

The People Forgot

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Bible Verse: Psalm 106
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There is a circle of thought in some quarters that what evangelism really needs is for the ability of Christians to do works of power in front of people so that they would be so overwhelmed by the miraculous aspects of things that they would be compelled to believe. That is not true and that is a very false premise of evangelism as we're going to see in our study of Psalm 106 and I just want to say by way of preface that people do not need a miracle in front of their eyes in order to believe. They need a miracle in their hearts in order to believe which is rebirthed by the Holy Spirit or new birth by the Holy Spirit. A Christian is someone on whom the Spirit of God has worked, the Spirit of God has opened their eyes and changed their heart of stone to a heart of flesh and changed them from unbelief to belief as they sit under the sound of the word of God. Nothing that is outside a man can produce that kind of change inside him and unless the Spirit of God works inside a man, that change will not take place. Those of you that are here and you are not a Christian and you are hardened against the things of the Gospel, you need a work of the Spirit of God in your heart and it is a serious mistake for people to think, "Well, I'll just believe whenever I want. I'll live a life of sin and then, you know, on my deathbed I'll repent and believe." That's not how it works. The underlying premise and assumption of all of that is that it is within your power to do that and it's not. You need the Spirit of God to do a work on you or you will not believe and that's why it's all the more important for you to apply yourself to the things of God and to seek him and to ask him for that grace while you have your breath and your sentient mind.

So the whole charismatic movement when it comes to that kind of evangelism is premised on a fallacy that fundamentally misunderstands the depravity of the human heart and fundamentally misunderstands what it takes for a man to be converted. We don't need things presented to us. Many many people saw the miracles of Christ and walked away unbelieving. If it was simply inherent in the power of a miracle to change a heart from unbelief to belief, Christ would have had all kinds of hordes following him. He didn't and it was because the problem was within the sinful heart of man.

I think that that introduction is helpful for us to see and to understand what's going on in Psalm 106. Psalm 106 is paired with Psalm 105 in that Psalm 105, as we saw last time, was a praise to God because he remembered his covenant with Abraham, and Psalm 105 praises God for his covenant faithfulness to Israel throughout their history. Psalm 106 is a

little bit like a reverse bookend that in that Psalm 106 is a protracted confession of Israel's unfaithfulness to God.

Now the Psalm is framed in the context of praise and it is in that sense a Psalm of praise to God. Look at the bookend verses in verse 1, Psalm 106:1, "Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting." It opens on a note of praise. Verse 48 closes on the note of praise, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, From everlasting even to everlasting. And let all the people say, 'Amen.' Praise the LORD!"

So again, the bookends give us the sense and the understanding that this is meant to communicate a unit of thought that is praising God but here in Psalm 106, it is praise rendered in a minor key, a praise rendered in somber tones. It is mainly a Psalm of confession as measured by the length of its center section, and in this Psalm it is confessing how the people of Israel were known for their rebellion and for their forgetfulness of God and I just want to highlight this for you with some key verses. In verse 7, look at it with me, it says, "Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses," they didn't remember, they rebelled. Verse 33 says, "they were rebellious against His Spirit, He," meaning Moses, "spoke rashly with his lips," but he spoke rashly as he was responding to the rebellion of the people of Israel. In verse 43 it says, "Many times [God] would deliver them; They, however, were rebellious in their counsel, And so sank down in their iniquity." In verse 13 you see the forgetfulness of the people, Psalm 106:13, "They quickly forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel, But craved intensely in the wilderness." And in verse 21, "They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt, Wonders in the land of Ham And awesome things by the Red Sea." What you'll see as we go through the entirety of the Psalm is this theme of rebellion, this theme of forgetfulness is marking the confession of sin that is taking place throughout the Psalm. In contrast to the covenant faithfulness of God, the so-called covenant people were forgetful, they were rebellious, and they were completely unworthy of the faithfulness that God was showing to them, and so Psalm 106 praises God for the fact that he still delivered his people even though they proved time and again that they were utterly unworthy of that deliverance. It shows us something about the nature of God that he is willing to deliver his people when they are like that, and we see something about the vast nature of the grace and mercy of God that it is extended on people who are completely unworthy, people who have no claim, who have no merit to call upon such grace upon them. It's not because they were a good people that God blessed them like this, they were a bad people and God blessed them anyway. It's not because they were a great people in number that they were saved, Scripture specifically says God chose them because they were small in number. There was nothing in Israel that merited the favor that God showed to them, just as now in New Testament times there is nothing in us that prompted him to extend his grace to us.

So we need to see this clearly from Scripture, but we'll break the Psalm down into three sections, two short sections on either end with a long section in between. The first section is we find a brief expression of praise. If you're taking notes, you can give that title to the

first five verses: a brief expression of praise. And in verse 1, you see him opening up, as we've seen,

1 Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

He is ascribing blessing to the name of God in response to the attributes of God, the perfections of God. He is good. His loyal love is forever upon his people and that is reason for his people to give thanks. So great is his goodness, so great are his wonders toward his people that it is impossible to number them and to speak adequately about them. He asked the rhetorical question in verse 2,

2 Who can speak of the mighty deeds of the LORD, Or can show forth all His praise? 3 How blessed are those who keep justice, Who practice righteousness at all times!

In other words, these people who are practicing justice, these people who are oriented toward righteousness are those people who truly belong to the Lord.

So he is extolling the perfections of Yahweh. "Yahweh is good. Yahweh's lovingkindness is everlasting. Yahweh is all-powerful. Yahweh's deeds are too many to describe." So there's this wonderful depth of praise that he opens up in a summary fashion as he begins the Psalm, and so you might expect as you start the Psalm, you might be expecting it to be a lengthy exposition of the attributes of God, but that's not the direction that he takes it as we will see in a moment, but his praise as he speaks about the goodness of God toward his people, his praise turns into a bit of a personal request that he, himself, might personally share in the blessing, verse 4, when he says,

4 Remember me, O LORD, in Your favor toward Your people; Visit me with Your salvation, 5 That I may see the prosperity of Your chosen ones, That I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, That I may glory with Your inheritance.

Five times in those two verses you see the first person singular aspect of his praise: me, me, I, I, I, and there is this desire that he approaches God with, "God, I want to share in those blessings. Just as You've shown this to Your people in general, Father, make it particular to me as well." A very fine prayer for those of you who are outside of Christ as you see time and time again, as you come and sit under the word of God and you see Christ extolled before you, you see Christ extended to you, you see Christ promised to you from his word, that he receives all who come to him. Well, you know, I just, I can't, I just have to be really candid in the position that I have here and I worry about some of you, that your hearts just get hard against that and that the more the sun shines on you and the warmth of the sunshine of God's word shines on you, it's not melting your heart, it's rather functioning like heat on clay and making you hard toward it.

Well, friends, that worries me. You young people, that worries me about you, that you could come and just be cold and indifferent again and again and again and, you know, it's the nature of young people that, you know, "Well, I have to come because my parents make me," and not recognizing the blessing that is upon you to have these things presented to you. My point being here that as you're sitting under the word of God, your prayer should be, it's not just the young people, some of you old folks with old, hard, sclerotic hearts as well, to adopt this prayer and to have it change in your heart, "God, I've been so hard but open my eyes and remember me as I hear about this favor that You have to Your people. Visit me with Your salvation. Come to me and help me." Scripture says, Christ said that you should seek after the Lord while he may be found. I don't know, I just, you know, I just worry that on judgment day somehow I'll be a witness to seeing some sent away who sat under the sound of the word of God and ignored all the pleadings to avoid that destination and weren't willing to heed it and to humble your heart before Christ and to seek it while it could be found. You know, you go out and you've got a foul mouth as you interact with God's people. I just can't comprehend, I can't comprehend that.

So what we see here is the psalmist inviting us to ask God to show us a personal degree of favor in his interactions with his people. "Father, don't simply be kind to the people as a group, visit me with Your salvation. Share it to me. Open my heart. Help me," and to interact with the word of God in that humble searching way that says, "God, make me an object of Your grace as well." He's willing to do that. Christ came because he came to save sinners just like you. He is eager to do that and he has the power to do that, and the only thing that stands between you and the blessing of God in salvation is your own hard, sinful, rebellious heart, and to the extent that you stand outside the blessings of salvation, the blessings of Christ, you are the one to blame, not him.

So we see that as we move on into the Psalm as we come to our second section here, we could say, we could call this second section a long confession of sin. A long confession of sin. His praise in the first five verses goes immediately without much transition into a confession of sin. Look at verse 6 with me. He says,

6 We have sinned like our fathers, We have committed iniquity, we have behaved wickedly.

Notice he's shifted to plural pronouns as he's making a corporate confession now, confessing the sins of his contemporaries and realizing that the sins of his contemporaries are consistent with the sins of the people throughout all of the generations of Israel. He says, "We've sinned just like our fathers. We've committed iniquity just like they did. We've behaved wickedly just like they did." There's a threefold confession of sin just in that one verse of verse 6. Look at it there as we just point these things out. He says, "We have sinned, we have committed iniquity, we have behaved wickedly." Do you realize that as he's coming and he's offering this praise and he's about to embark on this long section of confession of sin, that he has adopted a posture of utter humility and unworthiness as he does so? And in this confession is his confession of sin and iniquity and wicked behavior, he's confessing that he has no right or claim upon God in what he is

saying. The confession of sin is an acknowledgment of unworthiness. It is implicitly a request for grace, for unmerited kindness, for a favor that he does not deserve as he confesses his sin.

What I want you to see as you go on is that he starts to make a series of specific confessions of past national sins in this section. He says,

7 Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses, But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea.

And so what we see here before we plunge into the depths of the lengthy confession that's made here, I want you to see something that's very practical for us even as believers is to understand that praising God and prayer that is devoted to praise to him is linked with true confession of sin. True praise has an aspect of confession of sin that is included in it, and likewise confession of sin leads to praise as well. As I'm confessing my sin, I'm acknowledging my iniquity before God and I am praising him for the fact that he's graciously willing to receive me nonetheless: that in Christ I have forgiveness; that in the shed blood of Christ I have reconciliation with God even though by nature I've sinned my way out of that, there is reconciliation to be found in Christ who is the manifestation of the grace of God to his people. So praise is not sharply distinguished from confession, the two go together in the prayers of the people of God.

Even in fact, look at Matthew's 6 and you'll see this point from a New Testament perspective. Someone was asking me, I can't remember the context as I stand here, someone was asking me about prayer very recently and whenever you're thinking about prayer as a New Testament believer, you can always come back to foundational principles that Jesus taught us in what's known as the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9, and what I'm showing you here is that a healthy balance in prayer includes aspects of adoration along with prayers of confession as well. Verse 9 of Matthew 6, Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name." Praise the Lord, in other words. Bless the Lord. "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread." Ah, here it is, right? Verse 12, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." True praise leads into a true confession of sin.

And you know, I just, you know, I can't separate out my teaching role from my pastoral role when I stand in the pulpit and I don't think that I'm supposed to. I think those are meant to be blended in when the word of God is taught as it's supposed to be, but for those of you that perhaps are abiding in a sinful pattern of life and refusing to repent and reject the sinful ways that you've cultivated over time, I want you to understand that your praise is empty. It is nothing more than hypocrisy if it is not joined with repentance and confession of sin that is in your life. It would be better for you not to pray at all than to pray with known, hardened, unconfessed, unrepented sin in your life. We should not mock a holy God by coming and pretending to praise him with our lips when our lives are denying everything that we're saying, right? There should not be any room for that

kind of hypocrisy in the believing heart and I know that some of you need to hear this and not only hear it but you need to heed it. So we'll leave it there for now.

Let's look more at this confession of sin. He confesses different national historic sins in three different parts of Israel's history. First of all, he confesses their sin at the Red Sea as we started to see in verse 7 and let's look at it there again. He's confessing sin, we see that from verse 6, "we have sinned, we have committed iniquity, we have behaved wickedly," and then he gets specific. What was it that our fathers did? How did they sin? Verse 7,

7 Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses, But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea.

And so he's starting his confession of sin with Israel's sin at the Red Sea when they rebelled against God as Pharaoh was bearing down upon them. We can look at the historical account of that in Exodus 14. Turn back there with me, if you will. Exodus 14 in verse 10, "As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD. Then they said to Moses, 'Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, "Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians"? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.'" God had delivered them by his mighty hand with 10 miraculous plagues and they saw the distinction that God made between Egypt and Israel. This was so recent in their national experience and they went out in the power of God, and no sooner had they gotten out than they complained and said, "I wish we had never left. I wish we were still in slavery in Egypt," is what they were saying, and their fearful grumbling at that moment in their national existence, beloved, was an act of faithless rebellion against God. They had just witnessed the miraculous plagues but they forgot and they rebelled and they wanted to go back, and despite their sin and ingratitude, God still delivered them.

Look at verse 8 and notice that it says there, I don't want you to miss this, that this was just not an act of excusable fear as they saw Pharaoh coming down on them, the Bible says it was rebellion. It was sin. It was iniquity. It was wicked for them to be like that, and yet what do we see God doing in verse 8? "Nevertheless He saved them for the sake of His name." For his own glory. Why does God forgive us? Why does God save us? Not for anything in us, it's for his own glory, it's for the sake of his name.

8 ... He saved them for the sake of His name, That He might make His power known. 9 Thus He rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up, And He led them through the deeps, as through the wilderness. 10 So He saved them from the hand of the one who hated them, And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. 11 The waters covered their adversaries; Not one of them was left.

You remember that from the story. We don't need to go back and read it. God parted the waters, the sons of Israel went through on dry land, when the army of Egypt tried to follow them in, God brought the waters back upon them and they all drowned, not one of them was left, verse 11. Then in verse 12,

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

And so this is what happened at the Red Sea. They sinned at the Red Sea but God delivered them and it says there in verse 12 that they sang his praise. Now that might sound like something good but the reality was it was just a superficial faith that was satisfied with a momentary deliverance and their hearts had not turned to God at all as shown by what follows in verse 13.

13 They quickly forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel, 14
But craved intensely in the wilderness, And tempted God in the desert.

So while they praised him momentarily, they quickly went back to their rebellious ways. Scripture warns against this kind of superficial faith. Jesus taught in his parable of the sower that sometimes the seed falls on shallow ground and a plant quickly sprouts up but it withers and it dies under the heat very quickly because it has no deep root to sustain itself. Jesus is not commending that kind of quick and superficial faith, he's warning against it and condemning it.

Now sometimes and I set aside a series of messages that I was planning to preach on altar calls but I might as well just mention something here right now, the whole premise behind altar calls, you know, the idea that people come forward to receive Christ after hearing an evangelistic message, some of you grew up in that kind of environment, I did in my younger days and was well acquainted with that and, you know, the drawn out singing of, "Just as I am," and so on. But the whole premise of that is that people need to make an immediate decision and step forward and come forward to show forth their faith, and sometimes it's almost suggested that this is the thing that you must do in order to be saved without which you cannot be saved. Well, what I want you to see is that that kind of immediate, pressured, superficial, immediate response is not necessarily the sign of a true conversion at all. This is not the way that the Bible presents ministry and conversion taking place because it encourages, it invites, it fosters an atmosphere where people make an immediate, unthinking decision based on emotional influences more than responding to the truth, and many books have been written showing the fact that 90% of the people who respond to these kinds of things are not following Christ shortly thereafter and yet they are conditioned to think that they've been saved because they walked forward in an aisle and coming forward was the way that they could receive Christ. But there's no change. It doesn't result in a life change. They're not truly born again. There was no change in their heart, there was just a change in their physical location because they walked a few steps.

So beloved, the whole point here that I'm trying to make here is that we have to beware of superficial responses to truth, superficial responses to the word of God. People sometimes

wonder why don't you do an altar call here? Well, it's because I don't want to encourage those kinds of superficial responses and make people think that they're saved because of something that they did. There is nothing that you can do to save yourself like that and I don't want to be a party to creating false impressions in the minds of people or to pressure them into a superficial response that they have not thought about, considered, or that they don't deeply mean from the depths of the heart.

Here in Israel, go back to Psalm 106 now, here in Psalm 106:13, oh, they were singing his praise in verse 12 but in verse 13 they quickly forgot. They had not experienced a saving work of the Spirit in their hearts. It just vanished like smoke in the wind and it was shown by their subsequent national behavior that their faith was superficial.

Well, God brought them through the Red Sea. They moved into the wilderness and what you see in an extended portion of Psalm 106 is their sin in the wilderness, their sin in the wilderness, and we're just going to have for the sake of time, we're just going to allude to the Old Testament passages where this is found without turning there or we would be here all night. But here in Psalm 106, the first thing that he confesses is he turns to their sin in the wilderness, is he confesses their greed in their wilderness wanderings. Now remember from reading your Old Testament that God was daily providing manna for them from heaven. Every day they were experiencing the miraculous provision of God and they had everything that they needed for their bodily needs through the manna that God provided for them, but they were discontent with his provision. They did not like that. They craved intensely in the wilderness, verse 14, they tempted God in the desert. They wanted other kinds of food and so he gave them their request but he sent a wasting disease among them. You can see this recorded in Numbers 11, especially in verse 33. God gave them meat but he sent a plague upon them indicating that he would give them their desire but it was a sinful request that they made, a sin of greed, a sin of ingratitude, a sin of discontentment and therefore the meat that they asked for was accompanied by a plague upon them. They were sinning in the wilderness.

Let's step back for a moment and just remember what he is doing here is he is giving a survey over the history of Israel cataloguing in multiple ways the way that Israel sinned against God despite his constant goodness to them. And so they sinned in their discontent, in their greed. Secondly, they were jealous against God's appointed leadership. They were jealous against God's appointed leadership. You see this in verse 16 through 18.

16 When they became envious of Moses in the camp, And of Aaron, the holy one of the LORD, 17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, And engulfed the company of Abiram. 18 And a fire blazed up in their company; The flame consumed the wicked.

The entire story is told in Numbers 16 but the people were rebelling against Moses and Aaron, "Who appointed you to lead the people? We have equal ability to lead. Our thoughts and opinions should be considered here." Completely rejecting and overlooking the fact that God was the one who had established their leadership for them.

So God established leadership. When they rebelled against the leadership, his judgment upon them was just and the judgment was severe, they died for it, verse 17, "The earth opened and swallowed them up. A fire blazed up in their company and the flame consumed the wicked." Two things that I would have you see as we're contemplating that. One is the severity of the judgment upon their sin, and secondly, just seeing how there was a whole company of people that were involved with them. The wickedness of their sin is shown by the judgment that it brought upon them. Sin deserved death, the wages of sin is death and they experienced that at the hands of a holy God.

And so they sinned at the Red Sea, they're sinning in the wilderness as well. In verse 19 he confesses their idolatry from an earlier period in Exodus 32. Look at verse 19,

19 They made a calf in Horeb And worshiped a molten image. 20 Thus they exchanged their glory For the image of an ox that eats grass. [This is when Moses was up on the mountain.] 21 They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt, 22 Wonders in the land of Ham And awesome things by the Red Sea.

They saw all of this but they forgot and they rebelled and they made a molten image instead of continuing on in the worship of the invisible God who had actually delivered them, and because they forgot, they rebelled against him.

Look at verse 23,

23 Therefore [God] said that He would destroy them, Had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before Him, To turn away His wrath from destroying them.

So they sinned with a molten image. They sinned in rebellion against God's leadership. They sinned in their greed. They sinned in their idolatry. This is just a multitude of sins indicating that their hearts were dead, they were cold, they were lifeless, they had not been born again.

Now going on, they sinned in their fear and rebellion under Moses and here it's referring to what we're about to read. You'll remember that they sent spies out to seek out the land and to spy out the land. They sent 12 spies, 10 of them came back and said, "It's too dangerous, we can't go," and the people wept and cried and, "Woe, we're gonna die again." Two of them, Caleb and Joshua, disagreed and said, "Let's go forward and conquer the land." What did they do in response to that? Verse 24, at that turning point in their national existence, verse 24,

24 ... they despised the pleasant land; They did not believe in His word, 25 But grumbled in their tents; They did not listen to the voice of the LORD. 26 Therefore He swore to them That He would cast them down in the

wilderness, 27 And that He would cast their seed among the nations And scatter them in the lands.

An entire generation with two exceptions, Caleb and Joshua, over the age of 20 died in the wilderness because of their rebellion against God in this way.

He goes on, the psalmist does, and he shows how they engaged in false religion in verse 28.

28 They joined themselves also to Baal-peor, And ate sacrifices offered to the dead. 29 Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds, And the plague broke out among them. 30 Then Phinehas stood up and interposed, And so the plague was stayed. 31 And it was reckoned to him for righteousness, To all generations forever.

False religion. One man stood in the gap. Just like Moses stood in the gap, Phineas stood in the gap for the Lord.

You go on and you see that they rebelled against the Holy Spirit in verse 32,

32 They also provoked Him to wrath at the waters of Meribah, So that it went hard with Moses on their account; 33 Because they were rebellious against His Spirit, He spoke rashly with his lips.

Moses got so frustrated with them that he acted sinfully and God said that he would no longer enter into the Promised Land. In his anger, Moses struck the rock in disobedience to the Lord and lost his privilege of entering into the land that God had promised. Now beloved, sin must be serious if even Moses suffers discipline as a result of it, and once they finally did get into the Promised Land, they were still sinning. They sinned when they compromised with the pagan nations in the book of Judges 1.

Look at verse 34 with me,

34 They did not destroy the peoples, As the LORD commanded them, 35 But they mingled with the nations And learned their practices, 36 And served their idols, Which became a snare to them.

How degraded did they become? It's shocking. Look at verse 37 with me,

37 They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons, 38 And shed innocent blood, The blood of their sons and their daughters, Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; And the land was polluted with the blood. 39 Thus they became unclean in their practices, And played the harlot in their deeds.

Step back with me now. At the Red Sea they rebelled even though they had seen the plagues and the mighty way that God had delivered them from Egypt. In the wilderness they rebelled even though they were daily receiving the provision of manna. They had the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire to lead them. There was this miraculous presence of God. He had given them leadership under Moses and Aaron by which they could move forward and they rebelled. Even once they were in the Promised Land and Joshua had started the initial conquest, the book of Judges is a record of how they continually rebelled. God would send discipline, they would cry out for relief, he would send a delivery like Gideon or Samson but they would fall right back into it again. This whole national pattern of rebellion marks the people.

For centuries Israel rebelled against God and, look, the only way that we can properly understand that, I think, in part anyway, is to go back to Exodus 19, go back to Exodus 19 and just after God had brought them out of Egypt, he tells them why he did. In Exodus 19:4, God tells Moses to say this to the sons of Israel, verse 4, "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." God called them out. They were to be his people, a people uniquely devoted to his glory to minister the word of God to nations, but for centuries they rebelled against that. It was an utter perversion of the reason that they existed. They existed to be the people of God and yet they rebelled against God repeatedly again and again and again, and what their national history shows, beloved, is that they had hearts of stone. They were not able to believe and respond as they should and their extended history shows that they never would apart from a miraculous intervention of God to save them, and to bring a spiritual deliverance to them that was not unlike the physical deliverance that he had given them in Egypt.

They needed not only to be delivered from slavery to Egypt, they needed to be delivered from the sinfulness of their own hearts and if you will turn to the book of Ezekiel 36, you'll see why the new covenant was necessary. In Ezekiel 36, they needed a new heart and he says in Ezekiel 36:26 he says, "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." They needed a new heart. Their national history showed that they did not have the ability to believe and to follow God on their own and the repeated rebellion was proof enough that the only reason they continued in their existence was that God was having mercy upon them. And so God had brought discipline upon them again and again.

Turn back to Psalm 106 with me, if you will. Psalm 106. In light of all of this sin, what did God do? He brought discipline upon them in verse 40.

40 ... the anger of the LORD was kindled against His people And He
abhorred His inheritance. 41 Then He gave them into the hand of the
nations, And those who hated them ruled over them. 42 Their enemies also
oppressed them, And they were subdued under their power. 43 Many

times He would deliver them; They, however, were rebellious in their counsel, And so sank down in their iniquity.

This was the history of Israel. In the days of Judges, foreign nations oppressed them. In the northern kingdom, Israel took them into exile as God's judgment upon them. Later the nation of Babylon came and took the southern kingdom into exile as well. For centuries they had rebelled, God brings judgment upon them so that it says in verse 41, "He gave them into the hand of the nations, And those who hated them ruled over them." Beloved, as you read the Old Testament, as you see the history of Israel and you see the judgment that God brought upon them, sometimes a wicked accusation is made against God that he's only a God of wrath in the Old Testament and, you know, he's so severe in his dealings with his people. That is a wicked falsehood to make against God. God dealt graciously with his people. He forebore with them for centuries and centuries in light of this kind of repeated rebellion against him. The accusation that is to be made, the right accusation is not to impugn the goodness of God against his people, it is to recognize that his Old Testament people were rebellious from the start and they were marked by this rebellion for centuries, and that the discipline that he brought upon them was just. Israel had proven beyond a doubt that left to their own devices they would never believe and obey.

What was true of Israel is true of mankind in general. Man is a rebel at heart. He forgets the word of God. He is ungrateful to God and that is not a minor matter. That ingratitude is not just a matter of having a bad attitude, it is a sin of most serious consequence that brings down the wrath of God and I want you to see this from Romans 1, if you'll turn there with me. Romans 1. Look, this should provoke in us the fear of God. This should provoke in us a sense of his holiness that leads us to like confession of sin. This ingratitude brings about his wrath, Romans 1:18, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." Now watch, this universal condemnation is an expansion of the condemnation that was brought upon Israel. Verse 21, "even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Even in nature you can see that God is a great. Even in nature you can see that he is worthy of praise and the refusal of man to give thanks and honor to this God who is revealed in nature is a matter that Scripture calls morally culpable. It is sinful. It is wicked. It provokes his judgment against ungrateful men. So he's a rebel at heart and part of his rebellion is shown in his ingratitude.

We'll go back to Psalm 106 with all of those things in mind. What you have in this long confession of sin that we have seen, what you have is a cumulative picture that is presented. He doesn't focus simply on one episode, he piles episode upon episode upon episode of rebellion in the history of Israel to make this overwhelming case against them to show that they were utterly without excuse, that their rebellion was severe. So each

individual case was proof enough but when you combine them, you're left with this overwhelming thing that just brings you to utter silence. Sometimes when attorneys are making arguments for their clients in court, they will make arguments that are independent of one another but they pile up argument 1, argument 2, argument 3, any one of the arguments is sufficient to render a verdict for his client but the three or four or five of them taken together makes it overwhelmingly obvious that the only way that you can rule is in favor of my client, the attorney says. Well, something like that is taking place in Psalm 106. You have this cumulative argument that is made over the course of their history illustrated by so many different kinds of sins in so many different places that they're left utterly without excuse. They are silenced by the way that they forgot and the way that they rebelled.

So that was the end of the story, right? Not quite. Not quite at all. The final section of Psalm 106 we could call a closing prayer in light of God's deliverance. A closing prayer of God's deliverance. God had brought discipline upon his people but even then, even after all of that, he remembered his promise to Abraham.

Look at verse 44, this great word "nevertheless." Nevertheless. Despite everything that I've said, the psalmist is saying in a sense, in the prior 43 verses, nevertheless, despite all of the complete obvious unworthiness of Israel,

44 Nevertheless [God] looked upon their distress When He heard their cry;
45 And He remembered His covenant for their sake, And relented according to the greatness of His lovingkindness.

How great the mercy of God. How great the loyal love of God. How great his faithfulness to those promises that he had made to Abraham centuries earlier, so much so that he relented even despite so much provocation that in verse 46,

46 He also made them objects of compassion In the presence of all their captors.

If this is an allusion to the Babylonian exile, God sent them away for 70 years but then brought them back to the land. After all of this, after a millennia almost of rebellion, God still brought them back and showed compassion upon them.

Now we've rushed through this very long Psalm for the sake of time but there's been enough here for you to learn the preeminent lesson that leads to the praise in the closing verse. Look at that sweep of history and look beyond the sin of Israel and look beyond it to see what the psalmist is teaching about the nature of God. Look at that whole sweep of history and learn. God rescues unworthy people when they call upon him. God saves sinners just like you when they cry out for mercy to Jesus Christ. There is this overwhelming beacon of light that shines into the darkness of man's sin when you see God saving Israel despite all of this sordid history of theirs; he still delivers them and responds graciously to when they call upon him and that teaches us something about the nature of God. Israel was so faithless and God was so faithful. And having reviewed that

history, the psalmist has hope. He sees all of this and he prays for further mercy. In some ways the prior 46 verses are a prelude to the prayer that he offers up in verse 47. If this is spoken in the Babylonian exile, it makes perfect sense, it's not necessarily from that historical setting but he says in verse 47,

47 Save us, O LORD our God, And gather us from among the nations, To give thanks to Your holy name And glory in Your praise.

What he's saying here is and he spent 46 verses to build it up so that the prayer would be potent. He doesn't need to pray for another 48 verses, he can express it in the briefest of terms here saying, "God," and here's what he's saying, "God, in light of the way that You have shown grace to Your people throughout the centuries, in light of the fact that You are an unchanging God, in light of that, in light of who You have revealed Yourself to be, in light of how You have dealt with Your people throughout the course of their history and You have shown grace in the past, God, I'm asking You now to save us and gather us from among the nations. I'm just asking You to do what You've always done before, be consistent with who You have revealed Yourself to be and show mercy on us even though," verse 6, "we have sinned like our fathers, we have committed iniquity and behaved wickedly. God, save us anyway." He is appealing for God's grace to operate afresh.

He's acknowledged that it's undeserved but he's asking and look for the reason that he asks there at the end of verse 47, he says, "Save us, gather us to give thanks to Your holy name and to glory in Your praise." You see, he's not merely asking for a personal deliverance because his situation is bad and the situation of the people is bad. That's true but that's not the highest end of his praise. He's saying, "God, save us so that we could fulfill the purpose of Your people, that we would praise You and to honor You and give thanks to You. That's what Your people should do. Save us so that we're able to do that. Save us so that we could praise You once again."

And he ends on a confident note that God would answer. Look at verse 48. He says,

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

He's praising God, he ends on this note of praise because he is confident that God will answer in his grace so that he does not have to wait for the deliverance to take place, he can praise God now as if God had already given the requested mercy. The long confession gave rise to a short prayer that gave rise further to a heartfelt praise.

And this ends Book IV of the Psalter, Psalms 90 to 106. He's praising God and you go through all of the detail in order to make a simple point, the simple point might sound flippant without all of the detail, with all of the detail the simple point suddenly becomes simply profound, majestic even: God is worthy of praise because God gives grace to undeserving people. Do you see it? Israel, so unworthy. God gave grace to them. Oh, praise God, that's what he's like, a merciful, gracious, kind, patient God.

Now beloved, let's just make it personal here as we close. Those of you that are Christians now, isn't that your testimony? Hasn't God been gracious to you despite all of your sin, your sin before your conversion, your sin after your conversion? Hasn't God given you grace that you did not deserve? Then isn't that grounds to thank him afresh and praise him again for his goodness? And isn't that the message of the Gospel that we carry out to undeserving people? Jesus Christ died for sinners while they were still his enemies. Jesus Christ will receive a sinner just like you and give you new life. He simply calls you to come even in your guilt for grace, and you can know that he will be gracious to you because that's who he is. That's what he does. He's been doing it for millennia for his people. He's been gracious to unworthy people who cry out to him in repentant faith. What a great God. What a great Gospel. So we join on this side of the cross and with the psalmist we say, "Praise the Lord."

Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for Your matchless grace. We thank You that You showed grace to us when we first cried out under the influence of the Holy Spirit for grace in our sin and You saved us. Thank You for that. Thank You for the grace that You have shown to us throughout the process of sanctification and our halting efforts and our inconsistent desires, You've been gracious and you've kept us. Thank You for that even greater future grace that we will see when we gather around the banquet table of the Lamb and celebrate with the saints of all of the ages in the glories of Your grace to sinful people. To think that You would choose us and bring us to Christ and that we might share in that though we ourselves were dead in sin and full of rebellion against Your word, God, You are gracious to undeserving sinners, You've been gracious to us and therefore we join with the psalmist in simply saying, "Praise the Lord." Through the name of Christ who loved us and gave Himself up for us we pray. Amen.