

PRAISE OUR ENDURINGLY FAITHFUL SAVIOR (Psa 106) 2 May 2021

Given how chronically sinful we are as God's chosen people, the only hope we have is an enduringly faithful Savior. Do you ever get so sick and tired of the church's sinfulness that you nearly give up on her? Many who used to identify with the church have left her in disgust for our hypocrisy. In ourselves, we are not worthy of God's love. If you only love the church for her moral excellence, it will not last. She will disappoint you over and over.

But Psa 106 preaches good news to us: God is not like us! He forgives more than we ever would (Isa 55.7-9)! He is *enduringly faithful* to a people who demonstrate very little faithfulness to Him. He never stops forgiving; He keeps His promise of salvation to us!

In most of its content, Psalm 106 is a lament over the endless sins of God's people. It looks back over centuries and finds many major skeletons in our closet. Thus it is a confession of our sin to humble us to repentance. This prompts us to prayer for His mercy in verse 47. But the priority is that God would be praised in our contrite, grateful, hopeful worship (vv. 1, 48).

I. CALL TO PRAISE THE LORD (vv. 1-3, 48). "Hallelujah," first & last word. => The basics of righteous praise: 1) To the true God, Jehovah, Lord God of Israel, and to Him alone. 2) Stirred up by remembering His goodness/ enduring mercy/mighty acts to save us. 3) Form of songs describing Him, rehearsing His favors to His people. 4) Always less than He deserves and so properly eternal (2b, 48a). 5) Universal duty, all should praise Him (48b).

=> The blessedness of those who heed the call (3). "Benediction," pronouncement of blessing upon people here described as those who "keep justice" (i.e., do right acc. to God's law) "at all times" (with integrity). Not sinless perfection; a living faith with the fruit of obedience/worship.

II. CONFESSION OF SIN TO THE LORD (4-46)

=> The psalmist's personal plea for ultimate salvation (4, 5). For "me." He knows of God's favor to the many; he pleads it for himself. Our love for the church must not cancel out spiritual self-interest. Seek *your own* salvation from the gracious God by the instruments of faith, prayer, and hope.

=> We (1 Cor 10.1) have had glaring moral failures (6-46). He confesses the sins of the whole people of God using the pronoun "we," owning it. Three phrases for sin (6)—no minimizing or excuses; it is really, really bad.

1) Moral failure at the Red Sea (6-12). Yielded to fear and unbelief (Exod 14.10-12). Their sin a contrast with God's mercy who saved, not destroyed.

2) Moral failure at Marah (=bitter) and other places (13-15). Murmuring over food/drink was the outward sin; unbelief and lust named here as the inward. God gave them water, quails, and the plague to discipline them.

3) Moral failure in the wilderness (16-18). The Dathan and Abiram incident was a kind of mutiny against Moses. Even this startling public judgment didn't cure them of their madness (Num 16.41)! Yet they were preserved.

4) Moral failure at the base of Mount Sinai (19-23). Aaron and the golden calf incident (open idolatry, immorality) would have ruined them but for Moses' intercession. Consider God's faithfulness to His unfaithful people!

5) Moral failure at Kadesh-Barnea (24-27). In Num 14, after bad report of ten spies, ready to return to Egypt. Their sins? Not treasuring what God had promised, not trusting Him for it, private complaints, a deaf ear to God. Again, He chastened them (death in the wilderness) but preserved them.

6) Moral failure at Mount Peor (28-31). Public idolatry and immorality/ indecency, plague, execution of two fornicators by Phinehas—a hero. Yet God preserved Israel as His chosen people.

7) Moral failure at the waters of strife (or, Meribah; 32, 33), where Moses lost his temper. They provoked even the meekest man of all (Num 12.3)!

8) Moral failure in the Promised Land (34-39). They violated His command of total extermination and moral separation from the Canaanites.

9) Moral failure in exile (40-46). Repeated cycles of sin, judgment, repentance, apostasy—God's inexpressible "hesed" (steadfast lovingkindness) on display through it all!

III. CRY FOR MERCY FROM THE LORD (47). Earnest plea in Old Covenant form. 1) Directed to the faithful, covenant-keeping God (47a). 2) From the misery of being scattered among the nations (47b). 3) So that our Savior God might be thanked and praised (47cd). SDG (Rom 11.36).

Our Use of This Psalm as Christ's Church Today

* Renew our devotion to the ultimate priority of praising God together! See how His reputation is more important than our spiritual recovery.

* Identify by faith with God's wretchedly sinful people! Sadly, the list of sins by Christians in church history is every bit as long and discouraging as this list in Psalm 106. If you think this is only true of OT Israel and not the NT church, I ask, "Have you ever read the NT?" Even the sins of CBC-Exeter would make a long list (many members over 59 years). But, as Calvin wrote, "The pure ministry of the Word and pure mode of celebrating the sacraments are, as we say, sufficient pledge and guarantee that we may safely embrace as church any society in which both these marks exist. The principle extends to the point that we must not reject it so long as it retains them, even if it otherwise swarms with many faults" (ICR IV.i.12).

* Be encouraged more by looking up to God than by looking around at one another! He is the God who forgives—again and again and again.

* The gospel teaches us that this very God, in Christ, loved the Church, died for the Church, lives for the Church, and absolutely will always forgive her and cleanse the Church, bringing her to glorification on the Last Day. And He is the same enduringly faithful Savior of individual Christians.

* The matter of greatest concern for each one personally is, "Am I a member of this people so faithfully loved by the Lord?" Yes, if you are trusting and following Christ! Yes, though you have sinned a million times and will sin likely a million times more before you see Him! Yes, though we are together reviled by the world for our moral failures as a people. Ω