

PSALMS

Chapter 106

Give Thanks to the LORD, for He Is Good

Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! 2 Who can utter the mighty deeds of the LORD, or declare all his praise? 3 Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times! 4 Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to your people; help me when you save them, 5 that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory with your inheritance. 6 Both we and our fathers have sinned; we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedness. 7 Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works; they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love, but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. 8 Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power. 9 He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry, and he led them through the deep as through a desert. 10 So he saved them from the hand of the foe and redeemed them from the power of the enemy. 11 And the waters covered their adversaries; not one of them was left. 12 Then they believed his words; they sang his praise. 13 But they soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel. 14 But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert; 15 he gave them what they asked, but sent a wasting disease among them. 16 When men in the camp were jealous of Moses and Aaron, the holy one of the LORD, 17 the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. 18 Fire also broke out in their company; the flame burned up the wicked. 19 They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped a metal image. 20 They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass. 21 They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt, 22 wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome deeds by the Red Sea. 23 Therefore he said he would destroy them—had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying them. 24 Then they despised the pleasant land, having no faith in his promise. 25 They murmured in their tents, and did not obey the voice of the LORD. 26 Therefore he raised his hand and swore to them that he would make them fall in the wilderness, 27 and would make their offspring fall among the nations, scattering them among the lands. 28 Then they yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices offered to the dead; 29 they provoked the LORD to anger with their deeds, and a plague broke out among them. 30 Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was stayed. 31 And that was counted to him as righteousness from generation to generation forever. 32 They angered him at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses on their account, 33 for they made his spirit bitter, and he spoke rashly with his lips. 34 They did not destroy the peoples, as the LORD commanded them, 35 but they mixed with the nations and learned to do as they did. 36 They served their idols, which became a snare to them. 37 They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons; 38 they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood. 39 Thus they became unclean by their acts, and played the whore in their deeds. 40 Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people, and he abhorred his heritage; 41 he gave them into the hand of the nations, so that those who hated them ruled over them. 42 Their enemies oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their power.

43 Many times he delivered them, but they were rebellious in their purposes and were brought low through their iniquity. 44 Nevertheless, he looked upon their distress, when he heard their cry. 45 For their sake he remembered his covenant, and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love. 46 He caused them to be pitied by all those who held them captive. 47 Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise. 48 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, “Amen!” Praise the LORD!

Ps 106† A confession of Israel’s long history of rebellion and a prayer for God to once again save his people. In length, poetic style and shared themes it has much affinity with Ps 105 even while it contrasts with it by reciting the past as a history of rebellion (see Ps 78; Ne 9:5–37). It was most likely authored by a Levite in Jerusalem sometime after the return of some of the exiles. (CSB)

Apart from the fact that the psalm has an introduction (vv. 1–5) and a (composite) conclusion (vv. 44–48), the recital character of its main theme (as in Ps 105) controls its basic outline. Beginning with the events at the Red Sea (vv. 6–12), the psalm next narrates at length Israel’s many rebellions during the desert wanderings (vv. 13–33), follows with a summary description of Israel’s apostasy in the promised land (vv. 34–39) and completes its recital with a general statement of God’s stern measures in the promised land (vv. 40–43). (CSB)

Last psalm in Book Four. (See p 844.) Ps 105 and 106 begin and end with praise to the Lord. Although Ps 106 begins with praise and thanksgiving, it moves to confession. Luther: “This psalm teaches the true praise of divine goodness, namely, that to confess one’s own evil to God is to give thanks to the Lord, for He is good” (AE 11:345). Ps 106 covers many of the same historical events as Ps 105, but it praises the Lord for His wonderful salvation of a sinful people. Since v 47 appeals to the Lord to gather His people from among the nations, many think Ps 106 was written after the exile. However, vv 1b–c and 47–48 are included in David’s hymn of thanksgiving (1Ch 16:34–36), when the ark was returned to Israel. This, along with its place at the conclusion of Book Four, indicates that it might be an earlier composition. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–3, call to praise; vv 4–5, call to remember; vv 6–12, confession of sins during the exodus; vv 13–15, confession of sins in the wilderness; vv 16–18, jealousy of Dathan and Abiram; vv 19–23, the golden calf; vv 24–31, rebellion at Canaan’s border; vv 32–33, Meribah; vv 34–39, failures after the conquest; vv 40–43, the Lord’s anger during the time of the judges; vv 44–46, the Lord remembered the covenant; vv 47–48, appeal for salvation. (TLSB)

The psalm covers the same historical ground as Psalm 105, but it looks at the dark side of the picture. (PBC)

106:1–5 Introduction. (CSB)

The introduction calls on God’s people to be thankful for his goodness, not ungrateful like Israel. Who can convincingly proclaim God’s word? Only those whose thankfulness is visible in their devotion to obeying God’s word. Israel’s testimony was hampered by their disobedience, which is cataloged in the rest of the psalm. The psalmist combines his personal faith with a concern for the sharing that faith within the fellowship of God’s people. Christian worship should avoid both the loss of personal involvement which comes from being swallowed up in the crowd and the loss of fellowship with the group which comes from retreating into isolation. (PBC)

106:1 *Give thanks.* With praise; a conventional liturgical call to praise (see 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1–3). (CSB)

Hbr *yadah* can mean “to give thanks” or “to confess.” (TLSB)

106:2 *Who can ... ?* With integrity. (CSB)

his praise. Praise for his mighty acts. (CSB)

The true believer, as described in v 3, praises God. (TLSB)

106:3 *justice ... who do righteousness.* That is, justice-and-righteousness. This verse answers the question posed in v. 2. (CSB)

The appeal is prefaced by a word of blessing on the righteous: the significance of this is that people who are the recipients of God’s goodness and covenant faithfulness respond with obedience – they maintain justice (s.v. Ps. 9:4) and constantly do righteous deeds (s.v. Ps. 1:5). These are said to be blessed (s.v. Ps. 1:1); they are filled with joy because they are right with God. But placing this blessing here before the prayer serves a didactic purpose: maintaining righteousness must be seen as a prerequisite to answered prayer. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

106:4 *Remember me.* As one committed to the way of life described in v. 3. (CSB)

To remember is a prayer for God to act one ehat he remembers, namely, the covenant relationship he has with his people who believe in him. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

when you save them. Or “with your salvation.” The psalmist prays that God will include him in all the mercies of his “great love” (v. 45), which he shows to his people. Thus the inner logic of the prayer seems to be completed at v. 46. The editors of the Psalter appear to have converted an individual prayer into a communal one by their additions. (CSB)

As the psalmist considers God’s promises to all of Israel for salvation, he also looks directly to the Lord for his personal salvation. (TLSB)

106:5 *chosen* – The Lord chose Israel because He loved them, not because of something in them (Dt 7:7–8; 9:4–5). (TLSB)

prosperity ... rejoice. A progressive sequence of cause and effect. (CSB)

your inheritance. Israel is the Lord’s “possession.” (TLSB)

106:6–43 Israel’s history of rebellion. (CSB)

Confession of sin. (TLSB)

This section catalogs some of the many rebellions in Egypt and the Wilderness, but does not list them in chronological order. The principal rebellions listed are the grumbling at the Red Sea

(Exodus 14:11), the demand for meat (Numbers 11), the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram against Moses (Numbers 16), the golden calf at Mt Sinai (Exodus 32), the refusal to go into the land after the return of the spies (Numbers 14), the idolatry and sexual immorality at Baal Peor (Numbers 25), and the demand for water at Meribah (Exodus 17; Numbers 20). (PBC)

106:6 A general confession of sin introducing the recital. (CSB)

We. The author identifies himself with Israel in her rebellion even as he prays for inclusion in God’s mercies toward his people (see Ezr 9:6–7). (CSB)

have sinned – Hbr *yadah* can mean “to confess.” (TLSB)

106:7 *rebelled by the sea* – Could be understood as they rebelled “concerning the sea,” wondering why Moses led them there (Ex 14:10–11). The historian Josephus records that the Israelites wanted to stone Moses by the sea (*Ant* 2:327). The Hbr verb form is used only for rebellion against God. (TLSB)

106:7, 22 *miracles*. For example, the plagues against Egypt. (CSB)

106:8 *for his name’s sake* – He delivers his people in order to sanctify his name, that is, to preserve his reputation throughout the world (see also Ez. 36:22-36) (*A Commentary on the Psalms* - Ross)

106:10 *redeemed*. Here, as often, a synonym for “delivered.” (CSB)

106:12 *believed his words* – Israel’s greatest problem—and ours—is turning away from God’s Word. (TLSB)

106:13 *his counsel*. The working out of his plan. (CSB)

106:14 *craving* – Such craving seeks and loves the things of the world and ignores the things of God. (TLSB)

106:15 *wasting disease* – Lit, “leanness.” In Nu 11:33, God satisfied the people’s craving with quail but punished them with disease so that the nourishment did nothing for them. Though they ate, they were wasting away. (TLSB)

106:16 *Aaron, the holy one of the Lord* – Aaron was called by God to serve as high priest. As such, he wore a plate that was engraved “Holy to the LORD” (Ex 28:36). (TLSB)

106:17 *Dathan...Abiram* – Cf Nu 16. Along with Korah, these men accused Moses of foisting his leadership upon Israel. God destroyed their company with an earthquake, fire, and plague. (TLSB)

106:20 *Glory*. Glorious One (see 1Sa 15:29; Jer 2:11). (CSB)

At Sinai, God had revealed His glory. The people turned that glory into a miserable idol. (TLSB)

106:22 *land of Ham*. Descendants of the second son of Noah are associated with Egypt and Africa. (TLSB)

106:23 *chosen one* – Moses was specifically called by God (Nu 16:5). (TLSB)

106:28 *yoked*. Metaphor describing working together and marriage (2Co 6:14). People joined themselves in the sexually immoral worship of Baal of Peor (Nu 25). (TLSB)

106:30 *Phinehas*. Grandson of Aaron and high priest during the time of Joshua. As Israel was preparing to cross the Jordan, many among them were tempted to the false religion and immorality of Baal of Peor. Phinehas drove a spear through an adulterous Israelite named Zimri and his Midianite lover as they were entwined, an act that appeased God’s wrath (Nu 25:10–18). (TLSB)

106:31 *counted to him as righteousness*. As Abram’s faith was “credited to him as righteousness” (Ge 15:6), so, says the psalmist, was Phinehas’s priestly zeal for the Lord (see Nu 25:7–8). (CSB)

generation to generation. The psalmist refers to the “covenant of a lasting priesthood” (Nu 25:13) that the Lord granted Phinehas as a gracious reward for his zealous act. It was the granting of this promissory covenant that warranted the statement about crediting righteousness, for God’s granting of a promissory covenant to Abram had followed upon his crediting Abram’s faith to him as righteousness (see Ge 15:9–21). Similarly, God’s promissory covenants with Noah (see Ge 9:9–17) and with David (see 2Sa 7:5–16) followed upon God’s testimony to their righteousness (see Ge 7:1; 1Sa 13:14). (CSB)

Each generation would learn of Phinehas’s faith and zeal. Through faith, the Lord would grant everlasting life. (TLSB)

106:32 *Meribah*. Means “quarreling.” Twice, Israel complained about the lack of water, and God provided water from a rock. However, the second time, Moses’ patience had run out. Instead of speaking to the rock to generate the water, he struck it twice. This disobedience prevented Moses from entering the Promised Land (cf Ex 17:1–7; Nu 20:2–13). (TLSB)

106:33 *made his spirit bitter*. For a literal rendering of the Hebrew. For the Spirit of God present and at work in the desert wanderings see Ex 31:3; Nu 11:17; 24:2; Ne 9:20; Isa 63:10–14. (CSB)

106:34–39 A general description of the worst of rebellious Israel’s sins, applicable from the time of the judges to the Babylonian exile. (CSB)

106:34 *destroy the peoples*. God commanded the destruction of the Canaanites because of their wickedness (Dt 7:1–6; 9:1–4; 20:16–18). (TLSB)

106:36 *snare*. Joshua warned that the Canaanites would ensnare the Israelites if they mixed with them (Jsh 23:13). (TLSB)

106:37 *demons*. The Hebrew for this word occurs elsewhere in the OT only in Dt 32:17, where it refers to false gods. It is related to a Babylonian word referring to (pagan) protective spirits. (CSB)

Dt 32:17 uses the same Hbr term to relate idolatry and demon worship. (TLSB)

106:38 *innocent blood*. The blood of anyone not guilty of a capital crime. (CSB)

Chemnitz: “The blood is innocent because they were not killed on account of crimes that they had committed, as thieves are, but at an age which cannot deserve civil punishment for any action” (*LTh* 1:300). (TLSB)

polluted. The very land itself is defiled by the slaughter of innocents (see Nu 35:33; Jer 3:2, 9). (CSB)

106:39 *unclean*. Cf Lv 18:24. Canaanites were removed from the land because they had defiled it with false worship. Israel would commit the same sin (Jer 2:23–25; Ezk 20:30–31; 22:3–4). (TLSB)

whore in their deeds. Committed prostitution by joining themselves with false gods (see Eze 23:3, 5–8; Hos 5:3; 6:10). (CSB)

106:40–43 God’s stern measures against his rebellious people—a general description applicable from the days of the judges to the Babylonian exile and focusing particularly on God’s most severe form of covenant sanctions (see Lev 26:25–26, 33, 38–39; Dt 28:25, 36–37, 48–57, 64–68). (CSB)

106:40 *anger*. God’s anger is always an expression of his righteousness. (CSB)

abhorred. God promised severe repercussions for Israel’s disobedience (Lv 26:25–26, 33, 38–39; Dt 28:25, 36–37, 48–57, 64–68). (TLSB)

106:44–46 God’s gracious remembering of his covenant—a general description applicable from the days of the judges to the Babylonian exile. (CSB)

Israel’s history of rebellion continued in the land. They not only tolerated the idolatrous Canaanites, they adopted their ways. One terrible feature of the Canaanite worship was human sacrifice, especially of one’s own children. (PBC)

106:44 *heard their cry*. See Ex 2:23; 3:7–9; Nu 20:16; Jdg 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:6–7; 10:10; 1Sa 9:16; 2Ch 20:6–12; Ne 9:27–28. (CSB)

Cf Ex 2:23–24; 3:7–9; Nu 20:16; 1Sm 9:16; 2Ch 20:6–12; Ne 9:27–28. (TLSB)

106:45 *remembered his covenant*. See 105:8, 42; Ex 2:24; Lev 26:42, 45. (CSB)

106:46 *pitied by all who held them captive*. Makes clear that the author’s recital includes the Babylonian captivity (see 1Ki 8:50; 2Ch 30:9; Ezr 9:9; Jer 42:12). Although there were earlier captivities of Israelite communities, no other captive group was said to have been shown pity. (CSB)

Israel eventually found pity from her captors and was allowed to return to the Promised Land (1Ki 8:50; 2Ch 30:9; Ezr 9:9; Jer 42:12). (TLSB)

106:47 A communal prayer for deliverance and restoration from dispersion. (CSB)

This prayer for restoration so that the nation could serve the Lord was appropriate both during the days of David after the dark days of the judges and Saul, and during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah after the exile in Babylon. (PBC)

glory in. Triumphantly celebrate. The Hebrew for this phrase is found elsewhere only in the parallel in 1Ch 16:35. (CSB)

praise. See note on 9:1. (CSB)

106:48 The doxology for Book IV. (CSB)

This psalm was written not just to review history, but to teach us a lesson. Israel's bad example and the sad results it produced should warn us against repeating their behavior. Let us be on guard, lest we take God's grace for granted and squander the blessings it has provided. (PBC)

Amen! Psalms are the prayers and praises of Israel; they are not only to be studied but also to be used in worship! (TLSB)

Ps 106 One of the most important words in this psalm is "nevertheless" (v 44). Despite Israel's persistent disobedience, God consistently upheld His promises and saved them. As we struggle with temptation (Gal 5:17), we can be sure that God will remain faithful (2Tm 2:13), granting us true repentance and new life in Christ. • O Lord, we must also confess with ancient Israel that we have sinned. Nevertheless, You have faithfully saved us through Jesus' obedience, suffering, death, and resurrection. Praise to the Lord! Amen. (TLSB)