

Today's Quick Word Psalm 119:88

By Bruce Christian

PSALM 119:88 *Preserve my life according to your love, and I will obey the statutes of your mouth.*

Yesterday we saw from Deuteronomy 29:29 our responsibility to take God's Word seriously, and to pass it on to our children 'forever'. That is an onerous responsibility and can be quite demanding in a political climate where we are being impacted constantly by vocal, influential people who are militantly opposed to God's revealed truth.

Today we hear from the Psalmist who is under similar constant attack by God's 'enemies' who are threatening even his very life - and we find him taking refuge in the comfort of God's Word as he seeks to obey it in spite of such strong opposition.

The one word from the 'mouth' of his God that gives him untold assurance is the word 'chesed' - translated into English variously as 'love', 'covenant love', 'unfailing love', 'lovingkindness', 'mercy', and 'tender mercy', because we don't have a single word that does justice to its true meaning. It is the love with which the Faithful, Sovereign, Omnipotent LORD has bound himself

by an unbreakable covenant - the 'Covenant of Grace' - to his Chosen people.

The Psalmist clearly understands and embraces all that this means to him in his life-threatening circumstances. He has the guaranteed promise straight from the LORD's MOUTH! Have we tasted of the 'chesed' of this Covenant of Grace for ourselves? If we have, why do we still fret and worry about the future? (That is a genuine question that I have to keep asking my anxious heart!)

"God HAS SPOKEN by his prophets, spoken his UNCHANGING Word; each from age to age proclaiming: God, the One, the righteous Lord; in the world's despair and turmoil, one FIRM ANCHOR still HOLDS FAST: God IS KING, his throne ETERNAL, God the First and God the Last." (G.W.Briggs). "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God." (Psalms 42:11; 43:5).

Today's Quick Word Isaiah 58:11

By Bruce Christian

ISAIAH 58:11 *The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.*

What great promises these are. How God's people would have been delighted and encouraged to hear these words from their prophet.

Not so! They come in a chapter that begins with the words: "Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the house of Jacob their sins." They are in the context of Isaiah being told to make a no-holds-barred public proclamation of the extent to which God's Covenant people had developed a culture and lifestyle that totally rejected God's revealed truth and the terms of their special relationship with him. The promises are therefore conditional upon their genuine repentance, a renewed desire to seek God's face and grace, and an acknowledgement of his Lordship over all their ways.

How sad it is when a nation longs for God's blessing, and even 'seeks him out' and prays for his help (cf verse 2), while having no intention of changing their mindset and putting obedience to his inspired, authoritative Word at the centre of their worldview by making it the basis of all their thinking and decision making. A dramatic change of this nature is what has been at the core

of every powerful, life-changing spiritual revival throughout the history of the Church.

Faithful Isaiah is expressing something that moves the very heart of a loving God - a God who longs to bless his people with good things, a God who desires that they become "like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail". However, this outcome is not possible while ever his people persist in going their own way, making their own 'morality' decisions about what is 'right' and 'wrong'.

This loving God has provided US with a Saviour, Jesus, as the ONLY way in which we can be reconciled into fellowship with him again. If we are too proud, arrogant, and self-sufficient to accept this gracious provision, there is no point in 'praying' for the blessing that accompanies the provision. If we deny his right to run our lives, and refuse to bow to him as Lord, we can have no part in his favour. Clearly, in the light of Isaiah's words, we need a wholesale re-orientation of the thinking of our society - a re-orientation which is only possible if the Sovereign Lord intervenes with a powerful work of the Holy Spirit among us.

So, while we are seeking to encourage people individually to repent and, in faith, turn to Christ as personal Saviour and Lord, are we also earnestly pleading with the God of all grace to 'visit' us with a mighty Revival in the power of the Holy Spirit?

Today's Quick Word Psalm 126:5-6

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PSALM 126:5-6 *Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.*

The Jews who had served as slaves in Babylon could hardly believe that the Sovereign LORD was now restoring them to their beloved 'Zion', the City of Jerusalem from which they had been banished for 70 years! As the Psalmist said at the beginning of this song, "When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy." (1-2a).

But, the big questions on their mind were, "What would it be like as they start to replant their crops? Would the LORD send sufficient rain on the parched earth of the Negev, the area extending south west from the Dead Sea? What if they scattered their precious seed and no rain came? - would that be any better than the Babylonian captivity?"

Sometimes we feel very discouraged in Gospel ministry. We declare God's precious Word through the media, at work, at school, in the market place, at church, at home, ... and there is little response. The 'soil' into which we are casting the 'seed' of God's Word often seems rock-hard as our society becomes increasingly influenced by the Marxist humanism that pervades

our Media, our educational institutions and our corridors of power generally. Will there be a spiritual harvest in our day? The following two psalms (127 and 128) talk about the LORD's abundant blessing on all who acknowledge him as the source of all things. And so here the psalmist reminds us that although we might 'sow in tears', our God is faithful and we will 'reap with songs of joy'!

Let us persevere in our ministry in whatever form it might take, trusting him and looking forward to 'bringing in the sheaves', as his Holy Spirit 'breaks up' the 'hard ground' and 'waters' what we have planted. The Apostle Paul may have had these three Psalms in mind when he wrote to the Christians in Corinth: "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only GOD, WHO MAKES THINGS GROW." (1 Corinthians 3:7). "There shall be showers of blessing: This is the promise of love; there shall be seasons refreshing, sent from the Saviour above. Showers of blessing, showers of blessing we need: mercy-drops round us are falling, but for the showers we plead. ... There shall be showers of blessing: Oh, that today they might fall, now as to God we're confessing, now as on Jesus we call! Showers of blessing, showers of blessing we need: mercy-drops round us are falling, but for the showers we plead." (Daniel Whittle).