

Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous
Psalm 34:19-20 (Psalm 33:20-21 in LXX)
Communion Message of 9/18/2022

- I. **This Message is Based on Two Verses of Psalm 34 (designated Psalm 33 in the LXX)**
- a. Peter quotes from this psalm in **1 Peter 3:10-12**.
- i. The main focus of Peter's letter is Christian suffering. It discusses the suffering of Christ and the sufferings that many Christians were going through at that time.
 - ii. Many today would summarize the Christian faith with something like the following:
 - iii. **Proposed Summary of the Faith:** "Christ suffered and died for us, so that we don't have to."
1. **Question:** Is the above statement true or false? Or would you say that it is partly true?
 2. Consider how Peter might answer that question., in light of some of the statements he makes in **1 Peter**:
 - a. "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit...." (**1 Peter 3:18**, NKJV)
 - i. This statement might fit with the proposed statement of faith above.
 - b. "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:" (**1 Peter 2:21**, NKJV)
 - i. It seems that this statement would NOT fit with the proposed statement of faith. Here, it clearly states that we are expected to suffer, as well! Consider also the following statements by Peter.
 - c. "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin...." (**1 Peter 4:1**, NKJV)
 - d. "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to

the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (**1 Peter 4:12-13**, NKJV)

- e. "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you." (**1 Peter 5:10**, NKJV)
3. Instead of "Christ suffered for us so that we don't have to", the message Peter preached was, "Christ suffered for us to redeem us, but also to provide us an example of how we are expected to suffer for righteousness sake".
- a. Therefore, if we are following him, we should expect to face (even more) suffering in this life.
 - i. Peter describes various ways we die to sin (involving a degree of suffering) including specifics for husbands, wives, servants, those facing persecution, etc.
 - b. The idea that the righteous will suffer, and that the Righteous One (the Christ) would suffer more than anyone, is throughout the Scriptures.
- b. Read **Psalm 34** (**Psalm 33** in the LXX).
- i. Re-read Psalm **34:19-20** (designated **Psalm 33:20-21** in the LXX), the primary focus of today's lesson.
 - ii. Things we learn from David in this psalm include the following:
 - 1. David explains what it means to be living a righteous, God-fearing life:
 - a. Keeping one's tongue from evil and lips from deceit.
 - b. Shunning evil.
 - c. Doing good.
 - d. Seeking and pursuing peace.
 - 2. Clearly, there were people that David, speaking through the Holy Spirit, considered righteous prior to the time of Jesus. Consider **Psalm 34:17** (**Psalm 33:18** in the LXX).

- a. Noah is called righteous in **Genesis 6:9**. James cites Elijah as an example of the effective prayer of a righteous man, in **James 5:16-18**. Peter calls Lot a righteous man, in **2 Peter 2:7-8**.
 - i. In these contexts, the term 'righteous' is applied to several people who lived prior to the time of Jesus' ministry in Scripture. Note that it does not mean 'sinless'; nor does it imply that the person is saved apart from the blood Christ.
 - b. This is the same David who also was the author of **Psalm 14** (designated **Psalm 13** in LXX), where it says, "There is none righteous, no, not one". That statement was made famous by Paul's quoting it in **Romans 3:10**.
 - c. Also, based on what Jesus said in **Matthew 23:35**, referring to all the righteous men who shed their blood in the past, from "Abel to Zechariah".
 - i. **Question:** What about the popular hymns we sing in church that include statements like, "Faultless I stand before the throne, dressed in His righteousness alone"? Are those lines we sing consistent with how the term 'righteousness' is used in Scripture?
3. He offers encouragement to the righteous.
- a. An angel of the Lord will encamp around them, to guard and protect them.
 - i. Angels are warriors who fight on the spiritual battlefield as we see, for example, in the lives of Daniel and Jesus.
 1. Daniel: in **Daniel 3:28** (**3:95** in LXX), **Daniel 6:22-23** and **Daniel 10:12-14**.
 2. Jesus: in **Matthew 4:11** and **Luke 22:41-43**.
 - b. The Lord will hear their prayers.
 - c. It will go well for them in the end.
 - d. **HOWEVER**, they will face *many afflictions* and trials in this life!
 - i. Many wonder if something is 'wrong' if they face great trials after becoming Christians. However, David says that the righteous should expect to see many afflictions.

- ii. **Question:** What about that angel encamped around the righteous? Is he sleeping or distracted? If we are being protected by angels, why are we facing MANY afflictions?
- iii. YET “none of their bones will be broken”.
 - 1. It strikes me as God placing a limit on the suffering they will go through.
 - 2. Also, a prophecy about Jesus on the cross.
- c. Consider whether this statement by David, regarding the righteous facing an extra measure of suffering in this life, is true.
 - i. Think of the most righteous men in Scripture. Each faced suffering, and their faith was put to the test.
 - 1. Abel: murdered by his brother but did nothing wrong.
 - 2. Noah:
 - a. Preacher of righteousness.
 - b. However, no one listened nor took his message seriously over many years.
 - 3. Job:
 - a. He is described as a blameless and upright man who feared God and shunned evil.
 - b. However, he is put to the ultimate test in losing his property, his children and even his good health. Then he is criticized and challenged by his friends.
 - 4. Abraham:
 - a. Called to sacrifice his son Isaac on the mountain; “now I know that you fear God...”
 - 5. Lot:
 - a. Peter said he was a righteous man who was tormented in his righteous soul by the ungodly lives around him in Sodom.
 - 6. Jacob:
 - a. He became righteous later on in life.

- b. He suffered for 20 years under his deceitful uncle, Laban. He was refined through his suffering.

7. Joseph:

- a. He did nothing wrong, yet was rejected and sold into slavery by his brothers.
- b. He was kept in prison for over 2 years based on false charges.

8. Moses:

- a. He was repeatedly rejected by his people, threatened by Pharaoh, and faced armed enemies in battle.

9. David: a man after God's own heart early in life.

- a. He was hunted down by the king, Saul, early in his life. (That is the backdrop for his writing **Psalm 33/34.**)

10. Daniel and his three friends:

- a. Daniel was cast into the lion's den, and his three friends were cast into the fiery furnace, for doing what was righteous (praying to the Lord and refusing to bow down to an idol).

11. Jesus:

- a. "...who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet *He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.* And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him...." (**Hebrews 5:7-9**, NKJV)
 - i. Jesus was heard by His Father because of His godly fear.
 - ii. He was *made perfect* through suffering.
 - 1. Here the term 'perfect' means '*complete*'; it does not mean flawless (which He always was).
 - iii. **Question:** If Jesus had to be perfected through suffering, what do you think we should expect to see in our own lives as we follow Christ?

- d. All those heroes of faith suffered, but endured to the end. They provide an example for us, along with our ultimate example: Jesus.
 - 1. Read **Hebrews 11:35-12:3**.
 - 2. The heroes of faith in the past suffered much affliction.
 - 3. Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith endured the cross.
 - a. Let us consider him and his suffering, as we persevere in the face of suffering. (This is perhaps the most significant theme in Hebrews.)
- e. If we are living for righteousness, we should expect to be afflicted.
 - i. “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” (**John 15:20**, NKJV)
 - ii. “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” (**Mark 13:13**, NKJV)
 - iii. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” (**1 Corinthians 15:19**, NKJV)
 - 1. The blessings we look forward to are in the next life, not in this one!
 - iv. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” (**Romans 12:1**, NKJV)

II. An Important Prophecy about Jesus

- a. Read **Psalms 34:20** (designated **Psalms 33:21** in the LXX).
 - i. The Lord has set limits on the extent of the affliction that the righteous will face in this life. This is expressed by the statement that none of their bones will be broken (while they may have to endure other types of physical affliction).
 - ii. This reminds me of the story of **Job**, where Satan is allowed to afflict the righteous man Job, yet there are limits set by God on the extent of that affliction.
 - iii. God will provide some level of protection for his righteous ones (even if they should have to face martyrdom).
- b. Read **John 19:25-37**.

- i. The fact that the bones of the other two men were broken but Jesus' were not was in fulfillment of a prophecy made by David about 1,000 years earlier, in **Psalm 33/34**.
 1. This also was foreshadowed by the rules for the Passover Lamb in **Exodus 12** and **Numbers 9**.
 - a. Christ is our Passover Lamb, as Paul explained in **1 Corinthians 5:7**, and as Peter alluded to in **1 Peter 1:19**.
 2. This also (I believe) was foreshadowed by the **Daniel 6** story, where Daniel comes out of the pit of death unscathed. This is in contrast to the wicked, who are cast into the same pit, whose bones are broken by the lions even before they reach the bottom of the pit.

III. Things to Reflect On

- a. The righteous generally have had to endure great difficulties in their lives.
 - i. David explained it in **Psalm 34**. He experienced it in his own life, saw it in the lives of others, and laid down an eternal principle that Peter said still applies to us.
 - ii. Don't be surprised. However, check yourself to see WHY you are suffering, whether it is because of unrighteous things we have done, or if it was due to righteousness. (**1 Peter 4:12-16**)
- b. If we are living righteous lives, God will hear our prayers. He will protect us with angels and limit the damage we will face. It will not be more than we can handle.
- c. Jesus understands suffering, can relate to what we are facing, and can help us through it. Suffering perfected him (made him complete), it perfected the faith of others like Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. If we persevere, our faith also will be refined like gold in the fire.
- d. Jesus set the example for us to follow regarding living righteously in the face of suffering. If we died with Him, we will live with Him, with blessings to come in the end.
- e. As we reflect on what Jesus suffered on the cross in giving up his life for us, let us not only appreciate what he did for us, but also commit ourselves to following his example.