

When The Lord Withdraws Himself

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[0 : 00] Now, as we look at this 25th Psalm, one of the things that we won't initially realize in our translation, whether it's in English or in Gaelic or whatever it may be, is that this is one of seven psalms throughout the psalter which is conceived and written as an alphabetical psalm.

That means that either each successive verse or section of a verse begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, something that only comes through in the original but it is intended, it is conceived as an acrostic we might say.

An alphabetical psalm designed to take the reader through each stage of the psalm with each section or each verse beginning with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, their equivalents of our A, B, C, D, E, F, G.

So it's as though if you were writing it in English, you'd say your first verse, you'd begin with something with the letter A, the second one with something with the letter B and C and D and so on. And this is how it is conceived and written.

The other six alphabetical psalms in the psalter are Psalm 34, Psalm 37 which it's only every second verse that is alphabetical in that sense, Psalm 111, Psalm 112 and as most of you will be aware, Psalm 119 is divided up into sections of approximately eight verses each and each one is under the heading of the particular letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

[1 : 40] In the authorised version sometimes you just get the name of the letter, Aleph, Beth, Gimel, D'Aleph and so on. Sometimes you might actually get the wee sort of squiggle of the Hebrew letter that's there in Psalm 119.

119 is unusual because it's whole sections that are alphabetical. The other one is Psalm 145. That is also conceived as alphabetical. These are things which to an extent we lose in translation. But it does mean that this is a psalm which if it is written in this way, clearly must be intended to be remembered. It's a word intended perhaps for teaching, intended perhaps for memorising. Now some of you will be in a generation that was brought up with the catechism. And the whole thing with the catechism is it's meant to put Christian doctrine into comparatively bite-sized question and answer sessions.

So that as a particular question triggers in the memory a particular answer, it just comes out automatically. Ideally it should come out automatically. In the same way if you were given to memorising sections of the Bible, then somebody might just need to say a particular verse that would trigger the beginning of a chapter or whatever.

[2 : 58] This would be intended as the same in the Hebrew. It is intended that the successive verses would be more readily, more easily memorised with this alphabetical structure.

This acrostic structure. That means that there is something in these and all the other acrostic alphabetical psalms which the writer or through the writer of the Lord intends his people to be able to commit to.

He intends them to take in and have within their hearts that which this psalm contains. Now what is it that this psalm contains?

We were talking earlier with regard to that children's address you might say about when the tide is out. When the Lord withdraws himself.

I would suggest to you that this is a psalm written in the context of when the Lord withdraws himself. And that's not immediately apparent.

[4 : 02] Because it seems to be just a sort of, you know, nice deep devotional psalm. Talking about the Lord and how he reveals himself to the meek and showing his paths to us.

And how our eyes are toward the Lord and how he to look on our affliction and so on. And it just seems a pretty standard kind of devotional sort of psalm.

Until you begin to look actually at context. Until you begin to look at tenses. Nothing is ever written for nothing in scripture.

Nothing is wasted. Look at where it is the present tense. For example, unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. That is what I'm doing in the present.

O my God, I trust in thee. Present tense. Let me not be ashamed. Let not mine enemies triumph over me. This is the current situation. He is in a position of comparative shame and of difficulty with enemies, appearing to get the advantage.

[5 : 04] Yea, let none that wait on me be ashamed. Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. This is now a future hope that he is expressing. That those who trust in the Lord won't be ashamed.

But at the moment he's kind of hard and overwhelmed almost with shame. Show me thy ways, O Lord. Teach me thy paths. Lead me in my truth. Now why do you say show me something?

Unless it is not yet at this stage clear. You don't say to the Lord, oh, show me. If I go outside the door, show me the hills, show me the seas, show me the green grass.

Because you can see it. It's already there. If somebody were to say, oh, did you read such and such? It was in the paper today. I say, no, I didn't see that. Show me where it is. But you don't say, oh, if you say, yes, I saw that.

Then you don't have to say, show me where it is. Because you've already read it. You've already seen it. If you're asking somebody to show you something, it means you have not yet seen it. You haven't laid hold of it.

[6 : 04] Show me thy ways, O Lord. Teach me thy paths. Why do we need to be taught? If I were going to learn, for example, to play the piano, I would have to be taught from scratch.

If somebody were able to try to teach me the violin or the fiddle, then, okay, we could start from a little bit further up. Simply because I did some lessons when I was a child.

So some of the basics I've got. But what you ask to be taught is what you don't yet know. So this is the psalmist asking the Lord, show me thy ways, O Lord.

Teach me thy path. Lead me in thy truths and teach me. He doesn't know the Lord's ways that he's going to lead him. He doesn't know what the Lord is doing just now.

He can't see the way the Lord is leading him. Because the tide is out. And because the Lord appears to have withdrawn himself for now.

[7 : 02] The believer cannot see. The psalmist cannot see where God wants him to go. On thee do I wait all the day. Waiting is not wasting.

We've used the illustration in the past. Sometimes if you think of, you might see on TV a huge banquet maybe at Buckingham Palace. And the big long tables and all the guests sitting there. And at regular intervals down the hall you'll see the waiter standing very stiff. And they'll be waiting. They'll be looking around to see. Has that person finished their plate? Does that person need a bit of help?

And they look as if they're not doing anything. But in fact they are there. Waiting for the least indication. Either from the queen or from the host or whoever it may be. They say, come over here and help me with this.

Or take this plate away or whatever. They seem to be doing nothing. In fact they are waiting. They are doing their job. They are serving. And waiting. And that is what the psalmist is doing here.

[8 : 01] He is waiting on the Lord. He's not doing nothing. He's doing what he is meant to be doing. Until such time as the Lord calls for him or comes back to him.

He is waiting on the Lord. That's what we have at the end of Psalm 27. If you just run your eye across the page. Wait on the Lord. Verse 14 of 27. Be of good courage and he shall strengthen my heart.

Wait, I say, on the Lord. Now throughout this psalm. If you actually look at it. This is what you will see. Is that the expressions of distress.

Or difficulty. Are either expressed in the present tense. Or they are asking for relief from something. Which appears to be in the present tense.

Verse 17. The troubles of my heart are enlarged. Oh bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon my affliction and my pain.

[9 : 01] And forgive all my sins. Verse 15. My eyes are ever toward the Lord. They are present tense. He shall pluck my feet out of the net. He will take me out of the slayer.

Out of the net in which I am entangled. Why do you need to be brought out of a net? Unless you're already stuck and tangled in a net. He senses that his feet can't even move. He can't get to where he wants to be. He is struggling. He has been caught. His enemies have got the advantage over him. Some commentators speculate that this is written at the time of the Absalom rebellion.

About which you can read of course in the books of Kings and Chronicles there. Absalom David's own son who rose up against him and brought almost all Israel against him. And the conspiracy was strong as the Bible puts it there. And it looked very at the same possibility that David would lose his kingdom. But of course the Lord stayed with David and the Lord delivered him.

[10:01] But you see if you go through this psalm that is the expression. He is focused on the Lord. Yes as he ought to be.

But he is in difficulty in the present tense. All that he hopes for. All that he looks for. Is that the Lord will come. And the Lord will deliver him.

And the Lord will help him. Because at the moment for this believer. For this psalmist. The Lord appears to have withdrawn himself. Spiritually.

The tide is out. Now as we can see from this psalm. And the fact that it is conceived and written in this alphabetical acrostic form. Which we may have mentioned earlier.

This is intended to be remembered. It is intended to be used. And learned. And therefore something that the believer can as it were. Bring out of their life.

[10:57] And remember. And recite from their heart. To remember how God deals. With those his people who wait upon him. In verse 4 it says.

Show me thy ways. O Lord. Teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth. It is suggested by some commentators. This is simply three different ways of expressing the same thing. Ways.

Paths. Truth. Just as Jesus said. You know. In John. Chapter 14. In verse 6. I am the way. The truth. And the life. No man cometh unto the Father but my being.

If you want to know the way. You look to Jesus. If you want to know the truth. You look to Jesus. If you want to know the paths of the Lord. You look to Jesus. If you want to know the life. You look to Jesus.

The way. The truth. The life. Show me thy ways. O Lord. Teach me thy paths. Teach me thy truth. And teach me. For thou art the God of my salvation.

[11:51] On thee do I wait all the day. I'm not doing nothing. I'm waiting on the Lord. I'm looking for the Lord. And this indeed is what the Lord encourages, of course, his servants to do.

There are plenty of examples and illustrations in the parables that Jesus tells about faithful servants and how they are to behave.

In Luke chapter 12, for example, we cite these instances quite often. Let your loins be girded about. Your lights burning. Ye yourselves unto men that wait for their Lord when he will return from the wedding.

And when he cometh not that they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants in the Lord when he cometh shall find watching. Thenly I said to you he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meet and will come forth and serve them.

And whatever watch in the night it happens to be to be come. Now this is what he cite quite often in terms of watchfulness looking for the Lord coming back. The fact that it's a shortage of time. We don't know when it's going to be.

[12:54] We have to be ready. But it's not the case that the servants are to be simply said, I'm twiddling up. I'm looking at my light. I don't see him yet. I don't know what we're going to do. We'll just wait for him to come back.

So we can open as soon as he comes. But in the meantime we just sit idly and do nothing. A little further on in that chapter there's mention of, you know, it says, Who then is that faithful and wise steward whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household to give them their portion of meat in due season?

Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. That's the sense here of giving them a portion of meat in due season. The ordinary household tasks have to go on.

Meals still have to be prepared. Work still has to be done. The fields will still have to be sown and plowed and reaped when the time comes. All the ongoing work of the estate still has to be done.

It's not just a case of, well, make sure they've got all their food, but then you can sit and twiddle your thumbs the rest of the day. This is a sort of illustration for who is faithfully, diligently doing his work. [14:01] So that when the Lord comes back, it's not just a case of he can open the door quickly when he arrives, but he will come back and find everything as he would hope to find it. Because the servants have not been idle in his absence.

Whilst he has been away, they have been doing, faithfully getting on with what they were meant to be doing while the master is away.

Who then is that faithful and wise steward whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? But, and if that servant, saying, is out, my Lord, you lay of his coming, and shall begin to beat the manservants and maidens to eat and drink with the drunken, the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him.

In other words, to abuse his Lord's goods. And he said, oh, I've got plenty of food, I can eat it myself. Plenty of wine in the cellar. I can drink that and drug that myself. I can ill-treat the other servants because I'm in charge, and there's nobody else here but me.

That is not faithfulness. It is not watchfulness. It's not just about being on the spot when he finally does come. It's how you've conducted and worked yourself, and his estate, and his goods, and the things he's given you while he has been away.

[15:17] Why do you think the master does go away? To take Luke is another example. You know, we see in chapter 19, verse 13, he said, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.

And he called his ten servants and delivered them ten pounds and said unto them, Occupy till I come. Be busy with the talents, with the pounds that I give you.

Work with what you do have. Of course it would be better. Of course it would be easier if the master was there. Of course it would be easier if the steward could go to him and say, Well, look at this, Lord.

I'm just wondering what decision I should take about this. Which crops do you want planted in those fields? Who should get a pay rise and who shouldn't? Do you want me to buy in this additional stock for the kitchen? Or this particular new plough?

Or what should I do about this, this, this, and this? Of course it would be easier if the master was on the spot. Of course it would be easier if you could just physically ask him and go to him with anything that you had.

[16:18] But he has withdrawn. He has gone to receive a kingdom. He has withdrawn for a time. And spiritually sometimes, even though he is very present with us by his spirit, spiritually sometimes the tide is out.

And the Lord withdraws for a time. And this is not because he is displeased. Well, he might be withdrawing from us because of a particular sin. Or because we have turned away from him. Or grown cold towards him. Or perhaps become complacent. Then you are. That's all right. The Lord is always going to provide. We can eat and drink with a drunkard. We can ill-treat the other men, servants and maids.

And we can just live life as though there's never going to be a reckoning. Or like the unfaithful steward would be doing. But rather, what he is looking for is that when he is away, they will faithfully do what he's given them to do.

They can't ask him directly. Or they can't receive an answer directly. They have to take on trust. His trust. He has put into their hands the tools to do the job.

[17:20] And now he wants to see if they'll faithfully do it. Occupy till I come. So, likewise, when the Lord withdraws himself, he doesn't leave us with nothing.

When the tide goes out, it's not because, oh, it's a disaster. Look, global warming. All the seas have dried up. Now, this is something that happens on virtually a regular basis.

In terms of the tithes, it's a cyclical daily day. In terms of the Lord withdrawing himself, it is something which happens in the life of every single believer at some point or other.

It is part of the Lord's enabling his people to grow. He teaches them. He instructs them. He guides them. And then he withdraws for a time. See, right, I've given you everything.

Let's see how you get on with it. When Jesus revealed himself to his disciples after his resurrection.

[18:20] When you read in Luke's account in chapter 24, for example, we read of how it says, Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.

And he said unto them, Thus it is written, And thus it beheld Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. And that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name amongst all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

And ye are witnesses of these things. So basically, he opened the Scriptures to them, opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. I would suggest to you, they've suggested in the past, that the corresponding verse in John is in John chapter 20, at verse 22.

When he says, When he had said this, he breathed on them and said unto them, Receive the Holy Ghost. Now, clearly, that is not, that particular verse is not about Pentecost.

It's not about the Spirit being poured out on them at Pentecost, and Peter giving his great sermon, and 3,000 people being converted. That's a separate occasion. So that's not the pouring out of the Holy Ghost.

[19 : 28] What is he doing when he breathes on them and says, Receive the Holy Ghost? The Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, is the one who authored the Scriptures. And I would suggest to you, this corresponds with his opening to them, the Scriptures, so that the Spirit enables them to understand and makes clear to them what is already written.

Listen, just as the steward, when the Lord withdraws himself, he's been given the authority, he's been given the tools, he's been given the means to get on with the job, to be faithfully carrying on in his Lord's absence, doing the things the Lord would want him to do, being faithful with the things the Lord has given him.

Even though the time is out, even though the Lord has withdrawn himself for a time, the servant still has what he or she needs to get on with being faithful, in the knowledge, in the trust, that the Lord will be coming back, and perhaps sooner than they imagine.

Jesus himself experienced this withdrawal of his Father, in a sense. We read in the Garden of Gethsemane of how he prayed that this cup would be taken away from him.

Mark's account of the Gospel, of course, this is very clear, from verse 32. They came to a place which was named Gethsemane. He said to his disciples, Sit ye here while I shall pray.

[21 : 03] And he taken with him Peter and James and John and began to be so amazed. He was overwhelmed with his sense of dread and sorrow, to be very heavy. He said unto him, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death.

It's almost killing me, the weight of this sorrow and this anxiety. We might even say this fear. Tarry ye here and watch. And he went forward a little and fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee. Take away this cup from thee.

Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt. Now, this use of the term Abba, the Syriac or Aramaic term, roughly translates it, daddy.

It's a colloquial term. It's a very intimate term. It's only used three times in the New Testament. We think of it, because we tend to work it into sort of worship songs and hymns and things, we think it's a common term in the Bible.

It's not common. It's only used three times. Here in Mark's account of the Gospel, it's used once in Romans chapter 8 and once in Galatians 4. Those are the only three times that it's used.

[22 : 14] And it indicates an intimacy, a closeness with his father. He is praying that the Lord, the Father, would take away this cup if it was at all possible. Luke tells us, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

But he is desperate for this cup to be removed. But it's not going to be. The Father is not going to intervene and say, yes, yes, it's okay.

You won't have to go through with it. He is sweating with what we might in all reverence say at human level, the fear of what is coming, the spiritual weight that he has to bear.

And he's not sweating because it's a hot night. It's a cold night. Remember that Peter, when he goes to the house of the high peak, he's warming himself at the fire of coals that they have made because it was cold.

So Jesus isn't sweating because it's warm. He's sweating in a cold night. He is literally sweating blood. That's a separate sermon on its own, as you know.

[23 : 21] But Jesus experiences what it is like when the Father withdraws himself. He is left in one sense, if we can say it in reverence, alone in Gethsemane.

He is left alone in one sense on the cross. Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Of course he is not actually forsaken. But he feels it. He feels the weight, the depth of that forsakenness. And the fact that Jesus himself goes through that.

The fact that every believer in the Lord, every apostle, every saint of the Lord, every prophet of the Lord, David himself here, experienced what it is like when the Lord withdraws himself, indicates to us, that if this is what you are going through, or have recently, or shall in the near future go through, it is not an indication, necessarily, of you not being the Lord.

It is not an indication that, oh, God doesn't really love you. Otherwise, he wouldn't have left you in this way. Otherwise, he wouldn't have come away from me. He wouldn't have withdrawn himself.

[24 : 39] On a regular, cyclical basis, the tide goes out. It is natural in the spiritual life that there will be times when the tide goes out.

There will be times when the Lord withdraws the flood of his mercy. There will be times when you feel high and dry. But what you feel is not necessarily the reality of the relationship.

Because the Lord has withdrawn that you who are left with the tools, with the means to carry on the word that he has given, the spirit to understand it as he breathed on his disciples, you have God's word in front of you.

You have God's truth, which does not change. And yes, believe me, I know there are times when it can seem that this is all you've got. You've got, perhaps, your experience of the Lord in the past.

Perhaps you've got what you've always been taught to trust and believe, and you're holding fast to this. But, my goodness, it doesn't feel as if he is there. It feels as if he is gone. And the fear is that this will be forever.

[25 : 56] That is surely always the thing that overwhelms us with our fears. It's not, oh, the Lord has withdrawn for a while. But he'll be back soon. Then the tide goes out.

But we know the tide will come in again later in the day, in a physical sense. But when it happens in a spiritual sense, there's always the fear, this is it. This is it now forever.

Up until now, I've been fooling myself. Up until now, I always thought the Lord loved him. And now, look, he's gone from me. I can't possibly then be saved. I can't possibly be one of those.

Remember, oh, Lord, for six thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses, for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions according to my mercy.

Remember thou me for thy goodness sake, oh, Lord. It is a cry out into the dark that the Lord would remember that the Lord would return. And the Lord, if you think about it, never denies the plea or the prayer of any.

[27 : 00] All those who come to the Lord Jesus seeking his help, he always helps them. He never turns any away.

There are those who turn away from him. And there are those who he may test. Like the Syrophenician woman, he doesn't answer her right away. And he says, I've not sent any but the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

You know, I can't give the children's meat to the dogs and so on. But she hangs in there and she holds on true, Lord, that even the dogs eat the crumbs under the table that the children drop. Oh, woman, great is thy faith.

For this saying, go thy way. Be it unto thee as thou hast believed. The Lord answers her. The Lord answers Zacchaeus. The Lord answers Bartimaeus.

The Lord answers Jairus when he pleads for his daughter. The Lord answers those who come to him. Jesus says, all that the Father giveth me shall come unto me. And him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.

[27 : 59] It does not mean that it may be instantaneous. It does not mean that the minute we think, well, I'm having a slight inclination to pray to the Lord. And bing, there's the Lord right away that second.

No, we may have to knock hard on the door. But Jesus says, knock and it shall be opened. He says, ask and it shall be given. But you may have to ask a few times. Just like that poor woman did. You may have to be determined like Bartimaeus throwing off his cloak. And not taking the rebukes of the crowd. Saying, oh, be quiet. Just sit down, you know. Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

The tide may be out for now. But the Lord does not withdraw from his people forever. Any more than he withdrew from his only begotten son. Turn back with me, if you will, to Psalm 22.

Psalm 22, which begins with that verse which our Lord quotes upon the cross. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

[28 : 59] Why art thou so far from helping me and from the words of my glory? And so on. And it continues in this vein of absolute sorrow.

The depths of hopelessness. And yet, all through it, crying out to the Lord. Notice that. It's not just that, woe is me. Oh, how bad is my situation.

But it is pouring it out to the Lord. It is going to the Lord with his complaints. It is taking all the burden, all the pain to the Lord.

And then, verses 21 and 22, it switches over. And suddenly it becomes about praise to the Lord. It's as though there is this sense of relief. This sense that the Lord has heard. Then it becomes about praising the Lord. Then it becomes looking forward to God's answer and grace and mercy.

[29 : 57] The kingdom is the Lord's. He is the governor among the nations. They shall come, a seed shall serve, and shall declare its righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

What hath God wrought? He hath done this. This is a psalm which begins in the cry of desolation and ends in the cry of triumph.

Jesus would have known that when he cried that verse from the cross. Jesus knew his Bible perfectly. He knew the scriptures. The verse that he began with, he knew how it would end.

And this cry in the midst of the desolation of the sinner who feels forsaken, he knows how it ends. Verse 8.

Good and upright is the Lord. Therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment. And the meek will he teach his way. The meek are not those without sin. The meek are sinners who in humility acknowledge their sin.

[31 : 03] Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Those who are poor in spirit. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They know themselves sinners. The meek are not those who are sinless.

The meek are sinners but they are penitent sinners who are sinners nonetheless. Just as Paul wrote to Timothy, we quoted this earlier.

This is a faithful saying worthy of all acceptance. That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Of whom I am chief. 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 15.

That's why he's come. That's why he's here. That's why there is a time. Whether it's in or it's out.

That's why the Lord came amongst us. To save sinners. You know yourself a sinner.

You know yourself in need. You ought to be pleased today because you're exactly the kind of person the Lord came to save. He said I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

[32 : 03] The tide may be out and he may be waiting for your repentance. He may be waiting for an acknowledgement of some sin that maybe you weren't even aware of or else you thought you'd got away with.

And sometimes when we get away with it we think oh the Lord's not bothered about this one. That's fine. Think how long it was between David's actual sin with Bathsheba and being confronted by Nathan the prophet.

In all that time remember her husband had to die. A child had to be conceived and brought to term. The child was born. The child got sick. And then Nathan confronted David.

It's nearly a year later that Nathan confronts David. David must have thought hey I'm the king. I've got away with it. God remembers all these things. All the paths of the Lord.

Yes they are mercy and truth to such as keep his covenant. He sees all of our past, present and future right there before him.

[33 : 06] Sometimes people tend to think. He always talks about the sins of my youth. Not remembering the sins of my youth. Verse 7. It's almost like if you were to start off at the harbour then in Parham and say I'm going to walk all the way round.

All the coastline of Lewis and Harris. And you walk and you walk and you walk and you walk. And up. Up ■ seaport. And then down. And then up and round. And past Storn away. And then out point. And then back up.

And then past Tolstown. And round to Butter Lewis. And then down the west side. And you come past the Rue. And burn it up. And finally you come down the western side there of North Harris.

And then you come in past Ardassie. And you come back again to the very narrow neck. On the other side of Tarbert. And you've always met back where you are. And it's like the sins of long ago. Your youth. When you set off. You think oh nobody will remember this in a few years time. And you're brought back again. To confront all your past. All your sins. And all your blessings.
[34 : 05] And all the good things you've done. It's brought right back to where you began. For God. The past. The present. And the future. They're all right there. We tend to think in terms. Oh I did that.

I was 50 years ago. Nobody remembers that. For God. It is as though it's right there in front of him. Because he is an eternal God. There's no past. Present. And future with God. It's all there. Right in front of him. But all the parts of the Lord are mercy. What man is he that feared the Lord. For him shall he teach. In a way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease. His seed shall inherit the earth. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. And he will show them his covenant. This is the last point I want us to understand and make here. The secret of the Lord. Oh. Big. Big deep secrets. No. It's just that if we're trusting in the Lord. He makes his way known to us.
[34 : 58] Jesus says to the disciples. John 15. Verse 15. Henceforth I call you not servants. For the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth. Doesn't know beforehand. But I have called you friends. For all things that I have heard of my father I have made known unto you. They're his friends. So he makes known the Lord's intentions to him. Just like God says to Abraham in Genesis 18. He says. He says. Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do? Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation. All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. For I know him.

That he will command his children and his household after. And they shall keep the way of the Lord. To do justice and judgment. And Isaiah 41 says. Thou Israel art my servant. Jacob whom I have chosen. The seed of Abraham my friend. Jesus said. I don't call you servants anymore. I call you friends. Because I make known my ways to you.
[35 : 58] Jesus is making known his ways to us. And one way that he does it. Is with his word. He makes his intentions known to us. He lets us see. Yes. This is what happens.

The Lord withdraws for a time. But he gives you what you need to carry on in the meantime. He gives you what you need. To keep going. The first time I ever drove. When I grew up as somebody will know. In Aberdeen. The first time I ever drove north of Inverness. I didn't even know what the map really looked like. North of Inverness. It was all a sort of blur. But I was heading for Wick. And I didn't know all the ways the roads would go off. I just stayed on the road. Just stay on the road and follow the signs. I think I wasn't able to look at maps and things on the passenger seat. I'd look beforehand. But you just have to keep following the road. Stay on the road. And you won't go far wrong. I got there. I got to Wick. Sure enough. Just by following the road. Nobody was there.
[36 : 54] Tell me. Turn this way. Don't take that road. Don't follow this path. Just stay on the road. And that's all I was able to do. And the Lord gives us what we need to stay on the road.

Even when he withdraws himself. Because the tide will come back in. And we have to trust and believe in that. Keep my soul. Verse 20. And deliver me. Let me not be ashamed. For I put my trust in thee. The affliction is present tense. The hopes are future tense. This is a psalm written at a time when the Lord appears to have. With the arms of. When the tide is out. But David holds fast. Then it will come back in. I know I've quoted the following before. But it's a devotional little piece by a theologian called John Bailey. Who wrote this in Edinburgh. Published it in the 1930s. Just read a wee bit of it. When the way seems dark before me. Give me grace to walk trustingly.
[37 : 54] When much is obscure to me. Let me be all the more faithful to the little that I can clearly see. When the distant scene is crowded.

Let me rejoice that at least the next step is plain. When what thou art is most hidden from my eyes. Let me still hold fast to what thou dost command. When insight falters. Let obedience stand firm. What I lack in faith. Let me repay in love. And if still I cannot find thee. O God. Then let me search my heart. And know whether it is not rather I who am blind. Than thou who art obscure. And I who am fleeing from thee. Rather than thou from me. Sometimes. Perhaps on a regular basis.

[38 : 53] The tide goes out. But this is part of God's plan. It is part of his intention and purpose. This psalm. Is intended to be remembered.

And learned. Hence it's style. That we must trust. Believe. And get on with the job. And be found faithful. Diligent.

Working. And waiting for the Lord. That when he comes back. And the flooding of the tide returns. We may be found. Ready.

And not ashamed. Let us pray. Thank you.