

Got That Fainting Feeling

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 October 2010

Preacher: Alex Cowie

[0 : 0 0] page 518 psalm 73 and we're going to focus on verse 26 we read the words my flesh and my heart fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever my flesh and my heart fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever I'm going to borrow and paraphrase for our title today got that fainting feeling got that fainting feeling but there's God got that fainting feeling but there's God if you've nearly fainted or you've actually fainted perhaps somebody in the family last week there cut quite deeply into the skin and became really faint you'll know that the feeling before you faint or if you nearly faint is an absolutely horrid feeling you feel so weak you feel dreadfully weak you feel hot and sweaty and your head is spinning that is an illustration of the spiritual state of Asaph before he wrote this psalm his flesh and heart failed or as we say in our metrical version fainted and failed he felt dreadfully weak he felt dreadfully weak and in the life of faith both in the days of Asaph and in the Christian way the ravages of sin upon our lives can make us feel simply rotten and weak like fainting and failing

Asaph clearly before he could write this psalm actually felt like that that he couldn't go on he felt that God himself even seemed to be against him and he was allowed by God to give us his experience in this psalm in order to help us that's why when the writers of scripture wrote by the eternal spirit the word of God comes with that that abiding relevance it's as fresh and new and relevant today as ever it was it talks to us about the believer's experience and Asaph you see recorded in this psalm his own experience if you go back to verse 2 for example he tells us about his terrible condition he says but as for me he says verse 2 my feet had almost stumbled my steps had nearly slipped but you see if you think that that is literally like a Norman wisdom thing he tripped on whatever no it's a spiritual experience for I was envious at the wicked you see so as much as you can imagine somebody tripping and stumbling and nearly falling stuttering along you apply that the way Asaph does to his spiritual experience before he wrote the psalm

I was envious at the wicked and so what we want to do here is we want to look at what he says here in verse 26 and see the relevance of this to ourselves today and see grace to apply it got that fainting feeling but there's God first of all then the fainting follower it's clear as we've said already that Asaph of course he was a a lead singer in the temple choir he was a true believer a follower of the God of Abraham of Isaac of Jacob a follower of the Lord one who rested in the promises that God had given of the great deliverer the anointed one the Messiah and he like others hoped in and looked forward to the coming of the Messiah and he tells us about his own experience in his following the Lord and he tells us first of all my flesh fails verse 26 my flesh fails it's interesting to notice that there are two words that are used most regularly for describing us as people in the flesh as human beings and the regular word that's used dwells more on the on the literally our our physical side basar that is flesh but there is a poetic word and it's this word it's used here she air emphasizing the firmness of physical strength that's the idea the firmness of physical strength and psychological strength somebody who is in their prime so to speak man considered as firm and as resilient but there's a problem says

Asaph my flesh faints and fails and there is a very important reminder to you and me in the spiritual way in following the Lord that no amount of firmness of strength of inner resources can enable us to cope with spiritual battles in the way of following the Lord Jesus Christ it's not the outward problems yes they're difficult and they're hard and sometimes very serious and saddling but it's the impact within it's the impact on our psyche will come to heart that weakens our resources and no amount of firmness of strength of psychological strength of physical strength can enable us to cope with the spiritual battles of the life of faith that's a fact and

Asaph tells us that his own sin caused him big problems I was envious I take you back to his accounting verse 3 for I was envious of the boastful when I saw the prosperity of the wicked that's where his problem lay you see he resented the fact that as he saw it the boastful and the wicked had a life of ease and of plenty now you can say with me that he was overstating it that's not universally true of people who are ungodly they're not all rich they're not all equally rich they don't all have plenty but that was the state of mind he was in and that's how he saw it and that caused him problems that weakened him that took away the firmness from his manhood so to speak and his psychological strength

[8 : 55] Asaph found in fact that divine providence God's ordering of all things appeared to and against him as well there's no let up you see verse 13 just to get the picture here verses 13 and 14 surely he says I have cleansed my hands in vain following the Lord hasn't made it easy verse 14 for all day long I have been plagued see that this is a man of God talking this is him talking about his spiritual experience not only did he estimate wrongly how the wicked were the ungodly but he estimated God and providence wrongly too he says what's it been all for verse 14 for all day long that means every day morning by morning is our metrical version all day long

I have been plagued and chastened there's no let up that's what he's saying and so he came to see that sin his own sin his own sinful views his desires and his conduct sapped his firmness from him my flesh fails now you see at this point I want to introduce the Lord Jesus Christ's own teaching because Asaph tells us I was envious and to be envious is to be covetous and Jesus warned his own disciples take heed beware of covetousness because a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses beware be on your guard

Paul himself cautioned Timothy in 1st Timothy 6 teach the people not the Lord's people not to crave after riches because those who have have pierced themselves through with many sorrows when their aims and ambitions have become simply to be as rich as so and so as prosperous as so and so it's caused them problems and my dear friends we are to beware of this danger because and this is important the danger of covetousness of being envious of those who have plenty lies not in obtaining it for ourselves it lies in simply going round and round in our minds we want to have it and them not to have it that's a dangerous way to be

I was envious and I felt that God was against me I'm getting a rough deal here all day long verse 14 I've been plagued and chastened no letter the fact of the matter is that envy cripples the spiritual life it cripples the spiritual life and our walk and Asaph confirms that he says my flesh faints it fails and so we're to be warned and we're to take this to heart beware of the sin of seizing of sin itself actually seizing its opportunity in us in this way it will cripple us in the spiritual way the apostle

Paul said and I quote him because this is the only way forward this is the only way to sustain our walk in the way Paul talking in Romans 7 verses 24 and 25 says this that it is only in Christ Jesus the crucified the risen the exalted Lord that we can be delivered from sin in our flesh my flesh he says fails who will deliver me from this body of death in which sin is working against me I hear you say its power has been dealt the death blow of course that's true but it doesn't mean it's out the door still working still manipulating us affecting our desires our ambitions our appetites my flesh he says

[14 : 18] I'm in a terrible state I was in a terrible state he said my flesh failed Lord Jesus deliver me from this body this flesh of sin that can so easily cripple me the second thing is my heart fails and of course in saying this we are taken to the heart of the problem Jesus said as a man thinks in his heart so he is that's it as we think in our heart that's what we are and there beyond the scrutiny of man beyond the investigative powers man we are what we are the heart of course as you well know doesn't refer to the physical pump it refers to the centre of our being to where we think and feel and will sometimes in the scriptures the heart refers to our emotional makeup but very often the reference as it is here is to us at the core in our thinking and feeling and willing where we will to do or not to do and the problem you see is that what was written of man post fall and pre fled

Genesis 6 you have it there in verse 6 that the thoughts and the intentions of man was only evil continually man functioned in this way the every inclination was evil continually and then post land it's little different David tells us writing by the spirit Psalm 51 I was born in sin and I was shapen in iniquity Jeremiah is bold in verse 9 of chapter 17 of his prophecy the heart of man is deceitful above all things and who can know it notice that who can know it we don't even know our own heart we need help with that and Asaph writing on the other side of his dark trial his dark plunge into sin he tells us my heart faints and fails you see verse 16 casts a bit more light on this when he thought how to understand all this it was too painful for me until I went into the sanctuary of God until I got into

God's revelation the word of God that holy place his book and I got the right perspective on it and I recognized my heart Jesus himself said you remember to the apostles and to the religious leaders Matthew 15 verses 18 to 19 the heart is the heart of the problem out of the heart he says what comes out of it that's what defiles a man out of the heart flows evil thoughts and adulteries and thefts and all the rest that's what defiles a man it's not what goes in to the mouth in food it's what comes out of the human heart and Asaph tells us that he was in such a state that his heart fainted and failed and the point here is that whenever we let our heart go into envy mode to wrong views of people and of

God himself in providence we're in trouble it's his to apportion gifts and blessings he makes his sun to rise and set on the just and the unjust his rain to fall and he gives prosperity where and when he will and we will get into trouble you see when we get into envy mode and wrong views of God and his providence our heart will fail I remember reading an illustration from an old preacher who's trying to illustrate how wrong our perception can be of what God is doing and you maybe have heard this one before but there's a man standing with his walking stick standing by a lovely clear flowing stream and he puts the stick into the water at least partially into the water and he begins to look at it and the angle is straight till it hits the water and when it goes into the water it's crooked isn't it it's bad and he uses that illustration to make a good point to us when we go into envy mode we have a crooked view of

God's providence of God ordering things Asaph did that and his heart failed we're to beware therefore of seeing God's providence like this and if you think about it the cross of Christ the death of Jesus on the cross to people looking on that was the end of an imposter and a blasphemer a tribblemaker to those who were given a spiritual sight of what it was all about it was God at work making atonement for the sins of all who would believe it was God so loving the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him in that death in the meaning of that death not the human perception of that death but the real heart core meaning of it whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life we are to learn to read

[21 : 36] God's providence properly and we're to see what people have or don't have as part of that picture it's not for us to whinge and whine about it that leads us lastly to the divine provider we might say oh blessed reality but there's God got that fainting feeling but there's God the divine provider my flesh fails my heart fails but God is the strength of my heart and my inheritance forever notice he doesn't say here and it's very relevant to think about it he doesn't say but

God is the strength of my flesh and of my heart because all that's needed for us is to know this that God is the strength of my heart we're taken to the heart of the matter he says God is the strength of my heart because out of our hearts are the issues of life and death as we've observed already the heart is where everything goes on the heart is where things begin and they flow out from the heart is the control center excuse me it's the control center of our lives it's where the greatest danger lies it's in the heart we conceive all manner of things good or bad things and yes even the very best of what we conceive in our hearts is tainted with sin our motives are not always as wholesome as we imagine that doesn't that

I'm not saying to you therefore don't do any good not at all but even we have to recognize that the good we do has got a taint about it that's reality we're to do it with all our might and we're to do it recognizing that even our best has the suspect motive it is our heart we say that is the problem and the psalm writer tells us of the divine provider god is the strength of my heart it's in our heart we say yes I can or no I can't it's in our heart we faint and fail and the true follower of Christ has to learn and relearn this lesson that god alone is the strength of his heart god alone and you see it is as followers of the lord jesus christ we are to learn again and again to say as he said to the philippians in chapter 4 i can do all things through christ through him who strengthens me we never get beyond that if we think we are going to mature beyond that we are foolish in our thinking we are brought back to that again and again he is the divine provider we think and fear that god the lord jesus christ is the strength of our heart that's what paul commends to the philippians in chapter 4 verse 13 now i'm not saying that that lesson wasn't around or learned by the people who went before it was around among the people of god long before asaph it was there with asaph too that's why he says but there's god god is the strength of my heart the same spirit working in asaph worked in the lord's people way back to the beginning of human history it was something they were taught again and again in fact the refrain the lord is my strength and my song and my salvation comes up along the way of history among the people of god again and again precisely because we need to be reminded of it when we have that fainting feeling we feel we can't go on whatever it is my flesh fails my heart fails ah but god god is the strength and alone the strength of my heart we sing in the psalms so many times about god strengthening his people the lord will give strength to his people psalm 29 verse 11 psalm 28 we'll sing when we finish in a moment he strengthened my soul in another psalm you remember the words you answered me in the day when I cried to you when I cried to you and you strengthened my fainting soul with strength and therefore when we are found in this fainting condition within

our hearts and we say within ourselves I can't go on let us pour out that very thought to the lord yes he knows it anyway but he wants to hear us pour it out that we are aware of it that we are aware we're doing business with him pour out your hearts you people to him and simply tell jesus who alone is our strength that we need him again the truth of the matter is that jesus strength is only made perfect only made perfect in our weakness in our weakness and if we don't come clean and confess our weakness our fainting condition we're not going to have a strength are we that's what that's what paul discovered himself second corinthians 12 9 paul you're not you're not going to be without this thorn in your flesh it's going to be a plague to you all your life so just take this to heart my strength is made perfect in your weakness a few of us were talking this morning about the plague of tinnitus in the head that's there to stay for me for some others there are many conditions you have that are grievous to be born that you feel you can't go on with my flesh fails my heart fails ah but the divine provider there's

God God is the strength of my heart and my portion we're just touching on that we'll leave that for later on it is literally my inheritance you see this is interesting you may think well what's the point of introducing God as my portion you remember his problem was envying people who had a big portion in this life and what's happened here is he's got a heavenly perspective he's gained a true insight to wherein true riches lies I may have nothing much in this world but the Lord is my portion I'm rich beyond compare in fact James in his letter says to poor believers let the poor rejoice in their exaltation and let the rich believers be humbled they're no better than the grass in the field here today and gone tomorrow you see the perspectives and we're to notice as we leave it he is my portion my inheritance why should

[31 : 10] I sin and fret about what others have and I haven't got why should I dare covet what others have he he feeds the birds he clothes the lilies of the field and he cares more for his people than they can ever imagine did not he give his own dear son did not the son of God give himself did not the spirit eternal offer him up on the altar of Calvary the cross and will he not with him freely give us all things he is such a wonderful provider let us doubt him not let us be assured let us take him at his word here today got that fainting feeling can't go on but there's

God my flesh and my heart feel but God is the strength of my heart and my person forever amen