

Psalm 33
June 19, 2011
Lynchburg, Virginia

EXHORDIUM

The world is being saved by the Lord Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of the Father in full authority over Heaven and Earth. We take great hope and rest in this truth and we look for God to vindicate His name and His people in the Earth. But we also know that enemies of Christ and of God's people are still in the world. We know that our own sins rise up against us. We know that there is great trouble in the midst of the great good that God is working in the world.

So, what do we do? Do we shrug our shoulders at the sin and put on happy face? Do we wring our hands in fear of what the enemies of God will do? We do neither of these things. We are Christians. We acknowledge all of the trouble. We weep with those who weep. But we do so not as those without hope but as those who put their trust in God.

We may not be able to say why any particular event is good but we, as Christians, can say that it is good. Or, at the least, that our God works it for good. We need to learn to put our trust in Him explicitly knowing that He is good and that He is the wise governor of the world.

You might protest at the simplicity of this word. How can we simply put our trust in God? What about all the trouble in the world? What about sin? What about oppression? What about death?

I acknowledge all of that. And yet, I serve a good God, who not only created all things good but governs all things to a good outcome, even all the sin and trouble in the world. And I put to you that there really is no other option. Either God is good and His governance of the world is good, or He is bad and His governance of the world is bad. Or, perhaps a third option, He is not the God He says He is. He is impotent and unable to do anything about the trouble in the world.

So, while I cannot adequately explain exactly what God is doing, I can know Him and that will enable me to have explicit trust in His methods. Today is Father's day. Children can understand this truth. They may not agree with everything their father does, especially if they are teenagers and

are itching for a little independence. But if they are faithful children and the father is a good father, they have learned to wait upon and trust in their father. We must learn to wait upon our Father in the same faithful way.

EXEGESIS

Psalm 33:1-17 Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright. 2 Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. 3 Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.

Praise is not an option. David exhorts us again and again to be joyful, rejoicing and praising the Lord. This is very important for us to grasp. We tend to think of praise as something that is a spontaneous response to good things. We see a beautiful sunset and we praise God for His creation. There is nothing wrong with that at all and we ought to do it often. We should be looking at the world with eyes of wonder and responding to our wonderful God in a godly way.

But the Psalmist here is not really giving us an option. He is telling us to rejoice and praise the Lord. This praise is something that adorns us in a beautiful way. On the inverse, a failure to rejoice in praises to God makes us ugly. Praise looks good on a saint but complaints look like warts on a beauty queen. Completely incongruous.

This all fits together in this Psalm as we begin to look at the sovereign nature of our God. He has created the world and He directly governs it for His own glory. If this is true, and it is, then we should be constantly seeking to praise God for what He has done, what He is doing and what He will do. Many times, this will not be our natural response. We may recoil as God's mighty power is made known in tornado and tsunami and hurricane. We may shrink from praise as we enter into our own trials, struggles and failures. At those times, we often question, rather than acknowledge that God is in control of all things. This fact does not make terrible things good. There is much suffering, sin and death in the world. But our life in the recreation recognizes that death and sin are enemies that still must be dealt a final blow. We know that will come in the Resurrection and so we can face those enemies now, rejoicing that God will one day deal with them once and for all.

So, a Christian, looking at the world in the right way, is able to praise God for the good and for the bad. We acknowledge that He is working all things after the secret counsel of His will to accomplish what He has already revealed to us, that the world, through Christ, will be saved.

We are to rejoice in such a way that it produces music. Music is inherently beautiful and beauty comes in many forms. Much of the world that we see needs the beautiful music of sadness but there is also intense joy, exhilaration, pleading, thanksgiving, and many more thoughts and feelings to be expressed. We see all of this in the Psalms. We sing to God asking Him to provide for our needs, deliver us from evil, and bring us to the place of rest.

4 For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth. 5 He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

This is a clear acknowledgement of God's sovereignty. What God says and does is right. We must grasp this. We teach the children that God's Providence is whatsoever comes to pass. Well, some things that come to pass are very difficult to deal with. But where should we start as we deal with these things? Certainly in this verse. God's works are done in truth and righteousness. He loves uprightness and those who do right and He also judges wickedness. God's favor to those who serve Him and His judgment upon those who resist and reject Him both reveal the goodness of the Lord. God's goodness is not all blessing. Even among the saints, God brings chastisement and discipline upon those that He loves. This shows that He is a good Father who dearly and actively loves His children. His discipline draws us to Him.

6 By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. 7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.

A common theme in the Scriptures in establishing God's authority in the Earth is the fact that He created all things. Biblical authors do not conclude that God created all things and then left the rest up to the free will of man. On the contrary, their arguments assert in the strongest fashion that

since God is the creator of all things, it follows necessarily that He is also the governor of all things. If you understand that God is both all-good and all-powerful, then He must govern all things. Otherwise, His goodness would be revealed and there would be competing powers in God's universe. But the fact is that nothing occurs outside the direct oversight of an all-seeing, all-wise, all-good, all-powerful God.

God made the heavenly bodies, the planets, and all the hosts, the stars. He did this by simply speaking them into existence. He has commanded all of the waters to be where they are. He can lay them up in heaps or cause them to stay in their respective places. This was so in the beginning and it remains ever so.

8 Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. 9 For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

The Psalmist makes it clear that God continues to control the environment. Let all the Earth fear Him. If God could so easily create the world with just a word, then we ought to fear what He can do at any moment. We should stand in awe of His power. We often use the word awesome for things that really aren't. Awesome new shoes, dude. But the shoes do not really inspire awe. But the sun does. And the moon. And the fact that God simply called to the light and it came to be. That kind of power is truly awesome. We would do well to think about what inspires us. Too often we are inspired far too easily and it keeps us from seeing and being inspired by that which truly is awesome. Lightning? Awesome. A Tornado? Awesome. A baby being born? Awesome. And if we think in terms of God's care and control of the world, then our awe will resound in praise and redound to the glory of God.

10 The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. 11 The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

Folks, when are we going to believe what God has said and done? God brings the counsel of the heathen to nought. God made the heavens and the earth and you get all riled up by the talking heads on the radio. We

worry about what all the folks in Richmond or Washington are doing and act as if God is not in control of it all. But the fact of the matter, He is in control and He is putting all the wicked counsel to nought. But what does this mean for us? We do not see all the godly men in the places of power and we get depressed. Well, you just need to get over it. God does not play by our rules.

I am a patriot as much as anyone and I love my country. I hate those who would destroy my country, especially those who do so from the inside as they stake out their ground against God's Word, God's people and God's Church. They are very real enemies and enemies much more dangerous than external threats from the middle east. You see, our internal enemies can do two things.

First, by rejecting the Word of God, they reject the practical wisdom that brings blessing. We are seeing the foolishness of debt living magnified a trillion times at the federal level. We are seeing the foolishness of removing godly wisdom from our schools. And we are seeing God pay us back for letting, even asking our federal government to care for us as a savior. It is nothing less than idolatry and many in the government are more than happy to play the role of God. But the God of the Bible is a jealous God.

So, we see the second danger of the enemies within. They provoke God. And we are seeing, if not the outright judgment of God on us, at the very least, His strong hand of chastisement. I hope it is chastisement and not judgment but only time will tell.

God's counsel stands forever. What He says comes to pass. He has promised blessing for obedience, for individuals as well as nations. He has promised curses for disobedience, for individuals as well as nations. It is true that God is long-suffering. He is patient, even with nations, but His patience eventually ends. When there is stubborn rebellion and a refusal to submit to His Word and His Christ, He will bring judgment.

What is the way out?

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord: and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. 13 The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. 14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. 15 He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.

The answer is to turn to the Lord. In this Old Testament era, the nation specifically being referred to here was the nation of Israel. David was the chosen King, Israel was the chosen nation and Jerusalem was the chosen city. But even in the Old Testament, God's blessings rested upon those who submitted to His will. The blessing to Israel as the chosen was not automatic. By disobedience, they were able to cast off the blessing and bring on the cursing. But God had an even greater plan. Through the line of David, God would bring a way to bring blessing not just to Israel but to the whole world. Any nation whose God is the God of the Bible, will be blessed. This blessing is not nations, so it is not simply talking about the blessing of heaven. Nations that serve God will receive tangible earthly blessings.

This verse gives us some inclination about the promised blessing to the Gentile nations. God does not simply look at Israel. He looks upon all the inhabitants of the Earth. He gives them hearts of flesh and He considers their works, whether they will serve Him or not.

16 There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. 17 An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.

We should not fear the enemies of Christ for God protects His people and His own name. And no king, ruler, politician, governor or president is safe from God. A president cannot save himself from his enemies by the power of his armies. We need just such a warning. No doubt, we are the strongest military force in the history of the world. But if God is against us, no strength of force will be able to save us from His wrath.

Man is not delivered by much strength but by the strength of the Lord. This is dangerous because it can look like an optical illusion. What has saved us for the last 60 years or so? Is it not our American ingenuity, our strong army, our tremendous Protestant work ethic? No, it is completely the grace of God. He moves nations, raises up presidents, rulers and kings and He dispenses with them at His will. As we look at the world, we seem to be the power brokers worldwide who control all things. If we understood this at all, we would see that it is because God has raised the United States to this great strength. But it would not take too much to knock us back into obscurity.

Imagine a scenario in which multiple tornadoes killing thousands were followed by a horrendous hurricane season that devastated several southern coastal cities. Imagine also the long expected major earthquake in California that triggers a large Tsunami. Given recent events these things are not difficult to imagine. Imagine that these multiple natural disasters occur the year after we hit the twelfth month of hyperinflation due to the fact that we could no longer pay off our mountain of national debt. Furthermore, imagine a situation in which several states refused to participate in the Federal governments forced mandates. None of this is far-fetched, right? Do you think this could bring the United States to her knees and force her off the forefront of the world scene? God could do all of this in an instant and it would not require any foreign invader. However, if the United States was decimated in this manner, a foreign invader, or at least multiple serious and ongoing domestic concerns would no doubt plague us.

Why do I paint such a bleak picture? It is not because I am hoping that it will come or even that I am expecting it to. I am by nature a pretty intense optimist. I am still hopeful that our nation will come to our senses, repent of our sins, take up the Word of God, and have our land healed. But I am enough of a Christian and Bible student to know that if we do not do so, at some point, we are going to have to deal with God, and that will not be a pleasant experience. I also acknowledge that as God takes dominion over the Earth, He will use various means to do so. Just as He humbled His own chosen people, cutting them out of the covenant so that Gentiles could be grafted in, He can remove His blessing on a great nation for a while in order to bring her to her knees of repentance.

A horse is a vain thing for safety, as are tanks, armies, soldiers, fenced borders, and even atomic bombs. God is our refuge and strength.

18 Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; 19 To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. 20 Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield. 21 For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.

God looks for those that fear Him and hope in His mercy. He desires to bless them, delivering them from death, feeding them in famine.

Where is your hope? In Washington. False hope. In Richmond? False hope.

Hope in Yahweh and you will not be disappointed. And we don't just hope with our head, trying to figure out what God is up to and how we fit into His plans. Our hope comes from our soul, the inner part of us, our entire being. We wait on God as Christians, fully convinced that our waiting is not in vain.

God's Holy Name- He is Yahweh, the God who delivers. He is Jesus, the God who Saves. He is the Holy Spirit, the God who abides, teaches, leads and rescues. Do you know God by His name? He has a good name and does not disappoint.

EXHORTATION

22 Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

We call upon God's mercy. This is more than just grace. God's grace is sufficient for us. He blesses us according to His own desire. His grace is gift. But we also look to God's mercy. That is, we know that we do not deserve His grace. In fact, we have warranted chastisement and maybe even judgment for our sins. Certainly, our nation deserves God's judgment. But David calls out to God for mercy. Mercy is God looking at us in pity and responding with blessing. He looks on us with His favor because we have acknowledged that our hope is only in Him.