

God's Faithfulness

GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP BECAUSE OF HIS FAITHFULNESS TOWARD HIS PEOPLE. PSALM 105:1-11,42-45

"Great Is Thy Faithfulness" has been a favorite hymn of believers for over a century. It was written in 1923 by Thomas Chisholm, a pastor in Kentucky. The title comes from Lamentations 3:23, but throughout the Bible it is evident that the people of God recognized the faithfulness of God. Psalm 105 not only demonstrates that we need to remember God's faithfulness in keeping His promises, but we also need to recognize He deserves our worship because He is faithful to do so.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

There are a number of things to consider when looking at Psalms 105-106. First, there is no indication who wrote these psalms. Second, the first fifteen verses of Psalm 105 and the last two verses of Psalm 106 are quoted in 1 Chronicles 16, which is an account of the procession David led when he brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. Third, Psalms 105-106 are the last two psalms in Book IV of the book of Psalms (Pss. 90-106). Therefore, Psalm 106 concludes with a doxology of praise, as all five books do. Finally, these two psalms go together. They are one of a handful of psalms that appear to be paired together with a focus on historical information recognizing God's faithfulness to His people.

Psalm 105 focuses on God's calling Abraham into a covenant relationship and the promises He made to Abraham. God made seven promises to Abraham: (1) a great nation would come from Abraham, (2) blessing, (3) a great name, (4) Abraham would be a blessing to others, (5) those who blessed Abraham would be blessed, (6) God's curse on those who mistreated Abraham, and (7) God would use Abraham and his

descendants to be a blessing to the nations. In Psalm 105, the psalmist praised the Lord for how faithfully He kept His promises to Abraham and his descendants. The psalmist repeatedly recalls events in Israel's history, especially the nation's time in Egypt and exodus from Egypt, to demonstrate how the Lord had been faithful to the Abrahamic covenant through His providential care of his descendants (Ps. 105:42).

While Psalm 105 emphasizes God's faithfulness, Psalm 106 highlights Israel's history of repeated unfaithfulness to Him. Psalm 106 appears to have been written when the people were in exile and yearning for a new exodus so that they could return to the land of their inheritance, the land of promise that had been given them in accord with the covenant God had made with Abraham.

Key Words

1 Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; proclaim his deeds A among the peoples. 2 Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell about all his wondrous works! 3 Boast in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. 4 Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. 5 Remember B the wondrous works he has done, his wonders, and the judgments he has pronounced, 6 you offspring of Abraham his servant, Jacob's descendants—his chosen ones. C 7 He is the LORD our God; his judgments govern the whole earth. 8 He remembers his covenant D forever, the promise he ordained for a thousand generations—9 the covenant he made with Abraham, swore to Isaac, 10 and confirmed to Jacob as a decree and to Israel as a permanent covenant: 11 "I will give the land of Canaan to you as your inherited portion." (...)

42 For he remembered his **holy promise** ^E to Abraham his servant. **43** He **brought his people out** ^F with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy. **44** He gave them **the lands of the nations**, ^G and they inherited what other peoples had worked for. **45** All this happened so that they might keep his statutes and obey his instructions. **Hallelujah!** H

- **A.** Those who experience God's faithfulness are expected to share His faithfulness. Testimony is a powerful part of witnessing.
- **B.** Humans naturally forget what God has done, so we must be diligent to recall His goodness.
- **C.** God had chosen Abraham's descendants as His covenant people. He sealed His commitment with a three-fold promise of shaping them into a nation, giving them a land, and making them a blessing to the world.
- **D.** God sovereignly affirmed His covenant with Israel (Gen. 35:10-15), specifically focusing on the land as their inheritance.
- **E.** While His people might forget His covenant, God never does. He is faithful to them, even when they are faithless toward Him.
- **F.** A historical reference to the exodus from Egypt. God had demonstrated great power and loyalty to His people in freeing them from bondage.
- **G.** Canaan. God fulfilled His promise of providing a land for His people. He also used them to punish the pagan nations living in that region.
- **H.** "Praise the Lord" (NIV; ESV). The single word in English includes two words in Hebrew: *halal* (praise or glorify) and *Yah* (God).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Call to Worship

(Psalm 105:1-6)

Believers should be ready to tell others of what God has done.

 Which of the imperatives found in these verses come easy to you? Which are more challenging?

2. Covenant Made

(Psalm 105:7-11)

Believers can praise God for His sovereignty over all things.

How does an understanding of God's sovereignty influence your faith?

3. Covenant Fulfilled

(Psalm 105:42-45)

God's past faithfulness motivates believers to trust Him and obey Him.

- How did God provide for the Israelites?
- How did the people respond to God's promise?
- Why is it important that God has made and kept significant promises to His people?

Apply the Text

As a group, recount to each other the things God has done. Discuss ways you can proclaim His deeds among people who do not yet know Him.

KEY DOCTRINE:

Man

Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. (See Ephesians 2:1-10; Colossians 1:21-22.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a key biblical concept.

Psalm 105 focuses on God's covenant with His people. Study the following Bible passages and take note of the insights that you gain regarding the covenants that He made with His people: Genesis 17:1-8; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 22:19-20; and Hebrews 9:11-15. What do these verses reveal about God's faithfulness?

DID YOU KNOW?

Global missions did not start with the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). God's heart for all nations is revealed throughout the Old Testament. See, for example: Genesis 12:1-3; 26:4; 28:14; Exodus 9:16; Joshua 4:23-24; 1 Chronicles 16:23; 2 Chronicles 6:32-33; Psalm 67:1-2; Isaiah 49:6; and Daniel 7:13-14.

TALK IT OUT

Read Psalm 105:1-2. What are specific things believers are to do based on these two verses?

The writer of Psalm 105 is not identified, but the entire psalm recounts God's faithfulness and power. It opens with thanksgiving to God for His deeds on behalf of His people. Verse 2 includes worship and evangelism—the Hebrew word for "tell" means to talk about, communicate, and converse. The idea was a continual conversation about God's faithfulness and power.

For what can you thank God today? For what attributes of God will you praise Him?

God is worthy of our praise because of His faithfulness toward us. In these two verses, there are five ways to offer our praise to God, each is an imperative. Take some time this week to give thanks, call on God, proclaim His deeds, sing praises, and talk about God's deeds.

Why should we tell others of what God has done for us? Who is someone you can tell?

Read Psalm 105:1-2 aloud each day as a reminder to offer your praise to Him.

Prayer Requests

DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Psalm 105:1-2

Highlight the imperatives in these verses.

Ten imperatives are directed to the people of God in verses 1-5. Three of those imperatives are found in verse 1. First, the psalmist called on them to "give thanks to the LORD." Giving thanks to God is central to worship. The call to give thanks also lays the foundation for the rest of the psalm. The psalmist is about to list several instances in Israel's history when God demonstrated His lovingkindness and faithfulness to Israel—all of them reasons to give thanks to the Lord. To "call on his name" is a call to magnify His name in praise. To "proclaim his deeds among the peoples"-meaning the nations—demonstrates there is a missional aspect to praising God.

Of the various literary types of psalms, Psalm 105 is a hymn. While not as clear-cut as other types of psalms, hymns typically include a call to "sing" and to "praise" God. Then they usually describe the reasons for praising God, which are connected to His deeds, greatness, and majesty. Finally, hymns usually conclude with a word of praise, a statement of trust, or an explanation of why God did what He did. Verse 2 contains an exhortation. Corporately, the people of God are to sing praises to God and give witness to "his wondrous works" that He has done for them.

Make a list of reasons to give thanks to God.

Day 2: Psalm 105:3-4

Underline the word "seek."

The psalmist implored the people of God to boast in the Lord's "holy name." People are prone to boast in themselves, but here the call is to extol and express admiration for God. The Lord's name is to be the object of this boasting because He is holy and worthy of such praise. He is above everything; He is transcendent. Through His prophet Isaiah, God said: "I am the Lord, and there is no other" (Isa. 45:18). The Lord's holy name represents all that He is in His character and attributes, all He alone has done, and all He will do.

When Moses foretold of Israel's disobedience to God and their exile into foreign lands, he used two synonyms meaning "to seek" to encourage the people to seek the Lord. He promised them that if they would do so with all of their heart and soul, then they would "find him" (Deut. 4:25-29). Here in verses 3-4, the psalmist uses both of these Hebrew words to call the people once again to "seek the Lord." To seek His "strength" means to trust in His undergirding might so that they will be able to endure difficulty and go forward in faithful obedience to Him. To "seek his face always" is to look continually to His lovingkindness and direction rather than allowing their attentions to be diverted to lesser things.

What does it look like to "seek" the Lord?

Day 3: Psalm 105:5-6

Consider the connection between remembering what God has done and spending time in His Word.

Verse 5 provides examples of ways in which one is to seek the Lord. In the remainder of Psalm 105, the psalmist emphasized the need of God's people to remember the wondrous things God has done for them in the past. Therefore, if praising God involves acknowledging who God is and what He has done, then remembering the past is essential both to seeking the Lord and also to praising Him. "His wonders, and the judgments" call to mind how God saved Israel in Egypt with plagues and judgments upon the Egyptians (Ex. 3:20; 12:12). The record of these events is in God's Word. Consequently, seeking the Lord also entails time spent in God's Word.

It is not until verse 6 that the psalmist indicated who his intended audience was. Given Abraham and Jacob are their forefathers, the "offspring of Abraham and Jacob's descendants" refer to the people of Israel. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the biblical writers refer to the people of Israel as the Lord's "chosen ones "(Ps. 106:5; Isa. 45:4). The language here recalls Moses's words to Israel in Deuteronomy 7:6-9. Moses stated that God graciously chose Israel to be His holy people. Then Moses said, "Know that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps His gracious covenant loyalty" (v. 9). God's faithfulness to His covenant with Israel is the psalmist's focus in the remainder of Psalm 105.

What is the danger of forgetting all that God has done for you?

Day 4: Psalm 105:7-11

Note the aspects of God's covenant with Abraham.

Verse 7 is a declaration of faith. The psalmist recognized that the Lord God of Israel has all authority and "his judgments govern the whole earth." Therefore, wherever the people of God are, they are under God's rule and in His domain.

In verses 8-10 the psalmist recalled God's covenant with Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant refers to everything the Lord declared and obligated Himself to do for and through Abraham and his offspring. The details of the covenant are found in Genesis 12; 15; and 17.

Here are the aspects of the Lord's covenant with Abraham: First, God initiated the covenant. Second, God made promises to Abraham. Third, God pledged Himself to fulfilling His covenant promises to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 15:9-21). Fourth, God's purpose for blessing Abraham was not for Abraham's sake alone. God chose Abraham to be His instrument of blessing to people from every nation (Gen. 12:1-3). Fifth, God promised that His covenant with Abraham would be a permanent covenant (Gen. 17:1-13). It is this promise the psalmist emphasized in Psalm 105:8 and 11. The apostle Paul recognized the fulfillment of all of these promises in Jesus (see Gal. 3).

In verse 11, the psalmist highlighted God's promise to give Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan (Gen. 13:15; 15:18; 17:8). The rest of the psalm highlights God's faithfulness to keep this promise.

What are the implications of God's covenant with Abraham being "permanent"?

Day 5: Psalm 105:42-45

Circle the last word of verse 45.

Psalm 105:12-41 recounts the history of the Israelites and details the ways God provided for them and guided them out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and to the promised land. Therefore, the psalmist stressed that the Lord "remembered" His covenant with Abraham.

God protected their forefathers in foreign lands (vv. 12-15). He used a famine to lead Jacob's family to Egypt. He raised up Joseph to become a ruler in Egypt and a savior to his people (vv. 16-23). The Lord "made his people very fruitful," and they multiplied, causing the Egyptians to turn against them (vv. 24-25). He sent Moses and Aaron to deliver them and bring Israel out of Egypt (vv. 26-38). The Lord led them and provided for them through the wilderness to the promised land. Therefore, as they entered Canaan, the people rejoiced because the Lord was faithful. They inherited from Him what other peoples had worked for-cities and houses they did not build, cisterns they did not dig, and lush vineyards and olive groves they did not plant (Deut. 6:10-11).

The psalmist concluded with two important declarations. First, everything God did for Israel was so they would keep His statutes and obey His instructions. God expected them to be faithful to Him. Second, the final word is the plural imperative exhorting the people to praise the Lord, "Hallelujah!" The term also can be rendered "praise the LORD" in the Hebrew language. How could they not, given the faithfulness of their Lord to them?

Why is "Hallelujah" a fitting conclusion to this psalm?

APPLY THE TEXT

Practically speaking, how does God's past faithfulness affect your life today? What reasons do you have to give thanks to the Lord? What hinders you from giving thanks to God and praising Him?

