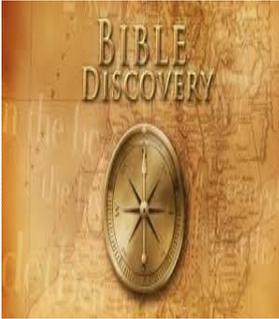


17 Aug 14

Psalm 44

Cast Off from the Shores of Trouble



At John 21 is the story of several disciples who had followed Jesus; had been taught by Jesus for many years, who after His death and resurrection, and with the encouragement of Simon Peter, decided to return to what they knew best – they went fishing. We’re told that night *they caught nothing*. One can imagine their frustration. Consider the trouble they were in. As far as they knew, they were being hunted by the Temple guards. They’d lost their leader and though somehow He was now back He wasn’t planning to stay with them – ***it wasn’t going to be as it was***. Three years of hard work had come crashing to an end. Now they had committed to bringing in the catch of the day only to have

nothing to show for a long night of work. Many of these men had been master fishermen. What would the other fishermen think and say? “Hey Peter, looks like you’ve lost your touch!” “Hey, Sons of Thunder, little wonder your dad has others working with him now!” Life looked to be handing Peter, James and John, seasoned fishermen all, a lot of grief and little else in their nets. Do you think they might have thought of praying to the Lord God for help? Do you think perhaps they cried out?

The entirety of Psalm 44 is a prayerful cry addressed to God. The Psalmist begins by looking back, remembering the graciousness of God - God had done it all for them; He drove out the heathen; He planted Israel in the Promised Land. It was not by the sword of man, nor in their own strength, nor the valour of people, but God; **God with them!** “Immanuel” (***GOD WITH US***) was their banner. And it was all grace! God’s people are and always have been blessed by God’s wonderful grace. Do you look back to the memories of God? Do you, in the midst of trouble, remember that God is good, that God’s grace is always there?

**Psalm 44 is
prayerful cry
addressed to
God!**

Yet memories can be clouded, the memory of mercy & grace, the memories of God’s triumph; the memories of our Lord’s constant presence - by thought of present troubles. “*What have you done lately God?*” becomes our human response. “*Where are you when I need you?*” our first cry. The joyful efforts to forget the darkness of our lives only goes so far – the façade only covers so much; like make-up there comes a time when it comes off. So then we too, along with the Psalmist, begin to think of all that transpires, to consider that nothing comes against God’s people accept God permits it – indeed, sends it! So our suffering must come from God! As the Psalmist reviews the events of his life he finds six ways in which he feels abandoned by God. When he uses the pronoun “**you**” he’s saying “**God – it is you!**” I think we can all relate with the psalmist. Let us see...

- 1) “**You** have rejected and humbled us”. We feel like we can’t succeed, that our plans will never come to fruition.
- 2) “**You** no longer lead our armies”. We think of the days when the Word of God reigned in our nation and we were envied on earth as a “Christian Nation”. Now we no longer see this in Canada. Everyone does their own thing. We’re a pagan country, bent on pursuing our own way.
- 3) “**You** made us retreat before the enemy”. When once our work for God brought great reward with many claiming His salvation, we no longer find victory; we’ve retreated to our sanctuaries; we no longer “relate” with the world around us, **or**, even more often, we simply assimilate into way of the world & lose our distinctive flavour.

- 4) “**You** gave us up to be devoured like sheep”. Men & women of God no longer seem to walk in the strength of the Lord. We’ve seen so many “defeated” & devoured by the enemy that we’ve become an anemic, exhausted people of God!
- 5) “**You** sold your people for a pittance”. The Gospel is to be our currency to go out & redeem the world in Christ, yet more & more God’s message is diluted, infiltrated by half-truths, compromised in order to be flavorful to an unknowing, uncaring world. We twitch their ears but not with truth. We’ve “*cached in*” on popularity rather than truth.
- 6) “**You** made us a reproach to our neighbours”. The butt of jokes, the root of fanatics, and the reason for cruelty to children is the portrayal of those who follow Christ. Media casts Christians in the light of fanatics, tyrants, abusers, or worse. We’re outcasts, lepers, “unclean”. We’re those who fail to walk without a crutch in a society where all are lifted up for their own success. Others walk in where angels fear to tread. We’re left behind.



Yes, we’re all too familiar with the circumstance of the Psalmist & his plight. We too have endured the agonies of defeat, the sorrow of abandonment, the torture of scorn from our neighbours. We who walk in the way of the Lord and reject not His truth are “*peculiar people*” in our society. We’re labeled intolerant, old-fashioned, simple minded, and out-of-step with our modern times. We lack the sophistication of fitting in with our neighbours.

As you read this psalm, you may reflect on the book of Job – on Job’s own plight & the reality of testing that came from the enemy of enemies. The Psalmist too truly recognizes the sorrows come not from God but because of the enemy; that the taunts of those who reproach and revile us are the same as those who have done it to Him; they are because of the enemy, the one bent on revenge. (vs. 16) It’s good for us to understand where the battle lays. Proverbs 21:31 reminds us, “*the horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory belongs to the Lord.*” It is essential we realize that “*our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*” (Ephesians 6:12)

Satan looms large in the Psalms, though it is always in the background; Satan looms large in the affairs of our lives, though it is with the knowledge that “*greater is He who is in me, than he who is in the world.*” (1 John 4:4) Satan looms large, yet it is important we hold to the truth that he has been defeated, “*it is finished*” at Calvary, we’ve been redeemed in Christ. So why do we stress ourselves out fighting a battle that clearly belongs to the Lord?

**Satan defeated at
Calvary – so why
stress ourselves
fighting battle that
belongs to the Lord?**

Notice while these calamities are presented before God, as the Psalmist pours out his heart with anguish and grief, there’s no sense of guilt. This is one of the perplexing things about this Psalm. Perhaps your mind opens Romans 3:23, “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” yet consider also what Paul instructs, that though, “*no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law*” (vs. 20) “*now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known...this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.*” (Vs. 21-22) Those whom are surely of Christ & in Christ, those who have confessed their sins & surrendered to God, have a clear conscience before the Father.

Jesus Himself warned us, “*in this world you will have trouble*”. (John 16:33) Is it not that we’re often in trouble; yes, from our own doing, but also brought on us by others when there is on our part no particular sin, or carelessness, or failure? We don’t know, we can’t comprehend, we fail to understand the purpose of our troubles but we’re called to remain firmly in faith with our God. The Psalmist, who hadn’t broken faith with God (vs. 17); whose heart hadn’t declined nor fallen away from God’s mercy (vs. 18); whose feet had not gone astray, demonstrates what our resolve must be. Rather than abandon our faith, let us gather in community, find strength in prayer with one another, and cast off from the shores of trouble and appeal to God Himself.



We must bring our prayer to our great God; we must follow the example of the Psalmist whose prayer rises to God with ever greater confidence. We too must ask for victory knowing there is no victory without suffering. The victorious Christian with no sin and suffering in his life may look great viewed from the front – but take a closer look; there's no depth. Rather we must seek victory over our enemies knowing that the enemy we fight is the same one – is the same one who came against Adam & Eve; is the same one who successfully tempted the Israelites to build a sacred cow in the wilderness even as Moses was on the mountain meeting with their God; is the same one who led King David into adultery; is the same one who took Jesus to the cross – and we must trust in God that He shall tread the enemy under his feet.

**We must
trust in God!**

I'm reminded, and want to remind you, in the midst of all this doom and gloom I've cast your way that *Jesus is the way* – whatever our circumstance - to overcome ***all*** the agony we've been cast into. Yet not one of us has endured to the point Jesus was given to endure as the perfect, sinless Son of God bore our sins and shame. Yet it is He who comes & gives us relief. It is He who comes & calls for us to take our empty nets yet out again onto the waters of life & throw them over the side. In the heat of day, when we're exhausted, feeling failure, we're encouraged to trust Jesus & to cast off from the shores of trouble. We're encouraged to cast our nets & *let the Lord*



give us the increase. Unlike the world which criticizes & abuses, the world which offers scorn & derision, our Lord comes simply and sincerely to us asking, "*Friends, haven't you any fish?*" And upon our usual negative response, He challenges us to cast off from the shore, to throw our nets on the ***right*** side of the boat ***and*** to be blessed.

As we pray, as we seek God's presence anew in our hearts, as we discover afresh our eternal hope in the One who does not change, as we recall that our God gains nothing by troubles & afflictions for His people, as we plead that it is for God's sake the enemy is trampled down; let us also reflect it was God who did not spare His own Son because the greater purpose at hand was to give us life when there was no other way. Let us hold to the truth that God has conquered the enemy, that God has resolved our problems, which God has enabled us to persevere through the Comforter He has given to us, that God has assembled not a mighty army, but a glorious throng of saints, and that we are redeemed for His own mercies' sake!

I encourage you to contact us at ***Mt Brydges Baptist Church*** by phone at 1-519-317-8659 or by email to office.mbbc@xplornet.com. We would love to discuss with you the love that our Saviour Jesus Christ has for all who will trust in Him and cast their nets; allow Jesus to direct their paths and lead them safe through the shores of trouble. Don't let your life be shipwrecked – Jesus is waiting to save you!

God bless you!