accompanied by great assurance he was loved by God. “When I said, ‘My foot is slipping,’ your love, O Lord, supported me” (94:18).

Discipline and love combine to form conscientious disciples. They are strong and humble. They obey God regardless of the cost to them physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually because they know He is greater than any enemy or obstacle and able to replenish any expense required for obedience. This was the downfall of God’s people at the edge of the Promised Land, so the Psalmist glorified God and encouraged those who heard His voice not to make the same mistake (95:7-8).

No other God was worthy of praise and obedience. “For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens” (96:5). Worship Him. Trust Him. Obey Him no matter what.

Saturday, May 13, 2017—Psalms 97-99

In his book *Future Grace*, John Piper takes an in-depth look at the beautiful covenant relationship between God and His people. He gives them the gift of faith which then produces in them the work of loving obedience. When they remain faithful, they love Him and obey Him, allowing Him to pour out the blessings of His covenant.

He draws this picture: suppose a man oversees the electricity-generating plant of a village. He tells each villager, I will send the electricity to your home each day beginning at 5 a.m. When I do, turn on your lamp. Seeing the light, I’ll know you’re using what I’m sending and continuing sending it throughout the day. If I see no light, I’ll stop sending power.

Knowing God, His people rejoice in His reign (97:1) and encourage others to leave behind the false gods of the world (97:7-8). Knowing God, His people love Him and hate evil. In turn, he guards their lives and delivers them from the wicked (97:10). Light and joy are blessings of His and their covenant faithfulness (97:11-12).

Psalm 98 calls for singing to the Lord because of this covenant faithfulness (98:1-3). When He rescues the righteous and judges the wicked, He fulfills all the promises He has ever made. His timing is rarely in line with what His people wish or expect, but in the end He is right and worthy.

Praise God today for being King (99:1), great and mighty (99:2-4), and faithful to speak, answer, punish, and forgive (99:6-9). Trust Him and obey so you may enjoy His covenant blessings.

*Read the Bible Through 2017*

Week 19

Sunday, May 7, 2017—Psalms 79-81

When life grows difficult, most demand justice and admit no wrong. The people of God had better insight. When they saw the Temple plundered and the city attacked, they knew something beyond their feelings or circumstances were at work. “How long, O Lord? Will you be angry forever? How long will your jealousy burn like fire?” (79:5). They admitted their sin had prompted God to act in discipline, but they prayed He would act further to bring wrath on the nations (79:6). His people, of course, needed to repent, but the others needed to face judgment for His glory.

Likewise, in Psalm 80, the people asked for restoration. They wanted to be in the presence of God again, to have His face shine upon them (80:3,7,19). They had once been like a beautiful vineyard, yet God had allowed the walls to be broken down and the fruit plundered (80:12). They recognized what a great waste this represented, and they asked God to make them right and renew His work and revive their hearts.

So much of the work of God begins with His people’s coming to a right understanding of their situation. Though He promised to fill the mouths of His people, they would not listen and submit (81:11), and He gave them over to their stubborn hearts. “If my people would but listen to me . . ., how quickly would I subdue their enemies . . .” (81:13-14).

Pray for wisdom, honesty, and repentance. Seek God’s glory in all.

Monday, May 8, 2017—Psalms 82-84

In the book of Job, God makes His case against Job like a lawyer presenting evidence in court. Several times elsewhere, He presents evidence of His people’s unfaithfulness and His unfailing love. In similar courtroom fashion, the Psalmist presents evidence to God Himself demanding He act according to character. “Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; . . .” (82:2-4). God needs no reminder of His character, but when His people recall who He is, lean on that truth, and give Him a reason to answer their prayers, He has more reason to respond.

Psalm 83 continues the demanding ways, pleading with God not to be silent or still (83:1). His enemies are plotting against His people and planning to take possession of Israel’s land. The Psalmist calls on God to crush them and their plans. “Let them know that you, whose name is the Lord—that you alone are the Most High over all the earth” (83:18). Again, this gives God a reason to answer the prayer—not that His people will be comfortable but that His name be glorified.

Knowing this God and His strength is a blessing like no other (84:4). Being in His presence for one day is better than 1,000 somewhere else (84:10), for He is a sun and shield, bestowing favor and honor, not withholding anything good from those who are blameless (84:11).

Find true blessing by calling on God to be God in your life.

Tuesday, May 9, 2017—Psalms 85-87

There are certain people who change the dynamics of a room simply by walking in. Their smile is contagious or their energy is infectious. Others have such negativity about them they cause everyone to take on a more sullen tone. There is power in presence.

Psalm 85 calls for God to manifest Himself in the lives of His people once again. They had known His blessings in the past, but current sin had hindered their way. They longed for Him to revive them again (85:6) because His presence ushered in a host of companions—love, faithfulness, righteousness, and peace (85:10). To know Him was to enjoy His nearness and its abundant benefits.

To walk with Him develops consistent humility in the disciple. The Psalmist admitted he was poor and needy (86:1). He needed God’s protection and mercy, and he wanted God to teach him His ways so he could walk in the truth (86:11). The key request was for an undivided heart (86:11). Life presents myriad options for finding truth, significance, comfort, and control, but God is the only true source of those and the only hope for man. Because he knew the reality of God’s greatness, the Psalmist asked for a sign of God’s goodness so he would be helped and comforted and so his enemies would be put to shame (86:17).

Great things were said of Jerusalem because God was in her (87:3). In humility, ask God to be abundantly present and powerful in your life.

Wednesday, May 10, 2017—Psalms 88-90

For many, the default verse for their view of God is, “God is love.” They find themselves warmed by the thought of His lovingkindness toward them, but that view can often blind them to another equally true reality—God is just. He expresses anger toward sin, and He demands that wrath be satisfied. Someone or something will pay the penalty His justice requires.

In Psalm 88, the writer twice mentions feeling God’s wrath (88:7, 16). Psalm 90 speaks of His anger as well (90:7). Can this be correct? Many would think one who knows God—the One who is the definition of love—could not or should not know His wrath, yet he clearly expresses this and concludes, “[T]he darkness is my closest friend” (88:18). For unknown reasons, sin is affecting the writer, and he understandably wants God to remove it and the wrath which accompanies it so he can know life and joy once again. He gives God a good reason for its removal—those who are dead cannot rise up and praise Him (88:10).

In contrast to this wrath, Psalm 89 celebrates His unfailing love but makes clear He can be both loving and disciplining at the same time (89:30-34). Sin requires punishment but does not indicate a removal of love. In fact, loving fathers discipline their children precisely because of their love. Their love compels them to remove the sin and its effects on their children.

Pray for a heart of wisdom (90:12) which understands His love and justice and knows His satisfaction and favor (90:14-17).

Thursday, May 11, 2017—Psalms 91-93

Reading the Bible is a spiritual exercise, but making it a grammatical exercise is important as well. God doesn’t simply want us to listen to Him. He wants us to hear what He says and obey. This requires paying careful attention to what He says and how He says it.

Psalm 91 makes declarative statements about the security which comes from walking with the Almighty. There will be rest, and He will protect from fear, attack, and diseases (91:4-7). These are guarantees, but 91:9 uses a critical word that cannot escape observation. That word is “if.”

Grammar calls this a conditional clause. The “if” clause leads to a “then” clause. The first has to be fulfilled before the second can be. God’s people want the comfort, provision, satisfaction, and rescue which come from His presence, but they first choose to make Him their dwelling and refuge (91:9). If the “if” isn’t true, then the “then” isn’t available.

The assurance of walking with God is on full display in Psalm 92. The writer declares the goodness of God and of singing His praise because of the work He does. He knows the senseless man does not understand this truth and will find seasons of life where he succeeds in his folly, but they will not last. God will destroy them, and the righteous will flourish even into old age (92:14).

Praise God today for His current and eternal reign (93:1). Choose Him as your refuge and fortress so He may protect you and lift you up.

Friday, May 12, 2017—Psalms 94-96

When a child is on the receiving end of a spanking or is sitting alone in his room because he has been banished from viewing screens, he might readily doubt that anyone loves him. What he can easily miss is the discipline from a parent is the outcome of deep love for the child. Helping remove selfish behavior and destructive decisions is a loving act.

The Psalmist knew the ways of the Lord were both disciplining and loving. “Blessed is the man you discipline, O Lord, the man you teach your law” (94:12). This discipline gave him strength and righteousness and helped him avoid evil and endure until the end. This discipline was