

The Lord surrounds his people

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Date: 18 June 2023

Preacher: John Lowrie

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[2 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[5 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[7 : 29] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[9 : 59] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[12 : 29] And I just kept thinking, Thank you.

Thank you.

Some people, Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[15 : 59] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[18 : 29] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[20 : 59] alive. He's not that old. He said in his book, a great wee book called Making the Most of Your Devotional Life, said this, we find ourselves in this world, in this fallen world, in which Satan reigns to some degree, where he is the ruler of the kingdom of the air. As I write these lines, news has come to me of two ministers with whom I briefly shared some classes whilst at seminary.

Today I hear that one has lost both of his teenage children in an accident. The other has a 14-year-old son who has shot himself accidentally and is brain dead. He goes on to say, theologies that don't take into account these possibilities and offer words of counsel and support are worthless. Worse than that, they are demonic. Like Satan who lies, these theologies distort and rob at the point of greatest need. We serve a God that even in the midst of wickedness, he still holds the scepter. He is still in control when things do not make sense. It's very hard as a pastor, in these situations, with these two ministers, what do you say? Where was God when these things happen? He still, he is in control of the scepter. And the scepter of wickedness will not remain in the land, otherwise God's people. And who knows the times when God has cut across something in our life where if the Lord allowed it to happen, we could have backslid. We could have said, this will be too much for John. I need to intervene. The scepter of wickedness would be too much for John in this particular situation. Alec Mottier in his book Journey says this,

We live in the hand that appoints our experiences and our destiny and which controls our daily circumstances. We need to affirm that in the day-to-day life. I don't know if you've got a doctor's appointment this Monday, you've got a twinge of pain, and you don't think it's anything.

How do you cope if you realize it's something more serious? We're all going to go that way.

Something at some point is going to take the wind out ourselves. The Lord is still in control of the wicked things and the dark things that happen in the world.

The reason God's people would not survive, for then the righteous might use their hands to do evil.

The Lord protects us. He preserves us. Alec Mottier says this in that same book, What then is the evil to which we can be tempted to put our hand? We have all experienced it.

[24 : 06] Why should I put up with this any longer moment? And that's the danger point. When patient endurance runs out, sinfulness comes running in. Impatience and making golden calves have for a long time been solidly married couple. I love the way he put that. Making golden calves, impatient and making our own. This is a problem, not just in the Old Testament. We all do this. Lord, what's happening?

Would you not come down the mountain? So, we make a golden calf. We make our own solutions to try and get our way out of this. A classic example of this, and it's relevant to this, Sam, is Hezekiah. Hezekiah is one of my favorite characters in the whole of the Old Testament.

I just love Hezekiah. And I actually used to like his engineering capabilities as well, until I read this passage. Hezekiah, you remember, the scepter of wickedness always looms large in Israel in their history. And there was one time when the Assyrians were coming to attack them.

And King Ahaz first thought when this was about to happen was the water supply into the castle, into Jerusalem, into the fortified area. And as I was thinking of Edinburgh Castle and its thing, if this was years ago, you don't really need to scale the walls and beat the people to a pulp.

You just cut off the water supply and you'll achieve the same thing. It's quite easy, actually, if there's a big valve. That's them sorted. You need water to survive. And Hezekiah and Ahaz thought, wow, what a place to put a castle or a city. Why here? They can easily cut off the water supply. So he's looking at Jerusalem and he's not singing Psalm 125. He's going, we're doomed.

[26 : 04] But whatever King Ahaz thought, Hezekiah thought the same thing. But Hezekiah did something about it. Hezekiah built these tunnels where water could come in, hidden under the ground. And it really was quite something. And we read in 2 Kings 20 these words, This was a technological marvel that he had done this in the cities. Wow, so forth. But the Lord saw this and was not pleased. And in Isaiah chapter 22, he says this, And you cannot get any more serious than what the Lord says here. He sent Isaiah, and Isaiah says this, You saw the walls of the city of David were broken through in many places. You stored up water in the lower pool. You counted the buildings in Jerusalem, tore down houses to strengthen the wall. You built a reservoir between the two walls of the water of the old pool. But you did not look to the one, capital O. You did not look to the one who made it, or have regard to the one who planned it long ago.

And as a result, and what happens, this might sound great. We look at what we've done, Lord. We don't need you to surround us. We don't need you to look after Jerusalem. Look at the tunnel that I've made. And the Lord was not pleased. He says, look at your fountains. Look at the reservoir. And in Isaiah 22, verse 14, he says this, That is quite something. It is a serious thing when the Lord constantly says to us, Trust me. Trust me. Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, like Jerusalem, surrounded by hills. And the temptation is for us always to try and sort out ourselves.

Lord, I'll make myself a golden calf. I think this will be the solution to my problem. And when we do this, when we take our eyes off the Lord and cease to trust in him, we get into all sorts of trouble. The Lord is not pleased. The Lord placed them in that city, and they had to look to him always to protect them, not to do their own thing. Quite serious, isn't it? And it's for those who trust in the Lord, who surround both now and forevermore.

Alec Mottier in that book says this, It's always the best and safest course to assume that the Lord knows what he is doing, although it is not necessarily the easiest line to take. It's so simple. It's always best to assume maybe the Lord actually knows what he's doing. And though it's difficult, though this is going to be difficult Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, I'm assuming, Lord, you know. You know the way that I take. And when you have tried me, I will come forth as gold. It is quite something.

[29 : 22] Sixthly, providence. Do good. In other words, another reason for singing, not only to protect us and preserve us and keep us forever, but do good to us. Do good to those who are upright in heart.

The Lord knows how to bless. He knows how to bless all people. The sun. We've been worshiping the sun, isn't it? There's a heat wave, and it's 22 degrees or whatever it is, and we're walking about with shorts on, and our knees are getting hairy because they're not getting rubbed off with our trouser legs.

A pastor told me that when he went to California. I said, how are you doing in California? Do you know hair grows in your knees? He said. That was his revelation coming from Newcomenock, who wear trousers every day of the week, and suddenly you get to wear shorts, and he discovered that hair actually grows in his knees. So that's, for me, as a definition of blessing, hairy knees.

And we've had hairy knees this week as we've been wearing shorts. The Lord knows how to bless the sinner and the saint alike. But here is a prayer or something to rejoice in. The Lord knows how to be good to his people. Test and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. Lord, you are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call upon you. You know the verses.

You know the many promises that we have. Be good to your people. Seventhly, linked to this, is peace. Peace be upon Israel. Blessing for God's people. And we pray that the Lord will speak to the Lord's people of old. But we, as I've mentioned many times, peace is not just freedom of war. It is blessing, well-being. Everything good is summed up in that word, peace. The Aaronic blessing.

[31 : 06] The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace and give you peace. There's great blessing from God. So, here is a psalmist, the psalmist singing.

He's singing of great security these seven things. It's for the people of God. This permanent relationship with God, protected, always protected, always blessed, preserved. God being good to us and wanting to bless us and give us peace. This is the God we serve. But note how it ends. It ends, eighthly, with a prohibition. That but, verse 5, but those who turn to crooked ways, the Lord will banish with the evildoers. What a contrast here. Verse Psalm 37 says, The Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. Wrongdoers will be completely destroyed. The offspring of the wicked will perish. The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever. And I won't read to you Revelation. You know that great picture in Revelation, where he will wipe away every tear from every eye. Blessed are those who wash their robes that they have the right to. The tree of life, they may go in through the gates of the city. Outside are the dogs. Those who practice the magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, everyone who loves and practices falsehood. That is the picture.

God knows how to bless his people. And those who reject him, the Lord will one day banish, will one day, there will be that separation from God's people from the rest.

Be encouraged in this psalm. If you're still, a lot of people come up to me this morning and said, thank you very much for that. They found it helpful. They found it very uplifting. More than that, it's not just a sermon. These are great biblical truths. It's worth going to the cross for some of the things that we looked at this morning and this evening. Your eternal security is worth rejoicing in. It really is turning to the person next to you and say, isn't that great? Aren't we saved? It really is quite something. So let's stand and we'll sing a closing song, He Will Hold Me Fast. We've sung this a few times. I'm sure you sung it long before I got here.

He Will Hold Me Fast. It's a good song. Great truths. He, this is basically what's happening in Psalm 1, 2, 5. So let's stand and we'll sing this together.