

# O Lord by these things men live (Quality: Average)

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Preacher: Cottingham, Peter (1947 - 2014)

[ 0 : 00 ] Seeking for the Lord's gracious and merciful help once more. Though I direct your thoughts to the same chapter of this morning in Isaiah chapter 38, we would seek to speak from a different verse, and that is verse 16.

Isaiah chapter 38 and verse 16, and really I feel that we can say and trust it will be so, a continuation of our thoughts of this morning.

O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit. And so on, they recover me, and make me to live.

Of course, you know, once the word of this morning was in the second verse, then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord.

But I do feel then that this bears out our reading this afternoon, as we mentioned at the commencement of the reading. Although the prophet Jeremiah felt himself to be in that very low and distressed place, and he could see that the Lord had brought him there.

[ 1 : 33 ] He could see that this was in the Lord's hand. And he could also say that remembering all these things, his affliction, the worm, and the gall, his soul had them still in remembrance, and therefore have I hope.

And the Lord had not left him. That although the Lord had so afflicted him, and tried him, and distressed him, and yet there was a purpose of grace and mercy in it.

Now we have King Hezekiah here. He turned his face to the wall, and in the pouring out of his soul, which we believe it was, there are those times, are there not, when we feel that everything is laid bare in the sight of our God.

When those souls are brought to that place of real confession and repentance, when they're brought to that place where they feel that there is nothing hid from Almighty God, and knowing that they can only cast themselves upon his mercy, through Christ Jesus, their only hope, then they can see that the Lord has dealt with them, in loving kindness and in mercy.

And Hezekiah had to say, O Lord, by these things men live. By these things men live.

[ 3 : 09 ] Firstly, I would like to say, regarding prayer, and again I would be careful here, for I know there are those souls that say, ah, but I cannot pray.

Prayer is life unto an exercised soul. It is that evidence of life, as we think of Saul of Tarsus, when he was taken by the hand after his sight had been taken from him, and when the Lord met with him on that road, it was said of him, for behold, he prayeth.

Do you remember the time when you had to pray? Do you remember the time when you, like Saul of Tarsus?

Do you remember the time when you, like Hezekiah here, or King David, that we mentioned this morning, had to pray? Yes, that time that showed one thing, and it was this, that you knew, for it was the way that you had your soul before God, but there was a God that heard and answered your prayer, and he did.

Through that love unto sinners, and that great love that he gave his only begotten Son, even Christ Jesus.

[ 5 : 07 ] We did briefly mention in prayer, as it came into our thoughts, regarding those that were, where prayer was wont to be made, and what do we find there?

And perhaps it would be profitable for a short while to examine the case there. What did the Apostle Paul have appeared to him in the night seasons?

Yes, there was then one of Macedonia that said, come over and help us. And by the Spirit of God, they had been brought to that very place, for we know that they had been prevented from going into different areas.

Those places that they tried to go to, what a mercy it is, not only if we seek for the Lord's guidance, that we take notice of it. And there is a point, is there not?

Oh, we may say, Lord, guide and direct my steps, lead me in those paths that are right, teach me thy ways, and lead me in a plain path, give me wisdom and understanding and direction in all the ways of my life.

[ 6 : 32 ] It's one thing to ask and to receive, but it's another to walk them out. By nature, we have our own thoughts, our own ideas, our own ways, and those paths that we want to walk in.

And what a mercy it is when we can see that these are not the Lord's ways or his thoughts, when he overrules all things for good. Has the Lord in your life brought you to a stand, brought you to a halt, closed the doors, overturned all your ways, and yet brought you into that right path and into that right way?

Oh, what a mercy it is that the Lord has not left us to ourselves. ourselves that perhaps have been those times when he has permitted it, but he's brought us back.

But generally speaking, as we can trace out as the children of Israel could, and they were exhorted to remember all the way which the Lord their God had led them those 40 years to the wilderness, so we can say that he has been our guide, our strength, our all, and has brought us through to this time to take note then, to listen, and to follow, and to walk in the way that he has commanded.

Paul and those that were with him, we read, they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost, and they listened and they walked in obedience, so they were brought to this very place that when they were commanded to go to that place where prayer was wont to be made, that they took that straight course, there was no hesitation, it was set clearly before them by the Lord, and they knew that there was the place that the Lord would have them to be, that there was prayer that had been made, and there was prayer that was going to be answered.

[ 8 : 50 ] So we also mentioned the case of, and we are only thinking of this then, it is so right and proper that we should look above the man when we think of Philip and the eunuch.

See, the eunuch went on his way rejoicing in what the Lord had done. The eunuch saw Philip again no more, and I feel that this is so very right. Look above the man, look unto the Lord, the place of true blessing.

so they went in obedience. You see, Philip, I wonder what his thoughts were.

The Lord had used his ministry. He had this area of usefulness and labour in the Lord's name, and I believe he truly felt that the Lord was with him and had prospered his way in spiritual things, in the things of God I'm speaking of here.

Now, who's to go down into that desert place? Strange paths. Oh, not our ways strange if we try to understand them by our own reasoning, but if we see then the Lord has been in it all, oh, can we not view, not as we would by our own eyes, but view by faith that there is that way that is right unto the Lord and that we would not go in that way that seemeth right unto a man.

[ 10 : 40 ] We know once the prayer of, as we come back again to the first prayer, the first real prayer of Saul of Tarsus, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

And he was made willing. He could fall, he could leave everything in the Lord's hand. Oh, in a moment those things were turned right round.

Now, I believe we can say of Saul, he admitted it himself, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees brought up under the feet of Gamaliel. He'd have been like the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of, fond of many prayers and a great show.

Going back to my first point here then, prayer is the life of a soul, the sign of a living soul.

And also, what do I find? Oh, what a mercy this is. It is an encouragement, it is strength and support. I was thinking when I was having my lunch earlier, love, the love, the love, the kindness that I receive here and there.

[ 12 : 02 ] And I would indeed, before my God, give thanks for these things. prayers. But what do I also see? You see, that in that outward expression we might say of your care and concern and love for me and for all of the Lord's servants, I trust it is so.

And especially for your pastor. But I see that expression of something deeper. And I'm not flattering you in this.

I'm just seeking to encourage you and perhaps to say to you, oh, that you may jealously watch over it. And it is this. Where there is the evidence of life amongst the people, and we're not just speaking of the church, we're speaking of the whole congregation here, there is prayer.

prayer. There is prayer. And perhaps I must say this. Although those times when you feel that your soul has not been fed, where do you lay the blame?

Where do you lay the blame? Now, if it was when I was before you, I would say, well, I know I come so far short.

[ 13 : 34 ] Yes, I could easily take the blame upon myself, for I feel oft times when a minister should give himself to prayer and to meditation and reading of the word of God, I feel to become so far short.

Now, I'm thinking of others of the Lord's servants and your own pastor. Do you feel that there is not food for your soul, those blessings that you desire?

Where does the fault lie? Is it in this? You see, it is either on one side or the other, shall we say in the word of God, where there is prayer, there is life, where there is no prayer, there is death.

Solomon thought this. Oh, may there be life that is found amongst these people here for a long, long time, because it can be said of you that they are a praying people, a praying people.

By these things, men live. By these things, congregations live, and are faint, and are faint.

[ 15 : 08 ] You know, I mentioned in prayer regarding that place that I went to, it was of recent days, I'll tell you where it was, it was at Stockfold.

I love and respect them for the truth's sake, the Lord's servant is hoping to take up the pastorate in the coming year. And I felt, well, there were those that I took with me, and they said when I announced my text, they wondered whatever I was going to say from it.

But because of that love and respect that I had for them, and for the Lord's servant, I had to speak in such a way as this, to lay things so very clear before them.

Yes, to be much in prayer, not to be left to idolatry, and I mean to idolize the Lord's servant, and also this, to support him.

I said you might be poorer in your pockets, but you'll be richer in your souls. oh, then, we may then be, and you may be, as a praying exercise concern people before the Lord.

[ 16 : 32 ] Oh, yes, before the Lord, to do all things that are as before him. and what is the Lord saying? Behold, yes, those things that you pray in secret and do in secret, the Lord which seeth shall reward thee openly.

vain. Or, as I would put it in this way, yes, behold, they shall have their reward. There will be that blessing in your soul.

By these things, oh, Lord, by these things men live. By these things that is the life of those exercise souls.

Well, as our thoughts have been so far this day, firstly, prayer of repentance, confession, sorrow, distress, need.

That prayer that is before the Lord when we are brought to such a place that we have to turn our face to the wall, and there we open out our hearts unto the Lord.

[ 17 : 50 ] But now in this, there is that looking back upon the Lord's goodness and mercy unto us. And you see, the Lord enables us by the Holy Spirit thus to look back at what he has done, what he has brought out, and he gives that faith and confidence to trust in him and to trust in him alone for all things, and to believe that it shall be well.

And again, as that thought comes to me, you take the Shunammite woman, you take her case. She received, by faith, she had believed in the promise of the Lord.

By faith, she had received that promise, and for a certain number of years, we can say, she delighted in the Lord's promise, in that son that was given to her.

There came that time when he was sick, sat upon her knees, and died. She laid her son upon the prophet's bed.

Now, going back to speaking of your care, the Lord's people's care of the Lord's servants, oh, those times when we have known such care of the Shunammite women, yes, of those that have cared for us.

[ 19 : 26 ] And she had to lay that one that her, you could say that her life was bound up in, perhaps too much so, dead upon the bed.

her husband did not understand her. Why must she go to see the prophet, the man of God? Why must she go?

There was neither new moon nor Sabbath. Why must she go and seek him out? And she could say, it shall be well.

she had that that the Lord had done that she could rest upon. She had that that the Lord had performed for her, that witness that she had.

Oh, I think of the dear young people. You've seen those things that the Lord has done for your parents, for others. And have you known those things that the Lord has done for your soul, in your life.

[ 20 : 38 ] Oh, how we can put our trust in the Lord, that he will work, he will perform, he will bring to pass, he will hear our prayer. She went to find the man of God, and the Lord's servant, he sent his servant to go and meet her to say to her, is it well with thee, is it well with thy husband, is it well with the child?

And she had to say, it is well, it is well. It's not presumption, it's not misplaced confidence, no, it's real and living faith, faith that is tried, faith that is brought into the furnace, into the fire, faith that is brought through the waters, faith that brings that child of God to lean upon their beloved.

As it is spoken of in the songs of Solomon, who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness, know what it is to walk through the wilderness of trial, despair, walk through the wilderness of this world of sin, walk through all those things that are a grief unto you, and yet you know what it is to lean and to lean harder upon your beloved and may you lean harder, may we each lean harder upon him, for without him we can do nothing.

And through Christ, yes, you can do all things and do do all things, yes, through Christ who strengtheneth you.

O Lord, by these things, men live. On another way to view this, he could testify the hand of the Lord was in everything, and when the Lord is with us, and in these things, there is our life, we've had to pray, step by step.

[ 23 : 02 ] Do you know what it is to pray step by step? Now I know there are those times when you lean upon your own strength, your own understanding, upon others.

There are many, many times when you forget to look unto the Lord, when the Lord is pleased to bring into these paths, when you can say, it is by these things that I have lived, it is by these things that I have been brought thus far, it is by these things that I have had to walk, praying my way along.

There are those paths that we are called to walk in, that we have not passed in heretofore, there are those ways that are so very strange unto us, and I tell you this, there are those paths that we are called to walk in, that none others are, for they do not understand, and they cannot walk in those paths as we cannot walk in theirs.

She comes into my thoughts regarding Abraham, oh, what a man of God he was, who was given that liberty to draw near unto his God and to plead for the cities of the plain for Sodom, even brought to that point where he said, oh, I must cry just but once more unto thee, there will be but ten righteous, will they spare of that city?

Yes, he had took upon himself, and there was no presumption there, there was nothing wrong in his prayer, has Satan tempted you sometimes that your prayer is presumption, he tempted you sometimes that your prayers are all wrong, but the Lord drew you unto his throne and you poured iron to your whole case unto him, now consider Abraham, and what is it spoken of of him, that the Lord tempted him or tried his faith, and said unto him, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for then to sacrifice that offering from the mount that I shall tell thee of, and what do we read, he rose up and went, as I've often said, not only in the preparation, the setting forth, but every step of the way, he prayed his way along.

[ 25 : 57 ] You take the case of Job, you take the case of many that we can read of in the word of God, and others that we may know of, and those times in our own life, how we would be crushed.

you, Abraham, was a man. Abraham, a man of God, it is true, but there was one that needed, all needed help, and a sinner before his God.

Subjects, as we read of, as Elisha, subject to like passions as we are, but there were those that walked in this path of prayer.

They had to commend all their way unto the Lord. You see, Abraham, he would have crushed him, without this living faith that the Lord would bring to pass what he had promised.

He felt that promise had been given to him. I wonder if there are any here at this time. Has the Lord given you a promise? Has he, is he beginning to fulfill it?

[ 27 : 17 ] What I mean is this, you see that the Lord is beginning to work in what he has spoken. And you feel, well, if he has begun to work, he will surely perform it unto the end, he will bring it to pass.

And then suddenly, it comes to nothing. the door that was wide open seems to be slammed in our face.

Well, Abraham had that promise then. And the Lord said to him, take thy son. And he rose up and went and they went up and he, Abraham built that altar, he laid it, he bound his son, laid him upon the wood and he took the knife in his hand.

Was this to the end of the promise? You see, there was a great and precious, the greatest promise in Isaac, in that seed of Abraham, and it was this, and in thy seed should all nations of the earth be blessed.

There was the promise of Christ there, the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Savior of his people. was it to be through the hand of Abraham that that promise was to be brought to nothing?

[ 28 : 44 ] Oh, we are not told, and we do not know the conflict that was in the soul of Abraham at that time. We do not know how Satan sought to get a hold of him.

and we can well understand he had much conflict there. And sometimes we have much conflict in what we are walking in, what we are passing through, what the Lord has brought us to, as to the reality, to the purpose of the Lord's will in this, is it all to be brought to nothing?

And yet there is that, that we believe that this has been of the Lord, and perhaps there is that promise that now we see brought to nothing. Ah, is it not so? Oh Lord, by these things men live?

Is it not so? But it brings us to much prayer, much seeking of the Lord, that he would go before us, that he would not let us err, that he would not let us turn aside.

We know how we can fail, we know how we can make so many foolish, sinful mistakes. We want the Lord to be in everything, to be in it all, to overrule all things for good.

[ 30 : 06 ] And there's that looking unto him. Oh, by these things men live, and have their life and their being, but the Lord is with them.

Yes, that exercise of faith keeps alive that poor, weak, sickly soul.

When they feel that they cannot pray, when they feel that they have nothing, when they feel that they have been deceived, the Lord brings them to that place.

And what is the purpose, what is the meaning, what is the reason of all these things? Well, there is only one purpose, that his name might be glorified.

Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever. By these things men live.

[ 31 : 06 ] I know there are many times when we seem to go aside from what we are thinking of, but we do, by the Lord's gracious and merciful help, try to return. Going back then to those that met by the riverside where prayer was wont to be made and how the Lord sent his servants to them.

So they made that straight course and they went and on the Lord's day, on the Sabbath, they went by the riverside where there were those women that were gathered together where prayer was wont to be made, commanded the blessing.

Two things there, not only the Lord's servant, the apostle Paul, but those that were with him. They were exercised seeking to know and to do the Lord's will, that the Lord would go before them, that the Lord would give them that matter to speak.

They preached Christ unto them. On the other side, there were the hearers, those that gathered there. Oh, how they had besought the Lord that he would send his servants to them, to preach the word of life.

And there was that coming together as we might say, there the Lord met in their midst, and there the Lord blessed them. Oh, what a time of favour and of blessing this is.

[ 32 : 35 ] Do you yearn for these things here? Do you long for them? Do you remember the time of your first love and of your espousals? When it seemed as if every time there was a portion for yourself?

Oh, where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord? Where is the soul refreshing view of Jesus and his word?

That is the language of yourself. By these things, oh Lord, by these things manly and in all these things is the life of my spirit.

There was one that had been shown, there was one that had been brought down to the very gates of death that he might see oh the goodness and the mercy of the Lord.

And what did he prove? Oh, what did he prove? He proved this. Life, eternal life, was his.

[ 33 : 42 ] David, King David, as he walked and passed through many different things.

When the Lord brought him to that very spot and place, what did he prove? Well, we have it in the very words of the Lord, through his servant, they shall not die.

Hezekiah here, he said at the end of the 16th verse, so what thou recover me and make me to live.

Oh, this was not just his natural life. It was added unto his years, those 15 years, to his days, those 15 years. I would say this, be careful in the interpretation of the word of God.

It is truth, and truth that cannot be escaped from, and I would never seek to pull down that truth or turn aside from it, to water it down, or in any way to put my hand to it.

[ 34 : 59 ] What I mean is this, be very careful how you so literally might take the word of God, you know, a particular word like this, you might feel that you've been led into the path of Hezekiah, you might say, well I'm a certain age now, and if he would lengthen out my days by 15 years, then I shall live to a certain age.

Oh, what a mercy is that our times are in the Lord's hand. But these things are for our teaching, for our instruction. And oh, what a mercy it is, not only the time of our birth is in the Lord's hand, and the time of our death, but the appointed time to call by grace, the appointed time to bless, the appointed time to favor.

God's love. Oh, those seeking, hungering, thirsting souls, how they long, that time may soon come, when the Lord will favor them in their soul.

When the Lord has laid that exercise upon you, love, and you feel in this way, can there be any hope?

Can there be any mercy for such a wretch as I? Can there be a portion, can there be a place amongst the Lord's people? Oh, these very exercises, which are turned into those prayers and those cries before the Lord.

[ 36 : 50 ] the Lord is pleased to use these things to keep alive the souls of his people, to keep them alive.

We mentioned some little while ago how we desire to be careful in this regarding that what we might say not to bring any distress upon a soul.

For I know that there are those that would say but I cannot pray. What do we read this afternoon? He shutteth out my every prayer. He has enclosed my ways.

Yes, I feel now that there is a purpose that the Lord directs my thoughts to read that first part of the third chapter of the Lamentations of Jeremiah.

And how he had to say oh in all this is my hope. My soul hath them still in remembrance and hath them in remembrance.

[ 37 : 57 ] Therefore have I hope that the Lord has not turned aside from me. You see if you consider the case of Naomi she lost her husband and her two sons in that strange land.

She knew and felt the hand of the Lord had gone out against her. When she returned she said call me not Naomi call me Mara for the Almighty that helped very bitterly with me. Very bitterly.

I went out full and now she felt to be empty but the Lord hath brought me home. Oh what a mercy this was as the Lord emptied emptied of everything of self and of the world of the flesh of loved ones even.

What I mean is this he's drawn our affections from all earthly things and fixed them above fixed them on him. Oh how we can willingly sacrifice and give up all these things if only we may know Christ and him crucified.

Yes that we may know him and that he might be revealed unto us all these things in all these things is the life of my spirit the life of my spirit.

[ 39 : 26 ] What can any man keep alive his own soul? What is the life of a soul? Well we've mentioned it is prayer and prayer of course this comes out of that lively exercise of those things that the Lord has brought us into in all those paths strange as they may seem and also when they seem to be so much against us so much against us and yet the Lord is that purpose of grace and of mercy unto us there is a purpose and there is a need to be for it and how many times and oh what a mercy this is if we can look back and we can say the Lord has used it and there's been a blessing in it and I would not have been without that trial because there's been good that I have been afflicted for before I was afflicted

I went astray but now but now and you have those but now for what the Lord has done so will thou recover me and make me to live I think of this in a particular way backsliding sinners so what thou recover me backsliding sinners to restore to restore oh how many at this time have cried unto the Lord oh that thou wouldst restore unto me those times of old oh thou wouldst restore unto me those times when

I felt I could pray when I come to the house of God that I could listen hear understand and receive those times when I could read thy word and drink it in oh that the Lord wouldst restore those times unto me so thou recover me recover from the place where I have fallen well in two ways then firstly to recover those souls from darkness and it is through his death that he raises up those that are his then through his death they might have life eternal they are recovered let us understand this man made in the image of God we think of Adam and Eve before they fell so they recover me now as there was that promise that was made then that the seed of the woman should bruise the heel of the serpent yes that

Christ must be born Christ taking upon himself that form of sinful man and yet without sin should lay down his life for his people there was that act of redemption of recovering bringing back to that state where those souls are made perfect in the sight of God through his dear son and let us truly know one thing for we have it before us we have it in all that the Lord is pleased to work and perform his works are perfect oh his works are perfect oh can you believe this when you feel sometimes how can there be mercy lengthened out such a sinner as I his works are perfect when the

Lord Jesus Christ spoke when he touched when he put forth his hand and healed and when he said in this way son daughter thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee I believe there is a perfect healing and oh I believe this I feel I can say I know this but may I know it in heaven perfect redemption perfect redemption that whole recovery so they recover me but then another point here just very briefly oh do you feel that you are back slid none are beyond the limits of his love and sometimes there is that feeling that we have gone oh because of our back sliding and because of our sin that the

[ 45 : 00 ] Lord has taken away his presence from us how can there be any mercy can he return will he recover me oh may we have the testimony in our own spirit by the spirit of truth that the love of God and the sinners through Christ Jesus is beyond and higher than all our thoughts and our understanding but it's something that poor sinners trembling sinners can hope in for he's granted them that trembling faith that they will have to look again isn't it so in your soul Satan tempts you to give up you you say no I must look again for this is the life of my soul so they recover me and make me to live and they shall be with him forever which is far better we have death in this world through sin but thanks be unto



Christ the son of God thence he gave his own life that through his death sinners might live  
amen we close by singing hymn number ten hundred and so to the tune pure delight nine  
hundred and twenty nine hymn number ten hundred and two prayer is the soul's sincere  
desire uttered or unexpressed the motion of a hidden fire that trembles in the breast

All the grace of God shall come. All the grace of God shall come.

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