

A Cry For Help

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: 24 February 2019

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 0 0] hope we'll find is very relevant for our own context today as well. Well, it really goes without saying that Christians are in a battle for the truth of God in the generation that we belong to.

We are very much in a conflict with those who want to undermine and overthrow God's truth, God's gospel, God's church, everything really that is done through the years valuable to Christians.

And how great a benefit it is for us that we can actually come from the context that we are in and find that the Bible speaks into that context very directly.

You go back to the Bible, you find down through the course of the centuries that Christians have faced exactly the same situation, the same problems, the same challenges, the same difficulties.

But you'll find, as you do in this psalm, that we are given a lot of light as to how to conduct ourselves in that situation, what is required of us in that situation, where we find our confidence in that situation.

[1 : 1 1] And all of that is packed into this very short psalm. It's a psalm that's crucial for ourselves as individuals in times of crisis.

It's a cry for help on the part of David, but it's not simply with a view to his own comfort, to his own life individually or personally. It is that, but it's also a cry for help that God would come and deal with the situation that he finds himself in.

A situation where so much of what he sees around him is simply the bravado of sin. And where he seeks that that will be changed by the Lord's own intervention.

So he finds his comfort and his confidence as he comes back to think about God, not just in God himself, but in the words of God and in the promises of God for the keeping of his people safe.

So that's the kind of thing that we require as we come to our own times. I need not tell you, you're very much aware yourselves, that as truth is relegated, so sin comes to be promoted.

[2 : 2 6] The more you relegate truth, the more you'll find that sin is exalted. And the more you find that people will unashamedly come to promote the ways of sin, of immorality, of debauchery even.

The less you have of truth stands logically, the less influence you have on people's lives. When we're talking about truth, we're not talking about just telling truth.

We're not talking just about the opposite of lies. Truth in the absolute sense is what we're talking about. Because when you come to the Bible and it's teaching on truth, you find that this in fact is itself God's truth.

God's truth revealed to us, spoken out by him. Truth ultimately is God himself. That's why Jesus, the Son of God, could say, as he said, as you find in John's Gospel, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

And if Jesus were not God, as well as man, it would be the height of arrogance for any mere human being to say, I am the truth. We can say as Christians, we know the truth.

[3 : 41] We value the truth. We promote the truth as far as possible. We defend the truth. But none of us would ever have the audacity to say, I am the truth.

Only God can do that. And everything that we know as revealed truth, the truth that is especially set out for us in the written word of God in the Bible, is something that has all come and is derived from the fact that God himself is the truth in the absolute sense.

So let's look at two things. Firstly, David's cry to God. We'll look at David's cry, first of all, looking at the crisis that he describes. And then secondly, his cry out to God and what that included.

And then we'll briefly look at God's answer as well, where God, in verse 5, especially speaks back to David as to how he is going to arise and come to hear in response as he's heard the words of David's prayer.

Then we'll look at, secondly, David's confidence in God, which will include the words of God and also the people of God in verses 6 to 8. So first of all, David's cry to God, and then we'll look at David's confidence in God.

[5 : 02] Here's his cry to God. Here's the crisis that he's describing. Save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone, for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man.

Everyone utters lies to his neighbor with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts. Those who say, with our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us, our lips are ours, they belong to us.

Who is master over us? So David is describing the society that he finds in his own day, the situation, the conditions, the crisis that he cries out of.

He knows that the godly have become few. That those who are faithful to God have virtually vanished from the face of the earth.

At least that's how it feels to him. That's how he himself senses things. That's what he's aware of. The scarcity of those who uphold the truth is his great complaint to God.

[6 : 06] It's that which he brings to God. There's plenty around, he says, of talk. But the talk that he's aware of on the part of those that he's describing, it's flattery, it's lying, it's boasting, it's smooth talk.

And he tells us it actually comes from a double heart. People whose hearts are not stable because we know that only the truth of God will in fact keep your heart stable and put your heart together the way that it should.

It's interesting if you go to Psalm 86, just briefly flick forward there to a verse that we often sing, but perhaps don't just stop to think about what it says in Psalm 86 and verse 11 there.

Where he says, Lord, teach me your way that I might walk in your truth. And then he says, unite my heart to fear your name.

Now it's interesting that he speaks there about God's truth and something that he himself wants God to teach him to walk in the way of his truth. But to do that, he says, unite my heart to fear your name.

[7 : 14] Why does our heart need to be united? What leaves our heart in this situation, in this condition that it needs to be united? What does it mean that it's disunited?

Well, your heart is disunited and mine is disunited because that's part of the ravages of sin, isn't it? You find that in our lives as they are without God's grace coming to powerfully influence and change our lives, what is the case with our soul?

Well, all of these faculties of your soul, your mind, your conscience, your will, your emotions, it's not that they're not working, but they're not working properly. And they're not working properly in relation to each other.

Because sin has broken down the relationship between the matters of our heart or of our soul, which is really what David means in Psalm 86 there. His heart, he means his whole inner being.

United, Lord, he says, put it together for me so that by that I may walk in your truth. Teach me to walk in your truth. That's what we need. That's what people everywhere need.

[8 : 19] That's what we need throughout our society. That's what you and I need. Our heart to be united. That's what grace does. Sin breaks things down, breaks things up.

Sin breaks us inwardly. Sin breaks us in our relationships. Grace mends. God in his grace. God in his power. God in his love. Because God's love as all true love is a unifying thing.

It's something which puts together what was broken as it found it. So here is David saying, they speak with a double heart.

And from that double heart comes that sort of language. How do you apply that in our own context today? It would be very easy to exaggerate things.

It would be very easy to fall into the trap of thinking there are no good people but ourselves. That would have been entirely wrong. But how do you apply this? Well for one thing look around you and you see we've come to be a generation really that by and large puts style above substance.

[9 : 29] You see when you do away with the truth of God you've got to put something else in its place. You always will put something else in its place. And if you do away with truth which really has substance to it.

Then what you're putting in its place always or almost always will be things to do with image and with style. Things without substance as such. Things which are not lasting. Things which are of secondary importance.

Things which are physical rather than deeply spiritual. And that's really the situation David finds. If you listen to interviews nowadays whether it's on the news or in other programs.

And people are being asked about a certain situation that they're asked to comment on. Or something that's happened in their own lives that's caused maybe some difficulty or challenge for them.

Or something they disagree with. Very often you'll find the interviewer saying how do you feel about that? How do you feel about that? You see there's a subtle change in that from what really used to be asked.

[10 : 37] Instead of how do you feel about that. If you went back sufficient number of years. The interviewer would say how what do you think about that? What are your thoughts about that?

You see we've come to be a generation that has been led away from giving our minds to something. To just feeling about something. To really thinking through situations.

To just expressing them emotionally. And David is saying that's what comes from laying the truth of God aside. Because when you value God's truth.

When you're serious about the Bible. You've got to think. And you've got to think through the things of life. You don't just go to the Bible and read it through as if it's just a novel.

A novel of course should also in its own way make us think. But when you're coming to the Bible as God's revelation of himself to us. What he's like. What we are like. What sort of situation we are in in the world.

- [11 : 38] What we need for our lives. It has to be something that you think through. Look at how often the New Testament and Paul's letters especially. Uses the word mind.
- Uses the word mind. Because the mind in our human being and makeup. Is that which really feeds if you like the rest of our faculties.
- What goes through to your mind. Is then if you like filtered through to your will and to your conscience. So when you have to bring your life up to the light of God's word.
- It makes you think. Or it should make us think. See Paul said to the Romans for example. Don't be conformed to this world. But be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
- The renewing of your mind. Is what happens when God's grace takes you. And changes you from someone unsaved. To someone who's saved. From someone who doesn't really care much about God.
- [12 : 50] To somebody for whom God is the all consuming matter of your life. That doesn't come about without thinking. Nor does your Christian progress.
- Your Christian growth. That's what Peter. Peter. In his letter. As he came to conclude. All that he had said.
- In writing to those that he was writing to. In his own situation. Where he was saying. Grow in grace. And in the knowledge.
- Of God. Or in Christ. The knowledge. What that mind of yours. Comes to assimilate. And apply to your life. So here is what.
- David is actually saying. All of that really grows out of it. Because this is what he's saying. His situation is. And that's the situation we're in. Ourselves today. As you apply that. You think of the way.
- [13 : 45] Language. Is being. Or has been. And is being. Deconstructed. Words that used to mean. Certain things. Have come to be turned around.
- To mean something else. And words that. Language is. Deconstructed. Sometimes. To just. Desensitize people. To what the Bible calls.
- Sin. Just one example. Hugely important matter. In our day. And it's currently. In the news. Particularly in America.
- That's the issue of abortion. Something that's. Difficult to speak about. But we have to speak about it.
- Look at the way. That language is used. Just to. Desensitize people. To what happens. In abortion. Spoken of.
- [14 : 42] For example. As. The termination. Of a pregnancy. But so is birth. So is the birth. Of a living child. The termination.
- Of a pregnancy. Avoids. Avoids. Making the kind. Of personal. Reference. That would conclude. This is actually. The murder. Of a human being. That's why it's.
- The kind of language. That's used there. Just to get people away. From thinking of. What is actually happening. And you can apply that. To other. Areas of ethics.
- And morality. As well. And Christians. Have to be wise. To that. And tactfully. And lovingly. Respond to that. By saying. Look. The use of language. Doesn't actually. In any way.
- However much. It desensitizes. People. In their minds. From thinking about. Being sinful. Or wrong. It doesn't actually. Change the issue. Faith. That's what our generation.
- [15 : 38] Really needs to be brought back. To the scriptures. To the Bible. To the truth of God. To have hearts united. By God. It's interesting isn't it. That along with all of that.
- You have a growing insistence. On individual rights. On individual rights. As you find in verse four there. The tongue that makes great boasts. Who says.

With our tongue. We will prevail. Our lips are ours. Who is master over us. That's the voice of today. Saying. I have my individual rights. I'm in charge of my own life.

I don't need a minister. I don't need a politician. I don't need anybody. To tell me how to live my life. I will live it the way I like. That's the situation. David. Was facing then.

Those who express themselves. In that sort of. Arrogant. Boastful. Proud way. And he's praying to God.

[16 : 35] It's interesting. When you go to. The book of Revelation. Which isn't the easiest book in the Bible. To read or understand. By any means. But. The outline of it is. Fairly straightforward.

There's Christ. And his church. Challenged by. Satan. And his assistants. The beast. The false prophet. That's what they're called.

We're not going to go into. Deputation of that tonight. But it's interesting that. One of Satan's great helpers. Is the false prophet. And false prophets.

Abound in the New Testament. That's what Elijah had to face. That's what Isaiah had to face. That's what all the prophets of God. In their own generation. Had to face. Because. The false prophet.

Smoothly. Butters people up. Flatters people. Prevents them from knowing the truth. Of God. Of course the outcome. As the Bible tells us.

[17 : 30] And shows us. Is disaster. And that false prophecy. Sadly. Is. Very much. A matter of. The church itself.

In its decline. No longer. Being true to God. And to his truth. Setting the truth aside. And living by other philosophies.

Instead. There is David's. Crisis. And there is David's. Secondly. The cry. To God. Where he is saying. Save. Oh Lord. You see. That word. Save. Is so important.

It's not just the word. Help. It includes the idea. Of help. But he is very. Carefully using. The word. Save. It's. From a big. Root.

In the Old Testament. From which you get. The word. Messiah. The word. Salvation. Savior. All these are from the same root. As this word. In this verb. Save.

[18 : 26] This imperative. That David is putting. To God. Why is that? Because. David knows. That only God's. Intervention. Actually. Is going to change things.

Have we got. This into our heads. Tonight. Are we. Impressing. Pressing. Upon. Our people. In the generation. That we belong to. That the situation.

That exists. In our land. Amongst our people. The crisis. That we know of. That's described. In the likes of. Psalm 12. And elsewhere. The only solution. To that. Is to bring it.

Before God. And seek. That God himself. Would intervene. By the power. Of his truth. Save. Lord. Deliver us. From this. Lord.

That's what he's saying. Pretty much saying. In that use of. That one word. Save. Or these words. Save. Oh Lord. It's David. Acknowledging. Lord. If you don't help us.

[19 : 21] We're done for. We're just going to go. Further on. Into this. Pit of darkness. But you. Lord. Can do it. And we're appealing to you.

Save. Take us out of this. Extremity. And that's what we must do. Likewise. We have to be convinced. Friends. Tonight. That. The crisis.

We're facing. Is far too. Far too. Great. For any political. Philosophy. For any philosophy. At all. In fact. For any human. Philosophy. How much.

However much. We may find. That people are very. Sincere. And very genuine. In trying to solve things. That way. And we have to. Support them. And pray for them. Where they are not.

In. In opposition. To God's truth. We need more than that. We need God. We need to be saved.

[20 : 16] We need the intervention. Of a savior. The only savior. Can come to our aid. We have the privilege. Friends. Of coming. To the God we know.

Answers prayer. God who's ridiculed. The God we're advised. To throw aside. The God we're advised. Is outdated. Belongs to an old book.

That's no longer relevant. You know. That that God. Listens to your prayer. Hears your cry. Just as much. As he did. In the days of David.

As you come. To cry to him. You can actually. Plead with him. As David is pleading. To come. To deal with. One. You know. See what he says. It's pretty. It's pretty.

Strong language. Isn't it? We're saying that. May the Lord. Cut off. All. Flattening lips. The tongue. That makes great boasts. Now you mustn't. Conclude from that. That inevitably.

[21 : 15] David wants all of these people. Destroyed. It's not really what he's saying. At all. What he is saying. Is may God intervene. To change this. To cut off the flattery.

And to replace it. With truth. And only God. Has the capacity. To silence. The big talkers. The big worldly talkers.

Of any generation. But he's appealing to God. In a way that knows. That that's the case. And what is God's answer? Well he's saying here.

Because the poor are plundered. Verse 5. Because the needy groan. I will now arise. Says the Lord. I will place him in the safety. For which he longs.

And that's very interesting. And significant. The way that. You find in the Old Testament. Especially this word. Arise. Used. Of the Lord. Sometimes the prayer itself.

[22 : 13] Calls upon the Lord. To arise. As if the Lord. Were sleeping. You see. He's talking about. Times when the power. Of the Lord. Is required. When it has. Reseded.

Because of the arrogance. And sin. Of human beings. That have provoked him. And David is appealing here. To God. To intervene. And sometimes. You find elsewhere.

In the Psalms. Arise Lord. As if he's saying to God. Stir yourself up Lord. See. We can use bold language. It's not.

Language. That's irreverent. That's unbecoming. Of us. When we come to God. To say to God. Arise. Oh Lord. Show yourself.

Stir yourself up. Come. For our salvation. Stir up. Your strength. And mighty. Sales elsewhere. You have the privilege. You praying. People of God.

[23 : 07] You have the privilege. Of coming before God. And the ability to use. That language. And God. Respect the use. That you make. Of that boldness.

That you have. As a child of God. Don't neglect it. Take the examples. That you find. In the Bible. Such as here. And come before God. And wait in the presence. Of God.

Until your heart. Comes to be. Warmed. By. The need. For God. To intervene. As you see it. And appeal to him. To stir himself up.

And you see. What David is saying. What God is saying. I will now arise. Isn't it marvelous. The way. That you find. Throughout the Psalms. David. Actually speaking.

About. The circumstances. He was in. And then he cried. To God. Then he speaks. About God's answer. Nowhere better. Than. You find. In. Psalm 18.

[24 : 02] Where you find. A minister's stress. Calling upon the Lord. Verse 6. To my God. I cried. For help. From his temple. He heard my voice.

And my cry. To him. Reached his ears. Then you find. The most of the Psalm. The rest of the Psalm. Is taken up. With God's answer. And what an answer.

Then the earth. Reeled. And rocked. The foundations. Also of the mountains. Trempled. And quaked. Because he was angry. Smoke went up. From his nostrils. Glowing coals.

Flamed forth from him. He bowed the heavens. And he came down. He rode on a cherub. And he flew. He made the darkness. His covering. He thundered in the heavens. The voice of the most high.

Uttered. He sent out his arrows. And scattered them. All the way through there. You find. Time after time. Building up. All of these. Upheavals. In the creation.

[24 : 59] You might say. And they're all an answer. To David's prayer. It's David's. Way of saying. When the Lord answers. You never know. What he's going to do. Isn't that great?

And I climbed up. These pulpit steps. Tonight. And I try. Allow a personal reference. I try. And think about this. In the vestry. Before I come through. And come to the pulpit. Which is always a great privilege.

Of course. But as Martin Lloyd-Jones said. One of the most exciting times. In his life. Was when he climbed. The steps of the pulpit. Because he says. Before you come back down again.

You never know. What God is going to do. And it's the same. When you come to pray to God. Oh you might be saying. As I often say. About my prayer to God.

How poor it is. How pathetic I am. In prayer. Compared to others. If I was to compare myself. To others. And especially. With those saints of the Bible. But when you open your mouth.

[25 : 56] And cry to God. Remember this. You may be very surprised. At God's answer. And what God is going to do. Now he says.

God. God says. I will. Now. Arise. You see. God. Like a sleeping giant.

Sometimes. He stirs himself up. In answer. To his people's prayer. Never lose sight of that. When you come before God. In prayer. You may not see it instantly.

You may not even see it. Through the whole of your lifetime. Your lifetime. But when God. Has his moment. That he has chosen. To answer the prayer. Of his people.

For his intervention. He really does. Come. To intervene. Mightily. And that's. Where we have.

[26 : 54] Tonight. Our view of God. From this psalm. I will now. Arise. Says the Lord. And that brings us.

To David's. Confidence. Here's David's cry. Out of the crisis. The cry that he makes. And briefly. God's answer. I'm just enclosing. God's confidence.

In God. David's confidence. In God. Verse 6. The words of the Lord. Are pure words. Like silver refined. In a furnace. On the ground. Purified.

Seven times. Sometimes we need. To be reassured. Of just what the Bible is. Here is God. Reassuring us. Through David.

That the words. Of the Lord. Are pure words. You see the contrast. Contrast. Deliberately. To the beginning. Of the psalm. The words. Of those.

[27 : 48] Who speak lies. With flattering lips. With a double heart. Who say our lips. Are ours. Those who boast. Who use this kind of language. The words. Of the Lord.

Are pure words. There's nothing in them. At all. Of anything. That is of. Sin.

That is unreliable. That you cannot trust in. They're pure words. And. You notice the illustration. He's giving. Like silver refined.

In a furnace. On the ground. Or a furnace of earth. Purified. Seven times. You come to burn. Silver. Gold. Metal. Like that precious metal. You're burning off.

The dross. Not that he's suggesting. That God's words. Had any dross. But what he's saying. With the purity. Of pure silver. Is an illustration.

[28 : 46] Of God's pure words. There's no defect. In them. You can absolutely. You can absolutely. Trust in them. I think there is also.

The idea. And it just like. Silver goes through. A process. Of refinement. It's quite often called. Testing as well. It's a process. Through which.

Silver goes in order. To produce the pure metal. Well. There's the idea. In this. I think. That God's word. Has been. Thoroughly. Tested. Down.

Through the generations. Of the world's. History. All the way. From the first. Believers. In the world. God's word. Has been tested. Put to the test.

And it hasn't just survived. It's always overcome. It's always proved itself superior. When God comes to show.

[29 : 42] Its superiority. We need that confidence. In the gospel. We need that confidence. In the word of God.

When it's so. Very much tested. And. When we are very much tested. In regard to. Our belief in the Bible itself. As God's word. God's truth. Have you ever thought.

How. Incredible. A thing it is. That the Bible still exists. That the word of God.

Still exists. In our possession. As we have it. In written form. Go back over the centuries. In the history of the world. Look at the many. Many attempts.

That have been made. In the history of the world. In the history of God's church. To destroy the truth. And it's still there. In its integrity. Untouched.

[30 : 41] Because you see. You cannot destroy. The truth. You can undermine it. You can misrepresent it. You can do all sorts of things.

That will seek to. Put it aside. You can stop using it. But you cannot destroy it. Simply because.

It is. In itself. Truth. It is God's truth. It is. Out of himself. The battle is still raging.

As you come to the end of the psalm. And just in case. We were. Lulled into a false sense. Of security. Going through the psalm. And coming to this confidence. That he has in God's word.

Rightly so. And then saying in verse 7. That God is indeed. Going to guard his people. That he's going to look after them. He's going to keep them. From whatever assaults come their way.

[31 : 38] They're never going to be. Ultimately destroyed. But he says in verse 8. On every side. The wicked. Proul. That's a word which means.

Really walk openly. They're walking about openly. The wicked. Are walking about openly. On every side. As vileness is exalted. Among the children of man.

That's what we said at the beginning. The more you put. That truth down. The more you relegate it. The more you put it aside. The more you're going to exalt vileness. There's a lot of vileness.

Exalted in our generation. It's a tragedy. It's an awful thing to see. People destroying their own lives.

And doing it in a way that they think. They know best. That's not what we were made for. We were made to value God's truth.

[32 : 40] To live by God's truth. To promote God's truth. To love God's truth. And what he's saying here. The wicked.

Are walking openly. Look at the boldness. The brashness. The self-confidence. Of sin in our day. And of the promotion of sin. On the part of those.

Who choose to do that. Well don't lose your confidence. We're going to sing from Psalm 37. In a moment.

As I was going through it yesterday. A thought came to me that. We should read Psalm 37. Very very often. Let me just close with.

Why that is so true. Because Psalm 37. Is a psalm that fits in so much. With what we're seeing. In Psalm 12 tonight. Here's the way that. The psalm of David.

[33 : 38] Psalm 37 begins. Fret not yourself. Because of evil doers. Be not envious of wrong doers. They will soon fade like the grass.

And wither like the green herb. Trust in the Lord. And do good. Delight yourself in the Lord. All the way down through the psalm. He is comparing.

Those who oppose God. With those who. Had his own. His own generation. Are faithful to God. But suffer for it. Well he's saying.

What David is saying there is. But. Think of the ultimates. Think of destiny. Take a long term view. Think of the end.

Of both of these categories. And the end. For the wicked. Is absolutely terrible. The end. For the faithful.

[34 : 39] Is indescribably great. You know. The best. Commentary. On that. Beatitude of Jesus. Blessed are the meek. For they shall inherit the earth.

The best commentary. You'll find on that. Is Psalm 37. Check it out. Check it out. In a way that. Would follow.

David's reasoning. In Psalm 12. To seek. That the Lord. Will come. Bless. Not only us. But the generation. That we.

Form part of. May he bless to us. His. Own word. Let's conclude. By singing. From Psalm 37. We're singing. From. Verse 7.

To 11. In the. Older version. In the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 7. 37. At verse 7. It's on page. 253. We'll sing.

[35 : 39] To verse 11. Rest in the Lord. And patiently. Wait for him. Do not fret. For him. Who prospering. In his way. Success. And sin doth get. Do thou from anger.

Cease. And wrath. See thou forsake also. Fret not thyself. In any wise. That evil. Thou shouldst do. Singing down. As far as verse 11. But by inheritance.

The earth. The meek ones. Shall possess. They also. Shall delight. Themselves. In an abundant. Peace. These verses. In conclusion. Rest in.

Have mercy. Of God. For him do not pay, But in the cross he did in his way, That death in sin of death.

Get out of my mercy, Sandra, See thou for sake of soul.

[36 : 53] Friend of my sovereign in any way, That evil are to do.

For those of evil who are so, Shall be the throne of gold.

But from the strength upon the Lord, The earth in her it shall.

For yet of his hell, why the man, The wicked shall not see.

Till his heart shall come to her well, But in the flesh shall not see.

[37 : 56] But by inheritance the earth, The unmeak ones shall possess.

They also shall be like themselves, In love among the kings.

I'll go to the side door to my right this evening. And now may the peace of God, The grace of God, The love of God the Father, And the communion of the Holy Spirit Be with you now and evermore.

Amen.