

Introduction: having finished Luke I am as yet unsettled about direction of ministry of the Word; in praying and asking the Lord to give direction, Psalm 34:19 became a burden. This text speaks of the afflictions of the righteous.

- Perhaps some of this came as a result of my own feeling of certain burdens as a pastor: the reality of the possible loss of 5-7 families in the near future as a church. The news that one from among us has gone again into the world. E-mail requests to pray for marriages that have, despite hours and hours of counseling, have not significantly changed. Other situations that, despite direction and counsel given, people still limping along and struggling rather than thriving and growing.
- Probably the biggest factors is the result of last week’s ministries on prayer. I confess that it is too easy for me to be content in the fact that I am in good health, as well as my family. I have food on the table every day, and nice place to live, plenty of entertainment and activities, a regular paycheck. But those ministries brought to me the recognition of failure to pray as I should for the people of God here with faith, fervency, holy argument, and perseverance. So in seeking to remedy this, it caused me to feel more deeply your afflictions.
- The afflictions of difficult marriages, physical problems, death of children, reality of age, broken relationships, persecution or distancing of family for Christ, need for employment, stresses and difficulties within your calling, problems with children (young and grown), burden for the lost, longing for marriage and family. Then there are the news reports that I have tried to read more deeply. Famine, abortion, erosion of marriage, injustice, crime.
- Galatians 6:2 calls us to “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” As we do so, it is indeed a burden, and the afflictions of others push out of our comfort zone of ease and pleasure if we are not already pushed out by our own afflictions. So in thinking about this, this text came to my mind early Friday morning:
- **Many are the afflictions of the righteous.** The word afflictions here is the Hebrew word “raah.” It is a very flexible term in the Old Testament, taking on a wide variety of meanings. It could be translated evil, bad, what is unpleasant, what makes unhappy, injury, wrong, calamity, distress, what brings about misery and trouble. It is everything that makes living in a fallen world difficult. We should not then be surprised
- Notice the text says that these afflictions are “many.” This word can mean much, great, abounding, numerous, abundant, or even strong.
- Notice the particular objects of this affliction. It is the “righteous.” Now the Psalmist isn’t saying that only the righteous suffer such things. Job 14:1 says of those who are born of woman (everyone) that his days are few and full of trouble. Ecclesiastes 2:23 says that man’s days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome. Just as there is a kind of indiscriminate demonstration of God’s love in giving good things to both the just and the unjust, so there is an indiscriminate kind of result from sin and living in a fallen world. Take all of the problems I mentioned early, and except for being persecuted for Christ’s sake, there is no difference. Consider the fires in California, the school shooting in Finland (8 dead)
- However the text is making a point that there is a difference in the ultimate outcome. There is a wonderful promise: **But the LORD delivers him out of them all.** He does not keep them from happening, but the Psalmist embraces the reality that there will be deliverance.
- Before we look at the promise of deliverance more closely, I want first to seek to answer the question “who are the righteous?” Seeing this promise is only for them, then who are they, how are they described?

I. WHO ARE THE RIGHTEOUS?

- Before looking into the Psalm for their description, let me mention what we will not find here, or anywhere else in Scripture. That is, that the righteous are those who are sinlessly perfect. I am presently reading through 1 Samuel, and assuming that David is the author of this Psalm as the title informs us, and that he includes himself among the righteous, then if anything can be seen it is that David was not without sin, sometimes very serious sin.

A. THE RIGHTEOUS IS A WORSHIPPER

- v.1 Blesses, praises, boasts in the Lord; vv.7, 9, 11 fear God – so the righteous person is one who is centered on God.
- The righteous also earnestly wants others to worship God - v.3 Magnify with me, let us exalt His Name together v.8 Taste and see v.9 fear the Lord v.11 come you children

B. THE RIGHTEOUS IS A PRAYER

- v.4 I sought the Lord; v.5 they looked to Him; v.6 cried out; v.15 their cry v.17 cry out
- v.8, 22 this is the way they trust (lit. seek refuge and protection)

C. THE RIGHTEOUS ARE HUMBLE

- v.2 the humble v.6 poor man v.18 broken heart and contrite spirit (lit. crushed spirit)
- They are not arrogant, self-righteous, self-confident (in own works). As they worship and pray they do so with a sense of the holiness of God and a sense of self-poverty and lowliness before Him.

D. THE RIGHTEOUS ARE RIGHTEOUS

- This may seem too obvious to mention at first, but it is the word to describe them. It means upright or lawful. It is those who love God’s law, and who inwardly delight in God’s righteous ways. Their burden and struggle isn’t in living righteously, but rather their remaining sin and corruption. Living righteously is not their burden, but rather the struggle against the flesh. They love it when they do right, and hate it when they do wrong.
- v.13-14 includes speech, departing from evil and doing good, seeking and pursuing peace

- v.16 This is in contrast to those who do evil
- With the full understanding of the Gospel, the righteous are so in two ways: trust in the provided righteousness of God in Christ (an expression of true humility). But it doesn't stop there. They are truly pursuing righteousness in life. This is why Hebrews 12:14 says that we are to pursue peace and holiness (righteous living), because without them none will see the Lord.

- More could perhaps be drawn out, but the righteous for whom the promise of v.19 applies, at least these 4 things are true. This is not merely a Puritan or Reformed view, but the view of the inspired Word of God.
- Is this a description of you? Are these things fundamentally true about you? Are you a worshipper (and have a passion for others to become worshippers)? Are you a prayer? Are you humble before God? Are you pursuing a life of righteousness? You either are or are not.
- If so, then I intend to bring you great comfort from what we see in the Psalm. I want you to be encouraged and strengthened and helped.

- But there are some who are not. If you are honest, you would admit that you are not a worshipper, a prayer, humble (needing and trusting Christ), and righteous.
- I first want to warn you with the warning of v.16 and 21. God's face is against you. God is resisting you, and your afflictions are a part of that resistance. You should not feel like a martyr or great sufferer, but rather know that God is bringing those things into your life so that you might have a relatively small taste of what is in your future.
- The rest of that verse makes a promise that is a threat: Your remembrance will be cut off from the earth. The time is coming when God will erase the memory of the wicked from among men. You will be assigned to essential non-being when that time comes, and you will not be mourned or even remembered. This may sound mean to you, but it is a gracious warning of what is to come.
- But I would not leave you there. I invite you to magnify the Lord with me and exalt His Name together. Come and taste and see that the Lord is good. Come and listen to me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Then your afflictions and difficulties and disappointments will have another purpose. It will be the very means that God uses in your life to hate sin and to long for God.

II. WHAT GIVES THE RIGHTEOUS COMFORT?

- Despite the reality of many afflictions, this Psalm is very optimistic. It would be easy, in being burdened and praying for the grievous things that happen (rather than numbing ourselves in a variety of ways), to be swallowed up with sorrow or despair (which is why we often do seek to numb the realities).
- He finds strength in afflictions because he is a worshipper; he thinks much on God, His character, His promises. It is this that sustains him. It is this that sustained Job (1:20) he worshipped; also David (2Samuel 12:20) and he went into the house of the LORD and worshipped.

- There are several things from this Psalm that I want to remind you of to help you in your affliction, whatever it may be.
 - 1.) God is still worthy of worship
 - 2.) God hears your prayers – v.4, 6, 15, 17, 18
 - 3.) God is protecting you from all unnecessary evil – v.7, 20
 - 4.) God has promised that you lack no good thing – v.9, 10
 - 5.) God has promised that you will not be condemned (a promise of forgiveness) – v.22
 - 6.) God has promised that He will deliver you from your all your afflictions – v.19
- He delivers you in two ways. First, there are many which are temporal. There are many things we are kept from that we don't even realize. Those things that we are aware of are the mercies of God. For this reason we should pray in hope.
- There is the promise of an ultimate deliverance. We have an eschatological hope at the return of Christ. Whatever afflictions are necessary in this life, that the Lord does not remove (having a purpose to make us more like Christ) will one day not be necessary when we see Him face to face. At that time we will see Him face to face and be like Him.

- If you are among the righteous, then all of these things are for you. Take courage, for the Lord is with you. This will enable you to bear up under the burdens and difficulties. No amount of drugs, alcohol, entertainment, distraction, hobbies or other idols will strengthen you to bear up. The Lord is your rock, your fortress, your strong tower, your shield.
- If you are not among the righteous, while God is still worthy of your worship, these promises are not for you. But I invited you to come, taste and see, learn the fear of the Lord, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Then all of things will also apply to you.