

Psalm 18
Part 7- Vs.25-26

We are still observing as in the previous part, so in this part, that there are reasons why God chooses to save a person from disaster. The reasons have to do with a man's behavior and God's nature. Here the psalmist shows that these may be reciprocal.

²⁵ With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright;

Jesus said in His famed beatitudes, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." He also taught that if we do not forgive (a most unmerciful act), God will not forgive us. To this effect He told the parable of the unforgiving servant. Therefore, we who are always in need of a Savior, should always desire the salvation of others. I truly fear for those who neglect evangelism and missions efforts around the world, showing little or no interest in supporting an effort to bring the message of salvation to others. Indeed, what salvation might they expect, who care nothing for the salvation of all men?

In this verse the archaic English word "upright" is translated in the Russian Bible as "sincere." In other words, "with the sincere man you will act sincerely." With either translation we are presented with a semantic difficulty. We have shown that just as God will be merciful to the merciful, He will be unmerciful as well to the unmerciful. Shall we interpret the same for the second part of this verse? Shall we imply that with the insincere, God will be insincere? We know that God does not lie. Shall we imply that God will not act upright with those who are not upright? We know that in God there is no unrighteousness.

However, this is only a semantic difficulty. James says that no man is ever tempted by God, so it is not God Himself who can be described as unmerciful, insincere, or not upright. At the same time there is a spiritual law about reaping what we have sown. Those who have been unmerciful will always meet up with people who are not inclined to show them mercy. Their reputation will follow them and they will be haunted by people who are as unmerciful to them as they have been to others. God will see to this. The same is true about those who are not upright or are insincere. If they have not taken others seriously, or if they have been disrespectful, who will take them seriously or treat them with respect. God Himself is not insincere, but He will surely repay insincerity with insincerity.

²⁶ With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.

In this verse two key words are juxtaposed. The word "pure" indicates a single, clear intention, without double or mixed motives. The word "froward" is a bit archaic, but it can be easily understood, if we break it down into two parts. "Fro" means in the opposite direction, as in the phrase "to and fro," which can also be stated as, "back and forth." "Ward" is a suffix, which means "in a certain direction," as in "forward" or "backward," etc. A froward person will take any direction

except the one that is good or acceptable. He will take any measures, or make any decision, except to cooperate or to agree. He is contrary in word or deed, just for the sake of contrariness. A stupider stubbornness or a more stubborn stupidity could not be imagined.

The Russian word here for “froward” is “deceitful.” It is the same word in the Russian Bible which Jesus used, when He said to Nathanael, “Behold an Israelite, in whom there is no **guile**.” It carries the idea of deception. When a person has no particular direction of his own, except to be contrary, he is totally unpredictable. He will stoop to the meanest deception, if only to make his own will supreme.

The main thought of these verses is the same as in the previous verses. God Himself has no impurity, and He could never be described as “froward.” However, if one wishes to be saved from such people, one cannot be like them. Imagine a froward person with impure motives asking God to save him from the shenanigans of likewise froward people. Do you think that God will save? No, there must be a repentance and a salvation from one’s own fallen condition, before we may expect to be delivered from others, who are only doing to us, as we have done to others.

The salvation of which David is speaking of in this Psalm is not necessarily salvation from sin and hell. Rather David speaks of salvation from those who oppose him and seek to ruin him. David cannot expect deliverance from them, if he is just like them. God is merciful, but He is also just. We may obtain God’s forgiveness for our sins, but we do not entirely escape the consequences of our deeds. Salvation from others or deliverance from trials is more often a way through the situation and the means or opportunity to overcome in a conflict. Hence, even in God’s justice there is mercy, but salvation depends as much on our repentant behavior as it does on God’s merciful and just nature.

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