

Job, Mother Teresa, and Jesus Christ

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[0 : 0 0] Gracious Heavenly Father, we're going to think now of some of the realities of being your child, living in fellowship with you, the Father, and your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

We need the help of your Holy Spirit to give us a right judgment in all the things that will pass before our minds. Grant us the help we need, give us the wisdom to discern, and then, by this means, strengthen us to live according to the realities of the Christian life.

For your glory, through Christ our Saviour, Amen. Well, you may be a bit surprised, Sylvia, that I am speaking this morning.

I should say at once, I am pinch-hitting. I think it was on a Thursday morning that Bill called me up and asked if I could fill the gap.

And I said I'd have a go. I have prepared in a great hurry something that I thought I would be sharing with you in about a month's time.

[1 : 2 9] And because I've prepared it in a hurry, there may be gaps in it, and it may rather proclaim the fact that it was put together in short order.

I think it was put together in a way that I would be able to do it. And I thought I would tell you at the beginning so that you would be prepared.

Now, Joe, Mother Teresa, and the Lord Jesus.

Let me introduce what I'm going to do by reminding you that in 1997, Mother Teresa, founder of the Sisters of Charity, and she was a charity in Tlocata, died.

And in 2003, John Paul II, still the Pope at that time, beatified her.

[2 : 4 3] That is to say, took her, posthumously, halfway to being canonised as a saint. It's a two-stage process in the Roman communion, being canonised as a saint.

First of all, you're beatified. That is to say, you are spoken of as the blessed, blessed person that you are.

and then when it's been ascertained that some miracle was brought through your ministry, you are moved up the second leg of the process, so to speak, and you become saint.

And then, she would then, if they find a miracle, which they may very well do, she may as well become Saint Teresa of Catherines.

And then, but now, in this year of grace, 2007, a book was published under the title Mother Teresa, Come Be My Light.

[4 : 0 5] If I'd had a little more time, I would have hoped to get hold of that book and actually scan it before I lecture it to you. But as I told you, I only had a couple of days to prepare, and I haven't seen the book.

But I've seen descriptions of it, and there's no doubt as to what it contains. It's her journals, diaries, and intimate letters to various friends in which, as we would say, she lets her hair down and speaks very frankly, out of her heart, about what she's feeling, as well as, indeed, more than, apparently, about what she's doing.

And, what these journals and letters reveal is that after being very much blessed at the beginning of her, shall I say, career as a nun and a worker, therefore, for the Lord Jesus, after being much blessed in those early days with the sense of the closeness of Christ, the love of Christ to her, from the time that she began work in Calcutta, that sense of divine closeness was withdrawn, and for half a century, she worked with a feeling of dryness and even abandonment inside.

Oh, well, she was pioneering missionary labour of a costly and demanding sort, very wonderful sort.

as you know, the thought around which she shaped her missionary labour, the thought around which the order of sisters of charity which she's founded still work, that thought is the thought that in every needy soul you see and should see the Lord Jesus Christ so that in serving the needs of that needy soul you're serving him.

[6 : 35] Her ministry focused on service to the dying in Calcutta, people who are left out in the streets simply to expire.

It sounds too unpleasant to be true but I have been in Calcutta and it does actually happen. It was a wonderful city, so they say, in the days of the British Raj and it's a pretty awful city now.

Well, that's what broke surface you see in this book Come the Night and I gather that there was an extended article about it in the New York Times Times and there certainly was an extended article about it in Tide Magazine.

I was given this copy of Tide Magazine and if you can all see what's here it's a picture of Mother Teresa looking pretty grim and the words alongside it are The Secret Life of Mother Teresa Nearly newly published letters reveal of the loved icon's 50-year crisis of faith.

Hold on to that phrase. Crisis of faith. You open the pages and turn to the article. The heading as perhaps again you can see is the two words Her Agony and under the words Her Agony you've got a sort of introductory thing that journalists write.

[8 : 18] She spent almost 15 years without sensing the presence of God in her life. What does her experience teach us about the value of doubt? Doubt.

Crisis of faith. Doubt. below me. But you have to understand that Time Magazine and the New York Times they express and embody the post-Christian liberalism of the east coast of North America where all the culture is supposed to be.

And this view of Mother Teresa crisis doubt this fits in with the liberal idea of religion according to which the essence of Christianity is comfort comfort inside feeling that God is close that Christ loves you having a sort of inner glow that enables you to stay above water like a cork on the water that can't be sunk you know the waves break over it but it comes to the surface again and so believing that that's what Christianity essentially is these liberals are implying they're not so brazen to affirm but they're implying that since Mother Teresa wasn't experiencing anything like that during her years as a missionary leader she was something of a fraud particularly since all her public utterances utterances and I expect many of you remember the public utterances they were all of them upbeat affirmative she spoke about serving the

Lord she spoke about joy in the Lord and all the time inside she wasn't experiencing anything like that so say these liberals you see she was a bit of a phone hit it's painful to see them positioning themselves like that at least it's painful to me because as I think you know I haven't much time for liberal reconstructions of Christianity I might as well come clean on that I don't think it would be a surprise to many of you to hear me say that but no that's what they're suggesting and I was introduced to this when somebody put this copy of Time magazine under my nose and said it's bollison isn't it all this these revelations of Mother Teresa in trouble and so and so and when

I was confronted with this troubled soul who felt that what Time magazine had to say must surely be the last word about Mother Teresa that I made up my mind the next time I talked to Leonard exchange I would speak about this matter and try to put the record straight what I didn't expect was that I would have to do it at two days notice so that's how I came to be talking to you on this subject today and having said that well let's proceed you can see already that I'm going to answer the question was there something wrong with Mother Teresa by saying basically no the liberals haven't got the appropriate categories of thought and understanding to make sense of an experience like this so they falsify the situation and like liberals love to do they're cutting down a very tall but conservative

[12 : 41] Christian pocket shall we put it that way and I wish the fact that they're doing that doesn't make me love them I wish that they wouldn't do that sort of thing and I am sorry for conservatives who are trampled by observing that these wise acres Time Magazine New York Times and so on are doing that if incidentally you read The Anglican Planet they have reprinted a far far wiser review of this book actually done by a Roman Catholic priest that it was very wise very good very appropriate I thought and he gave me some of the phraseology that I should be using as I talked to you now the question put to me this is sort of bottom line by the persons who I found were troubled by the time they was in was could the problem be the doctrinal defects of Roman

Catholic teaching well I'm going to answer that question by saying basically no however I've got to discuss the point more fully because there are things to be said on both sides three points then I want to make about Roman Catholic doctrine points which well I'm going to base my assessment on but they are points over which it's possible for Protestants I think to get off track and make some errors of judgment first point about Roman Catholic teaching their doctrine of justification by faith and the assurance based on the knowledge of one's justification really is deficient now that was what Luther said 500 years ago and that has to be said still for it remains true the Council of Trent which is supposedly irreformable has anchored a mistaken understanding of justification in the Roman

Catholic Church and I don't know how it can ever be removed what Roman Catholics say about justification is that we should understand it as the whole process of personal salvation taking up with the initial forgiveness of sins which Catholics ordinarily identify with the gift of God in baptism and then the process goes on through growth into faith and active Christ's life and it continues all through life and through purgatory until finally it's completed beyond purgatory you can see what the Catholics have done they have extended justification to take in sanctification and to cover the whole transformation of the

Christian which the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is about affirming the transformation in sanctification and final glory I deny that what Paul has in view when he talks about justification is that sanctifying process in other words I deny that the sanctifying process is part of the definition of justification I reject the Catholic way of formulating the doctrine now if you think that justification includes the sanctification the whole sanctifying process of bringing us to perfection not just the forgiveness of sins and the acceptance of our person into God's favour and everything else that's supposed to follow from that then when it comes to

Christian assurance you won't say as a Protestant evangelical will say well God's forgiveness of my sins for Jesus sake is the last judgment he'll ever pass on where I am to spend eternity so I can rejoice here and now that I am accepted and accepted forever I am adopted I'm a child in God's family and that's where I shall be forever I can be sure that God will bring me to final glory he has undertaken to do it and my assurance is based on his assurance to me at that point the best that a Roman Catholic can say about assurance is well God is faithful to his purposes and so

[18 : 36] I know that if I keep on cooperating with him in the process of Christian living the process of my sanctification he will keep on cooperating with me and together we shall work until as long as life lasts but there is this element of if I don't continue in the grace of God well then everything will be unraveled and I shall lose my salvation after all so assurance for Roman Catholics stops short at the certainty that I am in the grace of God right now but then it depends on me whether

I stay there if you have Roman Catholic friends and you have talked about this to them I am sure that you discovered this first time it is I have to say offensive to Roman Catholics to hear Evangelicals rejoicing in the certainty of glory here and now they think it's presumption I think it's the humility which dares to believe what God has promised so you see there's a wide difference of perspective but yes the Roman Catholic doctrine is what it is another Teresa like any other Roman Catholic lived by it so in any case you wouldn't expect her to know in her heart the assurance of final glory and the way that angelic was due the doctrine that she believed would keep her from that sort of experience that dimension of experience shall I say just as it keeps other

Roman Catholics from that dimension of experience but now having said that let me say something on the other side this is my second point about Catholic doctrine with regard to the certainty that sins are forgiven and that fellowship with Christ is a present reality Roman Catholics are as strong as evangelists and indeed in developed Catholic piety as it's been developed over the last 400 years the 17th century a very great deal has been made of fellowship with Jesus loving Jesus and expecting Jesus to acknowledge your love by giving you a sense of his love to you and at the beginning of her career

Mother Teresa experienced a good deal of that but that's what was withdrawn when she started ministering for Qatar well for the moment I'm simply making the point that this is part of the reality of piety as Roman Catholics understand it and we need to be fair and acknowledge this you know is something from Teresa of Aquila one of Teresa's namesake Teresa of Aquila was a 16th century group of Saint Pamir actually in the nunner life not monastic life Teresa of Aquila was Spanish she was lively she was funny yes she was it's said of her that on the occasion when she was in a cart being drawn by a donkey and the roads were locked in which in those days and the cart hit a rotten turn right over sort of bouncing her out onto the side of the road when she got up and dusted herself down she was heard to say

Lord if this is how you treat your friends I don't wonder that you have so few well that's Teresa and she had a prayer which she taught her followers it's extremely upbeat let's listen to it today may there be peace within you may you trust God that you're exactly where you're supposed to be may you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith may you use the gifts that you've received and pass on the love that has been given to you may you be constant knowing that you're a child of God let this presence settle into your bones and allow your soul the freedom to sing dance praise and love well as I said upbeat stuff and I'm if you tell me that simply to illustrate that when it comes to fellowship with Christ very

[24 : 36] Catholics shall I say there are no slight chances this aspect of the Christian divism is very much reality among them just as by the grace of God it's very much reality among us so there's something affirmative to say on the other side of course it points up the problem then what happened to Mother Teresa rather sharply okay and coming to that but first of all let me say that she was in line with the Roman expectation of fellowship with Christ early on in her ministry it was only when she started in Calcutta that this was withdrawn now the third thing to say is that Roman Catholics have a doctrine of what the Puritans who were scholars actually call spiritual desertion and what a friend and colleague of the

Teresa of Agatha and the man who's gone down to history of St. John of the Cross called the dark night of the soul and this is something on which Catholics have wisdom which a lot of evangelicals miss it isn't only liberals you see who commit themselves to the idea that Christian experience will always be awkward some evangelicals think that also and if there are periods of spiritual dryness in their life where they feel that God Christ has withdrawn his smile of his countenance if evangelicals think that that means there's something wrong well that's a sign that evangelicals themselves haven't entered into the fullness of the evangelical tradition the

Puritans knew all about the downs as well as the ups of Christian experience and I want to affirm at this point that the downs are real just as real as the ups are real here I want to stop and ask the question just because we're evangelicals together and the question should be focusing in your mind as it focuses in mine why is it that modern evangelicals know so little and are so reluctant to know anything actually about the downside of Christian experience where you feel that God has withdrawn his light and his smile and there are no good feelings inside those moments experienced by most of us anyway what's happening that we evangelicals today don't take account of this side of Christian experience

I think for this it's going to be very provocative I guess but I think let's actually do some others that the trouble is that we evangelicals have been shaped in our basic attitudes by too much of the post Christian culture of the 20th century which we are carrying with us now into the 21st and the post Christian culture of the or rather some I can say this differently in the post Christian culture of the 20th century Christianity amongst evangelicals too often was reshaped in a therapeutic direction as reshaped as a form of cure for troubled souls a kind of alternative to the cures which the psychologists were offering to troubled souls and therapeutic religion too often came to replace the real thing true wilderness in

Christian hearts let me point it on this way remember how at the beginning of Romans 12 Paul says I beseech you brothers by the mercies of God that you present your bodies you present your whole selves to God a living sacrifice holy consecrated acceptable in the way that consecrated offerings are acceptable holy acceptable to God which is translations vary but the best translation is the translation that says which is your spiritual worship yes consecrated living where God is at the center of everything serving the God who is at the center of everything is your big concern and never mind what I feel like I know what I should be doing so I'll get on with it that's the attitude in terms of which one crosses one's days that's the real thing and Paul you remember within that frame of reference goes on to say don't be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds mind like body is used in a broad sense there it means your whole thinking your whole attitude your whole perspective on life be transformed by the renewal of your minds that you may deserve what is the good and perfect and acceptable will of

[31 : 30] God that's the life of sanctification issuing from the gift of justification the mercy of God to which this is a response well therapeutic religion you see has a different perspective it is me centered it is feel good religion things aren't right unless I'm feeling good you see that's the grace of God and it puts happiness as a present goal before holiness now I want to hammer that thought not only because it's a interliteration either in this life holiness comes first happiness is the focus of all that's promised for glory we're all our way to happiness through present holiness that's how the

Christian life is meant to be seen and lived but in therapeutic religion happiness is within the trance and I will sometimes confess when televangelists and people like that shape their applicatory question and they present gospel facts in terms of now are you happy that's not the right question are you beginning to see the difference between therapeutic religion and real authentic godliness I don't want to take it any further only to say that if you believe that therapeutic religion is real Christianity you're going to have a lot of difficulty with the sort of experience that Mother Teresa had in her time and that other

Christians not just Mother Teresa have been having working through ever since Christianity began there is such a thing as spiritual desertion there is such an experience as feeling that God has abandoned him this is one of the reasons why a wise pastor will constantly be saying to people now don't live on your feelings feelings can mislead feelings can ruin you live on Bible truth not on your subjective feelings back then to our main line of thought we are trying to understand what to make of Mother Teresa and other people who have the same sort of experience now I want to try and formulate in positive spiritual terms what I call the doctrine of darkness picking up the image of darkness you see from John of the cross his phrase the darkness of the soul what is the truth about these experiences where people feel that God has withdrawn

God has deserted them God has abandoned them suddenly prayer was gone dead and they realise that whereas other Christians are going around exuberant they can't be exuberant themselves everything spiritually has become a drag what's the doctrine here we turn to the scriptures who are an answer to the question let's begin in the Psalms in the Psalms there's a great deal of spiritual experience and described as two of us know and we discover that sometimes the experience of God's withdrawal is intended as a wake up call something of an alert long to make people realise that they are in sin and they've got to stop sinning and secure forgiveness and start fresh before the sense of the blessedness they knew before will be restored to them you have that for instance in

Psalms 51 David's Psalm of repentance after Nathan had come in and made him realise how he had sinned in the matter of Uriah and now David is shattered and his sense of fellowship with God has gone and he's praying for its restoration in other words I guess purge me with his blood I shall be clean wash me I shall be white in snow let the bones that you've broken rejoice again broken bones you see what's happened to his inward experience hide your place from my sins create in me a clean heart of God and renew a right spirit within me restore to me the joy of your salvation well this is an experience of divine abandonment which about which

[37 : 51] David has no problem he knows that this is God rubbing in the fact that he sinned and sinned grievously and his joy won't be restored until he's dealt with God properly about that in the psalmist is looking back on how it was and this is what he says when I kept silent my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long day and night your hand was heavy upon me my strength was dried up like the heat of sun and then I acknowledged my sin to you I didn't cover my iniquity I said I will confess my transgressions to the

Lord and you forgave the iniquity of my sin now I'm back on track well you can't take the song any further but you see it's the same point unforgiven unrepented sin will cloud the spirit and drain away the vitality of the sunshine and the reality of the sense of the reality of God's love it's as if your heavenly father is frowning at you rather than smiling at you well that's not difficult to understand but there are in the psalms also alongside these passages testimonies to a bleak experience in regard to God where you feel abandoned and no reason is given to you at least except of course your knowledge that this is under the sovereignty of God and it's part of his will if you look at psalm 88 for instance it starts as a black psalm and it ends as a black psalm it's a bewailing or a complaining with regard to what feels like abandonment this is a believer the psalm starts oh God oh Lord

God of my salvation now here we go I cry out day and night before you let my prayer come before you incline your ear to my cry for my soul is full of troubles and my life draws near to shale I feel that I'm on my last gasp life can't go on very much longer if I continue to feel the way I do I'm counted among those who go down to the pit and so it goes on I won't read the whole song at the time but it ends as bleak as it started here are the very last verses you have caused my beloved and my friend to show me my companions have become darkness end of something and that leads us into

Job now Job as we know was never told the reason why he was put through the ringer in the way that he was God was showing something to Satan God was showing him the stability and the faithfulness of his own servant despite the fact that all the comforts of religion were being all the material blessings of Job the godly man were being withdrawn God says to Satan yes do all that and then watch and Job with a struggle stays steady although he says some wild things in his speeches to his friends who keep you look the wall really by telling them this has to be

God punishing you for sin can't be anything else so to get down to it Job being realistic search your heart acknowledge your sin and things will be different Job's conscience tells him no it isn't that there isn't any sin unrepented of any sin to be acknowledged that I never acknowledged before whatever is going on is something different from that and his friends don't believe it they keep saying no no no no it's your sins and Job is really mad by the the non comfort which is comfort he's giving him he makes speeches of which there were two thoughts one is that my present experience hurts like hell and the second thought is I don't know where to find God he doesn't he feels abandoned

[43 : 47] God is gone he doesn't know how to handle that situation so there you have Job finally he gets it right because after his comforters have done their best because actually their worst a man named Eliphaz pops up and does very civil chapters saying you know God in his wisdom has other practices in the things that he does besides punishing people for sin and that thought from Eliphaz becomes the transition to God's speech to Job out of the world and God in effect takes Job to the zoo and shows him a whole string of wonderful birds and animals and says don't you think that a God who is wise enough to make and look after all these wonderful creatures is wise enough to know what he's doing with you

Job even he doesn't tell you and Job finally gets the message and repents of having talked to God as if he had a right to know why God was stealing them the way that God was and when Job repents in dust and ashes as he says God restores him Job has learned a lesson in humility and James at the end of his letter in the testament chapter 5 verse 11 of his book says you've heard of the patience of Job that's a translation we're used to the ESV renders it you've heard of the steadfastness of Job and you've seen the purpose of the Lord how the Lord is compassionate and merciful well yes that's a reference to the fact that as the book of

Job chapter 42 says God blessed Job more at the end than he had at the beginning and Job we're meant to understand is the stronger for the workout in steadfastness that his experience has given him because though he talked wildly he didn't abandon his faith in the Lord he didn't dive into any form of sin he stayed steady even though he was talking well you've heard of the steadlessness of Job and seen the purpose of the Lord the Lord is very compassionate and merciful which is James pointing to the fact that Job through his experience was taught something that made him stronger and as a result was blessed more greatly in the end okay are we beginning to see something now look at Jesus we looked at the

Psalms we looked at Job now look at Jesus and in Mark I'm going to read to you Mark chapter 15 verses 33 and 34 Mark is a very perceptive man and he conveys a lot of theology by his narrative and I think that's what he's doing here verse 33 when the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour that's from 12 to 3 and at the sixth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice which means my God my God why have you forsaken me it's actually the opening words of Psalm 22 now what are we being told there various suggestions have been made one is that

Jesus used these words from the psalm to indicate that he didn't actually know why his experience was as it was well that's baloney just remember Gethsemane Jesus knew very well what was coming so that explanation is it's also been suggested that what Jesus intended to do was to recite the whole psalm because at the end of psalm 22 you've got words of triumph but the suggestion is done after he'd spoken of words of the first verse he had any more strength to say anything further well that's not plausible either in my judgment therefore there were 25 to 30 verses in the psalm and if Jesus had wanted to utter a cry of triumph well he would have got to it surely straight away and now

[49 : 25] I suggest to you what I think Mark was suggesting to us all darkness has come over the face of the earth that state of affairs we don't know how it was done whether it was some kind of eclipse of the sun or whether it's very low very thick cloud or what means it was that God used to bring about the darkness all we know is that he did bring about the darkness and the words of the psalm question sure but they are being spoken as a testimony so I urge a testimony to the darkness that's come upon Jesus' own spirit because of what he's doing on the cross it's a word of witness which those of the cross are asked to take note of and think about in order to understand what's going on in experience that is in feeling the Lord

Jesus does feel God forsaken forsaken by his father something that he's never known before just because he is our substitute under God's judgment and he's tasting hell literally because that's the way in which justice must be done as a foundation for our forgiveness substitution means substitution Jesus went where we should have gone and Jesus uses these words from the cross saying in effect as he said in so many of the other things that he taught now think about this Jesus was in the habit of leaving a gap you have to think about what he's just said in order to bridge that gap and gain understanding of it if you look to God the Holy Spirit to guide you he will give you understanding and you will see what Jesus meant well the people well some people around the cross didn't see what he meant they said oh he sounds like he's calling for Elijah let's see if Elijah comes to save him he's missing no this is Jesus word of testimony to what's going on as he suffers under the father's judgment for our sin suffering as our substitute so that we may be justly justified which is the glory of our salvation justice has been done in relation to our sin and we are pardoned on that basis all right well now thank you

Mother Teresa one of the things that mother Teresa excelled was patience steadfastness as she endured 50 years without any experience of joy warming up inside people and I'm going to put it to you now that she was thus being equipped qualified to empathize fully with the castaway human beings that she was serving in the Calcutta gutters who were also inexpressibly bitter and gloomy in their own spirit because everybody for so long had been neglected leaving them to die empathy is a basis of sympathy and from the time she started in Calcutta it was important as we can see that she should be able fully to sympathize with the trouble that the folks she served were in and I believe that providence purposed

God this is at the heart of the reason why her experience changed when she built out business in Calcutta and we say the same sort of thing about the Lord Jesus because of this experience on the cross he is able to sympathize with us in any form of temptation and nightmare that we may find ourselves in we never pass beyond the range of his understanding of the if you ask what should we think about the father at the time when Jesus was in inward darkness on the cross what I think we ought to say is that the father was much certainly present and rejoicing in what the son was doing for the salvation of sins but he couldn't feel it you see by the very nature of what he was doing the sense of fellowship with the father had to be withdrawn from him and was

I say it again he tasted hell for our sins so that we might not have to taste hell for ourselves beginning to get it all the threads together now and I'll close the doctrine of darkness is the doctrine that God uses experiences of darkness inward darkness for at least for good purposes for instruction that is to encourage our motives and teach us to desire only God which is one of the things that these experiences do and that's the big thing I say that John of the Cross is beating the drum about when he works at the dark night and sin secondly God uses these experiences for correction when there's been sin and there's need for people to realize their sin and to repent

[56 : 22] Psalm 51 experience and thirdly God uses these experiences for edification that is to build us up and make us stronger in certain virtues than we were before patience steadfastness inner strength like James says was the blessing for Joe and finally I haven't mentioned this before but I mentioned it now quickly well we have actually what I just said about sympathy but he also uses these experiences as preparation for ministry that he has in store for us and you have Paul being explicit about this side of things at the beginning of 2 Corinthians chapter 1 blessed be God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ the God of all comfort who comforts us that is comfort there doesn't mean makes us feel good it does mean make us strong who comforts or strengthens us in all our affliction so that we may be able to strengthen comfort those who are in any affliction themselves with the comfort or strength with which we ourselves are comforted by

God Paul said it laboriously to make sure that everybody gets the message I had a rough time says Paul but God in the end brought my strength out of it and in doing so I believe he was preparing me for ministry to bring strength in turn to people like you and what I said about Jesus entering into this experience of utter desolation utter feeling utterly abandoned further that prepared him for all the ministry of sympathy which on a regular basis he has towards us and other people who in the same way are feeling that God has abandoned them but God doesn't tell us in advance what he's up to we realise this afterwards and in the darkness we walk by faith waiting for the light well that is the doctrine of darkness as I understand it and that's what

I believe Mother Teresa was called to endure and now to exhibit say should I be saying called to exhibit she wanted these private papers of hers which were put in the book covering on that and she wanted them destroyed she didn't want them at all church authorities overruled them and was it good to do so they thought that obviously they think that testimony to the bleakness of her inner experience is part of the grandeur of the calling that she was fulfilling as servant of God to these outcasts in the streets of Calcutta and I'm not going to say that they're wrong but I am going to say that when a person wants their private papers destroyed I really think but that's the prior claim however

I simply say that for what it's worth the Roman Catholic authority has decided otherwise and so we have all this information about her inner life which she didn't want made public and is made public and so we have to make sense of it I have told you now the sense that I think it makes and I hope that something that I've said has been of some help and reassurance to some people and now it's high time that I stopped I see that I have overdone a bit sorry about that it happens so often but it's a defect whatever it happens let's discuss please react to the things that I've said Dr. Packer I read when I first saw the headlines I read something for God and she comes across as a sacred person

I mean it just seems strange to me that she could say those words and yet say I have no human thought well she always was a thing that she said that is true and I believe that that was the right thing for her to do she in her own way was something was a minister of the word I see I heard you what she was doing and when you minister the word you were to say what the word says rather than talk about your own experience what the word says is that we are called to live in steadfastness perseverance through the downs as well as the ups we are called to rejoice in the Lord at all times we are called to hope for the grace and health that we need on a daily basis and well that's an upbeat sort of life so when she spoke in public she exhibited that upbeat perspective would you think she would have invited or did you think if you speak in heart you say what is that so that we often get right down and it's okay if you say no sense to be people

[62 : 52] I can see doing that but you come across and Malcolm said she just had a role with it and I'm sure she did and it would have pleased me if she had been able to acknowledge and I know the spirit and I know I do get to that well she acknowledged the darkness to the confessors that's the spiritual gods that she had she had a number of them the most stabilizing thought that any of them could give was the thought that for the sake of her ministry she was being permitted this was how they put it to her permitted to share in the darkness that Jesus knew on the cross she found that a supportive thing and it sustained her all the way through

I recognize the need for authenticity when a person is talking as a Christian momentaries are taught on public occasions you know and when when you're talking to a large crowd you don't usually gain much by I can say going on about your experience experience I think you could make a kind of law formulate a kind of law of it the larger the crowd the more likely you are to be letting yourself down by talking about your own experience as if thousands of people cared about your own experience what you care about is the

Lord tell them about the Lord it isn't as if she's a loop that's here for a dozen of her kids well as I say it is in the book that she she shared all this with her spiritual guardians the professors she had four professors and this is something that something that Roman Catholics are being on their spiritual direction you have some I shouldn't be saying confessors your confessor in Roman Catholicism is the person to whom you confess your sins and from whom you receive those forgiveness that's the doctrine I should be talking all the time about her directors these substitute the word directors directors spiritual directors for confessors which I said

I don't need to say but the spiritual directors they responded to her in life really the broad-eyed and she was very friendly and one of the reasons why nowadays people are being encouraged to seek spiritual directors as they are is because the expectation is that with your director you'll be honest you'll be not honest with anyone else and when you're honest with your spiritual director he or she will be honest that really talking about spiritual reality you'll be known to your discipleship as well as the other it's something which we evangelicals don't talk too much about two hands went off yes number one number two well you started answering my question just now is it true that evangelicals have generally been somewhat hostile to or play down the need for true spiritual friends or directors as you put it directors are more than just a spiritual soul friend it seems to me but still there's a similarity and it seems to me that I'm asking a question rather than making a statement that evangelicals are not big on this idea and if they're not big

I think he said enough to warn that that's a bad thing but if you want to comment further on that and where to get this from or how do we get rid of it well I think you're right in some that evangelicals historically are not being big on this partly because we've had the same suspicion of spiritual direction that we have of auricular confession as a means of giving your sense for people we find it hard to get beyond the feeling that this is the intrusion of a human being into something that is reality between God and yourself and nobody ought to intrude on it I don't think there's any special wisdom of that but that's how evangelicals generally have seen the matter reacting against what they feel is an improper authoritarian which I don't know as to the

[68 : 54] Catholics priests telling the waitabout you see in relation to the people that they're guiding it's a fact also that during the past 20 or 13 years evangelicals have become very interested in spiritual duration and there are people nowadays who profess themselves to be spiritual directors and hang out they're shameful and invited to come to them for direction well whatever else one may want to say about that it's a very different story from how it was when I was a young Christian half a century 60 years ago none of this was going on 60 years ago and the bottom line I'm sure here is a pattern a pattern of what you call spiritual friendship which is the promotion to be working with a pattern of spiritual friendship having what the Puritans call a whoso friend someone to whom you make yourself accountable and to whom you are able you want to take to share everything about your life spiritually that can be a great blessing from God like any other great blessing from God it can be abused but in itself a pattern is a good and godly pattern those of us who don't know the phrase spiritual soul friend may know the phrase accountability relationship it's another name the same thing a one on one accountability relationship in the faith is a spiritual friendship according to the historic understanding and it's basically a form of fellowship whereby we help each other love by being accountable to somebody else one learns to be realistic about oneself because they ask the questions and they keep it away with fantasy and smokescreen music so fundamentally

I think it's a healthy development that we should be looking again at spiritual friendship soul friends accountability relationships whatever you call them I won't say more than that but I think that covers the water crony question and you have a question if there are different in the experience in the world that God I'm sorry the Lord and in us as Christians we have to bring Jesus in the hearts and the beliefs of the things evangelicals will divide over this question I'll tell you what I think but I'm well aware that many evangelicals take a different view my view is that the inward reality fellowship with God in covenant we can say in covenant because the name

Yahweh or Jehovah that is God's covenant name the name of the God who says I will be your God and she'll be my person so what we're talking about when we talk about Old Testament experience generally is experience of God the covenant God I think that relationally and intuitively it's essentially what Christians know through Christ without without this is where it falls short of Christian experience without the knowledge of the hope of glory and the perfect redemption I mean the once for all sacrifice of Christ which Christians know about but in terms of knowing God's favour and good will and having a sense of that yes

I think that there's a direct correspondence I think the same about the experience which the upbeat saints in the Psalter are expressing they're ahead of us frankly most of the time and what they do is model a quality of experience which we must try to catch up with I think this is one of the things which is a constant between the two testaments this sense of relationship with God goes right back at least to Abram I think it goes back further I think Abel for instance had it in Hebrews 11 there and the thing that Christians have have has to do with the knowledge of the perfect salvation and the perfect saviour and the hope of glory some

Christians will say it before everyone says it to me some Christians would say no way but the experience of fellowship with God is the gift of the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit was not given to Pentecost which I reply I think with respect that in terms of inner spiritual experience the Holy Spirit was at work in the lives of the Godly throughout the Old Testament period even though his work is not celebrated in any sort of detail I think it was there otherwise their experience simply wouldn't be a model for us in the way that Christians have always believed what it is again I appeal to the way in which Christians use the Psalter seeing there a pattern of godly experience in joy peace praise adoration devotion so on so forth

[75 : 48] Christians see in the sort of a quality of experience that we have to catch up with and we do finally catch up with it the psalmists are always ahead of us or so I think well you must carry on reflections from that point sir if you think I'm wrong or all right you will be the first person to think that wrong of course I think I'm right I want to come back to you in the terms that I pretty much in the terms that I just used so think of this friends as an open Indian discussion there's a lot for us to go on and talk about and I hope at least I've set you going along lines of thought which are helpful rather than deliverance so thank you very much for listening to me I want it but a lot of breakfast and you wanted to buy