reminded him of the destiny of the wicked, and he was reminded of the richness of being near God (73:28). Being with God softened his hardness and lightened his bitterness.

Reality can be unmistakably bad. Psalm 74 describes awful situations resulting from enemy attacks on Jerusalem and their continual mocking of God. They destroyed the Temple, and there were no prophets to speak truth. Anyone would have agreed the situation was dire, yet as in Psalm 73, the truth of God’s character and history provided the hope and energy to declare His praise (74:12-23).

How can His character provide hope and energy? He is the One who judges rightly (75:2) and provides stability in chaos (75:3). He humbles the arrogant and lifts up the righteous. Given enough time, God will reward the patience of the faithful. Praise Him for that blessed assurance.

Saturday, May 6, 2017—Psalms 76-78

Every generation has known dictators and lunatics who were intent on establishing themselves as supreme leaders. So maniacal were they about their ways that nothing would stop them, and only divine intervention brought about their demise. Those who followed them scattered, and those who suffered under them praised God and His instruments in bringing about liberation.

Psalm 76 celebrates the power of God to subdue earthly leaders. “He breaks the spirit of rulers; he is feared by the kings of the earth” (76:12). He had done so repeatedly through history and would continue to do so. This is the hope of Psalm 77 as well. The writer wondered whether God’s love had vanished (77:8), but he took time to remember what God had done in the past (77:5-6, 10-12). Knowing what God had done and how He had delivered gave him hope for the future.

In Psalm 78, the Psalmist discusses not only the importance of remembering what God has done in the past but the importance of sharing the faithfulness of God with the next generation (78:4). God had worked powerfully in countless ways, and His people had promised in each generation to be faithful. Repeatedly, however, they had wandered from Him despite His fidelity (78:57), and He brought harsh punishment on them. Each time He also eventually rose up and punished His enemies and restored His people.

Every individual needs to know the faithfulness of God, the necessity and blessings of following Him, and the foolishness and punishment of rejecting Him. Tell someone today.

*Read the Bible Through 2017*

Week 18

Sunday, April 30, 2017—Psalms 58-60

Sometimes, life’s circumstances can lead emotions to the boiling point. The Psalmist knew this. “Break the teeth in their mouths, O God; tear out, O Lord, the fangs of the lion!” (58:6). He had no desire for diplomacy or consensus. He wanted God to act mightily and decisively. He wanted his enemies to die like a melting slug or stillborn child (58:8).

He knew the results would be a blessing to God’s people and bring glory to God Himself. Because of this he prayed boldly. “The righteous will be glad when they are avenged, when they bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked” (58:10). “Then men will say, ‘Surely the righteous still are rewarded; surely there is a God who judges the earth’” (58:11). “O Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel, rouse yourself to punish all the nations; show no mercy to wicked traitors” (59:5). Interestingly, he prayed for God to punish but not completely destroy. He wanted the hand of God against the wicked to be a continual, visible reminder to God’s people (59:11). In turn, he would worship. “But I will sing of your strength, . . . for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble” (59:16).

Frustrations and circumstances can lead to feelings of worthlessness or rejection. Pray for restoration (60:1) and revival. “Give us aid against the enemy, for the help of man is worthless. With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies” (60:11-12).

Monday, May 1, 2017—Psalms 61-63

The wonder of a relationship with God is being able to be with God. For thousands of years, humans have sought to know the powers of the universe in order to appease them or, if possible, control them. There has been a seeming distance between man and these powers, whatever the historical period and cultural setting. When Yahweh introduced Himself to Israel, however, He changed things drastically. No longer was He a distant God in need of capitulation and limited by geography or season. He was the Great Self-Existent One who was choosing to be with His people wherever they would go.

In Psalm 61, the song writer celebrates the power and presence of God. “For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe” (61:3). He wasn’t asking for possessions or comfort. He was celebrating the person of God and His proximity. He longed to dwell with Him (61:4), and he prayed for His protection and provision for the king. What was good for him personally was worthy of sharing with others.

This relationship with God provided the new identity and purpose for the Psalmist. “My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is a mighty rock, my refuge” (62:7). He was convinced of two equally important truths—God was strong and loving (62:11-12). As a result, he sought the Lord with intensity (63:1). His soul clung to the Lord and hoped in the destruction of his enemies (63:8-9).

Pray for renewed wonder in the privilege to be with Him.

Tuesday, May 2, 2017—Psalms 64-66

Though the Psalms were originally used as songs, they provide helpful frameworks for personal and corporate prayer. Of course, many songwriters have provided new music to accompany these powerful words, but even without music, they are useful for seeking God and His Kingdom.

Like many before it, Psalm 64 expresses complaint over the enemies which attack the writer. He allows his trust in the righteousness and power of God to lead him to worship and call others to do the same. No circumstance is out of God’s sight or control, so praise Him in it.

In Psalms 65-66, the writer provides a long list of attributes and actions of God which move him to praise. They can do the same for modern readers. He hears prayer (65:2). He forgives sin (65:3), and He blesses and provides for those who come to Him (65:4). He answers prayer with righteous deeds and gives hope (65:5), and He has power over the creation which He Himself made (65:6-8). He cares for creation which displays His glory and provides food for those He has made (65:9-12).

To consider all of this should motivate people to declare how amazing He truly is (66:1-4). He turned sea into dry land and redeemed His people (66:6-9). He cares enough for His people to test them, allowing them to go through hard times which purify them (66:10-12). Sin will create distance between Him and His people, but He is willing to listen and respond to those who are repentant (66:13-20).

Praise God in prayer with these Psalms.

Wednesday, May 3, 2017—Psalms 67-69

God has made His glory known through creation. He has more fully introduced Himself to mankind through choosing Israel and then sending Jesus so mankind could come to know Him personally. The end result would be that the nations would come to know Him as they see Him blessing His people (67:6-7).

The blessing goes beyond material provision. God also protects His people (68:1-3), scattering their enemies and protecting the weak. He puts the lonely into families and sets the prisoner free (68:6). “Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens” (68:19). The writer calls on God’s people to sing to Him and proclaim His power (68:32-34). “You are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary; the God of Israel gives power and strength to His people. Praise be to God!” (68:35).

The praise and power of Psalms 67 and 68 are important for the writer of Psalm 69. He is sinking, and he is worn out from calling out for God (69:1-3). He knows he is not perfect, but he also knows his passion for following God and honoring Him and the mocking and scorn he faces for it (69:4-12). “But I pray to you, O Lord, in the time of your favor; in your great love, O God, answer me with your sure salvation” (69:13).

Bring God the praise He enjoys more than sacrifices (69:31). Thank Him for hearing you in your time of need. Pray your life brings Him the glory He deserves.

Thursday, May 4, 2017—Psalms 70-72

The contrast in Psalm 70 is stark. The Psalmist compares two types of people—those who are seeking his life (70:2) and those who are seeking God (70:4). The writer knew he was poor and needy (70:5) and called out for God’s salvation (70:1). He wasn’t deluded to think he was worthy of praise, so he wanted those who sought God—the One worthy of all adoration and obedience—to be blessed by God. Those who sought his life were bringing him grief and wasting their time, so he prayed for their shame and destruction. (Even in that difficulty, God might be praised if they saw their folly and repented.)

Psalm 71 likewise contrasts the destruction of the enemy and the praise of God. In this psalm, the writer gives God a reason to be his deliverer and constant companion. “Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone. For my enemies speak against me; those who wait to kill me conspire together. They say, ‘God has forsaken him; pursue him and seize him, for no one will rescue him’” (71:9-11). He had continual hope in God, even when his enemies assailed him, so he wanted God to have continual power and glory in his life.

In Psalm 72, the writer prays for God’s blessing and usefulness in the life of the king. Spend time today praying for yourself and your leaders. Pray for His glory and your usefulness in His Kingdom.

Friday, May 5, 2017—Psalms 73-75

Perception can easily become reality. In our post-truth world, what one “feels” or “perceives” is more important than what the facts actually communicate. The Psalmist knew this frustration. “Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart” (73:1). He knew God was of noble character and trustworthy, but his feet almost slipped (73:2) because the circumstances of life made him “feel” as if God were no longer good. He envied the arrogant and believed he wasted his time remaining faithful and pure (73:13).

The move which rescued his heart and mind was entering the sanctuary of God (73:17). The presence of God and power of His truth