

Now O Lord Take Away My Life

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- [0 : 00] Let us join together in the worship of God. We shall sing to his praise Psalm 43.
- Psalm 43, we're going to sing the whole psalm. Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against the ungodly nation.
- From the unjust and crafty man, O be thou my salvation. For thou the God art of my strength, why thrust thou meely fro?
- For the enemy's oppression, why do I mourning go? O send thy light forth on thy truth, let them be guides to me. And bring me to thine holy hill, even where thy dwellings be.
- Then will I to God's altar go, to God my chiefest joy. Dear God, my God, thy name to praise my heart by will employ.
- [1 : 04] Why art thou then cast down my soul? What should discourage thee? And why with vexing thoughts art thou disquieted in me?
- Still trust in God. For him to praise good cause I yet shall have. He of my countenance is the health. My God that doth me save.
- The whole of this psalm, Psalm 43, to God's praise. Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against the ungodly nation. Church, you can't be my cause against the ungodly nation.
- From the ungodly nation. O give thou my salvation.
- For thou the God, the God of my strength.
- [2 : 27] Why does love may be true? From the ungodly nation. From the ungodly nation. From the ungodly nation.
- For thou the ungodly nation. Why do I hold him know?
- O stand thy life for a night to death.
- And give thy soul. I bring thee to earth. I bring thee to earth.
- Thy holy heaven. In where thy dwelling to be.
- [3 : 30] Then will I turn. Then will I turn. God's all fair good. To God my spirit's joy.
- Yea, God my good. Thy kingdom to be. My heart by will and mine.
- any, Fil-man, For our sea. In Freddie and glory. ouvert protective Hidden■■ Inner■ bank
- The world is dead. I bring thee to work against us.
- My heart by will and mine. Thank you. Your loved ones, Illinois. For their whole land shallrut I, in the middle, Yet live in me.
- Still try to sing degree For him to praise To God Zeitlinh shall hail.
- [5 : 01] He of my God, now is Israel My God, now is He Let us come before God in prayer, let us pray Eternal and ever-blessed God, enable us to open our mouth And wait upon you to fill from on high That mouth with which we speak, that we would not speak in haste or hurriedly That we would not speak ill-advisedly But speak as those who come with nothing in our hands And declare our poverty

Thankful that when we do we come to one who is rich Who has riches without equal When we remember your word As it speaks to us of an encounter Between Solomon of old And one from the east who came to visit him And when she was Made aware of Of the glory of Solomon And the vast resources that were at his disposal The riches of the land She made a declaration that the half of it was not told But if that was true of Solomon There is a greater than Solomon To whom we must come And we bless you and thank you That when we do come Even with nothing of our own

To commend us or to To speak of That would in any way Be a means by which we would secure your blessing We give thanks that when we come We come to one who is able to To receive from our hand The thanksgiving that we offer In the name of Christ Jesus our Lord In whose name we are made Even in exceptional circumstances We may be alone In our homes We may be met With others at the throne of grace But collectively We know that there are many Throughout the world With whom we meet Whom we may never meet with in this world But it may be that in the world to come In the great mystery of

Of eternity That when the saints of Of old are gathered To enjoy the near presence of Christ That not one will be One hair's breadth Away from your presence And that is something that defies Our human logic Our understanding But it is a truth that We can believe in and trust in So we give thanks that we have this opportunity To come And to plead the merits of one who is the risen saviour We commit and commend This service to you for blessing And that whosoever would be present With a hungering soul may be satisfied That anybody who is sitting perhaps in solitude That they may at this very moment Experience a sense of being in company

With many others Whoever they may be May the eyes of their understanding be opened We know that there are passages of scripture That revealed to us How the hosts of heaven Invisible to the naked eye By reason of your own revelation They were seen And there were too many to be numbered And these ministering angels Are in the world at the present And while we do not speak of them While we do not see them We believe that they are at work in the world And we pray that even today One would come To minister to the sick To the lonely Minister to the broken in body or mind Heal their hurts and bind their wounds We pray for our homes and our families Our neighbours Our communities

[10 : 09] Our island and beyond From the Bud to Barra We pray that you would bless Every sin's exalted layer And direct them to put their trust in Christ We give thanks for the gospel That speaks of salvation to sinners And we pray that the eyes of the understanding Might be opened That they might see In their own heart The need that they have For such a salvation Something that only you can do We pray that you would remember The places set apart Set apart this day For caring for the sick We remember in our own island The hospital And Bethesda And the care homes We pray for them all Especially at this difficult time May your healing hand be upon them May you turn away The dangers that That are so prevalent And as we are exposed to this danger

That we have hitherto been preserved from May we put our trust in the God Who has ordained all things That your word That your word Reminds us that all things work together For the good of your own people Wherever they are in this world Words that we take so glibly Upon our lips Words that we may Quote often And yet It's only when these words are tested And when they are believed in That we truly Prove the reality of them Words that Speak to us Of the faith of your people Of the trust that they have In Christ Jesus The one who has come into the world To be their saviour And when we think about The many difficulties That many of your people Have to engage with That like the apostle of old

They can say I reckon that the sufferings Of this present time Are not worthy to be compared With the glory Which shall be revealed in us Help us To remember the truth Of your own word And have it Before us at all time Pray for those Who preach the word today Encourage them in their labour Keep them from the enmity That is in the world against them From the enemy of their soul Who is constantly Seeking to devour To tear To disturb their peace So hear our petitions Remember our nation And those who govern us Remember the nations of the earth Especially the ones That are impoverished And where there are countless numbers Who have succumbed to This pandemic in different ways That we may hear nothing of So grant us The grace to wait upon you

To look to you at all times And to Have this idea In our heads That you have implanted there That you are our God And that there is no God like unto you We pray that you bless us now As we read your word Cleanse from sin Forgiving every transgression That is numbered against us Through Christ the Lord Amen We are going to hear the word of God As we have it in The first book of Kings Chapter 19 And Ahab told Jezebel All that Elijah had done And with all How he had slain all the prophets With his sword Then Jezebel sent a messenger Unto Elijah saying So let the gods do to me And more also If I make not thy life As the life of one of them By tomorrow About this time And when he saw that He arose and went for his life

And came to Beersheba Which belonged to Judah And left his servant there But he himself went a day's journey Into the wilderness And came and sat down Under a juniper tree And he requested for himself That he might die And said It is enough Now O Lord Take away my life For I am not better Than my father's And as he lay and slept Under a juniper tree Behold then An angel touched him And said unto him Arise and eat And he looked And behold There was a cake Bacon on the coals And a cruise of water At his head And he did eat And drink And laid him down again And the angel of the Lord Came and came the second time And touched him And said Arise and eat Because the journey Is too great for thee And he arose And did eat and drink And went in the strength Of that meal Forty days

[15 : 15] And forty nights And to Horeb The mount of God And he came thither Into a cave And lodged there And behold The word of the Lord Came to him And he said What doest thou here Elijah And he said I have been very jealous For the Lord God of hosts For the children of Israel Have forsaken thy covenant And thrown down Thy notters Slain thy prophets With the sword And I even I only Am left And they seek My life To take it away And he said Go forth and stand Upon the mount Before the Lord Behold the Lord Passed by And a great And strong wind Rent the mountains And break in pieces The rocks Before the Lord But the Lord Was not in the wind And after the wind An earthquake But the Lord Was not in the earthquake And after the earthquake A fire But the Lord Was not in the fire And after the fire

A still small voice And was so When Elijah heard it That he wrapped his face In his mantle And went out And stood in the entering Inn of the cave And behold There came a voice Into him And said What doest thou here Elijah And he said I have been very jealous For the Lord God of hosts Because the children of Israel Have forsaken thy covenant Throne down thine altar Shall slain thy prophets With the sword And I even I Only am left And they seek my life To take it away And the Lord said unto him Go Return on thy way To the wilderness Of Damascus And when thou comest Anoint hath Iel To be king over Syria Jehu the son of Nimshi Shalt thou anoint To be king over Israel And Elisha the son of Shaphat Of Abel Mihallah Shalt thou anoint To be prophet In thy womb And it shall come to pass That him that escapeth

The sword of Hasael Shall Jehu slay And him that escapeth From the sword of Jehu Shall Elisha slay Yet I have left me Seven thousand in Israel All the knees Which have not bowed And to Baal And every mouth Which hath not kissed him So he departed thence And found Elisha The son of Shaphat Who was ploughing With twelve yoke of oxen Before him And he was the twelfth And Elijah passed him By And cast his mantle Upon him And he left the oxen And ran after Elijah And said to him Said to him Let me I pray thee Kiss my father And my mother Then I will follow thee And he said unto them Go back again For what have I done to thee And he returned back from him Took a yoke of oxen And slew them Boiled their flesh With the instruments Of the oxen And gave unto the people And they did eat Then he arose

And went after Elijah And ministered unto him Amen And may the Lord At his blessing To this reading of his word And to his name Be the praise I'd like us just for a while To turn to the passage That we read And we can read again Verse 4 But he himself Went a day's journey Into the wilderness And came and sat down Under a juniper tree And he requested for himself That he might die And said it is enough Now Lord Now O Lord Take away my life For I am not better Than my father As we continue our journey Through the Covid pandemic No one can doubt

That the list of casualties Is fearful And that is only Taking account Of the death toll Beyond that There are many Others Others who have Suffered And the actual Consequences Of the pandemic May not be known For decades to come If indeed Ever is And the impact And the long term Effects of Covid Upon survivors Is immeasurable And we have Impact upon The national economy As well as Personal finance Impact on the Health workers Who deal with Serious Often fatal effects Of the disease At the same time Exposing themselves To danger The danger They feared Their families Were being exposed to

[20 : 19] And many fear That the future May hold A wave of sufferers Of PTSD Post-traumatic Stress disorder That will place The health service Under further duress We know that Home life And school life And college And university Life have all Been affected It truly reminds us Of our utter Vulnerability Lockdown may have Many effects Not least Our freedom Inhibited But that in turn Produces a challenging Impact on our Mental well-being Which many Struggle To cope with And this in fact Reminds us of How truly delicate The balance Of our mind Is One person May hardly Feel the impact Of a particular Event Whereas another May be Greatly traumatised By the same Sequence And looking at

What takes place As an observer It is not easily Understood What is taking place Mentioning this Because when we Look at the Account that we Have here Of Elijah For many It is a mystery The reaction Of Elijah To the situation He finds himself In Is one of life's Mysteries In order to Try and Appreciate What is Before us Here We need to Consider the Kind of Person Elijah Was Secondly We need to Consider Where he Is at When these Words Come from His mouth And thirdly The possible Remedy That is Suggested Now the Name of Elijah Should be Known to

Most Bible Readers He is One of God's Prophets He is Described By some As the Prophet Of fire His life Is worth Following And reflecting At length On A mighty Instrument In the Hand of God In the Recent Experience Of this Man of God Which is What he Is He had Defeated With God's Help No doubt The prophets Of Baal 450 of Them Please read This for Yourself And Appraise Yourself Of the Kind of Person That he Was Elijah Is truly Magnificent He calls The people To him To witness This great Miracle Where he Calls down The fire Of the Lord We read Lord God Of Abraham Isaac And of Israel Let it be

Known This day That thou Wart God In Israel And that I am Thy servant And that I have Done all These Things At Thy Word Hear Hear me Hear me Hear me Hear me That This People May Know That Thou Art Lord God And that Thou Hast Turned Their Heart Back Again Of course this is but one account amongst many.

Elijah knew what it was to benefit from a miracle, being fed from the hand of God by ravens. He was responsible for miracles in the raising up of the widow's son from the dead.

[24 : 06] He had a close walk with God. He was physically fearless, described by some as a man of faith, courage, prayer and faithfulness in the Lord's service.

All of these things are true of Elijah, a truly remarkable individual. And yet in the twinkling of an eye, almost the scene changes.

This brave warrior flees for his life and desires death as a better option. Roger Ellsworth puts that never has there been a more abrupt and dramatic change in a man than the one that occurred in Elijah.

And the thing is this, that the change is evident, but what causes the change is less so. So the second thing is this, where is Elijah when he speaks these words?

We find him to be in the wilderness, sitting under a juniper tree. And he requests for himself that he might die. He wants God to let him die.

[25 : 25] No, in fact, we must be true to the scripture. Now, O Lord, take away my life. I have had enough. The suddenness of the experience is hard to explain.

Now, please be aware that I am not a psychologist. I have no training in the functions of the human mind as to how it affects behaviour. Nor am I a psychiatrist with any training in the treatment of mental illness.

But then I suspect that many who examine the behaviour of Elijah are in the same boat. All we can do is analyse what Elijah does and why. And, of course, what God does.

And what God does is provide a remedy. Now, we have to be aware that the English language is a very expressive and fluid language.

We may use words that can vary in meaning depending on the context. For example, we could argue that Elijah is depressed. Depression is a terrible thing.

[26 : 36] But we can say that we are depressed when we really mean that we are unhappy. Take away what makes us unhappy or provide something to make us happy and we are no longer depressed.

In the same sense in which we used it. However, there is a depression that may not have a recognisable root cause.

It could be situational. It could be spiritual. It could be psychological. I was recently reading the words of the prophet Micah.

As he considered the land under God's judgement. Deprived of God's blessing. His words are, Woe is me! Or what misery is mine!

Yet despite that grief, and his grief was steep and genuine, heartfelt. He goes on to say these marvellous words. Words of faith.

[27 : 38] But as for me, I will look unto the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O my enemy.

When I fall, I shall arise. When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. Now does that mean that his misery was not real?

Not at all. He was able to think of it in the light of the reality of God's covenant love. Coming back to Elijah, what makes it so difficult to understand is the suddenness of the change.

Some find the fault in the flawed perspective of the prophet. He had enjoyed a great victory with God's help, no doubt.

But no sooner is this done than Jezebel reappears, with all the vindictive venom she can muster. And she sends a message to Elijah.

[28 : 44] So let the gods do to me and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow, about this time.

The threat is real. Surely he is wise to take it seriously. But many are critical. Where is his faith?

Why does he not wait for God to tell him what he should do? There is no doubt that if he had taken time to do so, it may have seemed different.

Now I think that while that is a truth that we ought to bear in mind at all times, it is not always easy to understand why we react the way we do.

As a minister of the gospel, whose primary calling is to preach the word to all in season or out of season, I have never gotten used to how deflating that experience often is.

[29 : 47] Humanly speaking, you would imagine that there would be a feeling of elation in preaching as a consequence of fulfilling my calling.

But more often than not, that is not the case. I was reminded of this recently after Presbytery, when Reverend Kenneth I. MacLeod was giving a lecture on pastoral ministry and speaking of his own experience, but also the experience of his late father, Norman MacLeod, a former minister of the congregation here.

But it is not a unique experience within the ministry. And perhaps one that is difficult to understand from outside. It may be that we can't understand why, after having done our best or prayed or preached to the best of our ability, we would feel so empty.

Now looking at Elijah, there may be many who are critical of him at this point.

He let the Lord down. He let himself down. He let you down. You want your saints not to have feet of clay. What do you think of the logical mindset of Elijah?

[31 : 19] He wants to die. No, he wants God to do it. He does not want Jezebel to do it. So he flees for his life.

Sometimes we are confronted by behaviour that does not make sense. Elijah, the saintly man of God, is also, in the words of the Apostle James, a man subject to light passions as we are.

At the present time of pandemic, many have identified the probable danger of stress arising out of it. There cannot be a quick fix.

There cannot be a simple pointing to God as an answer to our problems. He can only be that if he is all things to us, which includes one able to remedy our situation as sinners.

Now what do I mean? How does God deal with his servant? He does not remonstrate with him. He does not tell him how shameful it is for God's servant to behave like this.

[32 : 27] No, he sends his angel to touch him and speak to him. Arise and eat. Perhaps this was the great physician doing his finest work.

He does not explain the remedy. Modern doctors will frown at this. They will say to you, this is what is wrong with you and this is how we intend to treat you.

Elijah, it seems, was physically and mentally exhausted. And in that weakened condition, extremely vulnerable. And that is what many must guard against at this time.

Constant physical and emotional duress will take its toll. The Christian believer can take their repose in Christ, no doubt.

He is the go-to person. But it is not something they do to the neglect of their physical, mental and emotional well-being. The Lord knows what it is to be constantly bombarded by the demands of a relentless world.

[33 : 37] But he took time away from the disciples at times to be alone with God. And as Christians, we delight in reading about the blessed fruit of the labours of saints of a bygone age.

But we can again and again come face to face with experiences that we do not understand, that are a confusion to us.

We read of one such who knew the blessing of God on his life and ministry. David Brainerd, who suffered from TB and the loneliness and isolation it inflicted upon him.

T wrote, The key words are, That's why I saw.

It's only possible with God's help. J. Gresham Machen, aware of his own shortcomings, was someone who, who, from time to time, acknowledged that.

[34 : 53] John Piper wrote about Machen. He has strengths and weaknesses. But the lesson we learn is that God reigns after his church and over his church and over the world in such a way that he weaves the weakness and the strength of his people with infinite wisdom into a fabric history that displays the full range of his glories.

Elijah said, I am finished. God said, You are not. I am not finished with you yet. I still have work for you to do.

How much we have to keep this in mind. We read in this chapter that God put Elijah face to face with what he was doing and what he was thinking.

He stated I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant thrown down thine altars slain thy prophets with the sword die even I only am left and they seek my life to take it away.

But God showed him proved to him that his reckoning was wrong. we need as believers who are confronted by our own inadequacies our weaknesses to remember that we can look to the God of heaven to be the source of our strength even when our weakness is greater than we could ever deal with ourselves.

[36 : 45] may the Lord be merciful to us watch over us each one now may grace mercy and peace from God Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and always Amen