

Dr. David Emanuel, Psalms of the Exodus,

Session 3: Psalm 105 - Remember and Obey

Podcast Audio Overview

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Welcome everybody to another deep dive today. We're going to be looking at Psalm 105, and we're doing that through the lens of this really cool lecture I found. Yeah, this one's really interesting.

One of the most intriguing things about this Psalm is that it really focuses on the positive. It's this incredibly hopeful picture of the Exodus highlighting God's faithfulness, and it does it in a way that's kind of different from how we usually hear the story. Yeah, the title of the lecture that we're looking at is Remember and Obey, which I've got to admit, I'm a little curious about.

What does that even mean? Oh, that's a great place to start. So in the Bible, remembrance isn't just like, oh yeah, I remember that. It's not just recalling facts.

It's more like this active process that's supposed to have an impact on what you do. It should actually shape how you live. Oh, okay.

So it's not just about knowing what God did in the past, but letting those memories guide your choices now. I see. Okay.

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And I can kind of see how that ties into the idea of obedience then too. Yeah.

Yeah, for sure. And there's another layer to this too, which is the significance of land. There's a theory that the Psalm might have been written during or after the exile, you know, when the Israelites were longing to go back home.

So you can kind of imagine how powerful this idea of remembering God's faithfulness would have been for them. Like it was tied to this hope of returning to this land that God had promised them, this place of belonging. That makes a lot of sense.

That adds a whole other dimension to it. So the act of remembering is almost like it's fueling this hope for the future. Yeah, exactly.

And to drive that point home, the Psalm uses all these, I guess you could call them, literary tools. They're called biblical allusions to kind of connect back to other stories in the Bible. They're like these little hidden gems that add a lot of depth and richness to the narrative.

That's cool. So can you give us an example, like what kind of allusions are we talking about here? Sure. So, like, one example is this phrase: when they were only a few men in number.

Okay. And that echoes back to Genesis 34 when Jacob is afraid because his family's outnumbered and he thinks they're going to get attacked. Right.

And it reminds us of how fragile God's promise seemed at that point. Yeah, totally. I mean, if Jacob and his family had been wiped out, that would have been it.

The whole future line of the Israelites would have been cut off. God's promise would have been over. Exactly.

And another really striking example is this phrase, do not touch my anointed ones, which you can actually trace that back to the story of Abraham and Abimelech in Genesis 20. Okay. And in that story, Abimelech accidentally takes Abraham's wife, Sarah.

Oh, right, right. And God has to step in to protect her. And he basically declares that Abraham is his prophet.

I see. So we're seeing this theme of God actively protecting the ancestors of the Israelites because their survival was essential to fulfilling his promise. But things get even more interesting when the Psalm gets to the story of Joseph, don't they? They do, yeah.

And what's really fascinating here is how the Psalm portrays Joseph's story as this deliberate test by God. It's almost like he's being refined for this greater purpose. And this is different from the tone of the Genesis account, which is a little bit more neutral.

Yeah, that's true. In Genesis, it kind of feels like things are just sort of happening to Joseph. But in Psalm 105, it feels more like God is intentionally putting him through these trials.

Exactly. It's like he's preparing him for something bigger. And this emphasis on God's control, it's really woven through the entire Exodus account in Psalm 105.

That's where I really start to see it depart from the traditional narrative. Yeah. So, for example, the Psalm says that God called the famine, whereas in Genesis, it just says that a famine happened.

That's interesting. It's like we're getting this behind-the-scenes look at God's actions. Like we're seeing his intentionality and what might seem like just random events.

Yeah, exactly. And even the way the plagues are portrayed is really striking. In the Psalm, God directly sends the plagues.

It kind of minimizes the roles of Moses and Aaron. It's all about God intervening. Right.

It's like they're not even mediating his power. It's God himself who's acting directly. Right.

Hmm. What about the order of the plagues in this Psalm? It seems like they're presented in a very specific way, like maybe there's an order to them. Yeah.

And there's this theory that they're actually arranged in order of increasing severity. Like it builds to this crescendo with the plague of the firstborn. So it starts with things like darkness and contaminated water, and then it escalates to, like, swarms of insects.

Then you've got hail and locusts destroying crops. And then finally, the plague that everybody remembers. Wow.

Yeah. That's a really interesting observation. I've never thought about it that way before, but it definitely adds to the dramatic impact of the whole story.

Yeah. And it's worth noting that the only places in the whole Bible where we actually get a full list of the plagues are in Psalms 105 and 78. Oh, really? That's interesting.

So this Psalm is really giving us a unique glimpse into a pivotal moment in Israelite history, but it's doing it through the lens of God's direct and intentional involvement. It is interesting, though, that it leaves out some of the more, I guess, well, the negative aspects of the story. Yeah, that's true.

There's no mention of, like, Abraham's lies. Right. Or Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery, or even, you know, the Israelites constantly complaining in the desert, all that stuff missing.

Right. So it's not trying to be a completely accurate historical record. It's crafting a very specific narrative about God's unwavering commitment to his people.

It almost makes you wonder what the psalmist is trying to emphasize by leaving all that stuff out and just focusing on the positive. Right. It's like they're really highlighting God's faithfulness, even in the face of human, you know, failure.

And it's reinforced by how much emphasis they put on his spoken word throughout the Psalm. Oh, okay. I'm intrigued.

Can you give me some examples? Sure. So, like, take the command, "Do not touch my anointed ones. Right.

Or the way that God just speaks to call forth the plagues. Right. It's like the Psalm is emphasizing the power and the authority behind God's words.

Like when he says something, it happens. It's not just, you know, empty words. They carry the weight of reality.

That's fascinating. So it's not just that he acts; it's that his words themselves carry the force of action. But there are also some things missing from this Psalm that I guess you might expect to see based on the traditional Exodus account.

Yeah, for sure. And I think those omissions are really important to think about, too. Okay.

One of the most notable ones is the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Right. Which is like such a central event in the typical Exodus narrative.

Why do you think that's left out? Well, one theory is that it's because that event, the giving of the Torah, is so closely tied to the incident with the golden calf. Right. Right.

Where the Israelites rebel against God. Right. And remember, the whole point of the Psalm is to present God's faithfulness and the positive outcome of the story.

Right. So bringing up the golden calf would kind of complicate that message? Exactly. It wouldn't fit with this kind of idealized picture of the Exodus that the Psalm is painting.

This picture emphasizes God's unwavering commitment to his promises even when his people are struggling. But that kind of raises a question about what obedience even means in this context. If the law is not explicitly mentioned, what are they supposed to be obeying? Yeah, that's a great point.

Maybe we can dive into that a little bit more. Let's do it. We were just talking about how this Psalm leaves out some pretty important parts of the Exodus story, like the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Yeah. And it makes me wonder: what kind of obedience did the Psalmist have in mind when he talks about keeping God's statutes and observing his laws? Where do those laws even come from in this version of the story? That is a great question. And I think it really gets at the heart of what this Psalm is all about.

The Psalm might not spell out the specific laws, but I don't think that's an accident. Oh, okay. Remember, the focus is on God's faithfulness to his promises, right? And those promises culminate with the Israelites finally getting to enter the promised land.

So it's like the Psalmist is saying, look, God held up his end of the bargain. Now it's your turn to hold up yours. I see.

Okay. But without those details of the law, how are we supposed to know what that obedience even looks like? Right. And that's where I think the overall context is really important.

When you consider the main theme of the Psalm, it seems like obedience is about responding to God's faithfulness with gratitude and trust. It's about aligning your life with God's purposes, knowing that he's always working for your good. So it's not just about blindly following a bunch of rules.

It's more about actively participating in this relationship with God. Exactly. A relationship that's built on trust and a willingness to, I guess, follow his lead.

Yeah, that's a great way to put it. And that idea makes even more sense when you think about the full Exodus narrative. Right, right.

Even beyond what's included in this Psalm, God constantly shows his love and care for the Israelites. Even when they messed up. Even when they totally messed up.

They definitely weren't always the most obedient bunch. No, they had their fair share of rebellion and doubt. That's for sure.

Yeah, for sure. But even with all their imperfections, God remained faithful to them. He continued to guide them, protect them, and ultimately he brought them to that land he promised them.

Right. It's like this Psalm is a condensed version of the Exodus. Yeah.

Highlighting just God's faithfulness and emphasizing that. He always keeps his promises even when we might stray from the path a little bit. That's a great way to put it.

And it kind of implies that our response should be one of trust and obedience, even when things get tough. Or even when we don't understand why things are happening the way they are. Yeah, totally.

I'm really starting to see how this ancient Psalm can still speak to us today. Like this idea of responding to God's faithfulness with a willingness to follow his guidance, even when it's hard. That's pretty relevant no matter what your background is or what you believe.

Yeah, for sure. And I think it's especially encouraging to remember that God's faithfulness isn't dependent on us being perfect. Right.

He's steadfast in his love and commitment, even when we mess up. That is a powerful thought. We've talked a lot about how this Psalm portrays God as this powerful being in control, orchestrating events for this greater purpose.

Right. But how do we square that with the idea of free will? If God's in control, do we really have a choice in how we respond? Oof, that's a tough one. That's a question that's been around for centuries.

It's definitely something that theologians have grappled with for a long time. This Psalm really makes you think about the relationship between God's sovereignty and human choice. So no easy answers then, huh? Not really, no.

But I actually think that wrestling with those questions, like really engaging with those theological complexities, can actually be a really good thing. It can help us understand who God is in a deeper way and how he works in the world. Yeah.

It's like this Psalm is inviting us to move beyond these easy, simplistic answers and really embrace the mystery of faith. Exactly. And it's within that mystery that we can find this profound truth, which is that even when we don't understand why things are happening, we can still find comfort and security in knowing that God is ultimately in control.

He's working everything out for good. Yeah. Okay.

I like that. So we've covered a lot in this deep dive. We have.

We've looked at how this Psalm portrays the Exodus in this really unique way. We've unpacked this idea of obedience as a response to God's faithfulness. And we've even touched on some of the bigger theological questions that it raises.

Right. But there's one more piece I'd like to explore if you're up for it. Sure.

Which is, how can we actually apply this Psalm to our own lives? What does it look like to actually live out this message of remembered faithfulness in a practical way? Yeah. Let's do it. Okay.

So we've been talking about this whole idea of remembered faithfulness, remembering how God was faithful to the Israelites. Right. And thinking about how we can be faithful in our own lives.

But I'm kind of struggling with what that actually looks like practically. It's easy to get caught up in the historical stuff. Oh yeah.

For sure. And miss the personal application. Yeah.

I think that's such a crucial point. Psalm 105 might be telling the story of ancient Israel. Right.

But it's ultimately about relationship. This covenant between God and his people. And that covenant doesn't stop with history.

It continues today. So you're saying God's faithfulness to them back then is like a mirror of how he's faithful to us now. Absolutely.

The same God who was looking out for them is looking out for us. He's not off somewhere uninvolved. He's actively working in our lives, even orchestrating things for our good.

Even when we can't see the whole picture. Yeah. That's pretty powerful.

It's like the Psalm is saying, hey, you're not alone in this. God's with you every step of the way, just like he was with them. But it's not just about feeling all warm and fuzzy inside, is it? Like remembering God's faithfulness also requires something from us too, doesn't it? It does.

The Psalm ends with that call to keep his statutes and observe his laws. And we talked about how obedience in this context isn't just about blindly following rules. It's about aligning our lives with God's purposes, trusting his wisdom, and trying to live in a way that honors him.

So it's about living in a way that shows how grateful we are for his faithfulness. Yeah, exactly. And that gratitude should spill over into everything.

How we treat others, how we work, the choices we make. It should shape how we interact with the world around us and how we handle the hard stuff that life throws at us. It's like we're called to actually live out this remembered faithfulness, both by remembering what God has done and by following his lead.

But that kind of life, that's not always easy, is it? No, it's definitely not. I mean, we're human. We doubt.

We question. Sometimes it's hard to see God working, especially when things are tough. Yeah, you're right.

It can be really hard. But even in those moments when we're feeling lost or uncertain, this psalm offers this incredible message of hope. It reminds us that God's faithfulness doesn't depend on us figuring everything out or always getting it right.

His love is constant. It never changes. And ultimately, he's working everything out for our good.

Man, this deep dive has been so eye-opening. It's really given me a fresh perspective on God's faithfulness and my own responsibility to respond to that. And just seeing how those two things are connected in my own life.

Yeah, it's been great exploring this with you. I really enjoyed it. And as we wrap up, I want to leave our listeners with something to think about.

If God's faithfulness really is as constant and unwavering as this psalm says, how might that change the way we approach our daily lives, our relationships, and the challenges we face? How can it help us live with more courage and hope and trust, even when things feel uncertain? Yeah, that's a really good question. I hope everyone listening will take some time to really chew on that. We encourage you to read Psalm 105 for yourselves and really let that message of hope sink in.

And until next time, keep diving deep.