

Journey To Glory

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 April 2017

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 0 0] The book of Psalms, Psalm number 73. Psalm 73. I'm reading it, verse 23. Nevertheless, I am continually with you.

You hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire beside you.

My flesh and my heart may fail. But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. This is probably one of the most familiar Psalms in the Bible, certainly with regard to the Lord's people.

It's a Psalm that we will come to again and again and again because it is so rich, so full of Christian experience, as all the Psalms are. But in this particular Psalm, there is a real ploughing of the depth, but there's also a soaring to the heights.

And there are times you would never believe that it's the same man writing because there are times that he seems to be in absolute despair and times where he feels that being a Christian is almost not worth it.

[1 : 2 6] We find there are times that he is looking at the godless. He's looking at those who have no concern for God, and he's envying them. That's the way he's feeling. But God changes his whole perspective, and we'll see that in a moment.

And this is a Psalm that then turns from one extreme right to the other. Now, Asaph, who as we see is the writer of a Psalm of Asaph here, he's so down and troubled because one of the things that's bothering him is as he looks around, he's obviously having all kinds of personal difficulties.

And he's looking at the cause, and there are difficulties. And he's looking around, and he's seeing those who don't really care for the Lord, have no thought of God, and their lives are trouble-free.

Everything seems to be going well for them. And he's looking at the Christian, and things aren't going well for them. And so he's troubled in his heart.

And that's why he tells us he was so in such a bad place, in verse 2, His feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped, for I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

[2 : 4 0] He couldn't help it, the way he was looking and seeing things. And we see then there was this great change because the beginning of the Psalm and the end of the Psalm are so incredibly different.

And it all hinged on what happened in the middle of the Psalm. Because it tells us that in verse 13, and in verse 17, I should say, say for instance in verse 14, all in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence.

It's all been in vain. Everything was bleak and black, and he was a massive downer until he went to God's house. Verse 17, Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then everything changed.

His perspective changed. God changed his thinking when he came into the house of God. Because when he came under the word, and God spoke to him in the word, he began to see that the very people he had been envying, the arrogant, and the ungodly, and the wicked, that they were standing on the most slippery place.

And he began to see very, very slowly that he was the one, in fact, by having the Lord as his God, who was the one who had everything. And it's amazing how often God will change us when we come into his house.

[4 : 12] Sometimes we come in, and we can be arrogant. We can be proud. We can come in, we can come in with a feuding heart. We can come in with all kinds of issues within our life.

We can be in God's house, come in with resentment against people. We can come into God's house, bearing all kinds of grudges, and all these sort of things. And when we come under the word, it's amazing how God will often speak to us through this word.

And sometimes we'll be rebuked, sometimes we'll be challenged. Sometimes we'll be humbled, and we'll be saying, Oh, forgive me, Lord, for my attitude.

Forgive me, Lord, for what I was thinking. Lord, forgive me for what I've been doing. And it's amazing how God will challenge us and deal with us in his house.

And again, sometimes we can come in really, really low, at a low ebb. Sometimes we can come in and we wonder, am I a believer at all? Have I ever truly followed the Lord?

[5 : 20] And sometimes we can come in and we think, I am the poorest, most useless article on the face of this creation. What have I ever, ever done for the Lord?

And we can sometimes come in so low, and God will lift us up. God will encourage us. God won't leave us lying down there. He'll lift us up.

So the house of God is an amazing place. And that is why it is so important. That's why we're told in Hebrews not to forsake the gathering together in this way. Because this is the place where God chooses so often.

It's not the only place. Sometimes he will deal with people like Jacob, for instance, when he ran away from home. And he was out in the open and he lay down under the night sky feeling so far from home.

He was a home-loving boy and a man at that time away from the tent, away from everything. And yet, it was there that God met with him in a way that he had never met with him before.

[6 : 23] So we cannot tie it down to any particular place where God will meet with us. but we can guarantee when we come where he has promised to be, then we can look for him speaking to us and guiding us.

So we find the psalmist having his whole attitude changed and he says in verse 23 that we find here, nevertheless, I am continually with me.

You hold me by my right hand. Now the contrast between verse 22 and 23 couldn't be more extreme. I was brutish and ignorant.

I was like a beast towards you. You know, that's how the psalmist felt. He's coming and he's apologizing before the Lord and he says that's what I've been just like a beast and it's just the he's expressing before the Lord just the sorrow of his just of everything and you know, the amazing thing here is that although he was brutish and he was ignorant and he was like a beast toward God, God never turned away from him and what a comfort that is because aren't there times that you say to yourself, Lord, I cannot understand how I have been.

The things that I look back and I just I'm ashamed. I've acted like a beast by what I've been saying, by what I've been doing and you say to yourself, the Lord would be completely right to wash his hands of me altogether but that's not the way he does it.

[8 : 19] He always wins us back. He woos us back. He loves us freely. He loves us with an everlasting love. I will heal their backslidings.

I will love them freely. And so that's what the psalmist is discovering here, that the Lord is continually with him and that you hold my right hand.

There is this hand that is giving so much strength, so much security, but he's so aware of the Lord holding him up.

Then he says in verse 24, you guide me with your counsel and afterwards you will receive me to glory. Now this word counsel has two meanings about it.

The counsel of God means on the one hand his purposes what he has proposed is determination to do certain things.

[9 : 18] And that is really what the psalmist is saying. Lord has a determined purpose for me in this world. And he's saying this, you guide me with your counsel.

So on the one hand there's two levels to it. We'll see the other one in a second. The first is this word counsel is speaking to us about God's purposes for us.

And we must never forget that God has a purpose for us all. God doesn't just have a purpose, like a random purpose for the world, or just in a sort of an abstract way, a purpose for the world.

Yes, he has a purpose for the world, but he also has a purpose for you and for me, individually, personally, where God is going to work. he has your life mapped out and he has my life mapped out.

And there are, let us never think for any single one moment that God doesn't know what is happening. God knows everything and he knows all about our life, every single thing that is happening and nothing, nothing will ever, ever take him by surprise.

[10 : 34] So we must always remember that. And God leads us by his providence. Now it's not the main way of leading. God's providence is important, but God also leads by his word, the two.

And the word is more important than the providence, although the providence and the word will always meet together. But what I mean by this is, if we look purely and simply at providence and say, the way my life is working out, that is the way I will go in life.

I'm not going to look to the word of God. I'm going to work things out just as they are unfolding in my life. Now, that's not the way to go, although at one level we do go by providence.

But sometimes God's word and God's providence are going as it appears in opposite directions. You look at the life of Joseph and that's exactly how it appeared.

You look at the life of David and that's how it appeared for years. God had promised him the kingship and for seven years Saul hunted him round the mountains trying to kill him.

[11 : 49] Joseph had the kings and for the kingship of the king. And that's what he did. And that's what he did. He was going to come into his life.

He was going to be exalted by God. And for years and years and years he found himself in a dungeon in Egypt. So that's why we mean sometimes providence goes completely opposite to the word that we have got from God.

But they have come together. They came together in David's life. They came together in Joseph's life. Remember Joseph just in a moment. He was ushered out from the prison before Pharaoh.

Before the day was out he was the second ruler in the kingdom. Only to Pharaoh he was the highest in the land. From the dungeon to the throne in a day. See God's providence and God's word came together.

And they always will. So if God's providence for you just now seems to be going in a different direction to his word. Ask the Lord for the faith to lay hold upon the word.

[12 : 58] Ask the Lord to strengthen you as you may struggle just now. Because you know it's a very difficult thing when God's word and God's providence are going in opposite directions.

But they will come together. God's word. God is not a man that he should lie. Nor the son of man that he should repent. Hath he not said and shall he not do it? And that is what we have to believe all the time.

And so there is this idea of being led by the counsel of God. But counsel also means instruction. And that's what the Lord does as well again through his word.

That he instructs us through the word. You see we are being taught as we go along. We are being taught from the word. And those of us who have grown up from childhood and maybe most of us here have with the Bible, we sometimes take it for granted.

But not only all the historical characters and all the prophecy and all these things which are set out for us, but all the instruction that is given to us, all the precepts that are set out.

[14 : 13] In the Old Testament and in the Psalms and the Proverbs and in so many parts of the great writings and again the words of Jesus and the words that we find in all the New Testament letters, they are so full of instruction.

And they also reveal to us things that we could never work out ourselves. They reveal to us how this world came into being. This is a wonderful thing. this is why this word is so precious.

It reveals to us, God has chosen to reveal to us something of himself. We could never work out other than, we're told in Romans, that the creation speaks to us of his eternal power and Godhead.

So we could work out certain things of God by the creation. But we need more than that. And that's why we have here the special revelation where God has revealed so much of his own, of who he is to us.

We're able to, from the word, understand his wisdom, his righteousness, his judgment. We're able to understand his grace, his mercy, his love, his goodness.

[15 : 27] There are so many aspects to the being of God that are taught to us from the scripture. Again, we're taught about the coming of the second person of the Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ, into this world.

Without the word of God, we wouldn't know that by nature we're under condemnation. There are things in the word sometimes that when we come to it will shake us.

But we see that all have sinned and we've all come short of the glory of God. But we also see that God has not left us to himself because God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

So we have this whole book of instruction. So this is what the psalmist is saying. You guide me with your providential leading just in the way that God led Israel through the wilderness all these years to the land of promise.

Again, that's a classic example of the word and providence. God gave the promise that he was going to take them into a land, the land of promise, into Canaan.

[16 : 44] But the getting there, that took a long time. Their journey was full of twists and turns. And there were many times that they seemed to be going back rather than forward.

Times they seemed to be going round in circles. And we hear them moaning and groaning and complaining. just like ourselves. Because sometimes that's the way it is for us too.

Because there's times we go round in circles. And there are times we seem to be going backwards rather than forwards. And sometimes we feel we've lost our way. And sometimes even we feel like the Israelites did, like taking up stones against Moses and Joshua and the leaders.

Because we think that what on earth is happening? But God was in control. and before he was going to take them into the land of promise he had to deal with them.

See this is what God is doing. This is what he was doing as well. This was the instruction part. He was changing them because they weren't ready to inherit the promise.

[17 : 49] And that's what God is doing with all the twists and turns and all the times you're going round in circles and you think nothing is happening. God is always at work.

So we must never lose sight of that. So that's what we're told. You guide me with your counsel and afterward you will receive me to glory. All through life the Lord is going to lead me and then at the end of the day he's going to take me to be with himself.

Now this word receive that we have here afterwards you will receive me to glory. It's the same word that is used back in Genesis when the Lord took Enoch.

Remember Enoch that man who walked with God and God took Enoch out of this world. Enoch remember didn't die. It's very interesting that God took from the first period in the world prior to the flood he took one in his body into glory and then he took another in the second period from the flood right up throughout the whole of the Old Testament period he took Elijah and then the next one in our time is the Lord Jesus Christ because Jesus took a body he died in his body and he rose in his body and he is in glory in his body.

So there are these three times within the history that God has set out for us but this is the wonderful thing is that the Lord will receive us to glory and as we say this word receive is the same word as where he takes and that's what he said I go to prepare a place for you and I will come again and I will receive you unto myself I will take you unto myself and it's a taking in order to receive.

[19 : 57] You know I often try to think what on earth will it be like the arrival into glory. You know we speak about it we think about it but there is no way our minds can understand just what it's going to be like but the thing is we will arrive we will be received by Jesus into glory.

It's an amazing thought but that's what the word is telling us and this glory that we will arrive into will touch every aspect of our being.

Our character will become glorious where we will in our being I was mentioning that just again I mentioned that very recently there how I was saying that about my father he was one of the things that concerned him so much in his last just before he died how does the spirit how do we function in glory without a body because there's this period where we will be unclothed till the resurrection but God is a spirit and there is this functioning in the realm of the spiritual and everything will be wonderful but it's difficult for us to understand how we will function but our soul and we believe that our memory and our understanding and all these things will be there because it's very clear from the scripture that memory is part of what happens in glory it was with regard to hell the rich man was called upon to remember the things that had happened we're told in glory that the church is asking about who are these and they're told again to remember those so there is a remembering going on in the great eternity so our whole everything will be changed and you know it's hard for us to understand that sometimes we say to ourselves why aren't we told more about heaven why aren't we told since that's where we're going to be that's where we're going to spend compared to our life here eternity is going to be like it's going to be like just one second put up against our life and that doesn't even begin to match it in any way it's forever and ever and ever and ever living living always living living more more alive than we've ever been here so it's hard for us to understand what heaven will be like and very often it's given to us in negatives that there shall be no more pain there'll be no more tears there'll be no more death the things that enemies that hurt us and we're so conscious of no more sin all these things none of these things will be within you or within me or within the environment that we inhabit so glory glory really is just it's the most extraordinary concept that we have ahead of us there will not be there'll be no anxiety no troubles no fear one of the sad things in this world as we know it's a great enemy of death and you just look around in here and so many of the seats would you used to know that so and so he sat there she sat there and that's what it says psalm 103 the place which once knew us will know us no more will never be seen again in this world but that'll never be the case in glory we're never asking where is so and so so and so is no longer here no that'll never be the case always and ever present always being led by the great shepherd the lord jesus christ and so this is what the psalmist says and then he goes and says in verse 25 whom have i in heaven but you and there is nothing on earth that i desire besides you how things have changed here's the man who not so long ago he was envying the wicked he was looking at their prosperity and i could well imagine

him saying to himself i wish i had what they had look at what look at all the things you'd be able to i suppose measure things in a different way to how you would measure them today but he was looking at what they had and what they were achieving and what they were doing and oh he was so miserable ah it's all changed now because he's saying whom have i in heaven but you and there's nothing on earth it's not an amazing change he's looking around everywhere he's looking at all the wealth and all the prosperity and he's looking at all the power that this world has and he's looking at all these things and he says i wouldn't choose anything anywhere in all the wide world over you lord what a change and that is where we need to get ourselves as well because if we are brutally honest i'm sure sometimes in your christian life something of the spirit of asaf has invaded our spirit where we have looked and our heads have been turned and we've looked at those and we say they've got such an easy life was it worth following the lord jesus christ satan will make huge mileage out of that as he did in asaf's experience the lord won't leave you there turn you around and you'll come back to the place and you'll be saying you know this i wouldn't change my life may be difficult there might have been losses and crosses and pains and sorrows but even with all these things i wouldn't change where i am now because i have the lord with the richest most powerful person in this world because you lord are everything to me and he knows that at the end of the day that he says this in verse 26 my flesh and my heart may fail but god is the strength of my heart and my portion forever because you see he has discovered that his flesh and his heart did fail and they do fail us you know there's no point in listening to our flesh our flesh will tell us our flesh will tell us many different things and the flesh is very deceitful our heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked but he's comparing and contrasting what it would be like what's it like without the lord what's it like with the lord well i'll tell you what it's like to have the lord to have the lord is to have everything because he says here but god is the strength of my heart now this word is literally the rock of my heart and you know what a rock is a rock is that which is steadfast the wind may blow but the rock will stay secure the fire may burn but the rock is still there and that's what he's saying despite all the things that come into my life the lord is the rock of my heart and he's my portion forever my portion forever it's not beautiful and it's the other way around as well because we're told in the scripture the lord says my people are my portion it's beautiful meeting together the lord's portion in this world are his people out of everything again you might be thinking a wee bit like as of today and you're looking at the world and you're saying oh look at look at these magnificent buildings look at all the wealth some of these billionaires have and millionaires have and look at all that these people have i would love to have a bit of it and be able to do this and that it would be great to go wherever i want all these kind of things but you know all these things

fade like a leaf they pass with a using one day they can be gone like that but the lord is our portion forever once the lord becomes our portion once the lord comes into our life once the lord enters into your soul once you begin to follow the lord it's forever you may stumble you may slip you may have all kinds of things that's what is happening to asaph he was he was saying that we saw that at the beginning my feet at all must stumble my steps had nearly slipped he was feeling that he was just about a goner but by the end he said oh no not a chance because lord you are my portion you have a hold on me just like jesus said my sheep shall never perish no one he said shall pluck them out of my hand and to reinforce it he says nor shall anyone pluck them out of my father's hand and i and the father are one so there's this we are being held secure forever so it's no wonder that the psalmist is just he's on an absolute high as he begins to reflect on who he has and what he has for all of time and for all eternity and i hope that it's true of each one of us that the lord is our portion because as he saw there in verse 16 but when

[30 : 12] I saw but when I thought how to understand this it seemed to me a wearisome task until I went to the sanctuary of god then I discerned their end truly you set them in a slippery place you make them fall to ruin how they are destroyed in a moment and so on see it's going to it's all going to change everything's going to change death as we said it's a great enemy and we've got to face it and I think the older we get the more we think about it it's inevitable that death is going to come and there's there are two ways of looking at death there's kind of a kind of a despair in it and just saying a sort of fatalistic approach and say well if it's going to happen it's going to happen I'll just have to meet it best I can and I'm sure that's how many people think of death but for the Christian they say well death yes I don't look forward to it nobody looks forward to it but you know we look forward to what's coming what's following immediately not after a while but immediately the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory because you see in death it's a one thing really in life we have to face all on our own people may be around you they can be holding your hand they can be giving you as much comfort as possible but only you can travel through that door that experience is yours for that at that moment but with the Lord he is your portion forever he is with you in death's dark veil and he is with you to take you up to the other side because he is going to receive you to glory let us pray oh Lord our God we give thanks for the great assurances that you give us in your word forgive us Lord for how fickle we often are but Lord we give thanks for your patience with us and that you will set out again before us as you do even today the right way and the right coach help us Lord to believe in you help us to trust you with all our heart guide us and keep us and take us to our home safely have mercy upon us oh Lord and do us good for giving us our every sin in Jesus name amen