

Psalm 89: 1-18; “The Joyful Sound”, A Sermon delivered in the Morning Worship Service on August 30th, 2020, by Pastor Paul Rendall, to show forth God’s Faithfulness, following the Great Storm on August 10th, 2020.

This Psalm was written, it says in the inspired heading, as a contemplation of Ethan the Ezrahite, probably at the time of the great decline of the Davidic kingdom in the time of Rehoboam, Solomon’s son. It was a time when Ethan, and many in Israel, were wondering whether the Lord’s lovingkindnesses had failed, as it says in verse 49, and whether God would continue to be merciful in relation to the covenant that He had made with David. The kingdom was divided; the people’s loyalties were divided between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. It was kind of like the situation in our country today. But these words show us that the Spirit revealed to Ethan that God’s faithfulness would continue, and that it would continue forever.

This truth of God’s faithfulness is the “joyful sound” which is talked about in verse 15 which is declared to God’s people by God Himself; to their minds and to their hearts. So this morning, I would like to ask whether you personally have come to know this joyful sound; of experientially knowing God’s faithfulness to you, and believing that it will be shown to you, to all generations? 4 Considerations of God’s Faithfulness are given to us in these verses. 1st of all – The joyful sound of God’s faithfulness to be merciful to His people forever. 2nd – The joyful sound of His faithfulness to His covenant in all generations. And 3rd – The joyful sound of God’s faithfulness to give us, in our walk with Him, the light of His countenance.

1st of all – The joyful sound of God’s faithfulness to be merciful to His people forever. (verses 1 and 2)

I do not think that we can quite understand just how quickly that things can change in a nation like ours in one generation, from what it was 25-50 years ago, to what it is like in our country now. Who is it who has brought about this change? Well, it is God who brings about all change in relation to the peace and prosperity of a nation. He does so, in relation to our righteousness or our sins. Righteousness exalts a nation. Sin is a reproach to any people. The truth is, that if Christians and non-Christians are not faithful to the Bible, to obey God’s truth, in all of its details, that God will bring national judgments to our nation. And we should understand that He will faithfully judge each nation and each person according to their works. Those people who listen to Him and take heed to do His word, He blesses them abundantly, spiritually, no matter what national judgment they are involved in. We cannot insure that others will be faithful to God. But we can take steps to be faithful ourselves and set a good example for them.

And we can praise God and sing of His mercies forever; that as our faithful God, He will see to it that we will be taught His ways and that we will receive correction where we need it. Psalm 119, verse 75 – “I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.” “Let your merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Your word to Your servant.” You see, these chastisements come to Christians as a result of God’s faithfulness. Do you praise God, and sing of His mercies in this holy way when you are afflicted; when you are chastised? God disciplines you because He loves you. Mercy is your not receiving from God the punishment that you deserve for your sins because of His promise in relation to Christ. His promise is that you will be forgiven of all of your sins. And when you have believed the gospel, that He will choose to remember them no more.

How awful a thing it is, when you have done something that another person thought was wrong, and they continually bring it up to you, to remind you. Has this happened to you? They never seem to be able to forgive you, and to get over it, or to forget it, even when you have confessed that what you did was wrong. But think about, if God was this way? Every sin that

you ever committed, He would remind you of it, He could hold it over you, He could make it apparent to you that He could never trust you again, never bless you again? According to His strict justice, this is what He will actually do, in relation to those people who will not have Him; will not listen to His word, will not cry out to Him for mercy. But if you are in Christ, if you have trusted in Him, you have received mercy. This is the glorious truth of what it means to be saved. If you have believed in Christ, God holds nothing over you. He will not bring up your sins before your face, ever again, because of Christ. You are forgiven! Your guilt is taken away!

Perhaps you are not saved yet. Oh, you should not put it off! You should understand that God can remember well all the sins which you have ever committed in your whole life. And if you do not repent of those sins, if you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, certainly God will bring them up to you on the Day of judgment. The ungodly will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. But if you will believe in the perfect work of Christ on your behalf; that He obeyed God's law fully and perfectly at every point, and He took your place as a sinner, in bearing your judgment at the cross; if you will believe in this, receiving Him and His atonement for sins, which is so freely offered to you now, you will be forgiven and God will choose not to remember your sins any longer, forever and forever. He will not bring them up in the Day of Judgment, and how good and kind He will be in that great Day to all who are His own. But does this mean that since you are saved that God will never again deal with you over sins, which He sees in your life?

Is this not the problem which often comes up, in our living our Christian life in God's sight, to one degree or another, according to whether we have been obedient or disobedient as a Christian? It is not that we have not been shown mercy. It is not that we are not forgiven. But it is often the case that we do not understand all that we need to learn, in relation to our obeying God's word in all of its particulars, and keeping His commandments in the way that He can be pleased with us. This is not a matter of legalism. It is a matter of righteousness in your heart and life after you have believed in Christ for salvation. Can a person really know God, and yet God not be pleased with them? Yes, it really is possible. David was a man after God's own heart, and yet he fell into sin with Bathsheba, another man's wife, had her husband killed by putting him in the front line of battle where he knew that he would probably die, and he thought that he would get away with it.

But, of course, he did not. God had Nathan the prophet come to David and confront him, and after he was confronted, David told Nathan that he had sinned. And Nathan said that David's sins had been forgiven; that he would not die, but that certain consequences would come to him, which God would providentially order in his life. God taught David what righteous heart obedience involved. Day and night God's hand was heavy upon him. God knew that he needed this; the confession of his sins and his forsaking them, and his learning to keep God's law. In the Bible we find that there were great and magnificent promises which were given to king David. But in verse 30 of this Psalm that we are studying, it says – "If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, if they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." "Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail."

I hope that you can now see the faithfulness of God in His mercy to a believer. I want to remind you that if you are saved, it was God's mercy that He saved you through Christ, in the first place. You did not save yourself from your sins. You simply believed in the gospel. You didn't believe in what you were doing by your works would make you right with God, so that He could save you. You did not believe that you could change your own heart without His working. You may have even heard the gospel over and over again before you really believed it, and were saved. How then were you turned, dear Christian, to see the love of Jesus Christ? He showed

you your own sinfulness and He showed you the beauty of Christ. He turned you to behold in the gospel, His obedience, and His sufferings in your place. Was this not His Spirit's working that caused this to come about, in accordance with His mercy? Well, yes it was!

Remember Ephesians chapter 2, and verse 4? "But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Oh, how merciful God is in the New Birth. You as a Christian did not bring about your own conversion to Christ by your own free will. No, you were made willing to trust in Christ in the day of His power. The Lord, being merciful to you by His Spirit blew the wind of His gracious influences upon Your heart, according to the eternal purpose of God, in the exact time of His purpose, and He mercifully illumined your darkness. You you saw that you were a sinner, and you saw that you needed Christ. You found God true to His word in the gospel, and you found life in Jesus name because God was merciful to you, the sinner. Now you sing of His faithfulness.

2nd – Let's think together about the joyful sound of God's faithfulness to His covenant in all generations.

Verse 3 says – "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: 'Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.'" We must ask ourselves this very sad question: How could David's seed be established forever, when we find that Solomon was unfaithful to the Lord at certain critical points, and his grandson Rehoboam lacked the wisdom to be able to keep the kingdom from becoming divided in his days. How did Israel, in one generation, go from the glory of Solomon's peaceful reign, to the fear and anguish and uncertainty of Rehoboam's reign? How then could mercy be built up forever to all succeeding generations, with such unfaithful kings as were seen in Israel? Well, let's be clear, this unfaithfulness began with Solomon's sins during his peaceful reign. He was unfaithful to God in certain ways which he should not have been. He was unfaithful to God, and unfaithful to the commandments of God's word which were specifically given to him as the king of Israel.

He disobeyed God express commands in Deuteronomy 17: 14-20. Listen to it – "When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother." "But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.'" "Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself." "Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites." "And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel."

Now this was the Old Testament, Old Covenant law which was given to the kings of Israel. These commands were negative, to show Solomon what he should not do; that is, he should not multiply horses, which he did. And he should not multiply wives for himself, which he did, in a very great and extensive way. And he should not multiply gold and silver for himself, which he also did in a mighty way. Positively, he was told that when he sat on the throne that he should write for himself a copy of this law, the law of the Old Covenant, and he should read it all the days of his life, so that he would learn to fear the Lord, and be careful to observe all the words of

the law, so that his heart would not be lifted up above his brethren, and that he would multiply his days. This, evidently Solomon did not do. He may have written it down, but he did not read the book of the law all the days of his life. And this is why he fell into the other sins which were forbidden for him to do.

And so what did the Lord do? He brought Solomon under his discipline. It says in 1st Kings 11: 11, verse 9 - "So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord commanded." Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant." (that is - to Jeroboam the kingdom was given, in Rehoboam's days) But let me ask - Did these evil actions of Solomon nullify the covenant that is mentioned in verse 3 of our text, the covenant made with David, that his seed would be established forever to build up his throne to all generations? No, it did not.

And the reason was, that the Mosaic law and the kingly commands which I read to you before, even though they were not kept by these men, by way of their fulfilling the stipulations under that covenant, yet Christ who was the promised Messiah of the Hebrew people, and their king who was descended from them, would fulfill all of the Mosaic law, including these stipulations. This is the reason that God could make the promise of verse 3 to have a good fulfillment for all of his elect chosen kings and people. It was because of what it says in verse 3 - "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David, Your seed I will establish forever. That is, David as the earthly king of Israel was a type of the greater King of Israel, our Lord Jesus Christ, and thus all of the promises given by God to the Jews in the Old Covenant regarding their land, their nation, and their people, would be fulfilled by His fulfilling the law.

All of the curses which the disobedient elect kings of Israel brought upon themselves, the guilt of all those curses would be borne by Christ. All of their failure to do God's will would be forgiven by God, through what Christ would do for them in His life, death, and resurrection. For when Christ died, He died as the King of the Jews. All three of these kings that I have mentioned had sins which broke God's Mosaic covenant and the kingly commands that were contained within it. But Christ in fulfilling the law, and in suffering in their place, for all of their sins when He went to the cross, all of the blessings of salvation would still be theirs. And this would include God's disciplining them and bringing them to repentance; and, their over time, rendering to Him a better obedience. They were complete in Christ by God's applying these blessings to them retroactively, based upon the certainty of what Christ would come to do and accomplish. Our Confession says in Chapter 8, Of Christ the Mediator, Paragraph 6 - "Although the price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ until after His Incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefit thereof were communicated to the elect in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises types, and sacrifices wherein He was revealed..."

This is seen more clearly when we look at the exact wording of the Davidic covenant which is found in 2nd Samuel 7, verses 12-29. You will recall that when David got old, that he wanted to build the Lord a house. David was dwelling in a house of cedar and he was concerned that God had no house to dwell in. And so he brought the matter to the prophet Nathan's attention and Nathan initially told him that he should do all that was in his heart. But God Himself later came and spoke to Nathan the prophet in the night and said to him - "Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says the Lord, 'Would you build a house for Me to dwell in?' "I will build a house for you." In verse 12 He says to David - "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your father, I will

set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.” “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”

“I will be his Father, and he shall be My son.” “If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.” “But My mercy shall not depart from him, and I took from Saul.” This “I will chasten him” is referring to king Solomon and his reign in the sense of the blessing; his being disciplined by God, but not sent to hell for his sins as Saul was. God’s mercy would not depart from Solomon as it had from Saul because it was New Covenant saving mercy that was shown to Solomon, based upon what Christ would do. The words – “I will be his Father, and he shall be My son, are quoted by the apostle Paul in Hebrews chapter 1, verse 5, as referring to Christ. So the covenant with David had Messiah for its object, and Solomon was a type of Christ, and we see here that sometimes the Scripture has a double application. Are you not glad? Glad for Solomon, and glad also for yourself, that salvation is not by the law? It is based upon the New Covenant with Christ

For God says in verse 34 of Psalm 89, “My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.” “Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; it shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky.” Now, it is not David’s literal throne that would endure as the sun before God, it was Christ’s spiritual throne, His rule over His Church, which will endure forever. And although David’s elect seed would endure forever, it is Christ spiritual seed, His Church composed of all elect believers, Jew and Gentile, who shall endure forever. Let us see that the typical does have a spiritual reality to it. David and Solomon experienced the fulfillment of all the promises of God to them. But we should see that the typical gives way in New Testament times to a much greater fulfillment to both Jews and Gentiles. This is the joyful sound for the one who understands, and who can spiritually apply these truths to themselves.

When we think of what happened in the days of Rehoboam and Jeroboam we see the fulfillment of verses 38-45 of our text; that apparently, by the judgments that He was bringing, that God had renounced the covenant of His servant David; that God had profaned His crown by casting it to the ground. In judgments that He brought, He was breaking down all of his hedges and bringing his strongholds to ruin. Ethan goes on then, to talk prophetically about how God turned back the edge of his sword, and did not sustain him in battle. No doubt this was the reality of things in Ethan’s days. But I would say that we should see this part of the Psalm typically as well. For it is typical in terms of what took place at the crucifixion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. We should not see God’s “anointed” there in verse 38 as referring ultimately to Rehoboam, or Josiah, or Zedekiah, or any others of the kings of Israel of that day or days following in Old Testament times. We should see that the Lord’s anointed there in that place as referring to Christ, whom God poured out His wrath upon.

You see, this was why Ethan was so perplexed, when he saw such great and precious promises of covenant faithfulness which had been given to David, and apparently, God was renouncing them. Ethan saw judgment, death and destruction coming upon Israel, and it made him think that God had renounced the covenant of His servant David. But no, that could never be. For God had sworn that it would be established in Christ. It would be established in the heavens by Christ, but Ethan did not understand that it would be established through Christ’s sufferings on behalf of sinners, and even on behalf of elect kings. It would be Christ’s Kingly crown that would be profaned and cast to the ground. It would be Christ who would be crowned with a crown of thorns. At the cross, all of the hopes of Christ’s disciples were dashed. God acted as though He was furious with His anointed. Christ was treated by the unrighteous leaders of Israel as one cast off and abhorred. All who passed by him from that group hissed at Him, saying – “He saved others, Himself He cannot save.”

Remember the two on the road to Emmaus, after Christ rose from the dead, what they said to him? They said – “We thought that it was He who would redeem Israel.” They thought all hopes of redemption by Him were gone, but in reality the Lord Jesus, on the cross, was ratifying the covenant of redemption and establishing the all the blessings of the New Covenant of Grace through the shedding of His precious blood. In His resurrection from the dead the Father made Him His firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth, and the firstborn from the dead as it says in verse 27 of our text. An application is in order here. When God brings His judgments upon nations, kings, and kingdoms for their sins, let us never forget that He is ever faithful to His promises, and to His covenant which He has made with Christ. And because of this, He is ever faithful to His own people.

Things may look very bad for us; they may look very bad for the cause of Christ at times. God has ordained judgments to come upon sinful wicked people in our nation, and we sometimes feel some of the effects of those judgments coming upon ourselves as Christians, don't we? And yet we must believe that God is faithful to His covenant. We must believe, because His word tells us, that He loves us very much because of Christ. And so, we must conclude that He will be with us, doing us good, in ways too many for us to count; that, even in the worst of situations and in the midst of our greatest difficulties, He will be keeping our souls and helping us through His grace to be strong and do His will. Let us have the faith to believe that. Let us remember that He is faithful, and that He will help us and be with us always.

3rd – The joyful sound of God's faithfulness, to give us in our walk with Him, the light of His countenance.

Verse 15 says – “Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!” “They walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance.” “In Your name they rejoice all day long, and in Your righteousness they are exalted.” “For You are the glory of their strength, and in Your favor our horn is exalted.” “For our shield belongs to the Lord, and our king to Holy One of Israel.” Sometimes our experience of going through the national judgments which God brings is one which brings us great discouragement. In verse 49, Ethan says – “Lord, where are Your former lovingkindnesses, which You swore to David in Your truth?” He couldn't find God's blessings coming to him in the midst of all the difficulties. And what was just as bad, he mentions in verse 50 – “Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your servants – How I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the people, with which Your enemies have reproached, O Lord, with which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed.”

In other words, there were many people who were blaming the king and those who supported him, for all of their troubles. Ethan, who was a loyal citizen, wanted to see good things come to the nation. He wanted to help to bring about good leadership decisions, and initiate good things to strengthen the nation, but he wasn't seeing any progress forward in that, at all. But he knew what you and I should know, that in even the most difficult times, when God's people cry to God, that He will hear them, He will answer them in His appointed time. He will be faithful to give them the light of His countenance in their walk. They will, in time, be able to rejoice all the day, and by Christ's righteousness they will be exalted.

Will you not remember this dear Christian? For it is the joyful sound of God's faithfulness. Even though you may sometimes be a child of light walking in darkness, you still should know, that if you trust in the name of the Lord, and you rely upon your God, that He will come to you, the one who waits for Him. Isaiah 40, verse 31 says – “They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” Teach me Lord, teach me Lord, to wait. Let us always remember that even in the worst of times and the worst of situations, that God is always doing right; even when we are not able to discern it, and therefore, let us trust in Him, and pray to Him that He would lift up the light of His countenance upon us, and give us peace.

