

Rhema Christian Center  
Triumphant Tuesday & Wisdom Wednesday Bible Study  
(September 12 & 13, 2023)

**PSALM 106**

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**MAN'S UNFAITHFULNESS AND GOD'S MERCY**

Psalm 106 is a psalm of national lament. A lament is a prayer for help borne out of pain. It's not only mourning over our sin, but it's asking the Lord for His forgiveness when we fail Him. Some commentators believe this psalm was written by a Levite who had returned from Babylon after 70 years of captivity and others believe it was written by David.

Like Psalm 105, this psalm traces the history of Israel, but for a different purpose. Last week the emphasis was on God's grace and faithfulness. This week the focus is on the Israel's unfaithfulness and God's mercy.

This Psalm begins by giving praise unto the LORD. Every generation of God's people (*that includes us*) can look at this verse and join in with praise and thanksgiving at the goodness of God because He has truly been good.

**A Call to Praise (1-5)**

***<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD! Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! for His mercy endures forever.***

***<sup>2</sup>Praising God for His mighty acts. Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? Who can declare all His praise? <sup>3</sup>Blessed are those who keep justice, and he who does righteousness at all times!***

***<sup>4</sup>Remember me, O LORD, with the favor You have toward Your people. Oh, visit me with your salvation, <sup>5</sup>that I may see the benefit of Your chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory with your inheritance.***

- Who can truly praise the Lord?
  - Those who know God through faith in Jesus Christ.
  - Those who obey Him.
  - Those who call upon the Lord.
  - Those who trust in the promises of God.

The psalmist is also praying in this verse for personal deliverance. He says to God, *Oh, visit me with Your salvation*. There is no salvation apart from the Lord, and He must visit us with it or we shall never obtain it.

**Confession of Sin and Cry for Mercy (6-7)**

***<sup>6</sup>We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. <sup>7</sup>Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; they did not remember the multitude of Your mercies, but rebelled by the sea—the Red Sea.***

The psalmist acknowledges the perpetual sinfulness of Israel, including that of his own generation. He is confessing his sins before God. He is also saying that his ancestors sinned and were forgiven. They are not in this by themselves. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

We Christians are forgiven of all our iniquity. Not even one person, aside from Jesus, has ever lived on this earth a perfect life. Our hope is in Jesus. He took our sin and traded it for His righteousness. Therefore, we are now clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Verse 7 indicates that when the first real test came upon these Israelites, they forgot that God had delivered them with the ten plagues out of Egypt. They panicked at the Red Sea. They saw the sea before them and did not trust God to get them out of this problem. Isn't that just the way we are sometimes? The first time we face a problem, we forget that Jesus is the answer. If He could take them out of Egypt, He certainly could get them across the Red Sea. Do you have Red Sea in your life that it seems impossible to cross?

The Israelites were looking back instead of looking up – they were walking by sight and not by faith. When life goes contrary to where we want it to go, look to Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith.

### **God's Mercy to a Rebellious People (8-12)**

**<sup>8</sup>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.**

God saved them even though they did not have faith to believe. He defamed the gods of Egypt that He might make His mighty powers known. He defied everyone of the Egyptian gods. Now, the world would know beyond a shadow of doubt that the LORD is God.

The Israelites sang and danced because God gave them the victory, but the celebration was short lived. The Israelites soon responded to God's great deliverance with ingratitude and rebellion. Seeds of unbelief buried in the hearts of the Israelites took root and bore bitter fruit in the years to come. "The Lord took Israel out of Egypt in one night, but it took Him forty years to take Egypt out of Israel.

As we look at the sequence of events written in this psalm, please note that they are not in chronological order. The purpose of the psalm is to show the disobedience of Israel and God's mercy.

## **DESERT WANDERINGS**

### **In the wilderness, Israel tempted God (13-15)**

**<sup>13</sup>They soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel, <sup>14</sup>but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert. <sup>15</sup>And He gave them their request but sent leanness into**

**their soul.**

The complaint to Moses was *“If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!”* (Numbers 11:5-6)

- Moses became upset and complained to God. *“Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant to the land you promised on oath to their ancestors? Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, ‘Give us meat to eat!’* (Numbers 11:12-13)
- God gave the Israelites the meat they craved. Yet, the meat was sent from God with an associated curse and what they wanted became something bad.
- While the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the LORD burned against the people, and He struck them with a severe plague

When we allow ungodly cravings to rule our lives, God may send what we crave – and leanness into our soul as well. It’s better to deny oneself those cravings and enjoy a healthy soul. *“They had their desire, but their souls were starved.”* (Meyer)

We should always pray or ask God for things according to his promises and according to his will. Never ask for things with the wrong motives or things that satisfy our selfish desires. You might get more than you bargained for.

### **In the wilderness, Korah and Company Rebel Against Moses (16-18)**

**<sup>16</sup>When they envied Moses in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD, <sup>17</sup>the earth opened up and swallowed Dathan, and covered the faction of Abiram. A fire was kindled in their company; <sup>19</sup>The flame burned up the wicked.**

This refers to the rebellion led by Korah, a Levite, whose responsibility was to carry the tabernacle furnishings. However, Korah was not satisfied with that task; he wanted to function at the altar as a priest.

- Korah believed that Moses and Aaron were arrogant and proud, so he and his company of men came to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, *“You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD’s assembly?”* (Numbers 16:3).
- *When Moses heard this, he fell facedown. <sup>5</sup> Then he said to Korah and all his followers: “In the morning the LORD will show who belongs to Him and who is holy, and He will have that person come near him. The man He chooses he will cause to come near him. <sup>6</sup> You, Korah, and all your followers are to do this: Take censers <sup>7</sup> and tomorrow put burning coals and incense in them before the LORD. The man the LORD chooses will be the one who is holy. You Levites have gone too far!”* (Numbers 16:5-7)

- The next day when Korah and company gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron at the entrance to the tent of meeting, the glory of the LORD appeared to the entire assembly. The Lord told Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from this assembly so He could put an end to them at once.” (Numbers 16:16-21)
- What happened? The earth opens up and swallows Korah, Dothan and Abiram alive with their families and all their stuff. Then a fire came from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense. These rebels were opposing the will of God, for it was the Lord who chose Moses and Aaron to lead the nation. Respect for God’s leaders is important to the success of the Lord’s work.
- The Apostle Paul said, *“Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”* (Hebrews 13:17)

### ISRAEL’S ENGAGEMENT IN IDOLATRY

#### The Golden Calf (19-23)

**<sup>19</sup>They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped the molded image. <sup>20</sup>Thus they changed their glory into the image of an ox that eats grass. <sup>21</sup>They forgot God their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt, <sup>22</sup>wondrous works in the land of Ham, awesome things by the Red Sea. <sup>23</sup>Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He destroy *them*.**

- For 40 days Moses had been on Mt. Sinai with the Lord and the people were nervous. In spite of all that God had done, Israel’s heart was not right. While Moses was on Sinai, *“They said to Aaron “Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.”*
- Aaron went right along with the people.
- God told Moses, *“Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt.”* They had the nerve to say that the golden calf is the god that brought us out of Egypt. God explained to Moses that He would **destroy** this rebellious people and build the nation again through him. But Moses pleaded with the LORD, asking Him to **turn away His wrath**. Moses stood in the gap (breach) for the people. “The metaphor ‘stood in the breach’ derives from military language, signifying the bravery of a soldier who stands in the breach of the wall, willing to give his life in warding off the enemy (cf. Ezekiel 22:30).
- Just as Moses stood in the gap or breach for the children of Israel, we have an intercessor, the Lord Jesus Christ, who ever lives to make intercession for us at the Father’s throne (Heb. 7:25).

God had mercy and did not destroy Israel as a nation because of Moses' intercession; but He did send his judgment and many of them died in the wilderness. An idol is anything you put before God. Have you been guilty of idolatry?

### **Refusal to Enter Canaan (24-27)**

**<sup>24</sup>Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word, <sup>25</sup>but complained in their tents, and did not heed the voice of the LORD. <sup>26</sup>Therefore, He raised up His hand *in an oath* against them to overthrow them in the wilderness, to overthrow their descendants among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.**

They had been out of Egypt for two years when the Lord brought them to Kadesh Barnea on the border of the Promised Land. (Num. 13-14). Instead of trusting God to give them the land, the people asked Moses to appoint a committee to survey the land. God had already surveyed the land. They didn't need more facts; they needed more faith. (Weirsbe).

- Twelve spies were selected—one from each tribe among them was Joshua and Caleb.
- The people reverted back to their regular crisis mode of weeping, complaining, and planning to return to Egypt. (Number 14:3)
- Joshua and Caleb believed they could take the land.
- God promised that this generation of unbelievers would not inherit the land of Canaan. (Numbers 14:38)

### **Sin and Plague at Baal-Peor (28-31)**

**<sup>28</sup>They joined themselves also to Baal-peor, and ate sacrifices made to the dead. <sup>29</sup>Thus they provoked *Him* to anger with their deeds, and the plague broke out among them. <sup>30</sup>Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, And the plague was stopped. <sup>31</sup>And that was accounted to him for righteousness to all generations forevermore.**

Numbers 25 tells the story of how the young women of Moab enticed the men of Israel to commit idolatry and immorality at Baal-peor. In their idolatry they ate sacrifices made to the dead. In other words, they ate of the sacrifices offered to the false gods of the Moabites, specifically Baal.

- Because of Israel's sin of idolatry, God sent a plague as judgment against the Israelites. The plague was only stopped when righteous Phinehas brought God's judgment against an Israelite man and Moabite woman who apparently were engaged in an act of immorality at or near the tabernacle itself (Nu. 25:6-9).
- This act of righteousness stopped the plague. By the time the plague stopped, twenty four hundred, seven thousand (24,700) people had died.

### **Moses' Striking of the Rock (32-33)**

**<sup>32</sup>They angered *Him* also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses on account of them; <sup>33</sup>because they rebelled against His Spirit, so that he spoke rashly with his lips.**

This demonstration of carnality was seen in Moses, not a sin of the flesh but of the spirit. He became proud and angry and took for himself the glory that belonged only to the Lord. (Nu. 10:1-13). Provoked by the people, the “pride of life” got the best of Moses, and he lost her temper and spoke harsh words that offended the Lord.

- Moses took the staff from the LORD’s presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, “*Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock? Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.*” (Numbers 20:9-11)
- Moses was having a real bad day. He did not *speak* to the rock as God commanded. In anger he *struck* the rock (Numbers 20:9-11). God provided the water, but Moses misrepresented God and did not honor God in the wilderness. Therefore, he denied entrance into the Promised Land (Numbers 20:12-13). Moses begged God to let him go over to the promised land, but God said no and don’t ask again. (Deut. 3: 23-26)
- Moses was truly provoked by this rebellious people, but God still held him responsible for *his* reaction to the provocation. Was the cost of disobedience really worth the consequences? Does God hold us responsible for our actions? Can we get away with saying he or she provoked me and that’s why you engaged in some unkind, carnal act?
- Leaders have an awesome responsibility to God and to their congregations. The sin of a leader can cause widespread damage. Always pray and encourage each other, especially our leaders.

### **Israel's idolatry in Canaan (34-39)**

**<sup>34</sup>They did not destroy the peoples, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them, <sup>35</sup>but they mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works; <sup>36</sup>they served their idols, which became a snare to them. <sup>37</sup>They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, <sup>38</sup>and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood. <sup>39</sup>Thus they were defiled by their own works and played the harlot by their own deeds.**

God in his grace took His people into Canaan and gave them victory over the nations living there. The twelve tribes claimed their inheritance and settled down to enjoy the land and serve the Lord. They were faithful during Joshua’s leadership, but when the third generation came along, they compromised and began to serve the false gods of their enemies.

- In the foreknowledge of God, He knew exactly what would happen and that’s why he wanted the Canaanites destroyed. One of the worst examples of the Canaanites’ evil influence was their worship of *Molech*, a Canaanite god who was sometimes worshipped with child sacrifice.
- Israel had freely given itself to idol worship. They defiled themselves by their own **by their own works**. The Apostle Paul tells us to, “. . . *Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of*

*the flesh.*” (Gal 5:16)

- Also, “*Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”* (I Cor. 15:33). In other words, if you spend too much time in the company of people who are immoral or unethical, your own morals can be negatively impacted and you can be lead down the wrong road.

### **The Cycle of the Judges (40-46)**

**<sup>40</sup>Therefore the wrath of the LORD was kindled against His people, so that He abhorred His own inheritance. <sup>41</sup>And He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles, and those who hated them ruled over them. <sup>42</sup>Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. <sup>43</sup> Many times He delivered them; but they rebelled in their counsel and were brought low for their iniquity**

- Israel would not obey God or heed the covenant promises given by Moses, especially the blessing and cursing given in Deuteronomy 28. If you obey God, this will happen; and if you disobeyed God, that would happen. Because they chose not to obey, God allowed the heathen nations to punish them for about 100 years in their own land--the land of Canaan.

**<sup>44</sup>Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry; <sup>45</sup>and for their sake He remembered His covenant and relented according to the multitude of His mercies. <sup>46</sup>He also made them to be pitied by all those who carried them away captive.**

- When Israel cried out to God for mercy, He heard them and raised up judges to deliver them from their enemies; but then, the nation would lapse into idolatry again and again. The cycle repeated itself.

In God’s covenant, He warned Israel that if they continued to resist and disobey, even after experiencing His chastening, He would take them out of their land and scatter them (Lev. 26:27-39; Deut. 28:48-68).

- In 722 BC, the Assyrians captured Israel and absorbed the ten tribes into their own empire.
- In 606-586 BC, the Babylonians invaded Judah, destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and took the best of captives to Babylon.
- The Jewish people were rooted out of their own land and scattered among the nations.

In 539 BC Babylon is conquered by the Medes and Persians and eventually the Jews are allowed to return to their homeland and rebuild.

- One aspect of God’s mercy to Israel was He gave them favor with the nations where they were in exile. **Those who carried them away captive** felt sorry for their Israelite captives and treated them accordingly.
- This was particularly true as of the Babylonian captivity; for *Cyrus* gave them their liberty; *Darius* favored them and granted them several privileges; and *Artaxerxes* sent back Nehemiah, the king’s cupbearer, and helped him rebuild the wall in Jerusalem.

### **A Plea for Salvation and Benediction (47 & 48)**

**<sup>47</sup>Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles, to give thanks to Your holy name, to triumph in Your praise. <sup>48</sup>Blessed be the Blessed LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, Amen!” Praise the LORD!**

The psalmist pleads on behalf of the nation and in light of the Abrahamic Covenant, for the nation to be regathered in Israel. He remembers that the men of Moses’ day forgot God as their Savior. And even the tribes of Judah and Benjamin returned to Israel, this text looks ahead to the regathering of Israel at the time when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to rule over the promised Davidic millennial kingdom on earth.

**Psalm 106:48 “Blessed [be] the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.”**

With the hopeful prayer on his heart, the psalmist closes the fourth book of the Psalms with a grand benediction focusing on the eternal character of God, Israel’s Savior—from everlasting to everlasting. The psalmist is speaking for himself as well as the Israelites. He said let all the people say, Amen. Amen means so be it. Let everything that has breath say, praise the LORD.

### **SOURCES**

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Psalm 106 – Discover the Books of the Bible

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