

Unite my heart

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Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 00] Now, the passage of the psalm that we read, you see at the top of this psalm is entitled, A Prayer of David. But even if we hadn't known that it was written by David, and we were just going by its content, we could see that this is, at the very least, the prayer of a believer.

This is one whose relationship with the Lord, and whose talking with the Lord, and business with the Lord is self-evident to anyone reading the psalm.

The first seven verses, which are almost like a section in themselves, take the form of variously expressed cries to the Lord. Cries which are uttered by a believer who is, yes, in great need and extremity, but who, even as he cries, expects God to help, and expects deliverance.

Verse seven, in the day of my trouble, I will call upon thee, for thou wilt answer thee. The expectation that God will help, and this expectation is built, firstly, on the strength of the character of God himself.

Verse five, for thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

[1 : 24] So, firstly, it is on the strength of the character of God. Secondly, it is on the strength of the believer's existing relationship with God.

Let me see verses two to four. Preserve my soul, for I am holy, that is set apart to the Lord. O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.

Be merciful unto me, O Lord, for I cry unto thee daily. Rejoice the soul of thy servant, for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. The strength of the relationship, of the believer's existing relationship with God.

Thirdly, on the basis of the believer's own extreme need. We see that verse one, verse three, verse seven. Bow down, O Lord, hear me, for I am poor and needy.

Verse three, for I cry unto thee daily. Verse seven, in the day of my trouble, I will call upon thee, for thou wilt answer me. We see each of these showing up the believer's need.

[2 : 31] These three aspects are then repeated and reinforced. Verses eight to ten. Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord, neither are there any works like unto thy works.

All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great and doest wondrous things. Thou art God alone.

That is the character and greatness of God. That's what's being talked about. Verses eight to ten.

Verses nine to thirteen. There we have all nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord.

Glorify thy name. Thou art great, doest wondrous things. Thou art God alone. Teach me thy way, O Lord. I will walk in thy truth. Unite my heart to fear thy name.

I will praise thee, O Lord, my God, with all my heart. I will glorify thy name forevermore. For great is thy mercy toward me. And thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.

[3 : 31] What is that talking about? It's talking about the believer's already existing relationship with God. And then the closing verses, fourteen to seventeen.

O God, the proud are risen against me. Assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul. Have not set thee before them. But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious long-suffering.

Plenteous in mercy and truth. Turn unto me and have mercy upon me. Give thy strength unto thy servant. Save the Son of thine hand me. Show me a token for good.

That they which hate me may see it and be ashamed. Because thou, O Lord, hast opened me and comforted me. And there, in that third section, we see the desperate plight of the believer as he cries to the Lord.

In whose character he continues to have confidence. Verse fifteen. Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, gracious long-suffering. Plentiful in mercy and truth.

[4 : 27] So the effect we see, we could sort of subdivide each of these sections. And find little tokens of each part of these sections. Of the character of God. The character of the believer's relationship with God.

And of the believer's extreme need. We could find that throughout the psalm. And it would be recurring again. And coming back then. The effect is like that of a wave breaking on the shore. Running up the sands. As we've all seen, as it runs up the sand, it gets thinner and thinner and thinner. The water that's left. And then it draws back out again. And then it gathers up. And then it comes crashing back again.

All thick and foamy and so on. So it repeats again and again. And repeats again. Gathering and rolling back in greater force. Than breaking again on the shore. And we have this repetition of the theme.

And expansion of the theme. The character of God. The believer's relationship with God. The needs of the emergency. And that repeats again.

[5 : 27] Like the waves going back again and again. The character of God. The relationship with God. The needs of the emergency. You also notice that at the end of each section.

Verse 7. Verse 13. Verse 17 at the end there. There is an expression of devout confidence. In both the Lord. And in the deliverance which he is being asked for.

The latter two of which if you notice. Verse 13. And at verse 17. These statements are in the past tense. Verse 13.

Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. Verse 17. Because thou Lord hast opened me. And comforted me. Past tense. Now I don't think we should take it.

That this psalm was begun. In a time of extremity. And then completed. After there had been a time of deliverance. As though it's being written in two different time stages.

[6 : 24] You know. One before and one after. The great need. And then completed. Once the emergency is passed. But rather. The past tense statements. That we have at verses 13 and 17.

Are expressions of God's faithfulness. On previous occasions. And what he has already done. For the believer in the past.

And because of the nature of the almighty. That is the character. Of an unchanging God. His faithfulness in the past. Is thereby proof. Of his reliability.

For the present need. This is the prayer. Of a believer in distress. Who yet remains confident. That God will supply. Grace to help.

In time of need. Now we may not all be professing. Believers here tonight. But many of us will be. And even those who are not. To come seeking the Lord.

[7 : 23] In prayer. And perhaps in preparation. As the time of our own communion season. For example. Draws nearer. This indicates at the very least. A desire to be with the Lord.

To seek after him. To be in his house. With his people. At such a time as this. This psalm. Is a prayer for those. Who already know.

Something. Of the character of God. Who perhaps already know. Their need. And the dire situation. In which their life. For their soul.

Maybe. So two out of the three aspects. They've got already covered. You know. The character of God. That's a given. The fact that. I am in need of his help. That too.

Is a definite. But the nature. Of my relationship. With the Lord. That is the variable. That is the thing. Which must be addressed. Here.

[8 : 19] As another communion season. Draws nearer. As we prepare. At its outset. To focus. Traditionally. As we do. At the start. Of our communion season. At any rate. On our need.

For repentance. And that's what we should be focusing on. As it comes nearer. This. Settling. Of our. Relationship with the Lord. This we cannot do of ourselves.

Or in our own strength. As verse 11. Points out. It is the Lord himself. Who must teach us. Teach me thy way. O Lord. I will walk.

In thy truth. Unite my heart. To fear. Thy name. It's the Lord himself. Who must teach us. But what David asked him to do here. Is to. As we saw there.

Unite. My. Heart. Unite. My. Heart. Now this is a unique. Phrase. It's not used. Anywhere else.

[9 : 12] In scripture. And I would suggest. To you. That this phrase. Is in fact. The key. To this. Psalm. As a whole. And to the. Establishing.

Of a right. Relationship. With the Lord. Particularly. At a time. Of repentance. And preparation. As we look forward. In the next couple of weeks. To our own. Communion. Season. To the Lord's. Supper. The word of God. Is. Is precious. And he will not. Waste. Any of it. Therefore. Whatever God. Causes. To be recorded.

In his word. Is not just. Idle words. You know. Romans 15. Verse 4. Tells us. Whatsoever things. Were written. A foretime. Were written. For our learning. That we. Through patience. And comfort. Of the scriptures. Might have hope. Joshua chapter 1. Is a case in point. With which. I'm sure. Most of you. Are familiar. Where Joshua. Is told. No less than.

[10 : 06] Four times. To be strong. And very courageous. Now. Why. Does. That need to be said. And. More to the point. Why does it need to be said. So often.

Throughout the chapter. Well. That's what. No doubt. Talked about. On previous occasions. The point. Is being made. There. Is that. Far from being. An all. Conquering hero. Of fearless character. Joshua. In chapter 1. Feels himself. To be both. Weak. And afraid. So he has to be told. And told. And told.

Again. To be exactly the opposite. To be strong. And very courageous. He has to be told it once. And twice. And three times. And four times. To be strong.

And very courageous. Because he himself. Is conscious of being weak. And afraid. So likewise. When God inspires David to plead. Unite my heart.

[11 : 03] It can only be because David. David's heart. And therefore. That of even. The most devout. Believer's. Is at times. Divided. Not so much.

From God. As perhaps. Divided. Amongst. Other things. And. God. If you think. For an example. If you think. You know. Picture if you can. Sort of like. The skyline. Of London. If you were to say. Lucas sitting at the top. Of the millennium wheel. Or whatever. You know. Looking at the skyline. Of London. And you could picture it. Well. If you weren't actually. On the wheel itself. That would be part of it. Nowadays. You know. You see. Big Ben. And Tower Bridge.

And the Gherkin. And somewhere. Somewhere there. On the skyline. With all the buildings. And all the sort of. Landmarks. That would be there. You would glimpse. Somewhere in the picture. The dome. Of St. Paul's Cathedral.

[11 : 58] But you only glimpse it. As part of a skyline. Your eye is distracted. Your heart is. Divided. By all else. That there is there. To see. But now.

Instead of looking. At the skyline. From a distance. Of London. Imagine yourself. Now then. Brought to. To the front steps. Of St. Paul's Cathedral. And there you are.

On the stage. And you're looking up. This huge. Massive edifice. And all the way. That it's been. It's been put together. You're admiring. The architecture. The stonework. And all the intricate design. And how it must have been. Put together. You know. Without all the modern machines. That we've got. Nowadays. And you go in. And you. You hear. The echo. Of your footsteps. And you.

You look up. Into the dome. That's been designed there. And your breath. Is taken away. And the more. Detail. I don't know a great deal. About architecture. Or how you put buildings together.

[12 : 53] Or measurements. Or the holding of weight. And how you suspend stone. And everything. I don't know half of these things. But the more you did know. About architecture. And building work.

And so on. The more detail. You actually know about it. And the use of stone. And how you design such a structure. The more you would be filled. With wonder.

And admiration. And amazement. Now. You're not thinking about. The gherkin. Or the millennium wheel. Or tower bridge. Or big ben. Now. You're just caught up.

With the amazement. And the wonder. And the focus. Upon this incredible feat. Of building. And engineering. And your mind. Your thoughts. Your heart. Are focused.

Concentrated. United. On this one structure. Let's leave aside for the moment. That it's meant to be a church. You know. Very few of those.

[13 : 47] Who visit. St. Paul's Cathedral. Go there. To worship. But you get the sense. Of going from seeing this. Only as a passive feature. Of a busy skyline.

To that. Which now. The closer. You come to it. And the deeper. You go into it. The more you know about it. And learn about it. It comes to consume.

Every part. And detail. Of your senses. As you look around. At it. And up into it. From the inside. Unite. My.

Heart. Very few people. Are actually. Genuinely. Atheists. Many people. Maybe practical. Atheists. But very few. Are actually. Genuinely.

Believing atheists. In that sense. That they. Honestly. Believe. There is nothing. There is no God. Whatsoever. Most people. Believe. In the existence. Of God. Or at least. The existence.

[14:43] Of our God. The supreme being. Of some kind. But. But knowledge of him.

Understanding of him. Relationship with him. Is hampered. By the fact.

That their heart. Is divided. Distracted. By all the things. Of the world. Which are important. To them. God is. In there.

You know. Somewhere. Out of the corner. Of their eye. But there is no focus. On him. The still.

Small voice. Cannot be heard. In our room. Jarring.

Of the noise. Of business. And money. And leisure. And sport. And relationships. And the unending. Treadmill. Of activity. In which we are. Ceaselessly engaged.

It's loud. It's demanding. It's endless. And it. Divides. Our heart. Demanding. If not our love. And at the very least. Our attention.

[15:39] Now. This minute. It wants everything. To be done. Right away. It's going to be. Instant reaction. And so on. Constantly. Lurching. From one crisis. Or emergency.

To the next. And even. For the believer. The demands. Of life. In this world. Are just. So clamorous. So urgent. So pressing. Our religious. Duty. To the God. Whom we profess. To love. Can at times. Become. Perfumctory. Cold.

Formalized. A drudge. Or. A burden. We. We just. So. So much else. We're going to get on with.

And such a heart. A heart. Divided.

Into so many. Competing. Slices. Cannot be. A whole heart. Cannot. Know. The Lord. As he ought to be known.

[16:33] Indeed. Has no time. To do so. If we plead. Like David. That the Lord. Should. Unite. Our heart.

What is the result. You're describing. Is it peace. Relief. Rest. At last. No. Our heart.

Is united. And put back. Together again. That it may focus. Wholly. Undividedly. Upon. The one thing. The one person.

That matters. More than all. The trivial noise. And busyness. Of all the world. And like. With the cathedral. As we stand.

Before him. We have to have. A sense. Of awe. Unite my heart. For what purpose. Well it's the inverse of that.

[17:27] Unite my heart. To fear. Thy. Name. It is. As Proverbs. Tells us. Chapter 1. Verse 7. The beginning of knowledge.

The fear of the Lord. Is the beginning of knowledge. But fools. Despise. Wisdom and instruction. Again. Chapter 9. Verse 10. Of the same book. Tells us.

That it is the beginning of wisdom. And the knowledge of the holy. Is understanding. The more our heart. Is reconstructed.

And we begin. Slowly. To recognise. That this is not simply. The old heart. With the bits. Stuck back together again. But rather.

This is. A new heart. Like. Ezekiel speaks of it. Ezekiel 36. Verses 26 and 27. It says. A new heart. Also.

[18:22] Will I give you. And a new spirit. Will I put within you. And I will take away. The stony heart. Out of your flesh. And I will give you. A heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit.

Within you. And calls you. To walk in my statutes. And you shall keep my judgments. And do that. And the more our heart. Then is reconstructed.

Into this new heart. The more the fear of the Lord. Then takes root. And we recognise. That it's not a sort of dread. Or terrified sort of fear. But it is. Like we're standing.

In the midst of this huge cathedral. It is. It is awe. It is reverence. Reverence. This. Is the spirit. In which we ought.

To approach. The closing weeks. Before the Lord's Supper. In preparation. And repentance. In the fear of the Lord. The awesome wonder.

[19 : 20] The mind blowing. Amazement. At who this God is. And what he has done. It silences our idle chatter.

Like the echo. In the dome of St. Paul. As you are looking up into it. Are very whispers. Are all those offensive intrusions. Into the silence.

That commands us. To be still. And know. That he is God. And the more we are aware. Of this great God.

Of the sacrifice. Of his son. Of all that he endured. Upon the cross. Of all that he suffered. For sinners. Of the deep. Deep love.

Of Jesus. And the wrath of God. Which shall surely. Be poured out. Upon any. And all. Who despise. That once and for all. Sacrifice. Then there is one last reason.

[20 : 16] Why even. Our new heart. Will need to be. United. Not now. Because it is distracted. But because.

In the knowing of God. In the deep. Love of Christ. God the son. Our heart. Breaks. It groans. And strains. With the recognition. Of all that he has endured. And all that he has gone through. For sinners like us. And it bends. Under the strain. And it.

Breaks. And it is well. That it does so. As we read. And swear in the sins. A broken spirit. Is to God. A pleasing sacrifice. A broken. A dark. Heart. Lord. Thou wilt not. Despise. Such.

[21 : 13] A heart. Broken. And now. Put back. Together. Mended. Healed. By the grace. And spirit of God.

It is a heart. Which the Lord. Has indeed. United. Not only to fear. His name. But to love.

And to praise him. Holy. And. Undividedly. For great. Is thy mercy. Verse 13. Toward me.

And thou hast. Delivered my soul. From the lowest hell. Then. Verses 11 and 12. Teach me thy way. O Lord. I will walk in thy truth.

Unite my heart. To fear. Thy name. I will praise thee. O Lord. My God. With. All. My heart.

[22 : 10] And I will glorify. Thy name. Forevermore. Let us pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Yeshua. Amen. Amen. Let us pray. Amen.

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Amen. Amen. Amen. God. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.