

Lesson 21 – Deliverance – Remembered
Psalms 18, 77, 105, 129
By Dan Leppo

Today's lesson is titled Deliverance – Remembered. We can make this title a little more personal by calling it Remembering God as our Deliverer. The word remember, or remembrance, is used 182 times in the NIV version of the Old Testament. That's enough times for us to come to realize that remembering is important to God. Why is it important to remember the things of Him? Remembering and acknowledging God's *past* works are a testimony to His character and His faithfulness to do what He has promised for *today* and into the *future*.

One of the most powerful testimonies to God as a deliverer is His dealings with the Nation of Israel in the OT. Despite their constant complaining, He remained faithful to His Word. He will do the same for them in the Great Tribulation as promised in Revelation and with the OT prophets. Psalm 105 is really a recounting, or a remembrance, of the nation of Israel's history. Beginning in verses 8-10, the psalmist says about God, "*He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant.*"

From there to the end of the Psalm, the psalmist documents God's dealings with the nation of Israel – providing repeated proof of God as their promised and engaged deliverer. The psalmist acknowledges it was *God*, not the people, who was orchestrating their deliverance. There are numerous references to God doing the work such as: "*He allowed no one to oppress them*" (v. 14); "*the LORD made his people very fruitful*" (v. 24); "*He brought out Israel*" (v. 37); and, "*He opened the rock, and water gushed out*" (v. 41). My memory is not what it used to be, but thankfully, God's is perfect. Verse 42 confirms this, "*For he remembered his holy promise given to his servant Abraham.*"

Why is it so easy to forget God's past acts as our deliverer? I believe it's because there can be gaps of the sense of God's presence in our lives, and the enemy uses these gaps to revise the history of God's faithfulness. This is why Bible study is so essential to the life of a believer. We need to stay in the Word as it reminds us of who God is and His deep love for us. We're not going to find that truth anywhere else. We're living in a world that is either growing more and more hostile towards God's Word or more and more dismissive of it. Who do you think is behind this effort? The same one who has been challenging the validity of God's Word and His faithfulness since the Garden of Eden. The only thing Satan wants us to remember is our past sins – that's the only time he's truthful. What he does not want us remembering is the truth of God's character and love for each of us as clearly demonstrated in His Word.

Psalm 77 is full of remembrance proclamations that would be good for us to hold close to our hearts. They include:

- *I remembered you, God* (v.3)
- *I thought about the former days, the years of long ago;* (v.5)
- *I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.* (v. 11)

What, specifically, should we seek to remember about God? For me, it is His character. The Christian faith is not a religion – it is a relationship. If you are going to have a relationship with someone, you are going to develop an understanding of his/her character. In other words, is this the kind of person I want to be around? Does this person make me want to be a better version of

myself? Psalm 18, written by King David, is one of my favorite Psalms for many reasons. David had possibly one of the best understandings of God's character in all of Scripture. In just the first two verses, He loads us up with statements of God's character that makes Him so qualified to be our deliverer, "*I love you, LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*"

Beginning in verse 32 of Psalm 18, David runs off a list of proclamations of God as his deliverer.

- *It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure.* (v.32)
- *He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he causes me to stand on the heights.* (v. 33)
- *You make your saving help my shield, and your right hand sustains me; your help has made me great.* (v. 35 – our memory verse)
- *You provide a broad path for my feet, so that my ankles do not give way.* (v. 36)
- *You have delivered me from the attacks of the people.* (v. 43)

As we look at this list, again, who is doing all the work? – God! How much time do each of us worry and fret over our trials and tribulations – spending endless amounts of energy seeking ways to deliver ourselves? Why do we do this? Because we don't remember God's character – we don't trust Him enough that if He was faithful to us before, He will be there for us again in the future.

For those of us who get caught up in the evil of legalistic teaching, perhaps we don't think we're worthy of God's deliverance. Our past sins or are current shortcomings in our faith lead us to the false conclusion that God is mad at us and, therefore, won't be our deliverer when we need Him to be. The real problem is we've forgotten, or we don't really understand, what happened at the cross.

For those of you who are shackled by legalistic thinking, I want you to listen very carefully to what I'm about to say. In verse 20 of Psalm 18, David states that, "*The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness.*" A little later in verse 24 he expands on this notion of God's responsiveness as a deliverer to righteousness, "*The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.*" Do you know that as a believer in – and a follower of Jesus Christ you are righteous in God's eyes? Philippians 3:9 confirms this, "*and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.*"

This isn't me telling you this is true – it is the word of God telling you are righteousness in the eyes of the Lord. Now, connect this truth to David's words about God's responsiveness to the righteous. Are you willing to believe that the fullness of God's character and His faithfulness as your Deliverer is available to you? Listen to what David says in verse 20 of chapter 18 regarding God's mindset as your deliver, "*he rescued me because he delighted in me.*" Do you believe God delights in you? Isn't that what you want in the heart of your deliverer?

Let's take this thought process of God delighting in being your Deliverer one step further. David shared some passionate descriptions of God's emotions in our reading. Just a few of them are:

- Psalm 18:7: "*The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry.*"
- Psalm 18:9: "*He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet.*"
- Psalm 18:13: "*The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded.*"

- Psalm 18:15: “The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at your rebuke, LORD, at the blast of breath from your nostrils.”

What was driving these emotions? The fact that God’s child was under attack and required deliverance. One of the greatest revelations and life-changing components of a growing faith in the Lord is developing an understanding of - and confidence in the deep and passionate love He has for you. He is extremely protective of His children – those who call upon His Son as their Savior and Lord. For those of you who are looking for the Lord’s deliverance now but are not seeing it, I can already hear your questioning this claim of God’s passionate love for you. *“I’m getting knocked around by the enemy, but I don’t hear God thundering from heaven or see the mountains shaking because He is angry at my enemy.”*

I get that – the challenge for each of us is to wait on the Lord for Him to deliver on His deliverance. His ways and thoughts are higher than ours – meaning He’s orchestrating the perfect solution of the greater good for not just each child, but for every current and future child. This is why we are encouraged to remember God’s past acts of deliverance to fortify our faith in Him as our deliverer. By remembering His past deliverances, we look to Him to remain true to His role as our Deliverer in our current and future needs for Him. The good news is even when our faith fades in storms of life, according to 2 Timothy 2:13: *“If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.”* God cannot deny Himself as your Deliverer.

One of the greatest parts of God is He does not change, and He is true to His character. While we may not be seeing or hearing from God in the manner David is describing in the verses I just read, there will be plenty of God’s passionate anger on display in the Great Tribulation. He hasn’t forgotten one drop of mistreatment towards you, and He will deal with it during these seven years, which I happen to believe is coming a lot sooner than many of you think. For those of you who are afraid of being around during this period, I believe you can relax because, as your Deliverer, He is going to rapture every one of His children and all those who are not at an age to be accountable for their awareness of Jesus before the Tribulation starts. Until then, remember God’s past acts of deliverance, and I’m believing for you that you will see His deliverance soon.

What should our lives look like when we come in to agreement with and start really seeing God as our deliverer? One aspect of how things should look we develop a boldness in our walk with Him. Again, we don’t place our confidence in *our* strengths, we just become more reliant on *God’s* strengths. David said in Psalm 18:29: *“With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall.”* The Apostle Paul clarified the benefit of relying on the Lord’s strengths – not ours, in 2 Corinthians 12:10: *“For when I am weak, then I am strong.”* Paul promotes the real fruit of trusting in God as our deliverer in Philippians 4:13: *“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”* If God Himself will not deliver us, He will give us His strength to give us what we need to deliver ourselves. When you think about it, this is such a liberating concept. The Apostle Peter speaks to the wonder of trusting in God’s deliverance – not ours – in 1 Peter 5:7: *“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”*

Another “fruit” of learning to trust in the Lord as our deliverer is it develops an inner desire to praise Him. No doubt, one of the things that earned David the moniker as a “friend of God” was his consistent exhortations to praise the Lord – in all circumstances. Our reading offered several of these exhortations:

- Psalm 18:3: “I called to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I have been saved from my enemies.
- Psalm 18:46: “The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior!”
- Psalm 18:49: “Therefore I will praise you, LORD, among the nations; I will sing the praises of your name.”

I’m going to cut short the teaching on the reading, and with my wife Vickie’s and Carol’s permission, I’m going to share with you some of my story. Normally, I seek to minimize injecting my personal life in my lectures for two main reasons. First, I’m a colossally boring person. Secondly, and more importantly, I have always subscribed to John the Baptist’s words, “*I must step back, and He must step forward.*” If I’m going to ask you to spend 30 minutes of your life listening to me, then it should be as much about Jesus and as little about me as possible. However, I have a special connection to this lesson and its topic, so I’m hoping you will find some application in your life.

We need to turn the clock back about 14 years ago. Our older son was married with three young children whom we were very involved with their lives. Our younger son was finishing up high school and was doing well himself. We had a nice home that we could live in the rest of our lives, and it had a comparatively low mortgage and mortgage payment. I had a good job. Life was good. We heard a sermon on the problems of being “fence-sitting” Christians – one foot in the Kingdom and one foot in the world. We both were convicted by this, so we prayed that we would not be fence-sitting Christians.

Not long after that prayer, our lives started to unravel. Vickie started to get sick – she was losing a lot of weight, her hair was falling out, she was in a lot of pain, and it was getting to the point she could barely get out of bed. We went to countless doctors, and while they all agreed she was very sick, none of them knew what was wrong. We finally figured out what was making her sick – it was the house we had been living in for 16 years. There was a plague of mold behind the walls – even in places where there shouldn’t be mold. The infestation was so widespread that to remediate and rebuild the parts of the house affected was too costly – we couldn’t afford it. We ended up having to sell the house “as is” at a steep discount to the market, and because the mold spores were so ingrained in so much of our stuff, we had to get rid of most or our belongings. We ended up spending the next four years living in multiple apartments and hotel rooms.

Thirteen years ago, pretty much to this very day, I was tasked with teaching this lesson – on God’s deliverance. This was at a point where I was seeing no evidence of His deliverance. However, I put together the lecture, gave it, and then right after I was finished, Carol came up to me and said something that I have never forgotten, “*That was a good lecture, Dan. Now do you believe anything you just said?*”

Fast forward to last Summer. Carol and Maggie sent out the list of lessons for this year and asked if there are any lessons I would like to teach. Since I do not like to teach on lessons I’ve taught before – I like expanding my coverage of the Bible – I specifically did not want to teach this lesson or any of the other lessons I taught the last time. They graciously agreed to this. Now fast forward to early January of this year, Carol and Maggie informed me Jeff Swaney was going to be out of the country and not able to teach his next lesson. They asked me if I would be interested in teaching it. Other than being with my family, teaching Bible studies is my favorite thing to do, so I gladly accepted the invitation – without knowing the lesson topic and verses covered. A few days later, I figured I should look up what I agreed to, and it was this lesson. I bowed my head with a smile and said, “*Ok, Lord. I guess You want me to teach this lesson*

again.” I’ve since heard Him say, “*Yep, you are uniquely qualified to teach on me as a Deliverer.*”

Fourteen years removed from the beginning of what was a very painful trial, I’m here to tell you that God is a Deliverer. However, it’s important you understand what that means. Our main prayer throughout the early days of Vickie’s declining health was that God would heal her. While God has healed her in some respects, in many respects, He has not healed her. She still struggles with her health and pain levels every day, and her immune system is seriously compromised. The real Deliverance, though, has come in response to our first prayer – remember that one? – That we would not be fence-sitting Christians. While I’m not going to tell you that we are perfect Christians, because of what we have been through – and are continuing to go through to an extent, we are much closer to each other and, more importantly, much closer to God. The Lord delivered us into a deeper relationship with Him.

The Lord graciously allowed us to have another home, and when we moved in, I felt compelled to erect an altar as a testimony to God’s deliverance and provision. Below is a picture of the altar:



The construction is three unmodified stones representing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit balance against each other with a light shining out of it 24/7. A fun fact about that light – it was only supposed to last 5 years. It’s now been more than 10 years, and it’s still shining.

I want to conclude this lecture with a story from the Gospels. You’ll recall the time when the disciples and Jesus were on a boat traveling across the Sea of Galilee. A huge storm came upon them, and the disciples were terrified and fearing for their lives. What was Jesus doing? He was asleep – shnoozing. The disciples wake Him up asking Him, and I’m paraphrasing, “*Lord, don’t you see what’s going on? We’re in trouble!*” Do you remember what Jesus’ response was? Four words, “*Where is your faith?*” Probably not what you want to hear from the Lord when you’re fearing for your life, right?

What was Jesus really saying behind this question? “*I’m here; I do know what’s going on in your storm; I do care; and I’ve got this.*” I believe this storm was no accident or random act. I believe God cooked up this storm to use it as a teachable moment for the disciples. Have you ever thought about the fact that in the middle of this storm – where the disciples were terrified and fearing for their lives – they were in the middle of God’s will? They must have been because Who was with them?

If you are going through a storm in your life, my heart goes out to you. While I won’t pretend to know exactly how you feel, I can certainly relate to the emotions that come with storms. The feeling of relentless pain and suffering. The loneliness. Maybe even the feeling of

abandonment by God. Storms are very painful, and they typically last a lot longer than you want them to. Having gone through one myself, and, to a certain extent, still dealing with the remnants of it, the Lord has led me to spend a lot of time at the cross. When I think of Jesus hanging on the cross, I hear Him saying the same thing that was behind His question to the disciples in the middle of their storm. I see Him on the cross saying to me, *“I’m here on this cross; I do know what’s going on in your storm; I do care – I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t; and, I’ve got this.”*

Here's the thing, Jesus isn't on the cross any longer. In a few weeks, we're going to be celebrating Resurrection Sunday – Jesus is alive. Jesus was delivered from death, and through faith in Him, we participate in *His* deliverance. A believer in Jesus Christ no longer needs to fear death, because he/she is adopted into the family of Christ. We become heirs of the promises of the Kingdom of God, and one of the most cherished inheritances of being God's child is His cross-proven role as our Deliverer.

My message from the risen Lord for each person who is reading/listening to this – and especially to those of you in a storm – is the same that was behind what he asked the disciples on the Sea of Galilee, *“I’m here; I know what’s going on; I do care; and, I’ve got this.”* What's He really saying with these words? “I love you. I love you. My love is different than any love you will experience in this life. My love for you is so deep, so complete, and so fulfilling that I will stop at almost nothing to reveal it to the heart that is willing to consider it. I'm here – I won't ever leave you. I do know what's going on. I do care – just think of the cross. I've got this because I'm in control as your Deliverer. Please remember that.”

I'm a fan of what we've been concluding each of the lectures with this year – singing the Doxology – a praise to God. I completely understand the hesitancy to do this when you're in the middle of a storm. I've been there, and when I was there, a brother in the Lord reminded me about the exhortation of Hebrews 13:15 – to give a “sacrifice of praise” to God. A sacrifice is giving something of yourself for the benefit of another. Giving praise to God when we feel abandoned by Him in the midst of a storm is, indeed, a sacrifice. But, when looking at His sacrifice for us as our Deliverer while we were still sinners, Christ died for us, giving Him a sacrifice of praise doesn't seem all that unreasonable. Thank you for your time and God bless you.