

A lamentation

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Date: 15 September 2019

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[0:00] Psalm 56 says for the director of music to the tune of A Dove on Distant Oaks of David, a Mictam, whatever a Mictam is, when the Philistines had seized him in Gath.

Be merciful to me, O God, for men hotly pursue me. So I ask this morning, what is the shape of the Christian life?

Sometimes the Christian life is communicated as if it's nothing but up and up, full of joy, nothing else, no trial, no trouble, a bed of roses, as the saying goes, from triumph to triumph.

So it's up and up. Now there are texts which encourage us to look up. There's a text which says we're changed from glory to glory as we behold the Lord.

So that's definitely something there. Is that the shape? Well, here's another alternative. The shape of the Christian life is basically we're always down in the dumps with constant misery.

[1:14] The Bible says that it's a right thing to say to God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

And that's a prayer from a low condition. Saying, I need your mercy, Lord. But I think that doesn't cover the whole shape of the Christian life.

I'd like to suggest that the Christian life is shaped with a same shape as the career of Jesus.

Because Jesus was killed on the cross.

And he was raised from the dead. So his shape was sort of U-shaped. And I don't think I can do a U-shape with those arrows. But there's a downness and there's an upness.

The death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. And I want to suggest to us this morning that that is more helpfully the shape of the Christian life.

[2:20] Christian life contains all those components we carry around with us. The death of Jesus Christ and the resurrection life of Jesus Christ. In a curious mixture of components in our lives.

And the psalm that we're reading has that shape to it. It is David shaped. It's a psalm of David. It's about his life. But he's not just an isolated private individual.

He's the king. He's the Christ. The anointed saviour that God gave to his ancient people, the Jews. The Christ, the Messiah.

It's David shaped. It's Christ shaped. It's Christ shaped. And therefore, if we belong to Christ, it's believer shaped.

So what we see going on in this psalm, we will find reflected in the life of Jesus. And we'll also find it reflected in one way or another. Perhaps more of this or less of that at different times in our own lives.

[3:29] A life shaped by both death and resurrection. So let's look at the psalm. I'm going to try and do it in three headings.

They've all got an R in them. I couldn't get three R's in a row. Number one, the trouble David was in. Number two, the response David gave.

And number three, the ultimate result. So there's the trouble that he was in. The response to the trouble. And how it all turns out in the end.

The ultimate result for David. So those three points, that's how we're going to approach it this morning. Trouble, response, and ultimate result.

So I've got the various components here. We've got enemies. We've got poor David in his tears.

We've got a song that's going to emerge. We've got the kingship of David.

[4:24] David, and those are the components of what happens. So let's look at it then. So the first thing it says, for the director of music, I

should say, I have gone through this in Hebrew, but it really, I couldn't, I found some of it really quite difficult to grasp the way the language was working.

And I think some of it is so compacted that different commentators will say, out of those words, it's meaning in this way. And then somebody else will say, well, actually, you could take it another way. But then poetry is like that, isn't it? It sort of sets off a number of different meanings. Anyway, it's starting, it says, to begin with, to the maestro. Is that Italian?

The master. The master, so in music, you'd call them, in the maestro. So to the director of music. Okay, it's a song that's going to be sung. It's a mictam. Well, nobody knows what a mictam is. Could be a blues. Could be country and western. Could be reggae. Or it could be something completely different. Anyway, it's a mictam. And it's linked to a particular incident in the life of David. [5:34] I don't think that means that he wrote it necessarily when he was in the middle of that. But I think it has an appropriate sort of perhaps retrospective that fits that situation.

Well, that's how I might like to reminisce about it when I write my memoirs, like David Cameron's been doing. Anyway. Anyway. Anyway. So it's when the Philistines took him in Gath.

A real life context, perhaps retrospectively. Should we look and see what happened to David in Gath? It is in 1 Samuel 20. Worth looking to see what happened in David's life.

I'm sure most of us know the story of David. But in case you're not familiar with it, David was selected by God to be the king.

The previous king had made a right mess of it. And David, young David, was selected to be the new king. And to begin with, he was successful. Very successful.

[6:37] People sang songs about him. In the street, there's, you know, here comes David. Whatever it was. He was really, really popular. But he then becomes very unpopular.

So this is a new experience for him. He becomes somebody that the existing king wants to kill. 1 Samuel 20, verse 32.

Jonathan is King Saul's son and is friendly with David. And he said to his father, Why should David be put to death?

What has he done? Jonathan asked his father. But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David. So he's in a...

I don't... I mean, is there anybody here who has ever had a realistic death threat? That you know somebody wants to kill you? I mean, that's a pretty extreme thing.

[7:34] I don't think I can honestly say that I can enter into that. Because I've never had that experience. But this is the experience of David. The king wanted to kill him. In 21, verse 1, David decides, Well, I'm not welcome at home.

I'm going to run away. I'm going to escape. 21, verse 1. He went to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech trembled when he met him and asked, Why are you alone?

Why is no one with you? And he says, I'm off on important business. And he's running away. He gets the sword of Goliath.

He gets some help in that place. And then he crosses the border and goes off to the place where the traditional enemies of his people are.

Because he's not welcome at home. So he goes, perhaps I'll be welcome over here. And in 21, verse 10, it says, That day David fled from Saul and went to Ashish, king of Gath.

[8:38] The Gath was one of the cities of the Philistines. The Philistines equals baddies. The servants of Ashish said to him, Isn't this David, the king of the land?

Isn't he the one they sing about in their dances? Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands. And now David is really stuck. And he doesn't know what to do.

He's in a very, very low place. Verse 12, David took these words to heart. And was very much afraid of Ashish, king of Gath.

So what do you do? He feigned insanity in their presence. And while he was in their hands, he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard.

And Ashish said to his servants, Look at the man. He's insane. Why bring him to me? Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me?

[9:49] Must this man come into my house? And David left Gath and escaped somewhere else. So this is a low time in David's life. And it seemed to him the only option he had was to pretend he'd lost his mind.

And they took no notice of him and he was able to escape. I notice it says that he was brought to Ashish. So whether there was some sense in which he was imprisoned or whether he was arrested, well, not entirely clear about that.

But that was the context that this is in. It does say bring me. So perhaps he was arrested. Just gives us a little flavour of the deep distress that this man was in.

What would you have done? What would I have done? I don't know. I've never been in a situation quite like that. But it wasn't very dignified, was it? Anyway.

When the Philistines took him at Gath. So let's go to this psalm, Psalm 56, which is referred to that situation. Perhaps with hindsight.

[10:59] And it bursts in, verse 1, Be merciful to me, O God. It's a cry for mercy, for favour.

It's to do with the word for favour. Oh, I don't deserve this, but please will you help me? Please help me. Please show favour to me.

Please do something for me. And notice the, so we'll think about the trouble he was in. Look at the list of things that he says. For men, now the NIV says, hotly pursue me.

I looked it up. It seems to be a word that says, swallow me up. If we take that perhaps more literal meaning, he's saying that, if they get me, they'll gobble me up.

Men want to swallow me up. And notice, there's several reference to days. In this verse it says, all day long. All day long.

[12:02] All day long, enemies attack me, or all day long they press their attack. And then he goes on to talk about, in verse 2, my slanderers, again it's the same word for swallow up, pursue me.

My enemies, they want to swallow me up. That's me gone. And again, the reference to days, all day long. many, many, many, so it isn't just a few people, he says, there's loads of them.

You know, wherever I look, there's somebody out to get me. Many are attacking me. There's a word for height, which pops in there.

So the NIV says, many are attacking me in their pride. So they've got a high opinion of themselves. Authorised version, if anybody has an authorised version, I think it would, it says that height is a reference to God.

So it's a, many are attacking me almost high. Well, which way to take it, but let's go with the NIV. People are getting above themselves, and they're attacking me in their pride.

[13:10] And there's many of them. Let's move over to verse 5. Again, the reference today. All day long. They twist my words.

I don't know whether you've had that experience. You say something, somebody turns it back on you with a spin on it that you never intended. Taking it in a way you never intended.

Just interested, for what it's worth, in the marriage course, that I think Ben might be interested in conducting, or one of the books that might be used for that.

It talks about how you can do that in a marriage situation. You say something, and it's taken one way, and can be twisted, and people can really hurt each other by just taking words, and taking them perhaps out of context, to mean things they didn't mean, and so on, and so on, and so on.

So David says, they twist my words. Interestingly, I had a good look at Calvin's commentary. He's not so good on this. He says, well, perhaps there's another way of taking it.

[14:18] That it isn't that other people twist my words, but that my words twist me. And he says, I can't even think straight. Because when I start to put things into words, I get all confused.

And I just go round and round in circles. And the words twist me. So he could mean that. It's certainly an experience, isn't it? Is that an experience?

I think it's an experience where you try to frame words, but you just can't get them to make sense. And there's a sort of confusion, a mental confusion there. Calvin was taking that view.

My own reasoning is up the spud. I can't think clearly. And he goes on to say, verse 6, they conspire, they gather, they lurk, says the New International Version. The original says they hide. So he's got the idea that people are gathering together and then they're hiding, ready to catch David out.

[15:24] They join forces, they hide, they lurk. And he says, they watch my steps. A word for watch is a word for guard.

It's usually meaning to guard or to keep. And he's almost saying, well, there's somebody somewhere watching exactly what I do. That's what he did then, that's what he did then, that's what he did then, that's what he did.

And it's all being stored up against David. Could you account for your movements on such and such a day? You know, it's worse than Google, isn't it? Worse than Facebook. I'm counting you.

Where were you then? What were you doing then? Why did you go there? Who did you see? They count my steps, he says. And they are eager to take my life.

The word eager is the word to wait. Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. Same word as that, if I remember correctly. But he says, they're not waiting for the Lord, they're waiting to get me, my soul, my life.

[16:27] they're waiting to get me. And of course, for David, this is literally true. And I think it's a little bit hard for us to imagine how desperate that would be.

I'm certainly going to pretend, stand in front of you and pretend that I've got a feeling for that because I've never been in that situation. But perhaps we should say that by God's mercy, we've never been in that situation.

We might be in situations that are not completely dissimilar. Where we feel pressure coming in on us in various angles.

We don't know where to turn. We feel that our every move is being watched. Our minds confuse us. And so on. But anyway, this is the trouble that David was in. And the commentator Calvin says, he was as a sheep between two bands of wolves, an object of deadly hatred of the Philistines on the one hand, and exposed to equal persecutions from his own fellow countrymen.

The whole world was combined against him. And I think that's a fair and insightful summary of his condition. This is the trouble David was in.

[17:47] And let's take the shape of that and step back a little bit and say, the Apostle Paul would have been able to quote things like that and say, that's my experience as a Christian apostle.

I'm just going to refer to 2 Corinthians chapter 1. You might like to look across if you wish. 2 Corinthians Paul talks about his experience.

He's talked quite frankly and openly about his experiences as a representative of Jesus Christ. First generation spokesman, ambassador, specially commissioned with a special role.

And he says, 2 Corinthians 1 verse 3, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all compassion, the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles.

Because the Apostle Paul would say, actually, in a sense, wherever I go, I get persecution. Wherever I go, there is distress.

[18:51] It's part and parcel of being a spokesman for Jesus Christ. Verse 5, For as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, he says, though also through Christ, our comfort overflows.

He talks in verse 6, he says, we're distressed. In verse 8, he says, We don't want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia.

We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. He was under pressure. He was under great pressure.

He says, I almost thought I wouldn't make it through. It's the experience of the Christian apostles, it's the experience of Jesus Christ. So, intensely and very explicitly, this was what happened to our Saviour, the Lord Jesus, and it's written all over the Gospel story.

I'm just looking at Matthew 27, verse 32, where Christ is taken to the cross. They forced him, they forced Simon to carry the cross, they came to a place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull.

[20:08] There they offered Jesus wine mixed with gall to drink, but after tasting it he refused to drink it. When they had crucified him they divided up his clothes by casting lots and sitting down they kept watch over him there.

Over his head they placed the writing of the charge against him, this is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right, one on his left. Those who were passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, you who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, come down from the cross if you are the Son of God. In the same way the chief priest teachers of the law and the elders mocked him, he saved others. They said, but he can't save himself. In verse 44, in the same way the robbers who were crucified with him heaped insults on him.

And this is supremely the experience of Jesus, isn't it? When his own disciples pretty much abandon him, when the leaders of his people make fun of him and hate him, when the Gentiles are against him, when even the criminals with whom he's crucified, at least at the beginning, pour scorn on him.

He's in deep trouble, isn't he? And that suffering of our Saviour. It's the shape of the apostolic life, it's the experience of Jesus Christ, it's not excluded from the experience of us as believers.

[21:51] So, Paul said, didn't he, in that 2 Corinthians, we share in that. Perhaps not to the same extent, the same degree, but the same shape.

So, in verse 7, he says, we want our hope for you, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so you also share in our comfort.

Suffering is part, one of the ingredients of the Christian life. It's not the whole thing, but it's one of the ingredients. Peter says, you shouldn't be surprised at this.

You should not be surprised at the sufferings and trials of life. It may take many different shapes and forms, maybe specifically because you're a Christian, or it may be in God's wider providence that suffering and trial enters our lives.

And we should not be surprised that that is part of the shape of Christ's life and therefore part of the shape of our lives. It may be specifically persecution, or it may simply be God's providence that he sees fit to allow pain, medical pain, perhaps emotional pain, into our lives.

[23:17] Please don't become a Christian or be a Christian on the basis that there will be no pain, no trial, no trouble, because it's not true.

It's not true. Through much tribulation, I think Paul said, that's how we enter the kingdom. So, the trouble David was in. Secondly, the response of David.

So let's go back to the psalm. How did he respond to this? It's very instructional, actually, how he responds. So we're back in Psalm 56, and I'm now going to verse 3.

This is another day reference. NIV says, when I am afraid, the original says, in the day I am afraid, I will trust you. So let's first of all say he feels frightened.

He talks about being fearful. He doesn't say, I'm never fearful. He says, in the day I am fearful, I will trust you. Calvin's comment again, Calvin knew persecution, didn't he?

[24:24] He makes no claims to that lofty heroism which scoffs at danger. He acknowledges his weakness insofar as he was feeling fear, but denies having yielded to it.

He says, I felt fearful, but I didn't let that control the way I reacted. That make sense? I felt fearful, but I didn't let that control the way I reacted.

In the day I am afraid, I will trust in you. So, first thing, he felt frightened. Faith does not insulate us from mental concern or emotional disturbance and pain.

Remember Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane was so filled with conflict, anguish. That's slightly off topic, but he felt fear.

David felt frightened. So, let's go a little bit further. What else can we say about him in his response? He exercises faith. So, one thing he does is he prays, which we'll come back to in a moment.

[25:35] It begins with a prayer, doesn't it? Be merciful to me. Help me, Lord. And, I don't know whether we can say that he was singing this psalm while he was in Gath.

I think perhaps that would be pushing it a little bit. He certainly sings about it afterwards, but it is a song about this. So, it's an exercise of faith. And, he says in verse 9, verse 9, there's another reference to a day there.

Then my enemies will turn back on the day when I call for help. So, he exercises faith. One of the things he does is pray. But, in particular, he trusts God's promises.

This is extremely instructive for us. Please notice, then, verse 4. When I'm afraid, I will trust in you, God, whose word I praise.

In God I trust, I will not be afraid. Look at verse 10. In God, whose word I praise. In the Lord, whose word I praise.

[26:39] In God I will trust, and will not be afraid. So, faith does not operate on just sort of positive thinking. Faith operates on what God has actually said.

And he says it three times, doesn't he? In God, whose word I praise. Now, this is very important for us. I suppose in two ways, really. Let's see what I've put.

Let's come on to that in a moment. we are to trust God's word. Please don't be a Christian who says, well, I don't really need God's word.

It all comes to me direct. No, we need God's, the word that is written down, his promises, which are here in scripture for us. So, number one, that's what we need.

So, when we go through trials and troubles, we need to equip ourselves with God's word. And probably the best time to do that is when you're not in the trials and troubles, to get a good grasp in your depth of your being, what has God said, and to use our minds to remember, here's an appropriate promise, da-da-da-da-da, in so many words, this is what it says.

[27:54] That's what Jesus did, isn't it, when he was tempted? Am I right? Tested it in the desert, he replied by quoting an appropriate little sentence or phrase from scripture.

So, that's what we need to do, we need to equip ourselves with God's word. So, that's on the other hand, we can't get God to promise things he hasn't promised.

If he has never promised that, we can't rely on it. If there's something he hasn't said, for us to say, I'm trusting God to do this, is actually, well, the word would be presumption, or it could be superstition.

If God hasn't said it, we can't say, oh, God's promised this, because if he hasn't promised it, he hasn't promised it. Do you get what I'm trying to say here? We stand on his word, the things he has said, and if he hasn't said it, well, we can't stand on it.

Am I just confusing you? I'm just trying to say that, we have to be clear what we're standing on. The commentator is referring to this fear and the exercise of faith.

[29:05] Fear and hope may seem opposite affections, yet it is proved by observation that the latter never comes into full sway, unless there, that should say, exists some measure of the former.

In other words, he says, you never really get to know how strong your faith is and get to exercise it. Until you're in a position of trouble where that faith is threatened.

Does that make sense? It's then, in that sort of battle of faith, that faith is exercised and that you get to know whether you really are trusting the Lord or whether you're kidding yourself.

And he also comments about human nature, how prone we are to fret and murmur when it does not please God immediately to grant our requests. trust. It's true, isn't it?

We say, God ought to do this immediately. And then we grumble about God when he doesn't do exactly what we want straight away. He says, that's not the nature of faith. We trust in what God has said he will do.

[30:11] God ought to And Calvin says, he says this a couple of times, that David actually had no other ground of support but the word of God.

So his feelings were all over the place, his own words were not clear, if he looked around for support from people around him, they were all trying to get at him. The only thing he had was the promises God had made to him.

In another place he says he relied on the naked word of God. Nothing but what God had said.

Now that's a strong place to be, but it's a difficult place to be. As Christians we need to walk not by sight but by faith, which means we actually put our weight on the things that God has said, even if

there's no other place around us to support us.

And he goes on to say, what perverse unbelief there is in our hearts, which leads us to rate the ability of God below that of his creations.

[31:24] So we say, oh, the things against me are so big, these people, they're so big, God can't match that. And he says, what a stupid thing that is. God is the creator of the ends of the earth, he's far bigger.

than whoever it is against us. He exercises faith. Observation proves how ready we are to distrust him under the slightest temptation.

That's true, isn't it? It's the weakness of Christians. We need him. We can't trust our own strength. strength. We need to call upon him.

Be merciful, O God, make haste to help me. That's the place of strength. It's borrowed strength from him. It's his grace. It's not our strength.

That was looking at the response of David. And he looks to the final resolution. verse 7. On no account let them escape.

[32:30] In your anger, O God, bring down the nations. Don't let evil triumph. Verse 9. Record my lament. List my tears on your scroll.

Are they not in your record? I think I'm going to come back to the evil triumphing bit. Verse 9. I'm doing the right thing. No, I'm doing the wrong thing, aren't I?

Verse 9. Then my enemies will turn back when I call for help. By this I will know that God is for me. The enemies will be turned back. And you might say, it's not very Christian, is it?

In your anger, O God, bring down the nations. Then my enemies will turn back when I call for help. You might say, that's not very Christian, not very kind, is it? And the answer, it's quite important that we get some sort of answer to that.

We are currently in a day of grace. grace. We are currently in a day when God says to his worst and most bitter and most perverse enemies, you have an opportunity to change and to come back, to change your mind, to come back and be friends with me.

[33:38] That's what a day of grace is. It's saying to people, you can come to Jesus Christ and be forgiven your terrible sins and have that rebellion in your heart dealt with. You can. This is a day of grace.

grace. A chance to change your mind, a sort of amnesty. God says, I won't deal with you as you deserve. If you come at this point in time and history, you can be forgiven.

But it's not always a day of grace. The day of grace, meaning the period in which the gospel is offered to everybody so kindly and generously, doesn't last forever.

It is a period of time which comes to an end. end. And it comes to an end when God says, okay, finished. Now people will get what they deserve.

I've been offering people what they don't deserve. Now you'll get what you deserve. Day of judgment. And what sort of God would ultimately in the end let evil triumph forever?

[34:44] disgusting God, wouldn't it? Who let evil triumph and say, well, that doesn't matter.

People who've done horrible things to other people, that doesn't matter. Let them off. Who cares? What sort of God would that be? So David's right to say, at some point of your choosing, Lord, where people have been evil and rebellious, don't let them escape.

In your anger, deal with them. And of course he's speaking as the king, isn't he? And his kingdom is the kingdom which is God's kingdom.

them. The same Jesus who said, come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, which is what he says now, I will give you rest for your souls.

It's the same Jesus who at some point in the future tells us, he will say, depart from me, you evil doers. I never knew you. So now's the day of grace. Use it.

[35:55] Another thing how David responds to this, he asks God to understand. So this is where I got ahead of myself. Verse 8. Record my lament, list my tears on your scroll, are they not in your record?

I had a little bit of an issue with the Hebrew here. The word that the NIV translates wanderings, the best I could, sorry, the word that the NIV translates lament, seemed in the books I looked at to be the word nod, which is wanderings.

I don't know why it's translated lament, maybe I'm sure somebody knows them a lot better than I do, but if we took wanderings, he's saying, record my wanderings, look, I've gone from here to there, I've gone from there to there, gone from there to there, I'm still, I haven't got a safe, secure home, Lord, notice that, would you?

Look at my wanderings. I've been without a proper home. Jesus was without a proper home, wasn't he? Birds of the air have nests, the foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, the son of man has nowhere to lay his head.

Record my wanderings. And I'll just tell you what I read in a book, there's a word for, see, list my tears on your scroll, and the authorised version will say, keep my tears in your bottle, because the word for bottle is another way of spelling something which sounds like nod, so it sounds like there's a little pun going on here.

[37:32] So I would say, instead of list my tears on your scroll, put my tears in your bottle. He puts our tears in a bottle, he doesn't say, ah, just try your tears, we don't care, all finished, like when a little child grazes their knee, so kissed, better forgotten, okay.

God says, actually your tears were more significant than that. They were real tears, and David says, yeah, put my tears in a bottle, because they're real tears.

They're not tears about, you know, I grazed my knee, they're tears about things that really matter, and really matter to you. Put my tears in a bottle, let it not be nothing. God doesn't think that the suffering of his people is nothing.

God doesn't think that the attacks on his kingdom are nothing. Daniel, when he prays, Daniel 9, verse 18, give ear, O God, and hear.

Open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your name. We can pray that. Lord, I've wept over this matter, let it not be nothing to you.

[38:45] Put my tears in your bottle. It really matters to me, surely it really matters to you. And of course, what David could not say because it hadn't happened yet, we can say about our saviour, Hebrews 4, 15, we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way.

So when we approach the Lord Jesus with tears in our eyes, we can say, do you understand this Lord? And he'll say, yes, I absolutely do because he does not, he's not an unsympathetic high priest.

He knows the trials of his people. He knows their tears and he knows how to help.

Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. And we pray to this saviour and he understands and he knows how to help us.

Right? Yeah. He knows. That's why we can pray to him. He embraces God's final victory.

[40:20] We've now got on to the ultimate result for David. So what's the ultimate result? He embraces God's final victory. Verse 9, he says, then my enemies will turn back when I call from help. So the trials and troubles won't last forever.

Not on the small scale nor on the big scale. It won't forever be trials and troubles. One day, God will put all wrongs right. Then my enemies will turn back.

And he says, verse 9, by this I will know that God is for me. We could be saying, by this I know that God is for me.

Or it might even be more compressed than that. But he just says, here's the heart of this matter.

This is the miraculous amazing heart of this matter. God is not against me.

He's not against his people. He's not trying to get his own back on his people. His grace is such that he is for his people. I know God is for me.

[41:25] Does he not think that's a really great thing? God is for me.

He's not just indifferent seeing how I get on, catching up with me every couple of years, seeing how you're getting on.

I'm actually actively for you. Romans 8, again, this is New Testament but the Apostle Paul has got an even more clear take on this when he says things like this.

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those he predestined, he called, those he called, he also justified, those he justified, he also glorified. He's got the whole plan mapped out for sure and certain.

And what shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

[42:40] Now then, what are the all things? I think the all things are not every single thing that we could think of that we would like, but I think the all things is all the things in this world and in this life that are necessary and appropriate for the fulfilment of his plan, that all these things will fit in under his good grace for our good.

If God is for us, who can be against us? God is for me. Take that away and have a think about that. I'm coming back to the psalm now. By this I know that God is for me, says in verse nine. And he repeats, it's God in whose word I praise, sorry, in God whose word I praise, verse ten, in the Lord whose word I praise, verse eleven, in God I trust, I will not be afraid, what can man do to me? What can constructed, created flesh do to me if God, the creator, is for me? And David has got the hang of this, hasn't he?

As he wrestles his way through this, situation. And he, think of the ultimate result, he looks ahead, no, let's just say he looks ahead from the situation, or perhaps he's actually got out of the situation and is writing the song looking backwards.

[44:22] Verse twelve, I am under vows to you, O God, I will present my thank offering to you. So whatever the technicalities of those words, he says thank you, doesn't he?

I will say thank you, he says it twice, I will under vows to you, I'll present my thank offerings to you. For you have delivered me from death, and my feet from stumbling. So the movement from describing his troubles and crying to God and finding God delivers him, is that he says thank you. I know the expression, teaching your grandmother to suck eggs, it means to say something that doesn't need to be said because everybody knows it, but I'll say it anyway. It's important to say thank you to God.

We pray to him, Lord, see me through this, Lord, help me with that, Lord, be with me in this, and when he is, we go back to him and say thank you. The importance of not forgetting the prayers and the answers.

And if I may give advice, it's not a rule, but it's an advice, it's very helpful to keep some sort of diary of, I mean, keep a diary, whatever sort of diary you like, but at least include in it the answers to prayer.

[45:51] And the way God has heard prayer, so as to not forget to say thank you. Just on a very, very simple level, you know, our minds play tricks on us, we can easily forget the problem that we had last week, which we thought was so awful, and we cried to the Lord, and he saw us through it, and we looked back and we had forgotten it completely.

And David says, I'm going to say thank you. So I think there's a good lesson there, the importance of not forgetting the prayers and the answers to the prayers.

Now David says, you have delivered me from death. And as David would look at it, he experienced a life-saving miracle.

As far as he was concerned, he would say, this was a miraculous saving of my life. life. And as I read right at the beginning, the apostles, the New Testament apostles would look back on David's experience and say, actually this fits like a glove, what happened to Jesus.

How much more his son Jesus, who was delivered from death, not just a near miss from death, yes, but he went down into the whole thing and God delivered him from death.

[47:14] So what was true of David, in a sense, was true of Jesus in a very full way. So that's what I read at the beginning. Peter's saying, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried and his tomb is here, sorry, to this day.

But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ. And I would say this is what he's doing in this psalm. He's speaking in a way which is fulfilled only and fully in Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was buried and on the third day was raised again, according to the scriptures.

Thine be the glory, risen conquering son, endless is the victory, thou of death hast won. This is David shaped. Christ shaped and it's believer shaped.

We shall rise. Death will not have the last word on any single believer. And we trust God's word on this because that's all we have to go on.

[48:34] As we go to the graveside and see the mortal remains of somebody lowered into the ground or go to the crown and see the curtain closed, that's a believer.

It is not goodbye, it is au revoir. See you soon because we shall rise. Deliver my soul from death. death. The ultimate result for David. David experienced a life-saving miracle, a pattern in miniature. You have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling.

And he says in this miniature sense that he experienced it, verse 13, that I may walk before God in the light of life. I think that's a lovely expression.

You've helped me through this crisis in my life. life. You've delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling. And now, what does he say I'm going to do?

[49:33] That I may walk before God in the light of life. And if I might say, that's a wonderful thing to have as an ambition to live, that I may walk before God in the light of life.

life. That's not so high entertainment that we all gasp and say none of us can manage that. I think we could say, yeah, I could go for that. That I may walk before God in the light of life.

In our small scale and deliverances. But they're still deliverances, aren't they? They're still God's mighty grace at hand, you know, saving us from the Ofsted inspector or saving us from an adverse medical report or something like that.

All of these things, on a small scale, they're deliverances for which we give thanks, that I may walk before God in the light of life. So that we may walk trustingly in his word, which I praise, depending on the promises of his word, and to walk in the light, in the light of life, every day.