



## Psalm 106 - A Confession of Israel's Sins

### Introduction

This historical psalm recites a series of events from Israel's history to illustrate God's steadfast love in the face of Israel's rebellion and unfaithfulness. The events are selected from Israel's time following Moses in the wilderness recorded in the Books of Exodus and Numbers, and from the time when Israel repeatedly indulged in rebellion against the Lord after the death of Joshua, recorded in the Book of Judges. All of the episodes are instances of the whole people being unfaithful and of God's continuing commitment to maintain this people and to foster among them the conditions in which piety can flourish. The focus is therefore on corporate unfaithfulness and forgiveness.

The psalm begins by calling on the people to give thanks and praise to God; and it ends in a prayer that the God who has shown such forbearance will once again deliver his people, apparently this time from exile. In view of where the psalm ends up, it is best to call it a community lament.

The specific occasion for this psalm is some kind of exile, in which the people must be gathered from among the nations that had taken them captive. The obvious candidate for this is the Babylonian exile. One difficulty with this conclusion is that there is no mention of the dynasty of David, so caution is appropriate. In any case, the psalm is suited for a variety of recurring situations in which the people of God, including some Christians even today, are in a crisis that results from their persistent unfaithfulness.

A version of vv.47-48 appears in 1 Chronicles 16:35-36 as part of the song for bringing the ark to Jerusalem. Assuming that Chronicles records something like the actual song on the occasion, then probably the psalmist adapted the words of that song for his purposes.

**Derek Kidner wrote, "This psalm is the dark counterpart of its predecessor, a shadow cast by human self-will in its long struggle against the light." Charles**

Spurgeon observed, “Israel’s history is here written with the view of showing human sin, even as the preceding Psalm was composed to magnify divine goodness. It is, in fact, a national confession.”

### Psalm 106:1-3 - Praise to the Lord for His Mighty Deeds.

The psalm begins in a way reminiscent of Psalm 105, calling the people to give thanks to God and to reflect on his mighty deeds. Verse 3 of Psalm 106, with its description of covenant faithfulness for the members of Israel, i.e. observe justice and do righteousness at all times, reminds the singing congregation that they must authentically take hold of God’s grace – an authenticity that is absent in most of the events described in this psalm. This is reflected in: <<*If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who does right has been born of him*>> (1 John 2:29), <<*Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous*>> (1 John 3:7), and: <<*Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy*>> (Revelation 22:11).

<sup>1</sup> Praise the Lord!

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
for his steadfast love endures for ever.

### Psalm 106:1

Praise the Lord! Psalm 106 begins the way Psalm 105 ended, saying *hallelujah!* Psalm 105 gave praise because of God’s many gifts and blessings to Israel. Psalm 106 gives praise because of God’s great mercy to an often rebellious and ungrateful Israel.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. There is a sense of pleading in this phrase, as if the psalmist was desperate to draw greater gratitude from himself and God’s people, especially in light of his goodness.

For his steadfast love endures for ever. The rest of this long psalm will describe God’s great mercy, Hebrew *hesed*, God’s loyal covenant love, to a disobedient Israel. Spurgeon commented, “Since man ceases not to be sinful, it is a great blessing that Jehovah ceases not to be merciful.” Refer also to Ezra 3:11, Psalm 136 and Jeremiah 33:11 for more examples of this excellent phrase.

<sup>2</sup> Who can utter the mighty doings of the Lord,  
or declare all his praise?

<sup>3</sup> Happy are those who observe justice,  
who do righteousness at all times.

### Psalm 106:2-3

Who can utter the mighty doings of the Lord? In the midst of his praise, the psalmist recognised that it was not enough. God's mighty acts are so many they are beyond description. Because of this, one cannot declare all his praise.

Happy are those who observe justice. The word translated happy here is most commonly translated as blessed. The sense is that those who walk in obedience to God, i.e. observe justice and do righteousness, that they do their part to declare God's praise: <<*It is well with those who deal generously and lend, who conduct their affairs with justice*>> (Psalm 112:5), <<*But as for you, return to your God, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God*>> (Hosea 12:6).

### Psalm 106:4-5 - Request to Share in the Future of God's People.

A crucial principle of biblical faith is that the story of God's people is going somewhere; in the OT, primarily to the time when God so blesses his people with godliness that the Gentiles are drawn into the light. This section looks to that future; true piety wants to participate in the gladness of God's nation and recognises that for this, along with personal forgiveness, covenant authenticity is required (v.3).

- <sup>4</sup> Remember me, O Lord, when you show favour to your people;  
help me when you deliver them;
- <sup>5</sup> that I may see the prosperity of your chosen ones,  
that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation,  
that I may glory in your heritage.

### Psalm 106:4-5

Remember me, O Lord. With a preface and foundation of praise, the psalmist felt the door was open to ask God for help. He knew that for God to remember was to stir his compassion to action. For God to visit meant he would come with his salvation, bringing deliverance in the present trouble. David asked God to remember him but not his sins: <<*Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord!*>> (Psalm 25:6-7).

Help me when you deliver them. The plea is made as if the psalmist were too sick to go to the doctor for necessary care and must have the doctor visit him. Spurgeon observed, "There is no salvation apart from the Lord, and he must visit

us with it or we shall never obtain it. We are too sick to visit our Great Physician, and therefore he visits us.”

**That I may see the prosperity of your chosen ones.** Three reasons for the request are given, each one concerned with the honour and fame of God:

- **That I may see the prosperity:** “Lord, I want to see your people blessed by your mighty works toward them”
- **That I may rejoice:** “Lord, I want to share in the joy of your blessed and redeemed people”
- **That I may glory:** “Lord, I want to be part of your victory and the victory of your people”

### **Psalm 106:6-46 - Illustrating God’s Faithfulness and the People’s Unfaithfulness.**

The body of the psalm is a list of incidents in which both the current generation and their ancestors have sinned. This list begins at the shore of the Red Sea (vv.7-12); this is the only case listed in which the result of God’s response to the unfaithfulness was that the people ‘believed his words.’ The list then moves to Kibroth-hattaavah (vv.13-15), then to the revolt of Dathan and Abiram (vv.16-18), then to the golden calf (vv.19-23), then to the rebellion due to the spies’ bad report (vv.24-27), then to the sin with the Baal of Peor (vv.28-31), then to Meribah (vv.32-33), then to the wearying cycle of unfaithfulness followed by deliverance followed by more unfaithfulness that the Book of Judges records (vv.34-46). Each of these events can be tied to a passage in the Pentateuch and Judges; the psalm is probably based directly on the way that the narrative books describe the events. However, even though the overall movement, from the Red Sea to the time of the Judges, is sequential, the incidents in between do not strictly follow the chronology of the Pentateuch. Perhaps the simplest explanation for this is that this poem does not depend as much on sequence as narrative tends to depend.

- <sup>6</sup> Both we and our ancestors have sinned;  
we have committed iniquity, have done wickedly.

#### **Psalm 106:6**

**Both we and our ancestors have sinned.** This verse is the theme and focus of the whole list of incidents. The sins, iniquity and wickedness described here are the kind that reveals that the people of Israel have unfaithful hearts. It is entirely possible that the penitent generation singing this psalm has not committed the kinds of unfaithfulness that brought about their exile (v.47); and yet the psalm presents the current generation as having been present in their representatives, their ancestors, and thus incorporates the current generation in their ancestors’ sin; refer to the comment made on Deuteronomy 1:20-21. For similar prayers of

confession, refer to Ezra 9:6-15, Nehemiah 1:5-11 and Daniel 9:4-19 — all expressing multigenerational solidarity in wrongdoing. The words ‘we have sinned’ derive from Solomon’s prayer at the time of the temple dedication: <<*and if they come to their senses in the land to which they have been taken captive, and repent, and plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, “We have sinned, and have done wrong; we have acted wickedly”*>> (1 Kings 8:47).

Psalm 106 is mainly focuses the repeated failure of Israel throughout its history. Yet the singer of this psalm does not see failure as something only of Israel’s past. He identified his present generation with Israel of old, connected in their sin, their iniquity and their wicked deeds. Spurgeon observed, “Men may be said to have sinned with their fathers when they imitate them, when they follow the same objects, and make their own lives to be mere continuations of the follies of their sires.”

- 7 Our ancestors, when they were in Egypt,  
did not consider your wonderful works;  
they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love,  
but rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea.
- 8 Yet he saved them for his name’s sake,  
so that he might make known his mighty power.
- 9 He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry;  
he led them through the deep as through a desert.
- 10 So he saved them from the hand of the foe,  
and delivered them from the hand of the enemy.
- 11 The waters covered their adversaries;  
not one of them was left.
- 12 Then they believed his words;  
they sang his praise.

### Psalm 106:7-12

The first incident is from the shore of the Red Sea (refer to Exodus 14:10-31), when the people of Israel who had followed Moses saw the pursuing army of Egypt. To say that they did not consider God’s wonderful works and that they rebelled is to indicate that their reaction was more than justifiable fear of the Egyptians; it was evidence of unbelieving hearts. Nevertheless the Lord saved them for his

name's sake, i.e. that he might make known his mighty power, both to Israel: <<*I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians*>> (Exodus 6:7); and to the nations: <<*And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained glory for myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his chariot drivers*>> (Exodus 14:18).

He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry. The great works of God are remembered, from the dividing of the Red Sea to the destruction of the Egyptian army when the waters covered their adversaries.

The terms saved and delivered or redeemed come from Exodus: <<*Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore*>> (Exodus 14:30), and: <<*In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode*>> (Exodus 15:13); and speak of the great deeds God has done to rescue his people as a whole and to bring about the conditions in which their piety may flourish. The result was that they believed his words: <<*Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses*>> (Exodus 14:31), and sang his praise: <<*Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: 'I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea'*>> (Exodus 15:1).

Israel's reaction to God's saving works was not all rebellion and disobedience. There were times they trusted God's words and praised him in song recorded in Exodus Chapter 15. Spurgeon detected a fault even in this belief and praise: "That is to say, they believed the promise when they saw it fulfilled, but not till then. This is mentioned, not to their credit, but to their shame. Those who do not believe the Lord's word till they see it performed are not believers at all."

- 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.

### Psalm 106:13-15

Sadly, the people of Israel soon forgot God's works, i.e. descended back into unfaithfulness (v.7), such that they put God to the test in the desert, a hideous

*sin: <<nevertheless – as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord – none of the people who have seen my glory and the signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have tested me these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their ancestors; none of those who despised me shall see it>>* (Numbers 14:21-23). The psalmist repeated the idea from Psalm 78:18 which spoke of Israel testing God with their unbelief regarding his ability to provide for their needs in the wilderness.

The specific incident in view is not the very next event in Exodus; the term wanton craving points to Numbers 11:4 and 11:31-35, at Kibroth-hattaavah, which is the Hebrew for ‘the Graves of Craving’.

He gave them what they asked, but sent a wasting disease among them. God gave Israel the meat they craved; refer to Numbers Chapter 11. Yet the meat was also sent with an associated curse and what they wanted became something bad. The prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) and Lot (Genesis 13:11) are other examples of those who received what they wanted but came to ruin because of it. The wasting disease here is called a ‘very great plague’ in Numbers 11:33, and it killed many Israelites, indicating God’s disapproval of the unbelief behind the asking.

- 16 They were jealous of Moses in the camp,  
and of Aaron, the holy one of the Lord.
- 17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,  
and covered the faction of Abiram.
- 18 Fire also broke out in their company;  
the flame burned up the wicked.

### Psalm 106:16-18

The next event is the rebellion led by Dathan and Abiram, recorded in Numbers 16:1-40, who apparently enlisted the Levite Korah as their chief spokesman. Korah spoke against Moses and Aaron, and the specific question he raised was over whether Aaron was holy in a way distinct from the holiness of the whole congregation. Because these people were jealous, they rebelled against God’s appointed spokesman, Moses. Such a situation is intolerable among the leaders of God’s people, and God brought a dramatic judgement upon them: the earth opened and swallowed up the tents of the conspirators, and fire also broke out and killed those who had dared to violate the priestly requirements; refer to Numbers 14:31-35. Neither the psalm nor the Book of Numbers gives any hope that people came to believe as a result.

Spurgeon stated, “Who can hope to escape envy when the meekest of men was subject to it? How unreasonable was this envy, for Moses was the one man in all the camp who laboured hardest and had most to bear. They should have sympathised with him; to envy him was ridiculous.”

Aaron, the holy one of the Lord. This was God’s generosity towards an often-erring servant, as in Exodus Chapter 32, the golden calf incident. Whatever faults Aaron had, he was God’s appointed priest and Korah directed his rebellion against both Moses and Aaron.

- 19 They made a calf at Horeb  
and worshipped a cast image.
- 20 They exchanged the glory of God  
for the image of an ox that eats grass.
- 21 They forgot God, their Saviour,  
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.

### Psalm 106:19-23

The psalm moves on to the calf in Horeb, the cast image, the ‘golden calf’; refer to Exodus 32:1-14. The reason why they committed this horror was essentially unfaithfulness: they forgot God, their Saviour, who had done great things in Egypt. The singer of Psalm 106 did not present the Exodus account in chronological order. Here he remembered Israel’s sin with the golden calf, which happened well before the rebellion of Korah.

They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass. Israel’s idolatry with the golden calf did not actually debase God; it debased them. They lowered themselves to be the creatures and servants of a man-made beast. Paul quoted from the Septuagint translation of this phrase from v.20 in Romans 1:23, using it as a strong accusation against idolaters of all kinds. Paul’s application of this in Romans 1:23 demonstrates that it is not Israel alone that has been guilty of the sin of idolatry. This is humanity’s sin in general.

Therefore he said he would destroy them. Exodus 32:9-10 records the remarkable words of God to Moses, explaining that he would destroy the rebellious people of Israel and build the nation again through Moses. God told Moses: <<**Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them**>> (Exodus 32:10a). God did not ask for the opinion or participation of Moses in this matter. He simply told Moses, “Let Me alone so I can do this.” The clear impression was that if Moses did nothing, the plan would go ahead.

Moses stood in the breach before God, which is an image taken from risking one’s own life to close up a gap broken in a wall, to turn away God’s wrath from destroying the Israelites, i.e. by earnestly interceding for them, reminding God of his promises and his reputation; refer to Exodus 32:11-14.

Spurgeon praised Moses’ leadership and bravery, “Like a bold warrior who defends the wall when there is an opening for the adversary and destruction is rushing in upon the city, Moses stopped the way of avenging justice with his prayers.”

They exchanged the glory of God. As noted above, Paul uses this expression to describe Gentile idolatry: <<**and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles**>> (Romans 1:23). It is even more senseless when Israel does it: <<**Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for something that does not profit**>> (Jeremiah 2:11).

- 24 Then they despised the pleasant land,  
having no faith in his promise.
- 25 They grumbled 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 disperse their descendants among the nations,  
scattering them over the lands.

### Psalm 106:24-27

The sad list now moves to what happened when the twelve spies returned from their mission to scout out the land that God had promised as recorded in Numbers 13:32-14:38. Ten of them gave a ‘bad report,’ which led Israel to give in to fear. As a result, they despised the pleasant land, having no faith in his promise: they refused God’s command to enter the land to conquer it. The psalm follows the

Mosaic account in attributing the basic problem to unfaithfulness: <<*And the Lord said to Moses, 'How long will this people despise me? And how long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?'*>> (Numbers 14:11). This is a major turning point in the Pentateuch: a generation must now fall in the wilderness: <<*But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness*>> (Numbers 14:32), and: <<*Therefore in my anger I swore, 'They shall not enter my rest'*>> (Psalm 95:11), Israel must wander for another 38 years, and the children must take on the task of conquering. This section closes with an ominous foreshadowing of the singers' current situation: just as God made the Israelites would disperse their descendants among the nations, scattering them over the lands (v.47).

On 'They grumbled in their tents' Spurgeon observed, "Murmuring is a great sin and not a mere weakness; it contains within itself unbelief, pride, rebellion, and a whole host of sins. It is a home sin, and is generally practised by complainers 'in their tents,' but it is just as evil there as in the streets, and will be quite as grievous to the Lord."

The Israelites did not obey the voice of the Lord. God promised them the land of Canaan, no matter what the opposition. It was plain unbelief, masked by a supposed concern for their wives and children: <<*Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become booty; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?'*>> (Numbers 14:3). In fact, it would be those very children that Joshua would lead into the Promised Land at the end of the wilderness wanderings.

Therefore he raised his hand and swore to them. God promised that the generation of unbelief in the wilderness would not inherit the land of Canaan; refer to Numbers 14:21-25. That generation would die in the wilderness and the new generation had their opportunity to take the land by faith.

- 28 Then they attached 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 interceded,  
and the plague was stopped.
- 31 And that has been reckoned to him as righteousness  
from generation to generation for ever.

### Psalm 106:28-31

Next is the time when the Israelites attached themselves to the Baal of Peor; refer to Numbers 25:1-15. Participation in sacrifices offered to the dead, i.e. to the lifeless gods of the Moabites: <<*These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods*>> (Numbers 25:2) led to other kinds of immorality as well, which would have corrupted the people of God and ruined their ability to carry out their calling in the world: <<*While Israel was staying at Shittim, the people began to have sexual relations with the women of Moab*>> (Numbers 25:1), and: <<*Just then one of the Israelites came and brought a Midianite woman into his family, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the Israelites, while they were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting*>> (Numbers 25:6). It took the prompt and drastic action of Phinehas to stay the plague that broke out among the Israelites as a result of God's anger; refer to the comment made on Numbers 25:7-8. This deed was reckoned to Phinehas as righteousness, i.e. God considered it a deed of covenant faithfulness rather than as giving legal status (refer to the comment made on Deuteronomy 6:25), and it led to his family having the priesthood from generation to generation for ever: <<*It shall be for him and for his descendants after him a covenant of perpetual priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the Israelites*>> (Numbers 25:13).

- <sup>32</sup> They angered the Lord at the waters of Meribah,  
and it went ill with Moses on their account;
- <sup>33</sup> for they made his spirit bitter,  
and he spoke words that were rash.

### Psalm 106:32-33

At the waters of Meribah the people complained about lack of water and accused Moses of bringing them out of Egypt, apparently forgetting that Moses had acted throughout as God's spokesman; refer to Numbers 20:2-13 and the associated comments. Their unbelief led Moses to speak rashly, i.e. to become careless about acting by faith, and thus to lose his right to enter the Promised Land, it went ill with Moses on their account.

**This is the last event from the Pentateuch in this list.**

For they made his spirit bitter. The singer of Psalm 106 put the emphasis on how Israel provoked Moses by their rebellion and by making him angry. Moses was truly provoked but God still held him responsible for his reaction to the provocation. Spurgeon noted that sometimes congregations provoke their ministers or pastors as Israel provoked Moses. "We ought also to be very careful how we treat the ministers of the gospel, lest by provoking their spirit we should drive them into any

unseemly behaviour which should bring upon them the chastisement of the Lord. Little do a murmuring, quarrelsome people dream of the perils in which they involve their pastors by their untoward behaviour.”

34 They did not destroy the peoples  
as the Lord commanded them,  
35 but they mingled 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 prostituted themselves in their doings.  
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 regarded their distress  
when he heard their cry.

45 For their sake he remembered his covenant,  
and showed compassion according to the abundance of his  
steadfast love.

46 He caused them to be pitied  
by all who held them captive.

### Psalm 106:34-46

This description is unlike the previous episodes in that it refers not to a specific event but to the recurring pattern found in Judges 2:11-3:6, in which the people of Israel did not destroy the peoples in Canaan thus disobeying what the Lord commanded them. Instead, they mingled with the nations especially by intermarriage: *<<and they took their daughters as wives for themselves, and their own daughters they gave to their sons; and they worshipped their gods>>* (Judges 3:6), and: *<<For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons. Thus the holy seed has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands, and in this faithlessness the officials and leaders have led the way>>* (Ezra 9:2), and learned to do as they did. This led to the unspeakable practice of child sacrifice (vv.36-39). This is in itself a hideous moral outrage, and it attacks the very heart of God's covenant with his people: *<<I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you>>* (Genesis 17:7), *<<But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments>>* (Psalm 103:17-18), and what it means to be human: *<<God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth'>>* (Genesis 1:28).

They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons. One of the worst examples of this evil influence was Israel's worship of Molech, a Canaanite god sometimes worshipped with child sacrifice in opposition to God's will: *<<And they go on building the high place of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire – which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind>>* (Jeremiah 7:31).

The land was polluted with blood. The Bible teaches that until justice prevails, the blood of innocents murdered cries out to God: *<<And the Lord said, 'What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground!''>>* (Genesis 4:10) and pollutes a nation in the eyes of God: *<<You shall not pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no*

*expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it>>* (Numbers 35:33). Spurgeon commented, “The promised land, the holy land, which was the glory of all lands, for God was there, was defiled with the reeking gore of innocent babes, and by the blood-red hands of their parents, who slew them in order to pay homage to devils.”

Thus they became unclean by their acts. In both the atmosphere they allowed and the deeds they did, Israel defiled themselves, and by their own deeds. The same statement could be said over many of God’s people today.

Hence the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people, and he gave them into the hand of the nations, which came in part as they settled in the Promised Land: <<*So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them, and he sold them into the power of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies>>* (Judges 2:14), but came to true fulfilment with the exiles by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. The stunning thing about the period of the Judges is the side-by-side themes: many times he delivered them while yet they were rebellious in their purposes. Nevertheless God regarded their distress and kept coming to their aid.

Some commentators believe this psalm to be post-exilic since the oppression by neighbouring states during the time of the Judges does not fully explain the statement that God gave them over to the nations; refer also to v.47a. Another possibility is that this part of the psalm is prophetic about what would happen to Israel if they continued in their disobedience.

The expressions ‘remembered his covenant’ and ‘the abundance of his steadfast love’, a reference to Exodus 34:6, look back to v.7 and put the faithful Lord in stark contrast with the unfaithful people. In keeping with Solomon’s prayer: <<*and forgive your people who have sinned against you, and all their transgressions that they have committed against you; and grant them compassion in the sight of their captors, so that they may have compassion on them>>* (1 Kings 8:50), God caused his repentant people to be pitied by all those who held them captive, and he restored them.

#### Psalm 106:47-48 - Concluding Prayer that God Will Save His People.

The previous sad recital clearly establishes that nothing is more certain than God’s continuing commitment to his people as a body, so that when they come to their senses and repent they may appeal to God to save them and gather them from among the nations; refer to Deuteronomy 30:3. He will do so when they share his goal for them: <<*that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise>>* (v.47b).

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!

### Psalm 106:47-48

Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations. The sense is that this psalm was composed when the mercies of God to Israel in their captivity were just beginning to be seen. The singer of the psalm rightly took those early, small mercies as the basis to boldly ask for greater mercies – that their captivity would be ended and they could return to the land. Again, this verse fits well with the time of the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles. Before either exile Isaiah prophesied that God would indeed redeem his people from the nations: <<***He will raise a signal for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth***>> (Isaiah 11:2). Jeremiah gave a similar prophecy before Judah was taken by the Babylonians: <<***I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile***>> (Jeremiah 29:14). Ezekiel, who was in Babylonian captivity at the time of his prophecy, had confidence that the Lord would restore his people Israel: <<***As a pleasing odour I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples, and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations***>> (Ezekiel 20:41), and: <<***Thus says the Lord God: When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and manifest my holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they shall settle on their own soil that I gave to my servant Jacob***>> (Ezekiel 28:25).

That we may give thanks to your holy name. The psalmist vowed that God's people would respond gratefully, breaking the previous pattern of ingratitude. They would not forget, but triumph and glory in your praise.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel. The psalmist would not wait for the asked for mercies to be evident before he began to thank and praise God. The praise started immediately, and would be given to God from everlasting to everlasting.

This doxology closes Book IV of the Psalms; refer to the comment made on Psalm 41:13. Unlike those that close Books I-III, this doxology belongs to its psalm, as the final words, **praise the Lord!** (Hebrew *Hallelujah*), echo the opening phrase of v.1 and provide, so to speak, bookends or an envelope enclosing the psalm as a whole. In view of what this list of events establishes about God's faithfulness, **blessed be the Lord** indeed, and **all the people** may well – and should indeed – say, '**Amen.**'