

The Greatness of God's Deliverance

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I'd like to mention again about the evening service with a missionary, outgoing missionary from this church, and then a baptismal service in which there will be three men and three women, at least that many baptized. And then the evening, gospel service, sermon following. We also would like to mention, adding to what's been said about the going to the Council. The board has asked Brother McAfee to go as a delegate, and brother Maxey and his wife are going because this may be their last counsel for a long time since they're going to New Guinea before very many weeks and the Board felt that they would like to have them attend and get all of their batteries charged, all they can being present. As for myself, I will be going in my capacity as editor of the Alliance Weekly. I have not in 15 years cost the church anything. So, when I go to counsel, why, you can know that I am going without any cost to the church. I mentioned that for two reasons. One is that I want the facts to be out and the second is that you might be restful in your thought about it.

Now, in the eighteen Psalm, which we read previously; we will deal with a few thoughts. I will not be long. In the fourth verse and on, the man of God said that the sorrows of death encompassed him and the floods of ungodly men made him afraid, and the sorrows of hell encompassed him about and the snares of death prevented him, that is, bound him, held him back, went ahead of him.

Now, the floods of ungodly men you will read in your margin and everywhere else, that's Belial and Belial is wickedness and destruction. It's one of those words that translators don't know what to do with. You can go to the commentators and they'll disappoint you and go to the Bible dictionaries and they'll tell you that they think it's so and so, but they're not sure. But it appears there to be agreement that Belial was the spirit of destruction and wickedness and lawlessness and vanity, all wrapped up in one. And this Belial was now overflowing on the man David like a flood. The destruction and havoc had come now, not a little bit at a time, but as a flood, and was upon the man of God. Sorrow, death, and hell; there are the three words: sorrow, death, and hell; being surrounded, being floated about in a flood. He now called upon the Lord in verse six. And there is a bold downrightness here about this whole thing. He said that he called upon the Lord.

Now, salvation isn't the result of man's effort, not even the result of a man's strong prayers. But in the Bible, when a man got any help, it was usually when he called upon God. There was no action at all in this psalm from God's part until David called upon the Lord, "and then my cry came before Him even into His ears," and it was then that God rose in his wrath against the enemies. We'll skip the passages that tell us about it. It is thrown into the figure of a tremendous storm, a mighty storm and hailstones and thick darkness and the roaring thunder that discomfited the foe. God

sent this storm upon Belial and his wickedness in order that He might roll back the flood of sorrow, death and hell that was surrounding the people of God, and particularly this man, David.

Now, when David prayed, then God was angry against the oppression of Belial. It's good to get the indignation of God on your side men and women. And if I say nothing else this morning, but that, it would be, I think, worth your hearing, that it is a good thing to get the indignation of God on your side. It is a tragic thing to have the indignation of God against you.

Now, Belial, the enemy, the spirit, as he embodied himself in wicked men, for that of course is here in plain sight, that the Belial will reach David through ungodly men, yielded men, yielded to the spirit of Belial. And when these surging waters of sorrow, death, and hell began to swirl around David, David cried and God became angry with the enemy, and the indignation of God was on David side. And even though David was himself not a perfect man, yet the pity and anger of God were on his side. And God turned against the enemy and opened the floodgates and began this dramatic and colorful and terrible attack upon the enemy. In verse 16, he says that as a result of his prayer, God sent from above.

Now, I want you to notice those words, that He sent from above. You see, the reason God sent from above was the David was surrounded. And when you're delivering a man from a flood from above it's the best way. They're using the helicopter now. They flutter over and settle slowly down and from above, they take a man out of the swirling waters. Well, long before the helicopter was thought about, David knew that when you're in a flood, the only way to get any help is to come down from above. So he sent from above and he took me. And after all, any final help is going to have to come from above. When we get in a bit of trouble, we run to everybody for help and we get a bit of help I suppose. The chip floating there, we grab that and it helps a little or an old board. We get ahold of that and hope for the best, but we're dizzy with this swirling, and there's no shoreline in sight. And the tide is always rising and the floods increasing. There's only one direction that help can come from and that's from God above.

And God saves us from above. He sent from above Jesus Christ our Lord to give us an effective ransom. That ransom did not come up from the earth. It did not come up from below. It did not come out of the sea. It did not come out of the ground, but it came down from above. And thus was born of the Virgin Mary, a man who became our Redeemer. Again, He sent from above the Holy Ghost to apply that ransom and to make it effective to men. And He sent from above the Word and information and instruction and conviction. It all comes from God above.

Now He sent from above and then He took me in verse 16. Now I like that expression, He took me. I once heard Paul Rader many years ago preach a great sermon on the text that Jesus took the bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it. I guess you gentlemen are too young to have heard Mr. Rader and heard that great sermon of his. And there without any doubt, this man that of whom

I speak now, was probably the greatest preacher that ever-touched America's shores in 100 years. I wouldn't doubt that at all in saying this, though, he's now long gone to be with his Savior. But his text was, He took the bread and He broke it and He blessed it and He gave it, and he preached a missionary sermon from that. And he said, God takes a man and then God breaks the man and then God blesses the man and then God gives the man to the world. There's an outline for any of you preachers that want to preach.

And that's the same expression here. He took the bread and here in verse 16, He took David. And sometimes when God takes a man, He grabs him to save him and He doesn't always grab him gently. For remember that while God has all the grace in the universe and all the music and all the poetry and all the art and all the beauty and all the tenderness that there is, this is a time of crisis and emergency. And sometimes when a man is going down, God grabs the man and grabs him a bit roughly. Sometimes God takes us in a manner that isn't exactly according to Emily Post. Lots of times that happens.

I remember that when they were praying Peter out in jail, God sent an angel, and it said the angel smote Peter. Now that isn't the way they would do it in the First Church of the Liberals here where everybody has got to be a PhD or the usher won't let you in. They would do it so gently and so smoothly and so kindly there, and every voice would be modulated properly. But, God sent an angel and He just hit Peter a good blow. He smote him. Peter was an old fisherman and he wouldn't have understood any tender, kindly remark, Emily Post fashion. So, God said, when you go down, give him a good one, because he's a fisherman and he's used to the wind and the waves and falling out of boats and all that sort of thing, so he'll sleep heavy. So, give him a good one.

So, when he came down, he gave him a rough blow, and Peter woke up and said, what's going on? He said, come on, follow me and get out of here. And so he saved him. He took him and took him roughly. And I'm not going to tell you that the Lord will always treat you like a kind Sunday School teacher. The Lord will sometimes be very rough with you when you're in trouble in order they might get you out of trouble.

Now, He drew me out of many waters. What else could he do? God Almighty appeared like a helicopter coming down from above and grabbing David and then, pulling him up out of many waters of course, up out of the water of sin and up out of the swirling, murky waves of consequences. And of all that you did and all of the trouble with you and all the rest, God takes you out of that. But somebody says, David had to be innocent. David had to be right. If David had contributed any to the swirling waters, he wouldn't have got out. Now that's the way it is theoretically, but that isn't the way it is in fact. The way it is in fact, God has to get a lot of us out of our own trouble, like the little boy that climbs a tree and can't get down. Have you read about that? He climbed the tree and got stuck in the crotch of the tree. And I forget, did they have to have

the fire department was it, to come and get the boy down, and took him to a hospital to rest him up or somewhere to rest him up?

Well, it was the boy's fault. But then his parents didn't turn him against him because it was his fault. Our boys as they were growing up, fell off the fences, out of trees, off the street cars, and otherwise proved themselves to be unworthy of anybody's attention. But they got the attention nevertheless, the best that we could afford, because they were our boys. And so, David was God's boy. And although David may no doubt have brought some of this on him by his conduct. He still, when he cried unto the Lord that canceled out David's part and that set God to work.

Always remember this, if God chastises A or B, his children, and C, another one of his children comes along and tries to help God lay the lash on, the anger of God won't be against A and B, but against C. When God wanted to punish Israel, He allowed Nebuchadnezzar to punish Israel. But Nebuchadnezzar enjoyed laying the lash on, and so God said you thought that I had sent you because you were good. Now I'll show you. Then he destroyed Babylon and turned His indignation against the very whip that He had sent to whip Israel.

So, if the Lord ever sends you to chasten one of God's children, chasten awfully easy will you, because you're very likely to bring the lash back around on you. Remember that everything you throw at a Christian is a boomerang. You just wait around and it'll be back, and it'll carry back in its rebound all the power that it had when it first went out. And He delivered me from my strong enemies, said David. Now it transpires here that the real cause of the trouble was this Belial, his strong enemy. You have a strong enemy hidden, a malevolent foe and you can escape him. Or if you don't escape him, he'll destroy you, and yet you can't escape him alone. He said here, them that hated me were too strong for me.

A Christian isn't a weakling and yet he is a weakling. He has this treasure in earthen vessels. And a Christian can't fight back like other people, and he can't do the things. If you live beside a neighbor and that neighbor decides to persecute you, he can do all sorts of unpleasant things to you and you don't dare do one back. And if a man comes up and curses you out, he can look you in the face and with steely eyes, read your pedigree back three generations. And as a Christian, you don't dare open your mouth except, "all right, all right, all right. God bless you; I'll pray for you." That's about all you dare say. The ungodly man, he's always too strong for him. I never saw an enemy yet I could lick, never one, never saw one. The enemies within us and around us and everywhere are just too big for us. Greed and lust and pride and jealousy and malice and evil temper and untruthfulness and the drink habit and the dope habit and all the rest, they're just too big for us. Them that hated me were too strong for me, so He sent from above and He took me and He drew me out of many waters, and He brought me forth into a large place. That's verse nineteen.

They say Christians are narrow, but outside of what Jesus said to walk the straight and narrow way, there isn't much in the Bible about the narrowness of the Christian way. He brought me forth into a large place. And while seen from the standpoint of the flesh it's narrow. From the standpoint of the Spirit it is very, very broad indeed. The Christian way is a very broad way, large enough to accommodate the fullest activity and growth and development. I've never yet been able to understand it. I just can't understand the man who says, in that church there's nothing to do. Why, Brother, man, if God is in you, you ought to find something to do. If God is in you, you should need to be vote into office. You never need to vote a man into office. If he has anything to do, God will help the man to find something to do, a big full activity and growth and development and the exercise of all of our most brilliant intellect.

Now, there's a feeling that Christians not only are narrow, that Christians are dull, good, honest, dull fellows they call us, and that we're dull. But you know that in the kingdom of God and Christian theology and Christian hymnody--in all the fine high thinking of a Christian--there is room for the exercise of the greatest minds of the centuries, and those great minds have been exercised. They say that one of the greatest, if not the greatest mind ever to touch America was Jonathan Edwards. And yet Jonathan Edwards never wasted any time on mere philosophy or mere science. Philosophy and science to him were handmaidens to theology and religion. And he became the great revivalist of New England and one of the greatest theologians that ever lived and one of the mightiest of the Christians that have blessed our native shores.

Well, now, you don't have to apologize for your mind or to your intellect, there God brings a Christian into a large place. It's big enough. It's an ocean. The man who says that the Christian way is narrow, too narrow for him, that it confines him, he's like the little minnow in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean grumbling because there isn't room to swim. Just let him wiggle his fins and get going and he'll not find a shoreline anywhere. There's ocean enough for the swallow in the air complaining for lack of oxygen. There's plenty of it there. It runs up seven miles high and it goes around the earth. So, there's plenty of room for the sparrow and plenty of room for the fish in the sea and plenty of room for the sheep in the pasture field and plenty of room for the Christian in the kingdom of God. He brought me forth into a large place, a place that is pleasant, and a place of toil. That is, eternal toil, where all pure, natural beings are, friendship and love and high service to mankind. All of this can be exercised within the church of God, in the kingdom. Isn't it too bad that the unbelieving world has gotten the notion that evangelical Christianity consists of believing in God and then not going to theaters, not going to dances, not going to gambling dens, not smoking, not drinking, not using dope, not always, not, not?

You could say to the bird in the air, you're not supposed to smoke and drink and he'd flap his wings and fly away five miles and circle and come back and he'd say, I don't want to smoke and drink, I've got air enough up here. We'd say to the fish in the middle of the ocean, why, you're not supposed to gamble, and he'd flap his fins and dive and come up again and say, I don't want to

gamble, I got an ocean to roam in. So, we can say to the sheep in the pasture field, we're not supposed to go to the movies, and the sheep in the pasture field would smile and lie down in green pastures and gaze down on the silver surface of the water waiting for his nose when he gets thirsty enough to lazily get up and go get a drink. Great, vast pasture fields with a shepherd to lead them. So, we're always looking at it the wrong way. We're looking at the things we're not supposed to do forgetting that there are the little, narrowing things.

Just take such a matter. I didn't intend to mention it, but just take such a matter as cigarettes. Just take such a matter. You tell me that the man who doesn't use them is the slave, that he's the narrow fellow. How foolish can we get? It's the man that does that that is the slave. Invite him to your house and he'll come. Have lunch and he'll be nice and kind out of deference to you, he won't smoke. Sit down a half an hour and he'll begin to look around and act uneasy and say, "well I really feel I should get going." Why? Because he's a slave, not because you are. Because his blood cells and body tissues are beginning to tell him, get a hold of one of those coffin nails now and light it. He's the slave.

Who is the slave, the man that smiles and turns his back on liquor, or the man who has to drink? Like the man they laugh about but it's not very funny. He shook his head and shuttered, he said, I got to go and get drunk. Oh, God, how I hate it, but I got it to do. And men are bound, they're slaves. That little lady that walks down the street looking like somebody else, all polished up. Old Mother Nature doesn't recognize her. You tell me she's not a slave? You tell me that simple-hearted Christian woman who's relaxed and trusting God and living a simple Christian life, you tell me she's a slave? No, the other one is the slave, afraid that telephone won't ring or afraid if it does, it will say the wrong thing. Afraid that little thing on her chin will develop into a blemish that will mar her beautiful face. They're the slaves brethren, not Christians.

There are plenty of vast expanse in the kingdom of God, all the grand and glorious room for service, service to mankind, service to the human race, service to the world, service to the ends of the earth. And all the sweet Christian music and all the sweet Christian literature and all the sweet Christian poetry to add fragrance and loveliness to your service, and all the vast expanses that lead into communion with God.

I read the other day; I wonder if I can reconstruct it now. I didn't memorize it, but I read it to Brother McAfee. He read it in German and he translated it out of German for me and we got a hold of it at last. And it said, the bird lives in the air. The fish lives in the sea and the salamander can live in the fire, but Meister Eckert had for his habitation the heart of God. And it rhymed in German. That's what Johannes Stauffer said about Meister Eckert. That as the bird has the air for its home and the fish has the sea for his home, so this man chose the heart of God for his home.

And if I have found my home in the heart of God, I ask you, "is that big enough, that which contains all things? God is that which everything must have to make it complete, but which needs nothing to make Him complete. He is that which contains all that is and surrounds it. What a vast world to roam in is the heart of God. The City that hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. Whose doors and gates are said to be fifty miles across are narrow birdcages compared with a great heart of God that knows no bound and no limit. He brought me also into a large place because He delighted in me.

Now, what did He delight in and what does He delight in? Does He delight in my wisdom? What a laugh that is. Does the omniscient God who knows everything that can be known, delight in my tiny wisdom? No. Does he delight in my purity, the impeccable God, holy beyond the power of an angel to gaze upon? Does He delight in my purity, or does He delight in my strength? Does the Omnipotent One who can do anything that He wills to do, delight in my strength? Does he delight in my deeds, the great God who made the heaven and earth, who calls the stars by name, delight in my tiny deeds? No. He delights in that something in me which He made in His own image, and in you. And let us make man after our image and after our likeness, and not even sin has been able to take it away. Though sin has been able to bring death and judgment upon us and prepare us for hell at last unless we be saved. Yet, there's still that in us which God can move into.

And as Eckert said, to quote him again that there's nothing in the universe that God ever made so much like God, is a human soul. And therefore, God finds Himself at home in the human soul and is unembarrassed and restful as He dwells in the human soul, for He made it in His own likeness. And only sin has marred it. But when the power of God comes and delivers us and draws us up out of these swirling waters of sin and makes us new creatures, then He can move into our souls and live there because He's more at home there than He is anywhere else in the universe, because He delighted in me

God loves you, but I don't know why. And God loves me and I don't know why except, as I have said, He made us in His image. Not because of what we know or do or can be or ever were or ever promised to be, but because He saw in us that which He didn't see in angels. He took not upon Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham and was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death and by the grace of God, He might taste death for every man, and is that in us, which God loves. He sent from above. He took me, He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me because He delighted in me. Amen.