The Psalmist takes a similar approach. He sees the evil, boastful men around him who love evil and deceitful words, and he laughs at them (52:6). He knows the outcome of those who trust in themselves and their great wealth and destructive abilities rather than in God, and he sees the great contrast in his personal trusting in God and His unfailing love (52:7-8). He flourishes like an olive tree and will praise God forever.

 To say there is no God is the statement of a fool (53:1), one who has become morally bankrupt and doesn’t understand reality. These who deny God’s existence are the one who perpetrate evil and exert their power trying to make their evil plans succeed. This never works, yet they try time after time, generation after generation. This is a helpful reminder for those choosing evil but also those suffering under them. In time, God will destroy them.

 This was the cry of the Psalmist as evil men attacked. “Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me” (54:4). Make that your prayer and proclamation as well.

Saturday, April 29, 2017—Psalms 55-57

 The Psalms record the wide variety of life experiences. From public wedding celebrations to invisible personal darkness, the writers express their joy, fear, sorrow, and frustration. They do so because they believe God is a personal God—one who listens, responds, provides, and protects.

 Psalm 55 describes some of the deepest frustrations of any individual. Enemies are attacking, and the song writer can’t find mental or physical relief, so he calls out to God. Adding to the turmoil and grief is the fact that the attacker is a former friend (55:13-14), a person with whom he once worshiped God. This song is a reminder that all people are flawed and will somehow bring disappointment, yet God never fails. “Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall” (55:22).

 The tenor of Psalm 56 is similar. Slanderers are on the prowl, attacking in their pride. The Psalmist declares, “When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?” (56:3-4). He trusts God to know specifically the wrongs of the wicked and to hear the cries of his heart. He is so confident of God’s faithfulness he makes a vow to offer thanks offerings, expecting deliverance before it has arrived (56:12-13).

 While needing mercy, the Psalmist glorifies God. “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth” (57:5). Praise Him for His love and faithfulness (57:9).

*Read the Bible Through 2017*

Week 17

Sunday, April 23, 2017—Psalms 37-39

 The life of a disciple is often counter-intuitive. This is by design. Jesus called His disciples to counter-cultural lifestyles (see Matthew 5-7), so this requires making choices that seemingly defy logic and oppose prevalent views. Psalm 37 encourages the faithful to trust the Lord and to do so by exhibiting several unusual choices—do not fret (37:1), be still (37:7), refrain from anger and turn from wrath (37:8).

 Humans are experts at worrying, fretting, being angry, and flitting around, so how can God command His people not to do something which comes so naturally? The Lord laughs at the wicked (37:13), knowing their judgment is coming, and He knows the days of the blameless and the endurance of the inheritance waiting for them (37:18). When they trust Him and know what He knows, His disciples can more readily trust, be still, turn from worry and anger, and do good.

 This trust in Him cannot lead to laziness. Psalm 38 describes the burden and misery that comes when one of His children wanders from truth and discipline. “My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear” (38:4). Sin separates the sinner from God Himself and makes the sinner unattractive to others. Knowing this, the Psalmist declared, “I confess my iniquity; . . . Come quickly to help me, O Lord, my Savior” (38:18, 22).

 Life is short (39:4). Seek God. Trust His ways. Confess and turn away from anything that prevents the glory of God and the joy of life.

Monday, April 24, 2017—Psalms 40-42

 God has designed us to be in relationship with Him. He doesn’t want us to know things about Him. He wants us to know Him. Nature testifies to His existence and glory. Scripture reveals more fully His character and works. In Jesus, He gives the fullest expression of Himself and the way to walk with Him in all of life.

 That walk will have highs and lows, dark days and bright. Psalm 40 describes some of these. “I waited patiently . . . He lifted me out of the slimy pit” (40:1-2). Knowing God did not keep him from frustration and misery, yet he waited patiently because he knew God, not simply things about Him. He declared the blessedness of those who trust Him. He publicly spoke of the wonders and works of God, knowing he could not keep silent about someone so great.

 Knowing God did not prevent his having enemies or being sinless. Psalm 41 describes the words and actions so many had taken against him, and he confessed he had not lived perfectly himself (41:4), yet he knew the faithfulness of God would protect and provide as he himself walked faithfully and with integrity (41:12).

 This God who protects and provides is worth knowing at all costs. Psalm 42 describes the writer’s longing as like that of a deer panting for water. “Where can I go to meet with God?” (42:2). When troubled, he tells his downcast soul to hope in God (42:5).

 Like never before, put your hope in knowing Him today.

Tuesday, April 25, 2017—Psalms 43-45

 Trying to sway the beliefs of some people—any anyone in reality—is not a matter of winsome character or faultless logic. Only the Holy Spirit can truly change someone. The Psalmist knew this dependency when he pled with God to vindicate him and plead his case before an ungodly nation (43:1). They had no interest in what he knew and loved, so only a powerful move of God Himself would be able to arrest their hearts and minds. Waiting for this kind of move can make the soul downcast (43:2, 5), so the Psalmist claimed the truth of who God is and what He represents to bring himself to praise.

 Psalm 44 likewise notes the dependency of God not only in the battlefield on the mind but also on the field of actual battle. God had for centuries driven out nations before His people. Victory was not from the swords of the Israelites but because of the love of God for His people (44:3) and because of His powerful name (44:5). “In God we make our boast all day long . . .” (44:8). This trust is indispensable during hardship, which may come despite holy living (44:9-22). His unfailing love is a guarantee of His eventual deliverance.

 Psalm 45 celebrates the king and his bride on their wedding day. Celebrate His greatness, power, and destiny. Praise Him for making you part of His bride, the church, which brings Him praise. Pray for a life which brings Him praise (45:7).

Wednesday, April 26, 2017—Psalms 46-48

 The more things change the more they stay the same. History marches onward, and things in the present mimic events of the past. Of course, there are technological improvements and, ideally, lessons learned from the past, but human nature remains the same—selfish, sinful, and dead without Christ.

 One of the mainstays of history is war. Not a single century has passed without nations being in conflict, so the Psalmist knew his fair share of these battles, yet he was convinced of a superior truth—God could stop any of that strife in an instant with His voice (46:6). The one who could stop war (46:9) was with His people (46:7), an ever-present help in time of trouble (46:1). Rather than worry, God wants His people to be still and know He is God (46:10). Live differently than the godless world because God is with those who trust Him in their godless places.

 Even in hardship, then, God’s people can clap their hands and declare, “How awesome if the Lord Most High, the great King over all the earth” (47:2). He is King whether people believe it or circumstances portray it. He is in control and working His will day after day. Eventually, evil men and godless nations will see God in His fullness. Like those who saw the strength of God in Jerusalem (48:2), these people will tremble and flee (48:5).

 Because of what is true of God and what is going to be true in His revelation, live in the peace and power of His presence now.

Thursday, April 27, 2017—Psalms 49-51

 God calls his people to faith, but he is not asking them to believe something illogical or without proof. Nature and history point to the reality of God. Scripture reveals more fully His character and plan, and our souls respond to Him through the power of the Holy Spirit building on the work of Jesus. The choice becomes simple—trust Jesus or trust self.

 The Psalmist knew this choice, and he chose to trust God. He saw people around him trusting their wisdom and riches, but they all died like the simplest and poorest. The fate of those who trusted themselves was like sheep destined for the grave (49:13-14). No amount of money could ransom one’s life, so the Psalmist did not fear these people (49:5) because they had no more power than he did. God Himself would redeem him (49:15) because of His word and faithfulness.

 In Psalm 50, God speaks to the faithful and faithless. To those who have made a covenant with Him, He reminds them He doesn’t need their sacrifices. He owns all the animals in all the world. Their sacrifices were an act of gratitude and trust. In contrast, to the wicked He spoke words of condemnation. They hated His instruction and acted wickedly. They could repent or perish (50:22).

 In Psalm 51, David takes the ideas of Psalm 50 a bit further. In his brokenness, he cried out for cleansing. He realized what God truly desires is not sacrifices and offerings but a broken spirit and contrite heart (51:17).

 Declare your trust in God.

Friday, April 28, 2017—Psalms 52-54

 God has enemies, and those who follow Him were once in that camp. The changing of their hearts and minds brought them into new life and new status with Him. Many, however, remain rebellious, and while God will have compassion on any of those who come to Him in faith and repentance, He laughs at those who believe they can rebel successfully against Him (see Psalm 2).