

In the Day of My Trouble, I Seek the Lord

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: 26 July 2020

Preacher: Nigel Anderson

[0 : 0 0] first of all the crying and distress the crying crying to the lord that the psalmist expresses in his anguish and that we can connect with in our times of anguish and perplexity and then secondly calling to mind god's actions in the past considering god's ways with his people god who is the same yesterday today and forever calling to mind what god has done for his people in the past as an encouragement for the lord's people as we consider god's ways with us even in the present as we consider god's actions in the past that we commune with god that we call upon his name that we have that fellowship with god as we as we seek his face as we seek the comfort of his word so psalm 77 the day of my trouble i seek the lord you know if we were to be open and honest about the times that we're living in i think we'd all admit to being weary tired struggling even from from week to week as we as we find ourselves in troubled times i don't just mean the the continued impact of the coronavirus and in each and every one of our lives i think we have to admit that so much good has come from this particular time of a lockdown and restriction when we become to see and to know very much what truly matters in life what truly matters what there are true values lie which are of course in god and his word but when i'm thinking of at the times when we're weary when we're struggling when we're when we're tired i'm thinking more of really the world around us the emptiness that feeds our minds and hearts from well from a media so obsessed with trivia from governments that seem to be so determined to undermine god's god's word and god's law even as we're seeing in the current time in our the scottish government's proposed hate to build legislation which contains so many features that really are very much undermining the the right of christians to speak god's word to proclaim god's word to proclaim god's truth we're living in in an age when whether it be governments or media or those of influence or media or those of influence are very much determined to undermine the order of god's creation and our and the ethics the human-centered ethics that so dominate every strand of society and then there's the disdain for life whether it be at the time of conception or the time well at the end of life the hatred and vile directed against anyone that accepts the or the challenges the accepted line the denial of free speech that to those who would even dare to to challenge the moral agenda of today we see the weakness of leadership in so many parts of the world where the truth is ignored preferring a world that equalizes all religions and none it is wearisome it is troubling the burden of a society that really has that to the appearance anyway overwhelming our our faith and then of course there are the sins are the sins of our heart the sins that that so easily beset us themselves wearying troubling and we cry out lord i believe help my unbelief so where do we turn to where do you turn to when your heart is overwhelmed

and in perplexity who do we turn to we turn surely you turn to god's word surely you turn there to what we might call the the volumes of encouragement that we find in god's word and particularly at the close of another lord's day well we have before us god's word to to give us that encouragement and particularly as we see that encouragement in the in the book of psalms psalms that have so blessed god's people over the years psalms that have so encouraged the downhearted the troubled the lowly psalms that have spoken to the heart of god's people for millennia and so for our encouragement this evening encouragement in troubled times we're going to turn to the psalm that we read psalm 77 the psalm that in many ways is a reflection that god has given to this particular individual to show to reveal that gives the believer comfort comfort in the midst of particular times of trouble it's a psalm that really brings to our attention the the need to offset these times of trouble by remembering the lord our god by remembering what he's done for us particularly as the psalm even helps us to look to the lord jesus our savior and what god has done for us through christ even on in his his work of salvation there on the cross and so this psalm is very much an appropriate help to each one of us it's a word and season for our souls as as we seek to to rise and rise by god's grace

to rise above all that is troubling all that is disturbing and to look to god look to our help for look to the one who is our very present help in times of refuge so how are we going to look at this psalm obviously it's a long psalm we can't look at every line every detail but certainly we can think first of all of the psalmist predicament and then as we look at that predicament to focus on particularly these great words of verse 10 to 12 these words that we read of in my day of in the day of my trouble i seek the lord and all around these verses and as we do so that the word of god will enter into our hearts speaking to us helping us to as a center to rise above all that is troubling troubling your souls troubling your hearts as you turn to god as you seek god even as god says seek me and you will find me well let's seek god as we seek him through his word and so let's consider then the first nine verses really that sum up our first heading the cry the cry of distress or crying in distress and none of us not one of us is immune from from the anguish the anguish of the soul that the cry of distress our distressed hearts when our hearts are troubled when our spirits are troubled when trouble creeps into our lives and we we must we have to pour out our hearts before god to whom else can't we turn those things that concern us those things that trouble us to whom shall we go well we go to our great god and savior and we go with the psalmist here there are times when we can't even wonder wonder about god's mercy towards me god's mercy to his love towards me can even ask lord are you merciful towards me are you merciful towards us we can have heavy hearts and many of you have heavy hearts heavy hearts burdened for many things many reasons and whether you're the preacher

whether you're the hearer half of us are immune from the suffering of soul that that directs our souls in anguish to god the christian life is not a trouble-free life whatever else anyone else says whatever else the the so-called celebrity preacher says about the christian life being a trouble-free life no remember what job wrote in job 5 man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards if you follow jesus if you follow the lord jesus the suffering servant you're going to face a measure of suffering that must come to every believer it's what paul highlighted in romans 8 16 to 17 the spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of god and of children than heirs heirs of god and fellow heirs with christ provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him and so the reality of the believer's life is the reality that the psalmist faced here the reality of these times when we're crying out to god for help and it's the reality of the soul that cries out to god crying out to him lord hear me it's that reality as we focus on our own heart we focus even through our heart of tears and you see how the psalmist is doing that even from verse one he's very much focused on his own particular troubles it's all to do as he's with himself it's that focus on the individual yes he believes in god and he calls on god and he's communing with god and yet he's troubled and the psalmist will move from himself to god if you like from i to you from psalmist to god before he does that you see and you can see in his words how troubled his soul is there's that deep soul searching if you like that deep pleading with god but he he he's offering before god he's he knows that god is the god who hears and answers prayer and so he's crying in distress as you see there in the first three verses i cry aloud to god aloud to god and he will hear me he knows god will hear him in the day of my trouble i seek the lord in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying my soul refuses to be comforted when i remember god i moan and i meditate my spirit faints the psalmist here isa not afraid to voice his concerns he's not afraid to say that he's you know pleading before god crying before god and and in a particular troubled state of soul knows that god alone can answer his perplexities he knows that the answer to his deepest problems as deepest sufferings he knows that the answer isn't found in himself not even found in his fell humanity he knows that the answer to his difficulties is found in god the all-knowing the all-seeing the all-righteous the all-holy god and yet as he's meditating on god something's disturbing him he's troubled you see in verse 3 he remembers god but he's groaning in his heart as he's remembering god he's meditating on god the godly exercise of godly meditation he's meditating on god but as he's doing that his trouble his soul's trouble within him what are we seeing here what's happening well surely it's the experience of those like job job again we referred to earlier job who in in job 23 verse 15 wrote these words or said these

words i'm terrified at his presence when i consider i am in dread of him you know we can and must we must meditate on god in his in his greatness meditate on who god is and yes as we do so we can't be troubled when we're aware that we're in the presence of holiness and we're aware that we are but our sins are but filthy rags and here in asap's case he's troubled as he's meditating on god he's he's he's aware that he's in the presence of holiness he's aware that he's calling before god god who's made himself known through his word and through through asap's heart asap knows that

god has made himself known to the people through works of mercy works of deliverance he is the covenant god of israel but yet asap has a problem that he's trying to resolve in his own thinking as not getting it very far because asap can't reconcile the fact that the god who's the god of his fathers the god even of his own heart but he can't reconcile the fact that he's coming before the covenant god of israel and yet asap is troubled in his heart and you know he's asking these questions how can a god of faithfulness he's asking how can a god of loving kindness allow me to suffer asap where's the favor of god and on his people where's the favor that that god's people wants me where's the evidence of god's unfailing love where is god's covenant love so you see in verse 8 he's asking is it vanished forever never to appear again he's asking where's the mercy of god where's the compassion of god the psalmist knows that god is the god of compassion he's the god who's shown compassion to israel and so asap the psalmist here he's musing on god he's musing on god's nature on who god is he knows god's good he knows god's righteous he knows god's holy and yet asap's distressed because he can't reconcile what's happening in his own life in the life of god's people with the fact at the same time that god is the god of covenant mercy and grace god who's promised his faithfulness towards his people maybe that's where some of you are this evening this afternoon you love god with with all your heart and soul and strength and mind you've surrendered your life to jesus there are doubts within your heart there are perplexities you've even been found to ask lord where's your love when i'm cast down where's your favor towards me where's your favor towards your church where's your favor when i see the world turned upside down through all the various channels that seem to be so overwhelmingly against god and his word where are you lord even as the writer william cowper wrote where's the blessedness i knew when first i saw the lord but after his soul searching after his lamenting after the deep sorrow of his questioning heart he comes to a point in his in his heart when he has hope when he's got that hope of god when when the joy of his souls awakened to the truth of of god who is there of god and his covenant love god and his covenant mercy and as we know elsewhere as we we read elsewhere truly weeping may for a night endure but joy comes in the morning and we see that joy in the psalmist's heart and these great words of

verse 10 to 12 these words that really we ought to consider this evening dwell upon meditate upon these great words that the psalmist says then i said this i will appeal to this to the years of the right hand of the most high i will remember the deeds of the lord yes i will remember your wonders of old i will ponder all your work and meditate on your mighty deeds and really we do have to take time to consider what the psalmist is saying not just to to consider his own as it were deliverance from his troubles but to be encouraged in the way that god deals in mercy with yourself and ourselves when we find ourselves in these particular times of trouble you see after verse nine i mean the first verse first nine verses very generally but after these first nine verses after the psalmist pours out the soul we see a little pause that's why we mentioned that word sila sila that really is a device a hebrew device that really says something like you know take a break take a bit of time take a time of rest take a time to reflect quietly on god and his covenant love towards you and in that time of reflection we don't know how long that time was i mean the the lines just follow one from another from verse nine to verse 10 but that word sila would suggest that there was a time a deliberate time of reflection the psalmist undertook just to consider where his his safety is and from from god and so in that time of pause in that time of reflection something happened in the psalmist life something happened to change the direction of his heart he now knows he's going to focus his heart to focus his thoughts yes he's still going to focus his thoughts in god but he's going to do so to recall the power of god the might of god the might and power that god exercised in the past he says they are the years of the right hand of the most high in other words these years where god revealed this power to to bless his people power for the sake of the the safety of his people and so in that time of reflection he has he'll continue to meditate he'll he'll ponder deeply that exercise of godly meditation that we see often expressed in scripture that time to reflect deeply on who god is and what god has done for his people in the past and as our present significance it's something just maybe our own time of pause and reflection this aspect of meditation godly meditation something really ought to practice far more in our in your life as a christian because the more that you meditate on god the more that you ponder deeply who god is and his greatness and his power the more that will reflect on on what truly matters yes we're living in these troubled times that who is sovereign who is great it's gone i mentioned suraj kusala just a moment ago suraj very much has been meditating on god and yes despite the times of trouble even in his country he knows and he's he's broadcasting the fact that god is sovereign god is in control and that's something truly to meditate upon at this time

the sovereignty of god god in his sovereign power is sovereign greatness nothing is happening beyond god's knowledge god knows god sees as we're seeing this morning god cares god cares for you god cares for his people and so as we meditate on these truths

[20 : 20] do so as you fix your eyes on jesus as you fix your eyes on him who's one for you and great salvation one for you by his blood meditate on him on his actions in the past what he did there two thousand years ago on the cross and as you meditate on god delight in him delight in the savior delight to know that all things truly do work together for good to those who love god to those who are called according to his purpose and the more that we meditate upon god the more that we meditate upon what god has done for his people in the past yes through the lord jesus and the more even our own particular problems or difficulties or fears will fade will fade so let's cultivate the more that discipline of of godly meditation that we fill our minds with with him worldly meditation empties the mind that the godly meditation fills the mind with god in his word and his love and so as the psalmist meditated on god he came to that point where he's stopping asking these questions he's stopping you know figuring out by himself things that he can't work out for himself and instead he's focusing wholly on god god whose actions in the past whose past actions of present and future significance of present and future significance both for himself and for god's people as we of course we need to apply that to ourselves the actions of god in the past are present and indeed future significance for each one of us so let's look secondly at that calling to mind god's actions in the past because of god is the eternal god and since god is the eternal one he's the same god he's the same god who's whose eternal character doesn't change and therefore he's utterly consistent in his love for his own and if he's utterly consistent in his love for his own then what he's done in the past points to who god is in the present who god is in the future what god has shown of himself in the past is present and indeed future significance for all who are his and that truth itself should give you new hope that truth of who god is and really should should enable you the more to trust in him so that you can say with sincerity of heart just as he's been with me in the past so he'll be with me again in the present and again will be with me always we change we change in so many ways but god doesn't change we can be so so changeable in our in our faith in our trust in god god doesn't change in his faithfulness towards his people god's utterly reliable he has that eternity of eternal character of grace and mercy and steadfast love and so here's asaph the psalmist here he's if you like he's realigning his perspective he's not going to search for the answers to his troubles in himself he's not going to search within his own heart he's tried that it doesn't work he's going to meditate on god he's going to meditate on the god who's the same yesterday today and forever so asaph turns he's going to turn to the most high the one who's who's above all creation and he's going to call to mind the past he's going to call to mind what god has done in the past the point to to god's absolute faithfulness and and covenant love towards all who are his own he says i'll remember the deeds of the lord yes i'll remember your wonders i'll remember your miracles your miracles of old so you can just sense his rejuvenation if you like his his revitalization of heart as i see he's revived in his spirit as he comes to that resolve he's going to remember what god he's going to remember that particular time in israel's history when god saved his people when god redeemed his people that these verses of verse 16 to 20 that very much poetically point to the deliverance of god's people from repression in egypt and the miracle of the the deliverance of his god's people and in pattern they're passing safely through the red sea so asaph's going to remember god's deeds god's miracles the miracles performed in the past that are present and future consequence for all of god's people and that's the remedy for the psalmist's troubles and that remedy that's going to enable him to revive in his heart and his trust and in god is if you like his his faith is renewed it's it's revived and that remembering of god's deeds god's wonders all that god has done for his people in the past it's the same remedy for our troubled souls even in the present as you know as we seek to take time to remember to remember the great work of of our savior even on the cross as we call to mind the wonder of salvation won for us by our loving savior again you know this practice of remembering at least something we ought to the more do in our lives as part of a christian's discipline to remember to remember god we of course we do that at times of communion we remember the lord's death that he comes these times that we enjoyed certainly in the past remembering calling to mind with that view to action that view to trusting the more in our savior you know even remembering remembering the past we live in a world actually that really doesn't care much for the past and certainly we live in a world that doesn't really care much for what happened two thousand years ago and across in calvary but you see for the believer this act of remembering what god has done for his

people we've got to continue to do that many of you know that my previous profession was as a history teacher many many years and my school and on sky i learned so much about the past i learned to appreciate the past i learned how much the past is an influence even on the present so if you know i still do teach the past and for a number of weeks each year at ets i see very much as the more that i learn of the past and teach the past i see so much more of the hand of god god's sovereign hand in the course of human history remember that the central point of history the central point of any study of history is the person of the lord jesus we date our years according to what happened before christ and what has happened after christ bc ad and whoever much secular historians the secular mind try and remove jesus from from that crucial aspect of of timing of time itself when they put in ce common common era even that tries to make that doesn't take away from from the defining point of history being the lord jesus

being his coming to earth because his coming to earth ushered in that that hope of salvation that we find for what what he did on the cross for us so remember remember what he did in the past what he's done for his people in the past what he did for you in the past bring it to mind that once for all action on the cross that's got present and eternal consequences for the for the souls of his people the present and future consequence for you for all who are in christ and that remembering that act of remembering is going to be ongoing that we continue and continue to remember god's mercies towards us that we continue to to meditate upon god's faithfulness that we continue to look to the yes look to to what god has done for his people as we read in scripture in these these old testament new testament times these times of what we call redemptive history and yes remember what god has done for his people even in in the last two thousand years remember and see how god has blessed his people even turbulent times when god has been faithful and god has has blessed his people at certain times marvelously wonderfully miraculously and so we remember we meditate and call to mind god's actions in the past what god has done and continues to do for his people and then see thirdly how as the psalmist has has recalled god's actions in the past these wonders in the past he's going to now call upon god and call upon him directly he says in verse 11 second part of verse 11 i'll remember your wonders of old and then he says and he addresses god in fact if you look from verse 13 to and further really to the end of the psalm then you'll see how very much the psalmist launches into prayer he's now able to commune with god and to do it sincerely to do it with praise and thanksgiving you see the words that he directs and as i'm reading listen to the number of times when you see the word you or you're let's read your your way verse 13 your way oh god is holy what god is great like our god you are the god who works wonders you have made known your might among the peoples you with your arm excuse me redeemed your people the children of jacob and joseph when the water saw you oh god when the water saw you they were afraid and did the deep tremble the clouds poured out water the skies gave forth thunder your arrows flashed on every side the crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind your lightnings lighted up the world the earth trembled and shook your way was through the sea your path through the great waters yet your footprints were unseen you led your your people like a flock by the hand of moyses and aaron see how frequently the psalmist is calling upon god and is is recognizing god's power god's might and he's very much you know directly praying to god calling upon him and recognizing who god is and so this mind his heart is is calmed he's now in that position of calm rejoicing he's calling upon god he's communing with god as he does that his heart is at peace his anxieties have ceased his troubles have just become now a vapor that are that disappeared in the air and so what are we seeing we're seeing that

combination of true godly meditation on god and at the same time the practice of prayer calling upon god coming to the very throne of grace and that spiritual exercise of these spiritual exercises have blessed this the psalm writer and is he's no longer in turmoil and so the questions that he asked questions they asked before are now resolved and so he can respond faithfully he asked will the lord spurn forever and never again be favorable no has his steadfast love forever cease absolutely not are his promises at an end for all time no absolutely not has god forgotten to be gracious absolutely not has he in anger shut up his compassion again again absolutely not and so let's be reminded just this afternoon this evening as we let's we close that god has never and god will never cease being favorable to you who are his let's just remember that god's steadfast love never ceases his promises are sure and they're confirmed in the lord jesus god's never forgotten to be gracious to you he's always gracious even in these times when you can't fully understand what's happening in your life and indeed what's happening in the world around remember as we read in lamentations his compassions are new every morning great it's his faithfulness be reminded of that

when you wake up tomorrow morning so let's be encouraged by the word of god take that word with you as you well we've already started a new week take god's word that word with you into this week and continue to trust in him in all things and continue to to meditate on who god is in his his love and his faithfulness and call upon him the more in prayer as you find rest for your souls amen let us pray lord we bless you for your word of comfort your word of assurance your word that encourages your people even in these times of trouble and may it be that when we do find ourselves in these times of trouble that we will seek you and find you we thank you lord that you are the god who is to be final we ask lord that we will know that that you are the one who troubles who who who allays fears who calms troubled hearts or may it be that all who have worshipped here in this context this evening they will look to you and not be anxious but to trust in you for all things here is lord as we continue in worship before you now we pray these things in jesus name amen and now may grace mercy and peace from god father son and holy spirit rest upon and remain with you both now and forevermore amen and me and and and and and and an and and and and and