

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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Psalm 106 — Confessing Covenant Violation

1.0 Introducing Psalm 106

- Book 4 of the Psalter concludes with four psalms calling on God's people to bless or praise Him. See the chart in "Introducing Psalm 103."
- Psalms 105 and 106 form a pair. The former speaks of God's faithfulness; the latter speaks of Israel's unfaithfulness. In Psalm 105 Israel obtains the land because God fulfills His promise to Abraham. However, in Psalm 106 Israel loses the land due to their failure to trust God and obey His covenant.
- Psalm 106 is one of the "Hallelujah psalms" (106, 113, 117, 135, and 146–150).
- It is possible that this psalm dates from the Babylonian Exile (v. 47: "gather us from among the nations").
 - ✓ However, it is equally possible that verses 47-48 were borrowed from 1 Chronicles 16:35-36, rather than the reverse.

2.0 Reading Psalm 106 (NAU)

106:1 Praise the LORD!

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

106:2 Who can speak of the mighty deeds of the LORD,
Or can show forth all His praise?

106:3 How blessed are those who keep justice,
Who practice righteousness at all times!

106:4 Remember me, O LORD, in Your favor toward Your people;
Visit me with Your salvation,

106:5 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.

106:6 We have sinned like our fathers,
We have committed iniquity, we have behaved wickedly.

- 106:7** 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.
- 106:8** Nevertheless He saved them for the sake of His name,
That He might make His power known.
- 106:9** Thus He rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up,
And He led them through the deeps, as through the wilderness.
- 106:10** So He saved them from the hand of the one who hated them,
And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
- 106:11** The waters covered their adversaries;
Not one of them was left.
- 106:12** Then they believed His words;
They sang His praise.
- 106:13** They quickly forgot His works;
They did not wait for His counsel,
- 106:14** But craved intensely in the wilderness,
And tempted God in the desert.
- 106:15** So He gave them their request,
But sent a wasting disease among them.
- 106:16** When they became envious of Moses in the camp,
And of Aaron, the holy one of the LORD,
- 106:17** The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
And engulfed the company of Abiram.
- 106:18** And a fire blazed up in their company;
The flame consumed the wicked.
- 106:19** They made a calf in Horeb
And worshiped a molten image.
- 106:20** Thus they exchanged their glory
For the image of an ox that eats grass.
- 106:21** They forgot God their Savior,
Who had done great things in Egypt,
- 106:22** Wonders in the land of Ham
And awesome things by the Red Sea.
- 106:23** Therefore He 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.
- 106:24** Then they despised the pleasant land;
They did not believe in His word,
- 106:25** But grumbled in their tents;
They did not listen to the voice of the LORD.
- 106:26** Therefore He swore to them
That He would cast them down in the wilderness,
- 106:27** And that He would cast their seed among the nations



And scatter them in the lands.

- 106:28** They joined themselves also to Baal-peor,
And ate sacrifices offered to the dead.
- 106:29** Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds,
And the plague broke out among them.
- 106:30** Then Phinehas stood up and interposed,
And so the plague was stayed.
- 106:31** And it was reckoned to him for righteousness,
To all generations forever.
- 106:32** They also provoked Him to wrath at the waters of Meribah,
So that it went hard with Moses on their account;
- 106:33** Because they were rebellious against His Spirit,
He spoke rashly with his lips.
- 106:34** They did not destroy the peoples,
As the LORD commanded them,
- 106:35** But they mingled with the nations
And learned their practices,
- 106:36** And served their idols,
Which became a snare to them.
- 106:37** They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons,
- 106:38** 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.
- 106:39** Thus they became unclean in their practices,
And played the harlot in their deeds.
- 106:40** Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against His people
And He abhorred His inheritance.
- 106:41** Then He gave them into the hand of the nations,
And those who hated them ruled over them.
- 106:42** Their enemies also oppressed them,
And they were subdued under their power.
- 106:43** Many times He would deliver them;
They, however, were rebellious in their counsel,
And so sank down in their iniquity.
- 106:44** Nevertheless He looked upon their distress
When He heard their cry;
- 106:45** And He remembered His covenant for their sake,
And relented according to the greatness of His lovingkindness.
- 106:46** He also made them objects of compassion
In the presence of all their captors.
- 106:47** 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.
106:48 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
From everlasting even to everlasting.
And let all the people say, “Amen.”

Praise the LORD!

3.0 Understanding Psalm 106

3.1 Outline

- I. Preparing for Confession: Praise and Prayer for Salvation (vv. 1-5)
- II. Presenting Confession: Covenant Infidelity (vv. 6-39)
 - A. In the Exodus from Egypt (vv. 6-12)
 - B. In the Wilderness Wanderings (vv. 13-33)
 - C. In the Conquest and Afterwards (vv. 34-39)
- III. Promise for Confession: Compassion from God (vv. 40-46)
- IV. Pleading with Confession: Prayer for Salvation and Praise (vv. 47-48)



3.2 Notes

- **vv. 1-5 Preparing for Confession**
 - A proper view of God provides a proper context for confession. “Sin is the difference between what we are and what God is and what in his graciousness he calls us to be.”—Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 347.
- **v. 1 “Oh give thanks to the LORD”**
 - Same verse commences Psalms 107, 118, and 136. See, also, 1 Chronicles 16:34; Jeremiah 33:11.
 - God’s goodness and faithfulness are the foundation for thanksgiving.
- **v. 4 “Remember me, O LORD”**
 - “Remember” expresses God’s faithfulness to and His fulfillment of the covenant. Remembrance is equivalent to taking action.
 - Summarizing Israel’s infidelity and God’s fidelity, the psalmist declares that God “remembered His covenant for their sake” (v. 45).
 - In contrast, Israel “did not remember” (v. 7) and “forgot” (vv. 13, 21).
 - ✓ Compare Psalm 106:13 with Galatians 1:6.
 - Remembrance was also a theme in Psalm 105 (vv. 5, 8, 42).
- **vv. 6-39 Presenting Confession**
 - “We have sinned like our fathers” (v. 6) is similar in expression to 1 Kings 8:47 and Daniel 9:5.
 - Leviticus 26:39-45 requires confession. God’s ultimate goal for His people is repentance. “When they repent, Yahweh will reinstate or

reactivate the Abrahamic covenant's blessings. . . . Thus, Yahweh, Lord of the covenant, may restore the land and the people to a right relationship with Himself. Above all else, . . . Yahweh's covenant promise is sure. He reveals His commitment to restore His people in order to reassure them (vv. 44-45). Yahweh remains loyal to His covenant—even when His covenant people are disloyal.”—William D. Barrick, “The Eschatological Significance of Leviticus 26,” *The Master's Seminary Journal* 16/1 (Spring 2005): 105.



Sin #1: vv. 13-15 *Greedy craving* (Numbers 11)—1 Corinthians 10:6, 9

- Compare with the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), who also desired what was soon gone and no longer satisfying.

Sin #2: vv. 16-18 *Envious grumbling* (Numbers 16)—1 Corinthians 10:10

- Grumbling against God's appointed leadership contradicts His purpose and design (cp. Ps 105:26-27).

Sin #3: vv. 19-23 *Idolatry* (Exodus 32; Deut 9:8-21)—1 Corinthians 10:7

- Outside 1 Corinthians 10, New Testament allusions to Psalm 106 may include the following:
 - ✓ v. 20 – Romans 1:23
 - ✓ v. 41 (“He gave them into the hand of”) – Romans 1:24, 26, 28 (“God gave them over”)

Sin #4: vv. 24-27 *Unbelief* (Deut 1:21-33; Numbers 13-14)

- “Cast their seed among the nations” (v. 27) refers to a dispersion that Leviticus 26:33, Deuteronomy 4:27, and 28:64 had already revealed.

Sin #5: vv. 28-31 *Immorality* (Numbers 25)—1 Corinthians 10:8

- Phinehas acted in faith and God accredited him with righteousness (v. 31; cp. Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3, 23-25).
- Phinehas became the recipient of a divine covenant regarding priesthood in the Messianic Kingdom (Num 25:10-13; 1 Sam 2:35; Ezek 44:10-15; Mal 2:4).

Sin #6: vv. 32-33 *Rebellion against God's Spirit* (Numbers 20)

- If Moses should be denied entry into the land of promise, what might that mean to the rest of the Israelites?

Sin #7: vv. 34-39 *Impure compromise* (Judg 2:1-3, 11-17; 3:5-7)

- Reference to “demons” (v. 37) occurs only here and Deuteronomy 32:17. There is a different Hebrew word in Leviticus 17:7. Compare 1 Corinthians 10:19-22.

• **vv. 40-46 Promise for Confession**

- “He remembered His covenant for their sake” (v. 45)—the cycle in Israel's history that was especially evident during the period of the judges consisted of the following: *Rebellion > Retribution > Repentance > Request > Remembrance > Redemption > Restoration*.
- “The people had sinned repeatedly, and God had disciplined them repeatedly. But he did not cast them off, as they deserved. Instead, ‘he

remembered his covenant' (v. 45) and restored them. Thus Israel's history is as much the story of God's mercy, faithfulness, and long-suffering as it is the story of Israel's faithlessness and unbelief." — James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 2:854.

- God has repeatedly forgiven Israel's transgressions and shown mercy (vv. 8-11, 15, 23, 30, 44-46). This is the basis for the hope in verse 47.

4.0 Singing Psalm 106

Praise Ye the Lord, For He Is Good (Tune: "How Deep the Father's Love for Us")



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|---|---|
| 1 Praise ye the Lord, for He is good;
Give thanks and bless His Name;
His lovingkindness changes not,
From age to age the same. | 2 What tongue can tell His mighty deeds,
His wondrous works and ways?
O who can show His glory forth,
Or utter all His praise? |
| 7 Though they rebelled, yet for their help
In saving strength He came
To make His power almighty known
And glorify His Name. | 8 He brought them safely through the sea
And overwhelmed their foes;
Their faith was stirred, and for the time
Their songs of praise arose. |
| 19 Though from their harsh oppressors' hand
Ofttimes He set them free,
Rebellious still, they were brought low
In their iniquity. | 20 When unto God they cried, He heard
And turned again His face,
In boundless love remembering
The covenant of His grace. |
| 22 Save us, O Lord, our gracious God,
From alien lands reclaim,
That we may triumph in Thy praise
And bless Thy holy Name. | 23 Blest be the Lord our covenant God,
All praise to Him accord;
Let all the people say, "Amen."
Praise ye, praise ye the Lord. |

— Author unknown

5.0 Praying Psalm 106

- Thank You, Lord, for your goodness and faithfulness. [v. 1]
- Give me wisdom and strength to practice Your righteousness. [v. 3]
- Father, allow me to rejoice in the salvation of Your people. [v. 5]
- Teach me how to flee from sin. [vv. 6-39; 1 Cor 10:6, 11-13]
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6.0 Applying Psalm 106

- Confess sin as sin.
- Seek forgiveness as undeserved.
- Praise God as Savior.

— from Steven J. Lawson, *Psalms 76-150*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2006), 171