



## ***This Week in the Word***

*Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Ps 119:89.*



### ***Praising God's Mighty Works***

**Study Scripture: Psalms 66:1-9, 16-20**

**Lesson 12, February 16, 2019**

#### **Key Verse**

*Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men.*

*Psalm 66:5*

Our Lesson Study today introduces some extremely important ideas for us to consider if our Christian life is to reflect the nature of God and the reasons all persons on the Earth should be careful to have a specific vital and living relationship to God.

He tells us why the works of God should have a great impact on men individually and on nations and that these works of God should have a impact on the life of men, excite them to awe and inspire them to have confidence in God. This influence of the works of God will keep rebellion against God in check.

It also reminds us that God does act to refine His people in the furnace of affliction, for affliction unmask our hypocrisy and foolishness and shows how we are really inside so that it makes us better or makes us bitter.

In addition, the song warns us to pay our vows to the Lord, fulfilling our promises to Him, and encourages us to pay what we vowed to God and not simply forget or ignore our vows and our promises when the crisis is over and everything works out well. This of course echoes the warning of Ecclesiastes 5:4-5.

The Psalm speaks to us of gratitude for God's goodness and makes it clear that we are to invite others to see the goodness of God.

It also warns us of one important reason why the Lord does not hear prayer for it points to the power of the existence of wickedness in our hearts to thwart our prayers.

We are also encouraged to sing to God for singing requires a certain great deal of emotion since it flows from either sadness or from joy and crystallizes our position with a great deal of honesty at particular times of life.

And of course the Psalm deals with praise, an action which requires as one writer says, **"concentration on the thing, person, or deity being praised"**.

There is also an associated emphasis on *Thanksgiving* which as one writer points out is necessary for there has to be a delicate balance between praise of God and thanksgiving for the reasons indicated:

**"Thanks tend to be focused on what the speaker has received and thus may become rather narrow and perfunctory. In the expression of thanksgiving the self may become the primary subject, but this is much less likely to happen in praise"**.

So let us carefully observe what the psalmist has to say as he gives practical guidance to those who want to praise God from the heart and not in some mechanical or unfeeling way. We are given specific instructions as to how to praise God and how to say from our hearts what we feel inside as we and all humanity living all over the Earth look on the glorious works of God.

Psalm 66 declares a call to praise and tells reasons why praise should be given to God. Praise should be given because of God's character, His greatness and His grace. Yahweh is to be praised because He can be trusted to deliver and protect His own. The Psalm ends as it begins with a call for praise. It is a Psalm of exhortation and also a petition.

The Psalm exhorts believers to praise God, those in the nation of Israel, as well as the Gentile nations. The call to praise is universal, then national and then down to the individual. Repetition of the words sing, praise, worship.... set the tone and the psalmist's sombre reflection at the end shows his praise is the result of deep contemplation of the person and work of God.

The Psalm (song) may be divided into five stanzas. In the first stanza (Psalm 66:1–4), all the nations are challenged to praise God.

In the second stanza (66:5–7), Israel is to lead the praise before the nations by recounting God's mighty rescue of His people from Egypt.

The third stanza (66:8–12) recalls either the Exodus or a more recent time of trouble and rescue.

In the fourth stanza (66:13–15), the psalmist personally vows to offer sacrifices extravagantly to God as a response to His recent rescue?

The fifth stanza (66:16–20) records the psalmist's personal testimony regarding God's work in his life. His personal experience is about to become one of public declaration.

Psalm 66 should lead believers to personal introspection with regard to our need to praise God. We should ask ourselves to what extent the verses of praise, especially those in verses 1 to 4, describe our life in the past weeks and months, or even years.

We do not know the author of Psalm 66 nor the circumstances that prompted the writer to pen these powerful words. Some verses seem to reflect God's deliverance from attack and His subjugation of the enemies of Israel. Others reflect some personal deliverance and purging of the individual person by God. Both the corporate and personal aspects of God's work are highlighted in the psalm.

Application of the Psalm to the present day is seamless. God helps the church, the body of Christ corporately and He also works directly to help individuals and answers their prayers. The church and its individual members have a common experience with the psalmist and our response should be the same, the continual praise of our God for who He is and His acts in our lives.

The psalmist depicts the nations as confessing (or needing to confess) God's power and praising (or needing to praise), Him for His just rule. This concern with other nations' worship of God has led scholars to wonder if an international crisis was the background for its writing. Two possibilities are usually suggested. One is the Assyrian crisis of 701 BC (2 Kings 18:13–19:36); the other is after the release from Babylonian captivity. The date of the Psalm's writing under the latter proposal would be after the rebuilding of the temple in 515 BC, since Psalm 66:13 refers to that structure (Ezra 6:15). But regardless of the historical occasion for the Psalm it can have application to any deliverance the people of God experience.

Note the emphasis, that though God is the God of His people, He is the Sovereign, the Lord God of all the earth and the Creator of all things. He deserves the praise of every living thing.

## **THE TEXT**

**Verse 1.** *Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands:*

The song opens with a roar as *all ... lands* of the world are charged to make *a joyful noise* in acknowledgement of the one true *God*. Since His works are not constrained within the borders of Israel, every nation everywhere is challenged to join Israel in worshipping Him. The same challenge concludes the stanza.

The imperative *make a joyful noise* suggests to some the idea of a triumphant army celebrating a victory (Psalms 81:1; 95:1; 98:4; 100:1).

The praise is to be shown by joyful shouting, certainly open and with powerful exuberance. It is not to be lukewarm, apathetic, just on the surface mouthing of the words of praise.

This is to be effusive, full of life praise. This praise is joyous because it comes from the heart.

It is a command to individuals to show their appreciation of God. It is directed to all the earth and is obviously based on the assumption that the earth belongs to God, and that He has a right to praise and worship from the entire earth.

Clearly, this psalmist is so full of joy that he cannot contain his joy and so he shares his joy and called on the entire Earth's inhabitants to rejoice and praise the Lord with him.

**Verse 2.** This heartfelt worship must not only include exuberant declaration, but calls for singing about the glory of God's name. The psalmist is not satisfied with our declaring God's praises moderately. Rather, he insists that we celebrate God's goodness in some measure proportionate to His excellence. Our hearts are to be so overflowing as we consider the character and ways of God in Christ, that we will do everything we can to show that He is worth shouting and singing about, for in doing so we will be revealing His worth.

Note that though the psalm does not rule out traditional, formal and repetitive forms of worship, what it certainly shows is that the often commonly supported and indulged in outward forms and places of worship are not sufficient to show the glory of God. No wonder Jesus said the time would come when men would have to worship God "*in spirit and in truth*".

There must be an overflow of the heart which is captivated by the glory of God, and this overflow based on the knowledge of God will show itself in vibrant expressions of worship.

The psalmist is speaking of the joyful noise, the singing about the worthiness of God that is done with pleasure to edify others and honor the name of God. Everything that is shouted about or sung about is done to bring praise and honor to God's name. Only God is worthy of praise.

We may wonder how our singing glorifies God's *Name*. Is it through the skill of our voices, the level of our sincerity or the nature of the lyrics? The psalmist does not specify, but undoubtedly the level of our sincerity is the starting point for honoring the name of God.

We cannot say that we cannot shout and sing in praise of God's goodness. All you have to do is to watch the shouting and exuberance at football, soccer, baseball, or basketball games, and we will see that men are fully capable of showing their great emotion at things that they enjoy.

Shortly the goodness of God should excite us and we should demonstrate to the world that we too can praise our Redeemer more than they praise their earthly things.

**Verse 3.** *How terrible art thou in thy works!* We are now given specific reasons why we should praise God. But we are first told that we should address God and tell Him that His

works, the specific works that the psalmist has in mind are awesome. We are not only to observe the works of God, but we are to speak of them to Him and to others.

Note that the psalmist is “inviting us” to observe the works of God, to see that God is so awesome that He has victory over His enemies and these victories are designed to benefit all people. One writer tells us:

**“God's works are wonderful in themselves, and such as, when duly considered, may justly fill us with amazement. God is *terrible* (that is, admirable) in all His works through the greatness of his power, which is such, and shines so brightly, so strongly, in all he does, that it may be truly said there are *not any works like unto his works*. Hence, he is said to be *fearful in praises*, Exodus 15:11. In all his doings for the children of men, he is terrible, and to be eyed with a holy awe”.**

The psalmist acknowledges that some of God’s enemies will not give Him this heartfelt worship. They will pretend to obey Him because they fear His power and His wrath, but they are not genuinely obedient, for it is not heartfelt. They go along with the crowd and sing praises to God and shout, but inside their heart is not right, for they are fakes and pretenders.

Note that the psalmist is saying this to remind us that true worship is a heart matter. There are many that have received the kindness and mercy of God, and have not really appreciated what God has done for them. Hypocritically, they pretend to reverence God because they either fear His wrath for their lack of thankfulness or do not want men to think badly of them. The psalmist warns us that when we come before God to worship Him our hearts must be right. Charles Spurgeon comments:

**“Several commentators note that the sense of *shall submit themselves to You* has the feel of an insincere, unwilling submission to God. But, as the Hebrew clearly intimates, it will be a forced and false submission. Power brings a man to his knee, but love alone wins his heart. Pharaoh said he would let Israel go, but he lied unto God; he submitted in word but not in deed.**

**Tens of thousands, both in Earth and Hell, are rendering this constrained homage to the Almighty; they only submit because they cannot do otherwise; it is not their loyalty, but his power, which keeps them subjects of his boundless dominion”.**

Never let that remark and accusation be said of us!

**Verse 4.** ... *all the earth shall worship thee*. In both the psalmist’s day and ours, most peoples of the earth do not worship the one true God. Thus this phrase should be understood as prophetic; the conclusion is supported by the future nature of the word *shall*. The Scriptures foretell a time when the entire earth will worship Jesus (Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10).

From the very beginning, God’s plan has been to use Israel as the beachhead from which He brings salvation to all the nations (Genesis 12:1–3; 22:17, 18). We know this is accomplished through Jesus and the spread of the gospel (Isaiah 49:6; Matthew 28:19, 20;

Acts 13:47).

When Jesus returns, He will come not as the Suffering Servant but as a conqueror. Then all the nations of the earth will submit either out of heartfelt worship or begrudging obligation. Revelation 15:3, 4 predicts that those in Christ will sing the Song of Moses: "*Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.*"

Psalm 22: 27-29 reads: "*All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, And all the families of the nations shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the Lord's, And He rules over the nations. For the prosperous of the earth Shall eat and worship; All those who go down to the dust Shall bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep himself alive*".

Psalm 86:8-10 states: "*Among the gods there is none like You, O Lord; Nor are there any works like Your works. All nations, whom You have made Shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And shall glorify Your name. For You are great, and do wondrous things; You alone are God*". (See Isa. 56 and 60).

**Verse 5.** *Come and see the works of God:* Echoing his own words in verse three above, the psalmist stresses anew why everyone should worship the Lord: His *works* toward humanity are *terrible*, again in the sense of inspiring terror or awe. What the psalmist implores the reader to *come and see* is the topic of the next verse.

*...Come and see the works of the Lord ...* we must emulate the psalmist and invite others. The invitation is extended to observe the works of the Lord and to see why He should be praised. God Himself is awesome, but also His works are awesome. The awesome nature of God is reflected or made evident in His awesome works.

Note that these awesome works of God are beneficial to the people of God. He always acts to bless human beings. So when God fights battles and forces evil to submit, He does it for the benefit of men.

When He sent His Son to suffer and die for men, He did it for the benefit of men. So all men should shout and sing about the great victories that God has accomplished. They should not keep quiet about these triumphs, but they should send their testimony all over the earth and praise this victorious God and King.

The psalmist is obviously condemning the thoughtlessness so often found among believers and among other men who neglect to praise God. Men seem blind to the works of God's hands.

All of these ideas have led to a practical manifestation in the Christian world. Many hymns have been written based on Psalm 66 and it might be instructive to list some of them:

**-I love to tell the story based on Psalm 66:16**

**-All lands to God in joyful songs based on Psalm 66**

- Glory and Praise to our God based on Psalm 66
- O for a Thousand tongues to Sing based on Psalm 66:1-2
- The Matchless Worth based on Psalm 66:2
- When morning Gilds the skies based on Psalm 66:2
- All Creatures of Our God and King based on Psalm 66:1
- The Music of His N based on Psalm 66:2
- Jesus did it based on Psalm 66: 16.

And there are very many more hymns based on Psalm 66. We should sing some of these hymns more often. I particularly like the following Hymn of the great hymn writer Charles Wesley and some of the words I will quote:

**O for a thousand tongues to sing  
my great Redeemer's praise,  
the glories of my God and King ,  
the triumphs of his grace!**

**My gracious master and my God,  
assist me to proclaim,  
to spread thro' all the earth abroad  
the honors of your name.**

**Jesus! The name that charms our fears,  
that bids our sorrows cease  
'tis music in the sinners' ears,  
'tis life and health and peace..**

**Verse 6.** Here the psalmist begins to mention some of the awesome works of God. These works concern God delivering Israel from Egypt and their entry into the Promised Land some forty years later when God parted the flooded Jordan River, so the people could cross over.

... *He turned the sea into dry land...* Specifically, the psalmist invites his audience to ponder anew what God did in the Exodus. By the time God *turned the sea into dry land* to allow the Israelites to pass *through the flood on foot* (Exodus 14:21, 22), He had already worked ten miracles in the form of plagues (Exodus 7–11). When the people saw the bodies of the Egyptian soldiers washed up on the beaches, they "*feared ... and believed the Lord*" (14:31). Next came rejoicing (15:1–21). Every subsequent generation of Israelites should *rejoice in Him*, as well, in remembering these facts (1 Corinthians 10:1).

Psalm 66:2 refers to God's glory or reputation. Here we are given a tangible way that God established His reputation among "*the children of men*" (66:5). The Song of Moses describes the fear that would fall over the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, and Canaanites—all peoples that Israel would eventually face in their conquest of the Promised Land—when they learned how God mightily delivered His people (Exodus 15:14–16).

The Exodus is regarded as the greatest demonstration of the redemption of a people from slavery by God's great and mighty power. It stands as a powerful symbol of freedom and it has stirred the aspirations of many subjected people over the world and throughout many generations.

At the time of Israel's bondage, Pharaoh was the most powerful king on the earth and Egypt was the most powerful nation with the most advanced army and civilization. But the power of Pharaoh and Egypt was no problem for God. No oppressor can successfully resist the will of God.

God allowed the nation to develop in the tyranny of bondage but when He was ready, He took Israel out of Egypt and turned the sea into dry land so His people could go into freedom. The pursuing Egyptians were drowned when God who had parted the Red Sea let the waters go back to its normal position. When the people arrived at Canaan, God then divided the flooded Jordan River and they went through on foot into the land of Canaan without the threat of drowning.

At the Red Sea and at the Jordan River God showed Himself to be awesome, and there the people rejoiced at His great deeds. This was so powerful an experience that the people would worship Him for His deeds, for the pictures would always remain in their minds. Also the enemies of Israel trembled before them as Joshua 5:1 relates and they never forgot the awesome works of God.

Psalm 106:8-12 recounts these scenes and the reactions of the people even while it recounted the lack of understanding of the awesome nature of these miracles God did and the memory lapses and sins of the nation:

*"Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; They did not remember the multitudes of Your mercies, But rebelled by the sea- the Red Sea. Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake, That He might make His mighty power known. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it dried up; So He led them through the depths, As through the wilderness. He saved them from the hand of him who hated them, And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. The waters covered their enemies; There was not one of them left. Then they believed His words; They sang His praise".*

These images were firmly in the minds of God's people and they rejoiced in Him.

**Verse 7.** ... *He ruleth by his power for ever...* The readers cannot be reminded too often of God's eternal rule in power. The Song of Moses ends with this declaration:

*"The Lord shall reign for ever and ever"* (Exodus 15:18).

It is God who is the King of all the earth. In that capacity, He rules with great *power* and His accomplishments are awesome (Psalm 145:13).

As He rules, He sees everything. Nothing escapes His notice. He is able to *behold the nations* easily because He is sovereign over them as well as over Israel (Exodus 3:16; Psalm 11:4).

Any nation can suffer the consequences of being an enemy of God. Rebellion is always



characterized by defiance of a higher authority. In effect, those who do so justify their actions by switching allegiance to a different authority. Often that different authority is merely the rebels themselves as they attempt to become autonomous; thus do *the rebellious exalt themselves*.

But no rebellion against God ever results in good. Before a nation, society, or person dares try to exalt self above God, the lessons of history should be consulted!

The rebellious nations are still under His control, just as these ancient nations were at the time of Israel's deliverance from bondage and while He preserved them through the wilderness wanderings. The nations should be careful, be warned, and not make the mistake of challenging the God of Israel.

One writer comments: **"God has a commanding eye; from the height of heaven his eye commands all the inhabitants of the earth, and he has a clear and full view of them all. His eyes run to and fro through the earth; the most remote and obscure nations are under his inspection.**

**He has a commanding arm; his power rules, rules for ever, and is never weakened, never obstructed. Strong is his hand, and high is his right hand. Hence he infers, Let not the rebellious exalt themselves; let not those that have revolting and rebellious hearts dare to rise up in any overt acts of rebellion against God, exalt themselves as if there were any probability that they should gain their point. No; let them be still, for God hath said, I will be exalted, and man cannot gainsay it".**

**Verses 8-9.** The psalmist here calls on Israel and the nations to bless God, so that those who are not among His elect and not now His people will hear and turn to Him.

As we read the psalmist's exhortation to the Israelites here, we remind ourselves that Christians inherit this mandate. It is both a privilege and a responsibility to *make the voice of His praise to be heard*. The recipients of God's generosity need to take the lead in worshipping Him. How much more this is true for Christians today, who are aware of the great salvation provided by Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 10:11)!

The nations will not be asked to praise God without reason. They will be invited to investigate for themselves the mighty works of God. They are invited to see how God preserved Israel in spite of their lapses and frequent iniquity.

The very fact that they were still alive and the nation still exists shows the efficacy of God's grace. The good providence of God preserved them. One writer advises us:

**"He holdeth our soul in life, that it may not drop away of itself; for, being continually in our hands, it is apt to slip through our fingers. We must own that it is the good providence of God that keeps life and soul together, and his visitation that preserves our spirits. He puts our soul in life, so the word is. He that gave us our being, by a constant renewed act upholds us in our being, and his providence is a**

**continued creation. When we are ready to faint, and perish He restores our soul, and so puts it, as it were, into a new life, giving new comforts.**

***He suffers not our feet to be moved, in preventing many unforeseen evils, which we ourselves were not aware of our danger from the red. To him, we owe it that we have not, long ere this, fallen into endless ruin. He will keep the feet of his saints".***

**Verses 10-12.** The psalmist now addresses God, and states that he knows that God has disciplined His people to purge them of their sinful habits. He tried the nation and the people and refined them as silver is refined. They were put through the testing of fire and testing of water. But through it all God did not abandoned them but used the occasions to bring greater blessings to them.

Note the several actions of God. The psalmist did not try to sugar-coat the fact that God brought stiff discipline on Israel before He brought them into abundance. Those difficult experiences did not happen by accident. It was by God's design. God inflicted the trials on His people and so the psalmist made it absolutely clear as he addressed God:

- You have tried us.
- You have refined us.
- You brought us into the net.
- You laid an oppressive burden on us.
- You made men ride over our heads.

God burdened them for the purpose of purification after which He intended that they would be a people who would praise Him and be a blessing to the nations. Israel was called to offer the love of God to the nations. They were burdened for the sake of the world. So God did not just "permit" these things to happen to Israel, but rather He "did" these things to them.

This of course raises the question whether God who uses evil people to judge His people is responsible for evil. The case of Job was a case in point. We know that in Job 1:21 he attributed everything to the Lord.

In all these cases we cannot say that God was responsible for any evil in the proceedings. Yet we have a right to say that He was the one who did it or allowed it to happen. Note that God will judge those that do evil. But God allows evil to occur without sinning and uses it for His sovereign purpose.

It is important for the people who belong to God to go through difficult trials, and not to regard His discipline lightly or faint when He brings discipline and reproves us. We must remember that He disciplines us for our good and because He loves us as a Father.

One writer reminds us: **"How gracious God's design was in bringing them into this distress and danger. See what the meaning of it is (v.10): *Thou, O God! Hast proved us, and tried us.* Then we are likely to get good by our afflictions, when we look up on them under this notion, for then we may see God's grace and love at the**

**bottom of them and our honor, and benefit in the end of them. By afflictions, we are proved as silver in the fire.**

**That our graces, by being tried, may be made more evident, and so we may be approved, as silver, when it is touched and marked sterling, and this will be to *our praise at the appearing of Jesus Christ* (1 Peter 1:7), and perhaps in this world”.**

The trials of the people of God will always end well and that their end will be infinitely better than their beginning. Their times of troubles will end and the comforts they experience will be sweeter because of the previous trials. They will really begin to appreciate the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

**Verses 13 – 15. ... my mouth hath spoken... ... when I was in trouble.** When the psalmist was in dire straits, he vowed to offer sacrifices to God if He would deliver him. Now, God has delivered him, so he follows through. One writer suggests: **“we should be slow in making vows, but prompt in paying them.”**

Normally, thank offerings consisted of a portion that was burned on the altar and other portions that were shared by the worshiper and his friends. These sacrifices emphasized the joy of fellowship, along with thanksgiving to God for the blessing that prompted the thank offerings. But the sacrifices mentioned here are totally God-ward. Everything was consumed on the altar. One writer notes:

**“...They spoke of total dedication to God, suggesting, a mood of chastened rather than exuberant gratitude, as if to reflect the gravity of the threat that has now been lifted, and the depth of the offerer’s debt. The lavishness of the gifts in these verses underlines the point, saying in poetic fashion that the whole gamut of sacrificial beasts would scarcely do the occasion justice.”**

In New Testament terms, Jesus Christ is our God-ordained, acceptable sacrifice. His body, offered on the cross, is the once and for all sacrifice for sins that we need (Heb. 10:4-10). We can only approach God through Him. We can only worship God in spirit and truth after we have trusted in the shed blood of Christ.

However, there is another sacrifice of worship that we must offer. Paul describes it in Romans 12:1, *“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”* In other words, God’s great mercy towards us in Christ should move us to present our bodies to God as a worshipful sacrifice.

As Paul goes on to say, this involves not being conformed to this world, but being transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we work out in our experience God’s good, acceptable, and perfect will. He means that true worship flows out of first giving one’s self totally to God. We cannot make God’s praise glorious on an individual basis until we first trust in Christ and then give ourselves totally to Him.

**Verse 16.** In this final stanza, the psalmist is not addressing the nations (as in 66:5), but rather *“all who fear God”*. He invites us to *“come and hear”* as he tells what God *“has done for my soul.”*

In the first stanza (Psalm 66:1–4), all the nations are challenged to praise God. In the second stanza (66:5–7), Israel is to lead the praise before the nations by recounting God's mighty rescue of His people from Egypt. The third stanza (66:8–12) recalls either the Exodus or a more recent time of trouble and rescue. In the fourth stanza (66:13–15), the psalmist personally vows to offer sacrifices extravagantly to God as a response to His recent rescue.

... *what he hath done for my soul*... Here in this final stanza (verses 16–20), the psalmist begins a personal testimony regarding God's work in his life. His personal experience is about to become one of public declaration.

**Verse 17.** ... *cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue*... Here is another instance of parallelism that so often characterizes Hebrew poetry, with the words *cried unto him with my mouth* in the first statement reflects *extolled, with my tongue* in the second expression. The psalmist is offering one thought, which he repeats with similar words.

This singular thought is important: instead of immediately asking for help or complaining about something, the psalmist *extolled* God. ('extolled' is rendered "high praises" in Psalm 149:6.) This reminds us that our praise of God should come first, no matter the circumstances of life.

**Verse 18.** ... *If I regard wickedness in my heart*... in the middle of his testimony, the psalmist interjects an important principle for proper prayer.

... *the Lord will not hear*... hypocrites can offer prayers that impress those that hear, but God looks on the heart. We should not play games with Him. This does not mean that we must be perfect before we can pray, but it does mean that we should truly fear God and desire to be holy, so that we judge our sin on the heart level. We confess it openly before Him who sees it all. Then, cleansed by the blood of Christ, we can bring our requests to the Father and expect to be heard.

... *If I regard wickedness* .... this acknowledgment is also reflected by David in Psalm 32:3–5. The psalmist knows that the condition of his *heart* matters to God. There are certain conditions that hinder the effectiveness of prayers (Lam. 3:40–44; 1 Peter 3:7), and unconfessed sin is certainly one of them.

If we want God to answer our prayers, we must not regard (to look at with favor) sin in our hearts.

**Verse 19 – 20.** ... *verily God hath heard me* ... The fact that God did hear the psalmist leads him to end the psalm by blessing God for His lovingkindness, (covenant love, mercy).

In this final verse of praise that the psalmist's gratitude is not for the answered request alone, but for what it signifies: an unbroken relationship with God, which is pledged and since it might deservedly have been removed, it is ever a gift of grace.

In closing, the psalmist voices a praise blessing to God for attending to the his prayer. Going hand in hand with the psalmist's prayer being heard is God's continuing *mercy*. The word being translated occurs about two hundred and fifty times in the Old Testament, with varying translations such as "lovingkindness" (Psalm 17:7).

## **CONCLUSION**

Gratitude shines all through this Psalm. God is good and we should testify about God's goodness. Testimony and invitation must be made.

There will be bumps in the road but God is awesome. These bumps in the road are designed so that we will not slip. They are there to preserve our lives.

Despite the circumstances in the psalmist's day, God was still sovereign and all-powerful. He was still worthy of praise. He was still the judge who ruled all nations and knew the true condition of every individual human heart.

All the above remains true today. Although we are surrounded by those who do not fear God, we can do so nonetheless. Although we are surrounded by those who do not praise God, we can do so nonetheless. We can make a commitment to remind ourselves continually of His history with us. We can also encourage each other by sharing our personal testimonies of how He has demonstrated His strength in our lives.

As we do (or, perhaps, because we do), we will find ourselves submitting to His ways, regardless of whether those around us do so as well.

God has preserved His people. The people of Israel and the congregation of God, the church, have been preserved despite all the odds.

Both groups which constitute the remnant of God have failed many times, but God has judged, burdened, and refined so that the remnant still survive, and will learn more and more about the awesome works of God and will be able to tell the people of the world about our marvellous God. This must be our testimony!

If we hunger for eternal life and hunger to see the approving face of God the Father, then our desire is worth the suffering. People of God will certainly be able to say with the psalmist:

*"We went **through** fire and through water, But you brought us out to rich fulfillment".*