

What Can The Righteous Do?

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, it's been 56 years now this week, this coming week, since the winner of the 1968 Olympic Marathon in Mexico City crossed the finish line.
- And most of us probably weren't alive to see that. Some of you maybe remember that happening. But when looking back on that particular moment in history, it's not the Ethiopian gold medalist named Mamo Waldi that people tend to remember.
- Instead, it is the runner from Tanzania. His name is John Stephen Okwari. He finished dead last in that race.
- And he is the one that has become an Olympic legend, an inspiration for countless athletes ever since. And you say, well, how is that possible to get dead last and become such an inspiration to so many people?
- Well, I'm glad you asked. I'll tell you. And Okwari was never favored to win that race. He was a good runner, obviously. He was a good runner. He's participating in the Olympics of his time.
- [1 : 0 8] But he was unfortunately caught up in the middle of the race into a collision with a group of other runners. And he fell. And when he fell, he did significant injury to both his knee and his shoulder, even causing a dislocation in that moment.
- And while 18 runners with similar or even less significant injuries chose to drop out of the race, Okwari refused to do so.
- He took a few brief moments to get medical attention from the people responsible for it. And then he resumed the marathon course. And he finished his race.
- By the time he actually made it to the stadium where the finish line was, you can, if you like the Summer Olympics, you know how this works. They, the last thing that they do in the marathon is they enter the track and field stadium and they do a lap around the track and field and then there's the finish line.
- And so by the time Okwari actually gets there and he enters the stadium, it's dark outside. He was, they were having to use, follow him with golf carts or cars or whatever they were using with headlights that would show him even where to step as he's outside.
- [2 : 1 9] He finally makes his way into the stadium. Most of the people had left at that point. You can see even in the picture, most of the stands are empty at this point. The race had been finished for well over an hour.
- They had already done the award ceremony and everything. Gold, silver, bronze medalists, they had finished their race. They had received their awards. The national anthem for the Ethiopians had played and everybody went home except for the few people that remained in the stadium and John Stephen Okwari.
- He was determined to finish his race. And when he did finally finish, someone asked him, a reporter asked him, why, why were you so willing to risk your health?
- I mean, it was a significant risk. Perhaps he might never run again. He did end up running again, but he didn't know that that would be the case at that point. And his response has now become a famous quote.

He said, my country didn't send me 5,000 miles to start the race. They sent me 5,000 miles so that I could finish the race. And we find wonderful inspiration in stories like that, don't we?

[3 : 24] We love them, these stories of perseverance. And the reason we love them is because so few of us are actually that determined. Let me just tell you something.

I've run two marathons. And they hurt. They're not fun. In fact, you get to a point around mile 18, 19, 20, somewhere around in there, and what's going through my mind with every single step was, why am I doing this?

This is stupid. Why am I doing this? I can guarantee you something. If I collide with somebody in the middle of the race, I hurt my knee and my shoulder, and I dislocate something in the process of that, Jared ain't finishing that race, right?

We find inspiration in these stories because we're not like John Stephen Ackroy. And this shows up in all kinds of ways in our lives. Sometimes it's in really kind of insignificant ways like exercise, right?

The start of the year, every year, we're determined, all right, New Year's resolution. I'm going to eat good, and I'm going to go to the gym, or I'm going to get involved in this particular routine. And we try our best to do it for a few weeks, but right when the workouts start to get a little more strenuous or they take us away from things that we would rather do, the temptation becomes very strong to do what?

[4 : 30] Like, sit on the couch with your Cheez-Its and your chocolate chip cookies or whatever it is and just quit, right? That's a less significant way. We do this in more significant ways, though, don't we?

Marriage gets really hard. The person that you wake up to every morning doesn't seem like the same person that you fell in love with however many years before, and now you're wondering, what have I done?

I'm not happy. I'm not sure if this is going to work. And the overwhelming temptation then is not to be John Stephen Hawkeye. The temptation then is to say, well, I'm just going to do what's best for myself, and I'm going to give up on this.

And we could talk about a million other categories of life where we feel this temptation. So finding inspiration in stories of perseverance through trial, it can be the thing that we need in those moments to push us along.

The example of people like this tend to boost our own resolve to continue. But what happens? Where do we find help when the temptation to quit is a spiritual temptation?

[5 : 42] When circumstances are so difficult that the impulse is not to abandon an earthly relationship so much, it's not to quit on our workouts.

The temptation is actually to abandon our faith, to abandon our trust in God, to abandon our confidence in the Bible.

Where do we go to? Where do we find help in those moments? John Stephen Hawkeye doesn't help us with that. So how do we get help? I think Psalm 11 gives us the answers that we need for those questions.

The song, it speaks of a group of counselors who advise David to essentially find his refuge in something other than the Lord.

And at the heart of their counsel is this question that they submit in verse 3. They say, if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? David, what more can you do?

[6 : 44] Nothing's working. This following God's heart thing, this is not working anymore. We've got to do something different now. The wicked had grown so strong that David's advisors believed his best course of action at this point was to abandon his faith and abdicate his responsibility as Israel's king, especially their spiritual leader.

And fortunately for us, David refused to heed their counsel. But he doesn't use the psalm to turn our attention to himself.

He doesn't want the reader or the hearer of this to persevere by looking at his example. Instead, what does he do in the second part of the psalm? He turns our attention to God's unchanging character, to God's unfailing promises.

And he explained how the Lord is the source of his resolve. And he wrote it all in this song so that God's people will sing it and meditate on it when they too are tempted to doubt God and his promises and to turn away from faith in him and his word.

There's two main sections to the psalm that we want to deal with. First, we want to look at the temptation to quit in verses 1 through 3. And then we'll move on to David's resolve to continue in verses 4 through 7.

[8 : 18] But first, the temptation to quit. Look with me again at verses 1 through 3. In the Lord I take refuge. How can you say to my soul? And here's what the advisors were saying.

Here's the quote. David, flee like a bird to your mountain. Run and hide. For behold, the wicked, they bend the bow. They've fitted their arrow to the stream to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart.

And if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? So David's counselors, they present two circumstances here. First, they say the wicked had grown strong in their war against the righteous.

Having prepared their weapons, they took direct aim at the king. And anyone who was following after his pattern of uprightness and of faithfulness to the Lord.

And to make matters worse, the enemy was firing from the shadows. Making it difficult to see when the attacks were coming.

[9 : 22] Now there could be a very physical component to this and what's happening in David's life. I think probably we're meant to see this as spiritual imagery though. Sometimes you don't know where the attack is coming from.

Sometimes it's from the least expected places that you begin to be confronted and challenged in your faithfulness to the Lord. So that's the first thing they say. They say the wicked has grown strong.

They have readied their bow. They're shooting from the shadows. But then they say there's a second problem here. And that is that the moral fabric of society had degraded to the point that any effort to right the ship seems hopeless.

That's what they say in verse 3. If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? So David's counselors declared there's nothing more that the righteous can do.

And in the interest of self-preservation, they urged David to flee like a bird to the mountains. To run and hide.

[10 : 26] To find refuge in some other place than what he has up to this point. That's the essence of the temptation David was facing in Psalm 11. And it's not unlike our own situation.

Faithful Christians have no lack for enemies who are prepared to fire their arrows to deal a deadly blow to the influence of our convictions.

Some places the war is not even a battle of ideas. It's a literal attempt to destroy the lives of those who follow God and his word. Martyrdom is not a thing of the past.

It's as common and prevalent today as it's ever been. It's just not something we deal with in our direct context quite so often. You know, I'm thankful for ministries like Voice of the Martyrs that keep in front of us the reality of the persecuted church around the world.

In our world and in our context, this is often a battle of ideas. But for many people and many Christians around the world, it is much more than that. It's much more significant than that. It's also true that the moral decline of our society shows no signs of reversing itself anytime soon, does it?

[11 : 47] The foundations have been obliterated. It doesn't seem like there's anything that we can do about it anymore. Even the so-called conservatives have proven that they're not actually very righteous.

That whatever so-called moral ground they stand on is as faulty as anyone else is. So when you know the wicked are anticipating your fall and working towards it, and that there's no longer an effective influence of righteousness on society, what is the temptation that we face?

Is it not to step back and to think, well, maybe we're the ones that's wrong? Maybe we can't trust the Bible. Maybe God has abandoned us at this point.

Maybe we need to just give up and give in. I think that's generally the context of what's happening here in Psalm 11. Other than running away, flee like a bird to your mountain.

It doesn't tell us a whole lot about what the practical actions were that David's counselors wanted him to take, does it? It's poetic language, isn't it? So we don't know exactly what was happening and what they intended for him to do.

[13 : 07] But it's David's opening affirmation in verse 1 that sets the context of the advice. Notice what he says. He makes an affirmation from the very beginning. In the Lord I take refuge, he declares.

Whatever he was being urged to do, David understood it was fundamentally an abandonment of the Lord as his refuge and strength.

The advice meant that he would have to doubt God's character and promises, ultimately finding shelter in some other place or some other person.

If you study through the Old Testament, particularly the narratives in the Kings and Chronicles books, you'll find that this was a common occurrence, even as you read in the prophets, that there would be times that Israel's kings, they would be overwhelmed.

And rather than trust the Lord and to trust the promises of God, they would go outside of Israel to try to find their help. They would take comfort and shelter in Egypt. Or they would take comfort and shelter in the Assyrians.

[14 : 13] Or whatever it was, whoever it was that might come to their aid in those moments. And oftentimes the judgment that they faced was because of that. Their judgment was a correction, a punishment from God because they did not trust him and rely on him in those moments.

Perhaps that's something similar to the temptation that David has faced here. Whatever it was, at the heart of it is the idea that it would force him to take refuge in something other than the Lord.

So the issue at hand here is not what actions should be taken when we're in a similar situation as David. That's not really the issue. The issue is what's at the heart of those actions.

Are we acting in trust and in faith? Believing God? Trusting him? Or are our actions a reflection of an abandonment of trust in the Lord and his promises?

Your life choice is grounded in faith. Or do you tend to take matters into your own hands? Decidedly abandoning the Lord as your true refuge and strength.

[15 : 26] This truth is so important for us to grasp. Because the right response to difficulties will vary from situation to situation. Let's say that what David's dealing with here is physical.

Well, we know that there were times in David's life where a retreat was the right thing to do. He did it with Saul. He did it with Absalom.

He did it in other situations. There were some times where the right thing for David to do was to actually run and to get out of Dodge and to get out of the way. And he was trusting God to preserve him in that.

But if that's the case here, he's determined that to take that action now would be to abandon my faith. It would be to abandon trust in the Lord and what he's commanded me to do as Israel's king.

It may not have been physical. It may have been something else. That's irrelevant. What matters is that whatever it was he was being tempted to do would have worked against what God had told him to do.

[16 : 22] There's times when the right thing to do is speak up. There's times when the right thing to do is to be silent.

There's times when the right thing to do is to be present. Other times it's best to be absent. But any action that results from abandoning our hope and trust in God will inevitably produce far greater consequences than those posed by the original threat.

That was a hard lesson that Israel learned over and over and over. And let's be honest. It's one that we haven't really very faithfully learned ourselves.

Loved ones, if we are going to be faithful Christians, we've got to learn to filter our lives through this lens.

All of our life. Is any action you're considering right now or any belief that you are adopting or about to espouse, is it fundamentally an abandonment of the Lord and his promises?

[17 : 42] Have you weighed your counsel against the scripture to determine if you're engaging in sin with your actions and perspectives?

All of our thoughts and deeds must be grounded in this opening affirmation. The Lord is my refuge. He is the one I will trust.

But let's look a little closer at the counsel itself. In the Psalms, the wicked refers to men and women who set themselves and their whole direction of life against God.

It's a designation that we should interpret in light of the introductory Psalms of Psalm 1 and 2 that we studied several weeks ago. There, the wicked set themselves against the Lord, and they are ultimately judged by the Lord, right?

We can't forget Psalms 1 and 2. They are the gateway into the Psalter. We interpret the Psalms through the introduction that we are given in Psalms 1 and 2.

[18 : 47] And that's what we're presented with there. There are these two groups. There is the wicked, who is represented as those whose direction of life is really set against God and His Word.

And they take their aim at the upright in heart. The righteous. Those whose direction and determination is to, according to Psalm 1 and 2, delight in the law of the Lord and to meditate on it day and night.

So we have two categories. The Bible often does this. It gives us really two categories of people or two categories of destinations, two roads to walk, two gates to enter in.

This happens a lot in the Scriptures. So the Psalms are really dealing with these giant categories. Here is the wicked who generally their lives, not everything that they do is evil. That's not what that means. But it means that generally their perspective, their life, their direction of life and of thought and of heart is set against God and His Word.

Rather, they are walking in their own way. Choosing to live life their way rather than according to God's plan. And then there's this second category of the righteous or the upright.

[20 : 00] Those who are determined to delight in the law of the Lord. Not to spurn it, to delight in it, to meditate on it day and night. To be like Jesus who is that tree planted by the rivers of water whose leaf does not wither.

Those are the categories here. In Psalm 11, the wicked have grown powerful so that the foundations are nearly destroyed. But what does he mean by foundations? What is that really about?

This is where I think Christopher Ashe has a great little paragraph that summarizes it better than what I could. And here's what he says. When Bible poetry speaks of the foundations, it means the moral foundations of society.

What theologians sometimes call creation order. It's the pillars upon which the moral order of the world rests. The bulwarks protecting mankind from chaos, evil, disorder, and death.

These foundations are summed up in the Ten Commandments. And all around David, these good commandments, the law that's celebrated in Psalm 1, are being trashed.

[21 : 12] In his attempt to be God's king, David feels like a man trying to shore up a collapsing building in the midst of an earthquake.

Isn't that helpful? What does David mean by the foundations or his counselors mean by the foundations being destroyed? They're looking at the world around them. They're looking at their society around them and they're saying, This all has fallen apart.

This whole way of life and way of thinking and worldview that we've been trying to cling to and build up, it's all falling apart, David. What can you do now?

What can you do but either run from faithfulness, just abandon this whole idea, or maintain it and die from the arrows that are readied by the wicked who are against us?

It's a demoralizing feeling, isn't it? It's a demoralizing feeling of hopelessness that's presented here by David's counselors.

[22 : 21] And again, it's not unfamiliar to us. The moral foundations of our society, those essential ordinances instituted by God at creation and expanded on in God's law, they continue to erode.

And remaining faithful to the Lord is going to set you squarely in the crosshairs of those whose God is moral progressivism or expressive individualism, what they call progress.

It's not hard to see it. Everything God instituted at creation is attacked. And it has been. It continues to be.

We're redefining marriage to accommodate perversion. We've seen God-given roles for men and women reversed.

We're even now bringing into question the very truth of gender. What is that? The foundations are eroding. The morality of our society is falling apart.

[23 : 37] It has been. There's a continued diminishing of the value of human life. If you like politics, and to be honest with you, I don't like them.

I follow them because I feel like I need to follow them. Because I know how to engage in an intellectual conversation with somebody. But let's be honest. There is not a political platform that exists in the United States now that is truly righteous and moral.

There's not one. There's not one. Even the conservative platform has capitulated to abortion. No longer is the right to life really that important.

Is the institution of marriage and the family and the protection of it really that important? It's been removed. There's evident corruption everywhere we look. Every sphere of society has it.

It's in government. It's in schools. It's in churches. It's in churches. It's in our homes. It's everywhere. As a society, we tend to call what's evil good and what's good evil.

[24 : 45] Church, we see this all the time. Look around. David's counselors saw this. It may not have been the same situation.

It certainly wasn't the same exact thing that we face now. But whatever they understood to be those moral foundations were eroding. And they looked around and they look at David and they say, this is hopeless. Why are we continuing in this?

We are the ones who are on the outside now. What can we actually do anymore but run? Give up. Give up on this, David. Fearing the shots of the wicked.

The shots of the wicked, fretting over the degradation of righteousness will inevitably lead to being tempted to question God's commands. Is he really right maybe the society's right it'll lead us to doubt his promises will he really judge because it doesn't seem like he's doing it right now it'll tempt us to abandon the faith David's counselors asked what can the righteous do well let me tell you what the righteous must not do don't give in don't give up do as David did return to the scriptures return to prayer let the Lord renew your hope in his goodness and in his promises this is the resolve that David maintained and he explains the source of his resolve in the second part of the psalm let's move on to that resolve to continue look at verse four the Lord is in his holy temple this is David's response to that council the Lord's in his holy temple the Lord's throne is in heaven his eyes see his eyelids test the children of man the Lord tests the righteous but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence let him rain coals on the wicked fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup for the Lord is righteous he loves righteous deeds and the upright shall behold his face the upright shall behold his face

David's explanation for continuing to trust the Lord is basically this God has not changed so I will not run the Lord is not abdicated his throne so I will not question his sovereign rule he is righteous in all that he does so I will not doubt his future judgment the Lord's promises are faithful and true and I know I will enjoy his presence in the end all of David's hope here all of it it rested on God's unchanging character and his unfailing promises let's consider three affirmations that he communicates here first the Lord is on his throne the Lord's on his throne verse four the Lord is in his holy temple the Lord's throne is in heaven his eyes see his eyelids test the children of man in Psalm 10 we noted that there is an attitude that marks the wicked and the attitude is either a denial of God's existence or a claim that he does not see and will not judge you can go back and read Psalm 10 you can go forward to Psalm 73 and you'll see the same idea presented there that there is this attitude that marks the wicked that's being characterized here and that is they just kind of either ignore God's existence or they are complacent towards it or they say he's not really active in anything that we're doing and what often produces that attitude is the apparent success of those who follow their own way as opposed to following God's way if you go back and read Psalm 10 you'll see it they were successful in doing things their way they had gained wealth and influence and power all the things that they craved and that led them to think well either God's not there there is no God or you don't see he's checked out and it's just up to we can do what we want that's the judgment that's what marks them David knows better than that he says the opposite he says God is in his holy temple that's not a reference to the temple in Jerusalem that didn't even exist when David wrote this Psalm it wasn't there he's not talking about that he's talking about God's cosmic temple it's further clarified in the second line where God is said to be seated in the heavens it's again a poetic picture God is in the place of rule sovereign rule over all of his creation he sees he knows he hears he's aware he's working what David means to say is that the Lord remains on his throne observing and ruling over creation and this truth contributed to his resolve he could persevere through these moments not because he had the gumption to do so he persevered through those moments because he truly believed God is there and he's active and I may not see exactly what he's doing or understand everything that he's doing but I know he's there and I trust him that's what gave him the resolve to continue temptation to doubt the Lord it often follows the observation of the wicked success isn't it because we can't understand why a holy God allows evil to succeed it's easy to question if we've placed our faith and hope in the wrong place we look at the suffering the evil around us and it makes us question doesn't it we're tempted to say well maybe we've got this wrong how can how can God be loving how can he be good and all of these other things be true too you don't understand but God's delays they prove neither his absence nor his idleness we may not always understand his plan in fact most of the time we don't

[31 : 03] but the faithful know and believe that he reigns that he sees our works that he knows our thoughts and that he will act according to his sovereign divine and perfect plan and affirming that God remains seated on his throne produces the resolve we need to continue when the situation is grim but that brings us to a different question how can we be so certain of this how could David be so certain how can we how can we really know that God is good if he is there how do we make sense of what we see is our faith blind is Christianity a blind faith an unsubstantiated faith no I don't think it is of course that doesn't mean that we have every answer to every question as one may ask we don't claim that but we're not without reason for one for all the evil that we see around the world that suggests God's absence or at least his apathy there is a multitude of good that can only be attributed to his presence we tend to ignore that part in this conversation we focus on the wrong and on the suffering and on the evil and we don't want to acknowledge the good that can only come from the hand of a God who is loving and engaged and good but it's there also God's revelation in the scriptures it affirms again and again that he is always working out his righteous plans not only by what he states he will do but what he has proven in history that he has done in fulfilling those promises he's proved that he's there and that he's active

David knew that he experienced it firsthand but nothing gives us more confidence than this the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead the resurrection it changes everything it changes the whole conversation it proves that God has a distinct saving purpose in all that he does it shows that he has made a way for the wicked a category to which we all belong by nature that he has made a way for the wicked to be forgiven and to actually be transformed away from their wickedness to display the glory of God for which they were created to display it affirms that Christ is indeed ruling and reigning until every enemy has been defeated and all of his elect has been redeemed ours is not an empty faith it's actually quite a robust faith built on the incarnate word of God

Jesus Christ the sinless son and on the inscripturated word of God the fact that our God is a God who has spoken and he has revealed himself in the pages of scripture that is where our hope rests it's not an epiphany it's not in dreams it is in substantiated reason David says because of this the Lord is my refuge and I will keep going so the next time you're tempted to give up and give in consider the good that you see go back to the scriptures study them but most importantly look to the cross in the empty tomb it must mean something it means much the Lord is on his throne the second affirmation here is that the Lord will judge the wicked he will judge them it's coming look at verse 5 the Lord tests the righteous but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence let him rain coals on the wicked fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup because David believes that God remains on his throne he also affirms that God will eventually bring his judgment he doesn't do that according to our timeline and to our wishes we aren't God and he's not our pet he's our God we submit to his ways to his plan and what he has affirmed is that judgment will come and clearly the Psalms are meant to assure our hearts of this future judgment a future judgment which the wicked will be destroyed and the righteous will be vindicated it's one of the primary themes that we've seen again and again in these first 11 Psalms and we're going to continue to see it in book 1 of the Psalter over and over it's repeated that God's judgment is coming even though in the present moment it doesn't seem like it is in this Psalm

David alludes to God's judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah that's I think the reference that he's pointing us back to in verse 6 let God rain coals on the wicked fire and sulfur and scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup the scriptures they routinely refer to that story to emphasize the future judgment of the wicked Jesus does it in Luke 17 Peter does it in 2 Peter chapter 2 in both places they refer back to Sodom and Gomorrah to encourage those in the present moment who are wondering if God is actually present and active in order that they may set their eyes on a future judgment that's coming so the scriptures routinely they go back to this and I think David's doing it again here so that his resolve to continue trusting God rested on the fact that God will eventually judge all who continue in sin and unbelief and he has proven that he will do that in other moments so that we can trust that those things are pointing forward to a greater judgment for all just because that judgment isn't seen now doesn't mean it isn't coming it is coming that's a reality that should drive unbelievers to repent while there's time to do so but it should encourage believers to remain faithful when we begin to doubt and to question as David was tempted to do so the Lord's on his throne and then he says the Lord will indeed judge the wicked but then the third thing is that really a promise the Lord will bless the righteous he will bless us verse 7 for the Lord is righteous he loves righteous deeds the upright shall behold his face that's more than an affirmation he's clinging to a promise here a future hope that for David was as certain as the judgment of the wicked why should you reject the temptation to quit and faithfully continue instead because God is righteous because he loves those who follow his righteousness by faith and because all who do will quote behold his face can we think about this as a motivation on David's part anybody can be motivated to desire refuge from God that's what we see in verse 1 in the Lord

I take refuge that means that things are hard and difficult I need help and if God's willing to give me that help I'll receive it from him anybody can do that this is different this motivation at the end in verse 7 is not like that this is a desire it creates a desire on the part of the believer to want to see God's face that is not motivated by a desire for protection that is produced by a love for a God that you know and believe it's intimate David says the righteous will behold his face and what he's saying is I want to behold the face of God and God has promised that those who continue in faith will see his face they will be with him and he will be with them as certain as God's judgment against the wicked is his eternal blessing of the faithful and while the wicked will suffer in conscious punishment apart from

[40 : 15] God those who repent and believe will enjoy the presence of God for all eternity if you know Christ this is your hope it's your certainty is that not helpful is that not an encouragement in the midst of a difficult life when the foundations are eroding and the wicked have aimed their arrows this hope of eternal life it produces a resolve to stay faithful now because of what we anticipate will be our future but again that produces a different kind of question for us though doesn't it if all of us are by nature sinners set in rebellion toward God how can anyone be considered upright enough to behold his face doesn't that seem to be what David says at the end of the verse the upright shall behold his face does David mean to say that those whose good outweighs their bad will ultimately be accepted by God no that's not at all what he means to say the scriptures make it clear that all of our righteousness all of our righteous deeds are like polluted garments that's what

Isaiah says it's graphic he says even the best that we can offer is not good enough essentially is what Isaiah is saying in Romans we read that by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight so what hope can we possibly have that we will behold his face or are the Roman Catholics right in this that you can't really know for certain that you can do your best and you can just hope that you build up enough righteousness that you'll be able to escape this kind of intermediate state in purgatory and enjoy the presence of God instead but there's no way for you to really know now are they right about that can we really not know no of course not we have a hope that is far more certain and secure than any hope of righteous deeds that we might compile now you can commit your whole life to goodness and get to the end of it and look at your big pile of good works and you'll still have doubt

I wonder if it's enough I hope it's enough I'll cross my fingers oh we have a hope that's far more certain than that far more our one and only hope is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ he is the sinless son of God he bore God's wrath against our sins he died in our place so that God the father would see us forever more not for our righteousness but with Christ perfect righteousness by raising him from the dead God showed that Jesus is death was enough so that our sins would be forgiven and that we could have eternal life in his name we talked about this with Carmen Carmen and Julie and I sat for an hour or so yesterday just thinking about this idea the idea that what Christ has done is enough it's sufficient you need add nothing to it in fact if you try to add something to it it means that you don't have the faith that you need to receive

Christ to come to Christ is to trust that you can't possibly do enough it's to trust that he has done enough that he's taken your place and to turn from all of those other pursuits and to trust him by faith and to believe that what he has done truly is enough and he invites us to receive it this salvation he invites you he says come to me all of you who labor and are heavy laden he's talking to a group of people who's doing their best and trying their hardest to pile up all the good stuff and hopes that it will get them there and he says this is a burden to you you have that burden he says come to me I will give you rest you'll find rest for your soul he says why because he's done what you cannot do he fulfilled the law never violated it even once and when God raised him from the dead it proved it was

God's way but then it's also God's way of saying to us my son has power over death and life and he has authority to freely give it to all who come to him for it that's the gospel message David doesn't have all those pieces at the time that he lived he's living in an old covenant time he doesn't know Christ yet he has the promises!

[45 : 14] he's clinging to the promises but we have a much greater advantage than David and we have no possible excuse because of what Christ has done every single person who does this will be considered upright not because they truly are but because Christ is and they will all behold the face of God in heaven for all of eternity this is a certain promise for those who believe and it will produce that kind of faith that will never quit John Stephen Ackwary his story is inspirational we should reflect on things like that it will help us those things do good for us we should pay attention to them but you know when

John Stephen Ackwary finished the race you know what he got nothing he had a sore knee and a hurt shoulder sure he's an Olympic legend you know I bet if he had an opportunity he would have loved to have had that gold medal though he finished his race but he got nothing for it that is not at all how the Christian life works listen to Paul's words in 2nd Timothy chapter 4 I have fought the good fight I finished the race I kept the faith hence forth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge that David speaks directly of from this psalm will award to me on that day on what day on the day that he stands before the

Lord in judgment but he doesn't finish there notice the next phrase not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing look this whole issue of facing situations and temptations to doubt and to quit and to question whether or not this is all worth it that's going to happen a lot you know it is some of you can testify to that greater than I can don't quit Paul tells us here there there's there's too much waiting for you to quit don't give up on it only those who persevere to the end will receive the crown and God is good to give it his promise is true it's sure don't doubt it anymore what else must he do to convince you this resolve it's only going to come through trusting

God's unchanging character in his unfailing word what can the righteous do they can go on being righteous they can go on standing against the evils of society doing whatever we can to help and they can take refuge in the promises of God that are fulfilled and made perfect in the person and work of Jesus Christ that's what the righteous can do and that's what the righteous will do