

Light Unto Our Path



*Messages by various speakers on various books
at the Streetlight Mission Church
in the 11:00 a.m. services of May 2007*

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May 6, 2007

Pastor Paul Aasman

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Psalm 51:7-9 “Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.”

Self Examination: Trusting Your Saviour

Reading: Psalm 51:1-9

Text: Psalm 51:7-9

You have heard, no doubt, of the story about Don Quixote. It is a story about a man who knew that there were enemies threatening the world, so he dressed up in a knight’s shining armour to save the world. But he did not know who the enemy was. He only knew that things were not right. He knew that he had to fight, but whom?

Don Quixote was slightly mad, that is, mentally unstable, and in his confusion, he started to attack windmills, believing that they were ferocious giants. Attacking windmills!

The spirit of Don Quixote is very much alive today. People know that things are not right. They know that there are enemies threatening the lives of people everywhere, but who are they? Who is the enemy? What is the problem that needs to be resolved?

Many people think that the problem is sickness and disease. Others, poverty, injustice, immorality, ignorance. Many people

put all their energy into overcoming these problems. But they may as well be attacking windmills. It is useless. Sure these are problems, but they are not the basic problem. There is a deeper problem afflicting mankind.

The deeper problem is sin, and sin's effects.

Psalm 32:1-2 says, "*Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.*"

David wrote that Psalm. Here David says that the worst enemy of mankind is sin. And the man who tries to heal human life by dealing with anything else first, is attacking windmills - imagining other things to be ferocious giants when the terrible giant is sin.

The Lord's Supper is for people who make no mistake in this respect. They are the people who know that what they need more than anything else is to be forgiven. That is what we saw last week. The Church is a gathering of people who have truth in the inner parts. They know that they have sinned against the most high God, and that this is what we need to deal with.

But a true believer knows more than this too. He not only knows that he is sinful, from birth, sinful from the day his mother conceived him. He also knows that Jesus Christ is his saviour.

David, the man who wrote Psalm 51, knew that his God was a loving God. God would heal him where it mattered most.

God would forgive him all his sins. He prays in verse 7, "*Cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean.*"

What does that mean? Well, hyssop is a kind of plant that priests used during the worship services in the temple. The branches and leaves of the hyssop plant had lots of tiny hairs on it so that when a person dipped the branch in water, it would hold a lot of water. The priest would dip the hyssop plant in water and shake it over people to symbolically cleanse them. He would also dip a branch in the blood of a sacrifice and shake it over the altar and sometimes even over people to symbolically cleanse them from sin.

David, then, is speaking symbolically. He asks God in a figurative way, to shake the hyssop branch over him so that he might be cleansed from his sin. David urgently wanted God to do that because he knew how sinful he was. He had committed adultery and he had committed murder. He knew that if God were to punish him for his sin, he would be destroyed. His sins were so bad.

But he believed that God loved him and wanted to forgive him. All he had to do was to confess his sin, break down and admit how sinful he was, and God would heal him. "*Cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean.*" Yes, I will be clean. David did not doubt it. He trusted in God's love. If God forgives, then the

enemy falls. Sin is overcome. Life is healed at its most basic point. And if God washes him he will be whiter than snow.

And so he prays in verse 8: *“Let me hear joy and gladness.”* What could be better than to hear that the enemy of our life is overcome? The songs of triumph, the shouts of victory, the joy of winning is the happiest sounds of all. David knows that. He has heard those shouts when God granted his army to triumph over other enemies - the Philistines, Moabites, Edomites and other enemies of God’s people. But the happiest sound is the sound of victory, which God’s people sing because God has given them triumph over their sins, when God has taken away the guilt of their evil deeds.

So once more, David prays to God in verse 9, *“Hide your face my sins and blot out my iniquity.”* David prays again, not because he was afraid that he might not get it, but to acknowledge that God is the source of his greatest victory. God will win the battle against sin. And he prays again to give him that victory. Wash away my sins.

We need to pray always. We must never stop praying God to forgive our sins.

When God sent his Son to be born of the Virgin Mary, the angel said, *“He will save his people from their sins.”* That is what Jesus came for. He came to fight the greatest battle for you. He did not fight windmills. Yes, he healed people of their diseases, he

restored people who were injured, he granted people things they never had, like sight and speech, and he fed people who were hungry. But these were only the small things. The great battle was sin.

He took the guilt of our sins on him and he overcame the guilt. He bravely bore our sins to the cross on Calvary and he suffered the punishment. He descended into hell. And he was not overcome. He overcame our sins, and then he announced, *“It is finished.”* The battle was won. There remained only for him to die and rise again. There remains still only to complete the victory he had begun. There remains to gather together the people of God into the Church of Jesus Christ, and when the full number is gathered in, he will return with the clouds of heaven to take us to himself. He will give us victory over the lesser problems too - over disease, over disabilities, over injustice, over fears and mental afflictions. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

Jesus Christ is gathering his church together. He gathers together those who know their sins and who know that they are completely forgiven by the work of Jesus Christ. They say to God, *“Cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean. Wash me in the love of Jesus Christ, and I will be whiter than snow.”* No sin will cling to me, even though I have done such terrible things. They are forgiven by the Father for Jesus’ sake.

And we, God's people will hear joy and gladness when our groaning and fears because of sin are removed. And in order that this song of gladness might be fixed deeper in our hearts, he gave to us the sacrament of the Lord's Supper - to give to each of you a deep assurance that he has given his body and shed his blood for you. But you must believe - believe that your biggest problem is your sins (because you have examined yourself and confessed your sins), and believe that Jesus is the perfect and complete Redeemer.

Whether you come to the Lord's Table, or must witness it apart for a little while yet, may we be blessed by this gift of God's grace to the church.

May 13, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

Psalm 51:17 "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

Self Examination: Responding to Grace

Reading: Psalm 51
Text: Psalm 51:17

Have you ever had to make a down payment on a purchase before?

If you want to buy something, but you don't have quite enough money with you, you can give a down payment. You become the owner because you have given the down payment -

you'll just have to give the rest of the money that you haven't paid yet, later. For instance, you go to Canadian Tire to buy a bike. You have \$30, but the bike costs \$150. You could give the store \$30 as a down payment. The bike becomes yours. But before you pick it up, you need to pay the rest of the money. How much is it? \$120.

It has probably happened that you have paid a down payment before. But have you ever received one? Would you like to have one? You should get one today! Not from town hall, not from the provincial or federal government, but from the governor of the universe, from your God! He wants to give you a down payment, because he wants to own something. He already owns your body (he created it). What he really wants is your heart.

Yes, God wants your heart. He wants all of you.

He is so eager to own you, that he gives a down payment. The Apostle Paul says that the Holy Spirit is "*a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*" (Eph 1:14) However, if God can't have your heart, then he'll take his down payment back. And if God takes the down payment back, you've got no hope, no future. Only to live out the days of your meaningless little life under the terrifying shadow of an angry God.

For David, nothing could be worse. But he had learned to fear. He had sinned dreadfully. You remember what he had done.

He had stolen another man's wife, and then he her husband murdered. Then he became arrogant: I'm a king. I'm allowed to do this. And he turned his back on God.

But after he had suffered deeply in his spirit, he repented. He confessed his sin. He was totally broken-hearted and he begged for God's mercy and forgiveness. He knew that if he were not forgiven, he would lose the down payment. So he prayed to God, "*Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.*"

For the Holy Spirit is our life. Remember, he is the Lord and giver of life. Without him we're spiritually dead. But when he is active in our lives, we get a little bit of what it will be like in heaven. He is a down payment. He begins to wipe the tears away. He begins to heal the madness of sin. He begins to purify our heart and to renew a steadfast spirit - that is, he makes us want what is right and the ability to actually begin to do it. He plants the joy of salvation and sustains you with a willing spirit.

That is the grace of God. He wants you that badly. He will have your heart.

So how do we get the down payment? By receiving his grace. God is moving in this place, walking among us, distributing his grace to you. Humble your heart and offer it to him. Do not be proud. Do not resist him. Confess your sins; believe in his

gracious forgiveness for Jesus sake. And you will receive a richer measure of his Spirit. He will never leave you.

We receive that down payment of our heavenly joy when we listen to the preaching and accept God's grace with a believing heart. We receive that down payment when we witness the bread broken and the cup of the Lord given. We receive that down payment when we eat the broken bread and drink of the cup.

This is a day of God's generosity. Open your heart and receive rich gifts from our gracious God.

May 20, 2007
Rev. Doug Vandeburgt

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

Comfort in all your troubles

Reading: 2 Corinthians 1:1-11
Text: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

This morning God's word will speak to you about *comfort in all your troubles*. As we listen to God's word about comfort let's begin with understanding what the word *comfort* means and afterwards we'll talk about *all your troubles*.

What does it mean to *comfort* someone? Literally it means to give strength to someone. The word *fort* means *strong*. By giving strength to someone you lessen their grief because of the troubles they face.

Now I have a question for you. Have any of you studied or learned the first question in the Heidelberg Catechism? That question is *what is your only comfort in life and death?* As a Christian what is the only thing that gives you strength in your life and even in the face of death?

Does anyone remember the answer? The answer is *'I am not my own but belong...to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.'* The only comfort of the Christian is to belong to Jesus Christ.

Why is belonging to Jesus Christ a source of comfort in your life? Because no matter what is happening in your life, even when you are facing troubles, the Lord Jesus is working for your good. He is with you and me in the midst of our troubles and no matter what difficulties or troubles we face he doesn't stop working for our benefit. He is on our side and he uses his power on behalf of all who believe in him. And that, beloved, is the greatest source of comfort any person can ever have.

Now I want you to look at what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:3. He writes, *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort..."* Before we confess that it is God who comforts you in

all your troubles I want you to notice why he comforts you. He comforts you because of Jesus Christ and because it is in his character to comfort. He is the Father of compassion. He is the God of all comfort. Because he is compassionate he gives comfort. It is in God's character to comfort. Here we are reminded of the words of that hymn we will sing after this sermon: *Great is Thy Faithfulness – thy compassions they fail not.* Why does the compassion of God not fail? Why does he always comfort us in all our troubles? Because in Jesus Christ he is the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.

Paul had experienced that in his troubles. That is why he says in verse 4, *"who comforts us in all our troubles..."* Paul tells us in verse 8 that he had suffered troubles in the province of Asia. There he had been under great pressure. When you see that word *troubles* you need to think of pressure. Trouble is that feeling that things are closing in on you. Trouble is that feeling that you are in a tight spot. Paul had that feeling in Asia. He was beaten because he was a missionary and because of the beatings he received he thought he was going to die. He says, *"Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death..."*

In all that trouble he experienced God's comfort. He experienced that comfort that comes from knowing and believing that the Lord Jesus was his faithful Saviour. He knew that even if

he did die that would not be the end for God raises the dead. So he set his hope on God who delivered him from his troubles.

Can you say what Paul says? Paul said God comforts us in all our troubles. Can you say he comforts you in all your troubles? Your troubles and my troubles are different from Paul's troubles. Paul was troubled because he was an apostle. We are not apostles but as Christians we still face troubles don't we? I read the bulletin today and I see people with health troubles. I see people having troubles because of where they live. Maybe others of you have troubles because someone you know is sick or has died. Maybe you have troubles in your relationships with other people – people you live with, family members or friends. Maybe you have troubles because of a particular sin or the strong temptation to sin. Maybe you have troubles related to money. There are so many different things that we can call troubles or hardships or difficulties in life. Troubles are not just things on the outside but they are also on the inside – in our mind and in our soul. We all face troubles of some kind and Satan uses so many of our troubles to try take away our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But whatever your trouble God the Father comforts you in the Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to notice that Paul says he comforts us in *all our troubles*. Do you see the word *all*? There is no trouble that will separate you from God's love. There is no trouble too big for God to deliver you from. There is no trouble

too great so that he cannot comfort you. He comforts you in all your troubles. Trust in him beloved. Believe in him. I am weak but he is strong, yes Jesus loves me. Put your hope in him for in Jesus Christ the Father has promised you that his compassions do not fail. Great is his faithfulness!

And if he is your comfort in all your troubles then you have an important job to do. Do you know what that job is? Paul says it this way, "*so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.*" God comforts you so that you can comfort others. I will say that again – God comforts you so that you can comfort others. That is what Paul is doing as he writes. He is comforting the Corinthians with the comfort he has received. That is what I am doing this morning as I preach to you. For the comfort I am telling you about I have received from God through Jesus Christ in the midst of the troubles in my life, and yes ministers have troubles just like everyone else. And what Paul did and what I am doing for you God calls you to do for one another. Do you want to comfort someone in their troubles? Then point them to the one who has comforted you in all your troubles. Then together we can give praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.

May 27, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

Genesis 6:14-16 “So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Make a roof for it and finish the ark to within 18 inches of the top. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks.”

The Ark

Reading: Genesis 6:9-7:10
Text: Genesis 6:14-16

You have heard before, of ‘the silent killer’. It is an expression that was invented by the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation to describe the danger of stroke. I don’t mean to alarm anyone, but a person can suffer a stroke suddenly and without any warning. If you don’t know the small signs that often precede a stroke, your chances of survival or of recovery, become much smaller. When you see the signs, you should get medical attention immediately even though the signs seem so small.

There is another great danger hanging over the human race. Those that do not take warning will not recover or survive. People should take warning and make necessary changes.

This great danger hanging over the human race is the judgement of God. And there are many signs by which God is telling people everywhere that his judgment is coming. But the

terrible fact is, more people pay attention to the warning signs of a stroke than of the wrath of God.

Jesus warned that the day of God’s judgment would come upon the world like a thief in the night. Many of you know what it is like to have someone steal things from you. The thief perhaps came without warning. Jesus describes how surprised people will be in Matthew 24:36-38 - “*No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.*” And in Luke Jesus extends the comparison to another time in Luke 17:26-29 - “*Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.*” The point is driven home in verse 30 “*It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.*”

Now, it would not be fair if God judged the world without first warning people beforehand, would it? A judge should warn people well ahead of time that certain actions will be punished. In the days of Noah, God had clearly done that. That is what our text tells us.

God came to Noah and commanded him to build a great big ship, called 'the ark'. It was enormous: 450'long x 75'wide x 45'high. Engineers have calculated that the ship would have a displacement of 40,000 tonnes. The whole thing was made of wood. Just the skeleton of the ship would take an enormous amount of work, but then just as much work would go into the planks of wood that had to be fastened to the sides, and the decking (three levels) and a roof.

We don't know what kind of technology they had at that time, but they probably did not have computerized sawmills. Perhaps they didn't even have sawmills at all. That means the trees had to be cut down by hand, and then the planks and beams had to be cut with saws, by hand, or with axes and adzes. How many people do you think worked on this? Four. No doubt, the women were hard at work too, because it does not seem that Noah's sons had any children. So how long do you think this would have taken? When you calculate the numbers from the genealogy, and when you consider the words of 6:3, it looks like it

took 120 years. 120 YEARS! That is almost as long as Canada has been a country!

So what Noah was doing would definitely have become well known. Not only because it was a fantastically huge project that would have required tremendous engineering skills, and cutting edge technology, but because it was being applied to something that to many appeared very strange, even bizarre. He was building this enormous ship in the middle of a field. What purpose could that serve? "It will never float", people said. It was huge and incredibly heavy. How would he ever be able to move it to water?

People naturally thought that Noah was a nut-case. A crazy man. So they asked him, "Why are you doing this Noah? Don't you see you are far from the sea?"

Then Noah would speak and tell them that God was angry with the world, that God was going to judge the world and that everything would die. Noah would tell them that they were being very wicked and God was deeply grieved by their sins, violence, selfishness, and lack of respect for their creator.

Did that bear any fruit? No. Not even a little bit. Nobody listened to Noah. Nobody repented and admitted that they were sinning against their neighbour and against their God. Instead, they made fun of Noah. And worse, they mocked him, hated him, despised and persecuted him. Peter calls Noah a "preacher of

righteousness”. He preached by his actions, by the commitment of his life. That great big boat dominated his whole life. It was everything. It consumed him and his wife and his three sons and their wives. But he built it because God commanded him to. He built it because he was a man of faith as described in Hebrews 11:7 – *“By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”*

Now, do you know what happens to preachers of righteousness? Abel was a preacher of righteousness. Cain could not bear it. He killed his brother. Recall how John describes it in 1 John 3:12 - *“Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.”*

And that was what Noah was. Therefore, he was not just rejected; he was despised, hated and probably persecuted. Jesus was not just rejected. Because all his deeds were righteous and those around him were evil, they could not tolerate him so much as to live. They killed him, the preacher of righteousness.

The world today is poised for destruction, not by water but by fire. We are Noah to our generation. It is our duty to witness to our neighbour. We don't need to do it first of all by our words, but by our life. Just as Noah committed his whole existence, 120 years to building the ark, so you must commit your whole life and your

work to God, as a thank offering, an act of love for the God who loved you in Jesus Christ.

And when they ask you why? Do not be afraid. You have been anointed with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, to speak of Jesus. You might seem like an oddball, and your commitment to Bible study and the Church and works of Christian love as strange as building a huge ship far inland. But God will show that your choice to serve him by faith was exactly the right thing. Do it for love of God, and for love of your neighbour.

