

Psalm 106:1–48 (NKJV) – A Reflection on God’s Mercy and Human Unfaithfulness

Praise the Lord! Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can declare all His praise? Blessed are those who keep justice, and he who does righteousness at all times.

This psalm begins with joyful praise for God’s enduring mercy and goodness. The psalmist calls us to give thanks, to recognize God’s mighty acts, and to live justly. There is blessing in walking with integrity and pursuing righteousness consistently.

Remember me, O LORD, with the favor You have toward Your people. Oh, visit me with Your salvation, 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. (Psalms 106:4-5 NKJV)

This prayer seeks personal inclusion in the redemptive work God has promised to His people. It shows that even in collective judgment or blessing, the individual heart still longs for fellowship with God’s people and the joy of shared salvation.

Psalm 105 emphasized God’s faithfulness; Psalm 106 now emphasizes Israel’s—and our—unfaithfulness. When we view history through the lens of God, we see mercy and grace. When we view it through the actions of people, we see failure and rebellion.

We have sinned with our fathers, We have committed iniquity, We have done wickedly. 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. (Psalms 106:6-7 NKJV)

This is a candid confession. Just as the Israelites failed to trust God after their deliverance from Egypt, so we often forget His works and murmur in difficult circumstances.

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. (Psalms 106:8-11 NKJV)

God’s faithfulness isn’t dependent on our worthiness but on His own name and purposes. Even when His people fail, He acts to make His power and mercy known.

Then they believed His words; They sang His praise. They soon forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel, But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, And tested God in the desert. And He gave them their request, But sent leanness into their soul. (Psalms 106:12-15 NKJV)

Sometimes God will allow us to have what we insist on, even when it is not His best. But what we gain in the flesh often results in spiritual poverty. When material blessings become the focus, our souls may wither in the process.

They envied Moses and Aaron. The earth opened up Dathan; a fire burned up the rebels. They made a golden calf and exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox (vv. 16–20). They forgot their Savior who had done great things in Egypt, awesome deeds by the Red Sea.

Human memory is short, especially when it comes to gratitude and obedience. We trade the eternal glory of God for worthless idols when we give our hearts to anything less than Him.

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. (Psalms 106:23 NKJV)

This speaks to the powerful role of intercession. Moses stood between judgment and the people. Today, Jesus Christ intercedes for us in a greater and eternal way (Hebrews 7:25).

Then they despised the pleasant land; They did not believe His word, But complained in their tents, And did not heed the voice of the LORD. (Psalms 106:24-25 NKJV)

They despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word. They murmured in their tents and did not heed the voice of the Lord (vv. 24–25). Therefore, He swore to overthrow them in the wilderness.

Disobedience, unbelief, and grumbling kept that generation from entering the Promised Land. It was not God's unwillingness, but their own hardness of heart.

They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor, And ate sacrifices made to the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds, And the plague broke out among them. Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, And the plague was stopped. And that was accounted to him for righteousness To all generations forevermore. (Psalms 106:28-31 NKJV)

They joined themselves to Baal of Peor and ate sacrifices made to the dead (v. 28). They provoked Him with their deeds, and a plague broke out. Phinehas intervened, and it was accounted to him for righteousness (vv. 29–31).

Zeal for God's holiness matters. It is still right today to stand against sin and plead for righteousness in our generation, with the heart of humility and love.

They angered Him also at the waters of strife, So that it went ill with Moses on account of them; Because they rebelled against His Spirit, So that he spoke rashly with his lips. (Psalms 106:32-33 NKJV)

They angered God at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses for their sakes (v. 32). He spoke rashly with his lips because they provoked his spirit.

This sobering account shows that even leaders are not exempt from consequences. Moses misrepresented God before the people, and for their sake, God withheld the Promised Land from him. His failure became a cautionary example, passed down orally to teach future generations the weight of obedience.

They did not destroy the peoples, Concerning whom the LORD had commanded them, But they mingled with the Gentiles And learned their works; They served their idols, Which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons And their daughters to demons, (Psalms 106:34-37 NKJV)

They did not destroy the nations as commanded, but mixed with the Gentiles and learned their ways. They served their idols, which became a snare. They sacrificed their sons and daughters to demons (vv. 34–37).

What began as compromise led to tragic corruption. They engaged in pagan practices so detestable that the land itself was polluted. The worship of idols was, in reality, the worship of demons (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:20). Spiritual deception has a real and dark power.

Therefore the wrath of the LORD was kindled against His people, So that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles, And those who hated them ruled over them. (Psalms 106:40-41 NKJV)

When God's people choose rebellion, He may give them over to their desires, allowing them to feel the full weight of their choices. Even so, His mercy remains.

Many times He delivered them; But they rebelled in their counsel, And were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, When He heard their cry; And for their sake He remembered His covenant, And relented according to the multitude of His mercies. He also made them to be pitied By all those who carried them away captive. (Psalms 106:43-46 NKJV)

God's mercy is never exhausted. Though justice may bring discipline, His covenant love remains steadfast. He does not forget His promises.

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. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel From everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the LORD! (Psalms 106:47-48 NKJV)

This prayer of restoration expresses the longing of every repentant heart—to be gathered again, to rejoice in the presence of God, and to lift up His praise.

This final doxology marks the conclusion of Book Four of the Psalms and brings us into the final section of Israel's hymnbook. It reminds us that, despite all human failure, God is still worthy of praise—now and forever.

Personal Application:

- Do I remember God's past mercies, or do I forget when the present becomes hard?
- Have I ever insisted on something from God that ultimately weakened my soul?
- Am I willing to stand in prayer for others, as Moses did?
- Do I pursue obedience because I love God, or only when it's convenient?
- Do I guard my heart from compromise, knowing it can lead to corruption?

19-Daily Bible Reading Companion
Psalms Chapter 106

May this psalm stir in us a renewed gratitude for God's mercy, a deeper resolve for obedience, and a heart that turns again and again to the Lord with praise.