

Give Peace a Chance

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

We're continuing our series of Prayers to Pray in the Mess of Life. We continue to walk through the first ten psalms in the book of Psalms. So if you'll look with me, chapter 4, verse 1.

This is the Word of God. Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness. You have given me relief when I was in distress.

Be gracious to me and hear my prayer. Verse 2. O men, how long shall my honor be turned to shame?

How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself.

[1 : 04] The Lord hears when I call to him. Verse 4. Be angry and do not sin. Ponder in your own beds, or ponder in your own hearts on your beds and be silent.

Offer right sacrifices and put your trust in the Lord. There are many who say, who will show us some good?

Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord. You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their wine and grain abound.

Verse 8. In peace, I will both lie down and sleep. For you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. May God bless the preaching of his Word. In the summer of 1969, no single word better captured the spirit of the moment, the heart of the people, than the word peace.

[2 : 14] The United States was in the midst of the Vietnam War, which had we not engaged in that war, my wife would have never come to this country. So I, for one, am grateful we fought. Many Americans were not, though, happy about that war.

They wanted peace. They wanted the war to be over. They marched in the streets and called for peace. They gathered throughout the summer of love for Woodstock and all sorts of things, for John Lennon's bed in with his new wife, Yoko Ono.

They celebrated peace and acceptance and love. They took to the stage and sung numerous songs about the emptiness of war and the dire need for peace. Songs like, war, what is it good for?

Tempted to sing it. Absolutely nothing. Blowing in the wind. Turn, turn, turn. Fortunate Son by CCR. While My Guitar Gently Weeps by the Beatles with Eric Clapton taking the long solo at the ends.

And perhaps none more clear than Give Peace a Chance by John Lennon, which he did sing from his bed. He said everybody's talking about the problems. Everybody's offering the wrong solution.

[3 : 25] All they really need to do is give peace a chance. Peace. Not war. Love. Not hate. You know, in many ways, this summer feels a lot like 1969.

Many Americans are taken to the streets. Many Americans are protesting the wrongs they see in America. Many are chanting and singing for justice and for peace.

But few are holding out the peace that David describes in this psalm. Peace in verse 8 and throughout the Old Testament is the Hebrew word, shalom.

That's probably one Hebrew word you've heard before. One I've heard before. Shalom isn't merely the absence of peace or the presence of love and acceptance. It's so much more.

One writer I read this week said, Jammed into this word is everything good. That's what shalom is. That's what peace is biblically. It's not a pacifism or something like that.

[4 : 26] It's jammed into this word is everything good. So shalom. Peace is contentment, harmony, freedom, health, safety, love, and of course, peace.

It's everything we long for. Everything we could ever want. And it's something God holds out for us. I think that's what this scripture is holding out for us this morning. It's something God holds out for us in the best of times and the worst of times.

Not merely in the gifts he gives, but in the gift of himself. In a word, where we're going is peace isn't a good feeling or a stress-free life. It's the settled confidence that the Lord knows you and keeps you in all distress.

Peace isn't a good feeling or a stress-free life. It's the settled confidence that the Lord knows you and keeps you in all distress. I know that's a mouthful, so I'll try to hold to it and press it into us this morning.

In a word, well, we're going to break this out three points. The first is distress will come upon all of us. Distress will come upon all of us. If you remember, as we've been walking through these songs, we talked about how chapter 1 was David individually praying for the word of God to dwell in him, that he'd be like a tree by streams of water.

[5 : 40] And then chapter 2 turned very global as he began to pray for the nations. And then 3 and onward, all the way, most of the first 24, David's dealing with trouble.

And so that's where we find him in this chapter again. He's in distress again. He's meeting trouble again. If you know anything about David, he met a lot of trouble at home and in the world.

And you see it immediately because there's no introduction, no thanksgiving, no invocation or something like that, no calling on the Lord, or I mean addressing the Lord.

Immediately he gets right to the point. Answer me. I'm calling to you. Be gracious to me. Hear my prayer.

Bracketed in this first verse are three cries for help. And then tucked in the middle of them is this remembrance of the past. You have given me relief in the past when I called.

[6 : 34] And I think taken together, they're meant quite obviously to say is David's in trouble. And desperate for God. There are times you have to pray that you don't have time for pleasantries.

And that's where David is. Now what's going on? Some say Psalm 4 is just a continuation of Psalm 3 that David's on the run from Absalom.

Y'all remember this and David's son who usurped the throne and ran him out of town. Others say that David's dealing with famine or drought. That's what we see down in verse 7.

And still others just say this is just another uprising that happened in the kingdom of Israel. Another threat to his rule. But in the end, we just don't know the details of what's going on.

And actually, I think it's quite helpful. So I think this Psalm is inviting us to place our distress into David's and take up his prayer.

[7 : 41] Distress, as I think David's trying to articulate here, is anything that comes upon us and leaves us desperate to God for relief. Distress is anything that comes upon us and leaves us desperate to God for relief.

You know, suffering, biblically, suffering takes on many forms. Suffering, we can suffer because of our sin. David's suffering in Psalm 51.

Y'all remember that psalm. Have mercy on me, O God. According to your steadfast love. He's just moaning out this prayer of repentance. Or Psalm 32.

He says, when I kept my sin, I can't remember. I'm not going to quote this right. But when I concealed my sin, when I did not confess my sin, I got in trouble.

We can suffer because of persecution. We can suffer because people rise up against us. They persecute us for the name that we follow. The name that we confess. But distress, in the way that David's describing it right here, is when we suffer because something happens to us.

[8 : 49] Distress is suffering that comes upon us. It's something that comes upon us, makes us suffer, and leaves us desperate for God, like a natural catastrophe, an earthquake, or a drought, or something like that, or a physical illness, a pandemic, or a chronic physical illness that happens upon us.

You know, an unexpected event, a cancellation, an economic downturn, or a sin of someone else. You know, sin splashes from close friends onto us.

Spouses, children sin against us. The idea is that in this world, distress comes upon us and makes us suffer. This kind of suffering is a fact of life on this side of the fall.

Job said man is born for trouble as the sparks fly upward. That's because every man and every woman is born into a fallen, troubled world. Distress and trouble come down on everyone under the

sun.

The rain falls on the just and the unjust, but so do the storms. The question is not if you'll face distress, it's when.

[10:02] How's that for encouragement? Cheer up, it only gets worse. But oddly enough, it is encouraging.

This is one of those moments where the Bible is incredibly realistic. It doesn't gloss over. It doesn't tell us that if life is troubling to us, then something has gone amiss.

In fact, it tells us the opposite. It gives us a much-needed, realistic perspective of life. One of the worst things we can do when distress and trouble come upon us is become surprised.

That's why 1 Peter says, don't be surprised when the fiery trials come upon you. Don't be surprised when headaches pound, businesses fail, customers cancel, friends walk away, viruses spread, kids stray, cancer strikes.

In the article that the women are going to read this week, every day is a bad day, the author says these words that are so helpful. The sooner we face the fact that we live and work in a sin-cursed world, the more realistic and stable we will be.

[11:10] Realizing that fact doesn't make us unstable, it actually stabilizes us. We will stop expecting things to always get better. We won't be so surprised when they sometimes get worse.

Listen, we no longer fear bad news, not because we hope it's not coming, but because we know it is coming. That's incredible.

That's the book of Ecclesiastes. If you haven't read it and just put your soul into it, it's an incredible book. And so we shouldn't be surprised, and yet we shouldn't stop crying out to the Lord for relief.

That's what I love about David. Yes, distress came into his life, but he had a reflex to continually call upon the Lord. Point two, distress often reveals what we want most.

Distress often reveals what we want most. You know, some people, when they begin to pray, they really talk more than they pray, you know? They're praying to God, but then they begin to ramble and address the people in the room.

[12:20] I found this often to be the case when I was a young boy, and my mom was praying for me. You know, she was obviously praying to the God, but she was also kind of lecturing me during the prayer for the ways I was being a pain in the neck to her day in and day out.

And I'm sure some of the parents can relate to that, and some of the kids can relate to that in this room. But David, as he continues to pray, he really does something very different. He begins to talk. He begins to address people gathered together with him.

Now, David is the king. He's the lead worshiper. And so many say he was praying in the temple where all could hear. He was leading the people in prayer. And as he does, he addresses three different groups in verses 2 through 6 and teaches us how distress often reveals what we want most.

This is just so helpful. David is telling us that distress is something that happens to us, but distress also, often quite painfully, reveals what's within us.

So distress is something that happens to us, but distress also brings out of us what is within us, what's in our heart. The idea is that distress and trouble are not merely bad things that happen to good people.

[13:37] The idea is that distress and trouble are acid tests for what we really love. You know, with a noble metal like gold, you know, something I guess is shiny and looks a little bit like gold, they would acid test it.

They would throw this acid on it to see if it would corrode or rust in any way. And so this process of scouring this rock with acid in order to discern its genuine qualities or its lack of genuine qualities, while a similar thing happens to us in distress.

Distress and trouble in the hand of a good God are acid tests for what we love, for what we want. And as David addresses these folks in the audience as he prays, he's addressing people's trouble in response.

To distress. It's just such an interesting psalm. And so some people, immediately what we see, they slander. The first people David talks to as he begins to talk in his prayer is to the powerful who are attempting to dishonor him by seeking and spreading slander.

[15:00] Look down there with me in verse 2. He says, O men, really that should be, O men of rank, if you see that in our ESV down there at the bottom, how long shall my honor be turned to

shame?

How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? The idea is he's addressing men of political and military power and they're turning against him.

But here they're not turning against him with spirit and sword. Spirit and sword. They're turning against him with words. Look, if we place those two together, how long shall my honor be turned to shame?

Well, how is it being turned to shame? It's because you love vain words and seek after lies.

Literally, you love empty words and you hide in lies.

The idea is you give yourself to slander. The idea is they're dishonoring, they're disrespecting him as the king by seeking and spreading slander. Now, we used to chant on the playground, sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.

[16:03] But the Bible completely disagrees. Particularly for a man in authority. The tongue is a fire, James tells us, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life and chief among its evils is slander.

Tim Keller and David Pallison define slander for us if you look there. The verb slander simply means to speak against. That's what it means in the original language.

It's not necessarily a false report, just an against report. The intent is to belittle another, to pour out contempt, to mock and hurt, to harm, to destroy, to rejoice, rejoice in purported evil.

I think it's so helpful. Just hold that up there for just a moment. That it's not necessarily a false report. It's an against report. So slander is not necessarily untrue.

So gossip is spreading something untrue, but slander is spreading just something damaging. It may be true, but spreading something true and damaging is wrong for the people of God.

[17:12] So why, in distress, do some people slander? What's going on? And I think, what's driving this slander here, I think this is where the context really helps if we take a read on one of those context ideas there, is that these men are seeking and spreading slander because they're jealous of David.

David's the king. They want the honor and respect and position he has. They want the success and blessing he has. You remember they were chanting, David's killed his 10,000 and Saul his, whatever, 100.

I don't remember. I need to refresh on David a little bit. But they want to be the ones who look good. Mel was trying to tell it to me. I couldn't read a little sweat. They want to be the ones who look good and so they slander.

They slander. To make them look bad, David look bad, and them look good. The idea is that when distress comes, instead of weeping with those who weep, they take advantage of the moment.

Slander is opportunistic. They take advantage of the moment to make him look worse, hoping they will look good. And we can be vulnerable to the same sin. Sadly, slander is a Christian sin.

[18:30] I think it's one of those sins that we condemn everybody that goes to the ABC store, but our mouth and under our tongue is evil.

When distress comes, we can take advantage of those who are down. We can spread an against report. We can make others' trouble look worse. You know, slander is never seeking information. Slander is always putting down the one in order to put up another. You know, a good rule of thumb is don't share anything damaging, or listen to, I guess, don't share or listen to anything damaging with anyone who is not a part of the problem or the solution.

Don't share anything damaging with anyone who is not a part of the problem or the solution. And you guys probably have people in your life that love to tell you everybody's dirty laundry.

And I don't want to know it, you know. If you just take that principle and apply it on Facebook this week, you will stick out like a sore thumb. And so David is confronting this first group because they slander.

[19:48] It's so interesting. One little point here. One last point. In verse 2, you notice he says, How long? Again, How long? You know, every other time that is used, that refrain, that rhetorical question is used in the New Testament.

It's used in the Old Testament and in the Psalm. It's used of the Lord. How long will the wicked triumph over me? But here it's used to underline how hard it is to get out of slander.

How long will you keep on slandering? Second, others become angry. Others become angry. The second people David talks to in his prayer are the angry.

Look down there in verse 4. He says, Be angry and do not sin. Ponder in your own hearts, on your beds, and be silent. You know, perhaps they're angry and offended with the slanderers. That's the way they go together. They're pro-king, pro-David, pro-Israel, and they want justice in the kingdom. But David addresses them very bluntly. Literally, he says, Tremble in anger, but do not sin.

[20 : 54] Boil in anger, but do not sin. Essentially, he's saying, your anger is not helping. So you can get angry, but do not sin.

You know, when we boil it down, anger is simply saying, I don't like that. I'm against that. You know, in and of itself, anger is not sinful or wrong.

In fact, there are some things we should be angry about. Sex abuse, human trafficking, racism, things like that. But anger often goes wrong. Sadly, distress and trouble often open up a snare for anger and bitterness.

Distress and trouble often open up a snare for anger and bitterness. We give in to discontentment and frustration. We take note of every wrong and replay it again and again and again.

How many days, weeks, and years have we wasted in the pit of anger and bitterness? It's striking to me that, you know, in Ephesians 4, Paul picks up this verse.

[22 : 02] A rather odd verse in the Old Testament to pick up. It says, Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down in your anger. I think he gets it exactly right. Why?

Is he saying that? Because anger becomes a snare. Becomes a snare because it feels so right. There's no sin more satisfying than anger.

You feel so just. Yeah, I remember years ago, and I know this, I know anger is satisfying firsthand experience, but I remember years ago, ran into a little angry incident.

I used to live in a house with 11 guys. You know, last week at Advance, they played this game. I didn't make it in time for this game. They played this game called Bonkers where they make the kids run around. It's kind of a way to pay back your kids if they've been annoying you lately.

And they give all the parents this kind of pantyhose like shove full of flour. They basically give them a flour bomb. And the kids are running around and you get to toss it or smack the kid.

[23 : 06] I don't exactly know all the rules, but if you smack them, you bonk them with this flour bomb, then you get to mark an X on their arm or mark a part of an X and if they get such and such a number X, they're out of the game.

Well, one time when I was living in this house with 11 guys, I was flour bombed. One night, me being a very studious college student, I'd come home with great plans to go to bed early, to rise up early because I was in the middle of my last semester with 18 credit hours.

You should start feeling sorry for me right now. And, you know, this is a Friday night. None of my friends had the same agenda on their night. So I went to bed early and somewhere in the middle of the night, three of my buddies came up into the room.

One worked the light switch. Another had a camera and the other had a flower bomb. And so basically, and it worked to perfection, their plan that they worked out.

And I hope some of them listen to this and turn back to the Lord. But it worked to perfection. When they flipped on the light, immediately, for some odd reason, I immediately shot up out of bed, at which point, I got slammed into the flower bomb.

[24 : 22] They snapped a picture with the flash and then cut the light out and I fell back in the bed going, what in the world just happened? I started feeling this stuff on my face and pulling it down and looking and seeing.

And when I saw that it was not like snot or something like that, I realized I had been flower bombed and I went through that house in rage. It was not a pretty scene.

I began to rip one guy's clothing or I mean his bedding and throw it into the street. Several guys went running around the neighborhood. I found out later they went immediately to CVS for a one hour photo developing and immediately had that.

And at which point, when they got back in town, I ripped all those pictures apart and I just sat there in my room seething in rage. And you know what? It felt good.

It felt right. And that's what anger does. Instead of seeing this as some sort of joke, not until like two years later, could I do that?

[25 : 28] I was seething in anger. I thought I was the one righteous. And I was ensnared. And that's a humorous example.

But there's been many others. Ensnared in anger. But how do we turn from anger? How do we turn from this snare? And this is where I just love David's prayer.

How do we be angry and not sin? Look at verse 4 and 5. He immediately, he includes six commands here. Verse 3 says, Know that the Lord has set you apart.

He says, Be angry. Do not sin. Ponder in your own hearts. Be silent. Offer right sacrifices. Put your trust in God. One commentator says that the way to be angry, the way you can be angry and not sin is by keeping your thoughts to yourself and by keeping your mouth shut.

I just love that. David immediately gets very practical. The way to get out of this snare is by keeping your thoughts to yourself and keeping your mouth shut. You know, Lisa Simpson on the show, The Simpsons said, Better remain silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.

[26 : 36] So, shut up. That's essentially what David says. When you're angry, when you're boiling up, just shut up. But then he says, Trust God.

This is incredible. I think the idea, he says, Trust God. Offer right sacrifices. Put your trust in God.

The idea is that sinful anger distrusts God. It concludes God doesn't know what he's doing.

It becomes angry with God, which is never wise. It's self-righteous. It reduces what is good and right in this world to what I think and what I want and what I am trying to do.

And it takes matters into its own hand. It vents. It erupts. It bites back. It hits. And so he says, Trust the Lord and stop all that. Reminds me.

I mean, this could be just pulled right out of James 1. Know this, my beloved brothers. Let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness God requires.

[27 : 32] That was my wife and I's life verse for the first couple years of marriage. No lie. I was quoted more than any other ones. So he addresses the angry. Lastly, he addresses those who begin to give up.

Those who begin to give up. Look in verse 6. He says, There are many who say, Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us.

It's striking here that he mentions many. So there are slanders. There are angry. But there are many in this group. There are many that in this occasion, and many just said, Oh, no.

Not another political battle that takes them into war. Not another fight that leaves our homes and land in tatters. Whatever it is, they're immediately discouraged. They keep on saying, and that's the emphasis of the text, they keep on saying, Oh, no.

Not again. Oh, no. Not again. They're beginning to give in to despair. He's addressing them, and he's coming to them because they've begun to locate their hope, which should only be in God, in better circumstances.

[28 : 49] They've begun to locate their hope, their joy, in the prosperity of Israel. And often the acid test of distress and trouble reveals our hope is in better circumstances and not in God.

It's a wonderfully compassionate little verse. He's saying, Our hope begins to be located in a clear scan, in a happy marriage, in a steady paycheck, in obedient children, in a growing nest egg.

We've set aside for retirement, but reality bites again. And again, and David is, David immediately goes, and I don't know how many times as a pastor, I've listened on the receiving end of a phone call or opened an email and sighed out, Oh, Lord.

No. No. No. Reality bites. They're on the edge of turning their back on God forever.

I read the story of one pastor talking about a lady in his congregation named Anna. She was single until later in life and longed to be married and to have children.

[30 : 02] She ended up getting married and even at an older age had two children. But her obsessive desire to give them a good life led to her controlling every aspect of their life.

Her older child began having trouble and her younger child became filled with anger. her desire to have children and to have good children became the only thing she wanted.

What's going to happen? She's on the edge. The names change.

But the cycle continues. Most people don't walk away from the Lord because of unbelief. Most walk away because of despair. But look at this.

The first two groups David rebukes. David looks those slanders in the eye and says, How long?

David looks at the angry and says, Tremble, but don't sin.

[31 : 10] But when David looks at the despairing, he prays. I just love that. David has the heart of God above. That's what you're seeing coming out in this passage. David and God himself rebukes the slander, rebukes the angry, but to the despairing, God opens up his arm and prays.

And I just love that David's eyes are trained to see those who are ready to throw in the towel at the life of heartache so that he can direct their gaze to God. And he does. He says, Lift up the light of your face.

Lift up the light. David's picking up the greatest benediction in the Bible. David's picking up one of the greatest themes in the Bible. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you. The Lord be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. And so doing, David is lifting their gaze to God. David's essentially saying, Don't look for better circumstances. Lift your gaze, beloved, to God.

Above. And I just love that. That's what God's doing for you. If you're in that group this morning. D.A. Carson says it so well, I'm going to quote him.

[32 : 19] He says, The ultimate ground of our rejoicing can never be our circumstances. Even though we as Christians recognize our circumstances are providentially arranged. If our joy derives primarily from our circumstances, then when our circumstances change, we will be miserable.

Our delight must be in the Lord himself. That is what enables us to live with joy above our circumstances. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why the Lord sometimes allows miserable circumstances to lash us that we might learn this lesson.

Whatever the mysteries of evil and sorrow, they do have the effect of helping believers shift the ground of their joy from created things to the creator. From the temporary to the eternal from jingoism, which I don't know what that is, to Jesus, from consumption to God.

In so many ways, that's what David is saying. That's what God is compassionately saying to these people that are despairing, that are on the brink and discouraged, ready to throw in the towel. Shift your ground.

Shift your ground in so many ways. And he continues in verses 7 and 8. Point 3 is, But the Lord gives us the secret to peace and distress. The Lord gives us the secret to peace and distress.

[33 : 38] The secret to peace and distress is remembering the Lord knows you and keeps you. Threaded through this psalm are staggering statements of God's confidence or David's confidence that he is in the Lord's hands.

They're staggering statements. So loaded into this psalm are deep confidence that he's in the Lord's hand. Look at verse 1. He says, Answer me when I call.

The assumption is Answer me when I pray. He's saying, Answer me, God listen to me when I pray, not merely after I pray. And so he says, Answer me when I pray. Answer me right now is what David is saying.

And he says, Answer me, O God of my righteousness. That's not a statement about David, about who he is and how righteous he is. That's a statement about God who is just in every way and righteous in all his acts.

And D's then, look in verse 3. He says, Know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself. The Lord hears when I call to him. And I just find this so interesting.

[34 : 38] We studied Psalm 3 several weeks ago. Remember, David had begun to pray there and he began to talk to himself about how he knows the Lord.

So he was talking about whatever he's facing, that is not who God is. I know the Lord. Well, verse 3 here, he's saying a similar but maybe more wonderful truth. The Lord knows me.

The Lord knows me. The Lord has set apart the godly for himself. And this word, set apart, is a very important Old Testament word. It's littered throughout the book of Exodus.

The idea is that when the plagues were coming down, and you remember that, they fall on Egypt but not on the people of Israel and Goshen because the Lord had set them apart. The flies swarm on the Egyptians but not on the Israelites because the Lord had set them apart.

The livestock of the Egyptians die but not the Israelites because the Lord had set them apart. The Egyptians wail when their firstborn dies but not even a dog grouse at the people of God because the Lord has set them apart.

[35 : 36] The Lord set them apart for himself. Doesn't mean it doesn't hurt.

But it does mean it doesn't have the final say. Because the Lord has set them apart. Look in verse 8. He says, In peace I will both lie down and sleep.

For you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. The rain falls on the just and the unjust. The storms fall on the just and the unjust. But peace only comes to those who have been set apart by the Lord.

This is the secret to peace. That's the secret to joy above the circumstances. That's it right there in the text. It's laying and it's available to every ordinary Christian in this room.

It's laying everything upon the Lord and waiting on Him for relief. That's the secret. That's the secret. That's the peace that surpasses understanding and guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

[36 : 45] Right there, realize that the Lord has set us apart and it's the Lord alone who makes me dwell in safety. So many men can come at me but only the Lord can make me safe. The Lord may set me in the high or I may build the highest castle but only the Lord can make me safe.

No wonder He rejoices. Look in verse 7. It's just an incredible verse. You put more joy in my heart than they have when their wine and grain abound. There's a wonderful contrast between sources of joy.

You see that? Look with me. You put more joy in my heart than they have when their wine and grain abound. So in poverty I have more joy than they have when the wine and grain abound. So there's a contrast in sources of joy.

So I'm not drawing joy and prosperity in this life. I'm drawing joy in the Lord and that's a wonderful truth, isn't it? My joy is not when the barn is full.

My joy is not when the account is full. My joy is not when the prognosis is good. My joy is not in earthly circumstances. But look with me. There's another contrast there.

[37 : 48] Not just between the sources of joy but between the amounts of joy. I just love that there is joy. There is joy in prosperity. There is joy in wickedness at times.

But there's more joy in God. Now, that's incredible. The Christian life is not turning your back on joy for lesser joy.

The Christian life is turning your back on lesser joys to greater joy and greater joy and greater joy. That's the Christian life. Jonathan Edwards said it like this. I think this is so good even though he probably won't read it the way I'm going to read it.

And he says, we come with double forces against the wicked to persuade them to a godly life. The common argument is the profitableness of religion.

Go and get religion so your life goes well. Go and get religion so you can be diligent and prosperous. Something like that. The profitableness of religion which there is some. But alas, the wicked is not in the pursuit of profit, is he?

[38 : 48] Tis pleasure he seeks. Now then, we will fight them with their own weapons. Now that may not tickle your fancy, but that gets me going.

The idea is, you know, the Christian life or the Christian message is not, let's compare the profitableness with the world's joy. The Christian message is let's compare the supremacy and the greatness and the abounding nature of Christian joy with the weak, temporary, fleeting joys of this life.

That's the message of the gospel. The gospel is the treasure. It's the kingdom of God was the treasure hidden in the field that man went and sold all that he had to buy that field.

The gospel is, in him is life and the fullness of joy. The gospel is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The gospel is, for the joy set before him, Jesus endured the cross despising the shame.

The joy set before him was ransoming a people for God from every tribe, tongue, and people, and nation that say, you put more joy in my heart than they have when they're whining grain about.

[40 : 03] I'm not a religion guy. If Christianity was religion, I never would have gotten in. I'm addicted to joy.

I'd chew a pack of gum and hours. Two pieces at a time, my wife does not like that. That's all I want. That's what I live for. And Jesus has the best joy. In conclusion, it's interesting that Psalm, this Psalm, and Psalm 3 refer to sleep.

Psalm 3, many people say Psalm 3 is a morning Psalm because David talks of waking up from sleep and realizing the Lord has kept him. In verse, Psalm 4, many people say it's an evening

Psalm.

Psalm. David talks about going to sleep, knowing the Lord will keep him. In October of 1555, Nicholas Ridley, who you've heard about here before, would sleep his last night on earth.

[41 : 20] the next day, all of Oxford, England, would see him burned on a stake for preaching the gospel of free grace.

I read this story this week, never read it before. But on the night before his execution, his brother offered to stay with him, keep him company through the night. No one sleeps on death row to be there with him as he faced the agony of certain death.

But Mr. Ridley refused. He said he planned to go to bed and sleep as soundly as he ever had in this life. Why waste a good night of sleep?

Go for it. I just love that. That's peace. Not for the super saint, but for every believer who throws himself on God's loan.

The next day, that same peace carried Ridley to the stake and into everlasting joy. That may not be our fate, but peace is God's offer.

[42 : 33] Let us pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for your word. We thank you for this word. We pray, God, that you would come and work in us that which is pleasing in your sight. Lord, we pray that the God of peace would come and build us up and strengthen us.

Supply all that we need to trust you, to rejoice in you, to lean on you. We pray for peace.

God, there's so many things in this world that are anxiety-inducing, and we desperately need peace to walk in the fear of the Lord, to walk in the good of the gospel.

That we might even say, with Luther, let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also, the body they may kill. But your truth abide us still. We trust you.

We love you. In Jesus' name, Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

[43 : 47] For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com. Pr
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