

## Psalm 119:153-160 (RESH)

### Seeking God for Quickening

...*quicken me according to thy word* – v. 154

We come to a section this morning that places an emphasis on a word that we've already seen a number of times. It's the word *quicken*. One English version translates the phrase *quicken me* with the words *revive me*. Another English word translates it by the words *give me life*. I like that expression. It defines revival. *Give me life*.

There's a sense, of course, in which every Christian has experienced this quickening power. *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins* Paul writes in Eph. 2:1. Doesn't that graphically describe salvation? You were dead in sins and to be dead meant to be separated from God and to be headed toward physical and eternal death. But God quickened you i.e. he made you alive.

So this experience of quickening can be viewed from the perspective of past Christian experience. It's a good question to ask yourself with regard to the condition of your own soul. Have you been quickened? Can you relate to what it means to be dead in trespasses and sins and then to be made alive? I fear that there are many that have professed faith in Christ who nevertheless have no more spiritual life than a dead corpse has physical life.

Christ described such people this way: *ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity* (Mt. 23:27,28).

It may be that there are some here this morning within the sound of my voice who have never been quickened. You would do well to call on God and on Christ and on the Spirit of God to give you life and keep pleading with God until you can confess that you were dead in trespasses and sins but that God quickened or made you alive.

There's another sense in which we anticipate being quickened. Paul speaks of this in 1Cor. 15 where addressing the issue of the final resurrection he writes in v. 54: *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

This is the quickening for which the whole creation groans according to Paul in Rom. 8:22. And when you consider all that is sinful in this world and all that is tragic because of the result of sin then this internal groaning becomes even more acute and we pray from within our hearts the words at the very end of the book of Revelation *even so, come Lord Jesus*. Come and deliver us from this sin-cursed world. Come and grant us a new heaven and a new earth where sin will be no more and wherein will dwell righteousness.

So there is a past perspective on this matter of quickening; there's also a future perspective to it. I believe, however, that when the Psalmist prays as he does throughout

this Psalm for quickening he has in mind the present aspect of quickening. This present aspect of quickening is also addressed by Paul in Rom. 8:11. Not all commentators agree on this interpretation but a number of them do. Listen to v. 11 *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* The fact that this is quickening that is wrought by the indwelling Spirit leads me to agree with those commentators in the view that the quickening power of the Spirit in this verse refers to our present day lives that we live in mortal bodies.

I believe this is what the Psalmist is praying for when he says in v. 154 *quicken me according to thy word* and in v. 156 *quicken me according to thy judgments* and in v. 159 *quicken me according to thy lovingkindness.*

Any Christian who knows how the Spirit lusteth against the flesh and the flesh against the Spirit also knows the need for quickening power. Any Christian who knows in some measure the vitality of spiritual life also knows that when that vitality languishes the soul cannot be content. I must regain lost vitality. And if you find yourselves dragging yourselves through the motions of Christianity and knowing little of that heartfelt peace and joy and love – the forces that are suppose to fuel your motivation for holiness then you have need to make this petition that is emphasized in this section of the Psalm, your own.

And so this is what I want to direct your attention to this morning – the theme of:

## Seeking God for His Quicken Power

*Quicken me, according to thy word; quicken me, according to thy judgments; quicken me according to thy lovingkindness.*

### I. The Need for Quicken Power

Part of that need can be found in the literal meaning of the word itself. I referred earlier to a different English version that translates the phrase *quicken me* with the words *give me life. Give me, O Lord, greater spiritual vitality. Give me spiritual energy that I may live more fully to your glory.* The need for quickening power arises, then, out of a longing for deeper, fuller, stronger, more satisfying life in which we know and enjoy God. That's what the Christian life should be like.

Christ declares his purpose for coming in Jn. 10:10 where he says *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* This is what we're praying for when you pray *Lord, quicken me* or *Lord, give me life.* You're pleading with God for more of that abundant life that Christ intends for you to have.

Christ describes this life even more vividly a little earlier in John's gospel. In Jn. 4:14 *But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* Isn't that a graphic image to describe the satisfaction and the refreshment of the life that Christ

provides? Isn't there something refreshing in just hearing Christ speak those words – *a well of water springing up into everlasting life*?

Listen to the words of one commentator on this phrase *springing up*: He's describing what this internal well of water means when he writes:

It shall bubble or spring up like a fountain. It is not like a stagnant pool — not like a deep well, but like an ever-living fountain, that flows at all seasons of the year, in heat and cold, and in all external circumstances of weather, whether foul or fair, wet or dry. So religion always lives; and, amid all changes of external circumstances — in heat and cold, hunger and thirst, prosperity and adversity, life, persecution, contempt, or death — it still lives on, and refreshes and cheers the soul.

This is the life that Christ intends for his followers to have. This is what the Psalmist is praying for and what we, as Christians, should pray for. *Lord, give me life – give me the abundant life that you spoke of – grant to me that inward experience of the heart in which I detect that well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

The very fact that the Psalmist would need to pray for quickening indicates to us, doesn't it, that the refreshment and satisfaction of life is not with us at all times. And don't we have to admit that? It sounds so good to read of a well of water springing up and it's a great thing while you read it to try to sense it but if we're honest we have to admit that we too often know little about what Christ is describing. And in a sense that's okay because the Psalmist is admitting that it too often escapes him too. This is why he prays for it.

In contrast to abundant living and in contrast to that well of water springing up from within listen to the way the Psalmist describes himself at the time he is praying for quickening. *Consider mine affliction and deliver me* he prays in v. 153. This doesn't sound like the words of one who is experiencing the joy and refreshment of a well of water spring up from within. It sounds rather like one who is oppressed and undergoing difficulties and trials. The word *affliction* is defined in one Hebrew lexicon as meaning *trouble, poverty, misery*.

The first time we saw this word *quicken* was back in v. 25 where the Psalmist uses language that really captures this idea of trouble or poverty or misery. Listen to v. 25 where he prays *My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word*. Isn't that the very antithesis of a well of water within springing up? His soul is cleaving to the dust. Doesn't that expression paint the picture of a man whose spiritual life has dried up, who is choking on the dust of the world?

Have you ever stood in the middle of a dirt field during a time of drought when it hasn't rained for weeks and the dirt is hard and dusty – and you're standing there on a hot day that is made all the more miserable by a strong gusting wind that creates whirlpools of dust that engulf you? You find yourself having to put your arm over your face to try to avoid breathing in the dust and your face becomes dirty and your throat becomes parched and you're thirsty.

This idea of the Psalmist's soul cleaving to the dust creates about as strong a contrast as words can convey to the picture Christ gives of this internal fountain springing up to everlasting life. And if you've been truly converted to Christ then you know something of that internal spring. Your soul thirst has been satisfied. You know the meaning of spiritual refreshment. But alas, you also know the meaning or the experience of having your soul cleave to the dust or having your soul in a condition of trouble and poverty and misery. And the anguish of this adverse condition is magnified all the more by your knowledge of the satisfaction and refreshment of that internal well springing up that you have known at other times.

This is why you should make the Psalmist's prayer your own. Lord, quicken me – Lord, give me life – give me that abundant life that Christ has promised – give me that internal well of water springing up to everlasting life. The ones I worry about are the ones that don't seek the Lord for quickening. It's amazing and sad but I'm afraid all too true that there are those that profess to believe in Christ who never seem to know anything other than their souls cleaving to the dust. They more or less come to accept dry, dusty religion.

This is what makes their profession of faith less than credible. No one who has known anything of that internal well of water springing up will be satisfied with anything less. If you find yourself satisfied with something less it could be that you've never known anything more than dry and dusty religion.

So we see the need for the petition – *quicken me according to thy word. Grant to me, Lord, the water that satisfies the internal thirsting of my soul.* Would you consider with me next:

## II. Our Hope for Quicken Power

One might argue that when a Christian has lost his vitality the fault lies with him. He's become careless and negligent in his devotional habits. He stops reading his Bible – he's practically given up on prayer – he may still show up at church but he never really engages in any heart preparation for church nor does he do any kind of follow up after church so church becomes merely a routine exercise that is done more out of a sense of duty and to put on a show before others so that others don't begin to question that Christian's true state of soul.

Or his situation may be that he's been lured into the world in such a way that he doesn't think of much else besides the things of the world. He may be absorbed with his job or he may be so taken up with sports or other forms of entertainment that he can wax eloquently about those topics but rarely has anything to say of a spiritual nature.

Another symptom of lost vitality (and I have to be careful here that I'm not misunderstood) but it's possible that a Christian has lost his spiritual vitality when he becomes so absorbed by politics that politics becomes his all consuming passion. He can talk about who he supports for President and why, or he can talk about what he's heard on conservative talk-radio but to speak of prayer or to speak of spiritual experience or to

speak of Christ and what new discoveries his soul has made of Christ is beyond the scope of his conversation. So you take these 3 scenarios and put headings over each one and you have the careless Christian, the worldly Christian, or the totally distracted Christian. Should God quicken such as these? What hope does such a Christian have for quickening if he becomes aware that he's careless or worldly or distracted?

Your hope for quickening, no matter what condition you find yourself in, is found in the appeals that the Psalmist makes to God as the basis for his petitions to be quickened. There are 3 such grounds for appeal found in this section of the Psalm: *quicken me according to thy word* – v. 154; *quicken me according thy judgments* – v. 156; *quicken me according to thy lovingkindness* – v. 159.

Let's look at them briefly one at a time. *Quicken me according to thy word* v. 154. This is perhaps the most general term of the three. It carries the literal meaning of *utterance, speech* or *word* and can refer to the word of God or the torah (the 5 books of Moses). Inherent in the root word, however, from which this term in our text is derived is the idea of *promise*.

Paul refers in Romans 9:9 to the word given to Abraham regarding his wife Sara bearing a son as *the word of promise*. And of course anyone who approaches the Bible covenantally will see the Bible in large measure as a word of promise. The verses I have already referred to in John's gospel that speak of abundant life and speak of that internal well of water springing up into eternal life – those verses can be regarded as promises from God.

Such promises, then, become the basis of our appeal when we pray to be quickened. *Lord, quicken me according to thy word* or to be more specific *Lord, quicken me according to thy promise of life and life more abundantly. Lord, quicken me according to thy promise to provide me with that internal fountain that wells up into eternal life.*

I think the Psalmist has this idea of promise in mind when he prays earlier in v. 154 for the Lord to plead his cause. Look at what it says: *Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.* Can you not detect in this petition how the Psalmist desires Christ to plead the same thing that the Psalmist is pleading? It's as if he's saying – *Lord, I'm pleading your promise – please plead the same promise yourself which relates to my life so I might gain the blessing of being quickened.*

It certainly can become a strong basis of appeal and a strong basis, therefore, of a sure hope if you and Christ plead the same promises before our Father in heaven. It's not hard to envision ourselves being denied. After all we deserve nothing from God and as I said a moment ago it's usually our own fault when we need quickening. But if Christ will plead your cause by pleading the promise that relates to your cause then you have one pleading for you who is worthy to be heard and whose petitions are never denied.

So that's the first basis for hope for a favorable response to the petition to be quickened. The next basis for hope is in v. 156 *Great [are] thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.* On the surface of this text it would almost appear that the

Psalmist is providing the very basis for his petition to be denied. *Quicken me according to thy judgments?* Wouldn't it be proper to say that there's a sense in which we deserve judgment or chastisement because of our wretched condition of misery and spiritual poverty that we've brought upon ourselves? Are you sure, David, that you want God's judgments to be the grounds for your appeal?

And yet if you look closer at the verse you notice something very interesting and intriguing. It's in the same verse that the Psalmist mentions *great and tender mercies*. How is it that he can make such a vivid statement pertaining to great mercies which literally can read many mercies and tender mercies and then appeal to something that appears almost contradictory to mercies by seeking quickening according to God's judgments?

The solution to what is only an apparent dilemma is found at the cross of Christ. I love the way this is expressed in Ps 85:10 *Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other*. Do you see the cross of Christ in such a text? The truth of God's judgment and the great and tender mercies of God meet at the cross. The justice or righteousness of God's law and peace for the sinner kiss each other because at the cross justice is satisfied.

So the Psalmist can testify to great and tender mercies and appeal to God's judgments as the basis for his petition to be answered. You begin to see, I trust, what a strong case the petitioner to God can make for his own quickening or his own reviving. The last basis for appeal is found in v. 159 *quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness*. Underlying God's lovingkindness is his covenant loyalty to his people. This is the definition of *lovingkindness* that is often put forth. It refers to God's faithfulness to his people. This is the confidence we can have therefore that he will hear our prayers and in particular our prayers to be quickened. He will honor his promises. He will be true to his judgments. He will be loyal to his people – he will, therefore, give us life and give us the kind of life and the quality of life that Christ intends his people to have.

I've referred a number of times in the past to a sermon preached by Charles Spurgeon on the subject of prayer. In that sermon Spurgeon points out that God is pleased to have his people make their case before him as to why their prayers should be answered. We find the Psalmist doing that very thing in this section of Ps. 119. And what a case we can make before the throne of grace by following the Psalmist's example: *Quicken me according to thy word; quicken me according to thy judgments; quicken me according to thy lovingkindness*. Such appeals will not be denied especially since they line up with the way Christ himself pleads our cause.

We have strong hope, indeed sure hope that our prayers to be quickened will be answered. So we've seen the need to be quickened – we've now considered our hope to be quickened. It remains for us to consider:

### III. The Effects of Being Quicken

One effect can be found in the first verse of the section. Notice what it says in v. 153 *Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.* Apart from being quickened by the Spirit of God through the word of God you will forget the law of God – you will grow careless in the matter of Christian practice and duty.

Walking in the obedience of faith, you see, demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit. Faith is one of the fruits of the Spirit and if you're not knowing the quickening power of the Spirit then you won't be manifesting the fruit of the Spirit but if you are quickened by the Spirit then you will manifest not only faith but love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, and faith (Gal. 5:22).

In a similar vein v. 155 shows us another effect of quickening. We're not shown this directly but indirectly by way of a contrast in this verse. Notice what it says: *Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.* By way of contrast – salvation is near those that know the quickening power of God. They know the joy of salvation; they know the peace that comes through salvation; they know and experience the communion with Christ that results from salvation; they know the power to overcome temptation and sin and they do seek the statutes of God.

And what's more they know and experience these things in spite of what external circumstances may bring. Notice what it says in v. 157 *Many are my persecutors and mine enemies.* This has always been the case for the Christian in a world that is hostile to grace. It is no less true today than it was in ancient Bible days. There is nothing in this world to encourage you spiritually but there is much in the world to discourage and oppress you spiritually. But notice what the Psalmist goes on to say in that verse – *Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.* Through the quickening power of God's Spirit you will persevere in the faith – you need not decline – you will not decline if you're living in the power of the gospel, the power that comes through quickening.

Could I point out something else about v. 157 in comparison to v. 156. Notice that it says in the beginning of v. 157 *Many are my persecutors.* With that in mind look at how v. 156 begins *Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD.* The word *great* in v. 156 is the same word in the original as the word *many* in v. 157. This leads us to conclude that there are at least as many mercies as there are persecutors. And in the quickening power of God's Spirit we know and appreciate and appropriate these mercies.

So the quickening power of God enables you to remember God's law – it enables you to bear the fruit of the Spirit – it keeps all the benefits of salvation in your mind and near your heart and it enables you to persevere in the faith even when there are many persecutors and enemies – even when you're grieved by the transgressors all around you (v. 158) who do not keep God's word.

How essential it is, then, for the Christian to know this quickening power of the Spirit of God. The difference between dry and dusty religion and revived and refreshing religion is determined by this power. As we bring this meeting to a close this morning – I wonder

how it is with you in your walk with the Lord? Do you know this quickening power? If you're saved you've experienced it. Salvation is nothing short of resurrection power. The same word of Christ that called Lazarus from the grave also calls each and every Christian from spiritual death to spiritual life. Do you know what I'm talking about? Or could it be that you're still dead in trespasses and sins? If you, by the grace of God, are able to discern that to be the case then you need to call on God to quicken you that you might be saved. You should earnestly plead with God for the blessing of that power until you are able to detect within your soul a love for Christ and a hatred for sin.

To those that are Christians – it takes the same power that brought you from death to life to sustain you in that life. You know that in the course of your life that power diminishes. It diminishes for a number of reasons. It may diminish because of your carelessness or worldly wanderings or it might diminish because God allows it to diminish in order to draw you out even more in seeking him.

You need to make this prayer your prayer. There's a sense in which you could say that this petition corresponds spiritually to that petition that is given to us in the Lord's prayer – *Give us this day our daily bread*. There is certain a physical aspect to that petition in that God does provide for our daily temporal needs. But there's also a spiritual aspect to that petition in that we need the daily spiritual quickening that is necessary to run and not grow weary and to walk and not faint.

This section of Psalm 119 teaches you how to make a good case before God for giving you that quickening power. *Quicken me according to thy word; quicken me according to thy judgments; quicken me according to thy lovingkindness.*

With such a strong case to make before God, there's really no excuse for you having to go long in dusty and dry religion. May the Lord indeed compel you to pray that you may know the answer to your prayers in such a way that you'll be blessed with that internal fountain that springs up into everlasting life.