

You Guide Me With Your Counsel

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[0 : 00] I'm reading at verse 24, Psalm 73, and at verse 24, You guide me with your counsel, and afterwards you will receive me to glory.

As everybody knows, this psalm, if you have any knowledge of the psalms, it's a psalm that is so, so rich in Christian experience. We find the psalmist on a journey from being pretty low, with very, very dark thoughts.

In fact, he recognizes his thoughts weren't just dark, they were really bad thoughts. He has to confess before God just how bad his thinking was. But the Lord brings him to a place where he is completely restored, his vision is restored.

And I think that is part, that is so often the problem when we struggle, is that our vision of the Lord isn't correct. Because if our vision of the Lord isn't correct, there's so much going on around us and about us and within us, that drags us down.

So it's absolutely essential in life that our focus is fixed upon the Lord. And I know it and you know it, the times we struggle, the times things go wrong, is so often because our focus isn't right.

[1 : 25] And that was so true with the experience of this man, Asaph. And we read of that in this psalm. But the Lord, as he always does to his people, he restores, he brings us back.

He brings us back to see properly, to understand properly, to know what we have, and such like. And that's what we find in this psalm. But in the first part of the psalm, we find that Asaph is envying the ungodly.

He has a major problem. He is feeling so, so sorry for himself. Because as he looks around, he sees that those who, not only they don't care about God, but they despise God.

That they're flourishing. Everything is going well for them. And their lives are being enriched. They're growing in wealth and in power.

And everything is just going so, so well for them. And then he's looking at himself. And he's seeing his own struggles and the troubles in life.

[2 : 26] And he begins to think to himself, I've got it all wrong. He's envying them. And he's saying, all these things that I've done. I've tried to live a good life. I've tried to seek the Lord.

I have given my life to this. And it's all in vain. And so he's got this major play for a while in self-pity. He's wallowing in self-pity. But God doesn't leave him there. And he comes to realize that he is actually the one who has everything.

He comes to this firm persuasion. That in having the Lord, he has everything. And without the Lord, he has nothing. And that's a lesson that we always have to learn.

And it's a lesson that's probably one of the hard lessons to learn. And let me say to anybody here today who doesn't have Jesus as their own personal Savior. It is absolutely critical and essential that you sort that out.

[3 : 30] Whatever else you do or don't do in life, sort that out. Get right with God in Jesus. Because at the end of the day, irrespective of what you've achieved.

Irrespective of how many good things have happened to you in your life. Even irrespective of what good you have done in life. At the end of the day, if we don't have the Lord, we've got nobody. We've got nothing. Because we're entering down into... We leave this world. We take nothing out of this world. We brought nothing in. And we'll take nothing out with us. Bar our soul.

And if we don't have the Lord, then we... As we see here, we're on our road to destruction. In the words of Jesus in the New Testament, what will it profit a man? Supposing he gain the whole world and lose his own soul.

So Asaph, although he was a believer, he had lost his way. And he began to, as we say, wallow in self-pity. And he was having a hard time as a believer.

[4 : 35] And all the unbelievers were getting on really well. But as we say, God didn't leave him like that. And we'll notice, we read it, where the vision was changed.

Verse 17. Or we'll read verse 16. But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task. I just can't... Just couldn't work it out until I went into the sanctuary of God. Then I discerned that end. All of a sudden, when he went back into God's house, he saw those people that he had been envying.

He realized that they were actually on a slippery slope to destruction. And Asaph came to a firm conclusion that he wouldn't swap places with them for anything.

No matter what they had done, no matter what they'd achieved, no matter their wealth, their status, their power, or anything. He wouldn't change places with them for anything. Before he went to God's house, he would have.

[5 : 37] He would have changed places in a moment. Until God restored his vision. And I think it's very important for us to lay hold, just for a moment, on what Asaph is saying here.

The importance of going to God's house. Because this is a place where God deals with us. Deals with us anywhere. And he can deal with us anywhere.

But this is a place where we gather together to worship him. We gather together to meet with him. And we gather together to hear him. To hear what he's saying to us.

And that is why it's so important. Because very often we come into God's house. And sometimes we can come in with our attitude is completely wrong. I'm sure all of us have experienced that.

That we have been changed under the word. Some days we come in and we have very dark thoughts. And we can feel very, very low. And as God, through his word, ministers to us.

[6 : 43] Our attitude and our mind changes. And we come out different to the way we went in. Other times we can come in and we can feel, we can maybe be arrogant.

We might have a wrong attitude. We might have a wrong attitude to people. We might be filled with all kinds of angst and anger and bitterness and all sort of things.

And God again deals with us. And he breaks us and he humbles us under the word. And we come out different. And that's why it's so important that we come under the word.

Because this is, the Lord has said, where two or three gather together in my name. That's where I am. I'm going to be there in the midst to bless. It's an opportunity to hear, to meet with the Lord. To hear what he has to say to us.

It's a wonderful privilege. And many a person has come to faith in the house of God. That they've come in without the Lord. They've gone out with him.

[7 : 39] Or they've begun to seek him. So that's one of the things we see the importance of coming to meet with the Lord. And so, here's Asaph. And we find that the restoration has taken place there.

And one of the things we discover about Asaph is how just his confession before God. He cannot believe his attitude. And I'm sure we've been there as well.

There are times God stops us. And we reflect and we review what we've been. You know, sometimes we're on a high horse with other people.

And sometimes even with God. We might not admit that. But there are times our attitude before God is all wrong. We have a bad spirit towards God.

You know, we might not admit and say, You know, I've got a really bad spirit towards God. But sometimes that's exactly where we are. And that's what Asaph acknowledged.

[8 : 40] Because he says in verse 21, When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in my heart, I was brutish and ignorant. I was like a beast towards you.

That's what he's saying to the Lord. My actions were like that of a beast towards you. It's obviously an angry beast, a wild beast. And you know, God sees all our attitudes.

He sees what motivates us. He sees what nobody else can see. Often what we cannot see ourselves. He knows what we're about. He knows what motivates us in life.

He knows whether our heart is right with him or not. He knows whether our spirit is right with him or not. And that's what I'm talking here about the believer.

Because our spirit can be bad. Our attitudes can be bad. And so, if we today, if we have to confess to the Lord that our attitude has been wrong, that we have a bad spirit within us towards people or towards God, then we have to open up and acknowledge and say, Lord, sorry.

[9 : 53] Because it's important. It's vital. And you know, when that happens, it's like there's a cleansing goes on. God restores us. Because Asaph's problem was he was backslidden.

He didn't know it. Quite often backslidden people don't realize. Sometimes they do, but sometimes they don't. And you can go through all the motions and be backslidden in heart and spirit and mind. And still be coming to church, but your heart is far away. You're not going towards God. So Asaph has dealt with this. And that's why in verse 23 he says, Nevertheless, I am continually with me. You hold my right hand. Here's Asaph and he's aware. Oh, he had been so aware of how things were all over the place. But now he says, Oh, Lord, you know, I have you. You have me. You have me by the hand, the right hand. The hand of welcome. The hand of strength. The hand of guidance. Lovers walk hand in hand. There's this great picture. And then he says, then in verse 24, You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you receive me to glory. [11:05] Now this word counsel can actually mean two things. The counsel of God can mean his purposes. And God has a purpose for every single one of us in this world, whether we realize it or not.

And particularly for the believer, God has a purpose for us. We're told in Hebrews that there is a race set out before us.

And it's in this race that we run, looking to Jesus. So God is a particular coach for you to run through this world. A particular way to walk. He has set it out for us.

And so it's important to understand that and to lay hold upon this fact. And God is the one who guides us through to fulfill his purposes.

Just in the way that God guided Israel from Egypt all the way through to the land of promise. And we've got to remember that just as Israel went through our wilderness, so do we.

[12:10] We are in enemy territory. We live in a world that hates God. We live in a world that hates the Christian. We live in a world that does not want to be holy or right with God.

We live in a world where it is impossible for ourselves to make our way by ourselves through it to heaven. It is only by God's counsel that that can happen.

And so just as God, by his counsel for Israel, took them through the wilderness, we also will find that he leads us along the right way.

Now when you look at Israel, many a time they were brought into trying and difficult situations. And you know sometimes we tend to think as soon as if we're a Christian and you arrive into difficult or testing situations, it's all too easy to say, oh you know I don't know, maybe I'm not a Christian at all. Why has this happened to me? Just like Asaph, look at these people there, they don't go to church, they have no interest in God and everything's going well for them. And look at me and I'm struggling.

[13:24] Again we go back to Israel in the wilderness. God led them to places where there was no food and there was no water. Why? In order to break them and in order to lead them to trust him to provide for them.

And he provided every time. Even although they grumbled and even although they complained and they moaned. Not just against Moses but against God. And they were saying, oh why did you bring us out of Egypt?

It was far better back there. Short memories. They were being put to death. They were living a life of total slavery.

There was infant genocide taking place. And yet they're saying it was better for us back in Egypt.

That's what happens so often. When we hit the troubles. When we hit the trials.

Short memories. And forget. But God takes us to these troubles and trials. To test us. To break us. To bring us to the place where we will come to trust him more.

[14:32] He has a plan and a purpose for us. This is part of his counsel. For us. And so it's important that as we journey on we realize God is at work.

And far too often. And I'm guilty of it as well. When things go against. The spirit of Asaph rises up. Our attitude before God is sometimes like that of an angry beast. And we say things we shouldn't. And we think things we shouldn't.

But God is at work. As we say. Breaking us bit by bit. But not only is counsel with regard to God's purposes. Is counsel is also with regard to advice.

Now I know a lot of counseling today. And I'm not a counselor. A lot of counseling just involves listening. Sometimes counselors don't say anything. They just allow people to talk. And to open out.

[15:32] And that's it. But I've always thought of good counseling. Something involving giving really good instruction. Or advice into a particular situation.

Certainly that's the way that God is dealing with us. Because God as he counsels us. He does so by advising us.

And teaching us from what? From his word. Because his word is that which shows us. What we couldn't work out any other way. First of all.

His word has revealed to us. What we could never ever ever work out. First of all. That we're sinners. Unless we have God revealing to us that fact.

We don't know it. The word of God. This is what it does. It shows us how we have fallen. It shows us how sin entered into this world. People don't often don't know that.

[16:31] It shows us where we've gone wrong. It shows us how God so loved the world. That he sent his son into this world. To become one with us.

To die for us. To take upon himself our sins. In order that we would be made right with God. This is all part of God's counsel for us.

But not only does he show us that. And ask us to come to embrace Jesus as Savior. He then counsels us out of his word.

He shows us. He advises us. Because he's saying to us. Look. You cannot work out yourselves. How to live. You need my word.

And that is why the word of God. Is a code of conduct. Besides a way of salvation. Because the word of God is showing us. How we are to live.

[17:27] With one another. And how we are to live before God. And. Again. I think this will show very clearly. Where we are.

Are we ready to submit. Under that word. Because. Very often. When we submit. Under the word. We have to put ourselves out. Because.

Say for instance. The word of God says. Esteem. One another. Very highly. The word of God. Tells us. That we are to love. And what is love?

Well. There's a great definition of love. In first Corinthians. Love. For instance. It keeps no record of wrongs. Wow. Do we keep a record of wrongs?

All the things. That have been done against us. Are they stored up there? Do they rise up every so often? Do we get angry over them? Do we all of a sudden.

[18:27] As we keep. Flick through that record. Oh. I can't believe he did that. Or she did that. It's still gnawing away there. Love keeps no record of wrongs.

And there's a list of things. That's just one of them. And this is a code of conduct. That the Lord. Requires us to live by. And that is why the Christian faith.

Is actually really radical. It's not like anything else. Because it goes against the grain. It goes against nature. That's why we need grace. In order to live.

In a right way. So the Lord is saying to us. The psalmist is saying. By the Lord. That the Lord will. Will guide us by. His counsel.

He will guide us by. What he has written to us in the word. And that shows us. Whether we have a Christian spirit or not. Are we ready to be taught? Are you today saying.

[19:25] You know Lord. Lord. I do want to live. According to your word. And yes Lord. There are times I don't. There are times. It's almost like I close your book.

And say. No no. I'm going to do this myself. But then Lord. When I do that. I'm really sorry. And we find that.

We have to confess to the Lord. Of who we've sinned. And who we've gone short. And who we've turned our back upon his word. But the main thrust of our life.

Is that we want our lives. To be built upon his word. If that's where you are today. You're a Christian. That is an evidence within itself. Is that your desire.

Is that your life will be molded. By his word. The non-Christian does not want that. The non-Christian. Says. I'm in charge. I will live my life.

[20:20] According to the way that I want. I will do exactly what I. Want to do. It's my life. And I'll do. What I want. The Christian.

Is somebody who is. Being broken. Yes. We resent the breaking at times. Yes. We still like Asaph. Will. Every so often. Will blow up. And we'll be angry.

And we'll be frustrated. Against people. And even against God. But then we go back. Asking for forgiveness. As the Lord deals with us. And so that's part of what makes this psalm.

Just so real. Because we can enter into it. This is. This is where we're at. God. God. But then. The psalmist says after this. You guide me with your counsel.

And afterwards. You will receive me. To glory. All the way through my life. Lord. You're guiding me. But at the end.

[21 : 17] You're going to receive me. To glory. This word receives. Very interesting. This verb. Is exactly the same word. That was used of Enoch. When Enoch was translated. Remember Enoch in the Old Testament.

The man who walked with God. And it tells us he was not. Because God took him. One day. Enoch was no longer in this world.

They were searching for him. Where's Enoch? God took him. And that's the word that we have here. This word receive. Where God just took Enoch.

Bodily. Into glory. Of course an amazing change. Just in that moment. Would have taken place. Preparing him for glory. So that's what the Lord is doing.

That he will take us. Because remember. This is exactly what Jesus said. He said. I go. He said. To prepare a place for you. But he also says. I will come again.

[22 : 15] And take you. To be with myself. So this is what we have here. This is this receive. Where he is going to take us. Receive us to glory. And the glory that the Christian enters.

Will affect and touch every aspect of their being. This glory will affect our character. In this world. Our character is stained by sin.

You know. Do you get frustrated. Sometimes angry with yourself. For who you are. Do you really annoy yourself. When you get irritated. And you feel that your character.

There's just so many twists. And aspects to it. That are wrong. And unsavory. Do you know. It's going to be wonderful in heaven. We'll never think like that. All that has been removed.

As the psalm says. Glorious within. That's amazing. Everything that in this world. Was corrupt. And twisted.

[23 : 17] And polluted. Will be gone. And we will. Completely mirror. Our savior. The mediator. The Lord Jesus.

Glorious. But not only. Will we be glorious. Within. Our environment. Will be glorious. Around us. Be no cloud. On the horizon. There will never be.

A day in glory. Where something. Will happen. And will throw us. Into confusion. Or something. Unseemly. Will arise. Or will be threatened. Or accused. Everything.

Always. Eternally. Glorious. And it's going to be. Permanent. It's going to be. Unfading. See the glory.

Of this world. And sometimes. Some of the things. That happen. In this world. Are incredibly. Spectacular. And you see. It's a war. That. That is quite. Amazing. And some of the.

[24 : 15] I mean. Some of the. Amazing. Palaces. That you see. That some of the. The richest people. In this world. Live in. You say. Whoa. That is. Incredible. But it never.

Lasts. It doesn't. Nothing. Lasts. The glory. Of this world. Fades away. There's nothing. Permanent. In this world.

But the glory. That will be. Is an ending. And that's where the Lord. Is taking us. That's where the Lord. Is preparing us. And that's where this. Psalm. Is all about.

Where we will be. Adorned with the magnificence. Of Christ himself. And we will be. Eternally. Happy. And the only way. That we can enjoy that.

Is by knowing. This guide. As our own. Because you know. As you. Live out your life. You are either. Being guided. By Jesus Christ. Or you're on your own.

[25 : 13] Now very often. As we go through this world. You say to yourself. I'm okay on my own. I can sort things out. But you know. There are always going to be times. When you can't. And you know.

The biggest time of all. When you can. There's nothing you can do. You can't sort anything out. Is when you come to die. Death is something. You have to go through. All. On. Your own. Other people.

Can do things for you. At other points. Can't do anything for you. When you come to die. And that is what we have in Jesus. Is somebody. Who will be with us in life.

And he'll be with us in death. And he will receive us. He sends for us. And he takes us. To be with himself. Forever. That's a choice we have.

Either our hand. In his hand. Or on our own. How's it going to be. With you. Let us pray. Oh Lord. Our God. We. We pray that as we have.

[26 : 10] Heard your word today. That we may indeed. Close in with Jesus. That we will not walk away. Forgetting. Or just ignoring.

Your truth. But that your truth. Will have gone down. Into our heart. To transform. And to change. To challenge. And to lead. Lord.

We pray then. To be with us. We pray to bless us. In light of the. Communion. Sacrament. That is. We will be. Celebrating. Next Lord's Day. And we pray for all.

Who will come. To preach. And all the meetings. And everything. We pray that your blessing. Your strength. Your grace. Will be given to us. In everything. We pray Lord.

To bless. The tea and coffee. In the hall after. And ask Lord. That you'll be with us. Take us to our home. Safely we pray. Be with those. Who are seriously ill. And ask Lord. That you will bless them.

[27 : 05] For giving us our sin. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.