



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“Is God Able to Deliver?”

John Galbreath
Bible Study Series

Text: Romans 8
Date: January 2, 1955

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on January 2, 1955.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (Romans 8).

Next, review the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would “fill in” the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

I. Introduction

A. "I could curse God for making all those promises on which he can't deliver."

1. There is no despair more deep than that of the man who has believed and has become disillusioned.
2. Many of the world's most notable atheists have been disillusioned clergy.
 - a) *Karl Marx had trained for the rabbinate.*

B. What Christian has not been threatened by doubt on God's promises?

II. Can God Fulfill His Promises?

A. We confuse God's promises with our wishful thinking.

1. Peter brought a truck with a broken axle. "Oh, Daddy will fix it."
 - a) *I've patched a good many toys, but I never told them I could patch everything.*
2. The lad in brig who felt all was well, for he had hired an attorney who couldn't lose.
3. God is no King-size "fixer" -- ready to clean up all the messes we bring upon ourselves.

B. God does not promise to keep us from all unhappy circumstances.

1. The great Christian Science heresy that relates suffering and sinning -- that where there is "faith," there will be no suffering.
2. It is not only the sinful who suffer -- nor will faith necessarily remove the suffering of those who believe.

C. What good is faith, if it will not prevent the consequences of our blunders -- nor even prevent the consequences of what we did not do?

1. Paul might well have asked that -- he suffered at the hands of men, and from physical ailment.
2. Faith, for Paul, was the ability to live above circumstances. "I have learned that in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content."

3. He proved the falseness of the assumption that happiness depends upon circumstances.

D. The function of faith is not to remove all unpleasant circumstances, but to give us that inner buttressing that enables us to live above the circumstances that surround us.

1. No auto manufacturer will guarantee that choice of his car will promise a free highway henceforth.

- a) He will promise a good set of brakes to help prevent accident.*
- b) He will point out a strong frame to assist you in event of collision.*
- c) And his insurance promises that should the car be demolished it will be replaced.*

III. Is the Church Able to Deliver?

A. When tragedy strikes one of us, have we anything to offer beside good advice?

1. Is the church relationship a fair-weather one?

a) As long as you can keep up your pledge, attend the functions, the church is behind you -- but in adversity you had better apply to Community Chest.

B. The Church can offer sympathy.

1. Not to be confused with pity -- or paternalism.

a) "We share our mutual woes; our mutual burdens bear. And often for other flows the sympathizing tear."

2. There is that time when all we can hope for is the assurance that we are not alone.

3. Ministry shut-ins.

C. The church offers "practical help."

1. The Deacons Board is prepared to offer assistance

a) Recently purchased a TV set for use with shut-ins.

b) The response of our people has always been immediate and generous when real need was evident.

D. The "Community Chest" is an expression of the Christian conscience -- as is the program of relief.

IV. Can I Deliver?

A. Have I done my share to make the ministry of compassion real? Or have I left that to God and the Deacons' Board?

1. I am the Church.

B. Have I gone out of my way to assist others?

1. One of our members who times her shopping so that she can give a ride to some of the domestic help who must climb a steep hill to get transportation home.

C. Have I learned to live beyond my personal concern for self?

V. Conclusion

Our faith is a cycle -- that God can deliver for us, by enabling us to live above unfortunate circumstances. But we can live above our circumstances only as we have lost ourselves in the circumstances of others.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things, we are conquerors, through Him who loved us."

These words were not spoken by a man who had driven a bargain with God and sat back waiting for God to deliver, but one who asked only that he might share the cross of his Master.

Study Questions -- Part I

Bible Reading: Romans 8

Romans 8:5 says: "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires."

- In what ways do you live in accordance with the Spirit? In what areas are you working to align your life to it?
- How does living in accordance with the Spirit help make us able to deliver what God needs us to deliver?

Romans 8:18 says: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

- In what ways do you feel that you are or have suffering?
- How does thinking of the glory of God help you to cope with that suffering?

Romans 8:26 says: "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that word cannot express."

- Have you wanted or needed to pray but couldn't find the words? What did you do?

Romans 8:31 is the start of a frequently quoted verse and says: "If God is for us, who can be against us? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of God? . . . I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

- Have there been times in your life that you have worried about being separated from God?
- What did you do to reinstate your bond with Him?

Study Questions -- Part II

Sermon :

Have you ever felt that God failed to deliver on a promise to you? If so, how did you reach out to God in prayer about that situation?

Why might so many vocal atheists be disillusioned clergy?

II. A. 1. Dr. Galbreath mentions his son Peter bringing a broken truck to him to get it fixed. Are there things others have expected you to fix that you couldn't? How did that make you feel?

II. A. 2. Dr. Galbreath seems to talk from his experience in the military. Has there been someone in your life you have depended on who let you down? How did that make you feel?

II. B. 1. There is mention of the Christian Science belief that suffering and sinning are related. Think about times in your life that has proven to be untrue.

II. C. Answer the question posed. What lessons do you take from Paul's suffering and his attitude toward it?

II. D. 1. Think about the year in which this was written -- 1955. Does his example about auto manufacturers hold up today?

II. A. 1. Do you know people who feel that the church *is* a fair-weather refuge? What current day equivalents do we have to the Community Chest of 1955?

III. B. 3. Dr. Galbreath made a note to himself to talk about ministry shut ins. What do you imagine he said in that part of the sermon?

I. B. 1. What image does the mention of domestic help bring to mind? What would be a modern equivalent of the woman timing her shopping to help others?

What can you do to deliver that will help Westminster and God to deliver?