

Sunday, May 6, 2018—Psalms 76-78

God calls people to faith—believing in what they cannot see. This is what Hebrews describes in Hebrews 11 and 12. This faith is not blind, however. God gives evidence in creation of His existence, ability, power, and praiseworthiness. History shows His faithfulness to His covenant, His provision for His people, and His hatred for sin. His call is to logical faith. Faith becomes the glad response to the compelling evidence presented.

Psalm 76 says God is known, and His power is evident. He is majestic and has worked powerfully against His enemies. The proper response is clear: “Make and keep your vows to the LORD your God; let all who are around him bring tribute to the awe-inspiring one” (76:11).

The struggles of life can make faith seem useless or make God seem unfaithful (77:1-10). The solution is to remember the things God has said and done in the past (77:11-20). This will help stir the reality, “God, your way is holy. What god is great like you?” (77:13).

Because God calls people to logical faith, the result should be their passing on that faith to the next generation. In fact, God commands that parents teach their children “so that they might put their confidence in God and not forget God’s works, but keep his commands” (78:7). God knows life can be distracting and deceiving, and one generation can fail to pass faith along (78:11-64).

Thank God for logical faith. Pray for faithfulness in shaping the next generation of believers.

Saturday, May 5, 2018—Psalms 73-75

Because God made man in His image, He knows the capabilities they have for worship, work, and witness. Because of the stain of sin, God knows humans can be distracted, even disabled, from their ability to do all three. That is one of the foundational reasons He created the weekly rhythm of the Sabbath, abandoning everything and gathering together with other believers to remember the goodness of knowing God. This resets the mind’s attention and heart’s affection, reducing distraction and disability.

Psalm 73 shows the power of distraction as the writer admits his jealousy of the wicked. He was frustrated by what he saw in the world, and he admits how devastating this admission would have been to other believers. What saved him? He made time to get away from the distraction and disabling thoughts and enter into the sanctuary of God (73:17). Seeing the majesty of God reminded him of the destiny of the wicked. He remembered the presence of God was his good and his true refuge.

Coming into God’s presence does not always provide sweet relief like the Psalmist found in Psalm 73. In the very next song, the writer grieves aloud about the destruction around him and wonders why God is allowing it. He knows God is powerful, so this trouble is vexing. The Psalmist remembers the covenant God made His people (74:20) and rests on that promise. God will surely rise up and champion His cause and His people.

Give thanks (75:1) and sing praise (75:9) to God, regardless of the present circumstances. Being with Him is your good.

Friday, May 4, 2018—Psalms 70-72

Many who consider a relationship with Jesus have the mistaken notion that following Him will take away all the problems of life. To be sure, Jesus solves the greatest problem—separation from God. He does not, however, magically make life full of unicorns and rainbows. He walks with His people through the dark moments that come to all.

The Psalms illustrate this powerfully. The people of God, who trusted Him and carried His name, faced great trials and dark emotions. In Psalm 70, the writer discusses those who are wanting to kill him, yet he calls on his people to rejoice. “Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; let those who love your salvation continually say, ‘God is great!’” (70:4).

God calls people, young and old, to walk with Him all the days of their lives. Psalm 71 discusses the reality of God’s presence in life when he was young and when he is old. While society may begin to see older people as less useful and unable to contribute, the Psalmist pleads with God not to abandon him (71:9) and asks Him to make him a powerful witness even as his years increase (71:18). The reality of God’s character and presence, despite any momentary challenge, stir the writer to continual praise.

Looking at the glory of nature, Psalm 72 expresses praise for God and asks his blessing on the king. “Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does wonders. Blessed be his glorious name forever; the whole earth is filled with his glory” (72:18-19).

Pray today, “God is great!”

Thursday, May 3, 2018—Psalms 67-69

Nothing was as powerful and intimidating as the presence of God, yet the people of God knew there was also nothing more blessed than to have His face shine upon them (67:1). The Psalmist asked God to bless them with His presence and gave Him a reason to answer that prayer. He wanted His way to be known on the earth, among all the nations. The result would be worldwide praise. In the same way, personally pray for His presence for the purpose of praise, and see how He responds.

God was supremely powerful, so He was especially good news for those who were outcast, weak, and overlooked. The Psalmist knew God moved powerfully against His enemies, and He worked graciously to be a father to the fatherless, a champion for the widow, providing homes for the homeless, and liberating the captives (68:5-6). He was not simply a one-time rescuer but One who provided hope, help, and healing continually. He could rescue from physical danger and spiritual destruction (69:14-15), and He bore daily dilemmas. “Day after day he bears our burdens; God is our salvation . . . escape from death belongs to the LORD our Lord” (68:19b-20). He listens to the needy and doesn’t despise the captive (69:33).

Prayer for His presence leads to power and praise. Praising Him is more pleasing to Him than any burnt offering could be (69:31). Tell Him, “God you are awe-inspiring in your sanctuaries. The God of Israel gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!” (68:35).

Wednesday, May 2, 2018—Psalms 64-66

Few people know the name Bob Dorough, but many know his work. First appearing in the 1970s on ABC, “Schoolhouse Rock” taught children (and their equally-entertained parents) through songs and cartoons like “I’m Just a Bill” and “Three Is a Magic Number.” One of the most popular, “Conjunction Junction” illustrated the power of simple connecting words like and, but, and or.

Psalm 64 puts that same power on display. The writer calls out in distress because of the anguish caused by the wicked people who are devising crimes against him. Verse 7 changes the course of the discussion with a simple conjunction. “But God . . .” He is convinced God will attack them and cause them to stumble. “Then everyone will fear, and we will tell about God’s work . . .” (64:9).

Dorough’s “I’m Just a Bill” demonstrated the legal process in Washington, D.C. Psalm 65 explains the legal process in Israel. “Iniquities overwhelm me; only you can atone for our rebellions” (65:3). Rather than trying to atone for his sin by doing good works or performing religious ritual, the writer knew God was the true source of forgiveness.

Psalm 66 praises God for all He is—Creator, Protector, Provider, Refiner, Victor. “Blessed be God! He has not turned away my prayer or turned his faithful love from me” (66:20). Join the Psalmist today in praising Him for all He has done for you. Thank Him for His willingness to forgive, His ability to provide, and His abundant grace.

Tuesday, May 1, 2018—Psalms 61-63

People throughout history have had awareness of gods and powers. The history of each people demonstrates how they related to those deities, hoping to control them, please them, or endure them. When Yahweh introduced Himself to His people Israel, He offered what no other god had ever offered—a covenant relationship. He made promises He was bound to keep, and His people responded with promises of their own. Thus began a unique partnership between immortal and mortal.

Psalm 61 expresses this covenant relationship. The writer says God has heard his vows (61:5), the promises he has made to honor, obey, praise, and more. He calls on God to hear his prayer and empower his king so he can continue fulfilling his vows (61:8). He wants to be a man of his word, but he knows without the power of God working in his life, he is nothing.

Psalm 62 describes the steady foundation of a relationship with God. Resting in Him means no threat from man will shake the faithful. Salvation and glory depend on Him, not on circumstances or effort. Oppression is nothing compared to Him. Robbery and wealth are worthless (62:10). Common people and the famous are a vapor on His scale (62:9). “Trust in him at all times, you people, pour out your hearts before him. God is our refuge” (62:8).

Seek God today like one thirsting in a desert (63:1). Tell Him His covenant love is better than life (63:3). Rejoice today because He protects you in the shadow of His wings (63:7).

Monday, April 30, 2018—Psalms 58-60

When considering the character of Jesus and the lifestyle of His followers, many believe the basic disposition is one of meekness, a manner of such mild demeanor there is no room or expectation of passion or anger. This could not be further from the truth. Jesus Himself expressed righteous indignation in passionate, visible ways when He saw evil.

The Psalmist calls on God to express His own righteous indignation toward the wicked in the world. He shockingly says, “God, knock the teeth out of their mouths; LORD, tear out the young lions’ fangs” (58:6). This is not the stuff of children’s Bibles or nursery rhymes. This is a beleaguered believer calling on God to demonstrate His justice. This is a weary worshiper wanting to see a reward for the righteous (58:11).

Psalm 59 requests more of the same. “Consume them in rage; consume them until they are gone. Then people will know throughout the earth that God rules over Jacob” (59:13). He isn’t calling on God to bring retribution so he can feel better about himself or walk around smugly among his enemies. He wants the world to see the goodness and reality of Yahweh, so He asks God to act like God for the glory of God.

When life becomes oppressive and overwhelming, there comes the understanding we are nothing without Him. “Give us aid against the foe, for human help is worthless. With God we will perform valiantly; he will trample our foes” (60:11-12). Praise God for His power and victory.