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E. Application: that we can always and often go to Him with the assurance that He will listen and answer our prayer.

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<sup>A</sup> Micah 7:18

<sup>B</sup> Romans 8:18

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<sup>C</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17

<sup>D</sup> Galatians 5:22-23, Romans 12:6, 5:5

<sup>E</sup> Romans 6:14

A. Introduction

1. You may know of Max Lucado, or perhaps a book of his
  - a. He relates how once a Christian brother had sharply criticized Max for his openness in Christian fellowship – having it even with people that the brother did not think were sound in their doctrine. Max had said, 'If God accepts others with their errors and misinterpretations, shouldn't we?' His critic said, 'No, fences are necessary. The Scriptures are clear. Be careful to whom you give grace.' Max said that he didn't give the grace, but only noted where God already had.
  - b. Then Lucado comments, 'I've never been surprised by God's judgement; but I am still stunned by His grace.'—{2}.
  
2. Satan seek to deceive so people are kept from salvation
  - a. 'You are too bad for God to ever save you.'
  - b. 'You are too good to need God to save you.'
  - c. 'You cannot be saved until you understand the Bible better.'
  - d. but, catching a glimpse of the grace of God, will illuminate just how false are all such lies from Satan
  - e. there are only two truths I need to know to find salvation
    - (A) 1. I am a lost sinner, headed to hell
    - (B) 2. Christ died to save me from sin and give eternal life
    - (C) to quote one old man's simple testimony: 'I'm only a sinner, and nothing at all, but Jesus Christ is my all in all.'
    - (D) all the rest of Bible truth – and it is very important – is simply icing on the cake
  
3. John Newton, the author of 'Amazing Grace'
  - a. as a young man he was engaged in much wrong-doing, including being a slave trader for some time
  - b. yet, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit drew him out of that life and eventually he was called to be a minister
  - c. he never lost his wonder at God's amazing, stunning grace
  - d. he was mentor to a young baptist pastor, John Ryland Jr.,

- e. one day Ryland wrote a very sharp article against another teacher with whom he differed on a point of interpretation
- f. Newton, in a gentle letter, reminded Ryland he only had his understanding of Scripture by the grace of God<sup>{3}</sup>.
- g. near the close of his life, after reading 1 Corinthians 15: 10, Newton remarked to a friend, "I am not what I ought to be – ah! how imperfect and deficient! I am not what I wish to be. I abhor what is evil, and I would cleave to what is good. I am not what I hope to be. Soon, soon, shall I put off mortality, and, with mortality, all sin and imperfection. Yet though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I wish to be, nor what I hope to be, I can truly say I am not what I once was – a slave to sin and Satan; I can heartily join with the apostle and acknowledge, 'By the grace of God, I am what I am'."<sup>{4}</sup>.
- h. God grace is amazing grace!

B. God is Just Waiting to Be Gracious . . . . . 30:18

1. Therefore the Lord longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.
2. God waits to show His grace – in the first part of this verse we find three aspects in God's gracious desire for his people
  - a. the first aspect is brought out by the NAS and NIV but is not quite so apparent in other translations – literally, God waits or awaits in order to show favour or grace
    - (A) it is not simply that God is delaying showing grace
    - (B) but also that there is an anticipation, a desire, a plan – or, as we would say in human terms – a longing
    - (C) in the words of Micah 7:18, 'Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love.' (or, hesedh, mercy)
  - b. the second aspect is that there now exists a holy separation between God and His people: he waits (exalted,) on high
    - (A) in this state God waits to show grace and compassion
    - (B) the reason is plain to see in Isaiah; it is because of sin

- (C) for, God is true to His own nature: as well as gracious, He is holy, of purer eyes than to behold evil
- c. thus the third aspect is: **for the Lord is a God of justice**
  - (A) God's grace will be shown, but consistent with justice
  - (B) there is first chastisement to take place
  - (C) a chastisement that will change His peoples' hearts

- 3. verse 18 concludes: **How blessed are all those who long for Him.**
  - a. the same word 'wait' or 'long' is used both of God and man
  - b. God is waiting until the time when His people wait for Him with the same desire as He does for them
  - c. God longs for when His people wake up and long for Him
  - d. everything that God is doing with the people of Judah – and everything God is doing in your life and in mine – is to bring this about; to prepare us to receive His grace

C. Your Present Situation Does Not Disprove This . . . . . 30:19-20a

- 1. **O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, ...**
- 2. note first that just because you have a reason to weep
  - a. this does not disprove God's graciousness
  - b. for the promise is that the time of weeping will pass
  - c. **you will weep no longer** – and no more
  - d. Paul reckoned the same thing: '**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**' (Romans 8:18)
- 3. and secondly, God hears your prayers
  - a. not simply in the sense that as an all-knowing and an all-seeing God, He hears them: but He hears them with grace
  - b. **he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry** (AV)
  - c. God hears in order to hearken; he hearkens, to answer

- d. **when He hears it** – the word ‘**when**’ is the shortest possible way in Hebrew to indicate a passage of time, of a very short time; of almost no time at all
- e. as soon as He hears, in the instant He hears, **he will answer**
- f. the God who is waiting, longing for His people to wait, to long for Him, is the God who is waiting for their prayer

4. their present situation is abnormal

- a. although God is now giving them the bread of adversity and the water of affliction – prison rations, as it were – and, by the way, this is a different Hebrew word than is used of the unleavened bread as a bread of affliction
- b. yet that is no reason for them to doubt God’s grace
- c. this is but a time of chastisement
  - (A) God’s chastisement is His normal response to our sin
  - (B) but, being chastised is not to be our normal state
- d. also, for you here this morning, you should not necessarily take every time of adversity, as being chastisement
  - (A) adversity may given to you as an opportunity to prove your love for Him – God said he would test Israel for that very reason<sup>{5}</sup>.
  - (B) or adversity may be to show God’s saving power in you as He did in the life of Job
- e. do not let the abnormal periods, the down times, of your Christian life, cause you any doubt in the grace of God

D. When God Show His Grace

- 1. He teaches us His ways . . . . . 30:20b-22
  - a. **... He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. Your ears will hear a word behind you, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right or to the left. And you will defile your graven images overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them as an impure thing, and say to them, ‘Be gone!’**
  - b. to the penitent, Isaiah gives a series of ascending promises; and the first have to do with God’s teaching us

- c. the form of the word which is rendered as 'Teacher' (NAS) can also be either singular or plural; but the context is clear that if it is plural, it is God Himself the great Teacher who is behind their instructions: shepherds may follow their sheep, directing to the flock, but they are only under-shepherds to the Great Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus Christ
- d. It is by the grace of God, first of all that our eyes are opened to his teaching – the teacher who was hidden from us on account of our rebellion – now makes Himself known
- e. in verse 21, the Teacher's guiding presence is promised
  - (A) with his rod, this Shepherd will defend us as well as nudge us back onto the path when we stray – 'prone to wander, Lord I feel it' – to the left or right of His path
  - (B) in NT terms, this speaks of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus said was with His disciples, but soon would be in them
  - (C) the indwelling Spirit, Author of the Holy Scriptures, is in the believer to apply Scripture to guide our lives
- f. in verse 22, He teaches how to live so as to please Him
  - (A) idolatry in any form must be purged from God's people
  - (B) grace will change their lives and minds so that it will be as abhorrent to them as it is to God
  - (C) the change in life that marks a Christian life-style is a result of, not a reason for, God's grace
  - (D) this is the new man, the new nature, that we put on when we come to Christ: 'Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.' (2 Corinthians 5:17)

2. He will shower you with gracious blessing . . . . . 30:23-25

- a. first, the blessings of the land of our possession: 'Then He will give you rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground, and bread from the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous; on that day your livestock will graze in a roomy pasture. Also the oxen and the donkeys which work the ground will eat salted fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork. On every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be streams running with water ...'
  - (A) in a special way, for the nation of Israel
    - (1) spiritual blessing was very much tied to the land
    - (2) the land belonging to God, wherein they could live

- (3) God's blessing to His people, if they obeyed the laws He gave them for living in that land, was that they would have material prosperity and health
- (4) a fulfilment of the old covenant made by God
- (5) when the purpose of God's chastisement of His people has been accomplished, by His Grace, they will come to know blessing upon blessing
  - (a) fruitfulness of their crops
  - (b) growth and blessing of their possessions
  - (c) even their livestock will be better off
  - (d) showers of blessing with abundance of water
- (B) under the new covenant, too, there are blessings
  - (1) but instead of being tied to the land, they are tied to a living relationship with an indwelling God
  - (2) not crops but fruitfulness: '[But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.](#)' (Galatians 5:22-23)
  - (3) not possession of herds but gifts for worshipping and serving God: '[Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: ...](#)' (Romans 12:6)
  - (4) not merely showers of rain but of love: '[... because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.](#)' (Romans 5:5)
- b. there is the blessing of deliverance: for verse 25 concludes: '[... on the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.](#)'
  - (A) Judah was under the chastisement of God
  - (B) Assyria, once an ally, now a foe, caused their tears
  - (C) through it all, God was with them, longing to show His grace, waiting until His purposes were accomplished
  - (D) and then the enemy towers would fall – those raised against them in siege and in oppression
  - (E) Judah very certainly will be delivered from Assyria
  - (F) deliverance also comes to the believer in Jesus Christ
    - (1) there is first of all the deliverance from sin's guilt
    - (2) and Romans 6:14 promises a further deliverance: '[For sin shall not be master over you, for you](#)

are not under law but under grace.'

(G) it is all by the grace of our loving heavenly Father

3. the final grace, He will lead you on to glory . . . . . 30:26
  - a. 'The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, on the day the Lord binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted.'
  - b. in this verse we step out of history, with seven league boots, into the end times, the final days
  - c. to the glory of the Messianic reign and its consummation
  - d. this reminds me of the final verse of John W. Peterson's hymn, 'Jesus is the Friend of Sinners'  
He will lead you on to glory, on to glory, on to glory  
He will lead you on to glory – home for evermore!<sup>-(6)}</sup>.
  - e. by His grace, He will take us home.

#### E. Conclusion

1. Sir Walter Raleigh used to come to Queen Elizabeth I on behalf of convicts, pleading their cause. Once Elizabeth reprimanded him, 'Sir Walter, when will you stop being a beggar?' 'When your majesty ceases to be a giver,' was his wise reply.<sup>-(7)}</sup>
2. How wonderful it is to know that our heavenly Father God is such a gracious God! It's shown in His gifts of God the Son and of God the Holy Spirit for and to His people! We can keep on going to Him as beggars and He will never cease giving!

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Various other English versions of the Holy Bible may be used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in {braces}. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. Adapted from article by Max Lucado recorded in Kerux illustration #33895
3. From ‘Wise Counsel: John Newton’s Letters to John Ryland Jr’ edited by Dr. Grant Gordon, Banner of Truth Trust
4. From Fredericksburg Bible Illustrator Supplements – Kerux illustrations #21569
5. See, for example, Deuteronomy 13:3
6. ‘Jesus Is the Friend of Sinners’ © 1971 by John W. Peterson Music Company
7. Fredericksburg Bible Illustrator Supplements – Kerux illustrations #21553