

Psalm 84, Isaiah 34-35, II Corinthians 1-4 (#64)

Psalm 84 — The Psalmist describes his exuberant longing to worship God in the temple.
of the verbs that the author uses to describe his passion for God?

What are some

Isaiah 34— Isaiah invites the nations of the earth to see His final decimation of its armies because of their willful pride and unabated rebellion. Edom, the descendants of Jacob's brother Esau, is singled out for destruction because of its hostility toward Zion. Isaiah gives the picture of the Lord offering the wicked people as sacrifices instead of animals. Edom's judgment will be so complete that instead of the land being populated with people, it will only have desert creatures. *Comparing verses 1-4 with Revelation 6:12-17, what future event in history do these verses describe?*

Isaiah 35— Now that God's judgment on the earth is complete, Yahweh will inaugurate the most beautiful era of human history, the millennial reign of Jesus the Messiah on the earth. After reading the oracles of destruction on the nations (34:1-4), now we see the earth being transformed into something similar to the Garden of Eden. Everything from the healing of humankind from its disabilities and sicknesses to the incredible productivity of the well-watered land, will be a part of this kingdom age where the glory and splendor of the Lord will be displayed. The redeemed will joyfully walk in God's ways and travel the Highway of Holiness to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh. *List the spiritual and physical blessings of the redeemed during the kingdom age that are given in this chapter.*

II Corinthians— This book is the most personal letter of the apostle Paul and was written about 56 A.D. from Macedonia. The city of Corinth was famous for its sexual immorality (1000 temple prostitutes) and debauchery (drunken orgies), which affected the lives of members of the church. II Corinthians was Paul's fourth letter to this church (two have been lost), and touched on a lot of important themes necessary for the maturity of the church. After receiving good news from Titus that his third letter (severe and painful, 2:4) had resulted in the repentance of the members for their rebellion against him, Paul gave many words of comfort and direction to them. Some of the major themes of this book are; (1) the progressive transformation of the believer by the Spirit (Chapter 3), (2) the treasure of the gospel in jars of clay (chapter 4), (3) the resurrection and judgment of believers (5:1-15), (4) the ministry of reconciliation given to believers (5:16-21), (5) defense of Paul's ministry (chapters 6, 10-12), and (6) the collection for saints in Israel and motivation for giving (Chapters 8-9).

II Corinthians 1— Paul begins his letter, after his usual greetings, by speaking of the comfort he had received from the Lord during his extreme trials and suffering. In a very personal and transparent way, his desire was to pass

along to them this overflowing comfort that he had experienced at a time when he suffered so much adversity that he expected to die. The lesson learned from this trial was to stop trusting in ourselves, but to trust only in God who raises the dead (vv. 1-11). Paul was accused by some that he didn't come to Corinth when he said he would because he was afraid to face them or at best was not straightforward with his words or promises. Paul said that the real reason for not coming in person was to spare them of a severe rebuke. He did not want to come as a domineering dictator, but a compassionate partner since ultimately it was their own faith that would cause them to stand firm, not his faith (vv. 12-24). *This chapter speaks about the suffering and trials we experience as Christians. What are the byproducts of our trials and suffering? 1. Verses 4-7. 2. James 1:2-4 3. Romans 5:3-5.*

II Corinthians 2— Paul made it clear that the reason he delayed his visit was because he did not want another painful encounter. He felt that the severe letter was better than a distressing visit even though the letter's contents gave great anguish and tears to both he and the church. His purpose was not to hurt them, but he wanted to express his love for them (vv. 1-4). Now Paul urges the one disciplined by the church to be forgiven and comforted. The person disciplined most likely was the person who sinned in I Corinthians 5:1-5 or possibly the one who was leading the opposition against Paul (vv. 5-13). God put Paul on display to the world as he preached the gospel and spread the aroma of the knowledge of Christ in every place (vv.14-17). *1. Paul said that we must not be ignorant of Satan's schemes (v. 11). What were the two extremes that Satan would want us to take in the area of church discipline? 2. Explain the meaning behind the imagery Paul gave of the Roman triumphal procession (vv. 14-16).*

II Corinthians 3— Paul said he did not need to give letters of recommendation to them since they themselves are his recommendation letter that was read by everyone. This letter was not written with ink, but by the Spirit of God in their hearts which was evidenced by their changed lives. Paul declares that in himself he is not competent to do any type of spiritual work, but that his competency comes through the Spirit that produces life, not the letter of the law that only produces death (vv. 1-6). Paul then contrasts the Old and New Covenants where the Old was glorious in its inauguration when Moses brought the written law down from Mount Sinai, and his face shown with the glory of God even though this glory was fading away. The New Covenant that brought life, not condemnation, was more glorious because it remains forever, and produces righteousness and an ever increasing glory (vv. 7-11). Just like Moses had a veil over his face, the Jews who do not believe have a veil over their hearts when they hear the words of Moses read in the synagogue. The veil is only removed when they believe in Christ and receive the freedom that only the Spirit of the Lord gives. As a believer, without a veil covering his face, beholds the glory of the Lord, he is progressively transformed into the very image of Christ by the Spirit of God (vv. 12-18). *1.*

Explain the phrase, "The letter kills, but the Spirit produces life (v. 6b). 2. What activities are necessary in the life of the believer to be progressively transformed into the likeness of Christ?"

II Corinthians 4— The ministry of the Spirit that God had given Paul was not one of deceit or a distortion of the truth, but the preaching of the truth with a clear conscience. The god of this world has veiled the minds of the unbelievers so that they are unable to see and understand the Gospel. Paul did not want to make anything great of himself, but instead he looked at himself as a slave and a clay jar. To him, the real important one was Jesus Christ, who is God's light that shines into our hearts, and God's power that transforms our lives (vv. 1-7). Though Paul was pressured, perplexed, and persecuted, he was never abandoned or destroyed. In fact, the more he suffered and was facing the danger of death, the more the spiritual life of Christ was produced in others. He had confidence that just as Jesus was raised from the dead, sometime in the future, the believers in the church of Corinth and Paul would also be resurrected together and would be in the very presence of God. Paul never gave up trying to reach more and more people so that God would receive more and more glory. Though the momentary light affliction may come, we focus by faith on the unseen realities of the eternal. *After reading this chapter, what actions and attitudes did Paul have where he showed himself to be a true servant of Jesus Christ?*

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Psalm 85, II Corinthians 5-10 (#65)

Psalm 85 — The Lord's unfailing love and faithfulness are remembered by the psalmist in the midst of exile. *What does verses 10-11 tell us about our proper response to God?*

II Corinthians 5— Paul speaks of four great motivations for Christians to live a life that pleases the Lord (v.9). First, the presence of the Spirit in us is a guarantee that even though our temporary earthly tent is destroyed, we will have a new eternal resurrected body (vv. 1-8). Secondly, every believer will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give account of the deeds done in his or her body, whether good or worthless (v. 10). A third motivation is the fear of the Lord. This is a reverential obedience to the Lord, knowing who He is, and the worship and honor that He deserves (v. 11). In the fourth place, it is the love of Christ that compels us. It is what He has done for us in saving us that spurs us on to fully devote ourselves to Him (vv 14-15). Because of all of this, we are new creatures in Christ and ambassadors with a message of reconciliation.

1. Verse 10 says that one day you will stand before Christ to be judged by Him as to how you lived your life after becoming a believer. Do a realistic inventory of your Christian life up to now (from day of your salvation up to today). What would Christ say about your life and your obedience to Him? This question is personal. 2. Illustrate and explain the great exchange that is described in verse 21.

II Corinthians 6— Paul was concerned that after all the time he spent with the church at Corinth, still many of them were rejecting God's grace and were deceived by the gospel of works preached by the false teachers that had come to them. Paul declared that he was a servant of God and had put no obstacle in their path to keep them from believing and following the truth. In every way he had suffered and endured for their sakes. He had lived a life of purity, patience, and love as a true minister of Christ. As a faithful apostle, he expected to be rejected and accepted, hated and loved, and honored and despised (vv. 1-13). Finally, since we are the temple of the living God, we must not be in partnership with the ungodly influences of the world and Satan, but be wholly devoted to Christ. *Verses 14 to 18 teaches that believers are to be separated from non-believers and ungodly influences. Explain what this means and does not mean.*

II Corinthians 7— Verse 1 refers back to the previous 5 verses (6:14-18) and encourages believers to make a clean break with all kinds of sins of the flesh and of the spirit, with our eyes set on becoming progressively more like

Christ. Paul was filled with apprehension after sending Titus with the “severe letter” to the church of Corinth and not knowing the reaction they might have to it. After searching for Titus and finally finding him in Macedonia, Paul felt great relief when he heard of their grieving for the wrong they had done. Their grieving brought them to genuine godly repentance. He rejoiced in the way the Corinthian church showed obedience, love, and loyalty to him.

1. What is required to bring “holiness to completion” in the life of a Christian (v. 1)? 2. Give a comparison between the lives of Peter (who denied Jesus) and Judas (who betrayed Jesus) regarding godly grief and worldly grief. See verse 10.

II Corinthians 8— Paul speaks of the grace of God that was displayed by the churches of Macedonia who financially gave in their deep poverty beyond their ability, in order to send money to the believers in Jerusalem who were in greater poverty because of famine. He urges the church at Corinth to excel in this grace and to fulfill their promise to prepare a generous gift which will test the genuineness of their love. Paul said that the goal of the church is equality so that members will share material resources with other members in order that the needs of each will be met (vv. 1-15). He then explains that he is sending other brothers with Titus to collect the offering in order to avoid criticism on the way the funds are being administered (vv. 16-24). *1. In what way was Christ an example of giving in this chapter? 2. How does the way Paul showed fiscal integrity speak to us today? What safeguards do churches and Christian ministries need to take to show the same integrity?*

II Corinthians 9— Paul bragged on the church of Corinth to the churches of Macedonia on their desire to give of their resources to the impoverished believers of the church of Jerusalem. He sent Titus and other men ahead of him to make sure that the church was prepared to give the generous gift they had promised, but at the same time he didn’t want them to feel they were being forced to give (vv. 1-5). Whether we reap sparingly or generously will depend how much we sow. The important thing is that each person decides in his heart how much to give and then do it cheerfully, not feeling under pressure (vv. 6-9). The benefits of giving were that thanksgiving went to God, and that the whole church was unified because of the generosity of the Gentile church (10-15). *Read verses 6 to 9 and Luke 6:38. What words describe how a Christian should give? What is God’s promise if we give this way?*

II Corinthians 10— Starting with chapter 10, Paul begins to defend his apostolic authority showing that he appeals to the church at Corinth by the gentleness of Christ, and not using forceful and demanding methods like the false teachers that had come into their assembly. Though he lived in the body, he did not use worldly means of manipulation to produce godly results. On the contrary, he used spiritual weapons to destroy the evil strongholds of the mind and cause every thought to be taken captive to obey Christ (vv. 1-6). The authority God gave to Paul was for the building up of the church. He was not being two-faced by appearing to be a different person when he was writing them than he was when he was present with them (vv. 7-11). We should never get into the comparison game. These false teachers tried to compare themselves with others using external measurements, but God’s mark of a successful ministry is the inward transformation that only the Spirit of God can produce in the heart. This is what the power of Christ accomplished in the believers of Corinth through Paul’s ministry. Ultimately, our only boast is in the Lord, and only He can give to us true commendation and approval (vv. 12-17). *What are the weapons of our warfare that demolish the strongholds of the enemy? See verse 4.*

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Psalm 86, II Corinthians 11-13, Ecclesiastes 1-3 (#66)

Psalm 86 — This psalm is a prayer of David containing both praises and petitions for God to act on his behalf. *Notable in this Psalm are what David asks for, and what he does not. What does this tell you about David's heart?*

II Corinthians 11— Paul had a fatherly concern that he would be able to present the church of Corinth as pure virgin to Christ. As the serpent had deceived Eve, he was afraid that these false teachers had seduced these believers from a pure devotion to Christ. Because of his pastoral love and tenderness for this flock, he had to forcefully defend his apostolic calling against the abuse and accusations of the false apostles. First, he indicated that he had nothing but pure motives in planting the church which was manifested by the fact he did it free of charge to them. He labored with his own hands as a tentmaker (Acts 18:1-3) and received gifts from other churches to evangelize them. The false apostles that came into the church were peddlers of God's Word (2:17), deceitful workers, disguising themselves as angels of light just as Satan had done. Paul then indicated that the sign of a true apostle of Christ is suffering. He then began to "talk like a fool" and chronicle his credentials and experiences of suffering including the daily pressure because of his care for all the churches (vv21-28). Another sign of a true apostle was a willingness to show weakness (vv. 29-33). *What were the practices mentioned by Paul in this chapter of these deceitful workers who masqueraded as apostles of Christ?*

II Corinthians 12— Paul continues to give his qualifications as an apostle. First, he speaks of visions and revelations and describes a time when he was caught up into the third heaven and heard things so astounding that no human being can tell them. He then speaks of his "thorn in the flesh" that a messenger of Satan sent to keep him from pride. He also reminds them of the other signs of an apostle he did among them which were wonders and miracles. Paul reminded them that he never burdened them with his financial needs, but only sought what was good for them and their building up. His one concern was that when he arrives he might still find them quarreling, jealous, selfish, arrogant, and unrepentant of their sexual immorality and promiscuity. *What lessons did God teach Paul by allowing him to have this "thorn in the flesh?"*

II Corinthians 13— Paul tells the church that this will be the third time he is coming to them and will deal with the sin in the church if they haven't already dealt with it by the time he arrives. Those in the church that don't believe that Paul had Christ's authority are warned that when he arrives in Corinth, God's power will be with him to discipline them. They must test themselves to see if their faith was genuine, but should recognize that he has not failed the test of his apostolic authority, and will make a show of Christ's power if it is necessary. Paul closes his letter with his final greetings encouraging the church to grow in maturity, comfort one another, and live in unity and peace. 1. Paul said, "Examine ourselves to see if your faith is genuine (NLT)." What evidences are there that we really are born again and a member of God's family? See Romans 8:9,16, I John 3:14, I John 2:29, 3:9, and I John 5:4. 2. What major doctrine of scripture is found in verse 14?

Ecclesiastes— One does not have to be Christian very long to understand that a life lived "under the sun" or independently from God is vanity or meaningless. The wisest man of his day used his life as a quest to find the "real meaning of life." Solomon wrote this book about 935 B.C., toward the end of his life, and tried every possible avenue to see if he could find fulfillment, but concluded "Vanity and meaningless, everything is vanity (1:2)." It doesn't matter whether one goes after wisdom (scholarship), sensuality (food, sex, adventure, excitement), materialism (possessions and achievements), power, or prestige. Living is futile apart from remembering that all of life must be centered on its Creator God.

Ecclesiastes 1— The third and fourth words of this book are "the Preacher" which is the word "Ecclesiastes," and is speaking of "the one who calls or gathers the people." At the outset of the book, the Preacher states his conclusion about "life under the sun." The Hebrew word translated "vanity" means "breath" which gives the idea of transitory or fleeting (vv. 1-3). A life that does not put God in the center is futile, meaningless, and pointless. He says that all of creation including the sun, the wind, and streams are in constant motion, but return to the same place and have no permanent significance (vv. 3-11). To find meaning in "life under the sun," Solomon dedicated himself to wisdom and scholarship. Being the wisest man that ever lived (other than Christ), he fully gave himself to accumulating human knowledge, reasoning, and philosophy to find satisfaction and purpose. Everything in nature and the world will point us to a creator who has infinite power (Romans 1:20) but will not tell you the real meaning of existence (vv. 12-18). 1. Verse 9b says, "there is nothing new under the sun." The truth is that the desperate needs of humanity are only found in Christ. What are the "new" things that are offered us in Christ? #12 p.361. 2. What is the one gift that God has given us that fully explains our purpose for living?

Ecclesiastes 2— Solomon continued on his search for meaning and purpose in life. After he found wisdom and knowledge to be like chasing after the wind (1:12-18), he next tried to see if pleasure, laughter, and the finest wine

would give him meaning, but this too was futility and madness (vv. 1-3). The next thing he considers to find fulfillment is material possessions such as houses, vineyards, parks, servants, cattle, silver, gold and sensual pleasure, and again he finds all of these pursuits the like chasing of the wind (vv. 4-11). Solomon then admits that life is better for a wise man than a fool just like living in light is better than living in darkness, but ultimately the wisdom one gains is of little value since the destiny of the wise and the fool is the same, which is death (vv. 12-17). To spend all of one's labor to accumulate is futile since what he leaves behind goes to his heir who has not earned it and may squander it. Instead of living to work and accumulate, one must learn to work to live and enjoy what he has earned, receiving it with thanksgiving from the hand of God (vv. 18-26). *In the first two chapters Solomon tried and experienced everything available in his day in order to bring purpose to his life and found it to be meaningless. If you were to meet a modern day person like Solomon and were able to give him spiritual advice on his chasing after the things the world offers, what would you say to him ? Please include scripture in your answer.*

Ecclesiastes 3— Life is organized in a pattern of cycles, and all events in our lives come from God and are allowed by God for a purpose. #6 p.271. If we accept these events from the hand of God and cooperate with Him, we will see that life is not meaningless and He will make everything beautiful in its own time (vv. 1-14). Someday God will judge the wickedness of unjust judges. Speaking like a man living under the sun (unconverted), Solomon says that men are like animals in the sense that they both will die, and who knows whether the spirit of human beings rise upward and the spirit of animals go downward to the earth? *What is meant by the phrase, God "has put eternity in the hearts of men."* #3 p 1060

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Psalm 87-88, Ecclesiastes 4-9 (#67)

Psalm 87 — The psalmist gives a joyous song celebrating the majesty of Jerusalem, the city of God. *Consider verses 5 and 6, where God registers the inhabitants of Zion. Explain whether you think this is prophetic or historical?*

Psalm 88 — The psalmist blames God and begs for help during a time of adversity and despair. *Have you experienced a time when you blamed God for the struggles in your life? If so, how did you overcome your doubts?*

Ecclesiastes 4— The writer starts this chapter talking about the oppression and suffering of the poor and weak caused by the powerful who are in control, and thus sees death or never having been born as better alternatives for them (vv. 1-3). Then Solomon speaks on the subject of wealth by saying that some who seek after wealth do it because they are envious of their neighbor's prosperity (keeping up with the Joneses). He chastises the lazy, praises the one who works and is able to enjoy life, and heaps scorn on the one who struggles to get wealthy but is never able to delight in the joys of life (vv. 4-8). The teacher now accentuates the need of relationships, friendships, and partnerships to get through the trials and hardships of life (vv. 9-12). The rise of a poor but wise young man to eventually be king is exciting, but the interest of the people soon wanes, and this too is meaningless and chasing after the wind (vv. 13-16). *In verses 4 to 8 the writer talks about two wrong extremes regarding our work. What are they, and why are they both foolish? What advice did Paul give in II Thessalonians 3:10?*

Ecclesiastes 5— Now the author visits the temple and makes observations about what he sees in those who come to worship. We are to fear God by quietly listening and seeking Him with a sincere and obedient heart, not making rash vows (vv. 1-7). One should not be surprised by the corruption in the best of governments since each official tries to protect the other, often to their own profit (vv. 8-9). Those that love money are never satisfied and seldom get restful sleep. Hoarding money or making bad investments to get rich will cause people to live under a cloud all their lives by causing them to suffer frustration, discouragement, and anger (vv. 10-17). God wants us to rejoice in our labor, enjoy life, and receive the good things as gifts from Him (vv. 18-20). *What are two sins one can commit when making vows (vv. 4-6)?*

Ecclesiastes 6— Some people receive wealth and honor from God but do not live long enough to enjoy it while others may live long lives but do not possess the power to enjoy life since their wealth, not God, is the in the center of their lives. “Enjoy what you have rather than desiring what you don’t have. Just dreaming about nice things is meaningless—like chasing the wind (v. 9, NLT).” We must not argue with God or be preoccupied about the future since He alone is sovereign and will fulfill His plans and purposes. *Verse 3 talks about “proper burial” or “no burial.” What does this mean, and is cremation a proper burial for a Christian?*

Ecclesiastes 7— Solomon says that it is important for a wise man to always live his life with the reality of his death in view, and not be like the fool whose life is a constant party and shields himself from the seriousness of death (vv. 1-6). The next verses are a variety of pithy statements about life beginning with the condemnation of extortion or bribery which turns wise people into fools (v. 7). We need to face the present reality of our lives and nation and not live in the past (v. 10). Wisdom is better than wealth since wealth can be temporary, but wisdom is enduring and can save us in the adversities of life (v. 11-12). In verses 16 to 18, the writer warns the readers to avoid the extremes of legalism and self-righteous pride on one side and immorality and wickedness on the other. In his exhaustive search for wisdom, the teacher explored every place possible and never came close to understanding the meaning of the events of his life but concluded that some things are unknowable (vv. 23-25). Solomon understood that the real problem in the world is the sinfulness of the human heart even though God originally created humankind upright (vv. 26-29). *How does one get wisdom? Give Biblical references with your answer.*

Ecclesiastes 8— The wise person will live before rulers with discretion and tact knowing the proper procedures and timing for everything (vv. 1-6). There is no escaping the day of our death or of stopping the working out of God’s laws and plans (vv. 8-9). There are many seemingly unjust occurrences on the earth; a wicked man receiving praise at his funeral, the sentence against a criminal act that is not carried out quickly, a perpetual evil sinner living a long life, and righteous people treated as though they were evil while evil people being treated as though they were good (vv. 10-14). We must learn to live with contentment and to accept with joy all the blessings our loving and gracious God gives us. Even though a person is extremely wise and tries to explore the depths of God’s plans and purposes on the earth, he will come up short since there are always more questions than answers in life (vv. 8:15-17). #3 p.1065. *The seemingly unjust things that happen in life given in verses 10-14 are said by Solomon to be “meaningless.” Is this true? Explain.*

Ecclesiastes 9— The skeptical side of Solomon shows in the first few verses of this chapter. Even though he brings God into the picture, he still has doubts about the reality of the afterlife. As he looks at life under the sun, he sees the unpredictability of life whether that of the righteous or wicked and the inevitability of death for everyone. No matter how random life may appear, the actions of the godly and wise are in the hands of God (vv. 1-6). While you are living you need to enjoy life as your circumstances permit, rejoice with the wife God has given you, and work hard (vv. 7-10). The writer observes that many times the fastest runner or the strongest warrior may not come out on top, but that chance plays a big part and therefore, one cannot predict when difficult times will happen (vv. 11-12). A poor but wise man was able to save his besieged city by his wisdom but was not remembered or appreciated afterwards. The benefits of wisdom can be easily undone by one evil person (vv. 13-18). *How do we explain verses 4 to 6 and other verses in the book of Ecclesiastes since it seems to contradict other parts of the Bible?*

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