saved by the Lord with and everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting” (45:16-17).

 In July 2017, country superstar Garth Brooks was singing with his wife Trisha Yearwood at a concert when he noticed a man proposing to his girlfriend in the audience. Brooks offered to pay for their honeymoon if they went to Hawaii. Was Brooks generous? Of course he was. Was he hateful or closed-minded for offering to pay only for a trip to Hawaii? No. His generosity allowed him to do as he pleased. Likewise, God highlights His uniqueness to illustrate His generosity and the only avenue for hope.

 Praise God for being God alone. Thank Him for Jesus’ being the way, the truth, and the life—the only way to God the Father.

Saturday, July 22, 2017—Isaiah 46-48

 Every culture has idols which promise power, pleasure, and possessions. Every generation pledges allegiance to gods who claim to be better than Yahweh Himself, and to each and every one of those in every time, place, and people group, God can say He is supreme. “Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you. To whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you like me that we may be compared?” (46:4-5). He knows the folly of making and trusting idols. None of them know the beginning from the end, and none of them bring salvation near like He does (46:6-13).

 Babylon saw itself as invincible. The king believed himself to be godlike, but their wickedness would cause them to crumble far more quickly and easily than they ever could have imagined (47:1-11). “Keep on with your sin,” God told them (47:12). “See how well it ends for you despite the warnings against it.”

 To ensure He was the only One who would receive glory for the deliverance and restoration He would enact, God was doing something new (48:1-11). His discipline, refining, and deliverance were something no idol or human could ever imagine or accomplish. He assures the listener, “There is no peace for the wicked” (48:22).

 Thank God for the peace He makes available with Him and only in Him through Jesus.

*Read the Bible Through 2017*

Week 29

Sunday, July 16, 2017—Isaiah 28-30

 Before the days of trophies and medals, those who achieved a particular feat or won an event received a wreath-like crown. Made of fresh greenery, this crown symbolized excellence and superiority but would soon fade. The memory remained, but the beauty was gone.

 God tells Ephraim their pride will soon be gone. That which has crowned their head for so long will quickly fade, but God will become the new crown for the faithful remnant (28:5), and He will provide justice and strength that will never fade away. Isaiah looks ahead to Jesus, the precious cornerstone (28:16), who will make justice and righteousness the measure of all He does and all He expects from His people. They have a choice—continue in the ways which they believe are right but lead to discouragement and death or repent and follow God in a new way of faith.

 Like trusting in a fading laurel wreath, the people were counting on their abilities and resources to provide and protect. They were also trusting their status as God’s chosen people to make them right before God. “These people come near me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (29:13). God was preparing to do an astounding work to gain their attention and show them what was true. He told them, “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength” (30:15), yet they would have none of it.

 Consider what gives you confidence and strength. Will it last?

Monday, July 17, 2017—Isaiah 31-33

 “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God” (Psalm 20:7). The Psalmist knew the overwhelming power and ability of God compared to man and his armies. Isaiah shares the same truth in Isaiah 31 pronouncing woe on those who trust in Egypt and their military strength rather than relying on the Holy One of Israel (31:1). God was going to bring victory through supernatural means (31:8), so foolish was the man who trusted in anyone but God.

 God was planning to restore righteous ways and just leaders. The world of Isaiah’s day was turned upside down, and the foolish were seen as noble and wise. The poor and needy could find no help or advocate. Complacency was common, but God was going to change that through the pouring out of His Spirit (32:15). Righteousness would be the root, and peace would be the fruit (32:17). His people had a choice—trust in the current culture and wicked leaders who had power or repent of their sinfulness and patiently endure until God established His ways once again.

 Isaiah offered a prayer for them which remains practical today. “O Lord, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in times of distress” (33:2). God is a treasure for those who fear Him (33:6). Renew your trust in Him and Him alone. He is the judge, lawgiver, King, and Savior (33:22).

Tuesday, July 18, 2017—Isaiah 34-36

 Two things will stand forever—the will and the word of the Lord. Despite the destruction He has promised on Jerusalem, God still has a plan for His people and His Promised Land. “For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion’s cause” (34:8). The people had sinned, but the purpose had not changed. Zion was to be a place which honored His name and housed His people. Being there would be a blessing to its inhabitants and a testimony to His goodness and greatness to all who passed through.

 His word stands true through all of life’s circumstances as well. He describes the restoration of Zion He has planned and tells the listener to look “in the scroll of the Lord and read” (34:16). His mouth has spoken, and His Spirit will accomplish it. His will and His word stand forever.

 Knowing these truths, His people can find strength for weak knees and joy for fearful hearts (35:3-4). He will come with vengeance and save His own. Blind eyes will see. Deaf ears will hear. God will undo destruction, and He will pave a new highway called the Way of Holiness (35:5-10).

 Hope in His word and His will are daily requirements as life will present all manner of difficulty. Much of it will be unexpected, so knowing the certainty of His will and His word makes the unexpected and frightening (36:1-22) easier to absorb.

 Praise God for His unchanging plans and constant word.

Wednesday, July 19, 2017—Isaiah 37-39

 God had chosen Assyria to bring about His discipline on Israel, so they also posed a threat to Judah. Their rise to power stirred up the pride latent inside every human being and made them more confident of their power and ability than they should have been. Isaiah 36 records their boastful threats to Jerusalem and its inhabitants. King Hezekiah was calling them to trust in Yahweh, but Assyria found that utterly foolish.

 King Hezekiah heard their threats and their slander of Yahweh Himself, and he tore his robes and went to the Temple (37:1). Isaiah sent encouraging words to the king assuring God’s deliverance. Sennacherib sent more threats, asking how Hezekiah would stand against him when so many other kings had fallen beneath his strength. Hezekiah prayed a prayer of authentic worship and desperate need (37:14-20), and God delivered them just as He said, without Hezekiah’s army lifting a finger (37:36-38).

 In his faithfulness, God gave Hezekiah two signs of His deliverance from Assyria (37:30, 38:7-8). One was immediate—the sun’s going back 10 steps. One was enduring—they were able to stay in the land and cultivate crops rather than being captured and deported. God does not always reward faithfulness in such visible ways, but He does reward it.

 Hezekiah was faithful but not perfect. After God added 15 years to his life and healed him, he wanted a sign (38:22). When he realized Babylon was a threat, he was content knowing it wouldn’t come until after his death (39:8). Thank God His faithfulness and power aren’t dependent on us.

Thursday, July 20, 2017—Isaiah 40-42

 When the sun peeks over the horizon after a long night, a sense of relief sweeps over those who have longed for its appearing. With similar hope, Isaiah proclaims hope and relief to God’s people. The judgment promised in the first 39 chapters will come, but God will then provide comfort for His people and glory to His name (40:1-5).

 How can he share such hope after describing great darkness and devastation in the previous chapters? Hope comes not from circumstances or the character of the people but from the character of God and the strength of His word. “He tends his flock like a shepherd . . . and carries them close to his heart . . .” (40:11). No one is wiser than He or can give Him counsel (40:13-14). No power on earth compares to Him (40:18-26). “He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom” (40:28b). He is the source of hope and strength for all (40:31).

 His strength gives hope for recovery but also for success. The nations which surround Israel will not be able to prevent their growth and fruitfulness. He will bring abundance for their good and His glory (41:20). None of the idols of the neighboring land and peoples could do this. He will send a faithful Servant to accomplish the task (42:1-4) and lead His people toward righteousness and justice.

 Praise God today for His mighty word and power. Repent of the idols which promise hope, relief, and success only He can provide.

Friday, July 21, 2017—Isaiah 43-45

 When Jesus taught a particularly hard truth in John 6, many of those who followed Him walked away. He asked Peter whether he, too, wanted to leave. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). Jesus was unique, and Peter was convinced.

 God makes this same repeated point in this passage of Isaiah. “I am Yahweh, and there is no other.” He ridiculed those who made idols of the same wood they burned for warmth and cooking. There were dozens of idols available to His people, but none of them were God like He was. “All the makers of idols will be put to shame and disgraced . . . But Israel will be