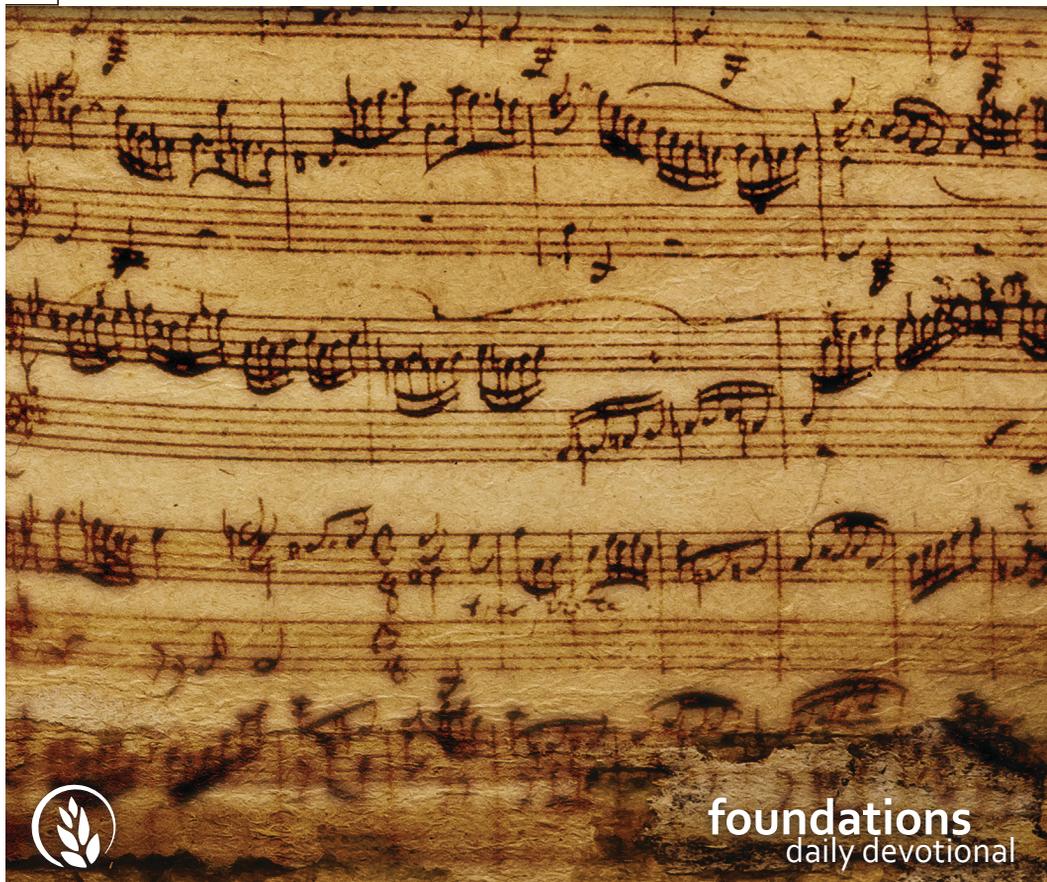


SOUTHLAND CHURCH

BOOKS III & IV OF
PSALMS

Psalms 73-106

16 Day Devotional



foundations
daily devotional

SOUTHLAND CHURCH

BOOKS III & IV OF
PSALMS

Psalms 73-106

16 Day Devotional

foundations
daily devotional

DAY 1**INTRODUCTION**

The Book of Psalms is divided into five smaller books. In this Foundations booklet we will be making our way through Books III and IV. Throughout these books there are a few themes. The first is that of sovereignty. We will be reminded of God as Creator and the way His hand is in every aspect of life.

Another theme paramount in these chapters is that of Remembrance. Over and over we will read the history of God's people and we will observe psalmists reciting the many things God has done, all for the purposes of reminding ourselves and others of God's power, goodness, and faithful, unending love. The Psalms use remembering as a method to bring us perspective when times are hard. The psalmists also communicate to us the importance of passing on the stories of God's faithfulness in our lives. We will be challenged to share our stories so the future generations will know of God and His great love and faithfulness.

Thankfulness is another huge component of this portion of Scripture. As we remember what God has done, we, along with the psalmists, will be moved to thankfulness. Many of the psalms actually are songs of thanks.

God's immense and everlasting love is the over-arching theme of all these psalms. When the psalmists questions, why the wicked prosper and the godly suffer, he directs our eyes to God's eternal love and justice for the answer. So many times we will read of God's wrath, punishment and justice but we will also see that God's motivation for all this is actually His love for people. Even in the darkest day, in the midst of suffering, in the midst of discipline and punishment, God's love overflows toward us. We see God's tender heart relenting as people beg Him for answers. We watch as He changes His mind about something because one of His beloved people asked Him to. If ever there was a part of Scripture that revealed both God's soft side amidst the tragedy and heartaches of life, it would be this set of psalms. Love is clearly God's number one motivator for all He does.

Engaging with God through Books III and IV of The Psalms will stretch us as we are challenged to grapple with God's control over every aspect of our lives. In order to be more equipped to face our current difficulties, we'll be encouraged to bring to the forefront of our minds all God has done. Sharing our testimonies and displaying God's glory in our lives will become a practical way to worship God. From all this grows a deeper heart of thanks and praise for all He has done, is doing and will continue to do. Responding to His love, whether in thanks or quick repentance, will be a much easier thing to do.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Which of the themes of this set of Psalms has the Lord recently been speaking to your heart about? (Sovereignty, Remembrance, Thankfulness, Love) Ask the Lord what theme He really wants to grow in you as you do this study. Write that down and ask Him to give you a teachable heart during this season.
2. What burden or difficulty are you experiencing right now? Ask God to show you if you really believe He is powerful enough to take care of the situation. Ask Him to bring to mind the many ways he has been faithful in the past so you can have hope for this situation as well. Take some time to thank Him for His intimate involvement in this specific situation.
3. Ask the Lord to allow you to experience His love for you right now. What does Jesus want to say to you about how much He loves you? Ask Him to give you word, thought or picture about how long His love for you will last. Bask in His love and worship Him.

BOOK III: Psalms 73-89**DAY 2** **READ:** Psalms 73-74

In Psalm 73:1 we see the psalmist's belief system: "Truly God is good to Israel, to those whose hearts are pure." Given this, it would make sense that those whose hearts are **not** pure don't receive God's goodness toward them. How many of us share that belief? We believe it, but like the Psalmist Asaph, we get thrown for a loop when we see the wicked and arrogant prospering. They are healthy, and wealthy, and have no problems! Not only do they not love God in their hearts, they actually blaspheme Him and His name, and blatantly and publicly promote sin. Yet, they keep getting richer and richer, and their punishment never seems to come.

Asaph says it's just not fair! He kept himself pure and innocent on purpose. Yet God gives him struggle and pain, grief and heartache. How does this make sense when we believe God is good to those whose hearts are pure? It *feels* so opposite. God's goodness feels like a burden, not like we think goodness *should* feel. Verse 16-17 clears this up.

When Asaph spent time in God's presence it finally all made sense. He got a vision of the final destiny of the wicked. God's goodness cannot be measured only within our time and space. It must include eternity. We only measure according to what happens in this life if we don't truly believe in eternity. When we, like Asaph, get into God's presence and let Him speak to us regarding heaven, hell and His love and holiness, we see how blessed we are to struggle and have pain in this world. This suffering develops our longing for God. Like he says in verse 18, their pain-free existence is actually a slippery slope to ruin. Oh, that we would keep this perspective clear in our hearts and minds: Eternity is real.

In Psalm 74 a heart of pain is revealed again. It is so difficult for Asaph to understand why God would allow the ruination and destruction He did. God allowed even His places of worship to be destroyed. He asks God (vs 10-11) why He holds back from punishing them because it makes no sense. God is allowing the wicked nations to make fun of Him and make Him look weak. It's not right when the wicked seem to come out on top and God seems to lose!

The answer comes through remembering. Asaph declares his allegiance to God's Kingship. He then proceeds to recount all the amazing things God has done. Through memory he relives the powerful and mighty events of creation. This practice of remembering God's powerful acts of the past give Asaph – and us – understanding, faith and hope.

These psalms give us two distinct tools to handle the frustration and lack of understanding we have concerning the prosperity of the wicked. One is by looking at the past to remember His sovereignty. The other is to look into eternity to see the final chapter. Both aspects are necessary to acquiring the hope we need to live today.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask the Lord to remind you of times when you have felt like Asaph; when you have felt like you suffer so much, yet the non-Christians get off easy. You will likely remember specific people. Ask God to give you His eternal perspective on the situation and to give you a deep and abiding eternal perspective regarding others you meet who might challenge this newfound hope.
2. Ask the Lord to reveal to you if you have recognized the struggles, losses, challenges, and heartaches, as invitations to draw near to Him or if you have wallowed in the

suffering. If necessary, confess any sin. Ask God to give you a heart that is quick to run to Him with thanksgiving at every opportunity, even the difficult ones, because you trust Him to be refining and preparing you for eternity.

3. Spend several minutes writing down some of the amazing things God has done. They could be things in creation or in your own life. Try to make it as personal as possible. Then spend time in thanksgiving for His power and activity in your life.

DAY 3 **READ:** Psalms 75-77

Chapter 75 is a psalm in which we see the sovereignty of God displayed. Sovereignty means supreme authority. It also can mean the ability to self-govern without any outside influence. We see both of those displayed in this psalm. In the second verse we see God establishing Himself as the One who not only judges the world, but also the One who sets the time when He will do it. He is the judge of everyone. It is God alone who raises people up or lowers them. No one can raise himself or herself up unless God has first ordained it. Verses 4, 5 and 10 speak about the 'horn' in some versions. The horn represents strength and power. From this psalm of God's sovereignty we see that God alone gives or removes strength and power.

Psalm 76 is a song praising God for His victory in war. The first few verses demonstrate the very practical power God displayed for the Israelites. He broke the flashing arrows, the sword and other weapons of war. The flashing arrows were likely arrows ignited on fire. God physically stopped them, and in doing so, protected His people from destruction.

We have seen the word *Selah* in previous psalms, but it's the first time in Book III. The word has a mysterious meaning, however, it is thought to mean 'to pause, or to rest, or to wait'. It is fitting in this particular place in the psalm that we, along with the Jews, pause to think about this incredible miracle. God's power protected them. When they were in danger of losing their lives, their autonomy, their ability to live in peace, their families, their everything... God stepped in and literally stopped the arrows. Broke the weapons being used against them. Broke the swords. And saved His people. The Psalmist, by saying *Selah*, is inviting us to pause and reflect on the wonder of this miracle.

Psalm 77 is again a song in which the Psalmist is crying out to God with pain. He feels like God hasn't heard him. He's awake at night, losing sleep and feeling like God just isn't paying attention. He's at the end of his rope. He questions over and over again whether or not God has forgotten him, or if His power has failed. Then... ! Then the psalmist says in verse 10 he is going to purposely remember the amazing things God has done in the past. He is going to think about and ponder the history of miracles God has done for His people. Going all the way back to the time when Moses and Aaron led the Israelites out of Egypt, the psalmist sets His focus on the enduring power and faithfulness of God.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Do you know and believe God is sovereign? Ask the Lord to speak to you regarding His sovereignty. Write down what He says. Ask Him specifically if there is something He has raised you to, or lowered you from, that you are blaming others or yourself for instead of allowing God to show you why He allowed or did what He did. Take a few moments to thank Him for His hand in your life.
2. Spend a few moments remembering the things God has done in your life and the lives of those who have gone before you. Ask Him to remind you of the mighty things He

has done on your behalf. Write down the list as it comes to mind. Consider putting this in a special journal where you can add to it as you think of them and as God continues to do them.

3. Spend a few minutes praying for a significant need you have (or that someone else has) with the fresh reminder of God's faithful acts in your life and on your behalf.

DAY 4

 **READ:** Psalms 78

Psalm 78 is a charge to parents and God-fearing people for all generations. In verse one and two the psalmist urges the reader (or listener) to pay very close attention. He announces he's about to tell stories and it's time to pass these stories on. These stories are about the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord – not just any old story. The instruction is clear, and plain, and very, very forceful: We **must** tell the stories of what God has done in our lives to our children and our children's children. How will they know of our God and His strength, His love and His forgiveness if we don't tell them? Verse 7 gives us the full purpose of telling these stories: so they would put their trust in God and not forget what He has done and obey Him. The other side of this is to ensure they don't become like those who have walked away from God in stubbornness and rebellion.

Unlike our culture that puts such a heavy emphasis on Pinterest-perfect lives and revealing the beautiful things while hiding the messy parts of life, Asaph, the Psalmist, begins by telling the stories of the failure of the people. In verse 10 he starts out by saying "they did not keep God's covenant". Then he continues with the history of his people who sinned against God time after time after time, while God continued to be faithful. Not only did God continue in faithfulness, He also saved them with miracle after miracle. He responded to their grumbling and complaining with blessing upon blessing. The psalmist also tells how God got angry with their rebelling, grumbling and complaining. He tells stories of God's supernatural provision and the people's calloused responses to His out-pouring of love, kindness and forgiveness.

Verse 32 must be one of the saddest verses in all of the Bible. It explains how, in spite of all God did for them, in spite of His miraculous wonders, they kept on sinning. Not exactly Pinterest-perfect! This is why they ended up in even more desperate situations. He allowed them to be killed in war. Celebrations stopped. The ark went into captivity. It was as if God Himself was turning His face away.

Then God, who cannot stay away long from those He loves, rose up again and began to pour out His power and show His might again for His people. Eventually, God chose a line of people – the clan of Judah – through whom came King David and through whom eventually would come the final salvation. This is why we must not let our children forget. Not our children, and not the children in the generations to come.

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Do your children, or parents, or siblings, or best friends know your testimony? Do they only know the 'good' parts or do they also know the parts that required a Saviour? Take a few minutes to write down the names of those people close to you who may not know your story of the things God has done for you, in you and in spite of you.
2. Considering our culture prides itself on Pinterest-perfect or Facebook-worthy, airbrushed, photo-shopped, filtered images that supposedly give a peek into our lives, ask the Lord if you have ever been, or are currently, guilty of presenting your sin, and

real-life issues to God in a 'touched-up' version. Ask the Lord if there is anything in your life, including past (forgiven) sin you are hiding out of shame, instead of sharing God's glory and story through it. Confess as necessary. Spend a few minutes in pure, unfiltered confession to the Lord.

3. Write down a short (few sentences to a paragraph, or do it point-form if that's easier) testimony of an area God has given you freedom in, or a miracle He has performed on your behalf. Remember to include your desperate need, and God's incredible action toward you because of His love. Ask the Lord for the words to write, and when it's done, ask Him who you should share it with today. (The names may come from #1.)

DAY 5

 **READ:** Psalms 79-81

Psalm 79 is a plea for mercy and help from God. The nation of Israel is again in a desperate situation and they are crying out to the Lord for assistance. Verse 9 begins an interesting twist to the plea for help. Up until this point the cry for help has been about them. Now, however, they are calling on God to save them, not because of His love for them, but to save His own reputation! God has changed His mind based on this kind of reasoning before (Exodus 32:11-14). It is important to God that both His people **and** those who don't follow Him understand both His love and His wrath. He wants people to know He is holy and won't stand for sin even for a moment. But He also wants people to see that He extends special blessing, covering, and deliverance for those who follow Him. This is what the Psalmist is speaking to in this Psalm. Finally, the psalm ends with a commitment to praise Him forever and to tell this story from generation to generation so His glory will be known in the years yet to come.

Verse 3, 7 and 19 of Psalm 80 are essentially the same verse. This is noteworthy. In the days these psalms were written, repeated words were not actually written down unless they held significant meaning. It was too costly, and took too much time to write out something that had already been said. So why is this so important? It is a prayer of deep humility. We know from other Scripture (Psalm 18:27, 138:6 for example) that God rescues the humble. These verses demonstrate that humility. First they are asking for restoration. One cannot be restored unless one has left or been taken away. So to ask for restoration is an admission that they have left the safety of God's ways. They've lived in rebellion and need to be brought back. Secondly, this verse asks for God's favour. When the psalmist asks for God's face to shine on them the deepest request here is that God would look on them without the marring of their sin. This is another way to say, please forgive us. The third demonstration of humility is the truth stated regarding their salvation. There is clear recognition that unless God is the One who gives favour, there will be no salvation. It is not something they can do in their power. They must, and do, rely on God for it.

Psalm 81 is a song of praise. This song recounts the wondrous things God did for them in the desert trek from Egypt to the Promised Land. This song is a call to celebration and remembrance. The whole purpose of the celebration is the list of things God has done for them. Many times in our celebrations we conveniently 'omit' the not-so-good parts of our history or testimony. This song makes it quite clear in verse 11 and 12 that not only were they rebellious and unsubmitive, but that God dealt with them quite severely. It is noteworthy that this admission of guilt comes in the midst of a song of celebration. The very thing that might make us cringe, and that might humiliate the Israelites, is the very thing we celebrate: A God who wants to bless and pours out His love and forgiveness even to a people with such rebellious hearts. Is that not a fantastic reason to celebrate?!


JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Lord if you live your life in such a way that other people can see His work and do they actually know what He's doing in your life (miracles, discipline, testing, blessing, etc.)? Ask the Lord if the way you live your life (the words you speak, attitudes you have, and actions you carry out) improve God's reputation in the world around you or detract from it. Confess if necessary. Pray a commitment to increase His reputation with His help.
2. Ask the Lord to bring to mind a sin you have committed this week, or an habitual sin you may need to confess. Using the structure of Psalm 80:3, 7, and 19, pray a prayer of confession and repentance, humbling yourself again before the Lord.
3. When was the last time you personally celebrated the wonderful deeds of the Lord in your life? Take a few moments now to thank Him. Consider planning a special time with friends or family, to have a celebration for the things the Lord has done. Use this as a time to celebrate, build relationships, and acknowledge the Lord in all things. Ask the Lord for steps and ideas on planning this small but special event.

DAY 6

READ: Psalms 82-84

Many songs have been written based on Psalm 84. This song oscillates between singing about being in heaven, in the actual presence of the Lord, and being in His presence while we're still here on earth.

In Psalm 84:2 the psalmist expresses his soul-deep longing to be in the presence of God. His yearning for God is so strong he feels it physically. He begins the chapter by calling the dwelling place of God 'lovely'. Yet as we read through the chapter we see what lovely really means. The original word is used in every other place to mean 'beloved'. This is the only verse where it is translated 'lovely'. When we read 'lovely' we think pretty, or serene. However, the depth of meaning we often miss due to translation could steer us away from the full sense of the passage. This verse is not saying "heaven is very pretty that's why I want to go there". Rather, it is saying, "the dwelling place of God is as significant to me as that of one I love very, very dearly". This is why his longing is so deep. It's as a lover who has been torn away from his first love. His heart beats for the presence of God.

As we read through this psalm we see verse upon verse recounting the incredible blessings of those who spend time in God's presence. They also are constantly praising God. How can you not? There is safety (vs. 3), and strength (vs. 5), and refreshing (vs. 6). As a matter of fact, verse 7 talks about going from strength to strength.

In this generation's church culture we often talk about 'mountain top experiences'. We tend to believe those are reserved for retreats, special experiences, etc. Yet, this passage talks about going from strength to strength. No valleys! And who is it that gets to live from strength to strength? It's those who live in the presence of God and who spend time praising Him. So how is it that they go from strength to strength? Besides the obvious reason that God gives them success after success, there is another very powerful reason: they spend time in God's presence.

When we are truly in the presence of the Lord, and when we are truly taking account of all He has done so we can praise Him, we can't help but go from strength to strength. In light of God's greatness and goodness even my worst situation can become our strength because we see God's hand at work.

The value the psalmist places on time with God is so great he easily says one day as a measly grounds servant (a lowly position) would be better than a thousand days spent anywhere else. Anywhere! It is evident this psalmist has tasted of the Lord and determined that indeed, God is still the best choice ever.


JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Lord to reveal to your heart whether or not you truly long for heaven and the presence of God. The Psalmist longs for the presence of God so much he feels it physically. Ask the Lord what "symptoms" you have that show you are yearning for heaven. Then ask Him to grow that desire to spend time with Him in His presence every single day so your longing for heaven will grow even deeper and stronger.
2. Think back to a time when you were in a very distressing situation and after spending time in God's presence the very difficulty you were in became a powerfully life-changing experience – a mountain top moment in the midst of the valley. Thank God for being your strength during that time. Make a commitment to spend more time in His presence and to be deliberate about living in His strength every day, all day.
3. Ask the Lord what stands in the way of your time with Him. The Psalmist would rather be in the presence of God than anywhere else. Some of us would rather be in bed or playing golf or even at work! Let the Holy Spirit reveal to you what needs to happen in order to develop that deep longing to be in the Presence of the Lord. Write down what the Holy Spirit tells you.

DAY 7

READ: Psalms 85-87

Psalm 85 is a beautiful prayer both for the nation of Israel and our nation today. The prayer begins with acknowledgement of all God has done for His people: showed them favour and poured out forgiveness in abundance over them. Then it becomes a prayer of confession and calling out to God for restoration. They recognize their loss and distance from God. They feel His displeasure and want to feel His love again. They are ready to obey again. Verses 10-11 remind us how amazing it feels to be in right relationship with God again.

This psalm is also a great prayer for us today as we pray for the nation God has placed us in. We cry out with the psalmist for forgiveness for the sins our nation has committed in the past and still does today. Along with verse 7 we pray asking God to pour out His love and salvation over our nation. As He people we commit ourselves to Him to achieve His purposes within our country. God is calling us (vs. 13) to return to righteousness. Our prayer for both Israel and our own country is verse 12: Lord, please give us what is good so our land will again yield a spiritual harvest!

Psalm 86 could be a personal life prayer for just about anyone, not just the psalmist. "Hear, O Lord, and answer me." How many times do we cry out wondering if God will just hear and not answer, just like the psalmist? We know the psalmist is devoted and has committed His life – not just the good times or just the bad times. The psalmist, like us, cries out for mercy. However, in verse 4 he asks for joy. The forgiveness is good, but the psalmist wants to move past the heaviness, past the hard stuff into joy. Verses 8-10 are full of worship, reminders of the greatness of God. And after all this, our devoted psalmist still and again submits himself to the leading and teaching of the Holy Spirit. He humbles himself by asking the Lord to teach him and give him an even more undivided heart. So many times when we are doing well, just like the psalmist has been, there is still more of

our hearts we can give over to God. There is always more we can learn of God and His ways.

Verse 17 of Psalm 86 the psalmist asks for a sign. At the beginning of the chapter he was asking God to hear **and** answer him. Now he is asking for a sign so that others would know God had been with him, and to reassure himself. Often we think Bible characters never doubted, and all their communication with God must have been crystal clear. This verse is such a relief! A great reminder that even the writers of Scripture needed to ask for a sign.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. The Bible specifically instructs us to bless Israel and to pray for peace in Israel (Gen. 12:3, Psalm 122: 6-9). Take a few minutes to pray through this Psalm as a blessing and prayer for the nation of Israel and God's chosen people. Listen carefully to the Holy Spirit and pray additional blessing and prayers as He leads.
2. Use this Psalm 86 to pray for our country. Take time to confess any sin the Holy Spirit brings to mind that you can confess on behalf of our nation, things we have done in the past or are doing now. Ask God for a heart that burns for revival in this nation. Ask God for a spiritual harvest again in our country.
3. Ask the Lord what you need from Him. Is it joy? Is it forgiveness? Is it teaching? Is it a sign? Spend time in God's presence listening for His words, a picture, thoughts, or whatever He wants to tell you or show you to meet your deepest need today. Write out what He says in your journal.

DAY 8

 **READ:** Psalm 88 – 89

Psalm 88 is another psalm of great anguish. Throughout this psalm it is clear the full responsibility for all the grief and despair is placed fully on God's shoulders. Verses 6-8 show us there is no doubt it was God who is keeping the Psalmist in this difficult place and who put him there in the first place. Yet there is also no doubt it is God alone who can be the Rescuer. The Psalmist is brave and honest in verse 14 and cries out to God with his deep question of 'why'. Unlike many other psalms, this one doesn't end in praise to God, rather it's a full confession of God's sovereignty and the Psalmist's desperate need.

Psalm 89 starts with a short introduction (vs. 1-4) including a commitment to praise and worship God, as well as the reason why. God is faithful and His love endures forever. God has made a commitment to David to establish his family line forever, and this is another significant reason to praise Him.

From verse 5 through verse 18 we find a detailed account of God's deeds of might and wonder toward His people. This section of the psalm acts as both history and teaching. This is a theme we have seen over and over again in Book III of Psalms: Remembering God's mighty deeds is critical to staying in a right relationship with Him. Songs and passages like this one help the psalmist, and each of us, remember who exactly God is. He is not some pie-in-the-sky invention of a deluded mind like some might have us believe. Not at all! God is directly responsible for all of Creation, has intervened personally and dramatically in the lives of individuals and the nations, and has given joy to those who have learned to worship Him.

Verse 19 begins a critical new section. From vs. 19-37 the Psalmist is remembering the words and promises of God. He is specific about what God has said. He is reminding God,

and himself, what those promises were. There were so many promises, yet one that stands taller than all others was the promise to let David's line continue forever. Even today we know this promise to be true and fully expect this to be finally fulfilled when Jesus reigns on the earth again as King.

The Father-Heart of God is portrayed beautifully in verses 30 through 33. God makes it abundantly clear in His promise, that although God would be quick to punish sin, He would never take away His love or become unfaithful to His word. Often we feel when we have sinned that God must not love us anymore. Yet the beauty and power of God's love is this, that while we are still sinners, God's love toward us is faithful and never-ending. Romans 5:8 is the New Testament confirmation of this.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Consider a struggle you are in right now. Ask the Lord to show you His part in both giving it to you and the part He'd like to play in rescuing you. Journal what He shows you. Worship the Lord for His sovereignty. Spend time thanking God for your current struggle and His part in it.
2. What is a promise God has given you that has not yet been fulfilled? Write down some of what God has done in the past for you that reminds you of His continued faithfulness. Now spend a few minutes talking to God about your commitment to believe He will keep this promise to you because of His proven faithfulness of the past. Journal anything He shows you.
3. How does knowing this truth from Psalm 89:30-33 (though God may punish you for your sins, His love and faithfulness toward you never ends) make you feel? Write down a prayer of thanks for God's unending love and faithfulness toward you and that the consequences he gives you are ultimately to bring you even closer to Him. If you are physically capable, consider spending a few minutes on your knees thanking God for all He has done and is doing in your life.

BOOK IV: Psalms 90-106

DAY 9

 **READ:** Psalms 90-91

Psalm 90 was written by Moses as a prayer. One of the themes of this chapter is a correct understanding of time. To God a thousand years is like a single day. The length of days for the average person is 70 or 80 years. For us those decades are full of trouble and burdensome living. We experience sorrow, pain, betrayal, sickness, trauma, grief and so much more. And though it seems long while we're in it, the truth is they really are over with quickly. In the grand scheme of God's timing, a lifetime is like a drop in a bucket.

Verses 14 to the end combine to make a prayer plea to God for specific blessing. The first blessing requested is for God's unfailing love to be poured out every morning. This daily portion of experiential love will go a long way in keeping us faithful and our eyes turned to the right perspective. Next Moses prays for joy. He fully expects God to give him at least as many instances of joy as He has given of pain. The third blessing is for the family. Moses wants his children and grandchildren to know of the mighty deeds of the Lord. Finally Moses prays for favour. Specifically he prays for favour in the workplace: that God would establish the work of his hands. Although we might think it is our work ethic, training, or

aptitude, it really is only God who establishes our work and gives us favour with employers and co-workers.

Psalm 91 is a favourite chapter for many. It is a psalm of declaration. In verse 2 the Psalmist says, *"I will say of the Lord..."* or *"I will declare of the Lord..."*. This is a statement of choice, not necessarily a statement of emotion. The Psalmist may not *feel* right now all the things he will be declaring of the Lord, but he knows them to be true so he chooses to declare them no matter what. His faith is in an unchanging God, so even if his situation changes his declaration need never change.

Psalm 91:8 holds a great nugget of truth for us. The original language of this passage would indicate that though we will observe with our eyes the thousands falling at our sides, and the wicked being punished it won't affect our souls. Although we may see it there will be no lasting damage or emotional trauma for us. God Himself will be guarding our hearts and our minds even though we will observe it. The trauma will stop and start with our eyes and not affect our hearts. This is encouraging to us and can act as a prayer to pray for the persecuted church as many people see atrocity upon atrocity lived out before them. God is able to let their eyes see without letting it scar their souls.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Consider the struggles you have already faced in your life and the ones you are facing now. Consider the struggles that may be coming ahead for believers in our nation, or as the time draws closer to the coming of Jesus. Now ask the Lord to give you a perspective of how short these struggles and pains are (will be) in comparison to the timeline He sees. Ask Him to give you His perspective of the length of your suffering in comparison to all of eternity. Write down what He shows you. Commit to living 100% for Him in the short time you have.
2. Do you really believe it is the Lord alone who establishes the work of your hand and gives you favour in the workplace (or school, or volunteer position, or ministry area, etc.)? Ask the Lord if there are any areas of your life for which you take credit instead giving credit to God. Confess any sin. Praise Him for the many ways He has given you favour among the people you spend your days with.
3. Take some time to pray for the persecuted church, for believers who face each day with the possibility they may lose their own lives, be imprisoned, tortured, or lose a loved one to persecution. Use Psalm 91 as a prayer guide, and especially when you get to verse 8, pray they would continue to become emotionally whole and not have their eternities affected by what their eyes see and that their hope would not grow dim. Ask God for a word, picture, or thought to help you in your prayer times for persecuted believers. Journal what He shows you.

DAY 10

 **READ:** Psalms 92-94

The heading for Psalm 92 says it is a song for the Sabbath day. Exodus 16:23 tells us the Sabbath was made for the Lord. Considering that piece of information, we can confirm this psalm is very fitting for the Sabbath as it is full of praise to the Lord.

The first three verses provide an interesting devotional regimen. The Psalmist reminds us how good it is to praise the Lord. Often we get stuck only praising God during a church service, when things have gone exceptionally well for us, or when it is obvious God is doing

a work in our lives. Many of us neglect to include praise as an everyday routine. Instead we do our Bible reading (check), we journal (check), we confess a sin or two (check), we listen (check), we pray for our urgent needs and sometimes a few other items or people on our list (check) and off we go because we've run out of time. However, this psalm challenges us to include praise. As a matter of fact, it tells us to use music to do it! There's also good reason, according to verse 2, to praise God for His love in the morning, and then praise Him again at night, this time for His faithfulness. It seems common to give God time in the morning **or** the evening. However, according to Psalm 92 it would be good to do it **both** times!

In the beginning of Psalm 94 the Psalmist is crying out to God to pay back the wicked what they deserve. He reminds God of the way they sin against Him and say God isn't paying attention. They carry out their evil schemes, they are rude and mean to God's people as well as the weak and helpless. The prevailing thought is that they will get away with their behavior because God has closed His eyes to their actions. The idea of God doing anything to judge them or curb their behavior is far from their minds. Yet the Psalmist reminds us this is very far from the truth. Of course God can hear every word they say! How can the God who created ears to hear be deaf Himself? Can He really create eyes to see and then still be blind? Everything He has created He knows. Whatever His creation can do, God can do better!

Psalm 94:17a is a very poignant phrase: *"Unless the Lord had given me help..."* This phrase alone is one of humility, submission, and praise. Without the Lord's help we can do nothing, and this is the Psalmist's relief and hope. The Psalmist says he would have died, and this very truth makes this verse even more accurate. Without the Lord's power, will, and desire, we wouldn't have breathed a single breath today. Unless the Lord gives us help we are utterly dead. It is no wonder the Psalm ends with the Psalmist putting his entire hope and safety in the Lord alone. So very fitting!

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Lord if there is any sin you commit, or any habit He doesn't like, or anything at all in your life in which you subconsciously say, "Oh well, God doesn't really see/hear/know that anyway." Confess if necessary. Ask the Lord to remind you, every time you are tempted to justify your sin that He knows, sees and hears everything!
2. Spend a few minutes asking God to help you think through all the things He does for you in a single day, and has done for you from the time you were born (or even before that). Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a picture (or word or thought) about where you would be if it wasn't for the Lord. Journal your thankfulness for where God has brought you to, so you can say with the Psalmist *"Unless the Lord had given me help..."*.
3. Here's a challenge to spice up the last 10 minutes of your devotional time: Why not turn on your favourite worship CD and sing (and perhaps do a little dance) to the Lord? Sing your praise to Him! Pray standing up, or out in nature, or kneeling if you can, and tell God how much His love means to you. Then, to really push yourself, consider spending time both in the evening and the morning every day for the next week. *Suggestion:* Use your morning devos to find strength for the day and to be thankful for difficult situations. Use your evening devos to be thankful for all God did throughout the day, focus on the blessings He has given and on the heavenly future God has promised.

DAY 11 **READ:** Psalms 95-97

If we are looking to get perspective on our position with God we need look no further than Psalm 95. The first two verses tell us to come and sing, shout and thank the Lord with music and song. One can't help but ask: Why? What's the big deal? Why should we?

It comes down to this basic truth: Because God is the Creator. Verse 5 tells us the whole earth belongs to God because He made it. Even a kindergartner can understand that! Small children naturally understand if a person makes something, the creation belongs to the person who made it. No young child would look at a play-doh sculpture he created and say it came out of nowhere, or want to share the credit with a friend. Of course not! It would be ludicrous to that child. And what child doesn't want the recognition for his creation, no matter how amateur? This simple logic transfers nicely: Everything belongs to God because He made it. Simple. He wants the recognition for it as well. That's why we praise Him: Everything is His. He made it all. He wants credit for it.

Psalm 96:4-5 tells us there are gods in this world with no power. They deserve no credit. We should not fear them. Why shouldn't we fear them? The answer to this question is actually aligned with what we saw in Psalm 95: They didn't create the world. It comes back to that Kindergarten logic: if they didn't make it they don't own it. If they don't own it, they don't control it. If they don't control it, what is there to fear? Understanding the fullness of what it means for God to be the Creator of the Universe is not even possible. However, the closer we get the less allure other gods of the nations will have. These gods of the nations may not always have been made from wood or stone or glass. Some of them may in fact be gods slipping in through internet connections, bank accounts, and time-wasting entertainment. 2 Timothy 3:4 says in the last days many will trade Creator-God for the god of pleasure. One of the best ways to guard against worshipping other gods is to follow the prescription of Psalm 96: *"Ascribe to the Lord the glory and honour due His name."*

Nearing the end of Psalm 96 the Psalmist begins to name God's creation: the heavens, the earth, the sea and everything in it, the fields and all they contain, and the trees. Everything is going to praise God and sing for joy, even these 'objects'. When Jesus comes He will set everything right. Everything. Even Creation. It will be quite a sight at the end of time when the world is finally judged, to see rocks, trees and animals singing and praising God! That's such a hard thing to imagine, but it will be grand!

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Write down a list of things God has made. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you ideas of things you haven't thought about recently. Ask God to give you a deep understanding of His ownership of Creation. Spend time in thanksgiving.
2. Ask the Lord to show you if there are any gods in your life. Ask Him if you fear Him more than those gods. Confess this if He shows you anything. Ask the Lord to grow your fear of Him and to keep your eyes sharp to see the gods of this age and to stay far from them.
3. Write down some of the things you have had to deal with in the last week that stem directly from the effect of sin on this world. Now ask God to show you the truth of how drastically things will change when He comes to set everything right on the earth. Meditate on that powerful truth, journal it. Ask God to grow your faith, hope and longing for His return and our eternal home in heaven.

DAY 12 **READ:** Psalm 98-100

This series of psalms is full of praise and worship to God. Each of them begins with an invitation into this praise. These are meant to be corporate, whole-life, all-of-creation-included worship songs. Yet even though each invites us into worship, praise and thanksgiving, there are differences in style of worship for each of the three.

Psalm 98 is an invitation for all of Creation to praise the Lord. It has a sense of loud, powerful, shouting-style, praise. The words used in this psalm invoke a feeling of exuberance and celebration. Words like 'shout', 'burst', 'blast', 'horn', and 'trumpet' indicate a style of worship some might consider over-the-top. In this psalm we see the participation of nature in the praise. The sea resounds! Anyone who has spent time beside a large body of water knows the sound can be deafening. Add to all this noise, rivers clapping, and mountains singing, and you have a universe full of worship sounds!

Psalm 99 is no longer directed to all of creation but rather to the nations. Instead of a psalm of jubilation like Psalm 98, this one has a tone of solemnity. There is a sense of awe and holy fear invoked throughout the text. Nations should tremble. The King is mighty and loves justice. There is a strong sense throughout this psalm of God as both political King and spiritual King. God's justice shines through. The Psalmist reveals to us the fullness of God's heart, both His justice and His mercy. We see He punishes and forgives. In the middle of this psalm we also see Exhibit A and Exhibit B. Exhibit A is Moses and Aaron. Exhibit B is the prophet Samuel. These both led the nation of Israel to follow God. The Psalmist has put these exhibits out for us to see it really is possible for a nation, led by men, to follow God as King.

The heart of Psalm 100 is directed at people and individuals. There is still a sense of celebratory worship, however it lacks the noise of Psalm 98. Instead of addressing entire nations, the Psalmist is addressing the sheep. The people. The everyday folk. He awakens our notice of God's involvement in our creation. We are invited to remember we are intimately known because God made us and we belong to Him. In this psalm we are encouraged to worship God, not because of His power or His political sovereignty but because of the relationship He has with us. Because we are His sheep He cares, provides, nurtures, and tends to us. He is good to us. He loves us. He is faithful to us.

This series of psalms gives us so many different dimensions of praise to engage in. Psalm 100:5 is a beautiful summary of why we should worship and praise our God.

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Often Christians feel they can only worship with 'their' style of music, whether it's rap, country, contemporary, hymns or even screamo metal. What is your favourite style of worship music? Is there a style of worship you prefer? Perhaps liturgical, solemn, casual, formal, charismatic, other? In this series of psalms we see God inviting and appreciating worship in many different forms and styles. Ask God what this might mean for you? Do you need to extend grace to the loud and raunchy Psalm 98 style worshippers, or need to be more patient with the touchy-feely Psalm 100 type people, or do you need to believe the solemn, awe-struck and quiet worship of the Psalm 99 style people is genuine? Ask the Lord to speak to you about any struggle you have regarding worship styles. Then spend time thanking Him for accepting worship in such diverse ways.

2. Take a few minutes to pray for our country. Pray for our government leaders to develop a fear of the Lord and to call on Him for wisdom and direction. Pray for churches and Christians across this land to bend their knee in confession so the Lord can forgive our nation's sins.
3. Ask the Lord to speak to you very personally about how much He loves you. Write down what He says, then spend time in thanksgiving and praise for His love and faithfulness.

DAY 13

 **READ:** Psalms 101-102

Psalm 101 is a psalm of dedication to a lifestyle of holy living. David begins this psalm singing of God's love and His justice. God's love leads David to the point where he wants to please Him, but he is also acutely aware of God's justice. His pursuit of holy living is a response to both God's justice and His love.

It is interesting to note in verse 2b how specific David is. He says he will have a blameless heart and walk with integrity within his own home. This is notable because most people can relate to the struggle of living differently in public than they do in private. David is making a commitment here to live at home and in his private life to the same degree of holiness and integrity he does elsewhere. We know David's story. We know he was diligent in attempting to live to this standard. We also know he didn't do it perfectly. This can serve as a great encouragement to us as we read his song of commitment. A commitment like this may be the very thing that kept David going back to the Lord for forgiveness and help, and then getting back up and living with confidence.

In Psalm 102:18 we encounter an interesting verse. This verse literally says to write this down. Not to **tell** it to the next generation but literally to write it down. What exactly are we supposed to write down? Verse 19 explains. We are to write down the story of when the Lord looked from heaven and saw us in our mess. He saw how we were prisoners and condemned to death. Then He did something about it! Why are we to write down the story of our mess and bondage? Verse 21 answers this question. It's so the name of the Lord will be declared and praised.

The last several verses of this psalm help us grapple with God's eternal nature. Most people see the earth and the universe we are a part of as solid, never-ending entities. There may be some who have predicted the demise of earth as we know it, however, even they often have plans and ideas for what we can do to save it. No matter how solid and never-ending this world may seem, Psalm 102 reminds us it is weak and disposable in comparison to the everlasting God we serve. Even after this world finally is removed from existence God will still be the same forever after that. Wow!

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Have you made a commitment to live a holy lifestyle? What about at home when you 'let your hair down'? Ask the Lord to speak to you about the commitment to holiness you have made in the past and how well you are keeping that commitment. Ask Him how you can improve and what you are doing well. If you have made that commitment but have dropped the ball, ask Him for forgiveness and confidence to get back up and try again. Ask Him for words of encouragement and vision. If you have not made a commitment to holy living in your private and public life, spend some time asking God to give you the courage to make that commitment today. Ask Him for specifics and strategies.

2. Psalm 102:18 is a biblical mandate to journal! Ask God to speak to you about your journaling habits. Is there something He would like you to journal about that simply has never gotten down on paper for whatever reason? Is your testimony of how God saved you from your own bondage and imprisonment to sin written down? Spend a few minutes listening to God about what part of your story He wants you to write down today, then spend some time obeying.
3. Sit quietly before the Lord. Ask Him to give you words, thoughts and pictures of His eternal nature. Worship Him!

DAY 14

 **READ:** Psalms 103-104

Psalms 103 and 104 have much the same theme and focus. These psalms describe the incredible character and deeds of God, as well as the intricate way every aspect of our lives is touched, managed and ordered by Him.

Verse 2 of Psalm 103 says we are not to forget the benefits we receive from God. The rest of the psalm is a long list of those benefits. One of the main benefits is the forgiveness of all our sins. Not some. Not most. All. All our sins are forgiven by the Lord.

Verses 9-12 also speak about this incredible forgiveness. His forgiveness means he won't be angry with us forever or hold a grudge. Many of us haven't experienced this kind of forgiveness in our human relationships and therefore struggle to understand it in our relationship with God. He removes our sin so far from us it is like they are continuously going in the opposite direction from what we are going. Some of us may have never latched on to how far away the east from the west really is. We may have pictured our sins going east around the globe and eventually making their way back to us as we go around the globe in a westerly direction. But that's not what this means. Instead he sends our sin so far away that if it travelled in a straight easterly line away from us into eternity it would never ever reach the destination called East. Now, He doesn't really send our sin eastward, or us westward, He forgives it and removes it. Our sin is as far away from us as the destination 'East' is from the destination 'West'. It is quite simply gone.

Chapter 104 begins by laying a foundation of God's majesty, splendor and control over all of Creation. He assigns places – like name cards at a banquet table – where the rivers and streams need to be. He sets boundaries for the waters of the earth and they obey! His control over all creation is endless, complete and full of purpose. Because of His omnipotence and sovereignty there is nothing we, as His created ones, can ever do for ourselves. It is only by God's direction. Yet even though He has this ultimate power He uses it to care for His creation. He feeds the wild animals, birds and fish. He purposely makes plants grow so we have food. He gave us cosmetics (oil) so we could make our faces shine with health. Every single thing we have is provided by God.

His faithfulness to animals and creation must speak to us of His love, attentiveness and provision toward us. It is no wonder then why the Psalmist ended this psalm by repeating, *'Praise the Lord, O my soul, Praise the Lord.'*

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask the Lord if there is a human relationship you have been or are currently in through which you have learned to distrust forgiveness and ultimately to distrust God's forgiveness. If so, ask the Lord to give you a word, thought or picture of how much better His forgiveness is than what you have experienced. If not, thank Him for the

solid examples of forgiveness you have experienced and ask Him to give you a strategy of how to extend that kind of forgiveness to someone else this week. Write down what He says and don't forget to take action!

2. Ask God to help you picture how far away destination 'East' is from destination 'West'. Think about a sin you have committed in the past that sometimes comes back to trouble you and make you feel unworthy. With the picture of your east and west destinations in mind, ask Him to give you a powerful and clear picture to help you understand how thoroughly you have been forgiven. Take a few moments to talk to the Lord about accepting His forgiveness and forgiving yourself as much as He has forgiven you. Write down everything He shows and tells you!
3. Do you truly recognize God as your provider? Ask the Lord to reveal any areas of your heart that doubt God's ability or desire to provide for you. Confess this as sin and ask God for a word, thought or picture you can go back to in the years ahead to confirm to your spirit that God **will** provide for you. Write down what He says. Thank Him.

DAY 15

 **READ:** Psalm 105

Psalm 105 is a psalm of teaching and history. A common thread and lesson we see in Scripture is the reciting of the many things God has done. Not once. Not twice. But many, many times. This is not to boast of the experiences, but to boast in the mighty deeds of God and to give Him thanks... again. We can never give God too much thanks or too much glory! Verse 2 encourages us to tell of all His wonderful acts. It's testimony time!

Verse 5 charges us to remember the wonders, but also the judgments God has pronounced over us. This seems so contrary to our culture. We are known to boast about the miracles He has done for us – almost as if we were worthy. Yet, it is more common practice to keep His judgments secret. It's as if our shame and reputation is more important than God's glory! When God has pronounced judgment on us, it's His act of love toward us so we might turn back toward Him. Why should we hide the power of God's love? When God disciplines and punishes us we turn to Him in repentance and He forgives us. What greater testimony of God's glory and might is there than that?!

The testimony of God's glory begins with the promise He made to Abraham; from the beginning of His relationship with the chosen people. He outlines the promise God gave, and the journey He took them on from just a few people to a nation more powerful than any of its enemies. This testimony includes God's plagues on Egypt. This shows God's long-suffering and the extent to which He went to save His people. Yes it was to save His people, but it was also to display His glory. Miracle upon miracle are repeated for the next generation to hear so they might also bring God glory as they repeat the story!

Not only did God do these mighty things because He loved His people, and to display His glory, but He also bent over backwards to make it as easy as possible for His people to keep His laws and obey Him. God longs so desperately to be in a right and intimate relationship with us. We see in verse 45 that this was again a motivating factor in all He did. His love for His people never ends. Praise the Lord!

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Do you know anyone who repeats the wonderful things God has done over and over and over again? Have you ever gotten bored with giving God thanks... **again**? Confess

any sin He convicts you of in regarding to being bored with the stories of His mighty deeds. Ask the Lord to settle in your heart the purpose and reason He asks us to repeat the things He has done for us. Write down what He says. Spend some time thanking God for everything you can think of!

2. Ask God to bring to your mind something He's healed you of, freed you from, convicted you of, or even disciplined you for. Take a few minutes to write out your testimony with words that bring glory to God instead of you or your sin. Ask Him whom He wants you to share that with today so His glory will be displayed. Make a commitment to obey!
3. Consider planning an hour to spend with your family, a group of friends, or perhaps even members of your cell group, to get together for the purpose of sharing your testimonies of the things God has done and the many things He has freed you from. It may be awkward at first, but you can lead the way by getting things started. Take a few moments now to pray and ask the Lord how He might want you to move forward with this idea to glorify Him. Then take action!

DAY 16

 **READ:** Psalm 106

Psalm 106 is another psalm of history and teaching. One of the significant themes in this psalm is repeating the sins of our fathers.

Verse 6 lays it out for us: We have sinned just like our parents and grandparents did. The Psalmist does not hide the sins of his people. He is blunt and to the point. *We have done wrong and acted wickedly*. There is no beating around the bush. He lists for several verses all the things his people did wrong. In verse 8, though, he explains God saved the people for His name's sake and to show how mighty and powerful He is. He did miracle upon miracle for the Israelites, pouring out blessing, and saving them from disaster time after time. The people turned back to God... but it didn't last.

Things got even worse for God's people. First they forgot what God had done. Then they didn't wait to hear from Him... they stopped listening to God. They gave in to their cravings and tested God as if He had to prove Himself. They begged God for things He knew were not good for them. They continued to beg and beg.

Verse 15 tells us God finally gave them what they wanted. But this was one answer to prayer that wasn't a blessing at all! Yet they continued to turn away from God. People were swallowed up by the earth, and burned up by fire. They worshipped idols and deliberately turned away from God. They even got to the point they despised the very blessing and inheritance God had given them in the land. They stopped believing God's promise. The awful story of their wickedness goes on from verse 6 through verse 43. Their sin is too overwhelming even to read about!

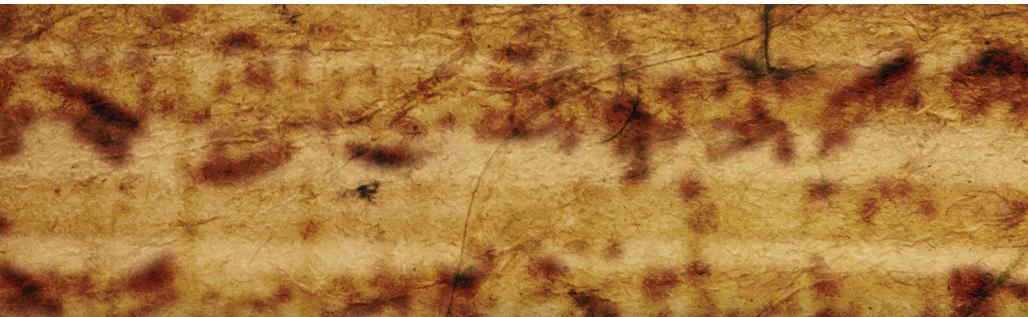
Yet God took note of their suffering. He didn't block out their crying. He remembered the promise He made. Verse 4 says that out of his *great love* He finally relented. He saved them again.

This is why we give thanks. This is why we tell these stories over and over. This is why we make a point to remember. When we follow God's prescription to give thanks, to remember what He has done, and keep believing His promise, we have the foundation to break the cycle of sin.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Generational sin is a real and powerful dynamic in our lives. We see this same issue in the lives of the Israelites. What one generation did, the next one did as well, often worse. Ask the Lord if there is a generational root to some of the struggles you face. If there is, confess your own sin in this area, then break the bondage of generational sin passed down from your family to you, and potentially from you into your family (even if you don't have a family yet). Thank the Lord for His power to bring us emotional wholeness and forgiveness.
2. Have you ever, or are you now, asking (begging) the Lord for something and not getting it? Ask the Lord to speak to you about the request. Ask the Lord to make your heart willing to have His best, instead of what you want, to avoid the heartache that may come if you pursue what you want instead of what God wants. Write down what He is saying about your request. Pray into that very specifically today.
3. Sit quietly today and listen to the Lord speak to you about his deep love for you. Ask Him to speak to you about a promise He has made to you in the past, and how He wants you to move forward from here. Write down what He says. Move ahead confidently in the direction God is leading you. Keep believing God's promises to you!



Books III & IV of Psalms *Psalms 73-106*

If you have ever struggled with watching non-Christians be blessed while good Christians suffer, or have fallen into sin... again, or wondered why God doesn't just deal with all the bad stuff right away, you will find yourself among friends in these psalms. Books III and IV of The Psalms are chock full of reminders of God's sovereignty and love, as well as His justice and forgiveness. Be encouraged as you work your way through some of the toughest questions of life and be filled with joy as you learn to praise God in brand new ways.

Psalms 103:17-18 (ESV)

"But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments."



SOUTHLAND CHURCH
190 PTH 52W Steinbach MB R5G 1M2
204.326.9020 | info@mysouthland.com
Get Foundations delivered to your e-mail daily!
Subscribe at www.mysouthland.com