

Read Through the Bible

Week 31: July 26th – 31st

Readings: Psalm 41 – 61; Acts 24 – 28

Reflections and Questions

By Jack Townley

Key Verse: 33:5 *He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.*

“He loveth righteousness and judgment.”

The theory and the practice of right he intensely loves. He doth not only approve the true and the just, but his inmost soul delights therein. The character of God is a sea, every drop of which should become a wellhead of praise for his people. The righteousness of Jesus is peculiarly dear to the Father, and for its sake he takes pleasure in those to whom it is imputed. Sin, on the other hand, is infinitely abhorrent to the Lord, and woe unto those who die in it; if he sees no righteousness in them, he will deal righteously with them, and judgment stern and final will be the result. **“The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.”** Come hither, astronomers, geologists, naturalists, botanists, chemists, miners, yea, all of you who study the works of God, for all your truthful stories confirm this declaration. From the midge in the sunbeam to leviathan in the ocean all creatures own the bounty of the Creator. Even the pathless desert blazes with some undiscovered mercy, and the caverns of ocean conceal the treasures of love. Earth might have been as full of terror as of grace, but instead thereof it teems and overflows with kindness. He who cannot see it, and yet lives in it as the fish lives in the water, deserves to die. If earth be full of mercy, what must heaven be where goodness concentrates its beams? (Charles Spurgeon)

v. 4, 5. God makes himself known to us.

1. In his word, here put for all divine revelation, all that which God at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke to the children of men, and that is all right, there is nothing amiss in it; his commands exactly agree with the rules of equity and the eternal reasons of good and evil. His promises are all wise and good and inviolably sure, and there is no iniquity in his threatenings, but even those are designed for our good, by deterring us from evil. God's word is right, and therefore all our deviations from it are wrong,

and we are then in the right when we agree with it.

2. In his works, and those are all done in truth, all according to his counsels, which are called the scriptures of truth, Dan. 10:21. The copy in all God's works agrees exactly with the great original, the plan laid in the Eternal Mind, and varies not in the least jot. God has made it to appear in his works,

(1.) That he is a God of inflexible justice: He loveth righteousness and judgment. There is nothing but righteousness in the sentence he passes and judgment in the execution of it. He never did nor can do wrong to any of his creatures, but is always ready to give redress to those that are wronged, and does it with delight. He takes pleasure in those that are righteous. He is himself the righteous Lord, and therefore loveth righteousness.

(2.) That he is a God of inexhaustible bounty: The earth is full of his goodness that is, of the proofs and instances of it. The benign influences which the earth receives from above, and the fruits it is thereby enabled to produce, the provision that is made both for man and beast, and the common blessings with which all the nations of the earth are blessed, plainly declare that the earth is full of his goodness—the darkest, the coldest, the hottest, and the most dry and desert part of it not excepted. What a pity is it that this earth, which is so full of God's goodness, should be so empty of his praises, and that of the multitudes that live upon his bounty there are so few that live to his glory!

(3.) The conviction he was under the almighty power of God, evidenced in the creation of the world. We "believe in God," and therefore we praise him as "the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth," so we are here taught to praise him. Observe: How God made the world, and brought all things into being. How easily: All things were made by the word of the Lord and by the breath of his mouth. Christ is the Word,

the Spirit is the breath, so that God the Father made the world, as he rules it and redeems it, by his Son and Spirit. (Matthew Henry)

PSALM 33

This psalm calls the godly to praise God for His dependable Word and His righteous works, specifically His creative activities in nature and human history. The psalmist also assured the readers that He will be faithful to those who trust in Him. "If the purest form of a hymn is praise to God for what He is and does, this is a fine example. The body of the psalm is occupied with the Lord as Creator, Sovereign, Judge and Savior, while the beginning and end express two elements of worship; an offering of praise, doing honor to so great a King, and a declaration of trust, made in humble expectation." (Van Gemeran)

1. A call to praise the Lord skillfully 33:1-3

The psalmist appealed to the righteous to praise God because it is proper to do so in view of who He is and what He has done. Furthermore we should praise Him in a manner suitable to His greatness, with beautiful musical accompaniment. Moreover our praise should be fresh and skillful, not hackneyed and sloppy. God is worthy of the best in expressions of praise as well as in all we do for Him. "The 'new song' is new in the sense that it celebrates a new act of God's redemption (v. 3; cf. 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa 42:10; Rev 5:9; 14:3)." (Van Gemeran)

"Psalm 33 is a *new song* (v. 3) that sings about a *new world*. It is the world about which Israel always sings, the new world that God is now creating. It is a world ordered by God's justice over which God presides with faithfulness. To such a world the only appropriate response is confident and sure praise to the one who makes that world available to us." (Brueggemann)

2. Reasons to praise the Lord 33:4-19

33:4-5 Two qualities of God that the writer stressed in this second section of the psalm are that God is dependable and righteous. We can rely on everything He says and does, and He does what is right in loyal love for His people. Some people mistakenly believe that God will forgive everyone, that they can live any way they choose, and that everyone really goes to heaven. But that's not the way the Bible tells us

that it works. Yes, Jesus came to save everyone, and yes, He died for our sins; but that is only part of the equation. The relationship of Abraham with God is probably the simplest form of how this equation of forgiveness works (Genesis 15:6):

6. Then he [Abram] believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Simply because Abraham [Abram] believed in the Lord, the Lord considered it equal to righteousness. Thus, He had to have forgiven Abraham's sins in the process. Because Abraham believed, he was forgiven. Now listen to what Jesus tells us (John 10:9):

9. "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Since Jesus came and paid the price of our sins, there is a somewhat new aspect to the mechanism of forgiveness. We are to enter in to the kingdom through Jesus. In one respect, this is really the same thing as with Abraham: it involves simple belief. But on the other hand, it involves a more active participation; for in order to enter through Jesus, we must now also be a part of His participation in our forgiveness. We must repent. Abraham also repented as part of his belief; but somewhere along the way, most people lost sight of what true belief and faith involves. A person can't really have faith in God and not want to walk away from their sins, and then to continue to strive to become a new person in the Lord. It's just as we are told in Proverbs 19:11:

11. A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook transgression.

In our process of becoming a changed person, we not only receive our own forgiveness from the Lord, but we learn to forgive others in the same way. But, in what way? Listen to how the psalmist explains it in 32: 1-5:

1. How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!

2. How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!

Here's the first key to unlocking the door to forgiveness. We are not to have a deceitful spirit; we're to be free of deceit. And when we are this way, something takes place within us.

3. When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long.

4. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.

A person who is open to hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit cannot do something wrong without its causing that person to have such an inner disturbed state of being, that they have to do something about their sin. This happens because the Holy Spirit constantly reminds us of what we have done. And this, in turn, leads us to repentance.

5. I acknowledged my sin to Thee, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"; And Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.

This is the mechanism of forgiveness. In Isaiah 1:16-20, the Lord expresses it another way to those who are reluctant to listen.

16. "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight.

17. Cease to do evil, Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless; Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.

And the Lord, knowing that most people want to argue with Him or blame someone else, or simply defend their actions, goes on and even offers them a way of receiving His forgiveness.

18. Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool."

19. "If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land;

20. "But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

It is here that we see the opposite side of this mechanism of forgiveness, which most people don't want to hear about. If we don't repent, if we don't turn from our evil ways, we are not

forgiven; we do not receive salvation. To put it another way, you go directly to jail; you don't pass "Go," and you don't get your \$200.00. In Luke 7:37-50 we are told of a gathering at a table with the Lord; and at this gathering, Jesus explains how this mechanism of forgiveness works.

37. And behold, there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume,

38. and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet, and anointing them with the perfume.

I have heard people say that they are not good enough to go to church. These two verses should dispel any such thought. I have heard people say that they didn't come to church because they were angry or frustrated because of something. These two verses should dispel those thoughts, as well. When something isn't right in our life, we are to come to Jesus, and not run away from Him. But sometimes people let the sins of others keep them away, too, as the host of the dinner is attempting to do:

39. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner."

Even though we don't say everything out loud, we do telegraph our inner thoughts and feelings that others perceive, as did Jesus.

40. And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher."

41. "A certain moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

42. "When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more?"

43. Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."

44. And turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair.

45. "You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet.

46. "You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume.

47. "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."

This is another part of the mechanism of forgiveness: if we do not have the power of love within us, neither do we have the power to either receive forgiveness for ourselves or to pass it on to others.

48. And He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."

49. And those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?"

50. And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

To summarize:

Everyone needs to come before the Lord with a humble heart and with no deceit within them, because those are virtues of His eternal being. Everyone needs to freely confess their sins and innermost thoughts to the Lord, and to seek His love and forgiveness and guidance, because He is our Creator and Father and has given his Son to redeem us. And everyone needs to have a place of sanctuary, a place to go where they feel safe and comforted. We at AELC are such a place and others in our community need to know this. Lets consider about ourselves:

1) What innermost thoughts and feelings do others 'read' in me?

2) Am I the beacon of light to lead others through the Door of everlasting life?

3) Am I part of the mechanism of God's forgiveness?"

4) If the answer to these reflective questions is positive, then we can say, "Amen."

5) Makes me want to sing "How Great Thou Art" – you can sing along, if you like. If you don't know it, here's a link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxCRIF0m79w&feature=related>