

6/13/10

Series Title: “Joyously Pursuing the Light of God’s Word”

Today’s Title:

“Resh: The Believer’s Need for Renewed Deliverance”

Scripture Reading and Text: Psalm 119:153-160

Introduction: (Illustration from Knight, pp.341-342)

A traveler on a lonely road was overcome by robbers who stole everything. They led him into the depths of the forest. There in the darkness they tied a rope to the limb of a tree and made him catch hold of the end of it. Swinging him out into the darkness, they told him he was hanging over the brink of a deep precipice. The moment he let go he would be dashed to pieces on the rocks below. Then they left him. He was filled with horror at his anticipated doom. He clutched desperately on to the end of the swaying rope. Each dreadful moment only made his demise more sure. His strength steadily failed. At last he could hold on no longer. The end had surely come. His clenched fingers relaxed their convulsive grip. He fell – six inches, to the solid ground at his feet. It had only been a ruse of the thieves to gain time in escaping. And when he let go it was not to his death, but to the safety which had been waiting him through all his time of terror.

Clutching with all our might will not deliver us. It is only Satan’s trick to keep us from being saved. And all the while is not our heart full of fear? We need to let go, trusting in God’s saving providence to deliver us. We may end up saying, “And will I not fall to eternal death?” NO. Underneath is Jesus Christ

Premise: *Deliverance is needed initially, daily, and finally*

Outline:

I. Humble Supplications

II. Honorable Scorn

III. Heartening Stability

I. HUMBLE SUPPLICATIONS

A. Look on my affliction

v.153a

- from *Queen of the Dark Chamber*, Christiana Tsai,
pp.138 and 142

The next day, Dr. Daniels sent a note saying, "We have diagnosed the case. It is Pellegra and beri-beri. No medicine will help, only forced feeding." (However, after sixteen long years of suffering, it was discovered that the basic cause of my trouble is malignant malaria in the marrow of my bones.) It was agony for us all to try and force the food down, for I had been so nauseated. As I got more nourishment, feeling came back and fiery pains began. My head seemed to be burning with fire, so for two years I had to have ice bags placed around it, while the women frequently gave me an alcohol rub and fanned me. The malaria in my bones was so terrible that even on winter nights, though the windows were open and the snow blowing in, I could scarcely stand the thinnest clothing, or bedding. Severe nausea made it difficult to eat and retain food. My mouth was sore, my hands black, and my knuckles cracked open to the bone. But I was able gradually to take more food, and slowly God drew me up out of the depths and I returned to life again....

During my illness a kind friend asked me whether I were lonely and tired spending my days in a darkened room. "Oh, no!" I answered, "the Lord is my constant Companion and real Friend. I am queen of this dark chamber and He is my King of Light!"

c/w Psalm 121:1-8

B. Deliver me

v.153b

- from *The Valley of Vision*, (Puritan prayers & devotions)
p.171

Father of Mercies,

Hear me for Jesus' sake.

I am sinful even in my closest walk with thee;

*it is of thy mercy I died not long ago;
Thy grace has given me faith in the cross
by which thou hast reconciled thyself to me
and me to thee,
drawing me by thy great love,
reckoning me as innocent in Christ though guilty in myself.
Giver of all graces,
I look to thee for strength to maintain them in me,
for it is hard to practise what I believe.
Strengthen me against temptations.
My heart is an unexhausted fountain of sin,
a river of corruption since childhood days,
flowing on in every pattern of behavior;
Thou hast disarmed me of the means in which I trusted,
and I have no strength but in thee.
Thou alone canst hold back my evil ways,
but without thy grace to sustain me I fall.
Satan's darts quickly inflame me,
and the shield that should quench them
easily drops from my hand:
Empower me against his wiles and assaults.
Keep me sensible of my weakness,
and of dependence upon thy strength.
Let every trial teach me more of thy peace,
more of thy love.
Thy Holy Spirit is given to increase thy graces,
and I cannot preserve or improve them
unless he works continually in me.
May he confirm my trust in thy promised help,
and let me walk humbly in dependence upon thee,
for Jesus' sake.*

C. Plead my cause

v.154a

c/w Luke 22:31-32

c/w I Peter 5:6-10

D. Redeem me

v.154b

- James M. Boice, *Atonement*, pp.84, 85-86, 99

“I define redemption as deliverance from the bondage of sin by Christ, at the cost of his life, because he loved us.”

“One of my favorite hymns is Charles Wesley’s “And Can It Be That I Should Gain.” It contains what is probably my favorite verse of any hymn in the English language. I refer to it as the great verse of deliverance. If you know that hymn and remember those words, you are aware that I am talking about the fourth verse.

***Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
fast bound by sin and error’s night;
thine eye diffused a quickening ray;
I rose, the dungeon flamed with light;
my chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.***

“For those of you who know him by grace alone, remember that you were bought with a price. Remember that he also commands us to not play the harlot. Do not flirt with the values of our culture, whatever they may be. You belong to him! Someone may say, “But aren’t we set free?” Yes, we are set free; that’s what redemption means. But, remember that “for freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” So it is not liberty to sin that God has redeemed us for. Rather, it is a liberty to faithfully love the One who loved us and gave himself for us.”

E. Give me life

v.154b “according to your promise”

v.156b “according to your rules”

v.159b “according to your steadfast love”

- Phillips Brooks

“The great danger facing all of us is not that we shall make an absolute failure of life, nor that we shall fall into outright viciousness, nor that we shall be terribly unhappy, nor that we shall feel that life has no meaning at all- not these things. The danger is that

we may fail to perceive life's greatest meaning, fall short of its highest good, miss its deepest and most abiding happiness, be unable to tender the most needed service, be unconscious of life ablaze with the light of the Presence of God – and be content to have it so – that is the danger: that some day we may wake up and find that always we have been busy with husks and trappings of life and have really missed life itself. For life without God, to one who has known the richness and joy of life with Him, is unthinkable, impossible. That is what one prays one's friends may be spared – satisfaction with a life that falls short of the best, that has in it no tingle or thrill that comes from a friendship with the Father.”

II. HONORABLE SCORN

A. Salvation is impossible to those rejecting God's Word

v.155 *“Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your statutes.”*

(Illustration from Nelson, p.34)

In his book, *Reasonable Faith*, William Lane Craig says, *Man, writes Loren Eiseley, is the Cosmic Orphan. He is the only creature in the universe who asks, “Why?” Other animals have instincts to guide them, but man has learned to ask questions.*

“Who am I?” man asks. “Why am I here? Where am I going?” Since the Enlightenment, when he threw off the shackles of religion, man has tried to answer these questions without reference to God. The answers that came back were not exhilarating, but dark and terrible. “You are an accidental by-product of nature, a result of matter plus time plus chance. There is no reason for your existence. All you face is death.”

Modern man thought that when he had gotten rid of God, he had freed himself from all that repressed and stifled him. Instead, he discovered that in killing God, he had also killed himself.

For if there is no God, then man's life becomes absurd.

c/w Psalm 14:1 *“The fool hath said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”*

(Illustration from Nelson, p.35)

A 1999 study by the Barna Research Group shows that roughly seven percent of the American population – approximately 14 million people – describe themselves as atheistic or agnostic. America had more atheists and agnostics than Mormons (by a 3 to 1 margin), Jews (by a 4 to 1 margin) or Muslims (by a 14 to 1 margin.)

An atheist complained that Christians had their special days such as Christmas, Easter, and so on. The Jews celebrate Passover. “But we atheists,” he said, “have no recognized national holiday. It isn’t fair.”

“I have an idea,” said the man’s friend. “Why don’t you celebrate April 1st.?”

B. God-deniers are contemptible to God-worshippers

v.158 *“I look at the faithless with disgust, because they do not keep your commands.”*

- the word “*disgust*” = lit. “grieved” or “sickened”
“loathed” “to nauseate”

- Albert Barnes

“I was made sad, sorry, sick at heart. I did not look on them with anger; I did not desire to take vengeance upon them; I did not return evil for evil. My heart was sad that men would do wrong; that they would expose themselves to such danger.”

c/w Psalm 95:7-11

III. HEARTENING STABILITY

A. great is your mercy

v.156a

- Hymn from Cotterill’s Collect #521

***Out of the deeps, O Lord, we call,
While guilty fears oppress;
Do thou, with ear attentive, hear
The voice of our distress.***

***If thou our sins severely mark,
And strict account demand,***

*O, who, of all the sons of men,
Before thy face shall stand?*

*But, Lord, 'tis thine to spare and save –
With mercy souls to win;
For mercy binds the grateful heart,
And makes it fear to sin.*

*We trust in thee; in thee, O Lord,
Is full redemption found:
Thy mercy pardons every sin,
And closes every wound.*

B. I do not swerve from your testimonies

v.157b

- Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “*The Heart of the Gospel*”
The heart of the gospel of redemption, and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. They who preach this truth preach the gospel in whatever else they may be mistaken; but they who preach not the atonement, whatever else they declare, have missed the soul and substance of the divine message. In these days I feel bound to go over again the elementary truths of the gospel. In peaceful times we may feel free to make excursions into interesting districts of truth which lie far afield; but now we must stay at home, and guard the hearths and homes of the church by defending the first principles of the faith. In this age there have risen up in the church itself men who speak perverse things. There may be many that trouble us with their philosophies and novel interpretations, whereby they deny the doctrines they profess to teach, and undermine the faith they are pledged to maintain. It is well that some of us, who know what we believe, and have no secret meanings for our words, should just put our foot down and maintain our standing, holding forth the word of life, and plainly declaring the foundation truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.....

The great doctrine, the greatest of all, is this, that God, seeing men to be lost by reason of their sin, hath taken that sin of theirs and laid it upon his only begotten Son, making him to be sin for us, even him who knew no sin; and in consequence of this transference of sin he that believeth in Christ Jesus is made just and righteous, yea, is made to be the righteousness of God in Christ. Christ was made sin that sinners might be made righteousness. That is the doctrine of the substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of guilty men.

C. the sum of your word is truth

v.160a

1. Note the propositions of God's Word:
 - a. All of God's revelation is true
 - b. All of God's truth will come to pass
 - c. All of God's truth is sufficient
2. Note the implications of these propositions:
 - a. If all of God's revelation is true; then our only solid foundation is to submit to its claims
c/w Matthew 8:8 *"But the centurion replied, 'Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.'"*
 - b. If all of God's truth will come to pass; then our only hope of deliverance is to trust its reality
c/w Matthew 5:17-18 *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished."*
 - c. If all of God's truth is sufficient; then there is no need of other resources to dynamically heal our sin sickness
c/w Luke 5:17-26

D. every one of your righteous rules endures forever

v.160b

- from the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

[No. 5] *“We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church of God to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, and the majesty of the style, the consent of all its parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man’s salvation, and many other incomparable excellencies, and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.”*

Conclusion: (Illustration from Knight, p.345)

Richard Almo of Pittsburgh was walking home after working on a night shift of the Jones and Laughlin Steel Works. Looking in a ravine alongside the Penn-Lincoln Highway, he saw protruding what seemed to be a man’s head. Descending into the ravine, he saw that it was a living man’s head. The man had been entrapped in the bog for eighteen hours. He had slowly sunk in the morass until it was almost up to his chin. He could not speak. His mouth was full of mud. He could move only his eyes. Richard dashed away for help. Nearby police and fire departments were notified. Descending into the ravine, brave men, supported by branches cut from nearby trees, crawled to where the imperiled man was and tied a rope beneath his shoulders. Then he was extricated from what would have been his grave in a short while if his plight had not been discovered. He was hospitalized for shock and pneumonia.

How fittingly this incident illustrates our plight before the Savior delivered us from the quagmire of sin and degradation! With glowing, grateful hearts we say with David: *“I waited patiently for the Lord; and he heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my going.”*

Premise: *Deliverance is needed initially, daily, and finally*

