

Psalm

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: 25 September 1983

Preacher: Rowell, Peter

- [0 : 00] I can depend to Thee in every sorrowful day, my grace, my love, and my grace.
Where all creation sleeps are bright, my promise is the same.
Let our gift be satisfied, and glory in my name.
Oh, go to the altar, CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS
CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS
CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS
CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS Order now to because of the Smallchselydi.
- [2 : 58] O Man, this day I stand. O Man, the access foi.
Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen.
Trusting in the Lord's health, I shall speak from verses you find at the beginning of Psalm 37. The beginning of Psalm 37.
I'm not going to read a text this morning because I want to speak rather more generally about the first eight verses of this psalm.
- [5 : 23] And the theme of these first eight verses is really that of the attitude of our hearts to different situations in which we may find us.
And the great question really is whether we have a spiritual and a gracious attitude to the circumstances and situations in which we find ourselves.
You may have noticed that when we read the psalm through, there is one recurring theme in the psalm. And that is, of course, the attitude of the psalmist David to those who were wicked.
Evidently, the psalm was written when David's mind was particularly affected by the attitude and behavior of wicked men, especially when those wicked people had affected him personally.
And we know that David's life was one in which there was many occasions when he suffered bitterly and deeply from the actions of wicked men.
- [6 : 36] Never more so than when his own wicked son behaved so wretchedly. And, of course, David did know from bitter experience the pain and distress that can be caused by the behavior of wicked men.
And you will find in the first verse, and, of course, it's implied in the eighth verse, you will find how David has to speak to himself and to others regarding the heart's attitude to those who were wicked and had behaved in a wicked way toward him.
And I always seem to link that verse with verse 8 when I look at this psalm carefully, because the reaction to the behavior of wicked men can sometimes be one of anger.
And so in verse 8 we read, So the first thing this morning is really to look for a moment at our attitude of heart to those situations where we are affected by evildoers, by the workers of iniquity.

You will find as we go through these verses, I hope, as God helps me this morning, that the whole spirit of these verses is one in which David is encouraging believers to a calm, quiet and trustful attitude.

[8 : 34] And he sets certain things in contrast to that. First of all then, there is fretfulness. And that is a kind of inward fretfulness.

It's a sort of nagging thoughtfulness, when we keep going over and over the thing that has happened. I don't know whether this is unkind.

I hope it isn't unkind to say this, but I do find that amongst older people, there's a very real danger of going over and over the same ground.

Especially, they look back in their lives and they remember, they remember the things that were very painful, very distressing. They remember the people that perhaps hurt them or wounded them in some way, and the circumstances seem to come back to their mind, and they get all disturbed again.

I feel this fretfulness is very often a danger in old age. And it needs to be recognised. It needs to be prayed against.

[9 : 46] And we need a great deal of grace to avoid that spirit of inward fretfulness, where we keep going over and over the same distressing things. And we get all worked up again.

We get all annoyed again. And we feel as though we're fighting the old battles again. And that is not at all spiritually profitable. And I've met people, I'm not pointing any fingers here this morning, you must take these things to your own hearts and ask questions about your own situation.

But I have met people whose later life, the whole years of the later part of their life, just seem to be eaten up with this kind of inward fretfulness.

They can't leave things alone. And they're always going back over the old troubles. Fret not thyself.

There's a very real danger then that we should do just that. That we should go on stirring up our minds in this very unspiritual way. Why fret yourselves?

[10 : 57] Why do you do it? What good can be done? What good is there as a result of becoming so inwardly fretted and disturbed and distressed all over again?

You see, your fretfulness won't change the spirit of the evildoer, will it? No amount of fretfulness will change the heart of an evildoer.

No amount of fretfulness will alter the things that have happened. No amount of fretfulness will alter the future. The only thing that fretfulness does is make you miserable now and threaten your peace tomorrow.

There's absolutely no benefit from this inward fretfulness. And yet, it's so common. It is so common.

It is so common. But it doesn't just apply to those who are older. It applies to those who are younger. When we're younger, we can become very angry if people cross our paths, if people treat us unkindly.

[12 : 08] It's a very real, practical danger that we should become bitterly angry with those who disagree with us.

And this is another thing about youth and early years. We can be very dogmatic in our youth. We can feel quite sure that we see the truth and we know the truth.

And we become very impatient with those who we feel are against the truth. And we feel they're wicked people because of their wrong attitudes and their wrong beliefs.

We can get very angry. But this is a wrong reaction. There is such a thing, of course, as righteous indignation.

But it's very, very hard to define what it is. And it's even harder to distinguish between righteous indignation and sinful anger.

[13 : 13] Very difficult. Because being what we are, you will find that very often righteous indignation just merges into sinful anger.

And that's why I said at the beginning, these verses in this psalm are very important verses because they examine our inward reaction, our real inward attitude to the situation that we're in.

And so they're very penetrating words. And they are saying to us this morning, now examine your spirit. Try your spirit. Test yourself. According to these verses, are you absolutely sure that your reaction to the situation is a spiritual one?

No, I don't know what your personal detail situation is. The Lord hasn't shown me things like that. When I preach, I just have to preach the word and hope and pray that God will apply the truth and make it suitable to your situation.

Well now, it may be that some of you are in a situation which is very distressing. A situation in which your spirit is giving way to anger and indignation.

[14 : 36] And a situation in which you're becoming very fretted and disturbed. And this is God's word to you this morning. And God by his Holy Spirit is saying through these ancient words of David, now, stop a moment and think very carefully whether your reaction to the situation is a spiritual one.

Whether your response to this is a gracious response. Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

The envy that shall prosper. Why do the wicked prosper? Asaph, in another psalm, speaks so painfully of this. Why do these wicked men seem to get away with it?

Why do they prosper? And why am I suffering like this as a result of their wickedness? What was the answer for him?

The answer was this, that God showed him their end. The answer for David is just the same. They shall soon be cut down like the grass and withered as the green herb.

[16 : 04] They will have to answer to their God. They will have to answer to their judge. You will not have to answer for them. I'm not, I'm not preaching a sort of disregard for other people.

But you won't have to answer for their evil doing, will you? What needs to be your concern is the attitude of your heart to them and to their evil doings.

Because that is what we have to answer for, isn't it? We have to stand before God and answer for our reactions to their behaviour. Their behaviour is what they will have to answer for.

So, remember, they shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb. There is no need to be fretted in this way.

They're in the hands of God just as you are. The wicked men of this world are in the hands of God just as the righteous men are because God is the sovereign Lord of all.

[17 : 22] Can't you commit yourself, your circumstances to God? Would it not be far better instead of fretting yourself about these things to commit to the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, these evil workers, these workers of iniquity?

and then to leave them in his hands. And certainly, as verse 8 says, cease from anger and forsake wrath.

That is that sinful anger, that sinful inward bitterness that rises up against the evildoer. Fret not thyself in any way to do evil.

And that tells us one of the dangers of this inner fretfulness. You see, if you go on in this way of inner fretfulness, in the end, you give way to something which is evil. You either give way to envy and that is evil, or you give way to covetousness and that is evil, or you give way to anger and that is evil.

There is the danger of going on in a way of fretfulness. Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. Well, that is really, I think, the major theme of this whole psalm.

[18 : 55] And that's why I've spoken right at the beginning about that. It is the major theme as you go through this psalm. David's attitude to the wicked.

And we need a gracious spiritual attitude to the wicked world around us. You know, it would be far better if we looked at words like this and our situation and tried to interpret the situation and these words in the light of the New Testament.

instead of fretting ourselves because of evil doers, it would be far better to pray for the wicked, to pray that God in his mercy would convert them.

It would be far better to pray that God will deal graciously with them because if he doesn't deal graciously with them, the time is coming when he will certainly deal very solemnly with them in judgment.

They shall soon be cut down like the grass and the spirit of Jesus Christ is to say, Lord, teach them, show them the evil of their ways, change them.

[20 : 24] God calls men to repentance. He calls the most wicked men to repentance. We have encouragement to pray then, that wicked men and evil doers will be called to repentance.

Fret not thyself. That's a waste of time, a waste of energy. It will damage your spirit. It will unfit you for prayer. It will harm you in times of spiritual worship.

Fret not thyself, but pray, but pray, and commit the wicked to the hands of a God who is both gracious and holy.

Verse 3. This is a verse which I feel very much has helped me.

trust in the Lord and do good. So shalt thou dwell in the land and verily thou shalt be fed.

[21 : 31] This is our attitude to the present situation. What is our attitude to the present situation?

I mean, now, not to do with the wicked and the evildoers, but our present situation. First, providentially.

Trust in the Lord and do good. So shalt thou dwell in the land and verily thou shalt be fed. And to put it in another way, this is a verse which speaks of the relationship between faith and works.

Faith and works, to use the New Testament way of expressing it. Faith and works go together. Without works is dead.

And works without faith aren't spiritual at all. Faith and works go together. The faith that God gives to his children is a faith that works by love.

[22 : 38] So there are really three things involved. faith and works and love. But you'll see by what I've just said, that it has to do with our inner attitude, doesn't it?

Our inner attitude to the present situation. Are we living a life of faith? Does that faith stimulate a life of activity?

and in that life of faith and activity is the whole prevailing attitude one of affectionate concern and love to Jesus Christ and love to God's people and a compassionate concern for those around us.

Trust in the Lord and do good. God's people and surely you couldn't read verses like this without thinking of Jesus Christ could you?

You couldn't read verses like this without thinking of his example. Verse 37 surely points us forward mark the perfect man and behold the upright for the end of that man is peace.

[23 : 56] but the life of that man was peace. The life of his spirit was peace. He was at peace with his father in heaven because he knew he was doing his father's will.

He went about doing good. He lived a life of complete trust in his father.

Trust in the Lord. Jesus did do good. Jesus did. So we have in these verses the perfect example.

I've often thought of Jesus when he was tempted of the devil and you know at the heart of that temptation was really the attitude of Jesus to his father.

And so often at the heart of our temptations is our inner attitude to our father in heaven. Are we living a life of simple childlike trust in the Lord?

[25 : 07] Jesus did. He could have worked a miracle. He could have changed stones into bread. There's no doubt about that. He changed water into wine.

He multiplied the loaves and the fishes. He could have worked a miracle. people. The temptation that Satan brought against Jesus was a temptation to act in a distrustful way.

To suggest to Jesus that his needs were so great that he must do a miracle to make the stones into bread. Otherwise he would starve.

He would die of starvation in the wilderness. This kind of suggestion. Trust in the Lord. Trust in the Lord. It's 25 years this last Friday since I first preached.

It's a time when I have been remembering and looking back over the past. it's not an easy thing at all to face the prospect of a life in the ministry when you realise that in the ministry you live completely dependent upon the Lord.

[26 : 37] Every time a minister preaches, every time your pastor preaches to you or speaks to you or conducts a church meeting or is involved in any way like that, he is dependent on the Lord to influence his mind and the Holy Spirit to guide him.

He has to live a life of faith and trust. It wasn't easy. I believe the Lord helped me but it wasn't easy to face the prospect of leaving a position where I was surrounded with financial security and go into a situation which was one of considerable uncertainty.

Trust in the Lord and do good. As God directs you, as God guides you, as God shows you the good that is to be done, then do it, trusting in him to supply every other need.

So shalt thou dwell in the land and verily thou shalt be fed. Of course these Psalms of David have application immediately to the people around him, his own people, his own nation.

certainly David would seek to encourage the people of his own day to live in this quiet trustfulness. But his words have a lasting significance.

[28 : 19] His words have a spiritual significance. Those who live the life of faith, who walk by faith, and those who do good, will inherit God's blessings in this life, and they will inherit God's blessing in the life to come.

They will find that God provides for their needs here and blesses them in a way which I can't describe in the life hereafter.

Trust in the Lord and do good. Is there something on your mind this morning, something which the Lord would have you to do, and you know it is good because the word of God approves of it, and yet you're hindered by fears.

You say, well, I'm not the right sort of person. I'm not adequate for this particular task. I haven't the gifts or the ability that's necessary.

Well, it's a sensible thing to prayerfully consider these matters. It is proper that we should say to ourselves now, what wilt thou have me to do?

[29 : 40] What would the Lord have me to do? What is the Lord calling me to do? How shall my life be used?

I'm not now talking about preachers any longer. I'm talking about every believer because God has work to do for every believer. The church of Jesus Christ is likened to a body and every part of the body has a function.

It has something to do for the good of the whole body. We're not all hands, we're not all mouths, we're not all eyes, but there's a part and a place in the body.

So there are those things that God calls us each to do. And there's a danger that we then sit down and we analyse the situation and we say, no, that's not for me, I'm not that sort of person.

And we begin to make excuses when God is saying, do good, the good that he has put into your heart by the work of the Holy Spirit, the good that he is calling you to do.

[31 : 02] However humble, however obscure that may be, however unnoticed be, trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land.

He'll provide what you need, he'll provide for what you need in every way, both practically and inwardly in your spirit, he will provide what you need to sustain you.

Verse 4, delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. This is a verse that has to do with our attitude to our God, our attitude to the Lord.

What is our attitude to the Lord? The hymn puts it very beautifully, O Lord, I would delight in thee, and on thy care depend.

Let me put it another way. When were you last delighted by the Lord? I think that's something which is often neglected these days.

[32 : 32] The psalmist is really saying that in his God he could see that which delighted his soul. And the psalms, especially the psalms of praise, are psalms in which David is showing to us how delighted he was with everything that the Lord is and everything that the Lord has done.

He was delighted with a God of creation and he was delighted with every work of God's creative power. He was delighted with the character of God as the holy, righteous, glorious God.

He was delighted with the mercy of God. Delight thyself also in the Lord.

Has somebody wounded you lately or grieved you or distressed you lately and you find there's no delight in the ones who you once found delight in, people who once gave you a sense of pleasure and joy and it's not like that now.

Men are changeable aren't they? Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils. They're so changeable. Delight thyself also in the Lord because he never changes and because I believe if I could put it this way, God is delighted when you delight yourself in him.

[34 : 22] That is the kind of relationship which I believe is right. That is a truly spiritual relationship when your heart is delighted in the Lord.

Delight thyself also in the Lord. And it's a very important verse because it has to do with the future.

Our attitude to the Lord at the present moment will affect our attitude to the future. If we now delight ourselves in the Lord then he shall in the future give thee the desires of thine heart.

It's not going to the Lord and saying Lord I want this this and this and you write out as it were a list of things that you want the Lord to do for you or that you want from the Lord.

you must look at this verse four and I think it's good to look at verse four before you start praying for the things you think you need or the things you think would be good for you.

[35 : 51] Look at verse four. delight thyself also in the Lord and so it's not the things you think you need and the things you think would be good for you and the things you want it's not that first delight thyself also in the Lord consider those things in your God which are delightful people seek that your heart be delighted with the God you worship and you will find that that completely affects your attitude to the things that you want or that you think would be good for you and for the future.

you will find it gives a completely different perspective on your life and you will find the desires of your heart are strangely altered then you will find the desires of your heart are spiritual desires and you will be able to see that the old desires that you had were not spiritual at all they were just carnal desires no friends as you experience this delight in the Lord and remember it is an exhortation it does say delight thyself it's a very positive exhortation this is what David would have us to do this is what the Holy Spirit is directing us to do delight thyself also in the Lord and if you say oh I can't do that then you've got another problem to face haven't you because the

Bible says to believers delight thyself also in the Lord and it doesn't accept the response that you've just made and say oh I can't do that it doesn't accept that response it says delight thyself also in the Lord and if it says that there must be ways in which believers delight themselves in the Lord it must be possible or it would never be commanded would it delight thyself also in the Lord and then you will find that you have new desires and those new desires are much much more spiritual and gracious than the old desires and so he shall give thee those new desires of your heart he will satisfy you in ways which otherwise you would never have known delight thyself also in the

Lord and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart I like to think of those words of Jesus he said if any man will come after me let him deny himself so well what's that got to do with desires of the heart it has this to do with the desires of the heart that you see in the prospect of following Jesus Christ something so attractive that you will then deny yourself and take up your cross and follow him and in that way of following he shall give thee the desires of thine heart heart now friends I'm sure that God is concerned about our providential situation in life

I'm sure that he is concerned about things like bread because he taught us to pray give us this day our daily bread I'm sure he's concerned about where you work and the kind of work you're doing I'm sure he's concerned about those of his children who are unemployed and in difficulties like that but I'm also sure that in the Bible we have a pattern of things which doesn't begin with those things it doesn't begin with the present life and the situation we're in here it begins with God it directs us to God first seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you these other things that you feel are so important God is saying now there is something more important there is something far far more important delight thyself also in the

[41 : 08] Lord in the Lord Westminster catechism says that man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever to glorify God and to enjoy him forever I wonder what you really think about that sort of way of living do you think that's important to glorify God you say well what's that got to do with me to enjoy God what does that mean how could anyone enjoy God you can enjoy a good meal the world enjoys for a little while it's entertainment it's pleasures you enjoy a good holiday what does it mean enjoy God you know if you're saying things like that it means that it really means that you're unconverted it really means that you've never been born again it really means that you have no spiritual understanding because if you had any spiritual understanding you would see in

God at least something of a wonderful glory and you would say yes man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever commit thy way unto the Lord trust also in him and he shall bring it to pass again you see there is this view of the future if you delight yourself in the Lord now he shall give you the desires of your heart in the future when you feel those desires of your heart very strongly well then you commit your way unto the Lord you trust in him and he will bring to pass the things that you now long for that doesn't mean to say that you're going to have your own way in a natural carnal sense

I think some professing Christian people think that's what they do you know they say they trust in the Lord and they say they're happy and they say that God is going to give them all they need what they're really meaning is they're going to have their own way but the psalmist never said that he didn't say you're going to have your own carnal way in life but he does say that the heart that is delighted in the Lord is a heart that is moulded by God and a heart that will have new desires and those desires God will satisfy rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass again a verse which tells us of the prevailing spiritual attitude the whole spiritual atmosphere in which we're to seek to live

I put it like that because I find myself so often living in a different atmosphere do you get rushed sometimes do you get feelings as though everything's on top of you sometimes do you feel as though you can't cope with everything sometimes as though there's so much to do you don't know what to do next and you rush about from one thing to another and you don't do anything properly there are times like that times when we're under pressure pressure from circumstances pressure from duties pressure from family circumstances and so on there are all sorts of things pressing upon you rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him you sometimes feel an inner anxiety because you feel far from God all these other things have crowded in and it seems to have driven you away from the Lord and your time of prayer has been less and less and your meditation has been more and more on the world and not on the things of

God and you know things have gone wrong you know that the balance in your life is wrong this verse 7 is calling you back it's calling you back to a new position spiritually I heard someone say recently very simply like this if you're too busy to read the Bible you're too busy if you're too busy to pray you're too busy and sometimes friends I've been too busy perhaps you know that sometimes you've been too busy now in that situation something must go something must go you can't go on like that and this verse 7 is calling you back to your

[47 : 21] God rest and you'll have to say to yourself now what is it that is breaking in upon this rest in the Lord what is it that is threatening that inner spiritual peace with God what is it that's producing such restlessness and friends something has to go things have to be put back as it were in their right perspective and kept in their right places is it the cares of this life the deceitfulness of riches choking the word well then that has to be dealt with are you idolising your family or your children then that has to be dealt with are you obsessed with possessions when that has to be dealt with verse 7 calls you back rest rest in the

Lord and wait patiently that takes time doesn't it wait patiently wait on the Lord wait patiently for him and fret not thyself because of him within his way I'm I'm afraid a lot of the anxiety in the business world of today is an anxiety that's produced because you see those who prosper in their way you see those who can use business techniques and get away with it they're called that aren't they nowadays it's really just different forms of dishonesty.

Fret not thyself. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? What will it profit you?

What would it profit you if you became the managing director of the biggest firm in England and you lost your own soul? Rest in the Lord.

That's far, far more important. Oh friends, don't we need a new perspective? Don't we need to look at our lives in the light of God's word again? Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him.

[49 : 55] Amen. Bem 772. That's why I gelernt.

Right, thank you very much. 772. 772.

782. Christ is the keeper of his saints. He guards them by his power, subdues their numerous complaints in every gloomy hour. 793.

793. The keeper of his saints, gave us the end by his word.

Shah Aaron. He Ik challenging■■■■ God alone is held alive.

[51 : 53] Joy and sing inados. And by the Savior, Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God our Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us forever. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.