

“CONSEQUENCES”

OBJECTIVE: TO STUDY HOW THE SCRIPTURE GIVES US GUIDANCE ON HOW OUR ACTIONS ARE RELEVANT TO OUR REWARDS/ CONSEQUENCES.

KEY SCRIPTURES: PSALM 3:1-8/ GALATIANS 6:7-10/

DEUTERONOMY 28:15-20/ HEBREWS 12:14-17

***CONSEQUENCES** IS A PRACTICAL MESSAGE ABOUT HOW TO SURVIVE THE MESSES WE MAKE OF LIFE. WE ALL DEAL WITH CONSEQUENCES IN OUR LIFE. UNFORTUNATELY, CONSEQUENCES SPEAK TO THE NEGATIVE RESULTS WE RECEIVE FOR WHAT WE DO AND NOT SO MUCH THE REWARDS OR BLESSINGS WE RECEIVE FOR THE POSITIVE RESULTS OF OUR ACTIONS.*

WHETHER THROUGH OUR OWN POOR CHOICES OR THROUGH NO FAULT OF OUR OWN, WE ALL LIVE WITH THE CONSEQUENCES—NO ONE ESCAPES THE FIERCE TIDES OF FAILURE, THE ATTACKS OF ADVERSITY, OR THE DISCOURAGEMENT THAT COMES FROM DEBILITATING DILEMMAS. ALL OF US FACE TRIALS AND CHALLENGES AND, OFTEN, FIND OURSELVES PRESSED BENEATH THE WEIGHT OF THE SEVERITY OF OUR SITUATIONS.

IF YOU HAVE EVER FELT LONELINESS, DISAPPOINTMENT, OR FAILURE BECAUSE OF THE POOR CHOICES YOU’VE MADE, AND YOU KNOW MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU NEED GOD’S INTERVENTION IN YOUR LIFE BECAUSE YOU ARE POWERLESS TO MAKE IT DIFFERENT ON YOUR OWN.

(PSALM 3:1-8)

THE PSALMS AS YOU MAY KNOW, MANY OF THEM WRITTEN BY KING DAVID, WERE ACTUALLY SONG LYRICS OR POEMS INSPIRED BY GOD. THE BOOK OF PSALMS WAS ESSENTIALLY THE HYMNAL OF ANCIENT ISRAEL AND MANY OF THEM CONTINUE TO BE USED BY CHRISTIANS TODAY IN PRAISE CHORUSES AND OTHER WORSHIP SONGS.

PART OF WHAT MAKES THESE LYRICS SUCH MOVING SONGS OF WORSHIP IS THAT THEY TUG AT THE HEART STRINGS OF EVERY PERSON, FREQUENTLY REFLECTING THE PROBLEMS AND PRESSURES

OF TRYING TO LIVE THE WAY GOD WANTS US TO AND THE HEARTACHES THAT WE SOMETIMES ENCOUNTER ALONG THE WAY.

IN THIS PSALM IN PARTICULAR, DAVID IDENTIFIES FOUR STAGES THAT A PERSON OF FAITH WILL OFTEN GO THROUGH AS THEY DEAL WITH SIN, GUILT, OR HARDSHIP—IN OTHER WORDS, THE CONSEQUENCES OF LIFE. THE FIRST OF THOSE STAGES IS DESPAIR.

• *DESPAIR*

NOW, THE BACKGROUND OF PSALM 3 IS SOMEWHAT COMPLICATED BUT IMPORTANT. DAVID'S PROBLEMS BEGAN WHEN HE SLEPT WITH BATHSHEBA, THE WIFE OF URIAH THE HITTITE, WHO WAS ONE OF THE THIRTY. THIS ACT OF ADULTERY LED TO AN EVEN MORE DESPICABLE ACT ON DAVID'S PART. IN ORDER TO COVER UP HIS SIN, DAVID HAD URIAH KILLED. SO, ADULTERY LED TO MURDER.

FROM THIS POINT ONWARD, DAVID HAD TO LIVE WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS SIN. FAST FORWARD SEVERAL YEARS: ONE OF DAVID'S SONS, AMNON, BECAME A BIT TOO ENAMORED WITH HIS HALF-SISTER TAMAR. UNABLE TO CONTROL HIS LUST, HE RAPED HER.

OF COURSE, THIS ENRAGED TAMAR'S FULL BROTHER, ABSALOM, WHO SOUGHT REVENGE AND GOT IT BY KILLING AMNON. WHEN DAVID LEARNED ABOUT BOTH CRIMES (THE RAPE AND THE MURDER), INSTEAD OF DEALING WITH IT IN A RIGHTEOUS AND JUST MANNER, HE BASICALLY IGNORES THE WHOLE SITUATION. WHY? WELL, BECAUSE DAVID HAD COMMITTED BASICALLY THE SAME CRIMES. HE ONCE LOST CONTROL OF HIS URGES AND ENDED UP KILLING AN INNOCENT MAN. AS A RESULT, DAVID HAD LOST THE MORAL AUTHORITY TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH HIS SONS.

IN TIME, ABSALOM BECAME VERY DEFIANT. HE THOUGHT HE WAS MORALLY SUPERIOR AND A WORTHIER LEADER THAN HIS FATHER, SO HE MOUNTED A REBELLION. IT WAS A REBELLION THAT CAUGHT DAVID BY SURPRISE; SO MUCH SO, THE BIBLE SAYS THAT HE FLED "BAREFOOT AND WEEPING."

IT'S IN THIS CONTEXT THAT DAVID WROTE PSALM 3. ESSENTIALLY, HE BROUGHT ALL HIS PROBLEMS ON HIMSELF AND THAT'S WHY HE SAYS, "O LORD, SO MANY ARE AGAINST ME. SO MANY SEEK TO HARM ME. I HAVE SO MANY ENEMIES. SO MANY SAY THAT GOD WILL NEVER HELP ME." (VS. 1-2).

THINK FOR A MOMENT ABOUT THE SHAME DAVID MUST HAVE FELT BEING ATTACKED AND HUNTED DOWN BY HIS OWN SON. DAVID WAS REAPING THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE BAD CHOICES HE HAD MADE. ONCE KNOWN AS “THE MAN AFTER GOD’S OWN HEART,” DAVID’S LIFE IS NOW CHARACTERIZED BY FAILURE, LONELINESS, DISAPPOINTMENT, AND AGONY.

MOST OF US UNDERSTAND ALL TOO WELL WHAT IT IS LIKE TO FEEL OVERWHELMED AND HOPELESS—AS IF EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING IS AGAINST YOU. THAT’S HOW DAVID FELT AND IF THAT’S HOW YOU FEEL RIGHT NOW, DON’T DESPAIR! DAVID, AS DOWN AND OUT AS HE WAS, BELIEVED WITH EVERY FIBER OF HIS BEING THAT GOD WAS WITH HIM, WHICH LEADS US TO THE SECOND STAGE IN APPROACHING ADVERSITY—DESIRE.

• DESIRE

HARD-PRESSED BY OPPOSITION AND DANGER, DAVID CONFESSES HIS DESIRE FOR GOD’S INTERVENTION, CRYING OUT TO HIM FOR HELP. HE SAYS, “BUT YOU, O LORD, ARE A SHIELD AROUND ME; YOU ARE MY GLORY, THE ONE WHO HOLDS MY HEAD HIGH” (VS. 3 NLT).

DAVID’S HEAD MAY HAVE BEEN BOWED LOW WITH SHAME, BUT HE KNEW WHO COULD LIFT HIS HEAD HIGH. HE HAD MADE A MESS OUT OF HIS LIFE, BUT HE KNEW WHERE TO TURN. AS A WARRIOR, DAVID WAS FAMILIAR WITH THE PROTECTION OF A SHIELD AGAINST THE SWORDS AND ARROWS OF HIS ENEMIES, AND NOW HIS HEART’S DESIRE—HIS HEART’S CRY—WAS FOR GOD TO BE HIS SHIELD! HE KNEW THAT GOD WOULD HEAR HIS PRAYERS: “I WILL PRAY TO THE LORD, AND HE WILL ANSWER ME FROM HIS HOLY MOUNTAIN” (VS. 4 NCV).

WHAT WAS TRUE FOR DAVID IS TRUE FOR US!

WHEN YOUR LIFE IS IN SHAMBLES AND IT FEELS LIKE EVERYTHING IS JUST FALLING APART AROUND YOU, WHEN YOU’VE MESSED UP AND YOU’VE GOT NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN—TURN TO JESUS! TURN TO YAHWEH! AS SOMEONE ONCE SAID, “WHEN LIFE KNOCKS YOU TO YOUR KNEES—WELL, THAT’S THE BEST POSITION IN WHICH TO PRAY, ISN’T IT?” HE WILL HEAR FROM YOU AND HE WILL ANSWER. THAT’S A PROMISE. THE BIBLE SAYS, “NOW THIS IS THE CONFIDENCE THAT WE HAVE IN HIM, THAT IF WE ASK ANYTHING ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, HE

HEARS US. AND IF WE KNOW THAT HE HEARS US, WHATEVER WE ASK, WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE THE PETITIONS THAT WE HAVE ASKED OF HIM" (1 JOHN 5:14-15 NKJV).

ISN'T THAT AMAZING? GOD ACTUALLY WANTS TO ANSWER OUR PRAYERS! AS LONG AS WHAT WE ARE ASKING FOR DOESN'T CONTRADICT HIS PURPOSES AND HIS PLAN, THEN HE'S OVERJOYED TO ANSWER OUR REQUESTS. THE PROBLEM IS—MANY CHRISTIANS DON'T EVEN BOTHER TO ASK. WE LET PRAYER TURN INTO SOME KIND OF EMERGENCY MEASURE: "WELL, I'VE TRIED EVERYTHING ELSE; I GUESS ALL I CAN DO NOW IS PRAY."

AFTER EXPRESSING OUR DESIRES THROUGH PRAYER, THE THIRD STAGE IN DEALING WITH DIFFICULTY IS DEPENDENCE.

- *DEPENDENCE*

AS WE ENCOUNTER VARIOUS TRIALS IN LIFE WE ALL FEEL THAT INITIAL DESPAIR, AS DAVID DID, BUT ONCE WE HAVE EXPRESSED OUR DESIRE FOR GOD'S HELP, WE MUST TRUST THAT GOD IS IN CONTROL AND DEPEND ON HIM TO TAKE CARE OF IT. MANY OF US HAVE A TENDENCY TO LAY OUR TROUBLES AT THE THRONE OF JESUS IN THE MORNING, AND THEN WE GO AND PICK THEM BACK UP LATER THAT AFTERNOON.

DAVID DEMONSTRATES AMAZING SURRENDER AND DEPENDENCE ON GOD IN THIS PSALM. HE WAS BAREFOOT, ON THE RUN, IN THE DESSERT, BEING HUNTED BY HIS OWN SON READY TO USURP THE THROWN—YET AFTER CRYING OUT TO YAHWEH, DAVID SAYS, "THEN I LAID DOWN AND SLEPT IN PEACE AND WOKE UP SAFELY, FOR THE LORD WAS WATCHING OVER ME. AND NOW, ALTHOUGH TEN THOUSAND ENEMIES SURROUND ME ON EVERY SIDE, I AM NOT AFRAID" (VS. 5 TLB).

WOW. THAT IS FAITH! THAT IS WHAT IT MEANS TO TRUST IN GOD—TO TRULY DEPEND ON HIM AND KNOW THAT EVERYTHING IS GOING TO WORK OUT. NO MATTER WHAT CONFLICTS LAY AHEAD OF HIM, DAVID DIDN'T LOSE ANY SLEEP OVER IT. THIS REMINDS ME OF MARK 4, WHEN JESUS WAS IN THE STERN OF THE BOAT ASLEEP ON A PILLOW IN THE MIDDLE OF A TERRIBLE RAINSTORM. IT ALWAYS INTRIGUED ME THAT THIS IS THE ONLY TIME THE BIBLE EVER MENTIONS JESUS SLEEPING.

IT SEEMS TO DEMONSTRATE A LEVEL OF FAITH AND TRUST THAT IS NOT INTERRUPTED BY WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD AROUND.

THAT IS THE KIND OF WE NEED, ISN'T IT? WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO LAY YOUR HEAD DOWN AND FALL FAST ASLEEP, SECURE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT GOD'S IN CONTROL AND THERE IS NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF, NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, NOTHING TO LOSE SLEEP OVER.

ONCE WE HAVE LEARNED TO DEPEND ON GOD TO CARE FOR US, THE FINAL STAGE IN TRIUMPHING OVER OUR TRIALS IS DELIVERANCE! THAT'S THE PART WE ALWAYS WANT TO GET TO.

• DELIVERANCE

FINALLY, DAVID BRINGS EVERYTHING INTO PERSPECTIVE. THE MARAUDING SOLDIERS OF HIS SON, THE LACK OF FOOD OR SHELTER, AND EVEN THE THRONE OF ISRAEL MEANT NOTHING IN LIGHT OF GOD'S INFINITE GRACE AND POWER! DAVID ANNOUNCES: "ARISE, O LORD! RESCUE ME, MY GOD! SLAP ALL MY ENEMIES IN THE FACE! SHATTER THE TEETH OF THE WICKED! VICTORY COMES FROM YOU, O LORD. MAY YOU BLESS YOUR PEOPLE" (VS. 7-8 NLT).

THE NKJV SAYS, "SALVATION BELONGS TO THE LORD!" (VS.8 NKJV).

THE WORD TRANSLATED VICTORY OR SALVATION, IS THE HEBREW WORD HA-YESHUAH. SOUND FAMILIAR? YESHUAH IS THE HEBREW PRONUNCIATION OF JESUS. SO, QUITE LITERALLY THERE IS VICTORY IN JESUS. THERE IS SALVATION IN HIS NAME!

DAVID'S IMAGERY OF GOD KNOCKING THE TEETH OUT OF HIS ENEMIES REMINDS ME OF PAUL'S WORDS IN 1 CORINTHIANS: "DEATH HAS BEEN SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR VICTORY? WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR STING? THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN, AND THE POWER OF SIN IS THE LAW. BUT THANKS BE TO GOD! HE GIVES US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST." (1 CORINTHIANS 15:54-57 NIV).

HUMANITY'S GREATEST ENEMIES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN SIN AND DEATH, BUT THEN JESUS CAME ALONG, DIED ON THE CROSS FOR OUR SINS, AND KNOCKED THE TEETH OUT OF THEM BOTH—PULLED THEIR STINGERS RIGHT OUT! BECAUSE OF JESUS, WE WILL HAVE THE FINAL VICTORY! THERE IS NOTHING IN THIS WORLD THAT CAN PUSH US

DOWN OR HOLD US BACK AS LONG AS WE HAVE JESUS, BECAUSE OUR DELIVERANCE AND OUR VICTORY IS IN HIM!

WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES. WE ALL SIN AND FALL SHORT.

(ROMANS 3:23)

AND MOST OF THE TIME WE HAVE TO LIVE WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR SINS AND FAILURES. BUT FAILURE IS NOT THE LAST WORD; OUR PROBLEMS ARE NOT THE LAST WORD; LONELINESS IS NOT THE LAST WORD; GUILT AND SHAME ARE NOT THE LAST WORDS—BECAUSE “SALVATION BELONGS TO THE LORD.” THERE IS VICTORY IN JESUS!

WHEN SIN REARS ITS UGLY HEAD OR YOU’VE MADE A MESS OF YOUR LIFE AND YOU’RE LIVING WITH THE CONSEQUENCES, YOU MIGHT DESPAIR AT FIRST, BUT THEN EXPRESS YOUR DESIRE FOR GOD’S MERCY AND GRACE, DEPEND ON HIM TO SEE YOU THROUGH, AND TRUST THAT HE IS YOUR DELIVERER, YOUR SHIELD, YOUR GLORY AND YOUR HOPE!