

11/21/10

Series Title: “Thanksgiving Admonitions”

Today’s Title:

“The Voice of Thanksgiving”

Scripture Reading: Psalm 107:1-3

Text: Psalm 107:1-3

“Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.”

Introduction: (Illustr. from Enc. of Chr. Quotes, pp.449-450)

- Letter from John Newton to a church member on October, 10, 1777

I am just come from seeing A.N. The people told me she is much better than she was, but she is far from being well. She was brought to me into a parlor, which saved me the painful task of going to inquire and seek for her among the patients. My spirits always sink when I am within these mournful walls, and I think no money could prevail upon me to spend an hour there every day. Yet surely no sight upon earth is more suited to teach one thankfulness and resignation. Surely I have reason, in my worst times, to be thankful that I am out of hell, out of Bedlam, out of Newgate. If my eyes were as bad as yours, and my back worse, still I hope I should set a great value upon this mercy, that my senses are preserved. I hope you will think so too. The Lord afflicts us at times; but it is always a thousand times less than we deserve, and much less than many of our fellow-creatures are suffering around us. Let us therefore pray for grace to be humble, thankful, and patient. This day twelvemonth I was under Mr. W.’s knife; there is another cause for thankfulness, that the Lord inclined me to submit to the operation, and brought me happily through it. In short, I have so many reasons for thankfulness, that I cannot count them. I may truly say, they are more in number than the hairs of my head. And, yet, alas! how cold, insensible, and ungrateful! I could make as many complaints as you; but I find no good by complaining, except to Him who is able to help me. It is better for you and me to be admiring the compassion and fullness of grace that

is in our Savior, than to dwell and pore to much upon our own poverty and vileness. He is able to help and save to the uttermost; there I desire to cast anchor, and wish you to do so likewise. Hope in God, for you shall yet praise Him.

I am..... John Newton

Premise: *Redeemed sinners have the most confident voice*

Outline:

I. The Goodness of God

II. The Grace of God

III. The Gathering of God

I. THE GOODNESS OF GOD

A. Consider the nature of God's goodness

v.1a *“Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good....”*

1. Listen to Roy Timpe's struggle with the goodness of God in his essay entitled, *“A Good Idol.”*

My problem was that I, along with Ayn Rand, was trying to make God responsible to me, and my concept of good and fair. Job did a similar thing. After suffering many trials (loss of children, land, and health) and hearing the counsel of his friends, Job wanted an answer from God. He wanted an accounting from God for what happened to him. “Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding....”

The point is that the almighty God of the doctrines of grace is not responsible to Job or any other man, including me. Just so there's no doubt, look at the words of Paul, “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known,

endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

So the almighty God set up a system where, "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Then he chose to save some, "so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."

Why would God design such a universe? To bring glory to Himself. This demonstrates His justice, and mercy. Does it conform to my knee jerk concept of good? No. Do I have a right to place my sin stained knee jerk of good as an idol above the almighty God, and ask Him to conform to it? The answer is: a resounding No. Does this system conform to my concept of good informed from scripture? Yes.

So, many years ago, I had erected an idol. I placed it above the almighty Go. When the almighty God refused to have the idol over Him, I fabricated a weaker bridge building God. I had my good idol, and my bridge building God for many years. Then, in 1990, it was as if the almighty God looked down and said, "All right, Roy, I'll allow you to experience the logical consequences of your idolatry." I've torn down my idol, my sin stained knee jerk concept of good. By His grace, I'll never place anything above Him again. God saw to it that even my own idolatry could not pluck me from His hand.

What does this mean for you? If you have yet to come to Christ, pray to God that He would show you mercy and draw you to himself. If you've already come to Christ, scan your world view in the light of scripture. Root out the idols, reconcile the logical contradictions. Take John's advice, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

2. Contemplate the biblical presentation of God's goodness

- well-pleasing, fruitful, morally correct, proper, convenient.
- appealing and pleasant to the senses, is useful and profitable, is abundant and plentiful, is kind and benevolent, is good in a moral sense as opposed to evil,

bears a general state of well-being or happiness, is the better of two alternatives,

- Baker and Carpenter

“The creation narrative of Genesis I best embodies all these various elements of meaning when the Lord declares each aspect of His handiwork to be ‘good.’”

c/w Psalm 107:39-42

B. Consider the durability of God’s loving goodness

v.1b *“...for his steadfast love endures forever.”*

(Illustration from Green #735)

Publilius Syrus in the first century before Christ wrote: “You can accomplish by kindness what you cannot by force.”

William B. McKinley, President of the United States from 1897 to 1901, was a man who understood that principle. During one of his campaigns, a reporter from an opposition newspaper followed him constantly and just as persistently misrepresented McKinley’s views. Eventually during this campaign, the weather became extremely cold, and even though the reported didn’t have sufficiently warm clothing, he still followed McKinley. One bitter evening, the president-to-be was riding in his closed carriage, and the young reporter sat shivering on the driver’s seat outside. McKinley stopped the carriage and invited the reporter to put on his coat and ride with him inside the warm carriage. The young man, astonished, protested that McKinley knew that he was opposition and that he wasn’t going to stop opposing McKinley during the campaign. McKinley knew that, but he wasn’t out to seek revenge. In the remaining days of the campaign, the reporter continued to oppose McKinley, but never again did he write anything unfair or biased about the future president.

II. THE GRACE OF GOD

v.2 *“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble....”*

A. Grace reconciles the rebel to his Creator

c/w Psalm 106:6-12

c/w Hebrews 9:11-14

- Hymn by Isaac Watts #251

*Nature with open volume stands,
To spread her Maker's praise abroad;
And every labor of his hands
Show something worthy of a God.*

*But in the grace that rescued man
His brightest form of glory shines;
Here, on the cross, 'tis fairest dawn,
In precious blood and crimson lines.*

*Here I behold his inmost heart,
Where truth and mercy strangely join
To pierce his Son with keenest smart,
And make the purchased pleasures mine.*

*O the sweet wonders of that cross,
Where God the Savior loved and died!
Her noblest life my spirit draws
From his dear wounds and bleeding side.*

*I would forever speak his name
In sounds to mortal ears unknown,
With angels join to praise the Lamb,
And worship at his Father's throne.*

B. Grace opens the mouth in praise of his Savior

(Illustration from Tan #7412)

When Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, the American financier, the multi-millionaire died, it was discovered that the year before his death, he had made his will. It consisted of about 10,000 words and contained thirty-seven articles.

But we are left in no doubt as to what Mr. Morgan considered to be the most important duty in his whole life.

He made many transactions – some affecting such large sums of money as to disturb the financial equilibrium of the world - yet there was one transaction that evidently stood out in Mr. Morgan's mind as of supreme importance:

“I commit my soul in the hands of my Savior, full of confidence that, having redeemed me and washed me with His most precious Blood, He will present me faultless before the throne of my Heavenly Father.

“I entreat my children to maintain and defend, at all hazard and at any cost of personal sacrifice, the blessed doctrine of complete Atonement of sins through the Blood of Jesus Christ once offered, and through that alone.”

C. Grace delivers the believer from his soul's troubles

- from *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*, p.100

O LORD GOD,

Thou art my protecting arm,

fortress, refuge, shield, buckler.

Fight for me and my foes must flee;

Uphold me and I cannot fall;

Strengthen me and I stand unmoved, unmoveable;

Equip me and I shall receive no wound;

Stand by me and Satan will depart;

Anoint my lips with a song of salvation

and I shall shout thy victory;

Give me abhorrence of all evil,

as a vile monster that

defies thy law, casts off thy yoke,

defies my nature, spreads misery.

Teach me to look to Jesus on his cross

and so to know sin's loathsomeness in thy sight.

There is no pardon but through thy Son's death,

no cleansing but in his precious blood,

no atonement but his to expiate evil.

Show me the shame, the agony, the bruises of incarnate God,

that I may read boundless guilt in the boundless price;

May I discern the deadly viper in its real malignity,
 tear it with holy indignation from my breast,
 resolutely turn from its every snare,
 refuse to hold polluting dalliance with it.

Blessed Lord Jesus, at thy cross

may I be taught the awful miseries from which I am saved,
 ponder what the word 'lost' implies,
 see the fires of eternal destruction;

Then may I cling more closely to thy broken self,

adhere to thee with firmer faith,
 be devoted to thee with total being,

detest sin as strongly as thy love to me is strong,

And may holiness be the atmosphere in which I live.

III. THE GATHERING OF GOD

v.3 "...and gathered in from the lands, from the east and
 from the west, from the north and from the south."

A. Note the cycle of the rebellious sinner

1. Distress

vv.4, 10, 17, 23

2. Disclosure/Dependence

vv.6a, 13a, 19a, 28a

3. Deliverance

vv.6b, 13b, 19b, 28b

c/w Judges 10:6-16

- Keil and Delitzsch

"Jehovah could no longer look down upon the misery of Israel; He was obliged to help. The change is the purpose of God does not imply any changeableness in the divine nature; it simply concerns the attitude of God towards His people, or the manifestation of the divine love to man. In order to bend the sinner at all, the love of God must withdraw its helping hand and make men feel the consequences of their sin and rebelliousness, that they may forsake their evil ways and turn to the Lord their God. When this end has been attained, the same divine love manifests itself as pitying and helping grace.

Punishments and benefits flow from the love of God, and have for their object the happiness and well-being of men.”

B. Note the categories of crises

1. Hungry, thirsty, and homeless sinner

v.4 “wandered in desert places”

- H. J. Wilmot Buxton [Bib. Illustr., p.394]

“Those who willfully sin against Jesus and the Truth wander through the wilderness of the world out of the right way. They are in a barren and dry land where no water is – no water of life, no water of grace, no water of penitent tears. They are homeless, they find no city to dwell in. Like the Prodigal, they have left their Father’s House, their true home; they have wandered from the true Food, and they are hungry; they have deserted the true Fountain, and they are athirst....They have shut themselves out of God’s House, and it is no longer home to them.”

2. Prisoners confined because of criminal behavior

v.10 “sat in darkness and in the shadow of death”

- Testimony of Harold Morris, *Twice Pardoned*

“To be sure, God uses my prison experience to save my life. At the time of my arrest, I was hell-bent on self-destruction, and there is no doubt that, had I continued in that direction, I would have become a drug addict and an alcoholic. Ultimately, mine would have been a life of crime. I’m convinced that if I had not been arrested, I would have fallen to such a low point physically and mentally that I could not have overcome.

If the verdict had been different- not guilty – I still would never have touched another drop of liquor, having learned my lesson going through the trial. But it took those years in prison – living with the most powerless people in society – to realize there was more to life than what I had.

Prison. It is forever a part of me, for in that decade, I lived a lifetime. I’ve relived that experience a million times. The anger. The hatred. The terror. The utter hopelessness.

Because God is my Redeemer, He has redeemed those awful times, replacing rage and hatred with love for those who hurt.

page 9

Replacing terror with confidence in His sovereignty. Replacing hopelessness with hope.

I could never repay Jesus Christ for what He has done for me. To lose everything, to be reduced in life to nothing, to be among the most powerless people on earth, then suddenly to be given everything! He became the Living Answer to all of my doubts, all of my pains, all of my problems.”

3. Folly leading to distress on all fronts

v.17 “*were fools through their sinful ways*”

- Charles Haddon Spurgeon

“Many sicknesses are the direct result of foolish acts. Thoughtless and lustful men by drunkenness, gluttony, and the indulgence of their passions fill their bodies with diseases of the worst kind. Sin is at the bottom of all sorrow, but some sorrows are the immediate results of wickedness: men by a course of transgression afflict themselves and are fools for their pains. Worse still, even when they are in affliction they are fools still; and if they were brayed in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet would not their folly depart from them. From one transgression they go on to many iniquities, and while under the rod they add sin to sin. Alas, even the Lord’s own people sometimes play the fool in this sad manner.”

4. Mariners doing commerce on the high seas

v.23 “*went down to the sea in ships*”

- a. They saw God’s wonders of the deep
- b. They felt God’s power in the rolling ocean
- c. They came to grips with their own helplessness
- d. They recognized God’s hand in calming the seas

Conclusion: (Illustration from *2,200 Quotations*, Spurgeon, p.141-142)

“It is a good thing to praise Christ in the presence of his friends. It is sometimes a better thing to extol him in the presence of his enemies. It is a great thing to praise Jesus Christ

*by day, but there is no music sweeter than the nightingale's,
and she praises God by night. It is well to praise the Lord for
his mercy when you are in health, but make sure that you do it
when you are sick, for then your praise is more likely to be
genuine. When you are deep down in sorrow, do not rob God of
the gratitude that is due to him. Never stint him of his revenue
of praise whatever else goes short."*

Premise: Redeemed sinners have the most confident voice