

The Confession of a Recovered Backslider

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[0 : 0 0] 73 at verse 23, nevertheless I am continually with you, you hold my right hand, you guide me with your counsel, and afterwards you will receive me to glory.

Whom have I in heaven but you, and there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

There are so many great confessions of faith in the Bible, aren't there? And these, of course, are by no means confined to the New Testament. They are not confessions of faith simply after the coming of Christ and his work is finished.

There are, of course, many great confessions of faith by writers in the New Testament. But even back here in the Old Testament, you'll find some great confessions of faith in God, sometimes through prayer, as here, other times in different difficult circumstances.

But think of the likes of Moses, wrestling with God after the sin of the people with a golden calf, how he expresses his faith in God and in the certainty of his promises and appeals to God to be merciful to the people.

[1 : 2 2] Think of Job in his distress, in the anguish of his life, and yet coming out with such great confessions of faith as you find in chapter 19.

I know that my Redeemer lives. Think of Isaiah, chapter 63 into 64, where again, similar to Moses, as he's wrestling with God for a blessing for the people who have so badly departed from the Lord and his ways.

Where he expresses his faith in God as the father of the nation, the father and the founder and the creator of these people. And on the basis of that, he appeals to God and as he does so expresses his own faith and how convinced he is of the steadfastness of God and his loving kindness.

But some of the greatest confessions of faith in the Old Testament are in the book of Psalms, such as you find in our verses this evening. We can call our study this evening, the confession of a recovered backslider.

Because he tells us in the major part of the same, the main part of the Psalm, verses 2 to 22, what his experience had been. How he had almost slipped away altogether.

[2 : 5 1] And he tells us something of what that involved and how he had come to that. But the key, in many ways, to the Psalm and to the way in which he had been away from God and how he had backslidden is in verse 3.

For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. That was what led him astray. When he had given such attention to that, but at the same time, as he thought more and more of that, he forgot their destiny, their end.

Which is really in verse 17, where he came to himself and where he came to return into a proper way of thinking about these issues and about himself and about the world in which he lived.

Until he said, I went into the sanctuary of God, then I discerned that end. That's really the flaw in his thinking up to then. That was the reason why he says he had almost slipped away when he was envious of the arrogance and the prosperity of the wicked.

He had forgotten to measure things as he was seeing them against eternity, which was unseen, of course. And the more he was taken up with these issues of the wicked and how they prospered in the world, the more he found himself asking not only why it was that they had such things in their lives and how they seemed to be different to other people in terms of how they were at ease.

[4 : 19] He says in verse 12, they increase in riches. These are the wicked who are at ease. They're arrogant. They say, how can God know? Is their knowledge in the most high? They were dismissive of God and of his knowledge.

And what's really troubled, what really troubled him at that time and what lies at the very heart of his straying away from God and from a proper committed nearness to God was this thought that, well, why doesn't God do something about this?

Why does he leave those wicked, arrogant people who are not just making things difficult for those who believe in God, but actually speak out against God so arrogantly and so blasphemously?

Why doesn't God do something about this? Why doesn't he intervene? Why doesn't he come and show himself to be God? Why doesn't he come and show himself to be God?

Why doesn't he come and show himself to be God?

[6 : 10] But he hasn't. And you may have the question, well, why doesn't he come and show himself to be God? Well, this is the psalmist's reply.

That's when I discern that end. The wicked will be punished. Justice will be done when you consider the destiny of the wicked.

So he had not set this against eternity. He had not set it against the final destiny of both believer and unbeliever alike.

And he works his way towards this great confession of faith. He tells us this is when he came to understand this, when he went into the sanctuary of God.

In other words, when he realigned his thinking so that it fitted in with God's own mind through his word and through the revelation of himself. That's what he means by the sanctuary of God.

[7 : 10] Where God's word was situated. Where God's word was expressed. Where God's people met to worship him. Then his thoughts were realigned. His thoughts properly then came back into line with God's own mind and God's own will.

So now he comes in summary to these verses from 23 to 26 with his confession. And it's a confession of two things.

It's a confession, first three verses 23 and 24. A confession of God's care for him. And God's care for him particularly during this time of crisis.

During this time when he says he nearly went away altogether from following the Lord. This is what he says. Nevertheless, I am continually with you.

You hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel. And afterwards you will receive me to glory. It's a confession of God's care for him.

[8 : 11] And then from verse 25 really through to the end of the psalm. You have a confession of his confidence in God. It's a confidence we'll see by way of drawing comparisons.

But also drawing contrasts. So a confession of God's care for him. And a confession of his confidence in God. Let's briefly look at a few points under each of these.

Look at this word nevertheless first of all. It's an important word. As it begins verse 23 there. You can see that word nevertheless. Against the background of everything he said in verses 2 to 22.

Where he's been outlining for us and giving us some details. Of what his thinking was like. And why his thinking had come to this. And how he had actually ended up in this perilous situation.

In this backslidden condition in his thoughts. And in his conclusions. And then he comes to say nevertheless. Nevertheless. Isn't that a precious word to yourself and to myself tonight?

[9 : 15] Isn't it a precious word to every single one of us? Even if you've not yet started following the Lord sincerely. Yet it is still an important word for you this evening.

That all the way through your life. God has actually still been looking after you. God has manifested his goodness to you.

And for all of us tonight who are followers of Christ. For all of us who can say we've had times of personal backsliding. Small or great.

For all of us who have to say and confess. That there are times in our thinking. When we find ourselves similar to the psalmist here. Or similar to others in the Bible. That have strayed for a while from the ways.

And the path of God. That this nevertheless is one of the most precious words in our believing experience. Because what the psalmist, what Asaph is saying is.

[10 : 15] Despite everything that I now am saying about these. However long it lasted this period of my backsliding. Despite everything that was involved in that.

Despite all of my thoughts against God himself. Despite all of my envy towards those who are worldly. And advancing in worldliness. Despite my failures in that regard.

Nevertheless. God didn't let me go. God didn't abandon me. God didn't give me over to these thoughts. God didn't let me slide away altogether.

As I would have done on my own. Nevertheless. Nevertheless. You know we should give thanks. Every day to God for this word.

And for everything that's included in this word. Nevertheless. Because when you analyze your own life. As I analyze mine. The more you go on and realize. Our proneness to failure.

[11 : 16] Our proneness to leaving the ways of God. And straying from them. Even if nobody else sees that but ourselves. Even if nobody else is aware of it. But ourselves.

In our own mind. In our own thinking. In our own conclusion. Yet this word. Nevertheless. Always holds before our eyes. The constancy of God.

The faithfulness of God. The unparalleled commitment of God. To his people. And what a precious thing. And what a precious thing. That is for people like you and I.

Who are so prone tonight to fail. It's a source of daily thankfulness. God is not put off by our straying. By our wanderings. By our failures.

He's not pleased with them. We're not making excuse for them. We can't say before God. Lord because this nevertheless. Is a feature of the way in which you regard and look after your people.

[12 : 15] Therefore it doesn't really have to bother me too much if I go away from your ways. That's not what the psalmist is telling us. That's not what we conclude from this. But we do say to God.

Lord. I am sincerely thankful. That this nevertheless. Is such. A powerful. Element.

In my experience. That you have not. Let me go altogether. And then he says.

I am continually. With you. Nevertheless. I am continually with you. And he explains that. In terms of. Not his own commitment to God.

Or his regard for God. Because this is really about God's regard for him. And what he's essentially saying is. Nevertheless. I was never out of your mind. I was never out of your control.

[13 : 14] I was never out of your commitment to me. That's what he's saying. And. He expands on that.

By really giving us. Three tenses. In these words that follow. The past tense. The present tense. And the future tense.

Because these words. You hold my right hand. Are really. More literally. To be. Looked at. And translated. In the past tense. You. Grasped my right hand.

And then there's the present. Where he says. You are guiding me. With your counsel. And then there's the future. Where he says. You will bring me.

Afterwards. To glory. To glory. You grasp me. You are guiding me. You will bring me. To your glory. That's what he's describing.

[14 : 14] As within. God's continued. Remembrance. Of him. During these critical times. During this lapse. During this backsliding. During this envy. That he had.

To the wicked. And to the world. And to the world. The happiness of the world. Nevertheless. He says. Lord. I was always in your mind. And I was in your mind.

As I now realize. In these ways. Firstly. He says. Look into the past. You grasped me. By my right hand.

You grasped. You took hold. Of my right hand. You know. What it's like. In a large. Busy. Shopping center. Where you see. A parent. Mother. Or father. With a child.

And especially. When. There are lots of crowds. As there will be. Over the next few weeks. Or months. Leading up to Christmas. But even other times. When there are. Lots of people around. Milling around. These shopping centers.

[15 : 09] And the. The various passages. Between the shops. And in the main thoroughfares. Of the shopping center. Where you find. The force of the crowd. The. Where you find. So much.

Pressure from the crowds. And it's so easy. For a young child. Suddenly. To get lost amongst that. To get carried away. And must be difficult. Then. To find them. So. What happens?

The parent. Grasps the hand. More tightly. The parent. Actually. Concerned. That the child. Doesn't get carried away. By the force of the crowd.

By the. By the. The sweep. The sweep of. The mass of. The mass of. Humanity of people. Will grasp the child's hand. You've done that yourself. As a parent. Or you've maybe felt that.

As. As a youngster. When you were younger. When your parent. In these or similar circumstances. Suddenly. You felt a hand. Grasping you. Taking you more tightly. Than before. Just to make sure.

[16 : 01] That you didn't actually. Get carried away. That's. He says. What God. Did. When I was about to fall away. Your hand. Grasped me.

Your hand. Took hold of me. You took hold of my right hand. And that's. How. He looks now.

With thankfulness. Within this. Nevertheless. Nevertheless. Lord. You took hold of my right hand. You grasped me. You made me. Secure. From falling away.

Altogether. Why don't we fall away. Altogether. Why doesn't doubt. Backsliding. Take us away. Into utter apostasy.

And abandonment. Of God. Not because of our. Grasp of him. But because of his. Grasp of our lives. Of our persons.

[16 : 58] Of our very being. Nevertheless. Lord. You grasped. My right hand. And. You can see. In Paul's. Testimony.

Of his own. Salvation. And his. Coming to know the Lord. As his savior. In Philippians 3. He says something quite. Similar to that. Here. Uses. A similar word. There. To the word.

Grasped. Here. Where he says that. He's pursuing. Going on. With his Christian life. He's not yet. Attained. That. To which. God has called him. And he's thinking there.

Of course. Of heaven. He's thinking of. The prize. Of God's high calling. In Christ Jesus. He puts it. But as he says. It's what I do. I pursue. I follow after. If that.

I may grasp. That. For which. Jesus. Grasped me. Apprehended. Is the word. In the old version. Anyway. It's. Apprehended. It's. Grasping.

[17 : 52] What is he saying there? He's saying. I want to. Really take hold. More and more. Of this. Salvation. That's in Jesus Christ. That's what he's done. That's what God.

Has called me to. But to do that. God. Christ himself. Grasped me. He took hold of me. You see. There's this. Arrogant.

Self-confident. Self-righteous. Pharisee. There he is on the way to Damascus. There's his plan. There's his purpose. He's going to wreak more havoc. In these people. That follow the Lord. Jesus Christ.

He's going to be true. To his God. As he understands it. In order to. Fulfill. God's will. As he sees it. In the darkness. Of his self-righteous mind.

He's going to cast more of these people. Into prison. He's going to cause even. That some of them. More of them. Will be put to death. And all of a sudden. He has taken hold of. The risen.

[18 : 47] Glorified Jesus. Reaches down. From heaven. Not in a physical sense. Although he did see. With his eyes. The brightness of Jesus. In his glory. But in a spiritual.

And moral sense. What you find is. The Lord Jesus Christ. There. Apprehending. This Saul of Tarsus. Reaching down from heaven. Taking him. If you like. By the very scruff.

Of the neck. And saying. Now I'm going to change. The direction of your life. Now I'm going to give you. A new affection. Now I'm going to show you.

What things you must suffer for me. But what things you must do for me. In my service. Is. And from that moment onwards.

From that moment that Jesus grasped his life. That man had one burning ambition. In his own personal life. And that was to take hold of the very thing.

[19 : 46] For which Jesus had taken hold of him. Eternal. Life. You know tonight. The grasp of Jesus on your life. Have you come to experience.

The hand of God. Taking you. And taking you into his own safe custody. Turning you out of the way of sin. That we're all in by nature.

And coming to give you a new direction. And a new life. Or as a Christian. Have you come to know.

God's redirecting of your life. Are you backslidden tonight. The fact that you're in church. Doesn't mean you're not. Or me. Is there anyone here that needs.

To return to God. To be redirected. Into the ways of God. To be. Well here is your comfort. Here is your encouragement.

[20 : 53] Nevertheless. You. Grasp me. And the fact that God. Has not let you go. And has not let go. His grip on you. Testifies to the fact that.

He is committed to your salvation. And therefore. If that's how you are tonight. Turn to him. Express your thanks to him. By coming back into his ways.

By rededicating yourself to him. By coming before him. And expressing again. What he means to you. Just between yourself and him. Nobody else needs to know about it.

You. You. You. Grasped my right hand. But. He then says. You are guiding me. With your counsel. Another important.

And crucial element. In our experience. We are guided by the counsel of God. Where do we find the counsel of God? How are we counseled by God? How do we take that counsel into our lives?

[21 : 50] What does he mean? You are guiding me by your counsel. Well remember. Verse 17. I went into the sanctuary of God. Then I discerned that end. In other words. He's talking about the word of God.

God's revelation of himself. Through his word. As it's expressed in his written form. Or as we know it being preached to us. That's the counsel of God. In the words of the psalmist.

In Psalm 119. As you find it there. At verse 104. Through your precepts. I get understanding. Therefore I hate every false way.

Think about that again. Through your precepts. Through your statutes. Through your word. I get understanding. Therefore I hate every false way.

How do we come to stand against. And overcome every false way. How do we come to resist the temptations. As you find them from the worldliness of the world.

[22 : 51] To follow them in their worldliness. Through the precepts of God. The moment you start giving up. On putting your mind under the word of God.

Of letting the word of God. Be the light of your soul. You are then immediately placing yourself. In the danger. That this man is expressing.

He was in. And all we need to do. To backslide. And to be on the verge of peril. Is to stop reading our Bible.

To stop praying. To stop coming to church. To stop seeking advice of other Christians. To isolate ourselves. And that's the very thing the devil wants you to do.

That's the very thing the world will rejoice over. Nothing would have pleased. These people who are saying. How can God know about us? Is there knowledge in the most high? Nothing would have pleased them more.

[23 : 52] Than for Asaph to have joined their company full time. Him. But he says nevertheless. You grasp me. And you are now guiding me.

With your counsel. And as he looks to the future. This is what he says. And afterwards. You will receive me.

To glory. The word he uses there. Receive. Is the word take. And it's very closely. Related to the word grasp. Or taking hold of someone.

God has taken hold of his life. God has kept his hold. Even through these times of crisis. God is now guiding him. During his present life. And he's saying. You will take me into your glory.

Same words used of Enoch. Back in Genesis. He was not found. One particular day. In the experience of his family.

[24 : 49] And his companions. They went as usual. To look for Enoch. He wasn't found in his usual place. They searched for him. He wasn't found. Why? Because God took him. God took him.

God took him to heaven. God took him to be with himself. God took him to be with him. That's what the psalmist is saying. Afterwards you will receive me. You will take me. To glory.

And notice that word. Afterwards. Because that's a great contrast. In itself. To the end. Of these wicked. Worldly people. Afterwards. For me.

He says. It's your glory. After this life is over. There's so much packed into. These verses. We could expand. All of that. In a way.

That's unapologetic. Against the thinking. Of the world. In the present day. Where so many people. Will say. You know. You Christians. Just. Are foolish. Following this. Outdated word.

[25 : 46] Life is life. And that's it. When you die. There's nothing else. Well. Here's the psalmist. Saying to us. That's not what I believe. That's not what I've. Come to experience. And appreciate. And treasure.

In my heart. Because. Afterwards. After this life is done. After my sojourn. My travel. In this world. Is over. You will take me.

To glory. You will take me. To glory. Very similar. To Psalm 17.

In the prayer. Of Psalm 17. Where as you remember. The psalmist there. Is seeking God's. Protection. In the shadow. Of God's wing. Keep me. As the apple. Of your eye. Hide me.

In the shadow. Of your wings. From the wicked. Who do me violence. My deadly enemies. Who surround me. They close their hearts. To pity. And so on. And all the way down. Then through. To the end.

[26 : 42] Of the psalm. But. Then he says. You fill. These men of the world. Whose portion. Is in this life. You fill their womb.

With treasure. They are satisfied. With children. They leave. Their abundance. To the infants. But as for me. I shall behold. Your face. In righteousness. When I awake.

When I'm into life. Beyond this world. And especially. Awake. In terms of resurrection life. I shall be satisfied. With. Your likeness.

There are so few words. Even. In the old testament. Confessions. Of faith. That are so. Wonderfully. Expressive. And filled. With certainty. And with depth. As these words.

I shall be satisfied. With your likeness. Lord. Is that what you're looking forward to? Where will you be? What will you be like?

[27 : 42] When this life is over? You know. We usually. We usually. Put to ourselves. Well if. I die tomorrow. Where will I go? But you can go back a bit.

And say. If I had died last night. Where would I have gone to? What would I have been like? In eternity?

What would my experience of life. Beyond. This world now be? Instead of sitting in Stornoway Free Church. Where would I be?

Had I left this world last night? Well listen. I was just saying. Nevertheless. Afterwards. You will receive me. To glory.

What a great confession. That is. A confession. Of God's care for him. Secondly. We're just rushing through. A bit more. A confession. Of his confidence in God.

- [28 : 41] First of all. A comparison. You know. It's verse 25. Whom am I in heaven. But you. And there is nothing. On earth. I desire. Besides you. Well he's saying here.
- Whom am I in heaven. But you. Not Abraham. Not Moses. None of the previous. Generations.
- Of believers. None of the great men. Or women of God. In past generations. None of that is really. What his mind is on. That's what you can say tonight. As a believer as well.
- Whom do I have in heaven. But you. You know. We say. When we get to heaven. By God's grace. We're longing to have. Some time. Or part of eternity. Perhaps.
- To speak with great people of God. What will it be like to meet. John Calvin. Or Martin Luther. Or any of the disciples. The apostle John.
- [29 : 35] Peter. To ask him about. What the Bible records. Of his experiences. To. Go over that. In more detail with us. No. It's not that.
- That's not the psalmist. Main priority. Is it? That's not his priority. That's not. His main desire. Or his main conviction here. Whom. Have I in heaven. But you.
- God. Alone. Is now. What fills his mind. And that's what heaven. Is about. Go back to Psalm 17.
- I'll be satisfied. With your likeness. I'll be like you Lord. And you are the only one. Who makes heaven meaningful. It's not that.
- There are other saints. In heaven. Besides some. That we knew ourselves. Who have gone before us. It's not that we know. We will join them. When we leave this world.
- [30 : 34] And go to glory. And are taken to glory. By God. God. What makes heaven. Meaningful. Is that God. Is there. That Jesus.
- In heaven itself. Is the light. Of that temple. Of that city. The lamb. Is the light. Thereof.
- Whom. Have I in heaven. But you. And then he says. By way of contrasts.
- Having you. There is none on earth. That I desire. Besides you. I think this is really. The way that. We should think about it.
- It's not simply. In terms of. There is none in heaven. To compare with God. That is the main. Figure for him. That's what makes heaven. Heaven. That's what makes it meaningful.
- [31 : 35] But he says. Having you. Everything else. Is then changed. And isn't that how it is. Truly for yourself. Tonight. Having you.
- Lord. Everything else. Takes on a new. Perspective. From what it used to be. Having you. It affects. How I think of. My marriage. My wife.
- My husband. My children. My grandchildren. My relatives. My neighbors. Having you. Lord. Makes me think of. My place of work.
- In a different light. To what it would otherwise be. Having you. Lord. I see the world. In a way. Different to what I would. Otherwise see it as. If I was still part of. The world.
- And its worldliness. Having you. There is none in heaven. I desire. When I have you. But you.
- [32 : 30] And on earth. There is none I desire. Besides you. Or as well as you. You notice the word desire. That too is an important word.
- Because the psalmist relationship. With God. Is not one of cold. Formality. His religion. Is not one of. Mere theories.
- And creeds. That he just subscribes to. He is talking about. Desiring God. He is talking about. God in fellowship. With his soul.

He is talking about. The experience. Of being grasped by God. Of being guided by God. And afterwards. Being received. Or taken by God. Into glory. And now he is saying. There is nothing.

Or no one on earth. That I desire. Besides you. When I have you. Lord. I have the object.

[33 : 27] Of my. Greatest desire. And that really is. How the Bible. So often describes.

A Christian life. A life lived. In living. Fellowship. And companionship. With God. And don't let.

Modern theology. Or liberal theology. Affect your mind. In taking you away. From that conviction. That the Christian life. Is one. Of experience.

Yes of course. God. Has laid down. Foundational matters. For us. In the work. Of Jesus. That's the foundation. Of all our hopes. Of our very redemption. Itself. God's own.

Great. Acts of redemption. But our. Relationship. With God. Is not just. A relation. Formally. To these. Acts of redemption.

[34 : 19] He says. Whom do I. Desire. Beside you. Having you. Who else. Can I desire. The way I desire you. Our desire for God.

Shows life in our souls. And it's. A remarkable thing itself. Our God. As he comes into our life.

Changes us from. Desiring so many things. As a priority in life. To making God. Our great desire. And that's what the psalmist.

Is teaching us here. Having you. There is none on earth. I desire. Above you. Beside you. The same way.

As I desire you. Are you in love. With God. Tonight. Do you love him more.

[35 : 23] Than you love. Anybody else. Is there someone else. In your life. That you love. More than God. Can you say this.

Of yourself. Tonight. And I'm speaking this. To myself. As a Christian. And to every Christian. Here. Not just to anyone. Who may not yet. Be converted. As things now.

Are between yourself. And God. Can you honestly say. That you love him. Above everyone else.

If not. Something's wrong. Something's amiss. Something needs to be corrected. We need a realignment.

We need an adjustment. Because the psalmist. Is telling us. This. Is how it should be. There is. Having you. Nothing. No one on earth.

[36 : 23] But I desire. Like I desire you. That's what our life is. Friends. In this living relationship. With this living God. Let the world.

Say what it will. Let secularism. Say what it will. Let atheism. Say what it will. You know. And I know.

In our experience. That this is it. That this is real. This is no fantasy. This is no imagination. This is no relic.

From the past. That's no longer relevant. To human beings. This is not something. That's been. Unsubstantiated. By science. It's the heart.

Of saving experience. That we have a desire. For God. And live in communion. With him. And then the contrasts.

[37 : 18] Are contrasts. Of strength. And contrasts. Of security. My flesh. And my heart. Fail. But God. Is the strength. Of my heart. And my portion.

Forever. Yes we fail. Of course we fail. The psalm is talking about. His failure. But he goes further here. And says my flesh. And my heart. Fail. My flesh. As well as my heart. We're all going to die.

We're going to die. Sooner than we think. That's not a premonition. Of some disaster. I don't have that ability. To prophesy. But I know of myself.

As I know of you. And as you know of yourself. That your life in this world. Will come to an end. One way or other. At one time or other. God will be my portion. But he says.

Yes that's true of me. But God is the strength. Of my heart. And my portion. Forever. Because when my body. Disappears. He says.

[38 : 17] And returns to the dust. When my place. In this world. Is no longer seen. This will still be true. God will be my portion.

God will be my inheritance. God will be my companion. My friend. My Lord. My saviour.

And that's never going to change. And then there's. A confession of his confidence in God. Not just in terms of comparison. And the contrast of strength. But also.

The contrast of security. Behold those who are far from you. Shall perish. You put an end to everyone. Who is unfaithful to you. But as for me.

It's good for me. To be near to God. What's he doing in that contrast. He's contrasting. Those who are. At a distance from God. Who don't want God. In their lives. Of course that can change. As has changed for many of ourselves.

[39 : 14] By the power of God's grace. But what he's saying is. If this is how life ends. If this is how it is. At the end of our journey. In this world. Well if we're far from God.

And I've never come to trust in him. We're going to perish. We're going to perish. We're going to perish.

It's a terrible word isn't it? It's a very important one. Perishing.

There's something against which God sent his son into the world. He loved the world. So loved the world. That he gave his only begotten son. That whoever believes in him.

Should not perish. Perish. And that means there are some who don't believe in him. And therefore will perish. And it won't be God's fault.

[40 : 18] He's done everything that needs to be done. For us to avoid perishing. But as for me. Let's not finish on that note. Solemn and important though it is.

As for me. It is good to be near to God. I have made the Lord God my refuge. So that I may tell of all your works. You see he's saying. It's still going to be the case for me.

I have to tell of God's works while I'm in this life. But the contrast with those who perish is this for me. It is good to be near to God.

Being near to God. Is being within the parameters of life. Being away from God. Is to be in the realms of death.

So tonight. A confession of God's care for him. A confession of his confidence in God. And that's why he's able to begin this great psalm.

[41 : 22] Truly God is good. To Israel. And it's out of that goodness. That this confession has arisen.

And I hope tonight it's my confession. And I hope it's your confession. And that in this confession. You too will say. God has indeed.

Been and will be. Good. To me. Let's pray. Lord our gracious God.

Once again we thank you. For your word. And it's direction of our lives. We pray Lord that our minds may be focused. This evening and in time to come.

Upon what it is to be near to God. Upon what it is to be far from you. Help us Lord to truly see the reality of those things.

[42 : 25] For it is your word that tells us. That to be far from you is death. And to be near you is life. We thank you for your own hold of your people.

For the way in which you have grasped the lives of all who trust in you. We pray that you would bless tonight. Any who have gone away out of following you obediently.

Whose hearts may have grown cold. Who have turned out of the way of coming to maintain their nearness to God. We pray especially Lord.

For any who are not even in this building tonight. Who once sat here to listen to the gospel. Who once took their place at the Lord's Supper. And who are tonight in the ways of the world.

Oh Lord we pray for them. We pray for their recovery. We pray that that hold that you have of your people's lives. Will be made known to them too.

[43 : 26] Continue with us now we pray. For Jesus sake. Amen. Amen. Well let's conclude this evening singing in Psalm 109. On page 148 Psalm 109.

That's at verse 21. We'll sing verses 21 to 27. But do thou for thine own name's sake.

O Lord. O God the Lord for me. Soth good and sweet thy mercy is. Sorry that's the wrong version of the psalm I have. It's page 148.

That's in the same psalms. My apologies. So it's Psalm 109. Page 148. At verse 21.

But O sovereign Lord and mercy deal with me for your name's sake. Save me in your love and goodness. And my life from danger take.

[44 : 32] So on through to verse 27 to God's praise.meko 119.

Let us pray.

Thank you. me in pure love and goodness, and my life from danger take.

For I am both pure and me, crushed within me is my heart.

I am feeble like an insect, like a shadow I depart.

[45 : 37] To see my knees give way from fasting, and my grave is thin and gone.

My accusers, when they see me, shake their heads at me untold.

Lord my God, draw near and help me, save me in your steadfast love.

Let them know you understand it, that my help comes from above.

Amen. I'll go to the main door after the benediction. Amen. 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 always.

[46 : 47] Amen.