

Tuesday, May 5, 2020—Psalms 73-75

In the Garden, Satan tempted Adam and Eve by drawing their attention to what they didn't have. God had given them everything in the Garden for the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan drew Eve's eyes to that thing, and sin entered their paradise.

The psalmist knew the goodness of God to Israel, yet he was distracted by the arrogant and the prosperity of the wicked (73:3). Satan was blinding him to all the richness he had by making him consider what he didn't have. Faithfulness to Yahweh seemed to be a waste (73:13).

Everything changed when he came into God's presence (73:17). The discipline of worship helped lift the fog of temptation. He saw the long-term consequences of sin and the real-time blessing of God's presence. "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (73:26). He knew there was no greater treasure than God and no better comfort than being with Him.

This knowledge makes any attack or discomfort troubling. If God is good and present, why do bad things happen and bad people prosper against us? This feels like rejection (74:1), yet the psalmist reminded himself of the character and faithfulness of God (74:12-17), and called on God to act in the present as He always had in the past. He is the true refuge.

Thank God for who He is and all He provides. Thank Him for the blessing of knowing Him and having Him near you at all times. "We give thanks to you, O God, . . . for your Name is near" (75:1).

Monday, May 4, 2020—Psalms 70-72

Because of His great wisdom coupled with His great love, God works in ways and through processes that do not always make sense to us. He is supreme, and He is all-knowing, so He can and will do what He desires. That reality, however, did not prevent the psalmist from asking God to hurry up with His action. "Yet I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay" (70:5). God is not offended by our requests to hurry as they express complete dependence on Him and full confidence that He can answer.

Psalms 71 expresses a similar desire for rescue since God is his refuge and strength. The world looks on the psalmist and seeks to shame him, but he knows God loves and accepts him based on God's righteousness and faithfulness. "Be not far from me, O God; come quickly, O my God, to help me" (71:12). All his life he has trusted in God and declared his goodness. Even when he is old and gray, he wants to declare God's power to the next generation, so he prays for God's constant presence and power (71:18).

The people of Israel would sing Psalm 72 as a blessing over their king—honoring him and asking God to use the king as a blessing to the nation and a testimony to God's greatness. How much more, then, can believers in Jesus use this as praise for Jesus and a prayer for their own lives? Declare Jesus' greatness. Live in patient dependence. Seek His fame.

Sunday, May 3, 2020—Psalms 67-69

For a generation or more people have confused Christianity with the American dream. They believe praying a prayer to Jesus for forgiveness and trying to live a good life will convince God to bless them and make them comfortable. If they do the right thing in God's eyes, He will surely answer their prayers and shower them with abundance.

The psalmist knew his need for God's listening and providing. He knew he needed God's grace and blessing (67:1) and the abundance of the harvest (67:6), but he wasn't expecting to be comfortable or praying for his own selfish interests. He wanted God to move in his life so the nations would know God's salvation (67:2). He wanted the nations to praise God and sing for joy (67:3-4) and fear Him (67:7). God works in the lives of those who want nothing more than His fame and renown.

To be sure, God does enrich the lives of His people. He is a father to the fatherless and a defender of the widow (68:5). He goes before His people in battle and blesses their land with bounty, but all of this is for His glory among His people and the nations (68:28-35). "Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens" (68:19).

His presence and strength allow those who follow Him to endure scorn and shame (69:4-12). "I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving" (69:30). "The Lord hears the needy and does not despise his captive people" (69:33).

Pray for a fuller understanding of true faith and joyful obedience.

Saturday, May 2, 2020—Psalms 64-66

The Psalms allowed God's people to put words to their inner turmoil. They processed in community the hardships they faced individually and collectively, and that honesty reminded them they were not alone. They did not avoid the issues or pretend they didn't exist. They dealt with them openly and compared their challenges to Yahweh. "All mankind will fear; they will proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done. Let the righteous rejoice in the Lord and take refuge in him; let all the upright in heart praise Him!" (64:9-10).

The people of Israel gathered at the Temple and praised God in song and sacrifice, but they were able to worship far away as well. When they looked at their land and saw its bounty and its beauty, they knew God was worthy of praise (65:9-13). The abundance of their flocks and their fields testified to His greatness. Each day stirred songs of joy.

The psalmist knew God was worthy of worship for how He provided in the present, but the song writer also knew God deserved praise for what He had done in the past. Remarkable were the thoughts of how God had taken Israel out of captivity in Egypt and brought them to a land of abundance in Israel (66:12). Seeing His grace and mercy in the past and the present moved him to repentance, holiness, and calling others to acknowledgement and praise. "Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!" (66:20).

Praise God today for faithfulness and provision, past and present.

Friday, May 1, 2020—Psalms 61-63

The Psalms are a collection of songs that God's people used in worship.

Worship is the interaction of God's people with God Himself as the people express their thoughts, feelings, needs, and more to God. Those expressions, then, are not simply songs. They are prayers.

Psalms 61 provides a helpful blueprint for personal prayer. Begin by acknowledging your need for God to listen, knowing He will listen to you wherever you may be (61:1-2). Then, affirm that God is and has always been your true refuge and remember your desire to be in His presence forever (61:3-4). Thank Him for His faithfulness to hear and to answer, and thank Him for the faithful people who have walked with you in life (61:5), and pray for those who are in leadership in your life, asking for God to bless and protect them (61:6-7). Close with a promise to praise Him (61:8).

Psalms 62 is another helpful prompt for prayer. The song reminds the reader, "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, and I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge" (62:5-8).

God is strong, and God is loving (62:12). Seek satisfaction from Him (63:1-5), and cling to Him (63:8) every day.

Thursday, April 30, 2020—Psalms 58-60

When God forgives sinners who come to Him in repentance, He gives them His Holy Spirit and transforms their souls. They are never the same. Their new lives are filled with the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. That transformation allows them to endure the injustices of life, but it does not mean they don't expect God to judge at the appropriate time.

Psalms 58 expresses this desire for vengeance. It is shocking to some with its brutal honesty. "Break the teeth in their mouths, O God" (58:6a). "The righteous will be glad when they are avenged" (58:10a). The psalmist is not looking to get revenge. He is looking to God to make things right. He wants to see God honored by everyone as a righteous judge (58:11), and he rests in the confidence that God will reward His own.

Psalms 59 takes this same approach. Enemies are a reality, but instead of taking an active approach, the psalmist calls on God to be the avenger. "O Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel, rouse yourself to punish all the nations; show no mercy to wicked traitors" (59:7). He isn't calling on God to do something evil. He is asking for justice to be done.

The psalmist faced God's justice as well (60:1-3), but he had confidence God would restore him because of His loving kindness. "With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies" (60:12). Live with humility before the One who saves and defends.

Wednesday, April 29, 2020—Psalms 55-57

Children are not supposed to sass their parents. Students are to treat their teachers with respect. How, then, can the psalmist be so demanding? "Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea" (55:1). The psalmist is in deep conflict, and the

situation involves some of those who have been closest to him. He calls on God to destroy his enemies, and he does so with confidence because he knows God listens. His words are not so much a demand for God's action but an affirmation of who God is. "But I call to God, and [he] saves me" (55:16). "Cast your cares on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall" (55:22).

God gave the psalmist confidence in the presence of struggle and slander. "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 was certain God would deliver him so he could praise Him.

He was calling on God to act so God would get the credit. Of course, when God delivers someone, that person experiences great benefit, but that was not the psalmist's focus. "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, let your glory be over the earth" (57:5). He wanted to sing praises to God so everyone listening would praise Him, too.

Thank God for being One who listens and responds. Pray and live for His glory and praise in your life.