

Monday, May 6, 2019—Psalms 76-78

When people discover a skill or activity at which they excel, they participate often. Some are content to approach it as a hobby and compete against whatever level is readily available. Others, however, grow competitive and want to gain more and more skill and success. They are willing to face the best in order to get better.

The Psalmist considered how God matched up with the kings and armies of the earth. God Himself was the protection and glory of Jerusalem, and He judged the evil and rescued the oppressed. The opposition of the greatest of kings only enhanced His glory (76:10), so there was no one who intimidated God. His people should feel the same.

Nonetheless, sometimes His people struggle, wondering whether God has stopped listening and forgotten them (77:1-9). The Psalmist recalled how God had worked powerfully in the past (77:11-20) and couldn't reconcile that God and that power with his current misery. The blessings of God seemed to have become hatred (77:10). While uncomfortable, remembering the power and faithfulness of God is the best thing His people can do when they suffer. He does not change.

This recall is the way one generation teaches the next (78:1-8). Remembering His greatness helps prevent stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful hearts (78:8). The ancestors of Israel had to go through hard times before they repented and remembered God was their rock and redeemer (78:35). "He cared for them with a true heart and led them with skillful hands" (78:72).

Praise God for His victory over the greatest of enemies. Pray for patience and peace as you walk faithfully with Him.

Sunday, May 5, 2019—Psalms 73-75

God uses imperfect people to communicate His perfect message. The Psalms demonstrate that time and again. Consistently, the writers admit their frailties and failures, and they magnify the perfection of God alone.

In Psalm 73, the writer admits he had almost given up on God (73:2). God had not done wrong or failed to fulfill a promise. The Psalmist had grown distracted by the prosperity of the wicked (73:3-12). He wondered whether faithfulness was worth it as it seemed to bring more pain than fulfillment (73:13-14), but his attitude changed when he came into the presence of God (73:17) and thought about the destiny of the wicked. Their short-term gain was no comparison to their long-term destruction.

He confessed his bitterness and ignorance (73:21-22) and marveled that God had not given up on him, continuing to claim him and lead him (73:23-24). His conclusion was that he had no one and needed no one besides God. He would rely on Him and tell of His wonderful acts (73:25-28).

Psalm 74 calls on God in distress—not the angst of jealousy but the bitterness of defeat. The enemies of God have destroyed the place of worship, and His people want Him to respond. The Psalmist knows He has the strength (74:12-17), so he is troubled by two things—not seeing signs of that strength and the mocking of the enemy. He begs God to act.

In Psalm 75, God assures He will act in His time (75:2-3). "It is God alone who

judges. He decides who will rise and who will fall” (75:7). Praise Him for judging the wicked and increasing the power of the godly.

Saturday, May 4, 2019—Psalms 70-72

The Psalmist often called on God to act severely against his enemies. Wasn't that arrogant or presumptuous? If the Psalmist were making these demands because he thought he was righteous or superior, that would be the height of arrogance. The Psalmist knew, on the contrary, that he was poor and needy (70:5). God had established Himself as the ultimate authority, so the Psalmist was simply calling on God to do what He said He would do and be who He said He was.

The Psalmist was fully aware of the majesty of God and his absolute need for Him. “My life is an example to many, because you have been my strength and protection” (71:7). This did not prevent his enemies from attacking him and doubting God, but the Psalmist was undeterred. “I will tell everyone about your righteousness. All day long I will proclaim your saving power, for I am overwhelmed by how much you have done for me” (71:15). He wanted the next generation to follow as faithfully as he (71:18).

While God is the ultimate authority, He gives earthly authority to various leaders. Just as God had helped him, the Psalmist prayed the king would help the poor and needy (72:4). He asked that the king have a long and productive reign so he could display the kindness of God toward the weak and oppressed (72:14-15). The flourishing of the people and the abundance of the land would lead to praise for God Himself (72:18-20).

Praise God for His power, protection, and provision.

Friday, May 3, 2019—Psalm 67-69

God reveals Himself through creation, so there is no excuse for anyone to say He does not exist. God further reveals Himself through circumstances so people can recognize His sovereignty in the present. God reveals Himself more intimately through Scripture and most fully through Jesus so people can come into relationship with Him.

Psalm 67 recognizes several levels of relationship with God. He prays for God to make His face shine on them with favor and bring blessing (67:1, 6-7). He hopes the whole world can see His saving power (67:2). He longs for the nations to respond with praise and joy for the justice with which God works (67:3-5). He looks to a day when the whole world will fear Him (67:7b). He writes of a time when all will know about Him, but only those who intimately know Him find treasure.

Psalm 68 calls on God to scatter His enemies, but “let the godly rejoice. Let them be glad in God's presence. Let them be filled with joy” (68:3). This is God's pattern. He led Israel out of Egypt and drove out the inhabitant of the Promised Land. He made the ground tremble at Sinai and caused the new land to be bountiful (68:7-10). He can do whatever He pleases, and He can give power and strength to His people (68:35).

Regardless of the frustration or exhaustion of a situation, God's people can pray to Him and anticipate His favor and unfailing love (69:13). Pray for those in struggles to know Him personally and to find victory.

Thursday, May 2, 2019—Psalms 64-66

Stories with a hero and a villain often involve a plot twist where the villain suddenly has the upper hand. This unexpected turn comes about as a result of the villain's cunning ways or exceptional abilities. The best stories tell how the hero uses his own wisdom and skill to turn the tables for good.

The Psalmist had enemies from which he needed the Lord's protection (64:1-5). They were without a doubt cunning and able to devise powerful plans (64:6). The Psalmist prayed that God Himself would be able to turn his enemies' words and plans against them. "Then everyone will stand in awe, proclaiming the mighty acts of God, realizing all the amazing things he does" (64:9). God can change the circumstances for His glory.

The greatest plot twist God works is the forgiveness of sin (65:3). "What joy for those you choose to bring near, those who live in your holy courts. . . . You faithfully answer our prayers with your awesome deeds . . . You are the hope of everyone on earth . . ." (65:4-5). He forms the mountains and quiets the oceans. He tends the earth and waters it. He has power over creation and the ability to overcome death itself.

There is no wonder, then, when the Psalmist urges, "Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth! Sing about the glory of his name! Tell the world how glorious he is" (66:1-2). He hears confession and forgives sin (66:18-19). Praise God for His unfailing love that changes everything.

Wednesday, May 1, 2019—Psalms 61-63

Perspective is important. Two mountains may appear the same size, but as the rider approaches the nearer, he realizes the further mountain is much larger and only appeared similar in size because of his distance from both. Time and attention made a drastic difference in understanding.

In Psalm 61, the writer prays for his king to have many years on the throne (61:6). There was no more important person in all of Israel than the king, so he prayed for the king's influence to span generations. He began the Psalm, however, with a plea to God to be the source of help and protection (61:1-4). He knew the king was nothing without God. Proper perspective moved him to pray to God and for the king.

The king was God's chosen leader, but God alone was the rock and salvation of His people (62:2). He was the fortress that would not be shaken (62:6). Power was His alone (62:11). Unfailing love and perfect judgment would only come from Him (62:12).

When His people realize that He is the source of hope, power, and protection, they will trust Him and not a politician or celebrity. Seeing Him and knowing His love will stir His people to honor Him and pray for all those in their lives in positions of prominence. "You satisfy me more than the richest of foods. I will praise you with songs of joy" (63:5).

"O my people, trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge" (62:8).

Tuesday, April 30, 2019—Psalms 58-60

Good judges make good judgments. They rule in favor of the right and punish the wrong. Good judges become the heroes of the weak, and the needy appeal to such

judges knowing they will find justice.

Because He is God, He is the greatest of all judges. The Psalmist, therefore, is able to appeal to God with certainty and to ask God to bring justice in impressive, unquestionable power. "Break off their fangs, O God! Smash the jaws of these lions, O Lord! . . . May they be like snails that dissolve into slime . . ." (58:6, 8a). "Destroy them in your anger. Wipe them out completely . . ." (59:13a). Imprecatory psalms call down the judgment of God on His enemies and invoke the curses He promised for rebellion.

Many would be uncomfortable praying such violence, but the psalmist does so with confidence. He wants there to be no doubt there is reward for those who live for God and judgment for those who don't (58:11). In doing so, he asks God to be the one who brings judgment and violence instead of trying to do the job himself. Then, God becomes the responsible party, and His enemies have no one to blame but themselves and no way of exacting revenge on the Judge who punished them.

God laughs at the plans of His enemies (59:8), and His people sing praises for His strength and protection (59:16-17). "With God's help we will do mighty things, for he will trample down our foes" (60:12).