

# A perishing hope or the hope of the perishing?

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[ 0 : 00 ] We are going to join together in the worship of God with the singing of Psalm 77.

Psalm 77 and reading at the beginning of the psalm Unto the Lord I with my voice I unto God did cry, even with my voice and unto me, as ear he did apply.

I in my trouble sought the Lord, and my sword my knight did run, and ceased note, my grieved soul did consolation shun.

I to remembrance God did call, yet trouble did remain, and overwhelmed my spirit was, whilst I did so complain.

Mine eyes, debarred from rest and sleep, thou makest me still to wake. My trouble is so great that I enable them to speak. The days of old to mind I called, and often think upon, the times and ages that are past, full many years ago.

[ 1 : 23 ] We are going to sing these verses. Psalm 77 from the beginning of the psalm. Psalm 77 from the beginning of the psalm.

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[ 4 : 01 ] Psalm 78 with Psalm. Psalm 70 from the beginning of the psalm. Let us come before God in prayer. Let us pray.

O Lord our God, as these words are upon our lips, we are reminded of the plight and predicament of some of your people at certain times in their lives, sometimes even for prolonged periods, and some even a lifetime, experiencing the sorrows and the sadnesses in a multiplicity of forms.

But those who know the Lord, know the wisdom of seeking the Lord, just like your servant the psalmist, in my trouble he sought the Lord, he said.

My sore by night had run and ceased not, my grieved soul did consolation shun. I to remembrance God did call, yet trouble did remain, and overwhelmed my spirit was, whilst I did sore complain.

He sought relief, and yet to his deeper grief, no relief was to be found. until you and your mercy reveal yourself to your people, that's the way it must remain.

[ 5 : 49 ] Another psalm of your servant says, that the troubles that afflict the just, in number many be. And there are times when that is so true.

But the promise is there also, that despite the numerous nature of them, they are able to believe, that out of them all, the Lord will set them free.

And that is the truth regardless, whatever point it may take its course, this world is but a fleeting shadow, a time of sojourn, that is soon spent.

We bless you and thank you, that there is a sure and certain hope, awaiting your people, that death is not the end for them, that is the resurrection of the just, that is, even as we reflected upon earlier today, the awesome provision made for your people, in a world far distant from this one, in so many different ways.

We pray your blessing on your word. We pray that it might have free course amongst us, through the hand of the Spirit, that may be applied liberally to the hearts and minds, of all who hear it, all who sit under it today.

[ 7 : 37 ] Pray for the preaching of the Gospel, every pulpit of our land, where Christ is lifted up, where people are reminded of the need that they have, to put their trust in him, and him alone for salvation, that they might disregard their own doings, if that indeed is what they put their trust in, for the salvation of their soul, because salvation can only come by one means, and that is through the passion of the Lord, Jesus Christ, through the work that he has done, through the redemption that he has accomplished, through the sacrifice that he offered.

We pray that you would bless that to us, even today, remembering all that we entrust to your care, and keeping of our loved ones. Remember your congregation here, and all who have fallen part of it.

Those who are ready hearers of God's word, those who are desirous of a greater acquaintanceship with him, who is to know his life eternal, give thanks for those who have come to know him, whose walk with him is constant.

We pray for those who have yet to discover, the certainty of what salvation in him involves. Guide them, we pray. Open the eyes of their understanding, that they may put their trust in him.

We pray for your mercy, for your grace, for your peace. We pray for your own hand to be upon, those who wait upon you, even in the night watches, crying out, what must I do to be saved?

[ 9 : 22 ] May the salvation of their soul be ever greater to them than anything else that they have a burden for. And may they learn to look to yourself. We would not deflect them from the sorrows of those who are crying for that salvation, but rather to direct them to him through whom salvation comes.

We pray for the needy amongst us, for those who are sick, those who are cared for by others, those who are weak, embody your mind, those in hospital, those in care homes, those in the hospice.

We pray for those whose role it is to nurse them, to offer medical care in these places or in the home. Place the families of the afflicted, bind them together as they may be a source of comfort to their loved ones.

Remember the grieving and the sorrowful, the voice of death is seldom silent. Pray for our nation and the Queen who rules over us, our government, and the officers of the various parliaments.

They do little but place lip service to Her Majesty in many respects. But there is a King over all who will have all appear before him at the last, and he must answer as we must all to him who is sovereign.

[ 10 : 52 ] We pray that you would bless the nations of the earth, especially the parts of the world where there are trials and tribulations abound. Be it from the heat, or from flood, or fire, or whatever it is, by natural calamities, we are without number.

So guide us in the truth as we turn to it very briefly this day. Open it out to us as we read it, as we hear it read, and as we reflect on the words that are before us.

Pardon our every sin. In Jesus' name we would ask it. Amen. We are going to read from the Old Testament Scriptures and the Book of Job, and we are reading from Chapter 8.

The Book of Job, Chapter 8. Then answered Bildad the Shulite, and said, How long wilt thou speak these things?

And how long shall the words of your mouth be like a strong wind? Doth God pervert judgment, or does the Almighty pervert justice?

[ 12 : 08 ] If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression, if thou wouldest seek unto God betimes and make the supplication to the Almighty, if thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would wake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.

Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase. For in choir, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers.

For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow. Shall not they teach us, and tell us, and utter words out of their heart?

Can the rush grow up without mire? Can the fig tree? Can a flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in this greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb.

So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish, whose hope shall be cut off, and whose thrust shall be like a spider's web.

[ 13 : 35 ] He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand. He shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure. He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden.

His roots are wrapped about the heap, and seeth the place of stones. If ye destroy him from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, I have not seen thee.

Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow. Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evildoer, till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing.

They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame, and the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to naught. Amen, and may the Lord add his blessing to a reading of his word, and to his name be the praise.

Many years ago now, when I was studying at university, one of the subjects that was in the course that I was doing was English literature, and one of the topics chosen for us was the book of Job.

[ 15 : 07 ] And I was quite delighted to have this as part of the curriculum, believing that there would be some spiritual edification for me in the study of that in what was otherwise a fairly arid course, as far as spiritual matters were concerned.

But unfortunately, the person who took this part of the course was not a believer, and he treated the book of Job as a work of fiction.

He did not believe in the Bible as God's word, nor did he believe in the passion of Job as a passion who was anything other but the figment of somebody's imagination.

So he was quite prepared to acknowledge the antiquity of the book, but that was as far as it went. But the book of Job is a book about a real passion with real sufferings.

His sufferings are many, physical sufferings, spiritual sufferings, and emotional sufferings.

[ 16 : 33 ] And the thoughts and feelings are of one who encountered them. And his struggles are genuine struggles of someone who knows God, but who may not fully understand what God is doing.

This is a man of God, a man who experienced the blessing of God during his days, but at the same time who experienced the hand of God heavily upon him.

in the book that tells us of these experiences, we are also introduced to those people who are described as his friends and comforters.

They too are genuine, real people. build at Eliphaz and so forth. But if you are ever called one of Job's comforters, please be assured that they are not playing you a compliment.

Job's heart is breaking, but all he hears are stern words, and each one of these comforters in his own ways is unfeeling, unjust, trading words that are empty and meaningless to themselves let alone to Job.

[ 18 : 24 ] They lack discernment and they are full of self-confidence and full of reproach for Job. In this chapter we meet Bildad, the second of Job's friends, who comes to speak to him.

Having read what he has to say, perhaps he would be excused for saying with friends like these who needs enemies. Clearly he doesn't like what Job has to say.

He virtually calls Job a big windbag. Because all he has to, all Job has to say as far as he is concerned is not worth listening to.

Bildad is someone who treats Job as someone who is clearly a victim a victim of his own sinful condition.

Somebody has said of him that he sees the situation that Job is in as a problem that needs to be remedied, an issue that has to be dealt with.

[ 19 : 55 ] of his life. He is not a pet project, or she is not someone who needs to be God alongside in order to secure some kind of agenda or solution that is mechanical or meaningless in the scheme of things.

If we cannot be a friend to the needy with our own heart breaking with their hearts, with our own sorrows, echoing the sorrows of those that we are ministering to, we should stay clear.

When we look at Job's situation, these people who spoke to him were convinced of one thing, suffering is caused by sin.

Job is suffering, therefore he must be suffering because of his sin. and that's an obvious conclusion, is it not? However misguided and cruel though their words were.

Now there are many things that they say that may be true. There are many things that they point out that are accurate, but just because they're true or accurate does not mean that they are relevant to the situation that Job finds himself in.

[ 21 : 51 ] They speak of God in ways which in many respects is quite accurate, but there is more to life than the accuracy that is sterile and without an understanding of what the implications of what they are saying involves.

I want us to think of these words which are true words, words which we believe are the truth.

In verse 13 we read that the hypocrites' hope shall perish. And indeed that is perfectly true.

But at the same time what is not true is that the accusation levied at Job that his hypocrisy is the very thing that they are in the world to condemn.

There are many who have a hope in the Lord and the Lord himself is the one who will test that hope whether it is genuine or not.

[ 23 : 15 ] Let's think about what it is about the hope of some that are in the world. What does the Bible say to us about hope first of all?

And then what is it that makes hope a hypocrite's hope? The Bible speaks of God as the hope of Israel.

His people possess this hope. They are people who know him and love him.

The prophet Jeremiah for example has these words O the hope of Israel the saviour thereof in time of trouble why shouldst thou be a stranger in the land and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for the night?

God is understood to be that very hope that is held dear by the people who hold God dear.

[ 24 : 33 ] The wise man says the hope of the righteous shall be gladness and in the New Testament the apostle Paul teaches us that it is the God of hope that will fill us with all joy and peace in believing just as it is his hope that sustains us with an eye to eternal life.

hope of the believer is something that is a necessary grace that God equips the believer with that enables them to look beyond the here and now to what is yet unrealized with the certainty that even though it is not yet theirs it will be and that is what every believer possesses there is a sure and certain hope we mentioned it in prayer of the resurrection unto life the person who looks upon death in the face and they know the finality of that in one sense when the dust returns to the dust from whence it came but for the believer there is a certain resurrection to life everlasting so how does the passage describe the hope of the hypocrite what do we mean by a hypocrite what is the definition of a hypocrite somebody who is making a pretense of being what they are not never forgotten the words of the late

Mulder Macaulay who gave the description by way of anecdote in a sermon that I heard many years ago he said there were three types of hypocrite one was black one was spotted and one was white the first the first of them fooled nobody the second of them fooled everybody everybody that is but God and here in this book we read the description that is given to us threefold we read that the hope of the hypocrite shall be cut off whose trust shall be like a spider's web he shall lean upon his house but it shall not stand he shall hold it fast but it shall not endure he is green before the sun and his branch shooteth forth in his garden his roots are wrapped about the heap and seeth the place of stones each one presents to us the image of the fragility and the foolishness of possessing such a hope would you put your weight on a spider's web would you trust and lean upon your house something that appears to be substantial but take a good look around you there are very many substantial properties around us in the world in which we live but go back a hundred years and there were many equally substantial properties maybe not so grand but built on solid foundations and made of solid rock and yet today they are but crumbling heaps the psalmist says about some that they flatter themselves in their own eyes and flattery is an activity where we give someone insincere or exaggerated praise self-flattery is the practice of someone who is trying and to persuade himself or herself that they are what they are not and that they have what they do not there were some well there was a renowned politician of recent times

I don't know if renowned is the right word but he was described as an overt narcissist believing so many things about himself and he was he was admiring himself constantly as it were in the mirror and seeing nobody better than himself self-flattery is not really of any substance consider the false hopes of the person who does not believe the bible will these hopes stand the test of time Jonathan Edwards one of the most famous evangelists of 16th 17th century many argue he says there is no hell there is no heaven there are no angels or demons because they have not seen them they have not seen them what are they putting their trust in what are they depending upon they are depending upon their own experience limited as it may be what they have not seen decrease what they do not what they believe how many are like that today what have you not seen and yet because you have not seen it you don't believe it that is not something that you can rely upon

God's word requires the holiness of the saints who believe and trust in Christ alone for salvation but the one resting on false hopes trusts in their own goodness perhaps or a sense of sin that is barely sensitive to sin at all in other words they do not feel that anything that they may be guilty of is worthy of condemnation anyways they're not always the possibility of reformation or self improvement when things become less frantic how many people have clung to this false hope when I have a when I have an opportune moment do not remember these words spoken by another when I have a more convenient season then I'll give time to the things of God

[ 32 : 30 ] I will have time to read I will have time to reflect I will have time to consider the things that have to do with my soul the first hope that death is still far away is alive and well in our day and generation and how many people have entered into that experience of dying and death without them even realising that they were in that very place compare all these things to the examples that have been given to us are they more worthy or sturdy not a bit of it we may have hope for some because of what we see in them but maybe our hope for them is more a wishful thinking how can we rely upon anything or anyone if they have not relied on

Christ Christ the preacher A.W. Toser wrote many years ago I want you he said to take this thought and I hope that God can burn it into your souls the truth that men and women can be respectable and religious and prayerful and careful and eager and ask the right questions and talk about religion and yet with all these things they can still be lost Job was accused of having the hypocrite's hope how wrong was that consideration how misguided was that conclusion there are many who do not understand the way

God works Bildad knew what was to blame Job lost his family because in all likelihood they were sinful the question Eve does not disguise the belief that he has that he knows why and he judges accordingly does he have all the facts no but the evidence points to this therefore guilt must be assumed you could describe this person's religion to be a religion of formulas which are closer analysis is but a lifeless and a dry religion which on the surface gives the impression of being meaningful we know that if anything what this proves that his opinion of

Job is that it is nothing better than the poor hypocrite whose religion was false what kind of religion do you have do you have the religion of the person who is already all too ready to condemn others because of the conclusions that they misguidedly arrive at and to excuse themselves because of the same misguided opinion that they have of themselves that they have a genuine hope which is but the hope that is spoken of here the hope of the hypocrite that hope shall perish just as surely as the one who possesses it the God in his grace give you the certainty that there is a hope that is of God and that the hope those who possess it are assured of the of the certainty it brings to the believer that they will come into the full realisation of what it presents to them may bless to us these thoughts let us pray grant

Lord that whatever hope we have made be of the Lord save us from the hypocrite's hope from the foolishness of misbelieving truths concerning ourselves and believing things that are clearly contrary to what your word teaches be near to us each one remembering all we leave in your care and keeping guide us in the path of life and cleanse us from every sin we ask all in the name and for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and now may grace mercy and peace in him be your portion now and always Amen