

Meditations on the Psalms

Volume Eleven: Psalms 101-110

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1. PSALM ONE HUNDRED AND ONE

The Righteous and Just King

1 A Psalm of David. I will sing of mercy and justice; to You, O LORD, I will sing praises.

2 I will behave wisely in a perfect way. Oh, when will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

3 I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me.

4 A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness.

5 Whoever secretly slanders his neighbour, him I will destroy; the one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, him I will not endure.

6 My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; he who walks in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

7 He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; he who tells lies shall not continue in my presence.

8 Early I will destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all the evildoers from the city of the LORD.

In this psalm David states his holy intention to lead a life of purity, and to repudiate all crookedness and deviation in his kingdom. He asks his God, "When will You come to me?" because he wants to live in the presence of God at all times. When that happens God's presence will fill his heart and the Lord will reign over his house. He will lead and guide him, and finally, the Lord will rule the kingdom through him. David lived with God and praised Him. His daily behaviour was compatible with his singing and his writings, because he applied the texts of his songs to his personal life as a sincere worshipper of God. As a king entrusted by God to carry the responsibility of ruling and caring for his people, he wanted to be the just ruler of a virtuous kingdom.

In this psalm David carries us away to meditate on his own personal life as a believer and as head of a family, and the reality of his practical life as king and ruler. He shows us how a worshipper applies what he says with his mouth in his own practical, daily life.

David explained his ethics in Psalms 15 and 24. He wondered, "LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?" Then he answered, "He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; He who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbour, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend" (Psalms 15:2,3). Again he wondered, "Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place?" Then he answered, "He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully" (Psalms 24:3,4). His last words were, "Thus says David the son of Jesse; thus says the man raised up on high... the sweet psalmist of Israel: `The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue... He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain'" (2 Samuel 23:1-4). This is the righteous David, the just king, of whom the Lord testified, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will" (Acts 13:22).

Expositors gave Psalm 101 many titles, two of which are: "A depiction of David the King" and "A Psalm to Princes". Many godly kings committed it to memory. It was said of King Ernest the Pious of Saxony that he sent the text of this psalm to one of his corrupt ministers, which gave rise to the saying about any corrupt official: "He will soon receive Psalm 101 to read."

The occasion for writing this psalm is not known for sure, yet expositors offered three occasions in David's life, any of which could have been the occasion for writing this our psalm:

1. He may have written it after the death of King Saul (2 Samuel 1:1-10). David was thirty years old then when the leaders of the tribe of Judah came to ask him to be the ruler over their tribe. David accepted their request and reigned over Judah for seven and a half years. The capital of his kingdom was Hebron. Thus David's status changed dramatically, after he had seen some hard days running away from King Saul, who chased him from cave to cave. He felt grateful to the Lord for changing his condition, so he declared that he would be loyal to God and be a just ruler over his people.
2. He may have written it after the death of his last opponent from Saul's family when all the other tribes asked him to take over the government. They told him, "Indeed we are your bone and your flesh... `You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over (all) Israel'" (2 Samuel 5:1,2). He sat on the throne in Jerusalem for 33 years. He sang this psalm to give thanks to God, praying that he may walk perfectly in the fear of the Lord and to reign over the people with justice.
3. He may have written it on the occasion of removing the ark of the Lord's covenant to the city of Jerusalem, the new capital, as a sign of God's presence in the midst of His people (2 Samuel 6). In the first place, the ark was not moved according to the Mosaic Law.

Instead of carrying it on the shoulders of the priests, they carried it on a new oxcart. So when the oxen stumbled, a man named Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, and was struck dead by God on the spot. David feared the Lord, but soon understood why Uzzah died. Once he knew the right way for carrying the ark, he had it moved to the tent he built for it. Perhaps this is why he asks in this psalm, "When will You come to me?"(verse 2). It looks like he was saying, "I have prepared myself, my family and my city in the way that pleases You, O Lord, and my city has become Yours. I want it to always be the city where the ark of the covenant dwells, which you made with your people as a sign of your presence in their midst."It seems like David understood the intent 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).

When the Lord honours and blesses you, giving you a special grace and success, sing this psalm along with David, having resolved to lead a pure and godly life, full of love for your family and the others.

The psalm contains the following:

- First: David the worshipper (verses 1-4)
- Second: David the just king (verses 5-8)

1.1. First: David the Worshipper

(verses 1-4)

1. **The worshipper gives thanks:** "I will sing of mercy and justice; to You, O LORD, I will sing praises"(verse 1). David sang to the Lord who is just and merciful every day, as Ethan the Ezrahite did, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face"(Psalms 89:14). David recalled how much strife and troubles he suffered from, and how he experienced the divine providence that assisted him and rescued him from every adversity. He then realized that every ruler must exercise mercy and justice in his judgments. "In mercy the throne will be established; and One (ruler) will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness"(Isaiah 16:5). He realized that every believer who wants to walk in a perfect way must overflow with praise to the good God, who is abundant in mercy and great in forgiveness. He must also thank Him for his equity that is manifest in His judgments and behave in a way that is in keeping with his faith, treating others with mercy and justice. "He (the Lord) has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"(Micah 6:8).

So let us participate with David in thanking the Lord and singing of His justice and mercy. There is success and failure in our lives, as well as the fulfillment of dreams and disappointments. Our lives have both the sweet and the bitter, days of health and days of illness, days of gain and days of loss. Let us, then, thank the Lord for the mercies He showers upon us in the midst of all this and say with David, "I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God; incline Your ear to me, and hear my speech. Show Your marvellous loving kindness by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust in You from those who rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me under the shadow of Your wings"(Psalms 17:6-8). Let us praise God and thank Him for His just judgments toward us, whether by rewarding or chastising us, for the apostle Paul says, "You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: `My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives'"(Hebrews 12:4-6).

2. The worshipper strives for perfection (verse 2):

- 1. Perfection of intention:** "I will behave wisely in a perfect way"(verse 2a). In wisdom and understanding David declares that he intends to walk in a morally perfect way, for "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom"(Psalms 111:10), and "The way of the just is uprightness"(Isaiah 26:7). David said, "For all His judgments were before me, and I did not put away His statutes from me"(Psalms 18:22). Afterwards when God told Solomon, "Ask! What shall I give you?"he answered, "Give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil."So the Lord answered him, "I have given you a wise and understanding heart"(1 Kings 3:5-15). It is a wise and understanding man who walks in the way that pleases the Lord, because it is the perfect way. For example, man often wants to avenge himself and take the law into his own hands, assuming that obedience to God will deprive him of his rights. So he does not obey God's order: "Do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, `Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord"(Romans 12:19). Yet the perfect attainment of our rights and the perfect victory are only in obeying the Lord's orders not to take revenge and leaving it up to the Lord to render to each one what is due to him. How beautiful is the advice: "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise"(Ephesians 5:15).
- 2. Perfection of eagerness:** "Oh, when will You come to me?"(verse 2b). David's life was replete with sweet memories with the Lord. He must have recalled how he dreaded the coming of the ark of the Lord's covenant to his city. He said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"(2 Samuel 6:9). But now he gets rid of fear and is filled with confidence and eagerness for the Lord's presence, so much so that he says, "Oh, when will You come to me?"He expresses the feelings of the Korahites in the statement, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear

before God?"(Psalms 42:2). He declared his eagerness to be even closer to the Lord, so that he could acquire more understanding of the perfect way that he resolved wholeheartedly to follow. He will not sin against himself or sin in passing judgment because the Lord will give him wisdom and holiness. In this request of his he asks God to fulfil His promise to His people: "In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you"(Exodus 20:24).

Come, let us declare our eagerness to live always in the presence of the Lord, making Him King over our lives. Say to Him, "When will You come to make my behaviour in accordance with your will? When will You come to my house as God, so that I may say together with my family, `But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD'? (Joshua 24:15). When will You have the final word in everything I do? When will you steer the ship of my life to where You want and please? This is truly heaven on earth!"How true is Saint Augustine's words: "God, You have created us for Yourself; our souls will never find rest unless they rest in You."

3. **Perfection of family life:** "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart"(verse 2c). Palaces are usually places for corruption, intrigue and lust. David, however, declares that his palace will be a dwelling place for the Lord, as though he were repeating the motto: "The Lord is the Lord of this house, the unseen guest at the table and the silent listener to every conversation."David was not only interested in behaving perfectly before the people as king, but was careful to behave in a perfect way before God at home. It was even said of him after he had transferred the ark, "He blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts... So all the people departed, everyone to his house. Then David returned to bless his household"(2 Samuel 6:18-20). Striving for perfection, he said, "I was also blameless before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity"(Psalms 18:23). Solomon the wise also said, "The righteous man walks in his integrity; His children are blessed after him"(Proverbs 20:7). David announces here that he will walk amid his children with a perfect heart, to model righteousness and goodness of heart. David must have recalled what Job did with his children: "And his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, `It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus Job did regularly"(Job 1:4,5).

The most difficult place to show our faith is at home. We often save the nice words for our dealings outdoors, and leave only the harsh words for indoors! The most ideal place for expressing feelings of love is at home, where our spouses and children are. Home is also the best place for testing a man's faith with his nuclear and extended family. The Lord always looks for a god-fearing home where He can find rest, as

Christ looked for a home where He could rest on Wednesday during the Passion Week, and chose the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus (Matthew 26:6-13). The believers at Colossae found their rest in Philemon's house, for which reason Paul wrote to him and the church, saying, "Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved friend and fellow labourer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"(Philemon 1:1-3). Does Christ find your house an oasis of rest and do the believers rest at your home?

3. **The worshipper hates evil (verses 3,4):**In these two verses David announces his perfect loyalty to God and that he will strive to lead a life of obedience, departing from all evil and loathing it.

1. **He will not imitate the wicked:** "I will set nothing wicked before my eyes"(verse 3a). He resolved not to imitate any evil thing he sees in the wicked, no matter how famous or successful they are, because what the eyes behold and are attracted to enters the heart. "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"(Matthew 6:22,23). Our first parents set the forbidden tree before their eyes, and found it good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise, so they disobeyed God (Genesis 3:6). David guarded himself, though, against what they had done, and learnt the necessity of obedience.

There is still another possible meaning to David's statement that he won't set anything wicked before his eyes, namely that he will not set before his eyes, or have intentions, to commit any wicked act. His entire intention was directed toward perfect, virtuous behaviour, because "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear"(Psalms 66:18). His motto was, "But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works"(Psalms 73:28).

2. **He will shake off any deviation:** "I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me"(verse 3b). God ordered His people, "So none of the accursed things shall remain in your hand... Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart"(Deuteronomy 13:17; 15:9). David acted on this commandment and decided to shake off all deviation and unbelief.
3. **He will not be friends with the wicked:** "A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness"(verse 4). David knew that "Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the LORD, but the blameless in their ways are His delight"(Proverbs 11:20). So he decided to have nothing to do with the wicked. We ought to follow David's example, for "Evil company corrupts good habits"(1 Corinthians 15:33). We must obey the apostolic command: "Do not be unequally

yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?"(2 Corinthians 6:14,15).

1.2. Second: David the Just King

(verses 5-8)

1. **The just king rejects the one who secretly slanders:** "Whoever secretly slanders his neighbour, him I will destroy"(verse 5a). A slanderer is somebody who tells lies about others, and hurts people by what he says about them behind their backs, giving them no chance to defend their name. A king must have assistants and counselors to give him reports about the country and the people. They should be honest and truthful, never slandering or wronging anyone, but give the king a true representation of the people and the state of affairs. If those around the king are honest, their reports will be honest, too; hence the king's decisions will be just. But if those around the king are wicked, they will submit false reports, which will lead to unjust and wrong decisions. For this reason King David did not permit anyone to slander others secretly; he rather removed them from his retinue, for "If a ruler pays attention to lies, all his servants become wicked"(Proverbs 29:12).
2. **The just king rejects the haughty:** "The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, him I will not endure"(verse 5b). David said to the Lord, "For You will save the humble people, but will bring down haughty looks"(Psalms 18:27). David had followed the example of his God; he did not endure haughty people like Haman. When King Ahasuerus asked Haman, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honour?"he thought in his heart, "'Whom would the king delight to honour more than me?' He suggested that the king should clothe him with the royal robe, let him ride on the king's mare, give him the king's crown to wear, then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour!'"So the king ordered this to be done to Mordecai, the gatekeeper of the palace (Esther 6:6-11). Truly, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart; these, O God, You will not despise"(Psalms 51:17). So "Be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time"(1 Peter 5:5,6).
3. **The just king uses a perfect and faithful man:** "My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; he who walks in a perfect way, he shall serve me"(verse 6). David was faithful, walked wisely and in a perfect way. Therefore he loved those who are faithful and perfect. He continually looked for them to be part of his entourage, counsellors, confidantes, co-workers and servants.

4. **The just king drives out the liars:** "He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; he who tells lies shall not continue in my presence"(verse 7). David suffered greatly from the lying deceivers who sold him out to King Saul, who chased him and sought to kill him. When Saul was caught one time by David, David said to him, "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, `Indeed David seeks your harm'?"(1 Samuel 24:9). And when God made David king, he did not want anyone to suffer the way he suffered, so he drove the deceivers out of his house. It was David also who said, "Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak insolent things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous"(Psalms 31:18). He who endeavors to walk in a perfect way cannot live in harmony with a deceiver, but rather says, "As for the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight"" (Psalms 16:3).
5. **The just king cleanses the capital of his kingdom:** "Early I will destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all the evildoers from the city of the LORD"(verse 8). David did not settle for just cleansing his palace from the wicked deceivers, but planned to cleanse his entire capital from them every day, "For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil"(Romans 13:4). David called the capital of his kingdom "the City of God,"therefore he planned to cleanse it from the workers of evil, in order to be the ideal city, a utopia. He planned that "early"every morning he would drive away from it the wicked and the unjust, who do wrong to others. The Lord said, "O house of David! Thus says the LORD: `Execute judgment in the morning; and deliver him who is plundered out of the hand of the oppressor, lest My fury go forth like fire and burn so that no one can quench it, because of the evil of your doings'"(Jeremiah 21:12).

So let us ask the Lord to bring us closer to Him, because if we walk close to Him we will be faithful in our work, house and ministry. We will deserve to hear the Lord say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things (your personal and family life, with your spouse and children), I will make you ruler over many things (a bigger and better work in ministry and society)"(Matthew 25:23). Let us walk before the Lord perfectly and uprightly, because we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, so that our light may so shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:13-16).

1.3. Questions

1. Why did God say that David is a man after His own heart?
2. What did David mean when he said that he will behave in a perfect way?

2. PSALM ONE HUNDRED AND TWO

A Prayer of an Afflicted Man When He Is Faint

1 A prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before the LORD. Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come to You.

2 Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble; incline Your ear to me; in the day that I call, answer me speedily.

3 For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned like a hearth.

4 My heart is stricken and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread.

5 Because of the sound of my groaning my bones cling to my skin.

6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert.

7 I lie awake, and am like a sparrow alone on the housetop.

8 My enemies reproach me all day long, those who deride me swear an oath against me.

9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,

10 Because of Your indignation and Your wrath; for You have lifted me up and cast me away.

11 My days are like a shadow that lengthens, and I wither away like grass.

12 But You, O LORD, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of Your name to all generations.

13 You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favour her, yes, the set time, has come.

14 For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and show favour to her dust.

15 So the nations shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth Your glory.

16 For the LORD shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory.

17 He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer.

18 This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.

19 For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven the LORD viewed the earth,

20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner, to release those appointed to death,

21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem,

22 When the peoples are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

23 He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days.

24 I said, "O my God, Do not take me away in the midst of my days; Your years are throughout all generations."

25 Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands.

26 They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed.

27 But You are the same, and Your years will have no end.

28 The children of Your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before You.

This psalm is the fifth among the seven psalms of repentance (Psalm 6,32,38,51,102,130 and 143). Saint Augustine requested these psalms to be written down and hung on the wall across from his sick bed in his last days, so that he could read them and be comforted. How much do we need to stop a while and meditate on our lives in God's presence, and ask, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"(Psalms 139:23,24). The way these psalms of repentance are distributed among the psalms teaches us that our prayers should include thanksgiving and praise, crying for deliverance and rescue, crying for victory over sins and weaknesses, as well as confession and repentance. This requires open eyes and attentive ears to God's voice, so that our lives may be pleasing to Him. In reciting the psalms of repentance we come to recognize that God does not want to record our mistakes in order to punish us for them, rather to confess them and repent of them. Above all, He is a loving Father, who always welcomes the repentant sinner with open arms. God receives us as we are, weak and unclean, to make us strong and clean. He says, "'Come now, and let us reason together,' says the LORD, 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool'"(Isaiah 1:18).

This psalm describes the feelings of a bedridden patient, saddened by the guilt that brought about his sickness. He cries out, "Because of the sound of my groaning My bones cling to my skin"(verse 5). In much the same way he was also saddened by the condition of his people and the community of believers of his time. The psalm is a prayer of a man who pours out his complaint in God's presence, because his cup is full of his afflictions, which he incurred for his sins and those of his brothers. When the body is in pain, each organ suffers, and when an organ is ill, the whole body is affected. It is just as Paul said, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?"(2 Corinthians 11:29). Yet the psalmist recalls the Lord's plentiful mercies, which comfort him and cause him to say, "You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favour her, yes, the set time, has come"(verse 13). He asks the Lord to intervene to rebuild the Church, so that God will have the credit: "For the LORD shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory"(verse 16).

The psalm contains the following:

- First: The psalmist's complaint (verses 1-11)
- Second: The psalmist's hope (verses 12-22)
- Third: Two comforting differences (verses 23-28)

2.1. First: The Psalmist's Complaint

(verses 1-11)

1. **A crying complaint:** "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come to You. Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble; incline Your ear to me; in the day that I call, answer me speedily"(verses 1,2). The afflicted man who grew faint cries and pours out his complaint to the Deliverer who is able to save those who are tempted, who shows pity and compassion on the mi-serable. He upholds all who fall and raises up all who are bowed down; He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds; He comforts all who mourn. The psalmist requests the Lord to hear his prayer, for He said, "It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear"(Isaiah 65:24). He is sore afraid that the Lord will hide the light of his brilliant face from him in the time of his trouble, causing the world to grow dark in his sight. He fears that the Lord will neglect his request, put off the answer or grow weary of his complaints, so he requests that his cry be allowed to come into God's presence, so that He might in-cline His ears and rush to his aid like a mother who bows down to wipe away the tears of her weeping child. If men hear the crying of their children "shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? ...He will avenge them speedily"(Luke 18:7,8). Even if He does not give the believer what he asked for, He will still give him grace and strength to help him achieve victory, saying to him all the while, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness"(2 Corinthians 12:9).

2. The reasons for the complaint (verses 3-11):

1. **A serious illness:** "For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned like a hearth. My heart is strick-en and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. Be-cause of the sound of my groaning My bones cling to my skin"(verses 3-5). The psalmist complains that he spent days burning like dry firewood from the intensity of his grief over his own sins and the sins of his people. His life began to disappear quickly and use-lessly like smoke, his bones dried up like twigs of dry wood and his heart, the source of his life and vigour, became like withered grass, scorched and dried up by the harsh sun. He no longer savoured joy and quit eating his food. He groans increasingly owing to his swellings, "my bones cling to my skin."We hear an echo of such a complaint in Job's words: "My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth"(Job 19:20). Or perhaps he recalled the Scripture: "When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty melt away like a moth; surely every man is vapour"(Psalms 39:11).
2. **Deadly loneliness:** "I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert. I lie awake, and am like a sparrow alone on the housetop"(verses 6,7). The psalmist compares himself to birds that live far away from people in wastelands and

desolate ruins, which serve as signs of evil omen. He likened himself to a lonely bird that sings in a sad voice on a housetop, under the heat of the sun or the downpour of rain, unable to fly away with his broken wings and his voice growing hoarse with the bitterness in his soul.

3. **The reproaches of the enemies:** "My enemies reproach me all day long, those who deride me swear an oath against me. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of Your indignation and Your wrath; for You have lifted me up and cast me away. My days are like a shadow that lengthens, and I wither away like grass"(verses 8-11). His enemies gloated over his sickness and loneliness, derided him for being abandoned by his God, and, out of spite and hatred for him, swore to stand against him to increase his suffering and speed up his total ruin. His soul broke within him; he chewed and swallowed ashes (a sign of grief), his tears of pain mixed with his drink, so that he was neither satisfied nor quenched. He knew that all this was a result of God's anger with him for his sins. Because of His indignation He lifted him up and cast him away like a powerful storm or a destructive hurricane. Isaiah said, "Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away"(Isaiah 64:6). His days have become like a long shadow cast by the setting sun, like dry grass with neither beauty nor usefulness, as though saying with Jeremiah, "Woe to us, for the day goes away, for the shadows of the evening are lengthening"(Jeremiah 6:4).

2.2. Second: The Psalmist's Hope

(verses 12-22)

1. **His hope is in the Lord:** "But You, O LORD, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of Your name to all generations. You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favour her, yes, the set time, has come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and show favour to her dust"(verses 12-14). In all probability these verses were written during the captivity. After the psalmist had lifted up his complaint to the Lord, he directed his face to the heavens, for himself and on behalf of his people. There he saw God, who reigns from eternity to eternity, who said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: `The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations'"(Exodus 3:15). He is the same God of whom Jeremiah said, "You, O LORD, remain forever; Your throne from generation to generation"(Lamentations 5:19). He must show mercy to Zion according to His sure promises, as Isaiah confirmed, "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins"(Isaiah 40:2). The time of favour has come as the Lord said to Habakkuk, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not

tarry"(Habakkuk 2:3). The psalmist emphasizes that the Lord surely feels for His people who love the stones of the city of God, which was razed to the ground by Nebuchadnezzar, and still yearn for the dust on its streets. Sanballat commented mockingly, "Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish; stones that are burned?"(Nehemiah 4:2). But the Lord rose up to show mercy and nullified the mockery of Sanballat and those who took his side. "For He says: `In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"(2 Corinthians 6:2). "So the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness; sorrow and sighing shall flee away... The captive exile hastens, that he may be loosed, that he should not die in the pit, and that his bread should not fail"(Isaiah 51:11,14).

2. **His hope is in a coming generation that will comprehend (verses 15-18):**When the psalmist lifted his eyes up to heaven he rejoiced and his soul was filled with hope that a new generation, which knows the Lord, is coming.
 1. **He knows the fear of the Lord:** "So the nations shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth Your glory"(verse 15). When God brings His people back from captivity to Jerusalem both kings and subjects will comprehend the glory of the Almighty God: "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... the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising"(Isaiah 59:19; 60:3). Thus the generation coming after Nebuchadnezzar will comprehend that the Lord is glorious and to be feared, and every knee shall bow to Him, those in heaven and those on earth, and worship will extend from the limited earthly Zion to the whole earth. And in fact, this did happen on the Day of Pentecost as the Holy Spirit fell upon the worshippers who celebrated the Passover from every tribe, nation and people under heaven (Acts 2:21), who returned to evangelise their own countries. "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved"(Acts 2:21). "Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas (a Cypriot who gave away his field to the church), Simeon who was called Niger (probably a black African), Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch (an aristocrat), and Saul (a doctor of the Jewish Law)"(Acts 13:1).
 2. **He knows the Lord's glory:** "For the LORD shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory"(verse 16). The Lord's glory appears clearly in His Church which He built up and purchased with His own blood, not of hewn rocks, but of living stones which are holy temples in which He dwells through His Spirit. In this way the prophecy will be fulfilled that says, "And I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire

of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts"(Haggai 2:7,9).

3. **He knows the Lord's response:** "He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer"(verse 17). The Lord's response to the prayers of His people shows that He is the One Who hears prayer; to Him all flesh will come (Psalm 65:2). It proves that He is the only true God, who answers the prayer of the afflicted when he is faint and pours out their complaint before Him. He does not let him go empty-handed, but encourages him, saying, "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly"(Matthew 6:6).
 4. **He knows the Lord's writing:** "This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD"(verse 18). Both inspired Scripture and history record God's great work, so that the coming generations may study the greatness of God's deed with the previous generations. Thus they will know that "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms"(Deuteronomy 33:27). Therefore they will shout, "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations... But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who repara His commandments to do them"(Psalms 89:1; 103:17,18).
3. **He has hope in divine deliverance (verses 19-22):**
1. **The Lord hears and sees:** "For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven the LORD viewed the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to release those ap-pointed to death"(verses 19,20). "He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? He who in-structs the nations, shall He not correct?"(Psalms 94:9,10). As the psalmist lifted up his prayer, the Lord looked down from heaven to answer the prayer. When he complained the Lord did not rise up to show mercy to him and his people (verse 13). But now the time for tender mercy had come, and the Lord looked down from on high and fixed His gaze on the earth to answer the prayer. "Look down from heaven, and see from Your habitation, holy and glorious... Doubtless You are our Father...You, O LORD, are our Father; our Redeemer from everlasting is Your name"(Isaiah 63:15,16). God must hear the groans of the prisoner who has been exhausted by the long prison night, as He did with Peter when He gave him restful sleep and woke him up to rescue and release him (Acts 12). God did the same when he opened the prison gate for Paul and Silas and brought them out of it (Acts 16). He sees the pains of the sinner who has been bound by the sins and evils, as he cries out in repentance, and hastens to set him from Satan's imprisonment. The prisoner then says, "But God, who is rich in mercy,

- because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ"(Ephesians 2:4,5).
2. **The Lord reveals:** "To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem, when the peoples are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD"(verses 21,22). Sinners tend to say that "The LORD does not see, nor does the God of Jacob understand"(Psalms 94:7). Nevertheless the Lord did not leave Himself without witness; the healing of the afflicted when he grew faint and the return of the exiled people made everyone comprehend that the Lord is God, and soon they came to repent and believe in Him, and, finally, walk in His way. "The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry"(Psalms 34:15). Every believer who has been delivered by God will shout, "Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; `For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation...' and in that day you will say: `Praise the LORD, call upon His name; declare His deeds among the peoples, make mention that His name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for He has done excellent things; this is known in all the earth'"(Isaiah 12:2-5).

2.3. Third: Two Comforting Differences

(verses 23-28)

After the complaint came the hope, because the afflicted man who grew faint, together with his people, has fixed his eyes on God. At the conclusion of this psalm the psalmist's soul filled with comfort because he could see the brevity of his days in the light of God's eternity, then saw the changing world all around him in the light of divine stability.

1. **A difference between man and God:** "He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. I said, `O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days; Your years are throughout all generations'"(verses 23,24). Owing to sickness the afflicted man who grew faint saw his body aging prematurely. But he shifted his gaze away from his own weakness and brevity of days to meditate on the One with endless years. He realized that the Lord made man weak so that He would realise that the Lord is strong, so that the created man would repara his Creator and obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; He flees like a shadow and does not continue"(Job 14:1,2). But the eternal God gives mortal man eternal life: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"(John 3:14-16). How lovely for man to call the Lord "my God". It is this personal relationship that gives man sanctification and life eternal.

2. **A difference between God and nature:** "Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end. The children of Your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before You"(verses 25-28). When the afflicted man compared his age with that of heaven and earth, he found that his life is short and transient. As he looked up and compared God with nature, which He created, the man found that nature had a beginning and an end. But, God is eternal, already there even before the world He Himself created came into existence, and He will also remain after the form of this world passes away. "The heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up"(2 Peter 3:10). Nature changes in obedience to the Lord's commands, who directs the winds and brings down rain to fill the seas, who shakes the earth, causes volcanoes to burst forth and change the face of the earth. They all change, but He remains the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Paul quoted those words when he was speaking of Christ, God's eternal Word (Hebrews 1:10-12).

Despite the brevity of the life of the afflicted man, he says to the Lord, "The children of Your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before You"because the Lord makes them dwell in safety. They will grow and take root like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither. How beautiful is the future picture of the believers which the prophet Daniel saw: "And behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed... But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever"(Daniel 7:13,14,18).

2.4. Questions

1. Why did St. Augustine hang this psalm on his wall?
2. Mention the two differences the psalmist with which ended his psalm.

3. PSALM ONE HUNDRED AND THREE

Bless the Lord, O my Soul

1 A Psalm of David. Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:

3 Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases,

**4 Who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies,
5 Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
6 The LORD executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.
7 He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.
8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.
9 He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever.
10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.
11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;
12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.
13 As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him.
14 For He knows our frame; He repairs that we are dust.
15 As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes.
16 For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place repairs it no more.
17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His
righteousness to children's children,
18 To such as keep His covenant, and to those who repair His commandments to do them.
19 The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.
20 Bless the LORD, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His
word.
21 Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, you ministers of His, who do His pleasure.
22 Bless the LORD, all His works, in all places of His dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!**

This is a psalm of joy, thanksgiving and praise. It opens and closes with the imperative: "Bless the LORD, O my soul." For the Lord is the believer's refuge at all times. When he is weary, he complains to Him, and He opens his hand of mercy to fill him with goodness. The Lord said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). Also when the psalmist is happy, he goes to Him in gratitude and appreciation, because he experiences the divine generosity of giving and feels how indebted he is, so he impels his soul to offer thanksgiving, saying, "Bless the LORD, O my soul." If it is natural to cry out when in trouble, it is only appropriate to give thanks when we are blessed. As much as we expect a response from our generous God, He also expects us to thank Him when He grants our request. After Christ had healed the ten lepers, only one

returned to thank Him. He asked, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"(Luke 17:17).

From both the introduction and conclusion of this psalm we learn the necessity of thanking God. We are to begin and conclude our spiritual life with thanksgiving. As we start our right spiritual life with repentance and confession, trusting in the forgiving atonement of Christ, Christ enters our lives, and we begin our new spiritual life span with thanksgiving, saying, "I was blind, now I see"(John 9:25). And as our life here on earth nears its end, we also bless Him and thank Him, because He has begun a good work in us, which He promised to complete (Philippians 1:6). Now we are nearer to the completion of our salvation (Romans 13:11) and will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psalms 23:6). Let us begin every day with the prayer: "Bless the LORD, O my soul,"and conclude it with the prayer: "Bless the LORD, O my soul."When faced with a problem, let us embark on solving it by thanking God, who is an expert at solving problems. When the problem is resolved, thanks to Him, we are to thank Him because He heard and answered.

The psalmist opens his psalm by demanding that his soul thank God for His favour and grace to him personally, having received five blessings from God. Then he moves on to urging the angels, the Lord's hosts, servants and all His works to join him in thanking the God of mercy, truth, revelation and the keeping of the covenant, whose kingdom dominates all.

The psalm contains the following:

- First: The psalmist gives thanks (verses 1,2)
- Second: Five blessings from God (verses 3-5)
- Third: God's mercy (verses 6-12)
- Fourth: The need for God (verses 13-18)
- Fifth: Everyone gives thanks (verses 19-22)

3.1. First: The Psalmist Gives Thanks

(verses 1,2)

In the midst of feeling gratitude for God's favour, the psalmist said, "Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits"(verses 1,2). God had blessed the psalmist out of the goodness of His heart, so, in return, the psalmist demanded that his soul bless God with all the mind, the emotions, the will, the thought and the tongue, under all circumstances, because he felt how greatly indebted he was to the generous Creator. The apostle Paul said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"(Ephesians 1:3). The apostle Peter also said, "Blessed be the God

and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you"(1 Peter 1:3,4). God, therefore, blesses us with His rich gifts, both spiritually and physically. In return, we bless Him by exalting Him, praising Him, revering His name, thanking Him, giving Him credit and talking to others about Him. We also say to Him, "All things come from You, and of Your own we have given You"(1 Chronicles 29:14).

1. **He blesses and thanks Him because He is the Lord:**He is the Lord of creation, the supreme Ruler of both heaven and earth, who owns every beast of the forest, and the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalms 50:10). As a son feels gratitude for his father who is "the lord of the house,"so does David expresses his gratitude to God who is "GOD the Lord."
2. **He blesses and thanks Him because He is the holy One:**The angels shout to him, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"(Isaiah 6:3), and in the vision John saw all creation shouting to Him: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"(Revelation 4:8). All His works are pure, and every "good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning"(James 1:17). "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all"(1 John 1:5).
3. **He blesses and thanks Him because He is the benefactor:**His benefits are free gifts to the undeserving man-kind. He acts benevolently because He is gracious by nature "who gives to all liberally and without reproach"(James 1:5). As a result of His generous benefits we say, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want,"past, present and future. "But I have trusted in Your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because He has dealt bountifully with me"(Psalms 13:5,6).

Men are tempted to forget to thank God, although they do not for-get to ask for their needs! Therefore we are admonished: "Beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God"(Deuteronomy 6:12; 8:11). And as we obey this command we say, "I will mention the loving kindnesses of the LORD and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, according to the multitude of His loving kindnesses"(Isaiah 63:7).

3.2. Second: Five Blessings from God

(verses 3-5)

The psalmist mentions five blessings God gives freely to the believer: Forgiveness of all sins, healing of all diseases, redemption of the soul from the pit, crowning the soul with mercy and

loving-kindness and satisfying life with goodness.

1. **The blessing of forgiveness:** "Who forgives all your iniquities"(verse 3a). The enumeration of five blessings begins with thanking God who forgives all the sins of the repentant sinner. Through forgiveness God begins to be pleased with him and starts His good work in him. Man cannot enjoy the rest of God's gifts unless he is sure that God accepted and forgave him.

1. **The meaning of forgiveness:**The word "forgiveness" is rich in meanings; here are some of them.

***To let go:**When Joseph, Mary's husband, knew she was pregnant, he "was minded to put her away secretly"(Matthew 1:19), namely let her go. Of course there is some difference between Joseph's position to his blessed fiancée Mary and our position to God as sinners. We are guilty and our transgression is evident and established. Yet God says to the repentant sinner, "I will let you go; I will forgive you and demand no punishment for what you've done. I will not proclaim your disobedience."This is exactly what Christ did with the woman who was caught in adultery; He forgave her and said to her, "Go and sin no more"(John 8:11). The gospel did not record her name, because God released her and let her go. Likewise the gospel did not record the name of the sinful Samaritan woman who repented (John 4), as well as many others.

***Freedom and release:**Christ declared that His mission was to free and liberate, which had been foretold by Isaiah long ago: "To proclaim liberty to the captives"(Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18). When the king forgave the indebted servant who could not pay, he "released him, and forgave him the debt"(Matthew 18:27). The word is used here in the same sense as when Pilate the governor "was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished"(Matthew 27:15). He released Barabbas during the feast even though he was guilty. This is forgiveness; the Lord frees the sinner from the bonds of his sins and set him at liberty. Christ said, "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed"(John 8:36).

***Remission:**Christ told a parable of a man who had two people in his debt, "and when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both"(Luke 7:42). He simply remitted the debt.

***Covering:**Psalm 32 opens with the statement: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered"(Psalms 32:1). The author of Psalm 85 said, "You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin"(verse 2). When God covers transgression He no longer sees it, because He Himself covered it and hid it. Our first parents tried to cover themselves with leaves, but to no avail. Therefore God provided them with a real cover; He made them shirts from animal skins, from a sacrifice. This is the garment of righteousness that comes from God.

How thankful we are to God, for He covered, absolved and released the soul that was polluted with sin, and let it go free!

***Blotting out:** "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities"(Psalms 51:1,9). It means: Do not let them be recorded in Your book, but wipe them out entirely.

***Removal:** "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us"(Psalms 103:12). The east and the west will never meet, and so will the transgressions of the repentant sinners never be seen or counted against them.

***Casting:** "Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea"(Micah 7:18,19).

***Putting away:**When David confessed his sin before Nathan the prophet, Nathan said to him, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die"(2 Samuel 12:13). Paul also said of Christ, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love"(Colossians 1:13).

2. **The foundation of forgiveness:**There are two bases for receiving forgiveness.

*** The grace of God:**as David wrote Psalm 103 by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he must have been thinking of the Passover lamb. Its blood was applied by the Hebrews on the two doorposts and the lintel of their houses on the night they left Egypt, so that the destroyer would pass over them when he came (Exodus 12:13-23). He must have also been thinking of the bronze serpent which Moses had lifted up in the Sinai Desert, and that every one of the Israelites who was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze serpent in faith was healed of the deadly venom (Numbers 21).

The Passover lamb and the bronze serpent were both symbols of salvation, which was to come through Christ. When John the Baptist saw Christ, he exclaimed, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"(John 1:29,36). Paul said the same thing also: "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us"(1 Corinthians 5:7). Christ Himself said to Nicodemus, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"(John 3:14,15).

Forgiveness of sin, then, is a free gift from God alone: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast"(Ephesians 2:8,9).

* **Repentance:**The tax collector prayed, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"and went down to his house justified (Luke 18:13). The repentant thief on the cross said to the other thief, "We indeed (are crucified) justly"then, turning to Christ, said, "Lord, repara me when You come into Your kingdom"(Luke 23:40-42).

It is not naturally easy to confess our sins and repent, because we prefer to blame others. Confession of sins, however, means that we have discovered our transgressions and shortcomings, as well as our inability to save ourselves. At this point we turn to the Saviour who is able to save to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25).

In order to obtain forgiveness, some people try to keep certain laws, but they soon discover that these only show them their wrongs. The laws are like a straight measuring stick that shows any crookedness and shortcomings, but is unable to complete that shortcoming or straighten the crookedness. The harder man tries to apply the laws the clearer he sees his inability, and cries out, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"(Romans 7:24).

Some people try to obtain forgiveness by means of doing good works, but they forget that their ability to do good is from God, that the money they offer to the needy is a gift from God, and that the intelligence they use to serve others is also from God. So, we cannot have forgiveness except as a free gift from God, having believed in Him and trusted His grace that was made manifest in the cross. This truth was seen in the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts and in the bronze serpent on the pole, because "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (and a new direction); old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new"(2 Corinthians 5:17). Let us return to God in repentance, trusting the atonement of Christ, who said, "The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out"(John 6:37). So let us hasten to Him, saying, "You said, `Seek My face,' my heart said to You, `Your face, LORD, I will seek'"(Psalms 27:8).

3. **The blessings of forgiveness:**The psalm introduces the five blessings with the blessing of forgiveness, because it is the basis for enjoying all of God's blessings. Man can never enjoy God's blessings, whether they be health, family or work unless he has peace with God. Sin raises a dividing wall between man and God, which screens off the divine light from reaching man, causing his life to become dark no matter how much health, riches, knowledge or friends he has. Health cannot give light to life, neither can money, however abundant, shine on our hearts. Knowledge increases man's woe, because the more knowledge he acquires the more ignorant he feels. "Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh"(Ecclesiastes 12:12). Only one Person can help us enjoy life; that is God, when He grants us forgiveness. It is He 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). "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"(1 John 1:9). "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"(Ephesians 1:7).

When we receive God's forgiveness we have peace with God, with ourselves and with others, too. We also receive the free gift of adoption, because all those who receive Christ's salvation "to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born... of God"(John 1:12,13). At this juncture they will 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 will also say, "Therefore, having been justified by faith (through what Christ has done for us), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us"(Romans 5:1-5). How lovely it is to stand in God's grace, near to Him, at peace with Him, following our Saviour in confidence, love and obedience.

- 2. The blessing of healing:** "Who heals all your diseases"(verse 3b). Our heavenly King is the only One who "forgives all your iniquities"and "heals all your diseases."One may fall ill because of his guilt, and God heals his spirit by forgiveness, then heals his body. Christ said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you,"and quickly added, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed and go to your house"(Mark 2:5,11). Christ said to the sick man of Bethesda after healing him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you"(John 5:14).

One may also fall ill because of a broken heart and of grief, as it is said, "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression"(Proverbs 12:25). But when someone starts a pure, personal relationship with God, he will run to Him with a son's frankness, and pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name"(Matthew 6:9). He will pray for comfort for his sorrow, so that the divine promise is fulfilled to him: "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you"(Isaiah 66:13). Through this sweet, personal relationship with God the sick is healed from his sickness, which was brought about by the brokenness of his soul. Therefore he will say, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God"(Psalms 42:11). And he will hear, "But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves"(Malachi 4:2).

There are also physical diseases that the Lord heals through medicines or miracles, or through grace, which enables the sick person to bear the torments of his disease. Complete healing, however, will be achieved when the believer is taken up to heavenly glory.

1. **Healing is to restore something to its original state:** God created man righteous and complete, but sin destroyed everything. Righteousness and reconciliation with God are part of man's original nature, whereas sin is foreign to his nature. Health is original, whereas sickness is foreign. Therefore the psalmist says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word"(Psalms 119:67). When we say that God heals all our sicknesses we are talking of the Creator God who restores everything to its original state. God created man after every other thing, and saw that it was good, and indeed it was very good. (Genesis 1:4,31). But "through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned"(Romans 5:12).
2. **The Lord is the Healer:** God let the Israelites know Him as "the LORD who heals you" right after their escape from Egypt. "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses, saying, `What shall we drink?' So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them. And there He tested them, and said, `If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you'"(Exodus 15:22-26).

"The LORD who heals you" in Hebrew is a title: "Jehovah Ropheh". This word "Ropheh" may be linked to the Arabic root *rapha*, meaning to darn or mend. It is so fitting, then, to say that the Lord is the Healer who restores the warp and woof of the human body to their original state, healing the wounds and setting the broken bones. Martin Luther said, "The physician is the cobbler of the human body, because he stitches its torn parts together." The Lord is the greatest physician there is. Has not Christ said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly"(John 10:10)? An abundant life is a whole life, which the Lord touches with His blessing, forgiving all sins and healing all diseases. To Him we pray, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for You are my praise"(Jeremiah 17:14).

3. **How does the Lord heal us?**

(1) He heals us through medicine:The Bible recorded several cases of healing through medicine. Here are three of them:

i. The healing of King Hezekiah: Hezekiah developed a deadly boil, and was told by the prophet Isaiah, "Thus says the LORD: `Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.' Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed, `Repara now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what is good in Your sight.' And Hezekiah wept bitterly."Then God said to Isaiah, "Go and tell Hezekiah, `Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years.'" ... Now Isaiah had said, `Let them take a lump of figs, and apply it as a poultice on the boil, and he shall recover'"(Isaiah 38:1-4,5,21).

ii. The healing of Epaphroditus: Epaphroditus carried a gift of money from the church at Philippi to the apostle Paul, who was imprisoned at the time in Rome. He volunteered to serve Paul, but sickness prevented him from doing so. So the apostle nursed him until he got better. Although the apostle had been given the gift of healing people miraculously (Acts 14:8-10; 16:16-18; 28:8), God, in His wisdom, intended for Epaphroditus to be healed in a natural way. Epaphroditus received medical treatment until he got better. The apostle Paul wrote about this incident thus: "For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow"(Philippians 2:27).

iii. The healing of Timothy: Paul sent Timothy a medicinal recipe, most likely in the form of advice from Luke the physician, in which he told him to "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities"(1 Timothy 5:23).

(2) He heals through miracles:The pages of the Bible are full of cases of miraculous healing. The apostle James admonished, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord"(James 5:14). Here are two examples from the Old and New Testaments of miraculous healing:

i. The healing of Naaman the Syrian: There is no cure for leprosy, and a person suffering from it expected only death. Naaman the Syrian, however, was cured from his leprosy when he "dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean"(2 Kings 5:10-15).

ii. The healing of the man who was born lame: This was the first miracle to be performed after the Pentecost. A forty-year-old lame man, who had never walked

before, was healed. Peter took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and the man leapt for joy (Acts 3).

(3) He gives grace to the sick person to bear his sickness:The greatest example of such a situation is Paul's condition. Paul said, "A thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me"(2 Corinthians 12:7). We do not know exactly what that thorn was, but it could have been an eye disease (Galatians 4:13-15). Paul prayed three times asking for healing, but did not get it because the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."No sooner had he heard this than he responded, "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"(2 Corinthians 12:9).

(4) God will give complete healing in heaven:Every believer realizes that he has a life without end, which started the day he opened his heart to the Lord. Therefore the believer does not consider death as the end of his life, but a passage to a better life. He says, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain... having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better"(Philippians 1:21,23). There "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new'"(Revelation 21:4,5). This is the perfect health and complete healing which the Lord wants to give to the believer.

3. **The blessing of redemption:** "Who redeems your life from destruction"(verse 4a). The Hebrew word shachat can mean both "hole"and "destruction". In this verse "hole"would indicate the grave, i.e. physical death, and "destruction"would be the eternal destiny of the lost. When God blesses someone by forgiving his sins, He also redeems him from hellfire. When God blesses someone by healing his sickness, He also redeems his life from destruction. Elihu, Job's friend, mentioned these two blessings as he said, "In order to turn man from his deed, and conceal pride from man (i.e. to help him repent and change his direction, as well as remove pride from him in order to confess his sins to the Lord), He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword"(Job 33:17,18). King Hezekiah received the two blessings, so he sang to the Lord this song of thanksgiving: "O LORD, by these things men live; and in all these things is the life of my spirit; so You will restore me and make me live. 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 38:16,17).

1. **Redemption from the hole that men dig:**In saying this David must have been thinking of Saul's plots to kill him. At one time Saul offered his daughter to him in marriage if he (David) would kill a hundred Philistines of the king's enemies. In giving such an offer Saul was digging a hole for David, for he expected him to die while carrying out such an impossible mission (1 Samuel 18). At another time

David's next of kin, his own son Absalom, dug a hole for David in that he planned a coup, in which he would kill his father and rule in his place (2 Samuel 15). But the Lord saved David from those pits of death.

David must also have recalled his forefather Joseph who was thrown down into a cistern by his own brothers, but "The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man"(Genesis 39:2). God released him from Pharaoh's prison, placed him in a distinguished position, so that, looking back, Joseph could say to his brothers, "As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive"(Genesis 50:20).

A friend may dig a hole for you with good intention, in order to drive you away from something that appears to be harmful, yet is good and necessary for achieving God's purposes. Peter scolded Christ to drive Him away from the cross, but Christ answered him, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offence to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men"(Matthew 16:23).

2. **Redemption from the hole that the devil digs for us or we for ourselves:**James said, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone (by evil). But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death"(James 1:13-15). The man who is drawn away by the devil's deception will fall into the hole of disobedience. The devil deceives us when he makes good look like evil, and fools us by his false representation. The devil never twists the arm of anyone to make them sin, but is content with false suggestions. It is up to man himself to accept or refuse. Pharaoh attempted to harm the Israelites, but the harm that the Israelites caused to themselves was far worse. Pharaoh caused them bodily harm, but it was their murmuring against God that caused their destruction and falling into the pits of lust in a place called Kibroth Hattaavah (Numbers 11:33,34).

On the other hand, the Lord warns people of sin, and it is the people themselves who either pay attention to the warning or are drawn away by deception. In both cases God still wants to redeem the penitent from the devil's pit and save them from falling into his snare. Obviously a ship is in no danger from the water that surrounds it; the danger lies in letting the water come into the ship. Therefore Christ prayed for the believers, saying, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one"(John 17:15).

3. **How redemption is achieved:**David must have been thinking of redemption in terms of the Mosaic Law. A redeemer was someone who redeemed, i.e. ransomed, a prisoner, or discharged the debt of someone unable to pay it. A redeemer was also next of kin, someone responsible for someone else by reason of close kinship. This

sense of the word is made clear by Naomi when she spoke with Ruth about Boaz: "This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives"(Ruth 2:20). There was a closer relation to them than Boaz who refused to fulfil the legal obligations of kinship, so Boaz filled his place and performed all the duties required by law. When David said that the Lord redeems his souls from the pit he meant that the Lord was his nearest relation, his next of kin. Redemption from slavery and from debts took place in the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:25,47-49). The gospels tell us that Christ came to proclaim the year of Jubilee and called it "the acceptable year of the LORD,"in which He proclaimed liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound (Luke 4:19). Thus He proclaimed that He was our Redeemer, our next of kin, the only One that can save us from the pit of sin, which leads anyone who falls into it to the eternal pit of destruction. On the last day, at the Second Coming of Christ, the Lord will raise the bodies of the believers from the pit and the grave: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first"(1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Now you must be wondering, "How can Christ be any relation of ours?"Scripture says that Christ is the Creator, the Son of God from eternity past, and we are created of dust. He is the Holy One who came down from heaven, and we are mortal sinners. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, came to us, born of a woman, the blessed Virgin Mary, born under the law (Ephesians 2:4; Galatians 4:4). The Bible also con-firms that "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh"(1 Timothy 3:16). "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth... And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace"(John 1:14,16). Because of this Martin Luther said to Him, "My Lord, Jesus Christ, You have become what You were not so that I can become what I was not."He became a man to make us partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). On the cross He carried our sins and became sin for our sake, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). And by virtue of this redemption He says to every one who believes in Him, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine"(Isaiah 43:1).

When John the Baptist was born his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people"(Luke 1:68). Christ promised the believers not only to visit them but also to accompany them on their life journey. He said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"(Matthew 20:28). Christ came in the form of a man and visited Planet Earth, having provided eternal redemption. When we were yet hopeless in our pit of sin He came to us, and He still comes to visit us in all situations; in our sins,

- sicknesses and when our enemies plot against us. We can always hear Him calling, "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"(Matthew 11:28). When we answer His call we become "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"(Roman 3:24).
4. **The blessing of loving kindness and tender mercies:** "Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies"(verse 4b). In the first three blessings we saw God blessing us with the basics; i.e. forgiveness, healing and redemption. But in the fourth and fifth blessings we see Him granting extra benefits: crowning the head with loving kindness and tender mercies and satisfying one's mouth with good things, so that one's youth is renewed. The psalmist says to the Lord that He crowns His children with loving kindness and tender mercies, considering them princes and princesses. They are the sons and daughters of the heavenly King.
1. **A crown of tender mercies means kinship:**Rachamim (tender mercies) in the Hebrew language is derived from the same root as "womb"and "kinship", that is, any blood relationship. The Lord showed loving kindness to His people by granting them adoption and making them paras of His family and household. When Moses was sent to Pharaoh to get the children of Israel out of Egypt, Moses was commanded to say, "Thus says the LORD: `Israel is My son, My firstborn... let My son go that he may serve Me'"(Exodus 4:22,23). Christ said, "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother"(Matthew 12:50). God says to the believers, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and paras of the household of God"(Ephesians 2:19). Since we do not deserve God's acceptance due to our transgression, He shows us loving kindness as we cry out to Him, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions"(Psalms 51:1). To everyone who accepts Christ as a merciful Redeemer He gives "the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"(John 1:12,13). This means those who are not born from a physical relationship, nor by human will, but rather through the work of God. The believers marvel at this heavenly work and say to one another, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!"(1 John 3:1). "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, `Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ"(Romans 8:15-17). The credit for all this goes to Christ who came "to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, `Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a

son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ"(Galatians 4:5-7). Adoption gives us the right to call God "Abba, Father". Abba is actually an Aramaic word. Paul quoted it and then translated it into Greek, "father". Paul meant that we could call God "Abba"with the same familiarity that children have with their own father, yet we should respect Him also by using the more formal word "father". This filial familiarity is related to the boldness, access and confidence given to us by God (Ephesians 3:12). When God grants us adoption we become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. So praise the Lord.

2. **A crown of tender mercies means loving kind-ness for His people:**After granting them adoption, God shows mercy to His people, and makes them paras of His own household. This tender mercy was manifest in what God said to Moses: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt... for I know their sorrows... Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt"(Exodus 3:7,10). The prophet Isaiah expressed God's tender mercies for His people this way, "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old"(Isaiah 63:9). If the be-liever meditates on "the days of old" in his own life, he will be amazed at the divine mercy and his heart will fill with confidence in the future, because God is "the same yesterday, today and forever"(Hebrews 13:8). The same God who redeemed the afflicted from their bondage, bore them and carried them all the days of old, will redeem, bear and carry now and in the future, too. Paul put it this way, "Who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us"(2 Corinthians 1:10,11).

God showed His great mercy for us when He came to us in the form of a man, and "in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted"(Hebrews 2:18). He did help them, for He "went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd"(Matthew 9:35,36). "And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, `This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.' But Jesus said to them, `They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.'... And He took the five loaves and the two fish... blessed... So they all ate and were filled"(Matthew 14:14-21). When he stood by Lazarus' tomb and heard the two sisters weeping, he could not help weeping, for He was moved by their mourning (John 11:35).

3. **A crown of loving kindness and mercy adorns the heads of the believers:**The Lord's mercy appears in the fact that He sets different crowns upon the heads of the believers, all having the characteristic of permanence. Paul made a comparison between the short-lived wreaths of flowers, received by the contestants of the Olympic games, and the permanent crown received by the perseverant believer who exerts himself in keeping God's way. He said, "And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown"(1 Corinthians 9:25). The believers who run the great spiritual race with faithfulness and diligence, striving against sin and Satan, will receive an imperishable crown from the Lord. Scripture lists several crowns which the Lord sets upon the head of a believer:

* **A crown of glory and honour:**The psalmist marvelled at the mercies of the great Creator God who is mindful of man, who is made of dust, and even visits him. He said, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honour"(Psalms 8:3). How great is the mercy that places a crown of glory and honour on the head of frail man, and invests him with authority over all God's creation, setting everything under his feet!

The highest crown of glory, however, is the one given by God to the pastors (shepherds) who persevere in serving Him and all those He left in their charge. The apostle Peter says to those men, "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away"(1 Peter 5:4). We are all shepherds responsible for a flock, whether we be fathers, mothers, teachers, pastors or government officials.

* **A crown of wisdom:**Solomon the wise said that wisdom "will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver to you"(Proverbs 4:9). Wisdom is a crown the Lord places on the heads of the believers. The apostle James said, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him"(James 1:5). A wise man is the man who surrenders himself to the Lord and wins souls (Proverbs 11:30). He will receive forgiveness for his sins, healing for his sicknesses, redemption from destruction and the crown of wisdom.

* **A crown of a happy family:** "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband"(Proverbs 12:4), and "Children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children is their father"(Proverbs 17:6). It is a mercy from the Lord to the believer to have a blessed house and an excellent wife, where children take pride in their parents and grandparents are crowned with grandchildren.

* **A crown of a glorious silver-haired head:** Another mercy from the Lord to the believer is to have the glorious crown of godliness in youth and a silver-haired head in old age. Solomon the wise said, "The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness"(Proverbs 16:31).

* **A crown of righteousness:** It is given by God to those who strive for the sake of the kingdom, who eagerly await the Second Coming of Christ, such as Paul who said, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing"(2 Timothy 4:6-8).

* **A crown of life:** God gives it to everyone who loves the Lord and endures the temptations which the Lord Jesus permits him to undergo, such as Job who said, "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD... shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"(Job 1:21; 2:10). The Bible blessed Job and all those like him as follows: "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him"(James 1:12).

Yet we are in danger of losing our crowns if we violate the conditions for keeping them, therefore Christ warned the angel of the church of Philadelphia, saying, "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown"(Revelation 3:11). This means that God may assign someone else to do the job the believer refuses to do, because He will not leave His work unfinished. Then He will give the crown to the one who does the job which would have been given to him who fell behind.

We, however, will have the privilege and honour of receiving that crown when we cast it at Christ's feet on the day we will meet Him. The Bible says about the twenty-four elders, who represent the churches of the Old and New Testament, "The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, say-ing: `You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and pow-er; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created'"(Revelation 4:10,11). So let us hold on to the crown given to us, so that we may have the honour to cast it down gratefully at Christ's feet, who alone is worthy of glory, honour and power.

5. **The blessing of satisfaction and renewal:** "Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's"(verse 5).

1. **God satisfies:** The psalmist blesses the Lord because He satisfies him and gives him

everything generously and liberally, according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19). This is what the prodigal son found out in the far country. He thought he could live his life and spend his money in any way he wanted as long as he was far away from his father. But the bitter experience in the far country taught him that departure from his father meant hunger and misery, and that true satisfaction could only be enjoyed in his father's house. He then said, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father"(Luke 15:17,18). No sooner had his father seen him than he embraced him with joy and held a banquet for him. The prodigal son had to pay dearly to learn that basic lesson, which we hope to learn without having to go through the sufferings the prodigal son went through.

In order to explain the conception of heavenly satisfaction, Christ said that the kingdom of God was like a wedding banquet held by a king, who gave every guest he invited a royal garment suited for the grandeur of the occasion and the greatness of the royal status. The point of Christ's parable is that God satisfies our life with good things and dresses us with a garment of salvation and righteousness (Matthew 22:1-14).

Christ did not just settle for teaching about satisfaction, but also fed five thousand hungry persons with five fishes and two loaves of bread (John 6:1-15). Then He said, "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). God still satisfies the believers both physically and spiritually, for "The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it"(Proverbs 10:22). And the believers will respond, "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore"(Psalms 16:11).

2. **God satisfies us with good things:** "Who satisfies your mouth with good things." Good things are things that suit our needs, and meet them. When God gives them to us we say, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want"(Psalms 23:1). Moreover, good things suit God's good nature. He gives the believers the best and the most costly, because they are the dearest and the best that He has. David testified to this as he said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread"(Psalms 37:25).

(1) The best thing is God's salvation: Christ said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me"(Revelation 3:20). He satisfies us with His precious character when He enters our hearts, saving us from our sins. In describing the conditions of the soul that is fettered by sin and humiliation, the psalmist said, "For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness. Those who sat

in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and irons; because they rebelled against the words of God, and despised the counsel of the Most High, therefore He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses"(Psalms 107:9-13). He satisfied them by saving and freeing them. As Christ enters our hearts we say, "As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness"(Psalms 17:15). So we start our day with prayer, and speak with God so that our souls may be satisfied. On the Last Day He will satisfy us with the completion of His salvation as He raises us from the dead to enjoy the light of His countenance forever.

(2) The best thing is His word:The word of God satisfies the hungry heart, as the psalmist said, "They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures"(Psalms 36:8). "How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"(Psalms 119:103). Christ said, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life"(John 6:63). The prophet Jeremiah said, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts"(Jeremiah 15:16).

(3) The best thing is praising Him: "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips"(Psalms 63:5). The believer is filled as he continually praises the Lord on earth, and his satisfaction will be complete in heaven when he sings forevermore. "The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail"(Isaiah 58:11).

- 3. God renews the youth:** "So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."God satisfies the believer with good things, so that his youth is renewed like the youth of an eagle that soars on high. It is not meant that the eagle renews its youth, because eagles die. The reference is made here to the strength of the eagles and the heights they rise to. There are young people who soar to the horizons of spirit and mind when they are in their eighties, and there are people who are old when still in their twenties. It is the person who possesses a deep faith and a strong hope that renews his youth, because his confidence in the Lord makes him say, "I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me"(Psalms 23:4). Elihu's statement about what the Lord does to the penitent will then be fulfilled to him: "Deliver him from going down to the Pit; I have found a ransom; his flesh shall be young like a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth"(Job 33:24,25).

Moses, who died at the age of hundred and twenty, was an example of renewed

youth. In describing him the Scriptures say that His eyes were neither dim nor his natural vigour diminished (Deuteronomy 34:7), although his life was fraught with burdensome responsibilities. The Lord satisfied him with good things and his youth was renewed. Similar to him was Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who said of himself, "And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive... here I am this day, eighty-five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in"(Joshua 14:10,11).

(1) The believer rises like an eagle:The Bible says, "But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). The Lord renews the youth of the believer, who becomes like an eagle that raises its wings and soars on high, and, having fixed his eyes on high spiritual things, rises and ascends in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord.

(2) The believer teaches others as an eagle does: "As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings, so the LORD alone led him, and there was no foreign god with him"(Deuteronomy 32:11,12). The eagle teaches its young how to fly by shaking its feather-lined nest, which is supported by thorny twigs. The thorns start to annoy the young and they try to use their wings to fly. When they jump out of the nest, the adult eagle swoops down to carry them back to the nest to rest. It repeats the same procedure again and again. Time after time the young eaglets learn how to use their wings to leave the nest and fly. The believer is like an eaglet in that the sufferings of the present time teach him to fly to higher spiritual horizons. He must also be like the adult eagle in teaching others how to walk in the way of serving the Lord, as the apostle Paul said to his disciple Timothy, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

3.3. Third: God's Mercy

(verses 6-12)

The psalmist spoke to his soul about the Lord's blessings, and asked it to sing of His mercies, for they are too many to be counted or enumerated. He said, "How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You"(Psalms 139:17,18). He refers God's benefits to him to the divine mercy alone, and ascribes four attributes to it:

1. **His mercy is impartial:** "The LORD executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed"(verse 6). One of the Lord's mercies for the believers is that He always

avenges them on their enemies, as he avenged David on King Saul. David said to the king, "Therefore let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand.' The king answered, 'May the LORD reward you with good... And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand'"(1 Samuel 24:15,19,20).

It may seem to us that injustice has won the victory, but this victory cannot continue, because "The LORD executes righteousness and justice"today, in our land, for all the oppressed. "For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those who condemn him"(Psalms 109:31). "He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people"(Isaiah 2:4). Therefore they will say, "The LORD is our Judge, the LORD is our Lawgiver, the LORD is our King; He will save us"(Isaiah 33:22). When Christ stood before Pilate, this governor said proudly, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?"Christ answered Him with all the truth that releases the soul from fear, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin"(John 19:10,11). Christ's life ended with His crucifixion on Friday, but he rose again, conquered death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Everyone who is united with Christ like a branch in a vine will receive eternal life and blessing.

2. **His mercy is revealed:** "He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel"(verse 7). God answered Moses' prayer: "If I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight"(Exodus 33:13). So the Lord made known to him the ways He deals with His people, and said to him, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth"(Exodus 34:6). Another of God's mercies for us is to reveal Himself to us, because we are unable to know Him by ourselves with our limited intellect. The Egyptian mystic Dhul-Nun (d. 859 AD) said, "I knew God through my God, and but for my God I would not have known God."You may get to know some information about a person by observing his behaviour or reading about him but you will never know him personally unless you come closer to him, talk with him, and share life with him. The apostle Paul said, "That I may gain Christ and be found in Him... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me"(Philippians 3:8-12). It is true that we know of God by observing His great, highly organized creation, but we will never know Him personally unless He makes Himself known to us.

As to the perfect knowledge of God, it has been fulfilled in Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). "God spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, at

various times and in various ways, but He has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, who is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person. In Him we received the full revelation which the prophets have long foretold, for He is 'Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us.' ...God was manifested in the flesh... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth... No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him"(Hebrews 1:1-3; Matthew 1:23; 1 Timothy 3:16; John 1:14,18).

- 3. His mercy is forgiving:** "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities"(verses 8-10). Nehemiah said to Him, "But You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness"(Nehemiah 9:17). Therefore the prophet Joel called his people to "Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness"(Joel 2:13). In His mercy He is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"(2 Peter 3:9). He said, "'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'"(Ezekiel 33:11). If He punishes for something wrong, His punishment will be a Father's punishment, full of concern for the safety of His son. He says, "For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry"(Isaiah 57:16). "'For I am merciful,' says the LORD; 'I will not remain angry forever'"(Jeremiah 3:12). Therefore the psalmist said, "If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared"(Psalms 130:3,4).

There are parents that pardon their children when they apologize for their mistakes, but when the child makes another mistake the father rebukes him for both, the old and the new. Some spouses do the same when they mix the new subject of contention with an old one. But the merciful God will not judge forever; He forgives and forgets. "Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy"(Micah 7:18). He does not deal with us according to our sins; rather "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself"(2 Timothy 2:13). There is assurance in divine forgiveness; as we confess to Him, He forgives our sins and reparas them no more. "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world"(1 John 2:1,2).

- 4. His mercy is limitless:** "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He

removed our transgressions from us"(verses 11,12). Those who fear Him are not those who are terrified by His might, but those who act on His commandments and submit to His authority with love, because He God our Saviour, who alone is wise, and His is glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever (Jude 25). Those who fear God say together with the psalmist, "For Your mercy reaches unto the heavens, and Your truth unto the clouds"(Psalms 57:10). King Hezekiah said, "For You have cast all my sins behind Your back"(Isaiah 38:17). He forgives our sins, completely drives them away from Him, according to His limitless mercy, saying, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not repara your sins... I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you"(Isaiah 43:25; 44:22). Therefore we say, "He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea"(Micah 7:19). Christ covered those sins with His precious blood, and as long as the Lord has forgiven us, we must forgive ourselves and others, too.

3.4. Fourth: The Need for God (verses 13-18)

In these verses the psalmist reveals his need to the merciful God, because He feels his own weakness and recalls God's great mercies, which He had shown to the previous generations, and which He will show in the future to the grandchildren.

1. **Man's weakness:** "As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He reparas that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place reparas it no more"(verses 13-16). Human fathers love their children and pity them, although they themselves are sinful people. But God's relationship to the believers is a relationship of an ideal, perfect fatherhood; He knows their weaknesses, has compassion for them and knows their exact nature. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"(Matthew 7:11). God says, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you"(Isaiah 49:15). Christ taught us to begin our prayers with the statement: "Our Father in heaven"(Matthew 6:9). He depicted the heavenly Father as welcoming the lost son on his return with these words: "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him"(Luke 15:20). Therefore David said, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me"(Psalms 27:10).

This compassionate God pities us because He knows our form. He knows the frailty of our humanity in face of the onslaughts of evil. He knows our sinful nature. "For we do

not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin"(Hebrews 4:15). He repairs that we are dust, for "The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being"(Genesis 2:7). Job said, "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue"(Job 14:1,2). The psalmist said, "For He repaired that they were but flesh, a breath that passes away and does not come again"(Psalm 78:39). He prayed, "Repair how short my time is; for what futility have You created all the children of men?"(Psalm 89:47). It is true that "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; surely the people are grass"(Isaiah 40:6,7). Moses said, "You carry them away like a flood; they are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up: in the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers"(Psalm 90:5,6). We are made of dust, and to dust we shall return. It is God's breath within us, the divine element in mortal man, that keeps us alive and makes us look up to the Creator. But we are still made of dust, the earthly element in us, which brings us down. Man is torn between the two, and finds himself saying, "To will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find... O wretched man that I am!... With the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin"(Romans 7:18,24,25). But we thank God because the grace of God, through the power of Holy Spirit, enables the believer to say, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death"(Romans 8:2).

Man often thinks that he is great, especially when he prospers, becomes rich or has influence. He thinks that his authority is permanent. But he is like grass. If he is not established in the Lord, and if he is not grounded in Christ, all the balances in his life will be overturned; he will be scattered by the wind. He comes to an abrupt end and none will know where he was, as Zophar the Naamathite described mortal man when he said to Job, "The eye that saw him will see him no more, nor will his place behold him anymore"(Job 20:9).

2. **God's mercy:** "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who repair His commandments to do them"(verses 17,18).
 1. **His mercy springs from His eternity:**Man perishes because he is perishable. God's mercy, however, is endless because He is from eternity to eternity. For this reason the psalmist advises us, "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. Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God"(Psalms 146:3-5). The believers rest in assurance because God's perpetual mercy is the rock upon which they rest. For this reason they say, "LORD,

You have been our dwelling place in all generations"(Psalms 90:1). "But You, O LORD, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of Your name to all generations... But You are the same, and Your years will have no end. The children of Your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before You"(Psalms 102:12,27,28). "A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation, they will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this"(Psalms 22:30,31).

2. **His mercy springs up from His covenants:**God committed Himself to mercy toward those who fear Him. He said in the Ten Commandments, "But showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments"(Exodus 20:6), and also, "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). He is faithful to His commitments, not one thing will fail of all the good things which He spoke (Joshua 23:14). God promised justice to those who keep His commandments when He said, "For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery for burnt offering; I will direct their work in truth, and will make with them an everlasting covenant"(Isaiah 61:8).

3.5. Fifth: Everyone Gives Thanks

(verses 19-22)

The Lord is the King, whose reign knows no end and whose dominion is eternal. May all creation worship Him with thanksgiving and reverence.

1. **The reason for thanksgiving:** "The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all"(verse 19). God's throne is established in heaven, where there is light, glory and magnificence unchangeable. He is King. He holds absolute authority in heaven and earth. "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes"(Proverbs 21:1). Joseph's brothers thought that they had got rid of him when they threw him into the cistern and sold him into slavery, but the Lord raised him to be in charge of Egypt's treasuries (Genesis 45:25-28). In the same way the elders of the Jews thought that they had got rid of Jesus when they crucified, killed and buried Him in a tomb. But this was only what their darkened mind imagined, for God raised him on the third day (Acts 2:24). King Herod put Peter in jail, preparatory to putting him to death, but the Lord delivered him to proclaim the good news of Christ's salvation (Acts 12:11).
2. **Those called to give thanks:**
 1. **His angels:** "Bless the LORD, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word"(verse 20). Perhaps the psalmist was referring to the highest rank of angels, who are ever ready to do His bidding. They also excel in

- praising the Lord owing to their distinguished status, bestowed on them by God, and His command to them to serve Him. The angel Gabriel who brought the tidings of Christ's birth to Mary is one of those (Luke 1:26). The prophet Isaiah heard them praise in a big choir, shouting, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory! And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke"(Isaiah 6:3,4).
2. **His ministers:** "Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, you ministers of His, who do His pleasure"(verse 21). Perhaps the psalmist is referring to the second highest rank of angels, whose number cannot be counted. It was said about them, "A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened"(Daniel 7:10). They are His soldiers whom He sends to do His pleasure, for it is He "Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire"(Psalm 104:4). They fight the Lord's wars. The prophet Elisha said to His disciple, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, `LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see'"(2 Kings 6:16,17). They also fight on the side of the believers; "The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them"(Psalms 34:7). "For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways"(Psalm 91:11). "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"(Hebrews 1:14). They are called to praise, as many of them sang here on earth with a loud voice, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"(Luke 2:14).
 3. **All His works:** "Bless the LORD, all His works, in all places of His dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!"(verse 22). In the conclusion of his psalm, the psalmist returns to what he began with. He joins all the creation in thanking, praising and singing. He participated with the rest of God's creation in praise, since this creation declares the glory of God and shows His handiwork (Psalm 19:1). All you who have been redeemed by the Lord, bless the Lord, and shout with joy, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created"(Revelation 4:11).

3.6. Questions

1. Write down the five things for which the psalmist praised the Lord.
2. Give five meanings of forgiveness.

4. PSALM ONE HUNDRED AND FOUR

Praising the God of Creation

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honour and

majesty,

2 Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.

3 He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters, who makes the clouds His chariot, who walks on the wings of the wind,

4 Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.

5 You who laid the foundations of the earth, so that it should not be moved forever,

6 You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.

7 At Your rebuke they fled; at the voice of Your thunder they hastened away.

8 They went up over the mountains; they went down into the valleys, to the place which You founded for them.

9 You have set a boundary that they may not pass over, that they may not return to cover the earth.

10 He sends the springs into the valleys, they flow among the hills.

11 They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

12 By them the birds of the heavens have their home; they sing among the branches.

13 He waters the hills from His upper chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works.

14 He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth,

15 And wine that makes glad the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man's heart.

16 The trees of the LORD are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He planted,

17 Where the birds make their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees.

18 The high hills are for the wild goats; the cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers.

19 He appointed the moon for seasons; the sun knows its going down.

20 You make darkness, and it is night, in which all the beasts of the forest creep about.

21 The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God.

22 When the sun rises, they gather together and lie down in their dens.

23 Man goes out to his work and to his labour until the evening.

24 O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wis-dom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions --

25 This great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great.

26 There the ships sail about; there is that Levia-than which You have made to play there.
27 These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season.
28 What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good.
29 You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.
30 You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth.
31 May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in His works.
32 He looks on the earth, and it trembles; He touches the hills, and they smoke.
33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
34 May my meditation be sweet to Him; I will be glad in the LORD.
35 May sinners be consumed from the earth, and the wicked be no more. Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD!

In Psalm 103 the psalmist praised the God of grace and redemption. In Psalm 104 the psalmist praises the God of creation. Both psalms begin and end with the imperative: "Bless the LORD, O my soul!", that we may urge ourselves to thank God and exhort others to praise the Creator, the Lord of redemption. This psalm speaks of the Creator who satisfies His creation with good things. As a result their hearts lift up praise to Him because He looks after His creation and provides it with all its needs. So the righteous man shouts with joy, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever"(Psalms 23:1,6). This psalm calls us to lift up our eyes to where our help comes from, so that we may be refreshed by the Lord, rejoice in Him, and lead a life of victory, exaltation and nearness to Him.

This psalm which praises the God of creation is a poetical composition of chapter one of the Book of Genesis; it speaks of the six days of creation in which God created all things:

- Verse 2a: On the first day God created light (Genesis 1:3-5).
- Verses 2b-4: On the second day God created the firmament, the blue sky, the visible side of heaven (Genesis 1:6-8).
- Verses 5-9: On the third day God created the earth and the trees (Genesis 1:9,10).
- Verses 14-19: On the fourth day God created the sun, moon and stars (Genesis 1:14-19).
- Verses 20-23: On the fifth day God created the fish and the birds (Genesis 1:20-23).
- Verses 24-28: On the sixth day God created the animals, and then man (Genesis 1:24-28).
- Verses 29-31: God also provided food for all those creatures (Genesis 1:29-31).

Our psalm is similar to the song of the Pharaoh Akhenaton (1370-1353 BC), who wrote his poem in praise of the one god who was represented by the sun disk. In his poem he spoke of the food for animals (as in verses 10-12 of our psalm), of the nocturnal and diurnal animals (as in verses 20-23), and of ships in the sea (as in verses 25,26). Akhenaton's poem also says that life and death are by God's command (as in verses 27-30). Despite the striking similarity between the poem and Psalm 104, the psalm differs from the poem in that it speaks of the Creator of the sun, the God of Providence, whom Akhenaton did not know or see beyond the sun disk. Akhenaton did not realize that there is no profit under the sun. On the other hand, we thank God who enlightened us by His holy word, which was written by holy men of God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), to elevate our thoughts to the Creator of the sun, the moon and the stars, the Maker of man and the manager of his affairs, the One who guides to happy eternity. To such a God man says, "You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence"(Acts 2:28).

The psalm contains the following:

- First: The work of the God of creation (verses 1-23)
- Second: Meditating on the God of creation (verses 24-30)
- Third: Worshipping the God of creation (verses 31-35)

4.1. First: The Work of the God of Creation

(verses 1-23)

1. The work of the majestic God (verses 1-3):

1. **Majestic in His greatness:** "Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great"(verse 1a). The psalmist urged his soul to thank God and express the magnification and exaltation of the God of creation that spilled over from his heart. How great is He and how great are His works and exalted wisdom!
2. **Majestic in His light:** "You are clothed with honour and majesty, who cover Yourself with light as with a garment"(verses 1b,2a). God is clothed in glory, surrounded by majesty and honour from His angels and saints. He put on light, not to hide Himself, but to reveal His character and person clearly, purely and beautifully. "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all"(1 John 1:5).
3. **Majestic in His status:** "Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain"(verse 2b). God who dwells in the high heavens spread out the blue firmament like a big, flowing tent. He stretched it like a big palace, in which He promised those who love Him to prepare a place for them. Once He has prepared it, He will come and receive them to Himself, that where He is, there they may be also (John 14:1-4). And until He comes He made everyone who dwells in His secret place abide under His shadow (Psalms

- 91:1).
4. **Majestic in His movement:** "He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters, who makes the clouds His chariot, who walks on the wings of the wind"(verse 3). Just as the Lord established everything with the word of His mouth, so also He established the water in the clouds as though it were a roof for the earth. He made the clouds that ascend from the waters of the sea its vehicle. He also went before His people "by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire"(Exodus 13:21). Eventually, when the world comes to an end, "They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"(Matthew 24:30). He "flew upon the wings of the wind"(Psalms 18:10). Our first parents heard "the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden"(Genesis 3:8). He is everywhere, rushing to the aid of His children with power and authority over nature, circumstances, difficulties and troubles.
 2. **The work of the Creator God:** "Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire. You who laid the foundations of the earth, so that it should not be moved forever"(verses 4,5). The Lord created the angels as ministering angels, fast as the wind, powerful as fire. This verse is quoted in Hebrews 1:7. Angels always praise Him and pronounce Him holy in His presence (Isaiah 6:1-3). The righteous will join them, saying, "You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You"(Nehemiah 9:6). And because our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29), He made His ministers burning fire, ready to do His bidding in heaven and on earth.
 3. **The work of the sovereign God:** "You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At Your rebuke they fled; at the voice of Your thunder they hastened away. They went up over the mountains; they went down into the valleys, to the place which You founded for them. You have set a boundary that they may not pass over, that they may not return to cover the earth"(verse 6-9). In the beginning water covered the face of the earth, as a garment covers the body. Then God commanded, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so"(Genesis 1:9). The water still obeys God's voice, which set limits to it that it cannot overstep. The Lord says, "Who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, yet they cannot prevail; though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it"(Jeremiah 5:22). He did that to protect the earth from destruction, as He promised Noah and his children: "Thus I establish My covenant with you... never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth"(Genesis 9:11). God made the strength of the mighty waters serve His creation; the water in the seas and rivers evaporates and goes up into the clouds, then falls

down accompanied by the sound of thunder to water the mountains and cover them with vegetation. God brings down snow, which turns into water and goes back to its sources, enriching the valleys and producing good things for man, beast and bird.

4. **The work of a mindful God (verses 10-18):** This great God who created every living thing is mindful of all His creation. Christ said, "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26).
 1. **He quenches the thirst of the thirsty:** "He sends the springs into the valleys, they flow among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst" (verses 10,11). God causes springs to gush out and flow among the hills, to come forth from the rocks and water every wild, untamed beast as well as every tame, domesticated animal and the sons of men. The righteous man says, "You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger, and brought them water out of the rock for their thirst, and told them to go in to possess the land which You had sworn to give them" (Nehemiah 9:15). In the same way that the Lord quenches our physical thirst, He also quenches our spiritual thirst by the Holy Spirit (John 7:38,39).
 2. **He gives a home to the birds:** "By them the birds of the heavens have their home; they sing among the branches" (verse 12). "Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young; even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God" (Psalms 84:3). This is why they sing to the mindful God.
 3. **He fills the hungry:** "He waters the hills from His upper chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine that makes glad the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man's heart" (verses 13-15). God rains down on the mountains, watering the valleys and causing the grass to grow as food for the beasts, and grain as bread for man to meet his basic needs. The vines also yield fruits, whose juice brings extra joy to him. It makes him happy and his face radiant with contentment. In the light of the New Testament we understand that the living Bread is Christ Himself, who said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst... I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world" (John 6:35,51).
 4. **He looks after the plants and the animals:** "The trees of the LORD are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He planted, where the birds make their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees. The high hills are for the wild goats; the cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers" (verses 16-18). The Lord guarantees life to His creatures, both big and small; He prepares a place for them to live. God's high trees, such as the

cedars of Lebanon, get their sufficient share of sunrays, water and fertile soil, making them a suitable dwelling place for the birds. Storks, however, with their white feathers, black wings and long beaks and legs, have found their home in the huge fir trees. Wild goats also were not deprived of a home; they found in the high mountains such a suitable shelter. Badgers, however, found in the rocks a very safe refuge.

5. The work of the God of order (verses 19-23):

1. **The order of the sun and the moon:** "He appointed the moon for seasons; the sun knows its going down"(verse 19). God made the life cycle to alternate between daylight, when the sun rises to give off warmth and light, and dark, when the sun sets and the moon appears. Nightfall follows daylight in such an order that helps people know when months begin, so they celebrate their feasts and enjoy their festivals. God ordered the sun to rise and set at an appointed time. Wisely He appointed the time when the moon appears. He established both sun and moon in the skies to guide His creatures and teach them obedience, perseverance and order.
2. **The order of work and rest:** "You make darkness, and it is night, in which all the beasts of the forest creep about. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God. When the sun rises, they gather together and lie down in their dens. Man goes out to his work and to his labour until the evening"(verses 20-23). When the sun rises or the moon appears each living thing, whether diurnal or nocturnal, goes about seeking its food, or heads for its place of rest after a long day of hard work. The psalmist introduces a contradiction between God's creatures, like the wild beasts and lions that go about in the earth by night, seeking their food, and sleep by day; and man, who labours and toils by day until evening comes, then goes to his bed to rest.

4.2. Second: Meditating on the God of Creation (verses 24-30)

1. **Astonishment:** "O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions; this great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great. There the ships sail about; there is that Leviathan which You have made to play there"(verses 24-26). After enumerating some of God's works, the psalmist stopped in astonishment to meditate on the greatness of the work of that wise Creator whose power and wisdom surpass the limits of our human mind. "If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You"(Psalms 139:18). Every righteous man sings of God's generosity, for He makes His riches overflow over the earth, filling it with His goodness. The sources of this riches are varied; treasures hidden in the depth of the earth, as well as those on the surface. But as many and manifold as they are, they all serve man, who should thank God along with Jacob, saying, "I am not worthy of the least of all the

mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies"(Genesis 32:10).

The psalmist ponders over the greatness of the realm of the sea, with all its diversity of fish and other creatures, both big and small. There are microscopic creatures we cannot see with the naked eye, and there is the gigantic Leviathan (or the crocodile). God provides all of them with food, so that they may play and frolic in gaiety. He made the sea subservient to man, bringing forth various foods from it. He also made it a facilitating medium for travelling and transporting things on board of ships that carry both people and goods.

2. **Expectation:** "These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season. What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good"(verses 27,28). The Lord gives to all liberally and without reproach, but man, in his greed and avarice, likes to possess more! Thanks to God, there is no lack of food or resources in the world, but mankind creates a problem because of its uneven distribution. As to the animal, fish and bird kingdoms the issue is different because it is up to the Lord to provide food in due time, sufficiently and equally. Together with those the righteous man shouts, "I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread"(Psalms 37:25).
3. **Submission:** "You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth"(verses 29,30). God's creation lives under His authority, and in the shining of His light it sees light (Psalms 36:9). It derives life from Him and in Him it subsists. If God hides this light, darkness, fear, confusion and loss will prevail. The righteous man may feel that the Lord hid His face from him in times of trouble, persecution, apostasy or sickness. But for sure it is the sin of the sinner that hides God's face from him, as the Scripture says, "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). God has authority over death as much as He does over life. This is only natural because He is the Creator; once He withdraws a creature's spirit, it dies, and when He sends His Spirit, He renews the face of the earth. He created Adam from dust, blew in him and he became a living soul. His authority over our spirits is permanent; He either withdraws them or renews them. Also, His authority over our bodies is the same as His authority over our spirits. Christ raised Lazarus from the dead after three days (John 11), raised the son of the widow of Nain while on his way to be buried (Luke 7), and raised Jairus' daughter in the room in which she died (Mark 5). He still raises those who are dead in their sins and renews the life of the perishing sinner. He also forgives the sinner as He forgave the Samaritan woman (John 4), the adulterous woman (Luke 7), Matthew the tax collector (Mark 2) and Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9). We await a glorious life at the Second Coming of Christ from heaven. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a

shout, and the dead who believe in Christ will rise first. He will then catch up them together with those who are alive in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

4.3. Third: Worshipping the God of Creation

(verses 31-35)

1. **We worship Him because of His glory:** "May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in His works. He looks on the earth, and it trembles; He touches the hills, and they smoke"(verses 31,32). His glory endures forever; His kingdom will not perish. We worship Him, love Him and trust in Him because He first loved us (Hosea 14:4; 1 John 4:19). He rejoices in the work of His hands, those who do His will, submit to His authority and honour His law. The Scripture describes them as it came down in these words, "Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly"(Exodus 19:18).
2. **We worship Him with singing and joy:** "I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being"(verses 33,34). We worship Him with praise as long as we have a breath of life within us, thus we offer Him a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name (Hebrews 13:15). In heaven, our praise to Him will not cease, so we might as well start now, because He loves our praise that pleases Him. Likewise, we rejoice in Him when He brings back our captivity, and we become like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with singing (Psalms 126:1,2).
3. **We worship Him because He is the Judge:** "May sinners be consumed from the earth, and the wicked be no more. Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD!"(verse 35). This request of the psalmist may mean either one of two things. Either that God should destroy the wicked in their wickedness (Psalms 34:21), or that they should die to sin as they repent in obedience to the apostle's command: "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord"(Romans 6:11). In the light of the gospel teaching, the righteous man feels eager for God's rising with His light on the sinners, making them repent, because He "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"(1 Timothy 2:4). Therefore our souls will bless the Lord and say, "Hallelujah! Praise the LORD!"

4.4. Questions

1. How is this psalm a poetical composition of Genesis chapter one?
2. Describe the feelings of the psalmist when he meditated on "the God of creation".

5. PSALM ONE HUNDRED AND FIVE

The Covenant as the Lord Keeps It

- 1 Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples!**
- 2 Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; talk of all His wondrous works!**
- 3 Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD!**
- 4 Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His face evermore!**
- 5 Repara His marvellous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth,**
- 6 O seed of Abraham His servant, you children of Jacob, His chosen ones!**
- 7 He is the LORD our God; His judgments are in all the earth.**
- 8 He reparas His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations,**
- 9 The covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac,**
- 10 And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant,**
- 11 Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance,"**
- 12 When they were few in number, indeed very few, and strangers in it.**
- 13 When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people,**
- 14 He permitted no one to do them wrong; yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes,**
- 15 Saying, "Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm."**
- 16 Moreover He called for a famine in the land; He destroyed all the provision of bread.**
- 17 He sent a man before them -- Joseph -- who was sold as a slave.**
- 18 They hurt his feet with fetters, he was laid in irons.**
- 19 Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him.**
- 20 The king sent and released him, the ruler of the people let him go free.**
- 21 He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his possessions,**
- 22 To bind his princes at his pleasure, and teach his elders wisdom.**
- 23 Israel also came into Egypt, and Jacob dwelt in the land of Ham.**
- 24 He increased His people greatly, and made them stronger than their enemies.**
- 25 He turned their heart to hate His people, to deal craftily with His servants.**
- 26 He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen.**

27 They performed His signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham.
28 He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they did not rebel against His word.
29 He turned their waters into blood, and killed their fish.
30 Their land abounded with frogs, even in the chambers of their kings.
31 He spoke, and there came swarms of flies, and lice in all their territory.
32 He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land.
33 He struck their vines also, and their fig trees, and splintered the trees of their territory.
34 He spoke, and locusts came, young locusts without number,
35 And ate up all the vegetation in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground.
36 He also destroyed all the firstborn in their land, the first of all their strength.
37 He also brought them out with silver and gold, and there was none feeble among His tribes.
38 Egypt was glad when they departed, for the fear of them had fallen upon them.
39 He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light in the night.
40 The people asked, and He brought quail, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.
41 He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it ran in the dry places like a river.
42 For He repared His holy promise, and Abraham His servant.
43 He brought out His people with joy, His chosen ones with gladness.
44 He gave them the lands of the Gentiles, and they inherited the labour of the nations,
45 That they might observe His statutes and keep His laws. Praise the LORD!

This is the second of the four historical psalms; which are Psalms 78,105,106 and 136. Psalms 105 and 106 are related to each other; this present psalm speaks of the Lord's faithfulness in keeping the covenant, while Psalm 106 speaks of man's faithlessness in keeping the covenant. These two psalms conclude the fourth book of the Psalter (which starts with Psalm 90).

Our psalm talks about God's mighty works, which He performed to keep His covenant with His friend Abraham. It encourages those who have just returned from the captivity, for if God has given the land to a group of nomads in the past, simply because He promised, He must fulfil His promises to His people returning from Babylon: "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. I, the LORD, will hasten it in its time"(Isaiah 60:22). This psalm is one of thanksgiving to the Lord who has blessed His people. Its

beginning (verses 1-15) sounds like David's song when he transferred the ark of the covenant of the Lord from Obed Edom's house to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 16:8-22).

The psalm contains the following:

- First: An invitation to repara the Lord (verses 1-7)
- Second: The Lord reparas His covenant (verses 8-15)
- Third: The Lord fulfilled His covenant in Jacob and Joseph (verses 16-23)
- Fourth: The Lord fulfilled His covenant in Moses and Aaron (verses 24-45)

5.1. First: An Invitation to Repara the Lord

(verses 1-7)

1. How do we repara the Lord (verses 1-4)?

1. **By praising Him (verses 1,2):**he psalmist invites the people to give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name, and make known His deeds among all the peoples. They are to do this by singing and extolling His wonderful deeds, just as Moses along with the Israelites did after the exodus. "I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously!"(Exodus 15:1). Deborah sang (Judges 5), according to Isaiah's words, "Praise the LORD, call upon His name; declare His deeds among the peoples, make mention that His name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for He has done excellent things; this is known in all the earth"(Isaiah 12:4,5). And who can help but give thanks and declare the good news of what God did for them? The tongue must shout with thanksgiving and declare that the Lord gave an unexpected blessing, healed a sick one or delivered from some bad trouble. He is the Lord "Jehovah,"the ever-existing, the unchangeable.
2. **By glorying and rejoicing (verse 3):**The hearts of those who seek the Lord are filled with joy, because they are sure He will answer them, as it was said, "I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears"(Psalms 34:4). He lifts their thoughts toward Him, so they glory in His holy name, as Isaiah said to the godly believer, "You shall rejoice in the LORD, and glory in the Holy One of Israel"(Isaiah 41:16). This was exactly the experience of the paras of the early church, for "continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people"(Acts 2:46,47).
3. **By seeking His face (verse 4):** "Seek ... Seek!"(verse 4) with the mouth and the heart, so that we can turn to God with both our minds and hearts, seeking His pleasure, help and the light of His countenance. "Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near"(Isaiah 55:6). How happy we are if we obey

Christ's direction: "Men always ought to pray and not lose heart"(Luke 18:1). "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full"(John 16:24). "He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength"(Isaiah 40:29).

2. What should we repara about the Lord (verses 5-7)?

1. **We should repara His wonders and judgments (verse 5):** "You shall repara well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh"(Deuteronomy 7:18). Let us repara the miracle of the Exodus and the judgments the Lord pronounced against the hard-hearted Pharaoh, which He also carried out. Can we ever forget how much the Lord did for us and how he had compassion for us? We must repara how we got out of difficulties thanks to His love. "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits... Who redeems your life from destruction"(Psalms 103:2,4). Repara the miracles of His healing and deliverance, and say to Him, "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well"(Psalms 139:14).
2. **We should repara His choice (verse 6):**He has chosen Abraham and his seed out of grace, not out of worthiness, "And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power"(Deuteronomy 4:37). He has also chosen a spiritual seed of Abraham from every nation, who will have the faith of Abraham, and follow the Lord whom Abraham followed. How true are the words of the apostle: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son... Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified"(Romans 8:29,30).
3. **We should repara His Lordship (verse 7):**He is the Lord of His people whom He chose, as well as the Lord of all the earth; He pronounces His judgments on everyone because He is "the Judge of all the earth"(Genesis 18:25). "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead"(Acts 17:30,31).

5.2. Second: The Lord Reparas His Covenant (verses 8-15)

1. A covenant of home (verses 8-11):

1. **An everlasting covenant (verse 8):**The Lord reparas His covenant to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants. He never forgets it. He commanded it for a thousand generations, for He is "the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a

thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments"(Deuteronomy 7:9). He repairs it until He brings it to fulfilment.

2. **A confirmed covenant (verses 9-11):**

(1) Which God made with Abraham (verse 9):He said to him, "To your descendants I will give this land"(Genesis 12:7). He repeated the promise to him several times (Genesis 13:14; 15:18; 17:2) and gave him an oath to the same effect (Genesis 22:16).

(2) God made it with Isaac with an oath (verse 9):He said to him, "To you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father"(Genesis 26:3,5).

(3) And confirmed it to Jacob (verse 10):God said to him when he was travelling to his uncle's house, "The land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants"(Genesis 28:13-15). He also repeated the promise to him after he has changed his name into Israel (Genesis 35:9-12).

3. **The terms of the covenant (verse 11):** "The land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance."Canaan is the portion of the seed of Abraham. Just as He divided a good land among his people, He also chose them as His own portion, as it was said, "For the Lord's portion is His people... He found him... He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye"(Deuteronomy 32:9,10).

2. **The people of the covenant (verses 12-15):**

1. **Few (verse 12a):**God's faithfulness to His covenant shows in the fact that He offered a promise of a vast land to a few people, who would increase in number. This is exactly what Jacob said of his own family, "I am few in number"(Genesis 34:30). God's true people at all times and all over the world are a minority, yet He says to them, "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"(Luke 12:32).
2. **Strangers (verse 12b,13):**They go from one nation to another, as it was said, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise"(Hebrews 11:8,9).
3. **They are well guarded (verses 14,15):**He permitted no one to do wrong to those patriarchs; He even rebuked kings for their sakes. He rebuked Pharaoh (Genesis 12:17) and Abimelech (Genesis 20,21,26). He commanded them not to touch His anointed ones, nor to do His prophets any harm. Although the patriarchs were not anointed with holy oil, they were still considered anointed because God chose them to carry out holy duties and assigned them special services. He called Abraham a

prophet (Genesis 20:7). A prophet is someone who tells people words of edification that build up their faith life, words of exhortation that encourage those who walk in the wilderness of life, and words of consolation about God's dealings with His people down the history (1 Corinthians 14:3,4). How encouraged we are as we read: "You, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"(1 Peter 1:4,5).

5.3. Third: The Lord fulfilled His Covenant in Jacob and Joseph (verses 16-23)

In these verses the psalmist retells the events that ended up in Jacob's migration from Canaan to Egypt.

1. **Famine (verse 16):**The psalmist says that God called for a famine to come over the land, as he said, "For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labour of your hands"(Haggai 1:11). God used famine in Canaan to achieve His purposes. He describes famine in this way: "He destroyed all the provision of bread"as if bread is a staff that props up life, just as Isaiah described the supply of bread and the supply of water (Isaiah 3:1).
2. **Being sold and imprisoned (verses 17,18):**God sent Joseph to Egypt even before the famine came, to prepare the path of exaltation and satisfaction for himself and his brothers, as he said to them, "God sent me before you to preserve life"(Genesis 45:5). Providence permitted Joseph to be sold into slavery and his feet to be put in fetters. The psalmist description of this was: "He was laid in irons."This expression may mean that iron (a symbol of solidity) entered his soul, indicating that Joseph, the spoiled youngest son with his multi-coloured shirt, became as strong as iron in prison. God does not permit anything to harm the believer unless it be for good. "Say to the righteous that it shall be well"(Isaiah 3:10).
3. **Exaltation and power (verses 19-22):**Joseph remained in prison "Until the time that his word came to pass,"namely the time when God would fulfil his promises to Joseph in his dreams (Genesis 37:5-11). Therefore he had the right to say, "This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life"(Psalm 119:50). Joseph's confinement in prison was a test of his faith, which he successfully passed, having learned humility and patience like Job did, "When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside"(Job 23:10,11). At the time appointed by God Pharaoh summoned Joseph to be Egypt's prime minister and chief wise man. God's promise "When I choose the proper time"(Psalm 75:2) came true.
4. **Satisfaction (verse 23):**Thus Jacob, the father of the tribes, came into Egypt and was a guest of Pharaoh. His descendants later on dwelt there as guests, not as landowners.

5.4. The Lord fulfilled His Covenant in Moses and Aaron

(verses 24-45)

In these verses the psalmist relates the events that ended up in the Israelites' departure from Egypt and reaching the land of Canaan.

1. **Prosperity (verse 24):** The Scripture says that after Jacob came to Egypt "The children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them"(Exodus 1:7).
2. **Persecution (verse 25):** God allowed Pharaoh's heart to be turned against His people to get them to leave for the Promised Land, which God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Thus out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet (Judges 14:14). He has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power (2 Timothy 1:7).
3. **Commissioning (verses 26,27):** God prepared Moses to set the enslaved people free from Pharaoh's humiliation. He provided him with a scientific training in Egypt and spiritual exercise in Midian. He also prepared Aaron to be his assistant.
4. **Plagues (verses 28-36):** God delivered His persecuted people by means of certain plagues, which he inflicted upon Pharaoh, as mentioned in Exodus 7-11. The psalmist starts off with the ninth plague, the one of darkness (verse 28), because it was the one plague that spurred both Pharaoh and his people to drive the children of Israel out of Egypt. Moreover it was levelled against the god Ra (the sun), Pharaoh's chief god. Because of the plague of darkness neither Moses nor Aaron disobeyed God's commands, nor even Pharaoh. Afterwards, the psalmist enumerates the plagues from the first plague (verse 29), turning the water into blood; the frogs, which was the second (verse 30); the flies, which was the fourth; lice, which was the third (verse 31); hail, which was the seventh (verse 32); locusts, which was the eighth (verse 34) and finally to the death of all the firstborn, which was the tenth plague (verse 36). The psalmist did not mention the fifth and sixth plagues (the plagues of cattle and boils).
5. **Exodus (verses 37,38):** After the ten plagues, the Lord brought them out of Egypt laden with silver and gold, just like a triumphant army that had no feeble soldier; and the fear of them had fallen upon their enemies (verse 38). "When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him"(Proverbs 16:7).
6. **Providence (verses 39-45):**
 1. **A pillar of cloud (verse 39):** The Lord spread a cloud for a covering to protect His people from the scorching sun during their travel in the Sinai Peninsula, and fire to give light during their travel by night (Exodus 31:21,22).
 2. **Quail and manna (verse 40):** When the people craved meat, He brought them quail, and every morning He gave them the manna (Exodus 16:13). The manna was called

- "the bread of heaven"(Exodus 16:4), which was like coriander seed, and its colour like the colour of resin, and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil (Numbers 11:7,8). The same God still says to us, "Do not worry, saying, `What shall we eat?' or `What shall we drink?' or `What shall we wear?' For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things"(Matthew 6:31,32).
3. **Water from a rock (verses 41,42):**In the Wilderness of Sin, God commanded Moses to strike the rock and when he had done so the water flowed richly (Exodus 17:1-7). And in the Wilderness of Zin, the Lord commanded Moses to speak to the rock, but he struck it in anger and much water came out (Number 20:1-13). This was the fulfilment of God's promise to His friend Abraham.
 4. **He gave them the land of Canaan (verses 43,44):**Once the people received the Lord's deliverance through Moses and Aaron, they shouted with joy and sang with jubilation about their deliverance. They were led by Miriam the prophetess who played on her timbrel, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and danced. And Miriam sang to them: "The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"(Exodus 15:20,21). So on and on the Lord led them in a barren desert till He brought them into the Promised Land, in fulfilment of these words of Moses: "So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant; when you have eaten and are full; then beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage"(Deuteronomy 6:10-12).
 7. **The goal of fulfilling the covenant (verse 45):**God did all this as His part of the covenant and his people, as their part, ought to have observed His statutes and kept His laws. Yet, they did not do that, as we shall see in the following psalm. But we are deeply indebted to God because "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself"(2 Timothy 2:13).

5.5. Questions

1. How should we repara the Lord?
2. What should we repara for the Lord?

6. PSALM ONE HUNDRED AND SIX

The Covenant as Man Keeps It

1 Praise the LORD! Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? Who can declare all His praise?

3 Blessed are those who keep justice, and he who does righteousness at all times!

4 Repara me, O LORD, with the favour You have toward Your people; oh, visit me with Your salvation,

5 That I may see the benefit of Your chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance.

6 We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.

7 Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; they did not repara the multitude of Your mercies, but rebelled by the sea -- the Red Sea.

8 Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make His mighty power known.

9 He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it dried up; so He led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.

10 He saved them from the hand of him who hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.

11 The waters covered their enemies; there was not one of them left.

12 Then they believed His words; they sang His praise.

13 They soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel,

14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert.

15 And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.

16 When they envied Moses in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD,

17 The earth opened up and swallowed Dathan, and covered the faction of Abiram.

18 A fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.

19 They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped the moulded image.

20 Thus they changed their glory into the image of an ox that eats grass.

21 They forgot God their Saviour, who had done great things in Egypt,

22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham, awesome things by the Red Sea.

23 Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them.

24 Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word,

25 But complained in their tents, and did not heed the voice of the LORD.

26 Therefore He raised up His hand in an oath against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness,

27 To overthrow their descendants among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.

28 They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices made to the dead.

29 Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds, and the plague broke out among them.

30 Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was stopped.

31 And that was accounted to him for righteousness to all generations forevermore.

32 They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses on account of them;

33 Because they rebelled against His Spirit, so that he spoke rashly with his lips.

34 They did not destroy the peoples, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them,

35 But they mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works;

36 They served their idols, which became a snare to them.

37 They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons,

38 And shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood.

39 Thus they were defiled by their own works, and played the harlot by their own deeds.

40 Therefore the wrath of the LORD was kindled against His people, so that He abhorred His own inheritance.

41 And He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles, and those who hated them ruled over them.

42 Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand.

43 Many times He delivered them; but they rebelled in their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.

44 Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry;

45 And for their sake He repaired His covenant, and relented according to the multitude of His mercies.

46 He also made them to be pitied by all those who carried them away captive.

47 Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles, to give thanks to Your holy name, to triumph in Your praise.

48 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the LORD!

This psalm concludes the fourth book of the Psalter (which starts with Psalm 90). It is one of the four historical psalms; which are Psalms 78, 105, 106 and 136. As mentioned in Psalm 105, the two psalms are related to each other; the first speaks of the Lord's faithfulness in

keeping the covenant, while our psalm speaks of man's weakness in keeping the covenant. The author admits faithlessness and ingratitude, two bad attributes that marked the children of Israel throughout their history. Nehemiah expressed this as follows: "They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of Your wonders that You did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage"(Nehemiah 9:17). Our psalm resembles the psalm of inauguration of the temple by Solomon (1 Kings 8), as well as Nehemiah's prayer (Nehemiah 9) and Daniel's prayer (Daniel 9).

Our psalm opens with praise "for He is good! For His mercy endures forever," which is an expression that occurs 36 times in the Bible (26 times in Psalm 136, as well as in 1 Chronicles 16:34; 2 Chronicles 5:13; 7:3; Ezra 3:11; Psalm 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1,29; Jeremiah 33:11). The expression "His mercy endures forever" occurs 5 times (in 1 Chronicles 16:41; 2 Chronicles 7:6; 20:21; Psalm 118:3,4). This is the fact that encouraged the psalmist to ask the Lord to save His ungrateful people, himself included, once more as he said, "Repara me, O LORD, with the favour You have toward Your people; Oh, visit me with Your salvation"(verse 4). This psalm is the first among ten psalms that open with the Hebrew word "hallelujah" meaning "Praise the LORD!" (They are Psalms 106,111,112,113,135,146,147,148,149 and 150). These psalms also end with the same word, apart from Psalms 111 and 112. Besides, Psalms 104,105 and 107 end with the word "hallelujah" yet they do not open with it.

This psalm is marked by its honest confessions of the sins, troubles and defeats of the people. The author says, "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly"(verse 6). He does not defend his people out of pride or patriotism, nor does he take pride in a prophet, priest or king. He rather apologizes for their sins and ascribes all greatness in his people's history to the Lord's faithfulness and observance of the covenant. The psalm is a description of God's goodness and man's sin.

The psalm contains the following:

- First: An Invitation to repara the Lord (verses 1-5)
- Second: A confession of breaking the covenant (verses 6-46)
- Third: Final prayer and doxology (verses 47,48)

6.1. First: An Invitation to Reparate the Lord

(verse 1-5)

1. **We repara God with adoration (verses 1,2):**The psalmist begins with "Praise the LORD!" inviting the hearer to worship and giving thanks to the Lord, for He is good and merciful. The psalmist and his people experienced his goodness and mercy down the

ages. We, too, share their experience and say, "I will mention the loving kindnesses of the LORD and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has bestowed on us, and the great goodness"(Isaiah 63:7). All the sins of the children of Israel have not put and end to His mercy. People's goodness may be suspended and their disobedience may continue, but His mercy remains. The psalmist says, "If I say, 'My foot slips,' Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up"(Psalms 94:18). No tongue, however glib, nor voice, however golden, can fully proclaim the miraculous greatness of bountiful deeds.

2. **We repara Him with obedience (verse 3):**How happy are those who keep justice, and those who do righteousness at all times! From them will come the sweet aroma of Christ, for "Thus says the LORD: `Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed'"(Isaiah 56:1).
3. **We repara Him with a sense of belonging (verses 4,5):**The psalmist seeks from the Lord to repara him and his people with favour, for salvation comes from Him alone. He submits his request with the boldness of a son, saying that salvation is "Your salvation"and the people are "Your people," "Your chosen ones," "Your nation"and "Your inheritance."He asks the Lord to repara "with the favour You have toward Your people"and to answer him from heaven saying, "In an acceptable time I have heard You, and in the day of salvation I have helped You"(Isaiah 49:8). He expects the Lord to visit him with the salvation of "Your people"to see the benefit of "Your chosen ones"and rejoice in the gladness of "Your nation,"and then glory with "Your inheritance."How marvellous it is to come near the Lord in prayer, confident that we belong to Him, and that we have a personal relationship with Him.

6.2. Second: A Confession of Breaking the Covenant (verses 6-46)

The psalmist makes a general confession, saying, "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly"(verse 6). "They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one"(Psalms 14:3). Sinning means missing the mark. Committing iniquity is doing harm to someone else. Doing wickedly is to break the law and commit that which is forbidden. In the verses 7-47 the psalmist confesses his sins in detail and those of his people throughout history, because "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"(1 John 1:9).

1. **Breaking the covenant at the time of the exodus (verses 7-12):**Murmuring and lack of faith in God was the prime sin of the children of the Israel at the Red Sea. Forgetfulness and lack of understanding caused it, which is what Moses mentioned in his poem after he had completed writing the Torah. He said, "For they are a nation void of counsel, nor is there any understanding in them. Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that

they would consider their latter end!"(Deuteronomy 32:28,29). The Book of Exodus (14:10-12) speaks of the same thing; for after the plagues that afflicted Pharaoh, he ordered them to go out, but he regretted his decision and followed them to the western shore of the Red Sea. Faced with the sea in front of them and the enemy closing in on them from behind, the people said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? ... For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."They could not understand God's grace, neither could they realize His love for them, or His power to save them. The psalmist describes their sin as rebellion to the divine will. God could have granted them their request and brought them back to Egypt, but for His name's sake and His mercy He saved them, so that the nations might know that He is the Almighty. He divided the Red Sea for them to cross. When the Egyptians followed them, they were drowned. At this time the children of Israel believed in the words of their Lord and sang His praises. But all this was temporary. For they soon reverted to their forgetfulness, ignorance and rebellion.

2. Breaking the covenant in the desert of Sinai (verses 13-23):

- 1. Complaining of the food (verses 13-15):**Three days after crossing the Red Sea they complained about the lack of water (Exodus 15:22-24), and six days after that they complained about the food (Exodus 16: 2-4). In Rephidim they complained about the water once again (Exodus 17:2-4), and forgot the gifts of the Lord. They did not wait for his counsel and plans for them, and said, "Who will give us meat to eat? We repara the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!"(Numbers 11:4-6). God granted them what they asked for, but He also punished them: "But while the meat was still between their teeth... the LORD struck the people with a very great plague"(Numbers 11:33). This place was then called Kibroth Hattaavah, i.e. the graves of lust.
- 2. Complaining against Moses and Aaron (verses 16-18):**Korah along with a group of the leaders of the children of Israel opposed Moses and Aaron, saying, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"(Numbers 16:3). When Moses lifted up his grievance to God, the Lord punished the rebellious so that "the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households... And a fire came out from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men"(Numbers 16:32,35).

Unfortunately there are some believers who are possessed by pride and arrogance, as were the followers of Korah. They competed with their brothers and the assembly of the Lord must pay the price for their self-centred competition. Every believer needs to hear this advice: "Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to

- think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith"(Romans 12:3).
3. **Complaining against God (verses 19-23):**In Sinai Moses went up Mount Horeb to receive the two tablets of the Law from the Lord, and there he spent 40 days. The Israelites thought him dead, and asked Aaron to make for them a calf to worship, so he made it out of the gold that they had taken from the Egyptians (Deuteronomy 9:7-21). No doubt they were still affected by the worship of the calf Apis, one of the idols of the Egyptians. They began to shout, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"(Exodus 32:8). This act was a rebellion against God, who commanded them not to make statues and worship them (Exodus 20:4), as much as it was forgetfulness of God's favour toward them. God wanted to destroy them but Moses intervened and prayed for them, and God respected his prayers (Exodus 23:9-14).
 3. **Breaking the covenant within sight of the land of Canaan (verses 24-33):**
 1. **An uprising in order to return to Egypt (verses 24-27):**Moses sent 12 leaders as spies to scout out the land that they were about to possess according to the Lord's promise to them (Numbers 13,14). They brought back a report about the greatness of the land, but said that they could not possess it because giants dwelt in it. They added, "We were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight"(Numbers 13:33). The children of Israel shouted, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword? ... Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?... Let us select a leader and return to Egypt"(Numbers 14:2-4). The psalmist says that in this situation they committed several sins: They rejected the Promised Land, which symbolized the heavenly Jerusalem; they did not believe in the Lord's promise; complained and disobeyed the divine commands. God, however, pardoned them in response to Moses' and Aaron's intercession (Numbers 14:13-19).
 2. **Participation in the profanity of heathen worship (verses 28-31):**Many of the heathen rituals of worship were connected with prostitution. The children of Israel took part with the Moabite women in this corrupt worship and worshiped the idol Baal of Peor (Numbers 25; Peor is a name of a place). The psalmist says that they ate sacrifices given to the dead idols, though their God is the living LORD. The Lord's anger was kindled against them and He struck them with the plague which killed 24 thousand of them (Numbers 25:9). Phinehas the son of Aaron rose up and killed an Israelite man and the Moabite woman with whom the man was sinning, so that the plague stopped. God said about the Phinehas, "Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood"(Numbers 25:12,13).
 4. **Breaking the covenant in the land of Canaan (verses 34-46):**

1. **The sin (verses 34-39):**The psalmist explains that the sins of the children of Israel after entering the Promised Land were disobedience to the Lord's command. They did not destroy the inhabitants of that land: "But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem"(Judges 1:21; cf. Judges 1:27,29; 2:1). Yet the command to wipe them out is repeated in several places (see Exodus 23:32,33; Deuteronomy 7:2-4). As a result, the children of Israel mingled with heathen nations and learned their cults. Later they worshiped the heathen idols and sacrificed their sons and daughters to the idols to atone for their sin and to increase their own crops, just as the Canaanites did. Thus they betrayed their covenant with the Lord their God, and were defiled by the evils of the heathen, for "Evil company corrupts good habits"(1 Corinthians 15:33).
2. **The punishment (verses 40-43):**God was angered against the children of Israel because of their repeated betrayals and their continued deviation. Therefore He handed them over to the peoples around them, who enslaved and humiliated them. Yet He had compassion on them and raised up for them judges to save them, such as Gideon (Judges 6), Jephthah (Judges 11) and Samson (Judges 13). However, they persisted in their disobedience.
3. **God's faithfulness to His covenant (verses 44-46):**The Lord remained faithful to His covenant with the children of Israel. He heard their cries, saw them in distress, repaired His covenant with them, saved them from their enemies and even favoured them in the presence of all those who also fought with them, as a response to Solomon's prayer: "Forgive Your people who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against You; and grant them compassion before those who took them captive, that they may have compassion on them"(1 Kings 8:50). The history of the children of Israel is a series of evil-doing, followed by punishment. This in turn was followed by their cry for mercy and salvation, and then they would receive divine mercies and deliverance. Then they would repeat the same evil all over again. This is in general the history of sinful man who disobeys God's commandments and receives his punishment. He then cries out in his pain and the God of tender mercies takes pity on him and saves him. The recipient of God's mercy then says, "The LORD will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me; a prayer to the God of my life"(Psalms 42:8).

6.3. Third: Final Prayer and Doxology

(verses 47,48)

1. **A prayer (verse 47):**After detailing the sins of his people throughout history and confessing them honestly, the psalmist lifted up a prayer as though he were saying, "How terrible are the many sins which we have committed, and for which You punished us with

mercy. We deserved a worse punishment than what fell upon us. But now we confess our sins and repent of them, taking refuge in the riches of Your mercy. So please restore us back to our land and we promise You to remain faithful to the covenant this time, so that we may praise You and glory in this praise. We are still Your people on whom Your name has been called, and You are our Lord and only shelter in whom we trust and in whom we rejoice."

2. **Doxology (verse 48):**This doxology could be the conclusion of this psalm, as well as a glorification that concludes the fourth book of the Psalter, which started with Psalm 90. In this doxology the psalmist blesses his faithful Lord for His covenant from everlasting to everlasting, as David glorified Him when he blessed the children of Israel saying, "Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever ... Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name"(1 Chronicles 29:10,13). And as the Levites asked the children of Israel to glorify Him, saying, "Stand up and bless the LORD your God forever and ever! Blessed be Your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise!"(Nehemiah 9:5).

6.4. Questions

1. Mention the four times the children of Israel broke the covenant of the Lord.
2. What did the children of Israel do to offend the Lord in Sinai?

7. PSALM ONE HUNDRED AND SEVEN

The Song of the Redeemed

- 1 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.
- 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy,
- 3 And gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.
- 4 They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way; they found no city to dwell in.
- 5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.
- 6 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.
- 7 And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city for a dwelling place.
- 8 Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!
- 9 For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.
- 10 Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and irons --
- 11 Because they rebelled against the words of God, and despised the counsel of the Most High,

12 Therefore He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help.

13 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses.

14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their chains in pieces.

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

16 For He has broken the gates of bronze, and cut the bars of iron in two.

17 Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted.

18 Their soul abhorred all manner of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.

19 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses.

20 He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

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

22 Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.

23 Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters,

24 They see the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep.

25 For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea.

26 They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul melts because of trouble.

27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end.

28 Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses.

29 He calms the storm, so that its waves are still.

30 Then they are glad because they are quiet; so He guides them to their desired haven.

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

32 Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, and praise Him in the company of the elders.

33 He turns rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground;

34 A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of those who dwell in it.

35 He turns a wilderness into pools of water, and dry land into watersprings.

36 There He makes the hungry dwell, that they may establish a city for a dwelling place,

37 And sow fields and plant vineyards, that they may yield a fruitful harvest.

38 He also blesses them, and they multiply greatly; and He does not let their cattle decrease.
39 When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction and sorrow,
40 He pours contempt on princes, and causes them to wander in the wilderness where there is no way;
41 Yet He sets the poor on high, far from affliction, and makes their families like a flock.
42 The righteous see it and rejoice, and all iniquity stops its mouth.
43 Whoever is wise will observe these things, and they will understand the loving kindness of the LORD.

This psalm is the beginning of the fifth book of the Psalter. It corresponds with the book of Deuteronomy, which emphasizes God's word (see the introduction to volume 1 of this series). Our psalm is the song of every believer who has been redeemed by God. In it the psalmist draws pictures from real life of a godly man who may have been lost in a desert and about to perish from hunger and thirst. God answered his prayers and guided his path to a vast land. Or he may have been imprisoned as a punishment for a crime he committed, and God set him free. Or he may have been on his sickbed because of his sins, and God gave him healing. Or he may have been aboard a ship about to sink, then God took him safely to shore. Perhaps the psalmist wrote this psalm as he was overjoyed at the return from captivity, so he started to list God's blessings to the redeemed people of God. "Whoever is wise will observe these things, And they will understand the loving kindness of the LORD"(verse 43). Our psalm opens with praise "for He is good! For His mercy endures forever," which is an expression that occurs 36 times in the Bible (26 times in Psalm 136, as well as in 1 Chronicles 16:34; 2 Chronicles 5:13; 7:3; Ezra 3:11; Psalm 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1,29; Jeremiah 33:11). The expression "His mercy endures forever" occurs 5 times, in 1 Chronicles 16:41; 2 Chronicles 7:6; 20:21; Psalm 118:3,4. There is a relationship between this psalm and the two psalms preceding it. In Psalm 105:44 there is the promise of the land that proves God's faithfulness to His covenant. In Psalm 106:27 there is a punishment in the land for the faithlessness of man in keeping his covenant, and in our psalm (verse 3) we see God's faithfulness in answering prayer and returning His people to their land.

This psalm contains the following:

- First: The joy of redemption (verses 1-3)
- Second: The weakness of man (verses 4-32)
- Third: The power of God (verses 33-42)
- Fourth: An invitation to wisdom (verse 43)

7.1. First: The Joy of Redemption

(verses 1-3)

1. **Because the Lord is good (verse 1):**The psalmist calls his people to praise the Lord and thank Him because of the His goodness, which is manifest in His care. He had prepared the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve ever before He created them, but His goodness appeared in a much more profound way when He covered their nakedness after they fell. We still experience every day the goodness of the caring God and redeeming God, and his everlasting mercy that does not change. He does not treat us according to our sins, but He descends to us through His forgiveness in Christ. To such mercy we say, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"(Romans 5:8).
2. **Because the Lord is Redeemer (verse 2):**The psalmist means that the children of Israel were captives in Babylon, but God redeemed them from the hand of the enemy, as He had redeemed them from the tortures of Pharaoh and caused the angel to pass over them when he saw the blood on their doors (Exodus 12:13,14). The Redeemer is the next of kin. The greatest redemp-tion, of course, is the redemption from the imprisonment of the devil: "For there is no difference; 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 as a pro-pitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteous-ness"(Romans 3:22-25). Christ is the nearest relation, because in the fullness of time the word became flesh and dwelt among us. Believers say that we all received grace for grace from Christ's fullness. Therefore we call him saying, "Draw near to my soul, and redeem it; deliver me because of my enemies"(Psalms 69:18).
3. **Because the Lord gathers (verse 3):**The Lord promised that after 70 years of captivity He would bring back His people from Babylon to their own land, and He fulfilled His promise as Isaiah prophesied, "He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dis-persed of Judah from the four corners of the earth"(Isaiah 11:12). In this verse the psalmist records the answer to the request that he made at the end of the previous psalm: "Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles, to give thanks to Your holy name, to triumph in Your praise"(Psalms 106:47). Today we thank God who restores our souls from the captivity and imprisonment of sin, so that we may say, "He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake"(Psalms 23:3).

7.2. Second: The Weakness of Man

(verses 4-32)

1. **The wandering man (verses 4-9):**The psalmist presents an image of human weakness. It is represented first in travellers who lost their way while crossing a desert. They almost perished from thirst and hunger, because they could not find food, drink and shelter. They cried out to the Lord, and He rescued them by guiding them in the right path where they

could find an inhabited country. The psalmist then invited them to thank the Lord for His mercy and miracles. This exactly is the situation of man when he wanders away from the house of the Father, and cries out, "Be merciful to me a sinner!" The Lord will then guide him to Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6), the One who gives rest to the weary (Matthew 11:28) and living water to the thirsty (John 4:10), who fills the hungry with the bread of life (John 6:51) and guides his followers to the heavenly city (Hebrews 12:22-24). Praise be to the Lord who filled a hungry soul with bread, just as the father filled his prodigal son who could find no food other than that of the swine, and gave him a fatherly banquet (Luke 15). "As it is written: `Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God'" (1 Corinthians 2:9,10).

2. **The imprisoned man (verses 10-16):** The psalmist presents a second image of human weakness. Prisoners bound up in the darkness of the prison on account of some transgressions they have committed, are reduced to abject humiliation with no advocate or defender to take up their cause. Yet they cried out to the Lord, "Repara me, Lord" and He heard their cry, saved them, brought them out of the darkness and cut their fetters. The psalmist calls them to thank the Lord for His mercy and miracles, because He breaks the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron in two. As a result, every one of them will say, "O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant; You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD" (Psalms 116:16,17). This is the situation of man who is imprisoned by his sins; Christ saves him and shines His light upon him (John 8:12), sets him free (John 8:36) and draws him out from the pit of prison and helps him. Christ, "the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:78,79). He is the One who said, "To set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18).
3. **The sick man (verses 17-22):** The psalmist presents a third image of human weakness as represented in some fools who lost the right path and ended up sick. Sin may be a cause of sickness, as Christ said to a sick man He healed, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you" (John 5:14). But sin is not the cause of every sickness, for the man born blind had not sinned, neither had his parents (John 9:2,3). The situation that the psalmist describes is the situation of a sinful sick man who lost his appetite for food and his body lost weight till the man was on the verge of death. At this point he called out to God asking for His salvation, and the Lord sent His word, healed him and delivered him from death. The word of God carries the authority of God, for He speaks and it is done. The word of God is "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow" (Hebrews 4:12). The psalmist calls all those who are like this sick man to thank the Lord for His mercy and miracles, slaughter the sacrifices of praise, to enumerate

God's favours towards them with singing. The apostle James exhorted us to pray for the sick as he said, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. `Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much'"(James 5:14-16). Then the one who seeks healing will offer "the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name"(Hebrews 13:15).

4. **The drowning man (verses 23-32):**The psalmist presents yet a fourth image of a human weakness. Experienced sailors had gone through the vehement tempests and experienced God's wonders in the deep waters. But God ordered the raging winds to stir up waves, causing the ship to rise and fall rapidly over great distances, while the sailors reeled like drunken men, not able to draw upon their previous wisdom in such a way to enable them to face this final and terrible situation. They all discovered that they are weak and small. When those brave and experienced men found themselves unable to face the sea, they knew that they would have no other shelter than God's mercy, so they cried out to God and He heard their cry and ordered the winds and the waves to calm down. Then He made them reach their destiny safe and sound. So they had to thank Him for His mercy and miracles. A certain wise man said, "Let those who do not know prayer face the sea."This is the situation of everyone who faces problems in his work and finds himself unable to cope with them despite all his experience. He cries out to God for help, "I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth; praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD"(Psalms 40:1-3). It is also the situation of the born-again believer who is deeply rooted in God's love, while storms rage around him and make him cry out, "Do You not care that we are perishing?"But the Lord rebukes the wind so that the wind ceases and there is a great calm (Mark 4:37-41).

7.3. Third: The Power of God

(verses 33-42)

1. **He turns the wilderness into rivers of water (verses 33-38):**These verses say that God turns fertile lands into deserts because of the evils of their inhabitants. Moses said that the Lord strikes the land of the wicked, turning it into "brimstone, salt and burning; it is not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger and His wrath"(Deuteronomy 29:23). He also brings rain down on the arid desert, turning it into a green expanse in which the hungry may find food and the poor places to live, as Isaiah says, "For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The

parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water"(Isaiah 35:6,7). Pastures for the increasing flocks will abound, and they will cultivate fields and plant vineyards, and the Lord will bless them so that they may increase in number. This is the situation of the people who will return to the Lord in repentance, and as a result He will satisfy them with the living water as He did the Samaritan woman (John 4). But the situation of one who rejects God as Judas Iscariot did will result in his own destruction (John 17:12).

2. **He sets the poor on high (verses 39-42):**When people's wealth and possessions increase, they may become proud. Then God punishes them by death and destroys them. They lose their joy and forfeit their peace. They bow down from the pressure of the evil and grief they committed in word and in deed. Their proud leaders also received humiliation and indignity, and wander in their evil paths. As to those who are poor in spirit, those who believe that everything they have is a gift from the Lord, He will draw them up from the humiliation of poverty, increase their number, and their livestock will multiply. "For `God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble'"(1 Peter 5:5). As a result, every mouth that speaks against God will be stopped, and the righteous will rejoice in their God's faithfulness and goodness, because His mercy endures forever.

7.4. Fourth: An Invitation to Wisdom

(verse 43)

"Whoever is wise will observe these things, and they will understand the loving kindness of the LORD."Whoever is wise meditates on the work of the Saviour God, who saves the weak man from his weaknesses, punishes the wicked for their evil, gives justice to the poor and sets them on high. He must also keep this in his heart as the Virgin Mary did when she heard of the most marvellous miracle. She "kept all these things in her heart"(Luke 2:51). He must learn a lesson and repent, and the believer must increase his dependence on the Lord and obedience to Him. How beautiful is the prophetic saying, "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).

7.5. Questions

1. Mention three images of human weakness.
2. Verses 33-42 of this psalm present God's power in two ways. What are these two ways?

8. PSALM ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHT

The Song of the Triumphant

1 A Song. A Psalm of David. O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise, even with my

glory.

2 Awake, lute and harp! I will awaken the dawn.

3 I will praise You, O LORD, among the peoples, and I will sing praises to You among the nations.

4 For Your mercy is great above the heavens, and Your truth reaches to the clouds.

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and Your glory above all the earth;

6 That Your beloved may be delivered, save with Your right hand, and hear me.

7 God has spoken in His holiness: "I will rejoice; I will divide Shechem and measure out the Valley of Succoth."

8 Gilead is Mine; Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet for My head; Judah is My lawgiver.

9 Moab is My wash pot; over Edom I will cast My shoe; over Philistia I will triumph.

10 Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me to Edom?

11 Is it not You, O God, who cast us off? And You, O God, who did not go out with our armies?

12 Give us help from trouble, for the help of man is useless.

13 Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who shall tread down our enemies.

This psalm is a quotation from two psalms; its first half is quoted from the second half of Psalm 57 (verses 7-11), and its second half is quoted from the second half of Psalm 60 (verses 6-12). Both Psalm 57 and 60 express David's misery at the beginning, but at the end they close up with an expression of his hope and confidence in victory through the Lord. The psalmist quoted only their closing sections, which is an indication that he must have shouted a song of triumph out of a heart full of hope, trust and gratitude. The psalmist had called his people in the three previous psalms to give thanks to the Lord (Psalm 105:1-3; 106:1; 107:1). In this psalm he is acting on the command that he had already given, confirming that whoever experiences the cross will enjoy the resurrection afterward. For if we carry our cross and are buried together with Christ through baptism, we must be raised from the dead together with Him in newness of life, and have a glorious hope in the future (Romans 6:4). "This is a faithful saying: ... `Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death'"(2 Timothy 2:11,13). Our awaited victorious King is coming again, because He must reign in order to put His enemies under His footstool. He promised us so, and He is faithful to his promises, sincere in His love and generous in His gifts: "My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him"(Psalms 62:5).

The psalm contains the following:

- First: Praising in difficulty (verses 1-6)
- Second: Fulfilling the promises despite the difficulty (verses 7-13)

8.1. First: Praising in Difficulty

(verses 1-6)

1. **The confidence of the one who praises:** "O God, my heart is steadfast"(verse 1a). The psalmist opens with an expression of his confidence in the Lord because of his dependence on His fellowship. He raises the motto: "Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You"(Psalms 73:25). Sometimes the psalmist says, "My heart is fearful because the winds of life blow over me, and storms and billows beset and endanger my ship."But when the Lord is in the ship of a believer's life, that believer cannot perish, but rather shout, "You have put gladness in my heart ... I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety"(Psalms 4:7,8).
2. **The thanksgiving of the one who praises:** "I will sing and give praise, even with my glory"(verse 1b). A steadfast heart sings songs and hymns to the Lord, because the devil proved unable to shake his trust in his God. Saul used to chase David before he was king, and after he was raised to the throne enemies threatened the borders of his country. But neither Saul's pursuit nor the enemies' attack frightened him because he knew that all his affairs were in the hands of the Lord. His heart was, therefore, steadfast, his tongue rejoiced and his lips sang praises and spiritual songs, which echoed in the mountain caves where he hid. As a result, everyone knew that his peace came from the Lord and not from circumstances. Paul and Silas walked in the footsteps of David. When they were thrown into jail in Philippi, their hearts soared up to the heights of joy through prayer and praise, so that the foundations of the jail shook. This led to the salvation of the jail keeper and his household (Acts 16).

"Even with my glory."Both his lips and his glory sang, i.e. the best there was in the depths of his being. He sang out all that his mind thought of, all that his tongue could express and all that his imagination brought up. He praised the glory of the likeness in which the Lord created him, so he cried, "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well"(Psalms 139:14). He also praised the glory of the new life that God gave him, as though he were saying, "Lord, You glorified me and raised me up from the death of my sins. You resurrected me from the grave of sin, set me free, and released me to the liberty of the glory of the children of God. All my glory comes from You; it serves You and lifts up Your name: `But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head' (Psalms 3:3)."

We become unhappy when we look at things through the eyes of the world, but when we regard things from Christ's perspective we grow happy.

3. **The enthusiasm of the one who praises:** "Awake, lute and harp! I will awaken the

dawn"(verse 2), as though his lute and harp fell asleep with him when he went to bed. On waking up at dawn to commune with his God, he awakened them to share his tunes and melodies as he lifted up to the Lord a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips, giving thanks to His name (Hebrews 13:15). He says, "As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness"(Psalms 17:15). How delightful it is to seek the Lord in the early morning with our hearts, so that He would give us what we need to carry the responsibilities of our day and face our problems.

4. **The place of the one who praises:** "I will praise You, O LORD, among the peoples, and I will sing praises to You among the nations"(verse 3). The Jews neither mixed with the heathen nor dealt with the Samaritans. But, filled with Spirit, David arose with his heart and mind to give thanks to the Lord amongst all peoples, both Jews and Gentiles, and declare in their presence that he rejoiced in the Lord. Christ also revealed to us that God loves the whole world, that He does not make distinctions between one man and another on a racial basis: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ"(Galatians 3:26-28). The Lord has commanded us to go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to all creation. We must walk in this evangelistic spirit, which surpassed the boundaries of race, colour and language. How beautiful it is for brothers and sisters to come together, because "there the LORD commanded the blessing; life forevermore"(Psalms 133:3).
5. **The motives of the one who praises:** "For Your mercy is great above the heavens, and Your truth reaches to the clouds"(verse 4). At the time of the exodus God's mercy was shown in the pillar of cloud that moved ahead of His people to guide and protect them from the heat of the sun (Exodus 13:21). When their enemies pursued them, the pillar of cloud moved from the front and stood behind them to protect them from their enemies (Exodus 14:19). In the days of Joshua, God's exalted mercy and uplifted truth was great toward them. He made the sun stand still in the middle of the sky, and not to go down for about a whole day (Joshua 10:13). The Lord surrounded the psalmist with mercy and truth, so he burst into spontaneous praise to the Lord. The psalmist knew that he de-served to be punished, "for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ"(Romans 6:23). He needed mercy because he deserved destruction; therefore God's mercy was great above the heavens and covered his evil and sins. Mercy covered him and he took shelter in it from death, just as the prodigal son took shelter in his father's bosom and forgiveness (Luke 15:20). Because divine justice (truth) must be satisfied, it also rose up and reached the clouds. The psalmist sang songs about it because he saw the sign of a covenant in the rainbow (Genesis 9:13). He also saw the covenant in the rain that comes down to water the land, so that it can yield food for man, bird and animal. Truly, "Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed"(Psalms 85:10).

6. **The humility of the one who praises:** "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and Your glory above all the earth"(verse 5). The psalmist felt how small his praise and glorification of the Lord were, for He is the Lord, seated upon the high and uplifted throne, to whom the angels sing: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"(Isaiah 6:1,3). Most people, however, do not feel so, and need to hear the divine command: "Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day"(Isaiah 2:10,11). No matter how great the believer's praise, it does not measure up to the Lord's majesty and greatness. So he calls upon the exalted Lord to exalt Himself even higher above the heavens, and to let His glory tower above all the earth. He asked Him to reign over the hearts and lives of the believers, so that all of them, big and small, should come to know Him, every knee should bow to Him, of those in heaven and of those on earth, and every tongue should confess His unlimited power and unending sovereignty. He is the Lord of the past, the present and the future.
7. **The hope of the one who praises:** "That Your beloved may be delivered, save with Your right hand, and hear me"(verse 6). The psalmist hopes that the hand of God, the great King, will be stretched out towards him with an answer, to deliver him because he is the Lord's beloved and lover. He has asked that the Lord and His truth should be exalted above all, so that all his enemies should bow down before Him, His beloved ones who take shelter under His wings should be delivered, and all those who call upon His name be saved. From His holy heaven the Lord inclines His ear and hears. How great is the salvation of the Lord's right hand that works mightily on behalf of his children, healing their bodies, setting their spirits free from the captivity of sin, transgressions and destruction. "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms ... pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much"(James 5:13-16).

8.2. Second: Fulfilling the Promises Despite the Difficulty

(verses 7-13)

1. **Promises fulfilled in the past:** "God has spoken in His holiness: 'I will rejoice; I will divide Shechem and measure out the Valley of Succoth. Gilead is Mine; Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet for My head; Judah is My lawgiver'"(verses 7,8). The psalmist speaks of God's previous dealings with Joshua when He divided the Jordan River. This allowed the people to cross over and take possession of the lands to the east: Succoth, Gilead and Manasseh, and the lands to the west: Shechem, Ephraim and Judah. They measured the land and divided it between the tribes. The Lord has spoken in His holiness, and everything He spoke was fulfilled. None of His good words failed. He rescued all the op-pressed in the land, guided those who lost their way in the desert of

Sinai, turned those nomadic Bedouins into soldiers conquering lands without having received any prior military education. He created priests out of them without having received any clerical education. He was their great Leader and good Teacher.

2. **Promises fulfilled in the present:** "Moab is my wash pot; over Edom I will cast my shoe; over Philistia I will triumph. Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me to Edom?"(verses 9,10). The psalmist faced three enemies who attacked him. The first one was Moab. He envisioned his victory over them through the eyes of faith. He saw himself turning them into a wash pot in which he would wash his feet from the long, hard road of subjecting and enslaving them. Edom was the second of those enemies. The psalmist saw himself casting his shoe over Edom, namely taking possession of their lands and dominating them, as a fulfilment of the Lord's promises to Joshua: "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses"(Joshua 1:3). The third enemy, however, was Philistia. The psalmist saw himself shouting over it as a sign of victory. The Lord has accomplished for David what he had hoped for by faith. The Scriptures say, "After this it came to pass that David attacked the Philistines and subdued them ... Then he defeated Moab. Forcing them down to the ground, he measured them off with a line ... So the Moabites became David's servants"(2 Samuel 8:1,2,14).

Just as David had three enemies, the believer also faces three ene-mies: The flesh, the world and the devil. "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another"(Galatians 5:17). The believer must rise up to resist the lust of the flesh that goes contrary to the will of God. The second enemy, however, is the world with its false principles and short-lived cravings. Believers hear the Lord calling them, "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God ... Resist the devil and he will flee from you"(James 4:4,7). The third enemy is the devil who misleads people by his faulty words, trying to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Yet, he cannot do more than suggest, and he can-not twist anyone's arm to carry out his suggestion. If the believer is drawn away by the devil's suggestion and is enticed by it, he sins, because if lust dwells in a heart it conceives sin, "and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death"(James 1:14,15). And the devil "was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him ... for he is a liar and the father of it"(John 8:44).

Yet, the Lord who granted victory to His people in the past under the leadership of Joshua and Moses, and empowered David by the Holy Spirit, He Himself is able to keep us from stumbling. He puts on us the whole armour, that we may be able to stand against the wiles and attacks of the devil, not conforming ourselves to the people of this world, nor applying their principles. Though we live in the world, the world does not live in us. Then we will be transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, and present our lives on the altar of

dedication as a living and holy sacrifice (Romans 12:1,2).

3. **Promises to be fulfilled in the future (verses 11-13):**The psalmist looks forward to the future with hope and confidence, telling his God of the longings of his heart.
 1. **Evaluation of the cause of defeat:** "Is it not You, O God, who cast us off? And You, O God, who did not go out with our armies?"(verse 11). Although the past was full of victories, it also included defeats. The psalmist confesses that defeat came as a result of the people's sins and departure from God's instructions. So the Lord cast his people off and no longer went out with their armies, which resulted in their utter defeat. When the believer boasts over his personal strengths or righteousness, he gets defeated, because God's presence no longer goes with him. When he asks his God about the reason, he gets the answer: "Repara therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lamp stand from its place; unless you repent"(Revelation 2:5). As long as we are in the world we need continual repentance and constant cleansing from the thoughts of the world. We need to return to God's bosom, so that times of refreshing may come to us from the presence of the Lord.
 2. **Declaring God as the only support:** "Give us help from trouble, for the help of man is useless"(verse 12). When the people deserted their Lord, the Lord deserted them and they were defeated, because He is the only refuge and only from Him come assistance and victory over trouble. Without Him we can do nothing, for the help of man is useless, whether it comes from within him or from without. "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"(Psalms 146:3,4). "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"(John 16:33).
 3. **The final victory is coming:** "Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who shall tread down our enemies"(verse 13). The psalmist's soul was reassured as he lifted up his eyes to heaven from where his help comes. He was then sure of deliverance: "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). Let us, therefore, forget those things which are behind and reach forward to those things which are ahead (Philippians 3:13), so that we may be more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Romans 8:37).

8.3. Questions

1. How could the psalmist praise God in his difficulty?
2. According to this psalm, what are the promises to be fulfilled in the future?

9. PSALM ONE HUNDRED AND NINE

Another Takes his Place

- 1 To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. Do not keep silent, O God of my praise!**
- 2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful have opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.**
- 3 They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause.**
- 4 In return for my love they are my accusers, but I give myself to prayer.**
- 5 Thus they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.**
- 6 Set a wicked man over him, and let an accuser stand at his right hand.**
- 7 When he is judged, let him be found guilty, and let his prayer become sin.**
- 8 Let his days be few, and let another take his office.**
- 9 Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a wi-dow.**
- 10 Let his children continually be vagabonds, and beg; let them seek their bread also from their desolate places.**
- 11 Let the creditor seize all that he has, and let strangers plunder his labour.**
- 12 Let there be none to extend mercy to him, nor let there be any to favour his fatherless children.**
- 13 Let his posterity be cut off, and in the generation following let their name be blotted out.**
- 14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be reparaed before the LORD, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.**
- 15 Let them be continually before the LORD, that He may cut off the memory of them from the earth;**
- 16 Because he did not repara to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart.**
- 17 As he loved cursing, so let it come to him; as he did not delight in blessing, so let it be far from him.**
- 18 As he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment, so let it enter his body like water, and like oil into his bones.**
- 19 Let it be to him like the garment which covers him, and for a belt with which he girds himself continually.**
- 20 Let this be the LORD's reward to my accusers, and to those who speak evil against my person.**
- 21 But You, O GOD the Lord, deal with me for Your name's sake; because Your mercy is good, deliver me.**
- 22 For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.**

23 I am gone like a shadow when it lengthens; I am shaken off like a locust.
24 My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh is feeble from lack of fatness.
25 I also have become a reproach to them; when they look at me, they shake their heads.
26 Help me, O LORD my God! Oh, save me according to Your mercy,
27 That they may know that this is Your hand -- that You, LORD, have done it!
28 Let them curse, but You bless; when they arise, let them be ashamed, but let Your servant rejoice.
29 Let my accusers be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own disgrace as with a mantle.
30 I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yes, I will praise Him among the multitude.
31 For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those who condemn him.

This psalm resembles Psalms 35 and 69 in being a complaint to the Lord about the lying, plotting, murdering enemies, and also in being a request to pour down curses upon them, since they repaid the psalmist's good with evil and his love with hatred. The Church has considered this psalm a Messianic one (foretelling the coming of the Messiah), because Peter quoted the eighth verse of it as a prophecy about Judas Iscariot. He said, "For it is written in the book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it;' and, 'Let another take his office'"(Acts 1:20).

The invocation of curses in verses 6-20 poses a problem for the believer who should love his enemies, bless those who curse him and do good to those who persecute him. Therefore some have explained it as coming from the psalmist's enemies, as they opened their mouths to curse him. Others, however, said these curses were uttered by David against his enemies, which suits Peter's quotation, which is referred to as a prophecy about Christ's faithless disciple. They are the angry words of the righteous declared against the wicked: "Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you"(2 Thessalonians 1:6). Yet, some expositors have seen in it a prophecy of the destiny of the psalmist's enemies, because he was blameless, loving and "given to prayer". According to the spirit of the Old Testament, in which the psalmist lived and whose law was "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,"he found no wrong in wishing harm to them and seeking punishment for them.

The psalm contains the following:

- First: Invoking divine help (verses 1-5)
- Second: Invoking a curse upon the enemies (verses 6-20)
- Third: The reason for invoking divine help (verses 21-27)
- Fourth: The divine answer (verses 28-31)

9.1. First: Invoking Divine Help

(verses 1-5)

1. **A request from the silent God:** "Do not keep silent"(verse 1a). Because of the intensity of the psalmist's pains he felt that the Lord had kept silent and not intervened for a long time. His thoughts got agitated within him and the uproar of the enemies rose outside him. He, therefore, cried out for the Lord's intervention to disperse his persecutors and put an end to his fears. No doubt the Lord would answer him, saying, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you"(Isaiah 49:15). So let us pray and hope in Him, expecting His answer.
2. **A request from the praise-worthy God:** "O God of my praise!"(verse 1b). As weary and bitter of soul as he was because his enemies spoke evil of him, this affected neither the psalmist's trust in the Lord nor his relationship with His God, who is his stronghold in times of trouble. So he called upon Him with thankful praise for His previous and coming blessings which would save his soul and heal his wounds: "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for You are my praise"(Jeremiah 17:14).
3. **A request for deliverance from lying:** "For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful have opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue"(verse 2). The mouth of the enemies opened against him and lashed him with fabricated lies that he could not bear. He ran out of patience and called his enemies three things: wicked, deceitful and lying. It is "out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But ... for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment"(Matthew 12:34-36).
4. **A request from a pure heart:**On examining himself, the psalmist found three good things.
 1. **That he was blameless:** "They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause"(verse 3). Every hateful word they said about him and every war they launched against him was not because of any evil he had committed. Neither did he absolutely acquit himself; he just declared his innocence of such false accusations they fixed on him. One such accusation was King Saul's accusation that David would seize the kingdom from him. But it was the Lord who chose David instead of Saul to be king, because David's heart was after the Lord's heart (Acts 13:21). The Lord will certainly rescue the believer who is persecuted without cause. He says, "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake"(Matthew 5:11). The world hates the believers because it has hated Christ already. Had they been of the world, the world

would have loved them (John 15:18,19).

2. **He is loving and given to prayer:** "In return for my love they are my accusers, but I give myself to prayer. Thus they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love"(verses 4,5). The same was also said in this way, "I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war"(Psalms 120:7). The psalmist extended love to his enemies and expected to receive the same, but they accused him and rejected his love. So he fell back on prayer and sought God's help, and found it. His life turned into sweet-smelling incense going up before Him who dwells in the heavens, because he said, "But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works"(Psalms 73:28). "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"(Psalms 69:13).

9.2. Second: Invoking a Curse upon the Enemies (verses 6-20)

In these verses the psalmist asks God to treat the enemies like they wanted him to be treated. He foretold the evil that would snuff them out because they wanted him to drink of the bitter cup they intended for him. Truly "Evil shall slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous shall be condemned"(Psalms 34:21).

1. **A request to put the enemy to trial:** "Set a wicked man over him, and let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is judged, let him be found guilty, and let his prayer become sin"(verses 6,7). The psalmist asks the Lord to set against his enemy someone even more evil than the enemy himself, so that the punishment fits the offence. He also asks for an accuser to stand at his enemy's right hand and heap accusations against him, so that the accuser may disclose the enemy's offence and evil counsels. He prays that the prayer of the psalmist's enemy will not be accepted, because it is abhorrent to Lord. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight"(Proverbs 15:8).
2. **The enemy forfeits his office:** "Let his days be few, and let another take his office"(verse 9). This was exactly King Saul's lot when he set himself against David and sought to destroy him. He was destroyed instead and David seized the kingdom. This was also the fate of Judas the traitor whose office was taken up by another (Acts 1:20). Wishing that his days might be few may suggest a lack of blessing. The wicked may live long, but his fruits are bad and displeasing to the Lord.
3. **The enemy's family turn poor:** "Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children continually be vagabonds, and beg; let them seek their bread also from their de-solate places"(verses 9,10). Because the Lord shortens the span of the wicked one's life and brings him to an untimely death, his children become orphans and his wife

becomes a widow. They lose their provider and suffer want; they dwell in desolate places and desire bread. This will never happen to the righteous, who says, "I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread"(Psalms 37:25).

4. **The enemy goes bankrupt:** "Let the creditor seize all that he has, and let strangers plunder his labour"(verse 11). He sows much but harvests nothing. He pays silver but gets no bread. He labours but is never satisfied. He eats but does not get filled. He drinks but is not quenched. He clothes himself but is not warm. He earns wages but only to put them into a bag with holes (Isaiah 55:2; Haggai 1:6). His labour and toils go in vain. Blessing departs from him and everything he earns goes to the creditor and the strangers.
5. **The enemy's future is dark:** "Let there be none to extend mercy to him, nor let there be any to favour his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off, and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be repaired before the LORD, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be continually before the LORD, that He may cut off the memory of them from the earth"(verses 12-15). Parents eat sour grapes and their children's teeth are set on edge. Socially, the wicked people leave behind a bad memory. Economically, they bequeath their children debts. Physically, they pass their diseases on to their offspring. This certainly affects the future of their children who are blamed for their problems by their contemporaries. Even if a wicked person repents after years of wickedness and receives forgiveness from the Lord, people still reproach his children, because God forgets the transgressions of a penitent, but men repara them. The crucified thief repented and even entered paradise, but people must have continued to reproach his children and grandchildren because their father and grandfather was a thief who died nailed to a cross!
6. **Curse falls upon the enemy:** "Because he did not repara to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. As he loved cursing, so let it come to him; as he did not delight in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment, so let it enter his body like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be to him like the garment which covers him, and for a belt with which he girds himself continually"(verses 16-19). The Lord was gracious to this wicked person and extended mercy to him, but he did not show mercy to the poor beggar; he rather drove him away from his door and sent him with curses and painful words that crushed his heart so that he almost died. God blessed him with the blessing of the world, but the man loved cursing and turned to wickedness. So blessing went far from him. Cursing surrounded him like a garment he wore night and day, and entered his body like water that causes the curse and makes the belly swell and the thigh rot (Numbers 5:22). The curse permeated through his bones like oil, making them weak and brittle. Water and oil usually symbolize blessing, but this blessing turned into a curse for the wicked who drove away the poor. The Lord says to him, "Inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the

least of these, you did not do it to Me.... And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life"(Matthew 25:45,46).

7. **The judgment of the wicked:** "Let this be the Lord's reward to my accusers, and to those who speak evil against my person"(verse 20). The Lord is compassionate, righteous and extends mercy to all; He exerts longsuffering with the sinner to bring him to repentance. "The Lord is ... longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"(2 Peter 3:9). As to those who grow obstinate, they earn terrible wrath and judgment for themselves as the wages for their lack of repentance.

9.3. Third: The Reason for Invoking Divine Help

(verses 21-27)

This part starts with "But," which indicates a change of attitude and a different thought. The psalmist's soul was filled with the bitterness of self-pity because he repared the behaviour of the wicked towards himself. Then he turned his gaze toward the source of his help and strength. After reparaing the injustice of his enemies, he turned his face to God's constant mercy to ask for His protection: "Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? Unless the LORD had been my help, My soul would soon have settled in silence"(Psalms 94:16,17). The psalmist lists four reasons for soliciting God's help:

1. **For sake of the Lord's name:** "But You, O GOD the Lord, deal with me for Your name's sake"(verse 21a). When the Lord's light shone on the psalmist, carrying along His active grace, he stopped cursing his enemy, and hurried to the name of the LORD, the strong tower; to which the righteous run and are safe (Proverbs 18:10). The name describes the character. And the Lord's character is loving, powerful, holy and faithful. The believer, on the other hand, is weak. He knows that he does not deserve God's favour, so he takes shelter in the precious name by which he was called, and says, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth"(Psalms 115:1).
2. **Because of the declaration of the Lord's mercy:** "Because Your mercy is good, deliver me"(verse 21b). Man does not deserve deliverance, but God's good mercy delivers him any way. "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!"(Psalms 34:8). "If I say, 'My foot slips,' Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up"(Psalms 94:18).
3. **Because the psalmist is powerless:** "For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. I am gone like a shadow when it lengthens; I am shaken off like a locust. My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh is feeble from lack of fatness. I also have become a reproach to them; when they look at me, they shake their heads"(verses 22-25). The wicked drove away poor and needy people, and wanted to slay the broken in heart

(verse 16). Perhaps the psalmist was one of those, so he became like a shadow when it lengthens toward sunset and is ready to disappear. He started to shake as though locusts sapped his strength, or started to shake himself like a locust ready to fly away. Out of fear, he kept away from food, so his knees trembled and he lost weight. He became an object of ridicule to his enemies. This motivated him to seek God's help.

4. **To declare the Lord's power:** "Help me, O LORD my God! Oh, save me according to Your mercy, that they may know that this is Your hand; that You, LORD, have done it!"(verses 26,27). The Lord certainly will rush to his aid and deliver him. "This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles ... Many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD"(Psalms 34:6; 40:3). This is how the Lord declares to all that He is the Saviour of His people. Then they will repeat what the peoples of the earth said as He brought His people out of the land of bondage to a spacious land: "Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let such as love Your salvation say continually, `The LORD be magnified!'"(Psalms 40:16).

9.4. Fourth: The Divine Answer

(verses 28-31)

The psalmist concludes his psalm with listing three contrasts between what he was like and what he is now:

1. **A blessing after a curse:** "Let them curse, but You bless"(verse 28a). Will a curse afflict him whom the Lord has blessed? God said to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you"(Genesis 12:3). Balaam could not curse God's people because the Lord had already blessed them, saying, "You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed"(Numbers 22:12).
2. **Joy after shame:** "When they arise, let them be ashamed, but let Your servant rejoice"(verse 28b). How ashamed was the officer of Philippi's prison as he saw himself a prisoner of his own fear, while Paul and Silas were released in their freedom! This showed in his cry: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"(Acts 16:30). They, on the other hand, were praising and praying. Paul said to the Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice"(Philippians 4:4).
3. **Salvation after danger:** "Let my accusers be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own disgrace as with a mantle. I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yes, I will praise Him among the multitude. For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those who condemn him"(verses 29-31). The psalmist's enemies meant to do him harm, but the Lord meant their harm for good (Genesis 50:20). It was his enemies that were put to shame, while he was released to praise and thank God, because God saved him when he was nigh unto death. What a contrast between the wicked who stands as an accuser at his right hand (verse 6) and the

poor at whose right hand the Lord stands to help and rescue him!

9.5. Questions

1. Why did the Church consider Psalm 109 a Messianic psalm?
2. Meditating on verse 4 of this psalm, how can a believer give himself to prayer?

10. PSALM ONE HUNDRED AND TEN

Christ the Priest King

1 A Psalm of David. The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool."

2 The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!

3 Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power; in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth.

4 The LORD has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

5 The Lord is at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath.

6 He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill the places with dead bodies, He shall execute the heads of many countries.

7 He shall drink of the brook by the wayside; therefore He shall lift up the head.

This psalm is the most quoted psalm in the New Testament. Christ quoted it in Matthew 22:44 (cf. Mark 12:36 and Luke 20:42,43). Its content was also quoted in Matthew 26:64 when Christ said, "Hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power." On the Day of Pentecost, Peter quoted it in his sermon (Acts 2:34,35). Again it was quoted in Hebrews 1:13 to show that Christ is greater than the angels. The idea of Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father is repeated in Mark 16:19; Acts 5:31; 7:55; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2 and 1 Peter 3:22. The idea of His kingship and the submission of all things under His feet is repeated in 1 Corinthians 15:24-27; Hebrews 10:13 and 1 Peter 3:22. The idea of the superiority of His priesthood over that of the Levitical priesthood, and the fact that this priesthood is according to the order of Melchizedek, is repeated in Hebrews 5:5-7; 6:20 and 7:17-19. The descriptions mentioned in this psalm can only apply to Christ. He alone is David's Lord; He alone is raised on the right hand of God; He alone will rule over His enemies forever; He alone combined both kingship and priesthood. God the Father has raised up Christ after people had rejected him. Peter and the apostles said to the Jews in that respect, "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of

sins"(Acts 5:31). And no wonder, since He is the One who offered Himself as an acceptable atoning sacrifice: "After He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool"(Hebrews 10:12,13). He sat at the right hand of the Father because He is the perfect intercessor and is in no need for someone else to intercede for Him, for it is He "who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us"(Romans 8:34). Christ quoted the first verse of this psalm to prove that He was the Messiah. It says, "The LORD said to my Lord, `Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"This took place in the week before His crucifixion after the elders of Jews asked him four questions:

1. **They asked Him a personal question:**When He cleansed the temple from sellers and money-changers, they asked Him, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"His answer was that John the Baptist, whom the Jews received as a prophet, testified to Christ's heavenly authority (Matthew 21:23-27).
2. **They asked Him a political question:** "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"He answered them that taxes must be paid, because we must render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. We must perform both our civil and spiritual duties (Matthew 22:17-21).
3. **They asked Him a doctrinal question:**They asked about a woman who married seven times. Her seven husbands died, and last of all the woman died also. Then whose wife of the seven will she be in the resurrection? He answered them that in the resurrection people neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. His questioners were Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection. So Christ confirmed to them that the resurrection was true, because God says He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Matthew 22:23-33).
4. **They asked Him a spiritual question:**Which commandment is the greatest in the Law? He answered, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself"(Matthew 22:34-40).

After answering their four questions, He addressed this question to them: "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?"They answered Him, "The Son of David"(Matthew 22:42). This is what the prophecies of the Old Testament say. Quoting the opening of Psalm 110, He asked them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him `Lord,' saying: `The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"'? If David then calls Him `Lord,' how is He his Son?"The Jews kept silent and could not answer Him, because the only answer was that Christ our Lord is the Son of David in the flesh, and at the same time the Lord of David in the Spirit.

Christ's question confirms that the Psalms are written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as it explains, too, that the content of Psalm 110 does not apply to a king, priest or prophet of human origin. Its object is the Messiah, the awaited Saviour who is to come from heaven, and therefore He is far greater than David. The king of the Jews used to come from the tribe of Judah, from the lineage of David, whereas their priests came from the tribe of Levi and from the lineage of Aaron. The way the elders of the Jews refrained from answering Christ's question tells us beyond doubt that this is the true exegesis of the psalm, which was commonly accepted by all the congregations of the Jews.

Christ used to drive his audience to search the Holy Scriptures, for He once said to them, "Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me"(John 5:39). This is advice to all of us to study the Scriptures for ourselves, to ask the One who inspired them to explain their meanings and reveal their hidden treasures to us. Today, we can say with assurance that Christ, who became incarnate as man and was born of the Virgin Mary is the Son of David according to the flesh, but at the same time the Word of God according to the Spirit. Whatever prophecies about Jesus' divinity and the triune nature of God that occurred in the Old Testament were concealed at first, but they were later revealed in the New Testament.

Christ said, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."For that reason the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God (John 5:17,18). Christ also said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."So the Jews wanted to stone Him because He called Himself "I AM", the name of the ever-existent God (John 8:58,59). But when He made Himself equal with God, He was not usurping something that was not His (Philippians 2:6). "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh"(1 Timothy 3:16). It was said, "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power. which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church... 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"(Ephesians 1:19-22; Ephesians 4:8-10). "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"(Hebrews 4:14-16). "Who 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). All this means that the LORD told my Lord after He had completed the work of redemption to sit at His right hand, at the position of authority. Then, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"(Philippians 2:10,11).

The psalm contains the following:

- First: Christ the King (verses 1-3)
- Second: Christ the Priest (verses 4-7)

10.1. First: Christ the King

(verses 1-3)

1. **The declaration of Christ's kingdom:** "The LORD said to my Lord"(verse 1a). At the opening of the psalm David de-claims, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that there is a dia-logue running among the three divine Persons within the Holy Trinity. This is not surprising, for indeed "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"(John 1:1). David says that Christ the King is his Lord, hence the LORD asks his Lord, the Messiah, who is the Word and Anointed of the LORD, to sit at His right hand. Now we have heard God say in Psalm 2, "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, `You are My Son, today I have begotten You'... Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him"(Psalms 2:7,12). Joshua expressed the same to the commander of the army of the LORD when he came to him. "Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, `What does my Lord say to His servant?' He answered him, `Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy'"(Joshua 5:14,15). So let us have sensitive ears like Samuel who said when called by the Lord, "Speak, for Your servant hears"(1 Samuel 3:10). Let us obey what the Virgin Mary said to the guests at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, "Whatever He says to you, do it"(John 2:5). Let us join Saul of Tarsus in saying to Christ, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"(Acts 9:6). May our hearts be filled with trust in the Lord King whenever buffeted by the storms and waves of life, for the Lord King will come to us to calm us down. He will subject the waves under His feet, as He had already come for His disciples when He walked on the waves of the Sea of Galilee, which was ready to swallow them up. He calmed it down and rescue them (Mark 6:45-53).
2. **The eminence of Christ's kingdom:** "Sit at My right hand"(verse 1b). Sitting at the right hand signifies an honourable and great position, as well as the completion of work. The Lord sent Christ, His Word, into our world to fulfil the work of redemption, and having completed it, He said, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which

You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was"(John 17:4,5). Thus He earned the right to sit at the right hand of majesty in the highest, and God also highly exalted Him and gave Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth (Philippians 2:9,10). The equality between "LORD"and "my Lord" is fully apparent in the Gospel. The Messiah is greater than David for David calls Him "my Lord". David did not ascend to heaven, but Christ was received up into heaven (Mark 16:19). He is also greater than the angels, for God never said to any of the angels, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"(Hebrews 1:13). The LORD and my Lord are on one throne, for Christ said, "I and My Father are one"(John 10:30). Only one is equal to the Father in substance, true God of true God, light of light. Apostle Peter said of Him on the Day of Pentecost, "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: `The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ"(Acts 2:32-36). The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, on My own throne, equal to Me, after You have completed the work of redemption."He could have never asked a created human being, however holy, influential or knowledgeable of the secrets of the heavens, to sit at the right hand of the LORD. The right hand is the place of authority, and humans are created of dust.

3. The triumph of Christ's kingdom (verses 1c,2):

- 1. The submission of the enemies to Christ:** "Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"(verse 1c). It is rather strange that there is continued resistance to Christ the King, described in Psalm 2 in terms of the kings and rulers of the earth conspiring together against Him. But the Father says to Him, "Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession"(Psalms 2:7,8). "For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet"(1 Corinthians 15:25). The Book of Revelation describes this battle by saying about the enemies of Christ, "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen and faithful"(Revelation 17:14). The enemies must be made His footstool, a sign of abject defeat, as it was said in Revelation: "He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of God... Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron"(Revelation 19:13,15). But we do not see everything under Christ's feet yet, because the end has not yet come. This time of grace is a chance for those who are far away to repent, and for those who are in

- rebellion to submit, because "the riches of God's goodness, forbearance and longsuffering may lead some to repentance"(Romans 2:4).
2. **The authority of Christ the Lord:** "The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion"(verse 2a). The rod of strength is the sceptre of dominion that embodies authority and power, to protect His subjects, and to punish the rebels. "He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore"(Isaiah 2:4). The Lord sent the rod of His strength and grace out of Jerusalem, when He commanded His disciples not to depart from it until they have received the Holy Spirit, and be invested with power; and become witnesses to Him in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:4-8). This did happen on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Christ's sceptre reminds us of Moses' rod, which split open the Red Sea to make way for the people to cross over, and made water gush out from the rock (Exodus 14:21; 17:5). It is Christ who makes way for His people through the sea and fills them with the river of His blessings. Christ's sceptre also reminds us of the rod of Aaron, which sprouted and put forth buds (Numbers 17:8). Christ, the Word of God, was incarnated and came to us in the form of a man, but those who only looked on the surface did not believe Him, and He was in their eyes like Aaron's dry rod. They were the ones "whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them"(2 Corinthians 4:4). But those who came close to Him and to whom God gave the insight to believe in Him, they saw Him as Saviour and Redeemer. His character and teachings proved to them that He is the Word of God who carried all God's authority. Christ's sceptre reminds us also of the golden sceptre which King Ahasuerus held out to Esther so that she could have access to his royal presence. Christ possesses of the sceptre of power and grace, who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"(John 14:6). Thus He opened for us the door leading to the mercy-seat, and to heaven. "He holds the key of David. What He opens no one can shut, and what He shuts no one can open"(Revelation 3:7). He is the One holding the triumphant, royal authority.
 3. **The authority of Christ the Lord:** "Rule in the midst of Your enemies!"(verse 2b). Perhaps these are the words of the LORD to my Lord, or the words of the people to my Lord, or words of prayer from the psalmist himself to my Lord. They carry a promise of renewing victory. Although the enemies surround him, yet he must assume power and rule, and pluck the fruit of his triumph. Although His enemies are there, victory is still Christ's because He went out conquering and to conquer.
 4. **The army of Christ the King (verse 3):**
 1. **An army of holy volunteers:** "Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your

power; in the beauties of holiness"(verse 3a). Christ will win His battle in the day of His power through his volunteers who are adorned with holiness, who are neither forced nor coerced by anyone to join Him in His holy war against the devil. The Spirit of God works in them as He worked in the children of Israel making them enlist in Deborah and Barak's army, who sang on their behalf, "When leaders lead in Israel, when the people willingly offer themselves, bless the LORD!"(Judges 5:2). And in such a manner the Spirit of God worked in Isaiah, who heard a general divine call crying, "'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me'"(Isaiah 6:8). And thus did Paul when he said to the Philippians, "Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all"(Philippians 2:17). And this is also what Scriptures require of us: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service... not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord"(Romans 12:1,11). So let us obey the apostolic admonition: "Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... take up the whole armour of God... And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"(Ephesians 6:11-17). May the Lord be the obeyed Master of our lives, the worshiped Lord of our families, and our leader in every work He assigns to us.

2. **A deployed army of heavenly beings:** "From the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth"(verse 3). The womb of the morning is the most beautiful hour of daytime, when light is born as an indication of the end of the night and the dispersion of darkness. Christ said, "I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness"(John 12:46). The people of God are the children of light, born again of the Holy Spirit, like the dew that falls down at dawn, meriting to be admired by these words: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ... It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing; life forevermore"(Psalms 133:1,3). The Lord has sent out the sceptre of His power, which is the gospel of salvation, which has brought life and immortality to light. Believers came to enlist in the army of the Lord, many of whom were young. This large number of young people were like the refreshing dew of the morning, which spread from heaven in abundance and quietness at dawn and quenched the thirst of souls craving for the word of God and His salvation, and released the prisoners of Satan from the bonds of their sins. They rush out to volunteer as soon as they hear the divine call, deploy to fight the Lord's battle against his evil enemies, taking them captive into His obedience, making light of adversities and death for they did not love their lives to the death (Judges 5:18; Revelation 12:11). O, you pure believers, who have been born of heaven at dawn, water the earth all around you!

You are a blessed army to the Lord, so deploy, fan out as holy volunteers to offer the world Christ's salvation and blessing! You are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light"(1 Peter 2:9).

10.2. Second: Christ the Priest

(verses 4-7)

A priest is someone who tells God about people, and tells people about God. He announces God's words to the people, and intercedes for them with God. Christ, the Word of God, is both the Word and the Speaker. He is the Message and the Messenger. He is the Prophet and the object of prophecy. In Christ, the Word, we get to know God in His fullness, for He said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father"(John 14:9). Since time immemorial, God revealed Himself in nature, which declares His glory, and the firmament, which shows His handiwork (Psalms 19:1), and by the prophets, at various times and in various ways (Hebrews 1:1). His full revelation of Himself, however, is in His Word, who came to us born of His Spirit in Bethlehem. He is the way, the truth and the life. This "Word" is the only mediator between God and man, because He is perfect, flawless and needs no intercessor Himself. He paid off our debts and took our place.

1. **The eminence of Christ's priesthood:** "The LORD has sworn and will not relent, `You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'"(verse 4). Christ's eminent priestly status is made known because it is declared by a divine oath. God has declared Christ's kingship by a word from Himself that carries His authority: "The LORD said to my Lord." But He declared Christ's priesthood by an oath: "The LORD has sworn and will not relent." "For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show... the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath"(Hebrews 6:16,17). Scriptures compare the priesthood of the tribe of Levi and that of Christ as follows: "For they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: `The LORD has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek,"' by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant"(Hebrews 7:21,22).

There were two priestly orders; one of Aaron, which is simple priesthood, and another of Melchizedek, which comprises both priesthood and kingship. In this psalm we see a revelation of the eminence of Christ's order- it is of the order of Melchizedek, not that of Aaron. The story of Melchizedek is found in Genesis 14:18-20. He was a king with a Semitic name meaning "king of righteousness". He was the king of Salem, i.e. Jerusalem, which means "City of Peace", as well as being a priest to the Most High. He offered Abraham bread and wine for food and blessed him, so Abraham gave him the tithes to support him. This should mean that Melchizedek must be greater than Abraham, because

he blessed Abraham. Melchizedek was not a Hebrew, but a keeper of God's old law while living among the heathens. Therefore he preceded Abraham and the priests that came after him. Melchizedek represents Christ; both were kings and priests at the same time, and neither of them was of the tribe of Levi. Their priesthood does not have a known beginning or end, for Christ has "neither beginning of days nor end of life"(Hebrews 7:3). Both of them reign with righteousness and peace. Christ is righteous within Himself and He makes righteous all those who believe in Him, so much so that they say, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"(Romans 5:1). Christ is the King of peace who said, "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... and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"(John 14:27; Philippians 4:7). He is the peaceful King who does not fight, but does good. When the Pharisees conspired against Him to kill Him, "Jesus knew it,... withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. Yet He warned them not to make Him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: `Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory; and in His name Gentiles will trust'"(Matthew 12:14-21). Christ's priesthood towered above Levi's due to its permanence, for His priesthood endures forever, according to the order of Melchizedek: "Since He always lives to make intercession for them"(Hebrews 7:25). This contrasts with Levi's priesthood, which ended in death. So the children of Israel had to appoint a new high priest when the old one died. In view of Aaron and his descendants' sinful nature, the high priest of the order of Aaron was required to enter into the holy of holies carrying blood to atone for himself first. If the Lord was pleased with him, he would return and enter again with blood to atone for the sins of the people. Christ, however, entered the holy of holies not with blood to atone for Himself, because He did not need to offer a sacrifice for Himself, but with His own blood for others. The high priest of the order of Aaron used to offer the sacrifice to the Most Holy once every year, but Christ offered one sacrifice, and obtained eternal redemption. On the basis of this redemption, He is the guarantor of a better covenant.

- 2. The victory of Christ's priesthood:** "The Lord is at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill the places with dead bodies, He shall execute the heads of many countries"(verses 5,6). What does the Lord do to him who rejects Christ and His kingdom? And what is the result of hardness of the heart that rejects God's salvation? It is the terrible judgment on the last day. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son

into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil"(John 3:16-19). Speaking of judgment may sound harsh and cruel, but we must be aware of the seriousness of the divine laws: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap"(Galatians 6:7). Those wicked ones sowed darkness, and now they reap eternal destruction and judgment. True, God is a loving God, but at the same time He is a just God.

- 3. The exaltedness of Christ's priesthood:** "He shall drink of the brook by the wayside; therefore He shall lift up the head"(verse 7). Perhaps Christ was meant as the one who shall drink of the brook and lift up His head in victory, or it may be the army of Christ. But Christ's victory is actually the victory of His army. When the rains of divine blessing inundate our land, the rivers will fill with water to fill and refresh God's people.

Perhaps the psalmist thought back to the judge Gideon and his victorious army. An army of thirty-two thousand soldiers rallied to him and ten thousand remained behind. So the Lord said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me... lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' Now therefore, proclaim..., 'Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart...' And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained. But the LORD said to Gideon, 'The people are still too many; bring them down to the water... Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink.' And the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men... Then the LORD said to Gideon, 'By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand'"(Judges 7:2-7). And it was so. Those who drank of the brook by the wayside won the victory, and lifted up their heads in triumph. The brook never impeded their march; it rather urged them on.

Or perhaps the psalmist meant that the victorious army of Christ rests to drink and recover strength, then carries on the march of their spiritual war against the powers of evil. For the Lord calls them, "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters"(Isaiah 55:1). Christ said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive"(John 7:37-39).

The Holy Spirit fell upon the followers of Christ on the Day of Pentecost, giving them strength to overcome their fears and weak-nesses, and they became witnesses to Christ in Jerusalem, in Judea and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). The people of Christ still

drink their fill of His Holy Spirit as He fills them. They drink their fill of the justice of their cause, as well as God's favour upon them, God's blessings and faithfulness and their own victories. So they say, "How precious is Your loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures"(Psalms 36:7,8).

So let us drink of the brook of God's bliss and call others to drink their fill with us, so that we may lift up our triumphant heads with the salvation of the Lord, until we accomplish the final victory that is described by Revelation: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb ... the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever"(Revelation 22:1-5).

10.3. Questions

1. What is the difference between the priestly order of Aaron and that of Melchizedek?
2. What is the meaning of verse 7 of this psalm, which says, "He shall drink of the brook by the wayside; therefore He shall lift up the head"?

11. Quiz

There are two questions at the end of each chapter. You are invited to write and send us the answers to them. If you answer 15 of these questions correctly we will send you a book as a prize. Or you may join our Bible school by correspondence and work toward a certificate.

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