

The Lord Who Knows

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[0 : 0 0] The Bible class just come in. I want to read the verses that we'll be looking at this morning from verse 15. And we'll read again down to verse 22.

The eyes of the Lord are towards the righteous and his ears towards their cry. The faith of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken. Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

The Lord redeems the life of his servants, and of those who take refuge in him will be condemned. It's one of the main recurring themes of the Bible, and even certainly the book of Psalms.

[1 : 1 0] There's this great division, the great division between those who, as we see here in the psalm, those who are deemed as righteous, and those who are deemed as wicked or evil.

You see that from the Old Testament division. You know the division between God's covenant people Israel, opposed to them the pagan tribes. The pagan tribes outside of the covenant.

And then you go to the New Testament. And again you see that division clearly set out between those who follow the Lord Jesus, and those who are against him.

As Jesus said, whoever is not with me, is against me. And there's that clear division based on a relationship with God. That great separation that Jesus spoke of when he spoke of his return.

Return that day when Jesus comes again. Matthew 25, 31 to 33. When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

[2 : 1 6] Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another. As a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he'll place the sheep on his right, and the goats on his left.

So that division in humanity, all humanity, that division that Scripture points to again and again, concerns two sides. Those who are God's covenant people, and those who are not in that covenant relationship with God.

Last Lord's Day morning, we saw that separation portrayed in the Lord's Supper. Remember, there were those sitting at what we call the table, the area where the bread and the wine were taken, that speaks of the Lord Jesus and his death for us.

We saw that separation on the basis of faith in the Lord Jesus. There were those, most of you, who made your public profession of faith in the Lord Jesus. But there were those who, as yet, haven't made that public profession of faith.

So we saw that separation as it were portrayed in the very Lord's Supper that we celebrated last Lord's Day morning. So it's appropriate then, and in the very providence of God, I hadn't anticipated looking at this passage until a fortnight's time, but in the providence of God, we're coming to the close of this psalm.

[3 : 39] As we consider this great theme of the great division that these verses show us, why do we look at them?

Because we need to grow in our knowledge of God. We need to grow in our knowledge of ourselves. We need to know who God is, the obedience, the submission that God demands of us.

And of course, the consequences for all who do not submit to his rule and his reign, as this psalm tells us. So, verse 15 to 22, verses that contain encouragement and contain warning.

And again, that shows us, surely, the division of humanity that the Bible tells us of. It's our present reality now, and it will be until the Lord returns.

And indeed, in eternity itself, that fixed division. We'll come to that in a moment. So, this last section, and this last portion, you know, we read the whole psalm, because this is a whole psalm.

[4 : 44] We can't just say that verse 15 begins something totally new, that some of it's detached from the rest of the psalm. It's very much part of the whole. We read the context there at the start of verse 34.

Remember why David wrote this psalm? He wrote it after his experience in Philistine territory. David had gone there. King Saul had been chasing, about to kill him.

David flees to Philistine territory. He thinks that he can go there unrecognized, incognito. But he is identified. And in order to escape, he pretends that he's mad.

But of course, overruling is God's providence. It's God who's seen his plight. It's God who knows David's predicament. And it's God who enables David to flee from that position of extreme danger to his life.

And so, in thankfulness, David writes this psalm, this psalm of praise to God. And you notice, it is to God. You notice the number of times, right from beginning to end, the name of the Lord, the covenant name of Yahweh is mentioned there.

[5 : 51] They see the Lord's name in capital letters that tell that this is the covenant God, that David's addressing the God who is faithful to his people. Because David knows that God has heard his cry.

David knows that it's God the Lord who's delivered him in his faithfulness. And so, David can triumphantly express his covenant relationship with God, seeing that God's very releasing him from that danger.

And David wants others to know that abiding presence of God with his people that David himself has experienced. So, that's the build-up. That's the build-up to this last section.

And obviously, it's in two parts, this last section, 15 to 18 and then 19 to 22. So, let's look at verses 15 to 18.

Firstly, what we've called the directions of God. The directions of God. And look at the first direction, if you like, of God.

[6 : 51] The direction of God towards what we're told there, the righteous, verse 15. Look at verse 15, 17 and 18. Look at the way that David uses language to express God's intimate relationship with his people.

Verse 15, The eyes of the Lord are towards the righteous. His ears towards their cry. And then verse 17, With the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.

Verse 18, The Lord is near the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Now, of course, God is spirit. God doesn't have eyes or ears.

But David's using a particular style of language. He's bringing home how close God is to each one of his people. And he's using language in a way that, you know, we finite human beings and our limited understanding.

He's using language so that we can understand how God, how close God is to his people. So when we're told that God's eyes are directed towards the righteous, well, we can identify with that expression.

[8 : 01] You know, when human eyes are directed one to one. You know, when eyes look in love one to another. That tells us. That tells us a warmth and love and affection and closeness.

And so when we're told here that God's eyes are towards the righteous, then, you know, we're able to understand that God looks in you.

God's looking on you directly in his perfect love, in his perfect care, in his perfect compassion. And then when we're told that God's ears are open to the cry of the righteous, again, this is the same kind of language that's used to help us to understand the kind of attention that God gives towards you when you're crying for help, when you're coming before and pleading the throne of grace.

Because just in a human situation, when, you know, in human attention, when you're not just hearing, but you're listening, when you're listening to someone else's cry, to someone else's complaint, someone else's, you know, call for help, you're listening with a view to action, with a view to helping.

And God listening with that view to action, with that view to help. So God's listening to you even now as you're crying out to him for help, for aid, for mercy. And so when we're told of God's ears and God's eyes, that just that, that these expressions of his attention, his direct nearness.

[9 : 36] As verse 18 summarizes, the Lord is near the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. So David's speaking from his own experience. He is telling of what he knows of God and God's love towards him.

But of course, it's not just his personal experience. It's what you as a believer, you who are a believer, it's what you know of God. You know that he never leaves you, that he never forsakes you.

Even when you're in the depths, even in the sorrows, he's there with you. Because he sees, and he hears, and he's beside you.

Now, these aren't pious platitudes. It's not what Karl Marx spoke of. Well, he spoke of Christian religion as a kind of narcotic, you know, the opium of the people.

It's not that. It's not a narcotic to desensitize a person to the realities of life. This is reality, the reality of the believer, the one who puts his or her faith in God, the God of all grace.

[10 : 42] Isn't it so often the case, and I've said this before and I'll say it again, that those who have endured much under the hand of God are those who reveal much of the peace of God in their lives, who can say, it is well with my soul.

Maybe you who are going through particular times of trial and difficulty, sorrow even, but yet you still testify to the peace of God in your heart, even when you're going through the valleys and shedding tears of affliction.

When you are going through these valleys, when you are in that place of brokenness, when you are even crushed in your soul, well, remember the Lord Jesus. Remember Him who is crushed for you.

Because the very same word that David uses here is speaking of those who are crushed in spirit. It's the very same word that Isaiah used in that prophecy of the Lord Jesus when he spoke of the servant and the suffering, when he spoke of the one who is crushed for our iniquities.

The very same word David uses here. He was crushed. And that sin bearing on the cross, the Lord Jesus crushed for our sake. Yes, in that sin bearing, Jesus cried out, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[12 : 02] But that forsakenness wasn't permanent. Because in that, in His cry of triumph, Jesus knew the closeness of His Father.

Remember that cry when Jesus cried out, Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit, Father. The intimacy of the Father and the Son expressed in these words of Jesus and triumph from the cross.

And you who know the Lord, you who love the Lord, will take great comfort in this very word of God this morning. And if you're crying out to Him for mercy, cry, and yes, even in troubled times and circumstances, cry yes when you're in the depths, when you are brokenhearted, when you are crushed in spirit, when the frowning providences of God, yes, are affecting you even now.

Remember, as we said just a moment ago, He has promised never to leave you, never to forsake you. He is near you, near you in spirit, in the spirit. Even now, by His word, comforting you, even through this word.

And of course, you know that this word is true, that it is utterly reliable. So trust Him. Trust Him even in the darkness. Because you are the object of His love.

[13 : 24] He's directing His love towards you, even now. But there's another direction mentioned here. It's not a direction of love, or grace, saving grace.

It's a direction of enmity. Look at verse 16. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil to cut off the memory of them from the earth. Again, this is the particular language we've been talking about before.

This is using what we might call human application to help us understand the attitude of God. And certainly to understand the attitude of God to those who are opposed to His rule.

When you think of this expression, the face of God, well, this is an expression that tells of His presence, His benevolent presence towards those whom He favours in His grace and in His love.

But, so to speak, of God's face being against whom we've spoken of here, those who are evil, those who do evil. This tells of the withdrawal of God's presence, the absence of God's favour, that place of being outside of God, beyond His love, separated from Him and separated eternally.

[14 : 40] So ask yourself this, what direction is God setting His face in your case? Is the face of God towards you in His love?

Or is it against you in His anger? Well, how will you know? Well, surely you'll know even in your very heart the direction that you are towards God. You know, ask yourself, is my face directed towards God?

Am I looking towards God and seeing Him, knowing Him? Am I putting my faith and trust in Him? Am I directing my heart towards Him in faith, in obedience?

Are my thoughts directed to Him? Am I seeing Him in His Word? Ask yourself, is my face turned towards God? Well, look to Him and do as the hymn declares.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full on His wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

[15 : 43] Turn your eyes upon Jesus. as He turns His eyes upon you, the directions of God. But then secondly, again a plural here, the outcomes of affliction.

Remember when I was in the Clough Free Church many, many, many years ago in the mid-70s, our minister, Alistair Ross, the late Alistair Ross, so often in his prayers would quote from the book of Job, man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards.

Speaking of the inevitability of affliction in the human condition, afflictions that are universal. All humanity suffers afflictions whether the righteous who know the Lord or those who don't know Him as God, as Lord.

So verse 19 to 21 tells us, many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers them out of them all. He keeps all His bones, not one of them is broken. And then back to affliction, verse 21, affliction will slay the wicked and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

Now, let's look at these verses. Troubles afflict us all because it's the effect of sin in the entirety of the human race. But there's still a great division, a great separation in the outcome of these afflictions.

[17 : 08] That's what just we read there in verse 19 to 20, God will deliver the righteous from their or even from His afflictions. But God's not going to spare us, we're told here, the wicked in their troubles.

And it's this expression of verse 20 that I think we really need to focus on because verse 20 there is, He keeps all His bones, not one of them is broken. It's really this verse that tells us something wonderful about God.

God. This is an expression that tells us God's care, God's particular care for His own, God's particular care for you. He keeps all His bones, not one of them is broken.

It's a metaphor. In the first instance anyway, it's a metaphor for God's care, God's care of His people. Now, of course, remember when the Lord Jesus was on the cross.

Remember at that point when the soldiers were about to apply that, as it were, that finishing touch in the breaking of the legs of those who were on the cross to hasten their death. Remember when they came to Jesus, they noticed He was already dead.

[18 : 16] And so we're told that Scripture was fulfilled, not one of His legs broken. So there's the literal not breaking of Jesus' legs. But much more than that, much more.

It's a reference, going back to the Psalm, it's a reference to the absolute care of God over the Lord Jesus, over His righteous servant, over His one and only Son in life and death and resurrection.

God delivering His Son, as we know, in raising Jesus to life. It gives that sure promise of life, eternal life, to all who are His as God shows His care and compassion over you who know Him.

So, we're seeing here this contrast between those whom God delivers judgment on themselves. That's what verse 21 is telling us.

Here's David pronouncing God's verdict on those who are opposing His reign. Affliction will slay the wicked. And you see that in many cases in the Bible. Those who plotted against God and His people bringing judgment on themselves through their own sin.

[19 : 30] remember Haman. Haman who tried to obliterate the Jews in Esther's time dying on the very gibbet that he'd set for Esther's cousin Mordecai. And then think of those who were plotting against Daniel.

They brought judgment on themselves. They perished by the command of the king. They were thrown to the very lions that they'd sent Daniel to. And whether it's in biblical times or in our own time, that's the verdict.

That's God's verdict on all who will seek to bring affliction on God's people. All who will trample in God's word. Affliction will slay the wicked. In other words, the judgment of God is upon all who would seek to destroy His word, to tear up God's word, to seek to remove God's word from our land, who are seeking even now to undermine the word of God at every facet, every aspect of our society.

And that's why on Wednesday in our time of prayer, we'll be focusing on the very massive changes that are happening in our society, even at this rapid pace that we're seeing.

And that will literally be on our knees and crying out to God for His mercy upon us as a nation. And we're not seeking any personal vendetta, of course not.

[20 : 51] We're not seeking personal, some kind of personal harm. But we're still to abide by the command of God, as we were thinking last Wednesday, to love our enemies, to do good to those who hate us.

But surely what we're calling upon God is that God's hand exercises His justice, His righteous justice against those who will not repent, who in their arrogance are seeking to condemn Christians for the truth of God's word.

In condemning God's people, those who are God's enemies, or condemning themselves in contrast to God's mercy upon those who are His. And we see that in verse 22.

We see that in the Lord redeems the life of His servants. None of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned. But in fact, notice we have to take that verse, verse 22, and match it with the last part of verse 21, because what do you notice in both these verses, you see the word condemnation.

Because in verse 21, we're told that those who hate the righteous will be condemned. But in verse 22, we're told that none who take refuge in God will be condemned.

[22 : 09] And it's this whole matter of condemnation. You know, whether it's preaching on the Lord's Day or on a midweek service, even in general conversation, condemnation, we don't speak of condemnation as much as we ought.

But in fact, condemnation is absolutely central, central to the word of God, central to the very present and eternal destiny of every single human being.

Because condemnation, we might say, is the story of the Bible, the result of the fall of man. When Adam sinned, condemnation, God's condemnation of the human race was immediate.

Only Jesus, only Jesus are represented, only Jesus could avert God's condemnation. Only Jesus, when he bore God's condemnation for sin on our behalf, when he took our sins upon himself on the cross.

And therefore, as Paul wrote to the Romans in triumph, there is no, therefore now, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. But for those who are not in Christ Jesus, God's word tells us, there is condemnation.

[23 : 27] That condemnation of God that remains on those who will not submit to the Lord Jesus as Lord, as King. In fact, the category we're told in verse 22 of those who hate the righteous.

And in fact, we can even bring that to the Lord Jesus. The ultimate expression of hating the righteous one, the Lord Jesus. What is that condemnation that David speaks of here?

Well, surely it's eternal punishment, it's eternal ruin. You know, when we think of condemnation, we can think of it in various ways. Humanly speaking, you can think of physical condemnation.

You know, you think of a building, for example, that's not fit for human habitation. It's condemned, that building is condemned, it's condemned as being unworthy, it's got to be destroyed because it's so dangerous.

I think, of course, more particularly in a court setting, when someone's condemned, he's condemned because he's committed a crime, he's guilty, he's condemned because of his guilt, he's found guilty of a particular crime and he's convicted because of that crime.

[24 : 38] So when we think of God's condemnation, condemnation, then it's condemnation because we have been found guilty, guilty through sin, through not having believed in the Son of God, that guilt that brings just judgment from the just judge who is God.

And the sentence of condemnation is that eternal destruction through the eternal punishment in that place of eternal destruction, the place of hell.

But for one who's not condemned, whose guilt, yes, has been guilty before God, but whose guilt has been paid for by the Lord Jesus on the cross, there is no condemnation.

Instead, there's freedom, freedom from eternal punishment. And the particular expression that we see, that freedom given in verse 22, redemption, redeem, the Lord redeems.

that ransom price that's been paid on our behalf by the Son of God. Jesus, the Son, gave His life for many, so that you, so that I might be set free, free from the judgment of God against sin, free from being under the dominion of sin, free under God's presence.

[26 : 00] And that surely cause for rejoicing this morning. The freedom in Christ that you have who knows the Lord Jesus as your Savior. That freedom that tells you there is no condemnation. And this is something of course that David could express in the context of his deliverance.

Because that deliverance that looked forward to the eternal deliverance of those who are in Christ, who have been ransomed by Christ, Lord Jesus who has freed you, freed you from sin and the consequences of sin.

And if you know you've been redeemed, if you know there's no condemnation, well show it. Show it. Show it. In that life of freedom, David rejoiced in God.

He showed that. He showed it in his telling of God's goodness. He told others to taste and see that God is good. Well you tell them these things. Tell them by word, tell them by action.

Tell them that those who take refuge in God have that freedom that the world can never give. But if you don't know Jesus as your Saviour, turn to him.

[27 : 08] Turn to him now. Repent of your sins. Look to the one who gave his life as that ransom for many. Don't live your life as a condemned person, but live as one who's free, eternally free with that heavenly prospect, that prize that we're telling the children of, that heavenly prospect of being with the Saviour in glory, glory, for you'll know that joy and that peace, that freedom that God gives to his people now and gives in all eternity.

Would you come to him now for there's opportunity still to do so? Know the blessedness, the joy of being found in God's presence. Know that joy of being found in the Lord Jesus Christ who knows you, who sees you, and who loves you.

Amen. Let us pray. Lord, we give you praise and thanks for your word, your word of promise, your word that shows that sure promise in the Lord Jesus of salvation for all who submit to you, our God, our Saviour.

And Lord, if there's any here this morning who as yet have not submitted in heart to him, may it be that they are drawn by thee to know the Lord Jesus as Saviour, to know you, our God, as Father, as Lord.

Help us then, we pray, to look to you, to serve you, to show by our lives that we are yours, that you are ours eternally. Bless then, we pray, the remainder part of this service.

[28 : 46] Bless our fellowship, one with another afterwards. Go before us for the remainder of this day, we pray. Pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let's sing now the verses we were looking at, page 41 of our psalm books, these verses, 15 to 22, the tune is Wiltshire.

The Lord's eyes are upon the just, he listens to their plea, the wicked he rejects and blots from earth their memory. 15 to 22, Psalm 34.