

THE COUNSEL OF THE LORD  
Psalm 33:11

Intro: We as the Lord's people find a great deal of peace in such verses as Romans 8:28 and Eph. 1:11. We can add Eph. 3:10, 11. And 2 Tim. 1:9 is another verse which belongs to that same group is one which I read to you this morning: 1 Tim. 1:9, where speaking of "the power of God," Paul wrote,  
Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling,  
not according to our works,  
but according to his own purpose and grace,  
which was given us in Christ Jesus  
before the world began.

Sometimes, as we look at our circumstances, we are inclined to wonder who is in charge of our lives. It may seem, as it often did to the Psalmists, that people were exercising a greater influence in their lives than God was, especially if there appeared to be little or no evidence of answered prayer.

Now we know that if God's purposes are to be fulfilled in our lives, He must have control over everything, and not just us. It has to mean that He is sovereign over all people and over all events. This would mean that, if God does not keep trials from us, He must be able to do something that shows His power to an even greater degree. That means that He can and will turn an apparent curse into a blessing. He will make the wrath of men to praise Him, as Psalm 76:10 says that he will.

The Lord took the mighty King Nebuchadnezzar through a very humbling experience to teach him about the sovereignty of God. When the trial was over, he came out talking like this:

I blessed the most High,  
and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever,  
whose dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
and his kingdom is from generation to generation:  
And all the inhabitants of the earth  
are reputed as nothing:  
and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven,  
and among the inhabitants of the earth:  
and none can stay his hand, or say unto him,  
What doest thou? (Dan. 4:34b, 35).

And this is what he said after his understanding returned to him. See Dan. 4:34a. In fact, this may have been the only time in Nebuchadnezzar's life when he talked sense. Only a fool would think that he is greater than God, or that there is no God.

However, as well as we may know these truths, at sometime in

all of our lives we are going to be tested as to how much we believe what the Word of God teaches us about God's sovereignty. Psalm 33 is a song of triumph of a Psalmist (whoever he may have been) when the reality of this truth had been firmly established in his own heart. And he gave expression to that truth in verse 11, where we read,

The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever,  
the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

It seems to me that this is the theme of the Psalm.

In verse 4 we have a very similar expression:

For the word of the Lord is right;  
and all his works are done in truth.

The NASB translates it this way:

For the word of the Lord is upright;  
And all his work is done in faithfulness.

The Psalmist meant that God always does what is right, and He never deviates from faithfulness to what He has purposed to do, from what He has promised to do. It is good for us to remember this, especially in times when it may appear that God has forgotten us, or has forgotten His promises. There is no uncertainty in what the Psalmist wrote then, and we can count on the fact that the same is true today.

In the NASB this Psalm is divided into four parts, and it seems to me that these are accurate divisions. The divisions are verses 1-5, 6-12, 13-17, and 18-22. Let us look at these divisions in the light of what the Psalmist wrote in verse 11, preceding it with the statement in verse 4.

The first paragraph is:

I. A SONG, OR PSALM, OF PRAISE (Psa. 33:1-5).

Since the Psalmist begins by praising the Lord, it is to be expected that we should be able to find in the psalm why his heart is so full of praise. We know that we are to be praising the Lord always, but often we have special reasons for praising the Lord, and that seems to be the case here. And the Psalmist is not content just to be praising the Lord himself, but he calls upon his fellow believers to do the same. The truth does not just apply to some of us; it applies to all of us. And so we ought to be thankful and join in the praise when someone discovers the faithfulness of God in some special way.

(Read these verses.)

Not only is the Lord faithful, but verse 5 indicates that He loves righteousness, and that everywhere we look in the world, with all of its sin and shame, we can see evidence of

the goodness of the Lord.

Now, if we need proof of God's sovereignty, and it does strengthen our faith, we have that in verses 6-12.

— II. THE PROOFS THAT GOD'S PURPOSES WILL NOT FAIL (Psa. 33:6-12).

There two:

A. His work in creation (vv. 6-9).

Creation would be impossible for us. And the only way that men can determine that this universe came into existence is that it took a long, long time. They have no conception of a God Who simply spoke the words, and the heavens and the earth came into being. In verse 8 the Psalmist said that creation itself should cause us to "fear the Lord" and to "stand in awe of Him."

Man-made ideas about the existence of the world do two things: (1) They rob God of glory which rightly belongs to Him as the Creator, and (2) they keep us from seeing how we need to humble ourselves before our God.

But what is the second proof?

— B. God's work of overruling the plans of the nations of the earth (v. 10).

The Word of God is full of illustrations of this. And we have seen it time and time again throughout the history of the world.

And so we come to the high point of the Psalm in verses 11, 12:

C. Our response to what God has done (vv. 11, 12).

Another possible translation for the word "counsel" is purpose. Man continually tries to work against the purposes of God, as Egypt did, and God is continually overruling what they do to accomplish what He has said that He would do. His counsel stands. It remains. It continues. Man can do nothing to alter the promises, or the purposes, of God. Man loses, and God is always, without exception, the winner.

— And so there can be only one thing to say, and the Psalmist said that in verse 12. He, of course, was thinking in terms of Israel, and so he said, "nation." But it applies to us as believers today. If God is our God, we can always count on

the fact that He will always be on our side. This is not something to make us proud, but to humble us and to make us continually thankful that such a God is our God.

— But there is more to strengthen our faith in this Psalm. And so the Psalmist went on to speak of what God is doing continually.

### III. THE WORKS OF THE LORD (Psa. 33:13-17).

First, he mentioned God's eyes. He said that God is far-sighted. See verses 13 and 14.

Second, he spoke of God's work even with those who do not know Him. See verse 15.

Verse 16 might be evidence that this Psalm was written by King David since he spoke of "the king." And he mentioned three things that any king would take comfort in:

- 1) A mighty army.
- 2) A strong soldier.
- 3) A good horse.

— The Psalmist did not say that a king should not have an army. Nor does he say that it is wrong to have strong soldiers. David had many of them. Nor are we to think that it is not right to have good horses. But what we need to know that we are not safe just because we have an army with strong soldiers who are mounted on the best horses in the world.

The same is true when we face an enemy which is more numerous, stronger, and with better horses. God is mighty enough to overrule the strongest enemy, however well prepared they might be. But in times of trouble we are to remember the eyes of the Lord--and know that He sees what bothers us, and has seen it even before we tell Him to look.

All of these are thoughts which we must not overlook. Man can have no secret plans against the Lord's people to cancel the purposes of God. The Lord knows all that is going on, not only outward, but in the hearts of men.

And so we come to the only conclusion that is worthy of the God we know and love and serve.

### IV. TRUST, AND PRAY (Psa. 33:18-22).

— The Psalmist has been assured that "the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever" (v. 11), and that "the Lord brings the counsel of the heathen to nought" (v. 10). So in verses 18 through 21 he declares his faith, and in verse 22 he prays.

Notice the words that he used: "fear him," "hope in his mercy," "waiteth for the Lord," "rejoice in him," and all because "we have trusted in his holy name." The Lord will never allow His Name to be stained in any way.

— And so the Psalm ends in a prayer. (Read v. 22.)

This teaches us that, while the Lord often gives us His blessing even before we pray, yet He is delighted when we come and say what the Psalmist said here. And I think that you can see from the way the Psalmist was exercised in his heart according to this Psalm, that it is God Himself Who brings us out of our doubts and discouragements to a place of strong faith in the Lord, that He will never fail us, and His purposes for us will never be abandoned, either because of what we do, or because of what others may do against us.

Concl: What better verse to close with than Heb. 13:5, 6?

Covetousness not only has to do with things, but it has to do with circumstances. When we wish that our circumstances were different, and will only trust God when He changes them, this is a form of covetousness--wanting to have what we don't have. Let us be content in the knowledge that the Lord is our God, that He knows our circumstances, and has ordered them according to His will to bring His purposes to pass in our lives.

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