

Waiting Expectantly

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[0 : 00] Good morning everybody. It's a real joy to be here to preach to you today. I'm so thankful! for the welcome that we received. Thank you for those people coming to our door on Thursday! when we arrived and just had such a really friendly welcome so thank you so much for that.

It's just such a privilege to be here serving you. I'm just looking forward to every minute of it so thank you. Let me pray before we start.

Heavenly Father we thank you so much that you are a loving God that you care for us so so deeply. We thank you that you've given us your your precious word. Thank you for your son. Thank you that he speaks to us today. We pray Lord that we will come to your word knowing that the Lord Jesus is addressing us. We pray that in his name. Amen.

Great. So this is a quote from Oprah Winfrey. She's a chat show host in America. She's retired now but and this is what she said. God is love and so that means that must mean that God accepts all ways.

And then when she was asked about a God who would judge this is what she said. She says I can't get with that. I can't get with a God who judges.

[1 : 49] Now is the Oprah Winfrey God the more ideal God? Loving, accepting, non-judgmental. Now maybe you'd like to tell your friends about that God.

God and of course we want to say very loud and clear that God is love. But do we want a God that's only acceptance, only non-judgmental and he's never just?

Well actually if you've ever been deeply wrong and I'm sure there are people here who may be experiencing that now, you've been deeply wronged. Well I know that you will not want the Oprah Winfrey God. Not one that just shrugs at injustice. I was watching this documentary on BT2 and you might have seen it this week. It's a documentary about a group called the Jesus Army.

Now they kind of started as a Christian group but they were infiltrated by these leaders who actually were, well they were abusing God's precious sheep. There's cover-ups, there's bruised victims. Some of those leaders, they died before they faced justice. And do those victims, do they want an Oprah Winfrey God? One who just accepts, who doesn't bring justice to abusers?

[3 : 22] Now let me just say, if you've ever been through something kind of like that, I'm really sorry. And actually keep listening because there is hope. But even though actually probably most of us haven't been through something exactly like that, well if we're a Christian, we've all been mistreated as a Christian for being a Christian. And perhaps as a church at Bethel, you've had times in the past where maybe someone in the council or maybe a neighbour's tried to complain to shut something down, to stop the work of the gospel here because you're Christians, because you're evangelical Christians.

Maybe at work or at school and you're treated a bit differently, you're sidelined a little bit, you're kind of frozen out of a friendship group, but now you're labelled as the one in the family who was really respected but now you're the crazy grandma, the crazy grandad, because you're a Christian and you hold weird views. An Oprah Winfrey God who just accepts everyone, well that God actually doesn't really care about you in that moment. However, the true God of Psalm 5 does.

If you've put your Bibles away, just please open them or scroll on your phone to the app, your Bible app. Psalm chapter 5, Psalm 5, not the chapter is it, King David is being mistreated as well. And he's being chased down by Absalom. If you look in the context, a section of Psalm 3 to 9, and it's chased down by Absalom and his gang who want him dead, King David. And along with King David, we might cry out for help in verse 1. Have a look at verse 1. Verse 1, listen to my words, Lord.

Consider my lament. Hear my cry for help. Now in moments when you pray a prayer like that, for others maybe, or for yourself, maybe you doubt that God will act, let alone listen.

But the Holy Spirit's purpose for us today through this psalm is to realise that a prayer like that, where we're in that situation, well it's never going to bounce off the ceiling wall.

[6 : 04] We can confidently expect God to act for us. Have a look at verse 3. This is what David says. In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice. In the morning, I lay my request before you. And what does he do?

He waits expectantly. How can he wait expectantly? Why is he so confident? Well, we're going to see it's because of who God is. His character. God's love and his holiness require him to act for his people and to be on their side.

So firstly, let's look at God's holiness. God detests evil. He will act against it in Jesus. Have a look at verse 4. He says, Look at this word here.

God detest. God isn't pleased when those evil men hunt David down. He hasn't turned a blind eye to the arrogant liars chasing David.

David can expect God to act against evil because God detests evil. You see that? He will act.

[7 : 39] Verse 10. Declare them guilty, O God. Let their intrigues be their downfall. Banish them for their sins. Now, detest is quite a strong word, isn't it?

You know, when did you last detest something or hear someone say they detested something?

Now, when I put new food in front of Daisy, that's kind of what I think her face looks like.

Detesting. Yuck! Pushed it away. Had a few of that this week, haven't we? God wretches at evil.

Especially against his people. He detests it. So God doesn't brush under the carpet what the Jesus army leaders did to those victims.

God isn't indifferent to hostile governments around the world. Beheading Christians for their faith.

God doesn't just hush, hush, cover up when corrupt courts in the world put false testimony against Christians.

[8 : 46] And maybe close to home. No, God cares when people actively try to shut down the work of the gospel in hail. God cares when you're being called a bigot at work for not going along with Pride Month or whatever it is.

God cares about all those times at school when people patronise you for saving yourself for marriage. God detests evil. God detests evil.

And he's got our backs to act against it. Now what does it mean for God to act? Well, I don't think it always means that he will always avoid persecution.

No, David didn't in this psalm. Actually, if we think about the greater David, Jesus, he didn't avoid persecution. He went to the cross, didn't he? It doesn't mean God will always bring judgment or justice in this life.

Sometimes God does kind of work in surprising ways. In that verse, let their intrigues be their downfall. Sometimes people's plans kind of backfire on themselves in the now. But not always.

[9 : 57] He doesn't always bring justice now. Actually, partly we're going to see a bit later on, he's actually giving people time to repent. It's part of God's love.

But God will always, always act in the end. David says, verse 3, I can wait. Doesn't he?

I can wait expectantly to the final judgment. Judgment. You know, and while the kind of Western world, you know, squirms at the idea of judgment, you know, for the victim, for the hurt, for the persecuted, well, this is really a deep comfort, isn't it?

No wonder you will be vindicated, is what it says. They didn't get away with what they did. They will face God's justice. Yes. So actually, we need to realize that judgment, when it's in the hands of a holy and loving God, is a good thing.

Still, I know that can feel maybe a little bit uncomfortable. You know, some people who've mistreated me for being a Christian are people I like, you know, I love. So the idea of judgment doesn't kind of bring me glee, doesn't bring God glee.

[11 : 18] Maybe we should love and pray for our enemies to be saved. And God will see, God provides a way, justly, to do that, to keep listening.

But even if they don't turn to Christ, we can still have peace that because judgment doesn't rest with me, I can know it's in Jesus' hands. And he's good, isn't he?

Jesus is good. The judge of all the earth will do what is right. Here's the point. The big point.

Jesus, he cares. He sees. He sees every insult. He sees every exclusion for being a Christian. And he'll act justly and rightly in a way that will vindicate us in the end.

And because of this vindication, we can rejoice, as David said in verse 11. Let all who take refuge in you be glad. Let them ever sing for joy.

[12:20] Spread your protection over them. That those who love your name may rejoice in you. And not a joy in judgment because, but joy that God will act for us.

He will protect us. Not always sparing us from persecution now, but bring us through it. Even death. In the sense that actually nothing ultimately can harm us.

So actually the Oprah Winfrey God who accepts everyone isn't very good news. The Psalm 5 God, the true God, most clearly seen in Jesus.

Well, he is good news. He's holy. He detests evil. And that is a good thing because it means that we can expect him to act. Now at this point I think we could probably say, great, we can go home and let's pray.

But actually not so fast because a couple of big questions arise. When I was reading this, these questions arose for me. So how does God's love actually fit into this?

[13:27] Right? Now we definitely don't want to go away from this saying, well God is all holy. He detests evil, but he doesn't love. Okay, that's not right. We know that. He isn't holy, sorry.

But actually the bigger question is, if God acts against evil, those who do wrong because he's holy, how far does that acting extend?

Now Hitler, yeah, I think we'd say so. The Jesus army abusers, I think we would want to say so. He detests that.

So people who persecute Christians, yes. But if God really detests all evil, his standard is perfect. Well then it doesn't just stop at the extreme, does it? His standard applies to me and you. Because actually according to God's holiness, well, we're not innocent.

[14:33] We're not innocent either. And what's so interesting is actually if you go to the New Testament in Romans 3, it picks up on this psalm in the New Testament.

And it quotes verse 9. You can see it there. Their throat is an open grave. But it doesn't just apply it to a few wicked people out there.

It applies it to everybody. Let me read it. There is no one righteous. Not even one. This is a famous passage, isn't it?

There is no one who understands. There's no one who seeks for God. And then what does it quote? Their throats are an open grave. Their tongues practice deceit.

So actually God sees and detests evil in us. We're all sinners. Actually we should all come into God's judgment.

[15:37] But here's the punchline. Unless you fall on the love of God, there is a way for God to be a holy judge and simultaneously the loving saviour whilst not compromising either of the two.

For sinners, for our enemies, for all people, for us, God justly but lovingly provides a refuge in Jesus if we trust in him. God lovingly provides a refuge in Jesus.

Here's the key. Why does David think he'll be saved in the end? Why is he confident that God will act against his enemies and not him?

Not because he's righteous. Not because he's much better. But because God is gracious and he is loving. Look at verse 7. Verse 7.

But I, by your great love, come into your house. By your great love, I come into your house. I know I'm not better than him, he says.

[16:49] I know I'm a sinner too. It's only by your great love that I can stand in your presence forever, he says, that I can trust that you've got my back.

That's what we can say too. God doesn't act for us because we're righteous, because of our track record, because we're not as wicked as other people. We haven't got God on our side because we're better.

It's only because of God's love that Jesus listens and he acts for us. God's great love. Hang on, you might say, how does this work with God's holiness?

Is it compromising, his detesting of evil? No. In Jesus, we can see that God detests sin and he fights for the oppressed and simultaneously can abundantly love us who take refuge in him.

There is always a judgment directed at all people because we're all sinners. But whilst hammered to the cross, Jesus, he takes the judgment that was judgmentally directed towards us if we trust in him

and he willingly stands in our place and he's punished for us.

[18:07] God detests Jesus in that moment. And now we only experience God's love and eternal protection. A judgment isn't put aside for love, but for those who take refuge in Jesus.

Let him be your shield. Well, it's taken by him. It's taken by him. That is a wonderful gospel, isn't it? God doesn't love at the expense of justice.

You know, actually kind of like the God in Islam, actually. And he isn't just at the expense of his love. You know, in Christ we see full and complete justice and overflowing, abundant, gracious love for his people.

Either we all receive the justice we deserve or Jesus takes it for us. In the end, justice is done. And we trust it to him to do that.

That is a scandalously gracious gospel, isn't it? Now, that famous hymn says, Till on that cross, as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied.

[19:12] On that cross. For every sin on him was laid. Here in the death of Christ I live. Now, we live, we love, we're kept. Not because of what we've done, but because of the love shown in Jesus on that cross.

Because he took the punishment that we deserve. We're not better. What a God. What a loving God.

What a loving saviour. And I think this is where this gospel truth really comes into its own in this psalm, okay? When we pray like David, for God to act for us, maybe you sort of doubt.

You don't really kind of doubt God's holiness. You know that he's really holy. Maybe you doubt God's love. Maybe you doubt God is actually on your side because you actually know that you're a sinner.

You think he's going to act against you for that thing you thought, that thing you did last week. And actually, by nature, that should be true. But when we've taken refuge in the Lord Jesus, when he's our shield, he allows a way for your prayer for vindication to be heard.

[20:30] Whilst forgiving you for all your wrong because Jesus has justly dealt with it. If you've trusted in Jesus today, even though Jesus is so holy and he detests sin, you'll never out-sin his commitment to you.

Forever and always, you can know that God will be 100% for you, as we sung in that song, right till the end. And that's how just and loving our God is.

And we end in joy, don't we? Verse 11, again. But let all who take refuge in you be glad. Let them ever sing for joy. What a joy this gospel brings.

Not just joy because we've been delivered from our enemies, but joy because we're not destroyed along with them. He's 100% committed to us.

He loves us and he's provided a refuge in Jesus. So what have we seen today? Well, Jesus is, he's not the Oprah Winfrey God, is he?

[21:41] Who shrugs at evil. He detests it, especially when it harms his people, but wonderfully he's full of love. Great love. And in the end, he'll always act for us, not because we're perfect, but because we've taken refuge in him.

So this psalm is here to give you rock solid confidence that God will act, that God hears you if you trust in Jesus today.

Look at verse three again. This is kind of a big application. Verse three, in the morning, Lord, you hear my voice. In the morning, I lay my request before you and wait expectantly. Expectantly.

We can really wait expectantly for God to act. Here's a little story to put this in perspective. A Christian lady at my last church has a daughter in a school up in Salau.

Her daughter came home one day and said, Mummy, I call my head teacher Miss. That's what she's always called, Miss. But then she said to me, Excuse me, it's Mr.

[22:54] Now. You know that I've changed. Isn't that a terrible and such confusing thing for a child to go through?

You know, and the mum contacted the school and she didn't get a great response. You know, it's less extreme than some of the other examples like we said today, like the Jesus army.

But it's a story of God's people being mistreated for being a Christian, isn't it? And it's actually something quite personal for me. You know, I'm quite worried that that could happen to our children at school at some point.

You know, and actually in this story, the mistreatment, it works both ways. And not only has the mum got a bit of a reputation now, probably for being a bit of a bigot from the other mum. She's shunned a little bit. You know, that little eight-year-old girl is getting flack from her other classmates and her teacher. A mistreatment for being a Christian.

[23 : 55] That's quite on the ground level of it, isn't it? And actually this came to me in a prayer request in a home group. And I wish I knew Psalm 5 better at that time.

But doesn't this Psalm give us confidence to pray for God to act and expect him to do right in this situation and be with us?

And maybe if those people don't repent, to act in judgment and justice. Either Jesus will take that justice or they will. actually, he will lovingly commit to that family, won't he?

And if they get worse mistreatments or if they get kicked out of that school, God sees and he cares. And he will act ultimately to protect and save in the end.

So maybe a far away from home when you see believers imprisoned for the name of Christ. When you hear of abuse and cover up in a church like the Jesus Army, like that documentary.

[25 : 01] Or close to home for that story I just told. Or for you. If you're excluded or you're shamed for living God's way, don't resign yourself to thinking that God has forgotten.

Don't think that your prayer bounces off the ceiling wall. God hears. He cares. And we can expectantly wait for God to act.

Let me pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for your amazing character that we see in this psalm. Lord, you detest evil.

Lord, you cannot stand things against your law, against your character to go in your way. Lord, we know that doesn't exclude us by nature.

Lord, we know that we deserve your judgment. But thank you that Jesus provided a way, a refuge to take in him. Thank you that justice is always done. Thank you that your love is put on display in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[26 : 09] And help us, Lord, for all those truths to help us to wait expectantly for you. Thank you that you care. Thank you that you see. And we pray that in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.