

“How Much is Lost by our Sin?”
Psalm 81
(Preached at Trinity, September 25, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. God knows all things; all things that are, all things that will be. It is also true that in the infinite knowledge of God, He also knows everything that might have been under every set of possible circumstances. It’s like the movie, “It’s a Wonderful Life” played out in an infinite number of possibilities.
2. This doesn’t mean that God’s decree is contingent upon anything outside of Himself. God has decreed all things according to His eternal sovereign wisdom, not according to anything He foresaw.
We read in LBC, Chapter 3, Paragraph 2 – **Of God’s Decree** – “Although God knoweth whatsoever may or can come to pass, upon all supposed conditions, yet hath He not decreed anything, because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.”
3. But it does mean that God in His infinite knowledge knows all of the blessings human beings lose through their bad choices.
4. **Psalm 81** speaks to this truth. Israel traded God’s greatest blessings for the pleasures of sin.
Psalm 81:13-14 KJV - "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, *and* Israel had walked in my ways! ¹⁴ I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries."
5. We find the theology of “probation and exile” throughout Scripture.
 - A. Adam was placed in the garden and given the command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge upon the penalty of death. Adam was to bear the image and likeness of God. So, we find that Adam was placed on probation. Had Adam continued in obedience to this command he would have secured a permanent place in the presence of God. By Adam’s disobedience, he and all his posterity were exiled from the presence of God.
 - B. Moving forward, God commanded Pharaoh to release Israel so that Israel could go forth and bear the image and likeness of God (just like Adam). On the eve of entering the Promised Land Moses told Israel that their ability to receive the land was conditioned upon their obedience. Once again we find the issue of probation.
Deut. 28:1-2 KJV - "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: ² And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God."

Lev. 26:3-8 KJV - " ³ If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; ⁴ Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. ⁵ And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. ⁶ And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make *you* afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. ⁷ And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. ⁸ And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword."

1. On the other hand, if Israel were disobedient and if they did not follow their God then, like Adam, they would be exiled from the presence of God.

Deuteronomy 8:19-20 KJV - "And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. ²⁰ As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God."

2. Israel was indeed disobedient and God did exile them from His presence. But God promised through Ezekiel that He would resurrect His people to once again dwell in His presence.

Ezekiel 37:4-5 KJV - " Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵ Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:"

- C. Jesus too entered into redemptive history continuing the theme of probation and exile. After His baptism Jesus was driven into the wilderness to be tempted, echoing Israel's wilderness wanderings. But unlike the disobedience of Adam and Israel Jesus maintained perfect obedience, This obedience continued His entire life and it culminated at the crucifixion. Jesus fulfilled the Law's demand of perfect obedience.

Philippians 2:8 KJV - "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

6. God continually called Israel to repentance and obedience.
Only God knows how much these people lost due to their stubborn sin.
7. Tonight, we'll look at this psalm under three heads
 - A. A call to rejoice over God's gracious works – **Verses 1-7**
 - B. A call to remember the blessings of faithfulness – **Verses 8-10**
 - C. A call to repentance and a reminder of all that is lost without it – **Verses 9-16**
- I. A call to rejoice over God's gracious works – **Verses 1-7**
 - A. The psalm begins with a joyous call to praise
Psalms 81:1 KJV - "Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob."
 1. True worship is joyous worship
 2. Sing aloud - רָנַן ranan – means to “cry out”
The NASB translates it “sing for joy” but this doesn't fully capture the meaning. It is a loud cry of praise.

Leviticus 9:24 KJV - "And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: *which* when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces."

Proverbs 1:20 NAS - "Wisdom shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square;"

Isaiah 42:11 KJV - "Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up *their voice*, the villages *that* Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains."

3. Each of us should examine how we worship God.
Spurgeon: "let no Christian be silent, or slack in praise, for this God is our God. It is to be regretted that the niceties of modern singing frighten our congregations from joining lustily in the hymns. For our part we delight in full bursts of praise, and had rather discover the ruggedness of a want of musical training than miss the heartiness of universal congregational song."
4. Such worship is commanded of God
Psalms 81:4-5 KJV - "For this *was* a statute for Israel, *and* a law of the God of Jacob. ⁵ This he ordained in Joseph *for* a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: *where* I heard a language *that* I understood not."

- B. In **Verses 6-7** God reminded Israel why they should sing forth with shouts of joy. God delivered them from Egypt as His people that He might abide with them and that they might worship Him

Psalms 81:6-7 KJV - "I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots. ⁷ Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah."

1. God continued with them. He led them, provided for them.
2. At every remembrance of God's mighty presence with us and His mighty hand upon us our hearts should be overwhelmed with joy!

II. A call to remember the blessings of faithfulness – **Verses 8-10**

- A. First, Israel was called upon to remember their duty

1. **Verse 8** – "Hear" and "hearken" - in other words, "listen and obey." This has always been God's charge
Notice the probation language –
Psalms 81:8 KJV - "if thou wilt hearken unto me;"
2. What were they to hear? That they must worship God alone – **Verse 9**
Psalms 81:9 KJV - "There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god."
Deuteronomy 6:4-6 KJV - "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: ⁵ And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. ⁶ And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:"

3. This was at the heart of the Ten Commandments
Exodus 20:2-3 KJV - "I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me."
 4. This command hasn't been reduced for us
Mark 12:28-31 KJV - "And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? ²⁹ And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: ³⁰ And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. ³¹ And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
 5. Human beings are so prone to idolatry – we must be continually reminded of the danger
1 John 5:21 KJV - " Little children, keep yourselves from idols. "
- B. Then, Israel was reminded of the wonderful blessings that flow forth from obedience
Psalms 81:10 KJV - "I *am* the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."
1. First, a reminder of all that God has done in redemption
 2. The blessings of obedience – the implications is that God's people open their mouths in prayer and God hears and answers
Philippians 4:19 KJV - " But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
 3. Spurgeon quotes Benjamin Beddome in his commentary, "Treasury of David" – "Do we desire fresh communications of grace, and manifestations of divine love; a renewed sense of pardoning mercy, and an application of the blood of Christ? Do we want holiness, peace, and assurance? Do we want to hear from God, to see him, and be like him? You shall have what you desire, and be satisfied: it shall be enough, and you shall think it so. "The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."
 4. But Israel did not walk uprightly

III. A call to repentance and a reminder of all that is lost without it – **Verses 9-16**

Verse 10 – "open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it"
Psalms 81:11 KJV - "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me."

- A. This is one of the saddest of all statements from God
1. To hear these words regarding our own lives should cause our knees to buckle and our eyes to flow with rivers of tears
 2. God set forth the demands of obedience to Israel with the promise of the blessing of His presence for obedience and exile from His presence for disobedience.

3. Israel was not obedient and so they suffered the loss of the blessing of God's presence. They traded the best- that is, God's wonderful presence, for the folly of sin.
Psalm 81:11-12 KJV - "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. ¹² So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust"
4. God turns their attention to the way things might have been.
Psalm 81:13-14 KJV - "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, *and* Israel had walked in my ways! ¹⁴ I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries."

B. How does this apply to us?

1. On this side of glorification sin is still an ever present danger. In a sense the probation/exile theme is still in force.
 - a. We are not on probation regarding our eternal condition. Jesus fulfilled all of the demands of the Law. We rest in His merits, not our own.
 - b. We must never look at obedience as meritorious. We cannot earn God's grace. The Law can never condemn us.
 - c. When I use the word "probation" I'm not talking about acceptance with God. But it is true that our actions affect the the blessings of His presence.
2. God has provided means of grace whereby we might grow in holiness and sanctification and in the blessings of His fellowship; that we might know Him more; that we might comprehend more of His love for us; that we might know the blessings of walking in communion with Him.
3. So it is true that we can experience loss through our actions. What have you lost by your carelessness?
 - a. What of the glory of Christ have you lost by your affections for this present world?
 - b. What have you lost through your prayerlessness?
J.C. Ryle - "What is the reason that some believers are so much brighter and holier than others? I believe that those who are not eminently holy, pray little and those who are eminently holy pray much."
4. How much do we suffer the loss of the Holy Spirit's leadership by our own stubborn and rebellious refusal to follow?
Ephesians 4:30 KJV - "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."
Thomas Jacombe (1622-1687) – "If the person led shall once begin to struggle with him that leads him, and shall refuse to follow his guidance, what is then to be done, but to leave him to himself? Continued, rooted, allowed resistance to the Spirit, makes him so to cast off a person as to lead him no more... Let it be your great and constant care and endeavour to get the Spirit's leading continued to you. You have it; pray keep it. Can it be well with a Christian, when this is suspended or withdrawn from him? O, it is of infinite concern to all that belong to God, to preserve and secure to themselves the Spirit's leading!"

OBJECTION. —"But does the Spirit at any time do this to God's people? Does he ever suspend and withdraw his guidance from persons who once lived under it?"

ANSWER. —Yes; too often. It is what he usually does, when his leadings are not followed. This is a thing that grieves him; and when he is grieved he departs, withholds, and recalls his former gracious influences, though not totally and finally; yet for a time and in such a degree."

Conclusion:

1. We should understand what we forfeit through sin and carelessness. Sin always has its consequences. How much do we lose through its deceits?
How foolish we are to feed upon swine husks starving our souls to death when we could be feasting upon the food of heaven and finding infinite satisfaction.
Psalm 81:16 KJV - "He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee."
2. Oh that we might walk in the light and countenance of Christ in communion with the one who saved our soul and find our full satisfaction in Him.