

Sunday, April 29, 2018—Psalms 55-57

Trouble will visit the people of God. Sometimes that may be an enemy in the human form, even a close friend (55:13). Other times the difficulty will be related to health or spiritual matters. In humble fear, God's people are able to approach him and lay their requests before Him. "I complain and groan morning, noon, and night, and he hears my voice. Though many are against me, he will redeem me from my battle unharmed. God, the one enthroned from long ago, will hear and will humiliate them because they do not change and fear God" (55:17-19).

Some might misunderstand the opening lines of this psalm as being demanding or petulant, but the Psalmist knows the necessity of humility and fear (55:19). He is able to speak boldly because he has confidence in Yahweh's ability to deliver. "Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never allow the righteous to be shaken" (55:22).

"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 mere mortals do to me?" (56:3-4). The Psalmist is confident of God's watchfulness, to the point He puts the songwriter's tears in a bottle (56:8). "Then my enemies will retreat on the day when I call. This I know: God is for me" (56:9).

The despondency of attack turned to praise when the Psalmist turned his attention to God. Sing praises to God today based on His faithfulness and the confidence that inspires in you.

Saturday, April 28, 2018—Psalms 52-54

In literature and movies, stories of mystery, suspense, and evil quite often make deep impact because of how they make the reader or viewer feel. The fear of the unknown or the possibility of danger and pain can create dramatic tension far heavier than if the experience were real. The characters within the story and those outside its boundaries find comfort when there is a source of hope or strength present or more powerful.

Psalm 52 looks at the worker of evil and asks why he boasts. His retort is that God's faithful love is constant (52:1). There is nothing the evil man can do which will be more powerful than Yahweh. Despite any hardship he may inflict, the unfailing love of God is present and enduring.

As a result, God's people can look at the evil one and boast themselves in the faithfulness of God and the folly of the wicked. They can guarantee the fall of evil and the flourishing of good. "I will put my hope in your name, for it is good" (52:9b).

Similar to Psalm 14, Psalm 53 speaks of the "fool," one who is morally bankrupt and spiritually dry. That emptiness of soul leads him to dismiss the existence of God. In reality, God sees everyone as fallen (53:2-3) because of the pervasiveness of sin, so He has to send deliverance from Zion in order to remove the dread of judgment.

Declare to God today, "God is my helper; the Lord is the sustainer of my life . . . For he has rescued me from every trouble . . ." (54:4, 7).

Friday, April 27, 2018—Psalms 49-51

"Nothing is certain in life except death and taxes." The adage speaks tongue-in-cheek about reality because death is certainly inescapable, and the taxing ability of the government certainly seems so. Because death is inescapable, the Psalmist sees important truth for life.

The wicked may seem to gain the upper hand, and the wealthy may seem to live life more comfortably, yet they will die alongside the righteous and the poor. They cannot take their wealth with them, and their sins will meet judgment. A man who lives without this understanding is no better than the animals (49:20). The wise man understands there is life beyond this one and aligns himself with God and His righteousness which lasts forever.

Psalm 50 reminds God's people He does not require their religious activity in order to live. He owns everything (50:12) and can survive without them. Their relationship with Him, then, is one of blessing to them and honor to Him (50:23). Those who ignore Him do so at their own peril.

One of the most personal and transparent of all the Psalms, Psalm 51 shares the brokenness of David after his sin was exposed and the relief he experienced in his repentance. He realized the heinous nature of his sin was an affront to the character of God Himself, so his only hope was to admit his guilt and trust in the cleansing which could only come from God. This alone would be pleasing to the heart of God.

Praise God for His reality and His demands for righteousness.

Thursday, April 26, 2018—Psalms 46-48

An anti-war song asked the question, “War. What is it good for?” The lyrics concluded, “Absolutely nothing.” Human history is filled with battles, skirmishes, and conflict that have transferred power and changed destinies. God’s people have seen their own share of difficulty, and they wrote often about the emotional and spiritual toll of war in the Psalms.

One of the most beloved of the Psalms, Psalm 46 says God is always present in trouble (46:1), an important reality when warfare can make him seem far off. In fact, the raging of nations is no match for the LORD of Armies, the stronghold of His people and the one who will bring war to an end. As a result, God tells His people to know He is God (46:10). Translations differ, but they all paint a picture of the way God wants His people to behave as a result of His supreme power—be still, cease striving, take a step out of the traffic, and stop your fighting.

The peace that comes to God’s people when they realize His majesty and power will fill their souls and give them rest. God does not want that joy to remain inward, however. In Psalm 47, he commands His people to express their joy with clapping, shouting, and singing. “God ascends among the shouts of joy” (47:5).

When the enemies of God see His great power, they tremble (48:5). Ask God to display His glory powerfully in your life so He might receive praise from believers and strike terror in His foes.

Wednesday, April 25, 2018—Psalms 43-45

Circumstances can be blinding. What seems to be true may not be true at all, but the feelings and consequences of the moment make something appear to be incontrovertible fact. Believers need daily time in prayer and Bible study and regular interaction with other maturing believers to help sift through the temporary to rest on the eternal.

When Jesus hung on the cross, He cried out wondering why God had forsaken Him. The weight of the sins of the world was so heavy on His body and soul that God seemed impossibly far away. The Psalmist, too, felt that great distance. “Why have you rejected me?” he asked (43:2). The feelings were strong, but he surrounded that question with fact and trust. He called on God to vindicate him and to send His truth and light. The power of absolute truth would overcome the grip of fleeting emotion.

In Psalm 44, there was similar questioning. “Why do you not march with us?” (44:9). The ancestors had spoken of God’s faithfulness and power. The songwriter himself boasted in God all day long (44:8). If they had forgotten God and wandered from Him, this kind of suffering would make sense, but they had not sinned in that way, so he begs God to wake up and redeem them based on His faithful love (44:23-26). He asked for God to work based on His character, not their faithfulness. No one is perfect, despite their best efforts and consistency.

Pray for the blessed assurance of Psalm 45 over your own life through knowing the faithfulness and power of God despite your struggles.

Tuesday, April 24, 2018—Psalms 40-42

Patience is a virtue everyone wants for everyone else. Having patience is a difficult task, so there are few who willingly choose it, yet patience produces quality character traits in everyone who seeks it, finds it, and lives it. The Psalmist said, “I waited patiently for the LORD . . .” (40:1). He

sounds almost victorious as he declares the fruit of his patience—the attention and deliverance of Yahweh Himself. Patience pays off.

Through patience, the Psalmist discovered God was always constantly compassionate and continually guarding him (40:11). The circumstances of life only made that seem inaccurate. His patience taught him God preferred a listening heart more than sacrifice (40:6), and his patience confirmed the greatness of God (40:16).

Patience is a necessary trait for those pursuing God because He calls them to care for the poor—people who require patience, personal sacrifice, and compassion—and to endure affliction. Patiently, the Psalmist waited for victory over the enemy. “By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy does not shout in triumph over me. You supported me because of my integrity and set me in your presence forever” (41:11-12).

Having patience is irreplaceable when people ask, “Where is your God?” (42:3). Their own affliction causes them to ask, or the suffering of a saint moves them to taunt or to question. Patience allows the saint to say, even as he suffers and wonders, “Put your hope in God, for I will still praise him, my Savior and my God” (43:11).

Pray for patience and praise the faithful Savior.

Monday, April 23, 2018—Psalms 37-39

Life is full of frustrations. The speeding driver who doesn't get stopped by the police. The arrogant neighbor or co-worker who never experiences humility. The nagging health issue that won't go away.

The Psalmist knew frustration at deep levels, yet he encouraged his people not to be agitated by evildoers. He encouraged them to dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. God was enough. They could delight themselves in the Lord (37:1-4). He was greater than all. “The wicked person schemes against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him. The LORD laughs at him because he sees that his day is coming” (37:12-13).

Life is most fulfilling, therefore, when one focuses on the Lord rather than evil or circumstances. “A person's steps are established by the LORD, and he takes pleasure in his way” (37:23). “Wait for the LORD and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land” (37:34). Exhaustion and misery will be unavoidable, but everyone has a choice in how to respond. The Psalmist encourages the people to remember the presence of God and remain silent and self-disciplined (37:7; 39:1-2).

When one considers life's circumstances and compares them to God, he realizes life is a vapor. The Psalmist prayed, “LORD, make me aware . . .” (39:4). People are a mere shadow compared to His reality, so he wanted to live his life in full awareness and joy of His majesty.

Thank God for His greatness. Enjoy Him above all things.