

PM Psalm 94:12-23

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[0 : 00] is taken from Psalm 84, sorry, Psalm 94, verses 1 to 23. I should say at this point, both this week and last week, thanks Norman for putting together the orders of service.

And any deviations from that is me, it's not Norman that's got it wrong. I give Norman the details at the start of the week, and as I'm preparing the sermons, then some things change a wee bit.

So our first reading tonight is Psalm 94, verses 1 to 23.

I should say, verse 1 to 23.

For justice will return to the righteous, and all the upright and heart will follow it. Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against the evildoers?

[2 : 09] If the Lord had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence.

When I thought my foot slips, your steadfast love, O Lord, held me up.

When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul. Can wicked rulers be allied with you? Those who frame injustice by statute, they band together against the life of the righteous, and condemn the innocent to death.

But the Lord has become my stronghold, and my God the rock of my refuge. He will bring back on them their iniquities, and wipe them off out for their wickedness.

The Lord our God will wipe them out. Our second reading is from 2 Corinthians chapter 4.

2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 7 to 12. 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 7 to 12.

[3 : 33] But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed.

Perplexed, but not driven to despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed. Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake. So that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Thanks be the reading of his holy word. Thanks be to God. Did they really see, believe that God did not see their actions, or understand what was happening?

The psalmist questions, Did they really believe that God, who created the senses, could not use his own vision, or his own hearing, to know what was happening?

[4 : 45] Did they really believe that God did not understand? He who created the universe, and created man in his own image, did not understand what man was thinking.

Now we have a change of mood in the psalm, and emphasis for the psalmist. The mood changes from a plea for God's intervention, for him to bring justice, to the positive experience of interacting with God.

The first of tonight's sections then, is Blessings upon the Teachable. Verses 12-15 reads, Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O Lord, and whom you teach out of your law, to give him rest from days of trouble, until a pit is dug for the wicked.

For the Lord will not forsake his people, he will not abandon his heritage. For justice will return to the righteous, and all the upright in heart will follow it. So in contrast to the foolish and evil doer, the psalmist announced a blessing for those disciplined and instructed by the Lord.

And I'm sure we know from personal experience that we may not always have enjoyed the idea of discipline being enforced upon us. But through time we begin to understand the instruction we are receiving.

[6 : 21] We first become accepting of it, and then see its true benefit for us. See what can be truly gained from it. So to here we see that a blessing comes from the discipline which God sets on his people, and the teaching which he gives to them.

In Hebrews chapter 12, we are urged not to grow weary, but looking to Jesus for our example, to the hostility that he endured for us from the hands of man.

Few of us will be asked to bear the same sacrifice that he required. Few of us will be required to shed our blood for our heavenly Father's purpose.

None of us will ever be forsaken by God if we trust in Jesus as our Saviour, no matter what we may experience. If we have a personal relationship with God, if we are to be his sons and daughters through Christ, then we require instruction through the guidance of his Holy Spirit.

And we require to be corrected when we stray from his directions for our lives and from his path.

Remember, we have walked in a way contrary to God's desires for our lives.

[7 : 45] We have a sinful nature, wishing to replace God in our lives with that which brings fleeting pleasure and satisfies our desires first and foremost.

We put fleeting pleasure before a life of eternity with God. But by his grace, he has called us to faith in Christ as our Saviour.

So if our path has to change to follow Christ's example, we should expect and rejoice that the Lord our God is prepared to discipline us, not spoil us and make excuses for our behaviour.

It's to discipline and to change our ways is to demonstrate love for your children. So as the children of God, we should, as the writer of Hebrews says, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

For the Lord disciplines the ones he loves and chastises every son whom he receives. And that teaching, when taken to heart, in verse 13, leads us to rest from days of trouble.

[9 : 11] This rest suggests a quietness or a peace which is innermost. So we may be in times of trial and torment, but inside we can have an eternal peace through God's power.

Often in Psalms, when a man has experienced tribulations and persecution, he looks back to times in the past when God has interceded for him. When God has acted to protect him and his people.

Or he has kept his promises to his people. And we can see in the Bible that there are many of such examples such as God fulfilling his promises to Abraham and Sarah and giving them a son to rescuing his people from slavery in Egypt.

But here, we have a positive view looking forward that God would give him rest until a pit is dug.

It also demonstrates to us that though we be in times of adversity, they are not endless and God will bring an end to the events. He is in control of the timing and has his plan.

[10 : 32] If we look forward from the time of the psalmist, we see the Jews once more in captivity as they were exiled in Babylon and Jerusalem is destroyed.

Now imagine if we were taken into exile away from our homelands, we would wish to return to our home. And just as the people were taken from Jerusalem, they desired to return to their homeland and did not wish to settle in a foreign land.

The traveller anywhere can find it difficult to settle on a voluntary journey, always harking for the day when he returns home. How much more for the person forced into exile against his will.

But God instructs his people for them to settle themselves and accept that a return shall take place, but it shall not be a return in their time.

It shall be a return in his time when his plan has been served. In Jeremiah 29, we learn that God was not planning a quick return home for the Israelites, but the Jews would require to wait 70 years in God's plan for their return.

[11 : 50] And in verse 14 and 15, we see the reassurance that God will not abandon his people. His heritage here. Here we have a direct reference back to verse 5 when the psalmist indicts the actions of the wicked.

They crush your people, O Lord, and afflict your heritage. Justice will return to those who are righteous in their fellowship with God. Not just justice for the individual that acts against God's people, but we see in verse 20 also for corrupt and oppressive governments.

And regimes, their days will be limited. The middle section of the latter part of this psalm now focuses on God's presence as our protector.

It says, Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against the evildoers? If the Lord had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence.

When I thought my foot slips, your steadfast love, O Lord, held me up. When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.

[13:06] I remember as a child that all our stories would have a champion. Someone to set everything right. Someone to protect the vulnerable and the weak against oppression.

But who would be the champion of the psalmist for the psalmist? Who would stand up for him? Of course, the question is rhetorical and the psalmist is quick to answer.

It is God himself who comes to his children's aid. This is not just the experience of the psalmist. In Ecclesiastes 4 and 1 we read, Again I saw all the oppressions that had done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed and they had no one to comfort them. But as we read through the book of Ecclesiastes, it shows the suffering of life but highlights the necessity of trusting in God.

The faithful do not lose heart but hold to God even when in adversity knowing that God will sustain them and God will come through. Again in 2 Timothy chapter 4 16-17 Paul writes At my defence no one came to stand by me but all deserted me.

[14:24] May it not be charged against them but the Lord stood by me and strengthened me so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. Excuse me. So Paul who normally had companions with him on his journeys found himself abandoned by his aides and the one person that was still with him was the Lord.

The Lord remained with him strengthened him so that God's glory could be proclaimed. So God will uphold all we call out to him in prayer and faith. He does provide what we require to sustain us in our times of trials.

The psalmist declares without God's support he would have succumbed to oppression and have lost his life. In verse 18 his foot slips but God's steadfast love holds him up.

God is not just our safety rope he equips us with all we require to meet the tasks he asks of us. If we think of the mountaineer God's unwavering love is not a safety rope which comes into action when we slip and saves us from calamity and possible death.

[15:56] His desire for us equips us with the tools and his instruction the skills to climb confidently and with the assurance that when things are at their most challenging we do have the lifeline of his promises.

This moves us to the final section of the psalm that God's judgment is coming and God's judgment is final. We read Can wicked rulers be allied with you those who frame injustice by statute they band together against the life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death but the Lord has become my stronghold and my God the rock of my refuge he will bring back on them their iniquity and wipe them out for their wickedness the Lord their God will wipe them out these verses almost appear as a summary of the entire psalm though it moves the question of evildoers from individuals to a state or corporate level it questions like earlier versions the thoughts and ideas of the evildoers and the states or monarchs acting as oppressors and aggressors towards God's creation really believe they can be doing

God's work and that God will side with them do they believe that God will accept their attempts to align themselves with him unfortunately history has shown that many will try and the occasions that men within the church have looked to align themselves with such people but verse 22 gives us once more a clear guide to the truth and rebuts such notions as the psalmist writes but the Lord has become my stronghold my God the rock my refuge he is our protector he is protector of the oppressed and will stand against the oppressors to go back to earlier illustration God will be their champion he will be their security and their fortress in the final verse as the psalmist started by twice asking how long the God of vengeance would take to rise up and judge the wicked he closes with a double proclamation of the fate of the wicked that God will repay their immoral and unjust behaviour and God will destroy them also significant is the change from the idea that he is a God of the individual to one of community as he speaks of the Lord our God will bring justice and that takes us back to the first part of the psalm where the psalm has reference to the experiences of the individual to experiences of a community and the experiences of a nation but what a psalm in the first half the psalmist cries out for the God of vengeance to arise and condemn the evildoers for their aggression and oppression of the weak challenging them do they really believe that God does not see or does not care about their actions he announces that God is ever present in the second half as our protector and enabler and his judgment will come upon those who rebel against God's teachings what an assurance and that assurance still stands for us today we are called to play our part in standing for the oppressed we are called to witnesses for Christ to be the salt of the world

and to bring light to the world

Jesus directs us to go further than the world expects we are to be their example and that means standing for the poor the destitute and those seen by society as undeserving the psalm also brings forth the fact that we are not able to stand alone we stand only in the strength of God within us and he will uphold us and keep us from slipping and falling he is our strength and our sustainer now here is a fact for all to hear whether they like it or not God does not promise us an easy life it's not about coming to Christ and all in the garden will be rosy he does not step in at the first sign of adversity to whisk us off to safety but through his Holy Spirit and our faith in his Son our Lord [21 : 00] Jesus Christ he is ever with us to strengthen us support us in all that we encounter in life for those who feel worn and tired by life's trials whose daily experiences drain them physically and emotionally for those that feel abandoned come and experience the support and the security of God just as it is available to the psalmist it is available to each of us here tonight through Jesus Christ his Son Jesus calls us in Matthew 11 28 and 30 to come to him if we feel burdened with life demands he says come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and they will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light if left to our own devices and our own choices there is no end to our labours as we seek fulfilment as we always await the person who replaces the person who will be smarter than us the person who will be quicker than us the person who will be better than us that is a life that we have if our satisfaction comes from things of this world

Jesus offers an end to that endless toil and offers rest what makes Jesus yoke easy and his burden light is that Jesus own active obedience his perfect fulfilment of his father's will and how he was prepared to follow that through to the cross he carried the burden that we were meant to carry his perfect obedience is applied to us through faith just as his righteousness was exchanged for our sin at the cross 2nd Corinthians 5:21 says for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God so Jesus carried the burden of our sin he became sin for us and experienced the separation from God that we may be clothed covered by his righteousness and so through Christ we are once again back in union with God we need only accept

Christ as our saviour as God declared his plan for humanity salvation following the disobedience of Adam so Jesus even in the book of Revelation as the Bible comes to a close in chapter 3:21 declares behold I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and open the door I will come into him and eat with him and he with me Jesus awaits our answer or your answer to his call for him to enter into your life to be your saviour for eternity that he can support you in life's trials and that through him we may once more call upon God as our refuge and our rock life in Christ is not easy as we read in the New Testament reading we are afflicted in every way but not crushed perplexed but not driven to despair persecuted but not forsaken struck down but not destroyed we will have difficulties in life even life in

Christ but we also have a support of the Holy Spirit that he uses each day we will feel afflicted we will be afflicted but we will never be destroyed we may be perplexed but we will never be driven to despair because we have an eternal hope in the Lord Jesus Christ let's pray