

Life Seen Through Comparisons

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Date: 27 June 2021

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[0 : 00] Let's join together in prayer. O Lord, our God, we do enter into that spirit of the psalmist, who not only gave you thanks for all that you were to him and to your people, but also sought that your glory would spread abroad throughout the earth.

Lord, we also come to you today as one who is altogether glorious in holiness, fearful in praises and doing wonders. We thank you that this is still the case with you, though we see many changes in our lives and our circumstances.

We thank you, Lord, that the faith of your people rests on your unchangeableness, on the way that you are the same yesterday, today, and forever. Lord, help us again to see our privilege as we come to worship you, and we thank you that we are able to gather together in this way once again.

We thank you for the technology that enables others to join us virtually. We pray for them and for ourselves here gathered as we come together today as a congregation.

We thank you for your ongoing goodness, for the certainty that you are committed to your promises, to your covenant with your people, and to fulfill all the things that you have promised for them, so that you bring them blessing throughout the generations of your church.

[1 : 28] And we thank you that even in times of adversity, as your word reminds us and teaches us so frequently, you continue to bless your people. We think long ago, Lord, of your people in Egypt being persecuted and downtrodden, and yet they multiplied, as you promised Jacob, that you would go with them down into Egypt and there make of him a great nation.

We bless you that even the afflictions that you bring in your wisdom and providence into the lot of your people are used by you to further them in their knowledge of you, in their commitment to you, in your sanctifying of their lives, in your preparation of them for eternity.

We thank you, Lord, that in all of these difficulties and trials of life, you are above them and you are behind them and you are beneath them. You are the God who has appointed them for your glory, for our good, even though at times we find it difficult, if not impossible, to see that.

Lord, teach us your ways, lead us in your paths, give us to rest in your wisdom, and grant to us, O Lord, that we may turn from looking in upon ourselves, so that we may come and place our confidence and trust in you, to trust in the Lord with all our heart, and not to lean upon our own understanding.

We ask, O Lord, your blessing today upon your word to us. We thank you for it and we thank you that it has been such a means of blessing as you have used it down through the generations of the world in the experience of your people.

[3 : 13] And we thank you today that your word is always relevant to our situation, to our generation, to our own personal lives, to our congregational life, to our life as a church.

We pray today that you're blessed and help us to depend upon your Holy Spirit, even if we come across passages in it that we are familiar with in our reading and have come to cover many times.

Lord, we ask today that you would speak into our hearts and minds in a way that is fresh and new, in a way that would quicken us inwardly, in a way that would give us further insight into your ways, and especially into your ways of redemption.

We bless you today, O Lord, for the provision you have made for us in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank you for his sufficiency and for the way that he continues to be the head over all things to his church.

Remind us, Lord, we pray that we live under his Lordship, that we come together today so as to exalt his great and holy name and to praise you, our Father, through him.

[4 : 27] And we ask today that you would truly make us thankful that we have not only a mediator, but such a mediator between God and men. We ask today that you bless those who have particular difficulties in their experience.

We continue, Lord, to pray for those who are ill and those who are experiencing trial through that. We pray that you bless them at home or in hospital. And we ask that your good hand may be upon them, as well as those receiving treatment for their illness.

We pray that you would continue, Lord, to bless them, bless their families, bless them in every anxiety they may have. Help us, Lord, to see that even our very illnesses are harbingers of eternity to us, that you teach us through them, that we too will come to end our life in this world and go into eternity.

We pray that these things may make us wise unto salvation through your word. We pray that you bless too those who mourn today the passing of loved ones.

O Lord, there has been such a lot of mourning over this past year and more in the life of our nation, in the life of our world. There are so many people, O Lord, who have come to lose loved ones not only through this virus, but other means as well.

[5 : 52] We pray for those close to ourselves who we know have lost loved ones, especially in recent times. We continue, Lord, to pray for them throughout the various ways in which they need your grace.

We give thanks that you are able to meet their need. We continue to pray especially for Ruth and for Finley as they continue to grieve over little Finley's passing.

And we pray for their families and pray that you'd continue to uphold them and lead them through this time of trial and affliction. As we would pray, O Lord, for all who have suffered loss and continue to miss loved ones.

We pray, too, for little Jessica in her illness. We pray for her and for her parents and for her grandparents. Lord, asking that you would continue to bless her as we give thanks for a measure of improvement in the past week.

And we pray that you will continue to uphold them and grant you blessing to her in her young days. Graciously, Lord, look after them, we pray. We ask that you would bless all other families we know in our community and in our congregation here who need you and need your support at this time.

[7 : 08] We pray for those with mental health issues. We pray for those who have begun to lose some of their faculties of mind or body. We pray for them and for their families.

asking, Lord, that you would be pleased to bless them. Blessed, too, we pray, those far from us today that we remember, especially those who are engaged in mission.

We pray for Muriel. We ask that you'd bless her, O Lord, in her circumstances when the COVID virus has increased and reached the area she herself is in.

We ask, O Lord, that you'd grant her your protective care and blessing and give her, we pray, that she may soon be vaccinated along with many others in that nation.

We ask that you would bless all others, Lord, at this time that we commit to you involved in mission work. We think of Suraj in Nepal. And, Lord, we know the devastation this country has suffered, not only through the COVID virus, but through earthquakes, through floods, through various disasters that have come upon them.

[8 : 13] And we pray for him and we pray for them today. We pray for Pastor Jock in South Sudan. Lord, we ask that you'd bless him as he and his church go on in their faithful service to you in such difficult circumstances.

We ask that you'd bring an end to the violence and to the war, that they may be able to rebuild their country once again, and that your church there, Lord, will be protected from further violence and persecution against it.

And we commend him to you and his family and ask that you'd bless them. We pray for those families today in Florida who wait for news of loved ones over this terrible disaster, this collapsed building.

Lord, our God, be with them, we pray. Give them that they may turn to yourself and know the comfort of resting in you even at times of such distress.

Bless those who are engaged in recovery and in seeking to go through the remains of the building and the sad work that that will involve.

[9 : 19] Oh, Lord, be pleased, we pray, to grant blessing, to accompany such times of darkness. Lead us into the light, we pray, that is in Jesus, and give us to rest our souls in him.

Receive our thanks now and cleanse us from all our sin. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, children, just a few words to you today.

Whether it's online or those of you who are here or listening elsewhere. Just over the last couple of weeks, I got a little tiny thorn into my finger here just as I was working in the garden and pulling out some stuff that needed to be pulled out of the ground.

I pulled out this plant. I can't remember which one it was. And I felt a tiny little prick at the end of my finger as I pulled it out. And then I forgot about it because it wasn't really painful at the time. But a couple of days afterwards, I started to feel a bit pain in it.

And especially when I touched the tip of my finger, touched something hard, it was quite sore. And I looked to see if I could see this thorn and I couldn't see it. It just wasn't visible under my skin at all.

[10 : 31] So I left it. And yet the next day after that, again, it really hurt. So I decided I'd have to look at this and try and get it out. So I did what you see on, if you've ever seen the program, the repair shop.

There's a couple of these experts who repair things and they wear a couple of pairs of glasses. So I couldn't see this with one pair of glasses. So I put on another pair of glasses just so I could maybe get magnification on the end of my finger.

And there was a tiny, tiny wee speck. I managed to find it. And then eventually I managed with a tweezer and a needle to finally pull it out. And it was so small, I could hardly see it at all.

And I couldn't see it without glasses on the tip of my finger. You or I say it as children would probably be able to see it much more quickly. But you know, if I'd left that and not done anything about it, it could well have come to the stage who had become infected.

And if it became infected, the poison from that infection could well have spread up through my finger and left unattended, would have come up my arms if it had gone really badly infected and lead to a sepsis, which of course is life-threatening.

[11 : 44] So from the tiniest little thorn in my finger, I could have lost my life if I'd neglected it and not bothered to do anything about it.

And, you know, that's really how it is with our sin. Because sometimes people think of sin as something that's really so small, it's not really worth bothering about.

But you know, when God shows you what sin is, what sin is like, what He thinks of sin, then it becomes very big and it becomes very serious and it's something you then realize, I need to do something about this.

Because if I don't, it's going to kill me. I'm going to lose my soul. I'll be lost forever. And when God shows us our sin, He shows us also how we need to deal with it.

That we need to repent. The Bible calls repentance turning from sin to God. And just like that tiny little speck of a thorn in my finger, sin needs to come out.

[12 : 52] Sin needs to be dealt with not only forgiven, but taken out of our lives. And only God can do that. And God can do that. And God is very willing always to do that.

So when we repent and turn from sin to God, we come to the God who has promised to forgive us our sins and to make us clean in His sight.

And that's what you children need to do as well. Because repentance doesn't begin when you get older. It needs to begin in your youngest days. We're never too young to repent of our sin.

To see our sin as serious and something that we need God to forgive and help us with. Now, I may never get another thorn in my finger. It's unlikely.

I'll probably get one at some point or other. But even after we've repented for the first time over sin, that doesn't mean it's the last time we need to do that.

[13 : 52] Sin is something that continues in our life. Even after God has forgiven it, we still know it's there. And we need to come again and again to God for our sin to be forgiven.

You can see that in David's life and in Peter's life. David wasn't a young believer when he came to write or pray the prayer of Psalm 51.

He was an experienced believer. He was a grown man. He'd been believing in God for many years, but still he came to repent of his sin. So did Peter when he came to repent of what he had done against Jesus in denying him.

And so for us as well, we need to deal with that sin every day and come and get this thorn of sin taken out of our life by God.

And more and more God will do that as we come to him to help us with our sin. So let's now say the Lord's Prayer. And in the Lord's Prayer, there is one of the petitions in the Lord's Prayer is for the Lord to actually forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors.

[15 : 02] And that's another word in the Bible for our sin, our debts. We owe God things which we ourselves cannot pay. So we ask God to forgive our debt, our sin as our debt to God because Jesus has already paid for that through his death.

Let's say the Lord's Prayer together. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. Let's read the Word of God now. We're reading from Proverbs chapter 25 today.

The book of Proverbs chapter 25, beginning at verse 11. Verse 11. A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.

[16 : 14] Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear. Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him.

He refreshes the soul of his master. Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift that he does not give. With patience a ruler may be persuaded and a soft tongue will break a bone.

If you have found honey, eat only enough for you lest you have your fill of it and vomit it. Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor's house lest he have his fill of you and hate you.

A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club or a sword or a sharp arrow. Trusting in a treacherous man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips.

Whoever sings songs to a heavy heart is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day and like vinegar on soda. If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink for you will heap burning coals on his head and the Lord will reward you.

[17 : 29] The north wind brings forth rain and a backbiting tongue angry looks. It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.

Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.

It is not good to eat much honey, nor is it glorious to seek one's own glory. A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

Amen. May God bless that portion of his word to us. I'd like us to think of the final few verses of this chapter that we've read, verses 25 to 28 here in Proverbs chapter 25.

Many verses that you know from the book of Proverbs are quoted in the New Testament. In this passage itself you find Paul is writing, when he's writing to the Romans in verse 21 here he more or less just picks them up word for word.

[18 : 40] If your enemy is hungry, feed him, give him bread to eat. If he's thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head. In other words, don't retaliate with evil for evil.

Do good instead of responding in the way that people sometimes may mistreat us. And when you look at how Jesus taught as you find recorded in the Gospels, you'll find that many times Jesus taught in a way that was similar to the way that Proverbs sets out its teaching.

It uses the style that you find in Proverbs. you find it often in the way that Jesus sets out his teaching as you see it in the Gospels. Especially in phrases like the kingdom of God is like.

Jesus often compared spiritual things by things that you find in everyday life or maybe used things you find in everyday life to illustrate some very important spiritual matter for us.

The kingdom of God is like treasure hidden in a field or whatever it was. And these verses really are the same style of presenting truth to us as you find there in Jesus or vice versa.

[19 : 53] It is here saying it's like cold water, like a muddied spring, like a city broken into. So it's using comparisons in order to present aspects of our lives to us.

Especially moral issues, things that are important spiritually and morally. are what you find in this passage so that as you follow through the various likes, these four likes, you'll find certain things about four types of life.

Four types of person, four types of life that you find described there. I'm going to deal with them as four types of life. Well, of course, that's really just saying the same thing as four different types of people, the people who live these lives.

in verse 25, you find what we'll call the refreshed life. Refreshed as cold water refreshes a thirsty soul.

Verse 26, the misleading life, a life that misleads people, is like a fountain that's become muddied. You might expect to find a nice drink of water there, but sadly, to your disappointment, you find that it's become unpolluted.

[21 : 08] So that's a misleading life. And then in verse 27, you find a proud life described. It's not good to eat much honey, nor is it glorious to seek one's own glory.

In other words, seeking your own glory, being proud and boastful, is like the person who eats too much honey becomes bloated and sick. And then finally, verse 28, the vulnerable life, a man without self-control, is like a city broken into and left without walls.

Let's take these in turn and apply them. Remember, we're looking at spiritual and moral matters that affect our lives that we are aware of in our own daily life.

Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. And if you compare that with verse 13, like the cold of snow in the time of harvest, is a faithful messenger to those who send him.

He refreshes the soul of his master, a similar emphasis there. Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. It's a picture of somebody, especially at time of harvest or hard work like that, and when the weather is really hot, and when you really would be just so glad of a cold drink.

[22 : 28] Well, here is what the comparison is brought. A person in that situation just longs for a cold drink. You bring them a cold, icy drink, and it's so good.

It's so refreshing. It's something that really just hits the right spot. And here is good news from a far country like cold water to a thirsty soul, like the cold of snow in the time of harvest.

And that's not saying like snow. Snow, of course, in a time of harvest would damage the crop. What he's saying is the cold of snow, iced water, water that's so refreshing to someone who's desperate for a drink, desperately thirsty.

It brings refreshing. And so when there's good news comes to a soul that's thirsting for good news, that is like that cold drink to somebody who is sweating out in the fields just needing to have a nice drink to refresh their bodies.

You remember Jacob. He thought his son Joseph had been killed. That's the version that Joseph's brothers, his other sons, gave him.

[23 : 38] And he grieved for the loss of his son. Of course, Joseph wasn't dead. They were just spinning him a lie and doing so to protect themselves in many ways.

But of course, when news came back from his sons having gone to Egypt, news came back with their sons that met Joseph and they came back to Jacob.

Joseph is still living. And you remember what the Bible says, the spirit of Jacob revived. Here he was thinking that Joseph, his beloved son, had been dead all of these years and all of a sudden he gets this news, this good news from a far country, from Egypt, far away, that Joseph is still alive.

alive. It's different to what he thought and his heart revived. It was like a cold, icy drink in that time of real heat to a thirsty soul.

And so it is elsewhere in the New Testament as well. Let me just read you from Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, the first letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 3 and verses 4 to 8.

[24 : 54] This was Paul, he was looking for news from the Thessalonians, they'd come under afflictions, they'd come under some persecutions for their acceptance of the gospel and of Jesus.

And this is what he said, when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction just as it has come to pass and just as you know.

For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

But now that Timothy has come to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remind, remember us kindly and long to see us as we long to see you.

For this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction, we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live if you are standing fast in the Lord.

[25 : 58] You see, the apostle there was concerned that the afflictions that had come upon the Thessalonians, this little church that he had so nurtured and was so precious to him, that somehow or other that Satan had led them away, that the tempter had tempted them away from following Christ, that the afflictions would have just meant for them that they'd say, well, this is no use, this is not what we expected.

But instead, Timothy, who was sent to them, Timothy came back with the good news. No, it's all right. They haven't gone away from the faith. They haven't departed. They haven't apostatized.

They haven't backslidden. They're still remembering you in prayer and they are still going on in their faith in Christ. And that was just for Paul, like this version Proverbs is saying, like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.

How important that we ourselves share good news. You know, one of the things we really miss and have missed so much is being together and sharing together in the things of the gospel and we long for the day and we hope it's soon when we'll be able to do that once again.

We hope it'll be within the next month, certainly, as seems to be the case, but we wait and see. But remember how important it is to share the good news of Christ and the good news of the Christian life.

[27 : 24] There is so much bad news in the world and most of what you find reported as bad news and sad news and news about disasters and news about all sorts of things that fill your heart with gloom.

We need to share together in this great news of Jesus and what Jesus means to us what it is to be a Christian, how we deal with afflictions, what sort of things have been in our experience as we followed Christ.

These are things to share. It's good news because it's come from God and it's about God and it's about life and it's about Jesus and it's about hope. Good news from a far country.

Remember, especially when Jesus was born in Luke chapter 2, verse 10, we find the celebration of that fact.

The angels came to bring the good news. Behold, we bring you good news of great joy to all people for unto you today is born a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

[28 : 27] And when Jesus rose from the dead, here you find these two disciples walking disconsolately on the way to Emmaus in Luke 24 and their heads are down and they think he's gone.

We thought that this was he who should have been the Savior of Israel. And Jesus came unrecognized and started walking with them and he began to speak to them and he began to speak to them.

And he spoke to them about why they were so disconsolate. And you remember how the story goes.

And then he revealed himself to them when he started expounding to them in the Scriptures. Beginning at Moses and all the prophets and in the Psalms, he expounded to them in the Scriptures the things about himself.

And what was their testimony afterwards? Did not our heart burn within us when he taught us along the way? You see, that come to them has good news from a far country.

[29 : 29] They were in this gloomy country of thinking that Jesus was dead, that he was gone, that he was not after all the deliverer of Israel. And here he is, just like Joseph in the experience of Jacob.

Here is Jesus in the experience of these disciples. What does it do for them? It refreshes them. It brings them to be again revived in their spirits. And so it is for ourselves.

Nothing revives your soul the way the truth of God does. And you notice it says here, like cold water to a thirsty soul.

And you can carry that imagery into the spiritual meaning and application of the verse as well. because it is only when you are really thirsty and then you get a drink of cold water that you appreciate that water for what it is.

Without the thirstiness, you are going nowhere like appreciating that water, that iced water for what it is. That is what the adverts play on, you find these adverts for whether it is a cold soft drink or whatever it might be but you will find in the advert that is held out before you and there is all these drops dripping down the glass or the can as it is held out for you and you really think well that looks really good I could do with a drink of that just now.

[30 : 50] When you are really thirsty then you really appreciate a drink of cool, cold, iced liquid, water especially.

How is it with my soul today? How is it with your soul? Are you thirsting for God? Are we really thirsty in there? Are we really thirsting in a spiritual sense after Christ?

It is a challenge. It is a great challenge but it is a challenge I must put to myself. Do I enter into a pulpit without being myself thirsty after the Lord?

Yes, sometimes I do. Do you listen to the gospel preached sometimes without being able to say well I am thirsting after Christ. I really need Christ. More and more I recognize my need.

Sometimes you probably do. But pray for that thirst friend. Pray as I must pray that God will make us thirsty and make us thirsty increasingly for Jesus.

[31 : 50] You remember David Psalm 63. There he was out in the desert somewhere where he couldn't actually have access to the temple that he longed to be back in. My soul thirsts for God.

My soul craves for the living God. I want to experience you here saying as I have seen you before in the holy place.

To admire him. To be again in his presence. If you have lost and if I have lost my thirst for Jesus ask God to restore that.

You can't recreate it yourself. But the Holy Spirit will give it to you. The Holy Spirit will bring that thirstiness to your soul that only Jesus can answer and what an answer it is.

Because when you come with a thirsty soul to experience the Lord drawing near to your heart you will be able to say that really is good. That is really refreshing.

[32 : 54] That has done me such good. A thirsty soul leading to a refreshed life. Pray that God will keep you thirsty and that God will keep bringing you this wonderful refreshing liquid of the gospel and of Christ in the gospel to meet your thirst.

Secondly there is a misleading life. Verse 26 you need to hurry on. Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.

Now that's a description of a fountain or a well or something similar to that. A spring that's become muddied or polluted as often is the case when it's not when it's just been out in the countryside and it's been cleared for a while sometimes mud gets into it.

Imagine a thirsty soul coming to where you know is a fountain of water even if you've drunk from it before and when you come to it this time it's gone all muddy and it's polluted you can't drink it.

It's filthy. What a disappointment and how misleading and how difficult and disappointing that is.

[34 : 11] Imagine Paul's disappointment over Demas. Demas had been a fellow worker with Paul and he wrote in Colossians chapter 4 verse 14 and a little letter to Philemon he wrote that Demas along with others were sharing and sending greetings greetings to those that Paul was writing to there to Philemon and to the Colossian church and yet when he came to write in 2 Timothy he actually said you can just just imagine the disappointment Demas has forsaken me having loved this present world.

What a contrast to what he wrote about him previously. Demas has forsaken me he's turned away he's gone he's no longer with me he's turned his back upon all of this.

Here was Demas who was once a fountain in the profession of faith that he made who had possibly helped some people along the way in their spiritual journey but here he was he turned his back it'd become a disappointment to Paul he's turned away from following the Lord he's gone back to the world having loved this present world and you can apply that to our own life and our own experience as well.

When we come to follow the Lord people expect us to be people that are dependable to depend on us to actually come and lead them further into the avenues of God's truth especially those of us who've been on the journey for some time younger ones expect us to be able to actually guide them into the truth to be of help to them in giving them counsel or advice and whatever it is and what if they find that we ourselves have suddenly in our lives not been following the Lord as we outwardly profess to do it's a disappointment it's misleading they've come to a fountain they found it polluted they found it's no longer what it should be and you know we can find that's applicable too to the situation of the wider church not just in terms of our personal life though it's important there it's also applicable to the wider church as well and in the present day in which we live sadly so many prominent evangelicals have come to actually follow the ways of the culture the ways of the world the ways of society over all sorts of things like marriage and relationships and sexual ethics all of these things they've come to cave in to the pressure of the world they've come to follow the culture rather than Christ and we're not saying that to elevate ourselves as if we were simply the best Christians the world has ever seen or presently are in the world we're not saying that to express ourselves as those who are superior nothing like that but it's sad when you see people who were once professing to follow a certain view of scripture and now they're no longer looking at it in that way they've become an unreliable and actually a misleading fountain a misleading life when the apostle

John wrote his third little letter he said this I have written something to the church but Diotrephes who likes to put himself first sorry this is this is the next one when he wrote his first epistle remember he said love not the world nor the things that are in the world they are not of the father they are not like Christ they are not true to Christ so today that's how we need to guard against a misleading life against turning out to be something we're not even after professing that we've been following the Lord thirdly there's a proud life in verse 27 it is not good to eat much honey nor is it glorious to seek one's own glory the Bible is full of counsels against pride many different ways in which it presents that to us and we live of course in a world that elevates pride we live in a world of selfies we live in a world when so many things come to you by way of

[38 : 55] Instagram or Twitter or Facebook or whatever none of these things are bad in themselves I'm not suggesting that for a moment but really who needs to read every day of what the Kardashians are wearing today or whatever else you might find of that sort of thing in celebrity lifestyles are kept coming kept being pushed at us as if they were really important for our lives that's the kind of world we live in and it's it's a world in which increasingly sin and shame and guilt are unwelcome doesn't matter what people do in terms of relationships it's not really counted as a sin even at the top most levels of society and government doesn't really matter that much there's no shame involved it's just human nature guilt is not attached to it these emphases in the gospel are not welcome and of course they're not welcome because they're contrary to what a

Christian life is about and at the basis in the very essence of a Christian life the Bible consistently tells you you find humility lowliness of mind that doesn't mean you don't think much of what a Christian is it's a superb thing to be a Christian there's no life like the life of being a Christian but it's not there so that you can elevate yourself through it it's not there so that you can say look how good I am I'm superior to everybody else no when Paul wrote to the Philippians that's not how he put it was it consider others better than yourselves consider Jesus whose life consisted of humbling himself he's the son of God he's in the form of God from all eternity Philippians 2 is saying we'll get to that eventually God willing in our studies of Philippians but there is Jesus the son of God the glorious

God the second person of the Trinity how did he come into this world he took the form of a servant he humbled himself and he humbled himself increasingly right up to and including the death of the cross friends the essence of what a disciple of Jesus is contains very prominently humility humility putting others ahead of yourself that's why it says here it's not good to eat much honey not as it glorious to seek one's own glory and you find a verse previously as well where you find the same emphasis in regard to honey as well much of it is bad for you verse 16 there if you have found honey eat only enough for you lest you have your fill of it and vomit it you can I'm sure most of us like honey or having honey in your toast or whatever it is honey is delicious for most people at least but you try and eat a whole jar of it no don't try and eat a whole jar of it you'll make yourself sick it's delicious to your taste and you'll say I'll have another spoonful of that and then you say well let's just finish with another spoonful and so it leads on to another one and it'll make you sick you'll be bloated that's what the verses say go for your own glory and you'll be a sick person morally and spiritually it's not good for you just the way that honey too much honey isn't good for you that's what it's saying and although it's very tasty to the natural heart to be up there with those who are really prominent in society and those who are really noticed and those who are really celebrities it's the last place you want to be it's not a place for a

Christian that doesn't mean Christians don't get elevated to places of prominence in society not saying that at all it's good that they are what I'm saying is that it's not for their own inflation and pride of heart that that happens it's to glorify God and to glorify God you need to be down here and I need to be down here the only way you can help people after all is to consider them better than yourself and to humble yourself and to deny yourself which as Jesus said is the essence of being a Christian that's why I mentioned Diotrophes I was just jumping the gun a little bit in 3rd John he wrote about Diotrophes in the church there I have written something to the church but Diotrophes who likes to put himself first this is one of the leaders in the church that John was writing to who likes to put himself first does not acknowledge our authority so if I come I will bring up what he's doing talking wicked nonsense against us and not content with that he refuses to welcome the brothers and also stops those who want and puts them out of the church what's the problem with

Diotrephes well in a few words John has captured it absolutely succinctly and pointedly he loves to put himself first he loves to put himself first is that why God changed our lives is that why God put us into the ministry is that why God made you a Christian a Christ follower a disciple of Jesus is it so that you would put yourself first no it's so that you put yourself out because that's really what Jesus did and we are to be like Jesus and for the Christian the proud life is something you constantly say no to temptation is there to just present yourself and think of yourself in a certain way that's not appropriate God is saying no that's the way the world works and thirdly fourthly rather there's the vulnerable life just in a word

[45 : 22] I know the time is gone a man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls the vulnerable life there's a city there it's pictured as broken walls they've not been repaired it's vulnerable the people are vulnerable there's no protection there so in the in the New Testament especially this word self-control is frequently used especially again in the epistles of Paul and as part of the way by which a person being a new creation in Christ shows that new creation shows that that's really happened in their life let me just give you a few texts 1 Corinthians 7 and verse 9 which has to do with sexual control control of one's urges in a sexual way he's saying there if you can remain unmarried and a servant of Christ that's all well but if you can't if you can't control your passions then it's better to burn in other words it's against sex out with marriage it's against what's so common in our world self-control it's part of the

Christian life go on in Galatians chapter 5 self-control is one of the fruit or part of the fruit one element of the fruit of the spirit is self-control and then in 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 7 and then contrasting it with 1 Timothy 3 verse 3 let me just read these two verses and you can see the contrast for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control and then the opposite understand this that in the last days there will come times of difficulty for people will be lovers of self lovers of money proud arrogant abusive disobedient to their parents ungrateful unholy heartless unappeasable slanderers without self-control sounds familiar doesn't it that's the society you and I live amongst that's why self-control is such an important feature in your

Christian life and mine because it's a beacon to a world that's full of spiritual and moral decay it calls them back to conscience to God's truth so strengthen the walls of your heart strengthen the walls of your heart as a city needs to be protected in those days at least against an enemy by prayer by dependence on Jesus by fellowship with God's people as much as you can strengthen the walls of your heart so these are the four lives the refreshed life the misleading life the proud life the vulnerable life Billy Sunday who was a prominent evangelist in the early 1900s I think he died in 1935 or so in America when he joined the church that he joined there an older

Christian went to him and he put his arm on his shoulder and he said Billy there are three simple rules I can give you and if you hold to them you will never write backslider after your name then he said this take 15 minutes each day to listen to God talking to you in other words prayer read your Bible take 15 minutes each day where you talk to God in other words prayer and take 15 minutes each day to talk to others about God in other words witness show that you're a Christian 15 minutes to listen to God 15 minutes to talk to God 15 minutes to tell others about God and if you and I do that and if we apply that to these four types of life well it's almost certainly the case that we will not be backsliders either may God bless us to that end and bless his word to us we're going to conclude by singing

Psalms 37 in Scottish Psalter Psalms 37 verses 29 to 34 the just inherited shall the land and ever in it dwell the just man's mouth doth wisdom speak his tongue doth judgment tell Psalms 37 page 255 of the books if you've got your own books with you the just inherited shall the land and ever in it dwell host Let just in perfection world on, and ever live it well.

[50 : 45] Let just as my God wisdom speak, this tongue that God may tell.

It sparked the Lord, it's all, it's all, it's all. It's there, slight, not a way.

The wicked man of water just has seen yet been to save.

Yet him the Lord will not forsake, nor even in his eyes.

The righteous will gain all from them when he in judgment stands.

[52 : 11] With God the Lord, and he is with, and the ex-shall shall be.

Yet him the Lord will not forsake, nor even in his eyes.

Again, please, after the benediction, if you remain seated, until it's your turn to leave, remain socially distanced, and also please just use the sanitiser. You know all these things by now, but I'm obliged to actually say this to you.

We'll say the benediction. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you, now and evermore.

Amen.