

MY GOD, THE ROCK OF MY REFUGE

Psalm 94: 1-23 and Psalm 71: 7 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Fyodor Dostoyevsky wisely said, “There is a battle between heaven and hell, and that battleground is in the hearts of man.” And in that battleground, few of us desire to quickly take responsibility for own sin. I read a story this week about a Dad who came home to find his four sons fighting. He turned to the eldest who seemed the angriest, and asked, “Son, “Who started this?” His eldest son quickly replied, “Well, it all started when Harold hit me back.” This text of Psalm 94: 8-11 seems to expose all of us at times as God speaks through the psalmist saying, “Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see? He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge—the LORD—knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath.”

Have you wondered how God views the growing wickedness today, that we are experiencing in America? Do any of you wonder when God is going to say to America, “Your time is up!” Have you prayed, “God, render Your due recompense to the proud. Stop the afflicting of Your heritage—Your people? Do you wonder today how many people across our great nation are saying with the psalmist in Psalm 94: 7, “The Lord does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive.”

Is God attempting to call our nation back to Himself, the Rock of Ages, the Rock of our Refuge? What were the headlines in Heaven this morning, related to our country? How long will we continue as a nation to enjoy the freedom we have to freely preach and teach the Gospel? I rejoice at the boldness God is giving many of His servants in America to stand in the face of our moral free-fall. Thank God for people who are willing in our day to take a stand, at great risk at times, and often, at a high cost. I’m sure you all know what I know, that we are in a precarious place as a nation, unless we soon experience a national revival. If we are to experience a true national revival, where does revival start? Revival always starts in the hearts of God’s people, His saints—you and me. God first must thoroughly purge our floor spiritually. From this text, God has directed me to share with us this morning three requirements He places on us if we are to genuinely seek revival in our own lives, first for ourselves, and then for our family, then for our local church and finally for our nation. What are these three requirements God gives us in Psalm 94?

WE MUST PASSIONATELY RETURN TO THE LORD, OUR CREATOR.

(I.) Notice Psalm 94: 1-9. “O LORD, God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shine forth! Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve! O LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult? They pour out their arrogant words; all the evildoers boast. They crush Your people, O LORD, and

afflict your heritage. They kill the widow and the sojourner, and murder the fatherless; and they say, “The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive. “Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?”

Sometimes we as evangelical believers minimize God being Creator and we minimize His creation. We want to stick only to evangelism or discipleship. Truthfully, unless we are willing to speak up for God as our Creator, the planter of the ear and the former of the eye, how can we speak of God as our Redeemer? Here in our text, hear it again in Psalm 94: 8,9, the psalmist declares, “Pay heed, you senseless among the people; and when will you understand, stupid ones? He who planted the ear, does He not hear? He who formed the eye, does He not see?” Thousands of years ago, God was saying to mankind, “Do you think I planted the ear in Adam, and yet I cannot hear your foolishness as you hate me and deny my existence and my place as the Creator of the world? Do you think I formed the eye, and yet I as God cannot see what you are doing, trying to use “science so called” to prove I do not exist and to prove that your eyes evolved rather than were created? How long do you think I will let you deny that I am Creator?”

Paul in his theological treatise, the epistle of Romans in Romans 1: 25 declared, “For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” Our Ear-Planter and Eye-Maker knows that we know deep inside that every automobile presupposes an automaker. Every watch presupposes a watchmaker. Solomon said in Proverbs 20: 12, “The hearing ear and the seeing eye, The Lord has made both of them.” Even the most basic of all scientific laws, the law of cause and effect (no effect greater than its cause) becomes utmost nonsense if our world is the product of chaos, evolving from chance. David in Psalm 14: 1 concluded, “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” All the way from the single celled amoebae to our amazing human body, every creature bears the impress of intricate planning and construction by our Creator. It takes audacious human rebellion and absurd humanistic reasoning to believe that complex structures of human life evolved by random mutation and natural selection. There is no scientific evidence for vertical evolution from one kind or species to another. The only ultimate reason leaders of universities believe in evolution is because they are blinded by their frantic desire to escape the necessity of believing in God. As Paul stated it in Romans 1: 22, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.” Psalm 94 declares that “the ear did not evolve; it was planted. The eye did not happen by chance; it was formed.” Every wise man, woman, boy or girl must say with the psalmist in Psalm 139:14, “I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; My soul knows it very well.”

As the psalmist in Psalm 94: 1-3 is saying, “God of judgment and vengeance, shine forth; repay the proud in heart and words what they have coming to them. How long will you put up with those who oppose You as they exult in the platform they have in universities across our land to denounce You as Creator—and to get a platform in thousands of churches across the land to play down Your role as Creator?” The psalmist goes on to say in Psalm 94: 4-7, “Opposing forces are pouring out their opposition to You in arrogance and boasting. They are attempting to crush the righteous and all those who stand for Your truth. They kill the widow and the stranger and murder the orphans, the fatherless and say in the same breath, “God doesn’t see. He doesn’t have a clue.”

But notice what God thinks of those who deny His role as Creator in verses 8-9. God is saying in essence, “Senseless, stupid ones, fools, how dull can you be, to claim to be educated and able to teach across the land, when you are dull, the dullest of all people? How can you claim to be wise and full of educational degrees when your denial of Me as Creator turns you into being fools? I see you not as wise, God says. I see you and hear you for who you really are—the dullest of fools. Beloved, this issue of Creation needs to be picked up on all our radar. God is seeking to prepare us to reign with Him eternally. May God forgive us for minimizing this issue of Him being our Creator.

When John was called up into heaven from his banishment on the Isle of Patmos, (Revelation 4: 1) he was soon to find out what would happen in the future. He saw the four living creatures, each of them having six wings, full of eyes around and within. Day and night they do not cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is, and who is to come.” Then he saw the 24 elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne to worship Him who lives forever and ever. Most theologians and pastors, including your pastor believe these elders personify us, the Bride of Christ. Whoever they are, and I believe they represent us, they will cast down their crowns before the throne, Revelation 4: 11, saying, “Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will, they existed, and were created.” Beloved, if this is the worship of God around the throne, and it is; oh how we need to passionately return to the Lord, our Creator. Where are we in our thinking on God as our Creator? Are we passionately declaring the truth of God as our Creator or do we need to passionately return? Only then can we be revived and only then can revival return to God’s church and return to our nation. Secondly,

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CHASTENER. Look with me to Psalm 94: 10-13. “He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge—the LORD—knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath. Blessed is the man whom You

discipline, O LORD, and whom You teach out of Your law, to give him rest from days of trouble, until a pit is dug for the wicked.” We believers across our land almost abhor the idea of any need for chastening, even for children, and we abhor it more for teenagers, and for adults, we try to deny it often. God’s church today, not only hedges on God being our Creator, but we like to think we can live above God needing to be our Chastener. **Did you know that an un-chastened believer is an impossibility?** (Hebrews 12: 6) God chastens every son or daughter whom He receives. Listen again to Psalm 94: 10-13. “He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge—the LORD—knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath. Blessed is the man whom You discipline, O LORD, and whom You teach out of Your law, to give him rest from days of trouble, until a pit is dug for the wicked.” God uses discipline to give us all rest. We all know well the words of Hebrews 12: 6-8, “For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.”

I fear for the souls of those professing believers who speak and act as if they live and act without restraint because they are living in the age of grace. A chastened heart is proof of our son-ship and the Father’s love for us. The mark of the last days is no accountability and no accepting of chastening. Paul wrote the Romans in Romans 6: 1, 2, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” The mark of an Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 3: 1-5 that “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.” One word could wrap itself around last days behavior. It would be unaccountable or un-chastened. What will it take to bring us back to revival as individuals, as families, and as believers? What will it take to lead us to welcome God’s discipline, to desire the rod of discipline or chastening, to kiss the rod, and to heed the rod of God as the word of God enjoins us—telling us in Proverbs 12: 1, “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.” I call us as God’s children to passionately return to the Lord, our Chastener. Any professing believer who feels no restraint of the Spirit is likely only a professing believer, and not a true believer. Freedom in the Spirit requires that each of us, like a race horse, accept the bit of God’s chastening.

Beloved, do you want to learn by God's chastening hand? Do you accept His chastening hand by whatever means He ordains? Do you willingly receive the Lord's chastening hand when you go astray? Sometimes God uses circumstances, sometimes he uses other people, our loved ones, our parents, our spouse, our children, our finances, our health, and He even uses tragedies to discipline us. David, the psalmist, learned the hard way how foolish it was to deny God as his Chastener, to live without accountability. It is often, not until a man or woman falls into open sin, that we are willing to speak of God's chastening. God rebukes this violence to His character—this rejection of His plan to be our Chastener. He ordains His plan of chastening in each of our lives. Just as God is the Creator, He is the Chastener of His children. Weeetrettee must affirm His character and not balk at His plan. If we will not passionately return to God as our Chastener, who designs His best plan of chastening for each of us, we will never know true revival. Lastly,

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ROCK OF OUR REFUGE. The psalmist cries out in Psalm 94: 14-23, "For the LORD will not forsake His people; He will not abandon His heritage; for justice will return to the righteous, and all the upright in heart will follow it. Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against evildoers? If the LORD had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence. When I thought, "My foot slips," Your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up. When the cares of my heart are many, Your consolations cheer my soul. Can wicked rulers be allied with You, those who frame injustice by statute? They band together against the life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death. But the LORD has become my stronghold, and my God, the rock of my refuge. He will bring back on them their iniquity and wipe them out for their wickedness; the LORD our God will wipe them out." So I ask you with the psalmist, "Who is it who stands with us in our battles against the enemy? Who rises up to help us? Is it not the Lord, the Rock of our Refuge. To understand this Hebrew word rock, we need to know what it means and where it first appears in the Word of God. The Hebrew word "Rock" occurs 119 times in the Old Testament. The first occurrence of this word "Rock" is in Exodus 17: 6. The Hebrew word is **tsur**. It literally means cliff or rock wall. On the Exodus, the Israelites found themselves often in a barren wilderness without food or water. God supplied manna for 40 years but never forget that 3 million Israelites needed tons of water to drink, not to mention all their sheep and cattle and beasts of burden. God provided them with daily water for 40 years. Where do you find water in a barren wilderness enough to feed 3 million people and all their animals? Paul wrote this in I Corinthians 10: 1-4, "Our fathers...all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ."

When God makes a cleft in the rock for us, it is always an act of His pure grace. It's not only that He gives us the water of His Word as well as physical water to drink. No, our Lord who is our Creator and Chastener is our Cleft Rock of our Refuge. The Israelites, even after God created manna for them, were ready to stone God's spokesman, their leader, Moses. Exodus 17: 4 tells the story. The complaint they had was really against God. God called Moses to smite the cliff or the rock, the **tsur** at Horeb. When that rock was smitten, a picture of Jesus's side being riven for us—to give us living water, what happened? A great spring of water burst forth, Exodus 17: 6. Moses smote the rock with the same rod of God he used to smite the Nile River before Pharaoh to turn the water to blood. Isaiah 53: 4 declares that Christ had to be smitten of God for us, because of our sins before He could fulfill His promise in John 7: 37 which declares, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." Once our great Rock was smitten and cleft for us, His water of everlasting life was made available freely to all who will drink. The very last invitation of the Bible is in Rev. 22: 17, "And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Jesus said to the woman at the well, "Whosoever drinks of this living water will never thirst again." (John 4: 14) The psalmist says we would have lived in the land of silence without our cleft Rock of our Refuge. Our feet would have slipped, v. 18, if the steadfast love of the Lord from the Cleft Rock of our Refuge would not have held us up. The cares of our souls would have ruined us, unless our Cleft Rock would have cheered on our souls. The evil plans around us, v. 20-21 would have ganged up on us and condemned us to death if Jesus were not the Cleft Rock of our Refuge, v. 22, if God would not have vindicated us and wiped out the enemy, v. 23.

The prophet Jeremiah in Jer. 2: 13 spoke for God quoting him regarding revival, indicting His nation with committing two evils. "They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, to hew out for themselves, to cleave out for themselves, cisterns, broken or cleft cisterns that hold no water." Have we as believers done the same? Have we run from the Cleft Rock rather than to the Cleft Rock to bury our faces in His cool clear living water? Have we forsaken our hiding place in the our Cleft Rock? Can we say with the psalmist in Psalm 94: 22—"But the Lord has become my stronghold, and my God, the Rock of my refuge!"? Do we need to run to our Creator, our Chastener, and to our Cleft Rock of our refuge? This morning, I am opening up the altar for us as believers to return to our Creator, our Chastener, and our Cleft Rock of our Refuge. If God is calling you, would you come now?