

July 31 Godly men in distress

Psalm 85

*“Surely His salvation is near those who fear Him, that His glory may dwell in our land. Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest.” 85:9-12*

The psalm reflects the dominant thoughts of the godly men in distress. The remembrance of God’s goodness provides a basis for the spirit of prayer and optimism which pervades the psalm. God’s past mercies fortify His people for present distress and assure them of future glory. When the blessing of salvation comes, it will involve absolute harmony of the divine attributes: He shows steadfast love to sinners without abandoning faithfulness to His own holy nature; His righteousness of character will not contradict with His gift of peace to men. The promise of salvation found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance unpunished- he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:23-26.*

Aug 1 Teach me your way, O Lord

Psalm 86

*“Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. For great is your love toward me, you have delivered me from the depths of the grave.” 86: 11-13*

This psalm is an expression of a devout soul seeking the assuring fellowship and strengthening grace of the Lord. A striking feature of the psalm is that each petition is accompanied by a reason why the prayer should be granted. The plea of the psalmist is based on his relationship with God: he belongs to the poor and needy (God’s dependants), and the covenant-people. His plea is also based on the divine nature: good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love. In meditating God’s creative power and ultimate purpose, His essential goodness and continuous activity, His sovereignty over all and His accessibility to man, the psalmist expresses his desire to become like Him in mind and manner, i.e. to be integrated in a life inseparable from Him. A climax of praise and worship is reached wherein the godly soul experiences a unity of being which is a partial participation in eternal glory. It is the affirmation of a God-centered life.

Aug 2 The city of God

Psalm 87

*“As they make music they will sing, all my fountains are in you.” 87:7*

This is a prophetic psalm envisioning Zion, the city of God, as the metropolis of the world-wide kingdom of God. The dominant thought is that of a universal and glad acceptance of God as Lord and King, in which allegiance all sources of international friction are removed. In the spiritual Zion, each and every nation (this one and that one)

shall claim incorporation on the ground of a rebirth, and the Most High Himself shall make it so. When He draws up the roll of the peoples in His city there will be no aliens, and the new life of the redeemed finds its perpetual inspiration and vigour in the experience of dwelling in the city of God. "Through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 3:6.

Aug 3 Ceaseless prayer in hopelessness

Psalm 88

*"Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me. All day long they surround me like a flood, they have completely engulfed me. You have taken my companions and loved ones from me, the darkness is my closest friend." 88: 16-18*

This psalm is unique for its gloom and unrelieved misery, devoid even of hope. The psalmist, like Job, was strained between an undeviating trust in God as the sole source of his salvation, and an intensely bewildering experience which appeared to negate the foundation of all such trust. The psalmist's faith is shown by the fact that throughout this troubled psalm, he remains as a man of prayer. Although distress has reached critical proportions, faith greets each new day with prayer, in spite of the fact that he is utterly perplexed by God's purposes as seen in his life. The last word of the psalm is darkness, and yet there lies its wonder- the wonder of triumphant faith, that a man should see no light at all but yet go on supplicating in fervent, trustful, ceaseless prayer. "Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God." Isaiah 50:10. The psalmist can be our master and teacher of prayer.

Aug 4 Complaints against God

Psalm 89

*"But you have rejected, you have spurned, you have been very angry with your anointed one. You have renounced the covenant with your servant and have defiled his crown in the dust..." 89: 38-39*

This psalm deals with certain questions which confront a godly man in this earthly existence. The honor and power of God and His goodness to His people are reversed in the evidences of the destruction He has wrought, the inversion of His promises, and the disgrace and shame brought to His people. It seems that God has made men for a mere nothing: all must die and that comparatively quickly. Unless God reaffirms the covenant speedily, the trusting psalmist and all men will come together to the grave and deliverance will be too late. The question which the psalm poses is this: What is to be done when the promises of God are denied by the facts of experience? The psalmist's answer is: turn the promises into prayers and plead them before God.

Aug 5 Praying our death

Psalm 90

*"We live for seventy years or so, with luck we might make it to eighty. And what do we have to show for it? Trouble. Toil and trouble and a marker in the graveyard... Oh! Teach us to live well! Teach us to live wisely and well!" 90:11-12.*

Death is not a popular subject. We live in a society characterized by the denial of death. This is unusual. Most people who have lived on this earth have given a great deal of attention to death. Preparing for a good death has been, in every century except our own, an accepted goal in life. Psalm 90 has been part of that preparation for millions of Christians.

Eugene Peterson, *Living the message*, p. 302.

Aug 6 Blessed assurance

Psalm 91

*“Because he loves me, says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.” 91:14-16*

The greatest blessing for those who have made the Lord his refuge is fellowship with God. On man's side this fellowship is expressed in love, knowledge of God's name, i.e. intimate awareness and joy in the revealed nature of God. On God's side it is expressed in the deliverance which makes a way of escape, the protection which lifts him high above the danger, the constant watchfulness which hears and heeds the cry of need, the presence of God known especially when the need is greatest, the intervention of God coming in power to the rescue, the bestowal of honor in God's sight, a life spent in true self-fulfillment and satisfaction, and beyond all, the full enjoyment of eternal salvation.