

Trust in the Lord

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again for a wee while to this psalm that we read, the 20th psalm. I'm going to read it again. I just want us to give a sort of overview of it, not looking through every particular line of it, but just looking at it in general.

This psalm, just read the first verse of it, the first couple of verses. May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble. May the name of the God of Jacob protect you.

May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion, and so on. Now, as we journey through life, I'm sure all of us here long for a life that will be tranquil, a life that will be peaceful, a life that will be sort of free from difficulties and problems.

We know it won't be, because life doesn't work that way, but that doesn't stop us from hoping that that's the way it will be.

There's a kind of a natural optimism in people where they just really hope that everything will kind of work out and that everything will go pretty well.

[1 : 16] I'm sure at the beginning of another year, that's the way as we go into it. So we've just come already into 2009. That's kind of the idea that we have. And we're saying, well, I hope this will be a good year.

When we say to people a happy new year, we're hoping for people that that year will indeed be a good year for them, that it will bring good things, and that life, by and large, will be a good one.

That's what we all want. But we're not always guaranteed that everything will go the way that we want. However, the one thing this psalm makes very clear to us is that if we have the Lord, then we are on the road to ultimate victory.

That doesn't mean that there won't be conflict. We'll see in a moment. I believe this is a psalm of conflict, a psalm of battle. It's a military psalm. And that, of course, talks straight away about danger, about conflict.

But it's also a psalm of ultimate victory. And that will always be true for the people of God. If you're here today following the Lord, then you are in the way of ultimate victory.

[2 : 30] And that's a wonderful thing, to know that whatever may come into your life, whatever problems that there may be, if you have the Lord with you, then we're not minimizing the problems or trying to underestimate in any way the pain and the force of difficulties in life.

But there's something wonderful in having underneath the everlasting arms. In this world of change, it's kind of, we live in a world that's kind of like quicksand.

It's always moving. It's never stable. Sometimes we think it is more foolish. And I'm sure there have been times in our life when we've thought this world is really stable.

Then all of a sudden, it collapses. It changes. Things, everything goes out of order a bit. And the Lord is showing us that that's the way it will be. But he's the one who never, ever changes.

And so we have this, it's really a wonderful psalm. And as we say, it's not a psalm that is free from difficulty because the very beginning, the very opening, reminds us of that, may the Lord answer you in the day of trouble.

[3 : 42] And so you see straight away that this is a psalm that's dealing, facing up to the realities, the problems, the difficulties of life. And as we say, I believe it is a military psalm because here is a psalm, as it were, it's preparation for battle.

There's no doubt about it. As you look at this with the horses, the chariots, the banners, and all these sort of things, we're talking about the collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright.

The whole idea is one of military, of war, of conflict. And it would appear from this psalm as if the sacrifices had been offered, it's as if the worship was over, and now it was a time for battle.

They would be there in the regiments, or well in David's time, they would be there gathered in their tribes, ready as it were for that conflict. But the psalm is highlighting just how wonderful it is to have the Lord who will hear us, and the Lord who will answer us.

And the Lord who will protect us. Do you have that Lord today who will hear you? It's a wonderful thing to have a God who hears and answers our cry.

[5 : 05] Now, we find here that the psalmist is saying, may the Lord answer you in the day of trouble. May the name of the God of Jacob protect you. Now, this name, the name, is all tied up into the self-revelation of God and his willingness to be pleaded upon, to be depended upon, to be pleaded to and depended upon.

In verse 7, it tells us, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. In the first verse, may the name of the God of Jacob protect you.

But we trust in the name of the Lord our God. In Psalm 9, in the psalm that we sung, and those who know your name will put their trust in you.

Wonderful thing to know the name of God. We find even in the priestly blessing that we find that the Lord is saying about his name that his name will be put upon the people of Israel as if they are his ownership, his possession.

Isn't that wonderful to have the Lord as you're possessing you, owning you? I can't think of anything more wonderful in this world that's who God's people are, his possession.

[6 : 33] We often talk about possessions and possessions that are very precious to us. We may have some things in this world and they're dearer to us than other things.

And I'm sure that everybody here would say of their own family as far as this world is concerned that they are the most precious thing that they have. not talking about salvation at this moment, but the most precious thing at a human level that we have, our family.

They are, and there's a possession, we're possessive about those that we love. Well, God's possession in this world are his people. And he watches over everyone.

And he does according to his will with the armies of heaven and with the inhabitants of the earth.

God is working everything with all his people. There's not one that slips his attention.

There's not one that goes, we use the expression, goes off the radar. Well, if we can use that reverently and spiritually, there is nobody hidden from the view of God.

[7 : 46] And he's watching over everyone, even although we may not think, though it may not appear to us, he is. And he will lose not one, because his own glory is tied up into the salvation and the keeping.

And that's part of the salvation. Salvation involves keeping, not just the saving, for when the Lord saves, he saves in order to keep and to take to be with himself forever.

So it's all part of this. And so, the Lord's people are his possession. If today, you belong to the Lord, isn't that a wonderful thing to know?

That out of everything else in this world, you may look at the White House today and think of all that it signifies and the power that it speaks of. No, that in God's eyes is not the possession.

It's you, my dear Christian friend. Somebody said of all that's going on in this world, that the world's history is like the scaffolding that's around the actual building, which is the church.

[8 : 54] And God is building, the Lord is building his church. And all history round about it is the scaffolding. Scaffolding will be taken down, but the church will remain forever and ever and ever.

It is his glorious possession, his glorious building. And that's a great and wonderful encouragement for us. Well, today, do you know the name of this Lord?

Not just to know of him, but to know him personally. Because that's what's important. Do you know this Lord personally? It's like the Apostle Paul.

He came to know the Lord, but he wasn't satisfied with just coming to know him as his Lord and Savior. When you come to know, you will want to know more.

We've said this often enough before, but that's what happens. The more you know of the Lord, the more you will want to know him. The more you will want to know of him.

[9 : 54] We've said it before, but just while we're on this subject, and it's so true, sometimes the more we get to know of people, the more disappointed we become in them. The reverse is the case with the Lord.

The more you come to know of him, the more you want to know of him. The more you will seek to know of. And this knowing involves a sense of intimacy.

It's like the very idea of marriage. That knowing, that belonging, that union, that oneness, it's all tied up in this.

May that those who, that the name of the Lord may protect you. And we see then about the support that is given out to Zion. And then in verse four, we read here, may he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans.

Now again, I suppose, at this time of year, so often we have our, we begin to maybe work out some of the ideas or the way that we want the year to go.

[11:03] And everybody has plans. We all have plans for life. And I'm sure one of the things that we often discover is that our plans don't always work out. Sometimes we have to change them.

In the same way as a person may have plans for building a house and they have to be readjusted or scrapped to start all over again, different way. So we have plans for life. And often we will find that our plans don't work out.

Why? Because our knowledge is limited. We don't know what's ahead. And often we're having to readjust and sometimes our plans go up in smoke.

And we have to just go in a totally different direction. But you see, part of the problem is that our plans are often not in keeping with God's plans.

And this is all tied in with getting to know the Lord. Because the more that we get to know the Lord and to be with him, and the more we get to know him, the more that our mind and our desire will be in keeping with his desires, with his will, with his way.

[12:14] And that's what causes so many of the problems for our lives, is that our will and our way is so different to the Lord's will and way.

That's what made Jesus' life so wonderful in this world. His life was in harmony with his Father. To do thy will, he says, I take delight, even although that will caused intense agony and suffering.

Yet there was this sense of fulfilling and honoring the Father's will all the time. Well, may we seek more and more that our heart, our mind, our everything will be in keeping with God's will, so that when we go to the Lord, we say, Lord, please direct me in life, so that I may form my plans in keeping with your will and way, rather than simply just going to the Lord with all our plans and saying, well, Lord, these are my plans, please fulfill them.

Now, there will be times where the Lord puts something in our heart and we begin to formulate something and we're kind of clear that this is the Lord's way and the Lord will often do that as we live with him.

That's what the Bible says, in all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths. You see, we're often so concerned about knowing God's will and often when we face up to a particular, maybe we're coming to a particular situation, we say, oh Lord, please direct me here.

[13:56] Show me your will. You're desperate to know God's will. And you know, sometimes the Lord will lay it on your heart. You will come to this persuasion and it's almost as the Lord is saying to you, how come you're so desperate to know my will now?

When you have had my will in your word day in, day out, and you haven't been that concerned with keeping my will, why now when you come to this crisis, as it were, in your life, that all of a sudden you want to know my will.

My will has been there before you every day and you weren't that concerned with keeping it. And sometimes we can be really rebuked by that because God's will is here for us in the word.

As it says in Micah, he hath showed you, oh man, what is good. The Lord has revealed to us and we have his revealed will here in the word. And if we seek by grace to follow that word, the Lord will direct us.

There will be, as it were, an opening up of the way before us. So we've got to be careful that we don't just use, come and use the Lord for our own ends when we may be forgetting about him so much of the other time.

[15:15] So we're asking, the psalmist here is saying that may the Lord fulfill all your plans. May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill your plans. And then in verse five again we see this great salvation, this great faith.

May we shout for joy over your salvation. May we shout for joy over your salvation. Now that's great faith. There's a battle to be fought.

May be blood spilled. There might be wounds and hurts. There might be homes that are going to lose loved ones. But here we find great faith because there is an assurance of victory before even

the battle has been fought.

I think that's wonderful. Why? Because David is here saying well this battle is in the Lord's name. We are in the Lord's land.

We are fighting for his cause. And we've got to remember my friends that that's how it is as we go forward in this world. May we shout for joy over your salvation.

[16:30] And you know there should be a shouting of joy. We can look at it in different ways but even there should be a shouting of joy when a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ.

That's a great reason for celebration. There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents. Surely there should be joy on earth. There should be should there not a corresponding between heaven and earth.

But we see this great faith here. Great faith. Going out into enemy territory. Battle. Conflict. Danger. And yet rejoicing in the salvation that shall come.

Do you have that kind of faith today? Because you're in a war. You're in a conflict. You're in a battle. But do you have that assurance?

Because remember ultimately it's a Lord's battle. His glory is all tied up in this in your life.

[17:33] Remember that my friend. Because sometimes we feel isolated and we feel alone. And we think oh it's just poor wee me.

And I'm wrestling here against these principalities and against these powers. And I'm oh I feel so defeated. And what's going to happen to poor me? My friend it's a Lord's battle.

It's his cause. His glory is tied up in your growth, in your development, in your progress, in your victory. And there will be ultimate victory.

So sometimes we've got to look just away from being caught up entirely in ourselves and get our focus right again. And look to him and see that he is the one who is in it all and over all and the glory as we said is his.

And remember Christ and his cause will never be defeated. There may look at times and often it looks at times as if his cause has been defeated.

[18:43] I suppose the ultimate of that was when the lifeless body of Christ was taken down from the cross. His enemies thought this was a moment of triumph. We've triumphed.

Oh no they didn't. What appeared to be their triumph was their ultimate defeat. Because it was through the death and the subsequent resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That the ultimate victory was won. And where every foe will be vanquished. And Christ is to be Lord over all. And just as that was the ultimate so it will be right throughout life.

And so we see this as it were this army and in the name of our God set up our banner. A banner of course I suppose with a flag or a big standard I don't know would be bearing the coat of arms of the tribes the different tribes would be there just as a way you'd have banners with regiments.

Now I'm not an authority on these things but I know there'd be certain things and I know the people here could talk far better about it than I can. But I know that a banner certainly in the old days banners would be unfurled as people marched into war.

[20:03] There would be the unfurling of this banner. And that's one of the descriptions in the Bible. Remember that the Lord has shown us many different things. The Lord our banner is one of them.

So that when we become a Christian we march under that banner. The Lord my banner. And again we're told in the song that the banner over me is love.

The banner over me was love. And of course that's all tied up. It's all in the one. And also the banner or these great banners or flags were rallying points.

It might be different in today's military operations but long ago at a time of battle it was very easy and it's still I suppose easy to become as it were to be separated.

But sometimes the flag or the banner should be raised up to try and get everybody focused back together again. Because in the heat of battle it's very easy for parts of the fighting force to be separated this way and that way.

[21:19] And so it was like a rolling call back to get everybody together again. And again we need to remember that Jesus is our banner. The Lord is our banner. Because sometimes our heads go down and we get lost in the way.

And you know sometimes we even Christians even begin they get so lost in the way they begin to fight amongst themselves. Isn't that extraordinary? There's the enemy and sometimes the focus

goes off and the Christians begin to fight amongst themselves. rather than fighting the enemy. And that's why we need all was just as the Ark of the Covenant was way ahead of the Israelites as they marched in order that their focus would be upon the Ark. Not upon the soldier in front of them. Because if the Ark was directly in front of them they would as the soldiers were marching on as the people were marching on they would be simply following. Following the and doing what the Christian in front of them was doing. But the Ark was way ahead so that everybody could see it and everybody was focused upon it.

[22 : 32] And that's how it is to be with us. Our focus must be upon Christ. Not upon other people. If our focus is upon other people our walk will be wrong.

We're not trying to imitate other people. We are to imitate Christ. We are to be followers of Christ. apprentices, disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And again the banner I suppose we could say is also a sign of victory. When you look, sometimes you see pictures of international matches of rugby and football and you see terracing full of banners waving.

Time of victory. Celebration. When armies marched home triumphantly, banners waving. It's a sign of victory, of triumph.

And as we said earlier, that's how it's going to be for the Christian. At the end of the day, the triumph will be complete. The victory which is guaranteed, you will be then become totally caught up in that victory.

[23 : 42] victory. Because you will receive the victor's crown. And you will be ushered into the celestial city where the battle is over. And where you will be conscious of the war having been won.

And we find then just in a word that the Lord, now I know that the Lord saves his anointed. He will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand. The right hand, the hand of power, the hand of direction, the hand of welcome, all these different things signified in this hand. There's many things we could say, but just moving on and see in a sense finally, David says in verse 7, some trust in chariots, some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright. And David shows how absurd it is to trust in horses and chariots.

In the olden days, this was, I suppose, people measured the power of an army when they looked at the number of horses and chariots that they had.

[25 : 01] And I'm sure it must have been one of the most terrifying things to have to stand facing a cavalry charge, where the whole ground would be vibrating and there would be like thunder.

It's all these hooves, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of horses with soldiers armed to the teeth charging at you. It must have been a terrifying sight.

All these magnificent chariots and that's how so many people, that's how they viewed it. How's the battle going to go? Oh, well, we've got superior strength in our horses and chariots.

Well, David says some trust in these things. But he said that's not where we trust. We trust in the name of the Lord. They're going to fall, but we'll rise and we'll stand upright.

And it's still the same today. So many people as they look around in life, they're putting their trust in different things. Whether it be in their job, whether it be in their family, whether it be in their investments, whether it be in their property, it doesn't matter what, people are often putting their trust in this and that.

[26 : 14] And life is forever showing us that things which may appear so secure, so steadfast, they're liable to collapse. Don't put your trust in anything, not even in man.

Put your trust in the Lord. He is the one who is worthy. of trust. And as you go through into this year and into your future, may we all put our trust in the Lord.

Because if we do, we will rise and stand upright. The salvation, the victory is guaranteed. Anything else is foolishness and is bound to collapse. Let us pray. Lord, our God, we pray to help us this day.

Help us to put our trust in the Lord. Forgive us for our tendency to trust other things and other people.

[27 : 20] Not that we are in any way to be dismissive of others and we give thanks, Lord, for the many ways in life where we can depend upon one another. But may our ultimate dependence and trust be in the Lord.

Be with us all here today. Be especially with those who are far from home. And we think of those whose families are on the other side of this world. We commit them to the other families. O Lord, our God, we pray to bless us and take us all to our different homes in safety, forgiving us our every sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.