

Can a Leopard change its spots?

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Date: 02 January 2022

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[0 : 00] We're going to begin our service singing to God's praise from Psalm 97. Psalm 97 at the beginning, the first six stanzas, verses 1 through to 8.

Psalm 97 God reigneth, let the earth be glad, and eyes rejoice each one, that clouds encompass and in light with judgment dwells his throne.

Fire goes before him, and his force burns up round about. His lightnings lightened at the world. Earth saw and shook throughout.

Hills at the presence of the Lord, like works that melt away. Even at the presence of the Lord of all the earth, I say, The heavens declare his righteousness, all men his glory see.

All who serve graven images, confounded let them be. Who do of idols boast themselves, let shame upon them fall. Ye that are called gods, see that ye do him worship all.

[1 : 15] Silent it here, and joyful was. God, Judas, don't us wear. They much rejoiced, O Lord, because thy judgments did appear.

And so on. Let us sing these verses of Psalm 97 from the beginning. God reigneth, let the earth be glad, and eyes rejoice each one.

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God reigneth, let the earth be glad, and eyes rejoice each one.

[3 : 08] If not the presence of the Lord of all the earth be glad, and eyes rejoice each one. If not the presence of the Lord of all the earth be glad, and eyes rejoice each one.

The heavens be glad, and eyes rejoice each one. The heavens be glad, and eyes rejoice each one. God reigneth, let the earth be glad, and eyes rejoice each one. Let us pray for the sound.

Let them be. Who do all my fears but themselves let cheer upon them all?

Yet I can call it as good as your peer and your whatever worship only.

Seget the Lord to whom praise and praise you to your judgment.

[4 : 53] May much rejoice, O Lord, because thy judgment is given you.

Let us join together in prayer. Let us pray. Have a blessed God as we have been singing these words that remind us of the difference that there is between the God who is Jehovah and the multitude of idols that inhabit the imaginations of those who occupy this planet of ours is a vast difference.

There is a great chasm between what is true and real and inescapably so, and that which is subject to the vicissitudes and changes that beset each creature.

And when idols who are done are brought into being at some point, as they must, they are the creation of the faculty of imagination and invention of their creator.

And as their creator is subject to change, so too are they. When the one who created them is inevitably removed from this world, the place that they have within the world may disappear with them.

[6 : 58] Or they may be given a special place in the affections of others who follow after that creator.

But at some point, their usefulness as far as the inventions of man are concerned will fade and disappear.

That is not the case with regard to the only living and true God. God. And when you bear your arm and reveal your might and power, when you speak to us through the emissaries the things that you created, be it sun or moon or stars or the things that sometimes cause us to take refuge, be it storm or raging torrent or whatever it may be, these are at your control.

These are under your subjection. These are they that speak to us and make us pay heed. And it reminds us of our own puniness and our own instability.

And we acknowledge that when you speak, it is well for us to hear that you are speaking and what you are saying to us is that we need you.

[8 : 42] And we need your help and we need your strength and we need your wisdom and we need your guiding hand to be upon us. Most of all, we need your spiritual grace to be infused into a very being.

And that imparted to us through Christ Jesus, your only begotten Son, the Lord of glory, the one through whom salvation is made possible.

We pray that you would bless your word to us today to remind us of the way in which through time you have intruded into the darkness with your marvelous light.

You have conveyed to us the power that is yours to execute at your will and none can resist it. And we bless you and thank you that there is clear and unambiguous record of the way that you have spoken into our spiritual darkness.

Even within our own nation in times of spiritual revival, we pray that you would remind us afresh that you are still the God who is able and that there is nothing that would thwart your hand when you but to speak to us through the power of your own word.

[10 : 10] Lord, speak to us today, we pray, each one, that we would hear the voice of God speaking to us through this word that we have had upon our lips and this word that we will read and reflect upon.

We pray that you would accompany all that is done in your name throughout the length and breadth of the land so that instantaneously we would hear that God is God indeed.

We are not worthy of the least of your mercies. We acknowledge that. We are sinful from the soles of our feet to the crown of our head.

There is nothing in us that is anything other than putrefaction and corruption. We acknowledge in your presence that the heart of man is desperately wicked.

Who can know it? And indeed, not one of us can acknowledge that to be true were it not for your own. Hand to be upon us revealing to us the true extent of sin in our hearts and in our lives.

[11 : 22] We pray, Lord, that you would magnify your name amongst us as individuals, in our homes, in our families, in our communities. That you would remind us once again that there is no shadow of turning with you.

You are the God of eternity. The same yesterday, today and forever. We bless you and thank you that such a God is held out to us in your word as the God who is refuge and the strength of your people.

The one who is there to go to. The one we are encouraged to lift up our voices in praise of.

May we do so readily, willingly. May we do so as those whose hearts and minds are drawn to praise you for all that you are as you have revealed yourself to us in Christ.

May we pray your blessing upon our homes, at this time, upon our families. At this opening service of this congregation into the new year as we pray.

[12 : 36] We pray your blessing upon the congregation. We see you even in the past year making inroads into the congregation.

When you remove from our midst those who were witnesses to your name, we are impoverished. When we see those who are part of our number and who have been for so long, being brought to a state of weakness and infirmity through the passage of time, again such presence is, we are deprived of it and they of us and we acknowledge the impact that has upon us as a congregation.

We pray for your people, especially those who cannot attend the means of grace, who are confined to their homes, who are constantly dependent upon the cares of others, those who have been committed to the care of others without their homes, in homes for the elderly, we remember them to you.

We pray for those who are dealing with illness of a serious nature, and we think of the hospice and those within the hospice at this time, others who are in their own homes having to deal with extensive and difficult illnesses.

Grant them grace to overcome fear in their heart and grant them healing if it be thy will. We cannot but submit ourselves to the will of the all-knowing God, the one who doeth all things well.

[14 : 23] We pray for our elderly, we pray for our young. We give thanks for the homes and the families represented among us, those who are careful about the spiritual needs of their children.

We pray that you would bless their interest in their children's souls. May they learn to commit not only the souls of our young, but their own souls to the care of God, and be interested in the things of God, and learn what it is to be committed to that God, far more than they possibly are hitherto.

We pray for a day of power, that such interest would be encouraged, and that such interest could be stimulated. May we be a source of encouragement and stimulation one to the other, as we live out our life in this world.

We are not our own, you tell us. We are bought with a price. The one who has shed his blood, has sprinkled it upon our lives, upon our hands, upon our mouth, upon our feet, upon our being, that we may live for you, and be as you would have us be in this world, that needs your people to be salt and light.

We ask, Lord, that you would equip us, so that we may be more than we are, and that we may be better than we are, as being your ambassadors, in a world that is estranged from you, and has no interest in you as God.

[16 : 20] We pray for those who would govern us, and we pray that you would mercifully draw them to yourself, and impress upon them, not just their accountability to the people who have elected them to office, but ultimately to the God who will call each and every one of us to account, that the day comes, when the judgment seat of Christ will be, where we will all stand, and we will answer to one who is high and lifted up, whose eye is all seen.

Nothing is hidden from your gaze, and we may hide ourselves in ways, just as our first parents did. Miraculously, having sinned, when they fled from your presence, or supposedly so, they sought to cover their nakedness, even though their nakedness was the result of their sinfulness.

And so it is in this day and generation, we see the shambolic coverings that many seek to cover themselves with, that are so puny, and so, so clearly inadequate, to avoid the probing, and the all-seeing eye of the God of heaven.

So remember us, Lord, and remember all we've entrusted to your care. So he said, those who govern, be they in the Westminster Parliament, in the Holyrood Parliament, within our local council here, all who have offices of import, all who have spheres of responsibility, even locally, may they acknowledge that the best they can ever achieve can only be achieved with your help.

remember our Queen, we pray that you would bless her majesty, in the frailty of her own old age, when yet again, we see her family, probably disappoint her, and bring shame upon her, in different ways, as it has been her life long.

[18 : 54] we pray that faith would sustain her, and a profession of her faith, is there for us, to cling to, that you would bless her in her soul, and that she would know, that there is a God, who will stand by her, in all her activities, even up until the present.

Continue to watch over her, we pray, and the nations of the earth, especially, these nations, that are suffering deprivation, those who are in the grip of war, of different kinds, we pray Lord, that you would, mercifully undertake for them.

Continue to watch over us, now blessing your word, as we read it, and as we sing it, and as we wait upon you, to open it out to us, pardon sin in Jesus name, Amen.

Amen. We're going to read from the scriptures, of the Old Testament, on the book of the prophet Jeremiah, and we're reading from chapter 13, Jeremiah chapter 13, Thus saith the Lord unto me, Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water.

So I got a girdle, according to the word of the Lord, and put it on my loins. The word of the Lord came unto me, the second time, saying, Take the girdle that thou hast got, which is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock.

[20 : 45] So I went, and hid it by Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me. And it came to pass, after many days, that the Lord said unto me, Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence, which I commanded thee to hide there.

Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had headed. And behold, the girdle was marred. It was profitable for nothing.

Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.

These evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing.

For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused, to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel, and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord, that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory.

[22 : 05] But they would not hear. Therefore thou shalt speak unto them this word. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine.

And they shall say unto thee, Do we not certainly know, that every bottle shall be filled with wine? Then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David's throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with drunkenness.

And I will dash them one against another. Even the fathers and the sons together, saith the Lord, I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them.

Hear ye, and give ear. Be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before he caused darkness, and before your feet stumbled upon the dark mountains.

And while ye look for light, ye turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride.

[23 : 31] And mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive. Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down, for your principalities shall come down even the crown of your glory.

The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none shall open them. Judah shall be carried away captive, all of it. It shall be holy, carried away captive.

Lift up your eyes, and behold them that come from the north. Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock? What wilt thou say, when he shall punish thee?

For thou hast taught them to be captains, and as chief over thee, shall not sorrows take thee as a woman in travel? And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon me?

For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?

[24 : 47] Then may he also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passes away by the wind of the wilderness.

This is thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the Lord, because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood. Therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear.

I have seen thine adulteries, and thy names, and the lewdness of thy hood, and thine abominations on the hills and the fields. Worn to thee, O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean?

When shall it once be? Amen, and may the Lord at his blessing to a reading of his word, and to his name be praise.

We're going to sing from Psalm 94. Psalm 94 at verse 9. The Lord did plant the ear of man, and hear, then shall not he.

[26 : 04] He only followed the eye, and then shall he not clearly see. He that the nations doth correct, shall he not chastise you?

He knowledge unto man doth teach, and shall himself not know. Man's thoughts to be but vanity, the Lord doth well discern.

Blessed is the man thou chastenedst, Lord, and makes thy law to learn, that thou mayst give him rest from days of sad adversity, until the pit be digged for those that work iniquity.

For sure the Lord will not cast off those that his people be, neither his own inheritance quit and forsake will he.

But judgment unto righteousness shall yet return again, and all shall follow after it, that are right-hearted men. verses 9 to 15 of Psalm 94.

[27 : 10] The Lord did plant the ear of man, and here then shall not he. The Lord did plant the ear of man, and the earth then shall not me.

He only formed the eye of man, and shall not be heard of man, and the earth then shall not be heard of man.

He that the nations look faith, that can open, shall not be heard of man, and shall not be heard of man.

In all ages and to man doth teach, a child himself not knew.

Man sought to be the vanity, the Lord was well discerned.

- [28 : 39] Blessed is the man that chiseled Lord, and it's thy law to learn.
That thou midst you in the rest of days of sight and mercy came.
Until the dead be digged for those that were in eternity.
For sure the Lord will not cast off those that is beautiful and be.
Neither his own would be led and done, and quit and forsake with thee.
- [30 : 03] But judgmental to righteousness shall yet return again.
And all shall follow after it, that thou right are given men.
Let us turn to the passage that we read in the Old Testament. Prophecies of Jeremiah chapter 13.
And reading at verse 23. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?
Then may he also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?
- [31 : 27] From time to time we all engage in a personal stock take.
Some do it regularly. Some less so. At times this takes place, perhaps as a result of some personal, what you would call a defining moment in their life.
Maybe some domestic situation arises. It can be a new birth.
It can be a death. It can be a marriage. It can be loss of employment. Any one of these things can be a stimulus to searching questions being asked by individuals.
And the question would arise in their heart. Where is it? Where am I at this present moment?
- [32 : 45] Where am I going? What have I achieved? What do I expect to achieve? This road that I'm on at the moment, where is it going to lead?
And sometimes every one of us will engage in this kind of soul searching. And we do so with varying degrees of regularity.
Perhaps some more so than others, as I've said. This opening juncture of a new year may be we're all used to thinking about resolving to do some things that we had not done.
Or resolving not to do the things that we were doing, which we feel that we should not be doing. The boys and girls here, I wonder if you have had that new year's resolution.
I know of very well-known ministers who were ministers from a very young age.
- [34 : 07] And they took it upon themselves to write down the resolutions. And they took it upon themselves. It's all very well saying it in your heart or in your mind.
But when you take a pen and you put it down on paper, that you are committing to do something. It becomes much more serious.
And what they were doing was, they would say, we are covenanting before God to do these things. We are promising God.
We are saying to God, I'm going to be this kind of person this year. I am going to be your mouthpiece. I am going to be your hands. I am going to be your feet.
I am going to be this person whose life is totally given over to God. You are never too old. And you are never too young to make such a commitment.
- [35 : 10] I wonder if you could do something like that. Perhaps you have already done so. If you carried out a retrospect on the past year, what did you discover?
As you look back on your last year in this world, what did you find? If I can narrow it down for you.

What did you find with regard to the kind of relationship you have with God? Have you given consideration to the life of God in your soul?

What kind of relationship do you have? How would you describe it? Is it healthy? Is it as it should be?

Is it as it could be? Perhaps your answer, and only you and God, can know it.

[36 : 25] There is room for improvement. There is room for improvement. There is room for improvement.

I don't care who you are. I don't care how long you have been a believer, a professing Christian. Every one of us could say that. There is room for improvement.

There is room for improvement. I remember the dreaded report card coming at the end of a school term. And there would be some cryptic remark, well, maybe not unused, but certainly on mine.

There was always room for improvement. And if you were presented with a report card of your activities with regard to God, how would it read?

In a retrospective work, family, health, future prospects may all have featured.

[37 : 27] Whereas the God question is not really all that important. Well, if that is the case, I would say to you that you need to think again.

If in your reflections, if in your planning, if in your looking forward to the future, if God is anywhere but in the first place, we need to think again.

Now, what has that got to do with this passage that we have before us? What are these thoughts to do with the verses that we are looking at in particular?

Well, I can remind you of just a sketchy picture of what the prophet Jeremiah had to deal with. He is dealing with a people and putting it simply.

God is greatly displeased with them. And his displeasure is going to result in his judgment upon them.

[38 : 51] He lets them know in very graphic terms what their spiritual condition is. He doesn't mince his words. He gives them symbols and signs to confirm it to them.

They know perfectly well what he is saying. But they are not in the best position to acknowledge it or accept it. I mean, that illustration that he gives to them where he asks the prophet to put on a new linen girdle or as some versions of it, a linen, loincloth.

And then having worn it for a time to go and bury it on the banks of the river Euphrates. And as you would expect, it becomes smart, as the passage says.

It's no use. And that's what he says to these people. You're no use to me. You live your lives for yourselves.

You live your lives for yourselves. You do your own thing. Not only do you not worship me, you worship other gods. And my displeasure will result in you being judged.

[40 : 23] And what is the response? Well, if you say in your heart, wherefore come these things upon me? You're saying, why?

What have we done to you? God describes to them the life that they live to his exclusion and they ask, what's wrong with that?

What is wrong with that? Can we not do what we want to do? Can we not live as we choose to do? Why must we answer to you? And verse 23 suggests that the people the prophet is dealing with are beyond the pale.

Is that not what the words mean? Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? So see, if I'm telling you this is what you are, then you're not going to change.

You're not going to change. You're going to remain the same. You might even get worse. You're certainly not going to get better. Now, is that really what the prophet is saying?

[41 : 45] Is that what God is saying? Well, we begin with this. And you begin with this. You begin this year with this.

Is there a need for me to change with regard to God? Is my life with God all it should be?

Is it all it could be? It seems that the prophet is saying you can't change. And remember, the prophet is writing in his own generation.

And some people have heard an elder making this kind of argument. Not on this passage, but, you know, he was talking about something else. And medical science has advanced.

And changes have occurred in science. And the things that were considered impossible when the apostles are writing or when the prophets are writing are no longer an impossibility.

[43 : 00] But that's missing the point. It may well be possible for a patient to experience some kind of pigment therapy that would alter the color of a patient's skin.

It may well be able to carry out some kind of gene therapy that would ensure that certain animals would be born when their natural color is changed.

That's not the point. That's not the point. That's not what God is saying. He's not saying this cannot happen. But ordinarily what we have here is something that is the way it is.

A person's skin naturally will not change. A leopard's spots will not be removed. A person's skin.

A person's skin. Let's say in the realm of temperament. Short-tempered.

[44 : 39] Something like I am. Sometimes I can become angry very quickly. That is my natural disposition.

does that make it right? Does that make it okay? Is that a reasonable excuse?

If I believe that grace tempers every area of my life if I believe that with the help of God these things that should not be can be changed with his help then surely that is what should happen surely there is no excuse for intemperate behaviour of any description so the open door here is not giving them an excuse to misbehave but the emphasis is falling upon this that they are in a very dangerous position where they cannot help themselves John Calvin suggests that God is declaring in this verse that the people were so hardened in their wickedness that there was no hope of their repentance that's what he said these people were so wicked that there was no possibility of them repenting now do you agree with that assessment?

just read through the passage again and find what kind of people they were the kind of behaviour they exercised the kind of activities they engaged in but that I think is missing the point as well he was not giving them an excuse he was emphasising the need there was for them to experience a life changing encounter with God and if our excuses maintain that God is not able to deliver such life changing experience then we do not know God and we do not believe what God can do it tells us of our impotence but reminds us of God's omnipotence maybe some people will excuse themselves and cover themselves with this as an excuse or maybe some will say or pride will say are you telling me that I can't change if I want?

are you telling me I can't be better than I am? and there's plenty of things like that when we carry out an assessment of what we are we have a very lofty opinion of what we can do but if that is the way you think think again because this is God speaking and God is reminding us that the change that is necessary that cannot possibly be naturally accomplished must be supernaturally accomplished and if the change that is needed is a change without which you cannot experience spiritual life that is worth living then you are in need of God's help in order to secure that if the assessment of your life your own assessment not mine your own introspective conclusions based upon your personal experience of your personal relationship with God if the conclusion that you've come to means that God is relegated to some part of your life that is distant that is really immaterial then something needs to happen and that can only happen with God's help some of you will know the name of the late

[49 : 48] Professor Douglas Macmillan he was a remarkable man in many ways I really I would say he was a people person I first met him as a very young Christian even before I was a Christian and I was on holiday in Glasgow I went to St Vincent Street and I always remember that first encounter because you were no sooner in the door of his church than you wanted to be alongside and find out who you were but most importantly where you were in relation to Christ it was a great gift but he gives an account of his own spiritual journey and he was like many other people he was living his life in this world for the world I didn't know he was a musician but he played the accordion when he was a young man he was also a powerful powerfully built man he very often took part in in games tossing the caper and wrestling he was a physically powerful man but when God engaged with him and when God wrestled with him and when God spoke to him he was like so many others making excuses about what his needs were and he went to a sermon once he was persuaded to go and he was touched by what he heard but not sufficiently to convert him and he promised to go back again but he never did for some matter of months but the minister confronted him and asked where have you been why have we not seen you and he gave this reason he said well I've been praying to God a number of times and nothing happened nothing happened and the conclusion was at that moment

God did not want it to happen do you follow the logic of what he was saying he was he was praying and God was obligated to answer and the answer was going to be the conversion of Douglas Macmillan but Douglas Macmillan like everybody else needed to understand that the simple truth of the matter is that he did not want it to happen he did not want to be converted and a person can believe this is what I want I want to be converted I want God to convert me I want to believe I want my life to be changed until you recognize that the real truth of the matter is this that you do not want your life to be changed and that if you are earnestly saying that you want your life to be changed you will be like these people that God was challenging who were like the Ethiopian black and could not have their colored skin changed or the leopard who couldn't have their spots changed you recognize your own inability and you say to God well I can't change unless you help me unless you change me the deeper we get into sin and this is the way it was for them here the deeper they get into sin and into the ways of the world outwardly you're content with the way things are and at its heart these are the things that keep you from God go back to this consideration of where you are today speaking to everybody without exception believer and unbeliever are you content with where you are today are you willing to change are you willing to change

Christian are you willing to be a better Christian are you willing to be a more diligent Christian a more zealous Christian a more faithful Christian a more Christ like Christian I suppose there is a necessity for being careful in what we have here Alexander Stuart tells us that self reformation is possible it is difficult it is rarely achieved but it is possible or as he puts it it is by no means impossible the tyranny of habit he says can be broken and has been broken without the miracle of saving grace do you believe that well I know someone well I knew someone he is no longer living he was a believer but before he came to faith he had been an alcoholic and his life was really on the skids but he managed to stop drinking and when he managed to stop drinking his life took an upward curve things were much better and his life improved no end the money that was wasted on drink was put to other uses and he built himself a brand new house with all mud cons and he was proud of his achievements and it was pointed out to him at that stage that there was something still lacking in his life when a person is confronted with that with that truth becomes a shock because after all look at me now look at what I've done look at my achievements my accomplishments

I've all done all these things and you're telling me there's something missing Jeremiah is speaking about something here that cannot be affected or that cannot be done by self this helplessness of which he is speaking needs divine intervention and all our lives whichever way we consider them this this improvement of our lives this betterment this closer walk with God this new walk with God can only be accomplished with God's help and all your resolutions without application to God will be wasted you know at this time of the year it's not so obvious

I suppose in many ways when I was young there was many people I interacted with and worked with and they were very much involved in drink and I was very often in company and worked with people who would go to excess as far as drinking was concerned and then all of a sudden there would be this resolution a result I'm not going to drink again they would take the pledge and when you spoke to them you wouldn't dare deny that they were serious that they were earnest not a drop will touch my lips again but for all their earnest resolve without

[59 : 53] God's help it's not possible whatever the vice is yes Christian for you whatever laxity has crept into your life needs to be resolved needs to be addressed needs to be recognized needs to be dealt with not in the resources that you possess but with God's grace with God's help if you really need to if you really want to if you really believe that your life is the way it should be with God we cannot overcome them except on bended knee you've heard the expression old habits die hard you know that expression don't you old habits die hard and any one of us can cultivate any kind of habit they can be bad habits and they can be good habits

Spurgeon makes an illustration of a group of people going out to plant trees and they were using shovels just to dig a hole and stick the tree in the hole but he said as they did so without realising it they came upon an old well beaten track and he said the shovels were no use the track had been so walked on and so hardened by use that you needed a peak you need a peak to break through the ground and that's the way we are by nature we've cultivated habits that are so deeply ingrained in us that without the grace of

God they will not be broken they will not be broken and that's the hope for these people God knows where their wickedness is going to lead them God knows where their unwillingness to change is going to lead them now that is the thing for you perhaps you've had your new year resolution it's not too late to think again it's not too late to resolve to put God at the top of your list and to seek his help to change the things that need to be changed as far as you're concerned as far as he's concerned and there's nobody of us here who can't do that there's nobody of us here who can't and shouldn't do that and may

God give us that grace to recognise that we can change for the better and that we can change for his glory and for his good which is our good may he bless to us these thoughts let us pray oh lord oh god our resolutions are many but our resolve is often not keeping pace with it grant to us that resolve to walk with the lord walk in your company that you may direct us as to how to live for your glory be merciful to us and all we entrust to your care and keeping the state cleansed from sin in Jesus name amen our closing psalm is psalm 51 a psalm that talks about change talks about the change that occurs in the life of a sinner when

God turns them psalm 51 verse 8 of gladness and of joyfulness made me to hear the voice that saw these very bones which thou hast broken may rejoice all mine iniquities blocked out thy face hide from my sin create a clean heart Lord renew a right spirit me within cast me not from thy side nor take thy holy spirit away restore me thy salvation's joy with thy spirit me stay then will I teach thy ways unto those that transgressors be and those that sinners are shall then be turned unto thee of gladness and of joyfulness make me to hear the voice downward a light say the ■■■■

[65 : 56] The reborns which the last joke can rejoice.

Almighty we praise. ■■■■ pleaws with them.

Cast me not from Thy sight nor take Thy holy stead away.

Rejoice me Thine salvation joy with the spirit through each day.

Then when I teach Thy vision to those that are who will be Bodhan and give aus May grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rest and abide with you all now and always.

[68 : 13] Amen.