

ETERNAL IN THE HEAVENS -PSALM 119:81-104

Blessings of the Word #5

Alosha Ivanov was excited. Finally, he was getting his new car. Being a war veteran and a recently retired pilot for the Soviet National Airline, he was one of the lucky citizens - he only had to wait 6 years for his car to be delivered.

Clutching the postcard that told of his car's delivery in his hand, Alosha went down to the dealer. He was a little bit disappointed that the postcard was good for a Zhiguli Model 2104 because he had ordered a Model 2107, but after 6 years, why quibble over the wrong model of car. At least he would finally have one.

The postcard told him that he had to be at the dealership at 9:00 A.M. sharp with a certified check for 8,900 rubles - roughly \$14,200 dollars in U.S. currency. Ivanov got there a half an hour early just to be sure, and was surprised to find that he was the 31st person in line. 90 minutes later, he finally arrived at the window. The clerk simply gave him a ticket that entitled him to move through the next door to another long line. But after 6 years, what was a wait in another line.

2 hours later, Alosha heard the name "Ivanov" echo through the loudspeaker. Quickly, he got up and went to the clerk to get his new car. Well, not just yet. The clerk told him that he had to make a choice. Yes, they knew that he had ordered a blue car. But there were only red and beige ones left. Would he like one of those, or would he prefer to wait another 6 years. After 6

years, who was going to quibble over the color of the car. “Beige would be fine”, Alosa said.

30 minutes later, the mechanic drove the car out of the garage door. Immediately, Ivanov noticed that there were 4 lug bolts missing from the wheels that didn't have hub caps on them. As he got close enough to open the door, he further saw a handful of nuts and bolts laying on the seat. But the engine was running, and he finally had his car. Now all he had to do was pay the cashier's check at Window 12. But wait, it was lunchtime now. Everything would be closed down for the next hour.

Alosa sat patiently waiting for everyone to return from their lunch break. And then he got back in line at window 12 to pay for his car. After he exchanged his check for the keys, he clutched those keys in his hand as he went off to start his car. But the key wouldn't turn the lock in the door. He couldn't get into his car. They must have given him the wrong key. Back to the line before Window 12. Another hour wait and finally, Ivanov had the right keys to his car.

Now he had to go to the place where the technical passports were issued for automobiles. The technical passport was a document listing the serial numbers for the car - much like our registration would be. Another 90 minute wait in line. Finally, 5 rubles lighter, with license plates in hand, Alosa Ivanov went to drive his new car home. It was only 6:30 P.M. He had gotten the whole process done in just one day. With a great sense of accomplishment, he turned the key in the ignition and heard the engine start up. But then he

noticed the needle of the gas gauge resting on E. And it suddenly occurred to him, "The gas stations had all closed at 6:00". It's really no wonder that the Soviet Union collapsed, is it? While they were able to maintain a strong army and build nuclear missiles, they weren't able to meet the most basic needs of their citizens efficiently.

Patience. What a needed virtue this is in our lives. Webster defines patience as "the will or ability to wait or endure without complaint". How difficult that is for us - to wait and endure. . .without complaint. Yet we all realize that patience is a foundational virtue, one that other virtues are built upon.

The Apostle Peter wrote - "Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, patience; and to patience, godliness." 2 Peter 1:5,6. Peter put godliness on the ladder of virtue built on patience.

How does a person become patient? That question is answered by life itself - for most of life has a part in building patience into our character. But one of the primary ways in which we learn patience is through the Word of God. We want to begin by looking at the relationship of patience to the Word of God this evening.

*TURN TO PSALM 119:

We began a series looking at blessings that we receive from the Scriptures during the Sunday evenings a couple months ago. Now it's been several weeks since we have studied from Psalm 119 due to holidays and graduation and

missionary celebrations. So it would be appropriate for us to remind ourselves of the 10 truths we have already seen.

1. God's word as a pathway to blessing - "Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart" vs.2

2. The Scriptures cleansing and purifying our lives - "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. . .I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." vs. 9,11

3. Giving wisdom and counsel to us. "Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors." vs. 24

4. God uses his word to strengthen us emotionally. "My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word." vs. 28

5. The Bible helps to correct unworthy priorities in our life. "Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word." vs. 37

6. Scriptures give to us assurance of our salvation. "May your unfailing love come to me, O Lord, your salvation according to your promise; then I will answer the one who taunts me, for I trust in your word." vs. 41,42

7. God comforts us in our suffering with his word. "My comfort in my suffering is this; your promise preserves my life. . . I remember your ancient laws, O Lord, and I find comfort in them." vs. 50,52

8. The bible shows us the importance of obeying God. "I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands." vs. 60

9. God's word reveals his goodness to us. "You are good, and what you

do is good; teach me your decrees" vs. 68

10. It also reveals God's love to us. "May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant." vs. 76

What a source of blessing God's word is to us! Now notice with me as we begin this evening, how the Word of God can help us to become more patient.

And as we look at the next 3 sections of this Acrostic Psalm, it is as if we are going down from the peak of a pyramid, for each thought of the Psalmist will build towards the foundation.

1. READ PSALM 119:81-84

PS 119:81 My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word.

PS 119:82 My eyes fail, looking for your promise;

I say, "When will you comfort me?"

PS 119:83 Though I am like a wineskin in the smoke, I do not forget your decrees.

PS 119:84 How long must your servant wait?

When will you punish my persecutors?

Now here we find the author in some sort of trouble. The specific nature of the difficulty is not mentioned. But the writer is eager to get out of the pit of life that he finds himself in. He feels like a used wineskin. The Wineskin in these days was the equivalent to a bottle today. The wineskin was usually made out of goatskin with the hair on the outside, of course. It was used for carrying any kind of liquid drink, usually water or grape juice which would eventually turn

into wine with fermentation. The goat-skin was perfect for this purpose, for it was able to expand and stretch with the amount of liquid in it.

Now an empty wineskin was usually hung up in the kitchen area, awaiting further use. If it hung there unused for a great length of time, it would become stained with smoke from the kitchen fire and shriveled up. It would then not be useful to put any new wine in, for it would easily crack allowing the precious liquid to seep out. Jesus , himself, spoke of the foolishness of putting new wine in old wineskins.

Now our author had been going through some difficult times. Trials and afflictions had been his portion during this period in his life. He felt like an old, used wineskin, having been put up on the shelf, dried up, shriveled, browned and stained with smoke, useless.

The only salvation of the psalmist during this difficult period was his hope in the word of God. "My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word." 119:81.

There are times in life when all we have to hold on to is the word of God. Everything else seems to be going against us. But it is during those times that we find that the Word of God is enough. And the word of God helps us to be patient, to wait on the Lord.

William Carey is remembered today as the Father of Modern Missions. He had the faith to leave his position as a shoemaker at the age of 28, to follow God's call to become a pastor. As he was preaching on reaching the lost for Christ some 4 years later, he sensed God's call for him to go overseas as a

missionary. Now this was an unheard of move in his day, for the church did not send missionaries to other lands. In fact, some of the elders in his church chastised Carey's zeal. If God wants to save those in foreign countries, He'll do it without your help, they told Carey. But William Carey went anyway, and he paved the way for a new age in world-wide missions.

Late in his life, someone asked Carey the secret to his success. Without hesitation he answered, "I can plod. This is my only genius. I can persevere in any definite pursuit. To this I owe everything." Patience. This was the virtue that he found most important in his life. William Carey by this time had translated the whole Bible, or major parts of it, into 36 different languages. Just think of that. Learning 36 languages would be enough of a feat. But to translate the whole Bible or major parts of it into all these languages? At the end of his life, William Carey would say that it was the Word of God that had helped to bring patience into his life- and to that patience he owed all of his successes. I can plod. . . to this I owe everything.

2. But now let's move on to a second blessing found in the next section.

This is the blessing of perspective.

READ PSALM 119:89-93

PS 119:89 Your word, O LORD, is eternal;
it stands firm in the heavens.

PS 119:90 Your faithfulness continues through all generations; you
established the earth, and it endures.

PS 119:91 Your laws endure to this day,
for all things serve you.

PS 119:92 If your law had not been my delight,

I would have perished in my affliction.
PS 119:93 I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have preserved my life.

Now one of the major problems that we all have in dealing with the temporal problems of this life is the simple fact that we naturally look at earthly situations from an earthly perspective. That is natural for us, for we live here on the earth in earthly bodies. So then, in this time oriented world, it is natural for us to become impatient.

But one of the great blessings that we have in being a child of God is that we have a new position. Having been adopted into God's family, we now become a citizen of heaven itself. This allows us the great opportunity to see situations through the eyes of God.

*Now instead of seeing life from a purely temporal, time-oriented point of view, we realize that God's word is eternal, outside of the realm of time

*Now instead of experiencing the insecurity of shifting situations here in this life, we realize that God's word stands firm, settled in the heavens.

*Now instead of becoming disillusioned with the weaknesses of even our best friends who so often let us down, we experience the faithfulness of God that never changes.

*Now instead of seeing all of the inconsistencies and injustices that so often face us in this life, we have God's law that endures unchanging.

*And it is this different perspective which helps us to see life in a different manner, and allows us to be more patient with situations now.

Our perspective in life changes the way that we look at everything. There was a steamer called the Valencia which sunk off the Northwest coast of our nation on its way from Alaska to California. On that steamer was a man named Graham who had struck it rich in discovering gold in Alaska. Graham had risked everything in life to go to Alaska in search of gold. He had worked hard, braving great dangers to mine in hopes of finding gold. And then, when he had struck it rich, he had gathered all of his gold together to come back to civilization in California, to enjoy his riches for the rest of his life. When it was first announced that the ship was in trouble, Graham ran to the section of the ship where the valuables were being held, and gathered as much of his gold as he could carry so that he might not lose all of his vast treasure. And then, Graham weighed down by as much of his gold as he could carry, made his way to the lifeboats as quickly as he could. By the time Graham got to the lifeboats, they were all filled with people. According to the eye-witness accounts that we have, Graham then tried to buy his way onto a lifeboat. He offered a bag of gold to anyone who would trade places with him. When no one accepted that offer, he tried 2, then 3 bags of gold. But no one was foolish enough to accept Graham's offer. So Graham was left as the ship went down, bobbing in the ocean with his lifejacket, as his gold went to the bottom of the ocean with the ship. He had risked his life for gold, but then he had offered all of his gold for his life.

Under different circumstances, many of those passengers would have given just about anything they had for a bag of Graham's gold. But when their

lives were in danger, and when they realized that the gold wouldn't be of any lasting value to them, their perspective in life changed. Suddenly, the gold wasn't worth as much anymore. In fact, it became a liability, dead weight to hinder the escape of the lifeboat.

So it is in life. As long as we are looking at life simply from an earthly point of view, there are certain things that we will treasure that really don't have much lasting value at all. It is only as we look at life from our position with Jesus Christ in the heavenlies that we will gain God's perspective on life. We see life from God's point of view through His word.

*Since then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. Col. 3:1, 2

3. Now we come to a third blessing that we will look at this evening- that is the blessing of having greater understanding.

READ PSALM 119:98-100

PS 119:98 Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me.

PS 119:99 I have more insight than all my teachers,
for I meditate on your statutes.

PS 119:100 I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

*Now these verses have not been given to undercut our respect for those in authority over us. It is not a legitimate interpretation of the Scriptures for a student to not respect his teacher in school on the basis that the Bible says that I

know more than my teacher does anyway. It is not a legitimate interpretation of the Scriptures for a member of the church to not respect the elders who have been chosen by the church on the basis that he has more wisdom than they do anyway. No, the Word of God itself teaches us that no Scripture is of private interpretation. That means passages of Scripture must be interpreted in light of one another, and may not contradict other clear passages of God's word. The Bible clearly teaches the importance of authority in our lives, and the necessity of respecting authority. "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority" Heb. 13:17. So then, even if a teacher is ungodly, or we feel that an elder is in error, they are to be respected because of the position that they hold. There are sometimes when it is the position that we are respecting more than the person himself.

But having said that, in a very real sense, there are times when a person who is perhaps much younger, perhaps much less educated will have greater real understanding and insight than his teacher or elder. That comes as a person is saturated with wisdom from the Word of God. Let me illustrate this from a daily situation that many of our young people face. Here we have a teacher teaching in one of our public institutions of higher education. This teacher has some of the finest training that is available. This teacher has an earned doctor's degree, has studied under some very learned and respected scholars. But this teacher does not accept the Bible as God's word. This teacher has basically accepted the theory of evolution as the best explanation of the origin of this universe and life. In fact, this teacher is so convinced of an evolutionary

philosophy that he teaches the theory of evolution very dogmatically.

Now in this teacher's class is a young man or woman who is a Christian. This student accepts the bible as God's truth. This student has experienced the reality of God's quickening power, and has the Spirit of God indwelling within. This student accepts the Bible's account of the origin of the universe and the creation of man.

Now let me ask you this question. Who really has a better understanding of the reality of life? Who has the greater insight? The teacher who has the greater credentials recognized by man who has been blinded by the acceptance of error or the student who is far younger and far less experienced in life but who has accepted God's truth? Now the student should still respect the teacher for the position of authority that the teacher has. But the student should not accept the error taught by the teacher, for, in this case, the student actually has more understanding and insight than the teacher does. And that understanding and those insights come from a knowledge of God's word.

4. Now in conclusion we come to a section that emphasizes the clarity of direction that God's word gives to us. Notice with me that God's revelation to us gives us light for living. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." vs. 105.

There are 2 words here that are used for lumination. The first one, lamp, refers to the common oil lamp that was used to give light in the darkness. We have all seen these small clay lamps with 2 holes in them, one in which to pour oil, the other for a wick. These lamps were used to give lumination in the

house, used to read by even though the light cast off certainly was not like a 100 watt bulb, and if one were to walk out in the darkness, there were lamps with little handles on them that could be used to show the way. The second term, light, is the Hebrew word that is commonly used in connection with the light of the sun. It indicates a brightness, a clearness that is found in daylight. It is used in connection with the morning sun coming up to dispel the darkness of night. These 2 words used have lead some commentators to surmise that the Psalmists point is that the word of God gives direction to us at all times. It is the lamp during the dark times of life when trials or suffering seems to obscure the mind of God from us. It is also the bright light of the day sun during those more pleasant times of life when it is so easy to drift off the path of God's perfect will onto those attractive roads of lesser priorities which the enemy always brings into our vision. Very often, we need the light of God's word even more during the prosperous times of life, for we are often less sensitive naturally to the voice of the Lord during these seasons of life. During the times of trials and sufferings, we naturally turn to God and ask him what He is trying to teach us. We need to realize God's word as our guidebook all of the time in order to experience the kind of progressive, systematic growth that God would have for us, in order to make consistent progress along the pathway of life.

Do you have a regular, systematic time when you study the Bible every day? Or are your Bible study habits sporadic? The mature believer is the one who realizes the value of God's word at all times in his or her life. AT night, during the darkness of the trial or storm, God's word is a lamp to our feet, to

show us the way that God would have for us. During the day, when everything just seems to be going more our way, God's word is still absolutely necessary to show us the best way to live so that we aren't diverted by the many lesser priorities that the enemy would lure us with.

Solomon in the book of Proverbs gave a parallel statement to this verse in Proverbs 6:23. "For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life."

The wise person is the one who realizes that God's word is the way to life, real life, abundant life.

Now, in closing, let me put all of this together briefly. You will recall that at the beginning of our study, we said that we were going to build an inverted pyramid, with each section building on the one that followed. I trust that you have seen that occur.

*God's word is a lamp for our feet, a light for our path. The Scriptures have been given to us in order to give us direction in life.

*It is through our study of God's word that we gain understanding and insights. This brings wisdom to us. Wisdom that is greater than the mere accumulation of life experience. This is wisdom that can make us wiser than our teachers, with more insights than our elders.

*Now this greater understanding that we have of life through the Word of God gives a different perspective to us. The person who understands God's creative hand in the origin of man will have a different perspective on human life giving a basis for greater esteem and self worth than the person who

believes that man is the tail end of the evolutionary cycle, just after the baboon.

So then, greater understanding brings a different perspective.

*And with this fuller perspective comes more patience in life and more mature character development. It is far easier to be more patient when we understand the purposes of situations and circumstances in life and the way that God is using them to build greater character in our lives.