

Psalm

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Preacher: Wood, Clement (1920-2010)

- [0 : 0 0] In dependence upon the Lord for all needed help, I venture to draw your prayerful attention to Psalm 144, verses 12, 13, and 14.
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- That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth.
- That our daughters may be as cornerstones polished after the similitude of a palace.
- That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store. That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets.
- [1 : 3 3] That our oxen may be strong to labor. That there be no breaking in nor going out.
- That there be no complaining in our streets. It is considered that this Psalm of David was written in the latter part of his life.
- David could look back and trace out the wondrous way in which God had helped him from the days of his youth as a shepherd, by God's help delivering the lamb from the paw of the bear and the mouth of the lion, the victory over Goliath, the anointing to be king over God's people, those years of persecution by Saul, but a step betwixt me and death, but God was with him.
- Well, would he remember coming to Ziklag and finding his city burned down and all taken captive, people threatening to stone him, but then David encouraged himself in the Lord his God and under God's direction and through God's blessing recovered all.
- In time, God's time, the anointing that was in the days of his youth, now he ascends to the throne.
- [4 : 0 1] We read in the second book of Samuel of that occasion, when he sat before the Lord, when he traced out God's great goodness to him.
- And now this Psalm speaks of his desires as he acknowledges with thanksgiving in his heart the Lord's great goodness to him.
- And his prayer for the rich blessing of God to rest upon his people, that the sons and the daughters, that they might be blessed, that the garners might be filled national prosperity, the flocks of sheep increased, oxen strong in laboring, that there be no invasion of the enemy, and no breaking away of the people, and no murmuring and complaining in the land.
- The literal interpretation of the desire of this godly king, who says, happy is that people that is in such a case, yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.
- But there is spiritual instruction and teaching in these desires, these prayerful longings, of this good and gracious king.
- [6 : 0 6] Let us, as God may be pleased to help, examine it. Our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, rooted in Christ.
- Spiritual growth has set place in the church of God and of usefulness.

That our daughters may be as cornerstones, quarried out of nature's darkness, shaped, polished of beauty, the spirit of Jesus Christ, and again, usefulness in the church of God.

That our garners may be as well, setting forth the gift of the word of God, which is ever full, and that from the word of God, there may be a drawing out of the rich treasures of that word, for the nourishment of our souls.

And that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands, setting forth a God-given increase.

[7 : 45] The gracious additions to the churches, those other sheep that the Lord Jesus speaks of, that then also I must bring.

Our oxen may be strong to labor, setting forth particularly the solemn work of the ministry, that there be no breaking in, breaking in of error.

And here the dear man prays, rid me and deliver me from the hand of strange children whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

Praying to be preserved from the breaking in of all that would be displeasing to God, dishonoring to his glory, and would be harmful to the spiritual prosperity of the people.

That there be no going out, that there be no falling away, no, like those in the days of Jesus, turn back and walk no more with him.

[9 : 16] And then this final petition, no complaining in our streets, godliness with contentment, which is great gain.

Happy then is that people that is in such a case. Yea, happy is that people whose God is their Lord.

The hymn with which we open the service has been sweetly confirming, praying for a gracious reviving among the churches.

We need it personally in our own souls, and we pray for it in among our churches.

So then, we seek to examine this a little more in depth, as the Lord may be pleased to help, that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth.

[10 : 26] From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation by faith in Christ Jesus.

And the apostle again, speaking of Timothy, spake of that faith in his mother and grandmother, and I am persuaded in thee also.

A great favor it is from a childhood to be brought up under the truth. But to be brought up under the truth, to sit in God's house, to hear the preaching of the word, which is all to be highly commended, deeply valued, yet much more than that is needed.

And some of us can really say that we've never from childhood days rebelled against going to the house of God.

Indeed, in some ways, we suffer a peculiar temptation. I say peculiar in this way, that the devil who comes and says it's just natural upbringing, it's just that you've always had a love for these things, and we are thereby trying, is it just a natural upbringing, is this work of grace real?

[12 : 11] Has it been truly begun in my heart? Or am I just a nominal hearer? Am I just like those that hear the word and like the wayside, it is sown and gone without any effect whatsoever?

Or am I like those stony ground hearers? Yes, I hear, but oh, when the word searches, I'm offended. Or like the thorny ground that the things of this world are more to me than the word of God.

Or how we are searched and rightly searched, lest and oft have I been troubled, lest after all that I should make shipwreck of faith, lest after all one should be but just a scaffolding of the building.

But oh how I remember, dear Mr. Ramsworth, once speaking on that, scaffolding has no root. It is used certainly, but my friend, the building has a foundation.

We may come to that as we speak of the corner stones. But think now of this, these plants grown up in their youths. Go back some of you to childhood days when it meant nothing to you until and you cannot describe how, you cannot tell me exactly when, but something took place, a concern, a burden of sin, a felt need of salvation, starting to hear, starting to hope, feeling cut off, cast out, feeling that there could be no hope.

[14 : 10] One would be tenderly careful never to set the standard of depth, mark what I say, depth of experience, of reality, yes, but depth is in the hand of Almighty God.

Some are more gently convinced of their sin, others more deeply so, but it will be real. Now you and I may be often tried concerning this.

Good thing to be tried, good thing when we are brought to search our hearts and pray, God, search me through and through, examine me, leave me not to come short at last, leave not my soul destitute, but Lord, do teach me, show me, and the evidence, the distinction between a natural conviction and a spiritual conviction, the natural conviction may sound and does a dreadful alarm, and there may be quaking and trembling and fearing, but soon it wears off.

Now those that are truly convinced of sin says, I fear that sometimes with me, but under that conviction of sin, beloved, if that conviction is real, if that is from heaven, if that is the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart, that conviction will lead you to God, to lead you to the one against whom you sin, in whose sight you stand, and that conviction, if real, will bring you down to the throne of grace, confessing that sin and crying for mercy.

It will. So I say, do you remember that those early days when you started to hope, could there be something for my soul, could there be a word to encourage me as I see?

[16 : 26] This is the work of the Spirit. This is the sowing of the seed. This is the heart being prepared. This is the good ground being prepared to receive that seed.

And that seed is there, deeply embedded, hidden and out of sight. You cannot see it, and you cannot perhaps detect it to start with, but this seed will grow, that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth.

As we think of wheat, as it is sown, as the grain sown in the bowels of the earth, there's death of the grain, and there's life, there's the root, there's a springing up, and so with the work of God's grace, the inner sinner's heart, death to all hope of salvation in self, and yet a hope in the death of Christ, and spiritual life, groanings and crying, the upward glancing of the eye, when none but God is near.

That moving of the soul, that first blade, the blade, oh that tender green blade, the evidence of the root, the hidden root, the evidence of the reality of a holy ghost religion, that as sons, maybe as plants, grown up in their youth, the days of your first love, the days when you ran in the ways of his command, when your heart was warmed with his love, such promise, but all then, perhaps, you've known something of a time of testing, that those days so precious, all now it seems hard going.

you see, the blade is not the harvest, the blade is not the grain ready for the garner, it is the promise of it, but there's a need being, sometimes, of the harrow, to be put over the field, over the green blade, one would think it would be for its destruction, one would think that that would be to uproot it, but it has exactly the opposite, it will strengthen the root, so if I speak to any younger believers, I don't know necessarily your age, but in the way that you think of those days of love, and now it seems more the time of testing, do not be dismayed, do not be discouraged, there is this way of growth, we ask the Lord that we may grow in grace, and yet you see the way in which this is accomplished, is a way so contrary to our flesh, and yet profitable to our soul, that our sons may be as plants grown up in their yields, and then following the line of wheat, there is the growth upward, now when there was the blade, that blade was not moved very much by the wind, or the gale, or the storm, that may have come over the field, but when that grows higher, then it is more conscious of the wind that can beat it down, and also this, that there's a formation, not only of the grain, but there's chaff, and there bringing us into that experience, that which is known only by those that are God's dear people, of an inward conflict, of two great opposites, this body of sin, this chaff, and this work of

[21 : 00] God's grace, which is the precious grain, and oh how the exercise will often be, Lord, am I just chaff, am I but just a tear growing with the wheat, Lord, where's the grain, where's that precious grain, but again I must not tarry at length, but in God's time and way under his blessing, the grain develops, is ripening, is golden grain, and there as we see the saint prepared for glory, as the head of corn is ripe and full, the head is bound of beauty, and the grain is loosened and ready for the harvest, a shock of corn, fully ripe, that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth.

Then as I look at this word, I think of this expression plants, I think of the Lord's, that Zion is likened to a garden, and here in that garden are his plants, all have a root, all have knife, all have a set place, all have a usefulness, all have a beauty, all have a fruitfulness or fragrance, some clearer seen than others, some that thrive more in the shade than in the sun, but all dependent upon the showers from heaven, the sunshine of warmth, the precious dew from heaven, you may think and trace out the spiritual counterpart, drops of heavenly dew, the warm beams of the sun of righteousness in your soul, and the showers of blessing, all have the shower in his season, the time of refreshing, and one shower is a promise of another shower, for he will give a shower in his season, and will give showers of blessing for reviving, refreshing, promotion of growth, and of usefulness in that set place, in that garden, you in your small corner, and I in mine, that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, again, reminding us also of the youthfulness of these plants, you may think of trees, you may go from the mighty oak, you may go down to the flowers of your garden, and I love to think, for example, of the little snow drop, that comes out fairly soon now, if the

Lord will, that speaks to us of purity in its whiteness, the head bound, speaking of humility, the loneliness place, and yet, of encouragement, that here, through the cold of the winter, again, the snow drop has appeared, the life that God has given, much instruction, there's, I remember one year, a heavy fall of snow, and melting, and a large quantity coming off the roof, and crushed a wallflower plant near my front door, and I thought at first I'd have it up, but I looked, and I thought, well, part of it's still there, but it's very bruised, and talking with my dear one, we decided we'd leave it, and, you know, that was often a sermon to me, who needs to come back, perhaps discouraged and cast down, look at my little wallflower plant, it's still living, and it revived, and at one time it was really crushed, yet it revived, and in time, came out in flower, you may say, well, you're a very simple minded man, well, friend,

God speaks to me in these simple ways, and in those simple ways touches my heart very often, and encourages me, because I just name another little instance, just one winter, I don't know why it was, a little sparrow would just go to sleep, just above the front door, and used to come in and look at that little sparrow, and think of God's care of that sparrow, and God's care of this unworthy man, and perhaps you've got some lessons, and do tell it to the children, do tell it to the generation following, my friend, it's your solemn responsibility, and that our sons may be as plants, grown up in their youth, and that these sons may grow up, be used in the church of God, in the various talents that God gives, men of God, men of prayer, men of ability, when I say ability, not in themselves, not what they're going to do, but by

God's grace, ministers of the gospel, deacons of the church, pillars in the church, men that sometimes perhaps can be a help in repairs of the church, others in the finances of the church, others in the legal matters, you see, God has a place for all, his people in that, and all working together, like in the garden, all is, there's no clashing of colour, all is beauty, and all, as it were, united, and all speak of God, and all that, and I must tarry here one more moment, as we think of fruitfulness, as we think of fragrance, is there a fragrance in our life, is there that which speaks of Jesus Christ, you know, sometimes there's, it's been a lot to bury dear saints of God, who've left behind their testimony of their life, their example,

[27 : 39] I've sometimes said, God has come down and gathered the lily from his garden, now, will you take that rose from your garden, it may have a sweet perfume, but soon it will die, soon the perfume is gone, it's finished, but the life of the believer, there's a sweet perfume that lingers, and like when the dear woman anointed the Lord Jesus and the odour filled the house, that our daughters may be as cornerstones, polished out of the similitude of a palace, speaking here then of the stone, it's not ready, it is to be quarried, it's to be dug out, some would need a greater effort, some more gentle, and there again the sovereignty of God, but it's the hand of God, it's the work of God, that stone cannot get itself out, that stone cannot prepare itself for to be a beauty and usefulness, but God does it all, but my friend, here it is, the same as we've said about the plants grown up, the stone it brought out, and it needs cleansing, it needs polishing, it needs shaping, it needs preparation, and here it is polished after the similitude of the palette, as I understand, made ready, you think of the stones for Solomon's temple, you see every stone was prepared, there was no sound of the hammer, or chisel, or any tool on the temple building, but when that stone was ready, then it was taken and put on its appointed place in the temple, and so

God prepares his people as living stones, and I think I read recently, I don't know if there's Mr. Philpott, it doesn't matter, that expression a living stone means a stone that's sound, not disintegrating, crumbling away, but real, solid, and this one that is made ready, prepared, and we have here polished.

Now, at what place have the daughters in the church of God a very important place, indeed, to keep silence in the church, indeed, not called to the work of the ministry, but with Paul, we thank God for the women that labor with us in the gospel, that bestow much labor upon us, whose, these mothers in Israel, these whose lives testify of that love of Christ in their heart, these with their influence and their words, kind and sometimes correcting, to those that are young, I look back to my boyhood days,

I thank God for a dear Sunday school teacher, oh, she was such a help to me, oh, she was made such a blessing, she was a help indeed, and my friend, these dear mothers in Israel, performing their duties, praying to the Lord, and their lives, speaking of the grace of God in their heart, that our daughters may be as cornerstones polished after the similitude of the palace.

I'm reminded that many years ago, in the early days of my pastorate, visiting some of my friends, one of one family, the children gathered around me, and they showed me a book that they borrowed from their school library, very profitable, it was on precious stones, beautifully illustrated, I remember it vividly today, and I looked at one of these pictures, it was a picture of ruby, it was irregular in shape, and other matter around, and as I noted it, I thought, yes, under the hand of the master, the craftsman, all the transformation, all that was of no value would be removed, and that would be polished, and made ready for the crown, and that's what God does, and to think that God takes the scum of the earth, filthy, vile sinners, and uses, blesses, prepares, and takes them to be with him in glory forever and ever.

[32 : 53] who's adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, of wearing of gold, or putting on other power, but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corrupt of all, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God, a great prize.

There's a dear old lady, she said to her pastor, you know, and I don't know who the pastor was, it's not myself, I'm no good, I'm too old, the pastor said, my dear, first of all, you're in your place whenever you're able to be there, then I observe your upturned face listening, and sometimes I see a tear trickle from your eye, you're a great help to your pastor.

so, friend, it may be some humble place, I think, the person passed away, a little chapel, miles away from here, one of our chapels, dear, humble soul, no education of whatsoever, but one of the duties was to, there was no water on in the chapel, she used to bring the water for the minister in a bottle and put it in the pulpit, well, after this particular service, I just said to her, don't forget you've got the water in the pulpit, she said, oh, I know, she said, not that she said that in a wrong spirit, I don't mean that at all, but she must have said, I shan't forget, shan't forget, and the way she said it, now this again is ever so simple, but it touched my heart, I said to her, I think you have a love to this place, don't you?

And tears filled her eyes, humble duty, no big eye in it, no, you see, the more we're used and blessed, I feel, and may it be, the humbler I shall lie.

I must hasten on the latter points, that our garners may be full, affording all manner of store. I've likened this to the word of God, the scriptures, and in these scriptures, it's full, it's complete, there's nothing lacking, of affording all manner of store.

[35 : 24] So it is not for any one of us to say, well, I can not take heed to that, I can do this, but not that. I think of the teaching of Jesus, go ye therefore and teach all nations, that is, make disciples of, that is, under the preaching, as there are those manifest as true disciples, these sons, these daughters, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

again, go back to Joshua, God says, have not I commanded you to be strong, but Joshua, turn not to the right hand, turn not to the left hand, from the word, it may be your meditation, day and night, the word of God, to guide you, to direct you, that our garners may be full, and that we may, as we come to the word of God, pray, Lord, open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law, that I may receive from the fullness of this, of the word of God, a blessing for my soul, even if it, Lord, cuts me down, even if it searches me, if it reveals my fault, if it comes and says, thou art the man, you're doing wrong, Lord, help me to receive it, if it's a word of exhortation, when I feel I can't go on, I'm ready to give up, no good my continuing, that there may be a word to encourage me, when I'm in the dark, that there may be light in my path, oh friend, has not there been something out of the garner for your soul?

I remember, and I will not go into the details of it, but the most sad occasion in my life, and turning to the word of God, and there was something there in the garner, and it was this, he was there, that was Jesus in the wilderness tempted with the wild beasts, and so forth, tempted and with the wild beasts, but it was just those words, he was there, oh my friend, what comfort, the sorrow was there, the burden was there, the grief was there, the heartbreak was still there, but Jesus was there, you see, the strength, the food, the nourishment, the support, and there's milk for the babe, there's strong meat for those that have need of it, friend, there's guidance for those in our path, there's wisdom from above, there's the news of salvation, and there's the guidance for us right through life's journey, all, and here it is, our garner may be full, affording all manner of store, that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets, all that yet there may be a reviving, all that yet there may be an in-gathering, we think of those words of the dear

Savior, of those other sheep, of this we are sure that they shall come because God says so, but does that mean because of the certainty and the sovereignty of God that the church goes to sleep and the church does not pray, my friend, I believe this, this is the very spur and encouragement for the church of God to earnestly see for the manifestation of the purposes of God's grace in the ingathering of these sheep, that they shall come.

Oh, how oft we say then as we baptize, I conclude always with this word, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is a room, that their oxen may be strong to labor.

[39 : 33] Brethren, pray for us. Here, it is not my thought to spend long. Brethren, in the ministry, know much of this word, labor.

They know that it's not just preaching and turning a tap on, preaching isn't just opening the Bible and saying, well, I can preach from that. My friend, we have to wait upon God, wait for a word, and sometimes it's, as it were, the last minute.

And yet, that does not mean neglect of waiting upon God, prayer to God, seeking time to be alone with God, in the preparation for the ministry.

But my friend, sometimes the Bibles are closed. Well, I think I'm right in saying my dear friend here would doubtless correct me, but I think the late Mr. Frank Gosden, I feel I may name it, once the dear man and I only know too well what he went through one Saturday, couldn't get a thing, and closed the Bible rather a bang.

And he thought, oh, how irreverent, and felt so grieved that he felt he must open the Bible and close it properly. And the Lord broke the snare, my springs are all in thee.

[40 : 52] Friend, he's a labour, he's a labour, and Satan attacking us in the pulpit sometimes, and saying you must water it down.

It's no good you preach. Where's the signs? Who's believed your report? You've toiled all night, you've caught nothing. It's no good, you better give up. My dear friend, we say no more.

But we have a solemn accountability before God, and that is we pray that we may not hold back on the truth.

And if your soul, I say this in love, if your soul is healthy, if you love the truth, if you love a God-given ministry, I do not mean a minister left in a wrong spirit, lashing at people in his wrong spirit, that's not blessed.

And I say a faithful, loving ministry that holds back nothing, you'll say, Lord, bless it to my soul, and make my heart willing to receive it, that I may not turn from it, that I may not be offended by it, but that I may bless thee for the wound that thou hast made, because I know, Lord, that as thou just wound my soul, there'll be healing and profit in the time to come.

[42 : 19] You won't want all slow things, sometimes your blessings and your good hearings may be most solemn hearings. I remember once at Galeed, just after the war years, prior to my marriage, Wednesday night, when dear Mr. Frost was preaching on the vine and the branches, and my dear friend with whom I was lodging the age saint, and she hadn't been baptised then, and I hadn't been baptised either, and we went back and I don't think we said a word to each other.

It was profitable, friend. It was a good hearing. It was. Not always comfort she, comfort she, that comes, blessed be God it does.

There'd be no breaking in. We've got to watch against the error that is around us, and the things and innovations.

You know, I don't want to set my people in front of anybody else, but this, I believe, is true of all our churches, I hope it is, but for a little season, at odd times, we had a dear man come to us.

I won't go into the details, there's no need for it, but he's moved away, and I believe he's a godly man. And he wrote to me, and to my dear one, wrote to us both, and in his letter he remembers, he says, I think of you every Sunday in prayer, great mercy, man, right down in Wales, to think of somebody praying for us like that, great help, but he said, one thing I often remember, and what I do not see elsewhere, is in your church a reverence, a silence, before the service.

[44 : 03] says, you know, it encouraged me. You see, today, the charismatic moment, and that which is attractive to the flesh, attractive to you young people too, it would be, but my friend, may the Lord keep you, and help us to stand in these old paths, that there be no breaking in of anything that is displeasing to almighty God, nor going out, and this is heart break.

Fathers and mothers, they're children coming of age, I'm not coming to chapel anymore, pastors, an empty seat there, another one over there, where's that lad, where's that lassie gone, away, shut the door, slam the door, they've gone and be done with them, that's not the spirit of prayer.

I hope that there's a spirit of prayer, we cannot see them, we know that God will in his appointed time, but does that mean to say that there should be no thought, no prayer?

My friend, I pray that our doors may ever be opened to receive them back. When I say receive them back, as repenting sinners before God, and who can tell?

I've seen it, I baptised one that had left our chapel for over 20 years, and was brought back. I know of another that left our chapel for years, and now of recent years, she told me, she says, I love the Bible, I've never seen it like this before.

[46 : 02] So, who can tell? My pastor used to tell us of some lad that went out and went right off in bad company one Sunday night, his companion said, where are we going?

And the Lord used that, I'm going to hell, so that there'd be no going out. But what about us?

Will ye also go away? One of our hymns says, I humbly answer now, that there be no complaining in our streets.

Murmuring. Do you know when I was a boy, I used to say, I can't understand those Israelites murmuring and grumbling. We learn some things when we grow older, don't we?

Ready to complain, ready to murmur, ready to be filled with self-pity, none are so tried as I, ready to murmur about this, murmur at that. You know, once I went to preach, and no provision was made for me for a meal, or afterwards, I sat in a train, having done about a 70-mile journey, 80-mile journey, just for the moment, self-pity.

[47 : 18] And then, I thought, what am I thinking about? Look at my comforts. I don't have to walk through snow, I don't, and not threaten with my life.

Oh, my friend, it soon swallowed up. Now, when I name that, that's the most unusual experience. It happened years ago, and I'm thankful it's not happened since. I think it was just an oversight.

But, I'm just naming, you see, we can be ready to complain, perhaps justly, and yet, may we ever think of what others have suffered, think of what Jesus has suffered. That will take away complaining.

And, don't be, and I'm speaking freely because I don't know of anyone here that I hope it doesn't come in this category, but the dear shepherd up in Scotland, that dear man, we love that little bull, he says there's a bully sheep, there are all the sheep resting and one will go around and keep nudging one and disturbing another.

Don't be like that in the church of God. Friend, we need this. Am I being an influence of God, or am I a disturbance?

[48 : 25] No, happy is that people that is in such a case that is so blessed, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.

Amen. bird, and to come to Jesus Christ, who is the incarnate light, the light of the world.

So may God help us then. Nothing could be more important than the verses set before us. It has been said that this third chapter from verse one to verse twenty-two, if there was no other Bible, no other parts written for us, there was enough in these verses to show us the way to salvation.

It gives the needs be for the new birth, for justification by faith, and for that faith in Christ.

Everything you'll find is there, which we need, which is essential to salvation. How indebted we are. To the Lord and to the Holy Spirit, we have this word recorded, but I must leave it.

[49 : 46] The time is gone. All that we may really meditate upon this wonderful gift at this Christmas time and at all times. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him that piece of have had but if he watched have C6 big s or features have out of can of hear at naz