

God, Guardian of Life

July 3, 2016 ~ Psalm 68.19-21

v19a ~ “Blessed be the Lord”

- ❖ What does this common phrase mean?
- ❖ How does this statement of fact compare to the command to “**ble**ss** the Lord**”?

v19b ~ “Who daily loads us with benefits”

- ❖ NIV ~ “Who daily bears our burdens”
- ❖ RSV ~ “Who daily bears us up”
- ❖ This text is not the main focus of today’s message
 - ✧ And all of these variations are true elsewhere in the Bible
 - ✧ The original Hebrew doesn’t contain the phrase “**with benefits**”
 - ✧ Translators believe it’s implied by “**God daily loading us**” i.e., filling our arms

v19c ~ “The God of our salvation!”

- ❖ He is “**the God of our salvation**” or “**our Savior**”
- ❖ The possessiveness here refers to salvation ~ “**our salvation**”

V20a ~ “Our God is the God of salvation”

- ❖ The possessiveness here refers to God ~ “**our God**”
- ❖ Let’s walk through this one word at a time
 - ✧ “**Our**” ~ indicates possession / God wants us to proclaim Him as our own
 - ◇ God “**owns**” us in the sense that He chooses not to “**disown**” us
 - ✧ “**God**” ~ God wants us to recognize Him for Who and What He is
 - ◇ The catechism questions asks, “**What is God?**”
 - ◇ This doesn’t deny God’s personhood / We can still ask “**Who is God?**”
 - ✧ “**is**” ~ The timeless verb of being
 - ✧ “**the**” ~ As differentiated from “**a**”
 - ✧ “**God**” ~ A god is required in salvation / Man in incapable of it
 - ✧ “**salvation**” ~ Salvation could be temporal or eternal
- ❖ These phrases confirm these two statements:
 - ✧ God alone saves us / God alone saves anyone
 - ◇ Even if a human agent is involved / God superintends

Xition: And now to the central portion of our message today . . .

v20b ~ “And to God the Lord belong escapes from death”

- ❖ We must study this phrase and its phrasing “escapes from death”
- ❖ A more natural phrasing may be, “to God the Lord belongs escape from death”
 - ✧ That way it reads more theoretical, more didactic, a bit more general
- ❖ But the way its written (**read it again**) makes it unique
- ❖ So because this phrasing strikes us (*me*) a bit odd let’s examine the context

Context ~ Before and After

- ❖ What comes right before our text is very interesting (**read v18**)
 - ✧ This is referenced explicitly by Paul in **Ephesians 4** (**read Eph 4.7-10**)
 - ✧ This is Christ rescuing His faithful from Hades after His victory on the cross
 - ✧ **Read Psalm 68.18-20** ~ So the escapes could refer to the many people saved
- ❖ But now let’s examine the context immediately after **v20**
- ❖ Read **Psalm 68.20-21** ~ Note the phrase “**who still goes on in his trespasses**”
 - ✧ This cannot refer to Hades, to those perhaps that remained after the rescue
 - ✧ It refers to the living, not the dead

Escapes from Earthly Death

- ❖ I believe the “**escapes from death**” refer to people while alive on earth
 - ✧ It’s true that these people Christ rescued from Hades escaped death
 - ✧ It’s true that those people Christ left in Hades did not escape death
 - ✧ But I link “**trespasses**” in **v21** back to those ignoring “**escapes from death**”
 - ✧ I see the “**But God...**” starting out **v21** connecting the two phrases
- ❖ My message today springs from this understanding
 - ✧ That “**escapes from death**” refer to this world, to believer and unbeliever alike
 - ✧ This is a temporal escape from earthly death
 - ✧ Not a permanent escape from spiritual death

Close Calls are Not Uncommon

- ❖ It’s understandable that soldiers or adventurers have close calls with death
 - ✧ They are engaged in very risky pursuits
- ❖ But the reality is that many people have “**close call**” stories
 - ✧ **!!!: Fireworks Friday** ~ Donna and Megan / close calls with tractors
 - ✧ Many of us have probably just forgotten them

Xition: Let’s talk a bit more about close calls . . .

Classes of Folks Experiencing Close Calls

- ❖ Soldiers ~ bullets or bombs, Colonel Washington (*bullet holes through jacket*)
- ❖ Adventurers
 - ✧ Explorers (*Antarctic expedition*), Mountain Climbers (*Everest*), Hikers (*127 Hours*), Skiers, Skateboarders, Motorcyclists, Bicyclists, Racecars, Speedboats, etc...
- ❖ Everyday People
 - ✧ Exposure to elements (*snow, flood, tornado, hurricane, mudslides*)
 - ✧ Avoiding falls, plane crashes, auto accidents

Instances I, or Others, Have Shared

- ❖ Sidney Poitier ~ nearly drowning
- ❖ Beck Wethers ~ “**Into Thin Air**” Everest climber left for dead twice
- ❖ Louie Zamperini ~ “**Unbroken**” WW2 Navigator
- ❖ Ernest Shackleton ~ “**Endeavor**” attempt to cross Antarctica (1914)
- ❖ WTC Towers ~ Only 1 man walked to safety from top of north tower
- ❖ Fellow student backing out of driveway nearly striking child
- ❖ Ethiopian fog ~ Phil’s story of running and falling
- ❖ Missed flight ~ Ask Mrs. Lois Kayser about a flight she missed long ago in Michigan

YouTube and Facebook

- ❖ Compilations of close calls
 - ✧ Near misses in car crashes
 - ✧ Cars running red lights and missing other cars or pedestrians
 - ✧ Car crashes resulting in pedestrians coming close to being killed

Life and Death

- ❖ We are easily lulled into a sense of complacency on this earth
- ❖ Isaiah said this of unbelievers, “**Come,’ one says, ‘I will bring wine, and we will fill ourselves with intoxicating drink; tomorrow will be as today, and much more abundant.’ (Is 56.12)**
- ❖ Jesus asked, “**.. those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” (Lk 13:4)**
- ❖ Jesus saw a teaching opportunity / What are we to learn from life-death events?

Xition: Different Lessons for Believers and Unbelievers

Lessons for the Unbeliever

- ❖ v21 ~ “But God will wound the head of His enemies, the hairy scalp of the one who still goes on in his trespasses.”
 - ✧ The message to the unbeliever is a wake-up call
 - ✧ Unbelievers are not to go on as before in their trespasses
 - ✧ **Read Heb 4.13**, “.. there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”
 - ✧ God’s message is clear, “**You must get right with Me before you die.**”
- ❖ But God is very patient with rebels
 - ✧ I read through **1st** and **2nd Kings** the past few weeks
 - ✧ Ahab was such a wicked ruler, but God withheld judgment due to his remorse
 - ✧ **Read 1 Kings 21.25-29** / Ahab repents after rebuke for murdering Naboth

Lesson for the Believer

- ❖ Life is precious and our God has blessed us wondrously
 - ✧ **III: PCH** ~ coastal trails, beautiful flowers, abundant thankfulness
 - ✧ **III: Clouds** ~ Tierney Erwin, “**God has good ideas for ceilings.**”
 - ✧ Hannah Swab, “**Clouds make things better.**”; “**Smashed cars and pretty clouds.**”
- ❖ We must live lives of thankfulness
 - ✧ **Read Ps 75.1**, “**We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near.**”

- “.. to God the Lord belong escapes from death”
- At times our conversations turn to “close calls”
- Next time you hear such a story from an unbeliever ask if it changed them
- And as a believer, embrace the wonder of life and give thanks to God

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,

And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

To God our Savior, who alone is wise,

Be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.

Amen *pause* Go in peace . . .