

Delighting in the Master's Will

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Date: 01 September 2019

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[0 : 00] I'd like us to think for a little while this morning about what we read in verse 143. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me, yet thy commandments are my delights.

Yet thy commandments are my delights. We see in this verse, in the midst of the longest psalm, the longest chapter in the entire scripture, which is devoted almost wholly to the praise of how great God's law and commandments are.

It is, the whole psalm is, as some of you will know, and as you'll perhaps see from the different sections, which have strange sounding words at the top of each section. These are letterings of the Hebrew alphabet, and in the original Hebrew, each section of roughly equivalent size, it always began with a particular Hebrew letter that is named at the top of each section.

So all the verses for each section would begin, for example, in that section with our verses, with the letter tzadi, it would begin, we each have that letter beginning each word at the start of every verse there.

And likewise with the previous ones, you know, with peh, 129 to 136, and so kof, likewise 145 to 152, and so on. We've got all these different letterings of the Hebrew alphabet throughout this whole psalm.

[1 : 30] But given that the whole psalm is devoted to the praise of God's word, his statutes, his commandments, his teachings, we could have taken almost any verse, really, out of this entire psalm.

But we've chosen this particular one today. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me, yet thy commandments are my delights. Now here we have in microcosm the experience of the believer, the experience of the one who seeks the Lord, and who seeks to follow him, and who trusts in him. Of course trouble and anguish likewise will afflict the complete non-believer. They will afflict the agnostic. They will afflict the one who struggles and wants to put their faith on the Lord, but hasn't yet quite got there or succeeded.

None of us escape, as we've said many times in previous weeks, none of us escape trouble and anguish. It is always there with us in this fallen world.

It is a symptom of this fallen world because of our separation from the Lord. Because this world is fallen, because of sin, all the symptoms of suffering, of disease, and ultimately of death, are in this world because of sin.

[2 : 40] And we live in it. And so likewise, trouble and anguish are going to be part and parcel of our daily lives. But not exclusively so. Because if there was nothing but trouble and anguish, if there was never any light in the darkness, that would be hell.

But rather, we have delight also in this world. And for the one who is in Christ, the one who is putting his or her trust in the Lord, their delight ultimately is in Him.

But of course, in our day and age, we don't have Christ physically with us in the room. We don't have Christ physically present bodily when we walk by the wayside, when we're driving in the car, when we're going about our business.

And it might be wonderful if we did have it physically right there. But spiritually, He is certainly there. And because He's no longer confined within His body, He can be with each of His children all over the world at the same time.

He's not constricted anymore. So if we are in Christ, our ultimate delight is in Him. We are filled with blessing, with grace, with delight when Christ, or we're conscious of Christ being there with us.

[3 : 54] And so we read, Yet Thy commandments are my delights. Now we think, yeah, but that's God's teachings, it's commandments. That's not Jesus physically Himself.

But remember that all of God's Word points us to Christ. He is the fulfilment of all God's Word. That is what it's pointing to. He Himself said, in John's account of the Gospel, The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

All that God is teaching, all that He is speaking, all that He is prophesying, All that He is prophesying, all the sacrifices, all the preparation, it's leading up to Christ. And so all of God's Word ultimately is pointing us to Christ.

So when we read, Thy commandments are my delights. It means that for the believer, The more they are seeking to follow and obey and delight in the Lord's commands and teachings, The closer they are to Him.

Because the more He delights in them, As they delight in Him and His teachings and His commands. How can we please the Lord? You see, this is the thing.

[5 : 04] Our salvation is not dependent on what we do. We're not legalists. We're not ticking boxes. We're not simply following rules to carry favour with the Lord. Our salvation, if we are in Christ, is already done.

It's already paid for. That's done upon the cross. What we do is we put our faith in what Christ has done there upon the cross. We put our faith in Him as our personal Saviour.

And that's it taken care of. But if we love the Lord now for all that He has done for us, Anyone who loves somebody, They want to please them.

They want to delight them. They want to do something that will bring them pleasure. How do they do it? Well, as they get to know them, They begin to discover the things that they like. And so they try to do those things.

They try to sort of anticipate what they might desire, What they might wish, And to sort of prepare that for them, Or to do that for them. To do things that will please them. And how do we know what will please God?

[6 : 01] Well, you can say, Well, we can look at Jesus and how perfect He is. And if only we could be like Him. Yes, that would be brilliant. That would be the ideal. But how do we learn what Jesus is like?

We read it in His Word. We read what God commands. We read what He teaches. And Jesus never contradicts a single one of His Father's commands.

You know, sometimes people try and make a dichotomy and say, Oh yeah, that's the Old Testament. But we like to think of Jesus and the New Testament As though this is positive and friendly. And the Old Testament is dark and legalistic.

No, it's not. It's all grace. It's all the mercy of God from Genesis to Revelation. Jesus never contradicts any of His Father's commands.

Sometimes He interprets them, or rather gives the full colour and picture to them by explaining what is fully meant by them. And He presents them to His audience in a way that, if anything, tightens them up.

[7 : 03] It's not enough just to say, Oh well, don't kill people. But rather, if you're angry with someone in your heart, then you've effectively sometimes murdered them already in your heart because you want to kill them.

And that's as bad as doing it, Jesus says, as far as your heart is concerned. He tightens up God's commands, but He never goes against them. He may seek to have them enforced and lived out by God's people in a more stringent and God-honored way, but He never contradicts them.

He never goes against them. So if we want to know how we would please the Lord, if we want to be like the faithful sheepdog with its eyes focused on its master, focus on His Word, focus on His commands.

And the more that we see of what He commands, sometimes it'll be things that we think, I never thought of that. I don't know why God would want me to do that. Instead of thinking, well, why would God ever command that?

Why would He want us to do that? That doesn't make any sense. Think, well, He does command it. But Jesus doesn't contradict it. So this must be something God wants. So I really should try and do that.

[8 : 12] I should try and be more like whatever it is that God is commanding. We come across something in God's Word and think, well, I never would have thought of that, but I don't do that. And surely God's not against me, so I don't do it.

And God's not against me. It must be okay to ignore that. But why does God reveal it? Unless He intends us to do it. What the Lord reveals to us, He wants us to follow.

He wants us to be like. And of course, it's an ongoing learning curve. As we seek to go deeper and deeper into the relationship with the Lord, we delight ourselves more and more in being conformed more and more to what He teaches.

My commandments are my delights. We come to the stage where we delight to do something, not because it might be especially something you would have chosen or thought of, or think, oh yeah, I just love doing this thing, but God loves it.

So I love it too. God wants me to do such and such, so maybe I'm making myself do it, maybe I'm forcing myself to have to do it, but you know, feel good about doing it because I know this is what God wants.

[9 : 21] And when we're doing what we know the Lord commands, we know it cannot be wrong. It cannot be wrong to do that which the Lord commands. So we take pleasure in it.

We take pleasure in that which God commands. It becomes our delight. Trouble and anguish are taken hold of me. No escape from that.

Yet thy commandments are my delights. In what sense that God's commands delight us. Well, the more, obviously, we say we know the Lord, the more and the greater is our joy.

You know, 1 John, we read chapter 1, verse 4, these things write me unto you that your joy may be full. God causes his word, his commands to be written down so that not only we would believe, as John says at the end of his gospel account, but also the more we take it in and the more we obey it, the more we will delight in it.

The more we will rejoice in it because the soul that is in Christ will ultimately rejoice in God, rejoice in the Lord.

[10 : 33] The soul that is out of Christ finds it tedious or boring or such a buying. And if you think about it, what is heaven going to be? Heaven is going to be being in the presence of the Lord for all eternity.

To soak up the radiance of that presence. To look upon him. Not merely with the eye of faith that cannot see with the flesh, but with the eye that sees the resurrection body that sees him with all the fullness of his glory.

Just to soak it all up. Just to gaze upon his duties. As we're told then in Psalm 27, I think it is. Just to gaze upon his beauty and dwell in his tabernacle and to be worshipping him in everything we do. Everything we do will be an act of worship in glory. And the believer delights in that. The prospect of being with the Lord for all eternity just fills their heart to a bursting point.

Whatever else may be. Yeah, gold on the street to trumpets and angels and fantastic colours of rainbows and all the kaleidoscope and wings. You never thought I could imagine an earth like, oh, never mind all that.

[11 : 49] That's brilliant. That's great. But it's not the main thing. The main thing is Christ. The main thing is being there with him, having him, delighting in him.

That's what heaven is going to be. That's what it already is for those who have gone before us in Christ. But for the unbeliever, that's just so boring.

That's just so, who in the world wants to be where does God have been trying to get away from all my whole life? Who wants to go to church for all eternity? Be like, just obey all these rules and commands.

Oh no, that would be so tedious. And they want nothing to do with it. And God, in his perfect justice and mercy decrees that as they have desired nothing of him in time, they will have to endure nothing of him in eternity.

Their eternity will be exactly what they desire and eternity without the Lord. That's all. But, friends, as we know, that is hell itself.

[12 : 56] But the believer delights in the Lord. Delights in Christ. Delights in his commands. The trouble and anguish have taken hold on me, yet thy commandments are my delights.

Now, obviously, the commandments of the Lord, they delight us firstly, spiritually. They do our spirit good when we obey something that we know God commands.

When we're doing exactly what we know we ought to be doing, when we delight to know, yeah, God is pleased with this because he says it in his word. I know this is in line with God's will.

I don't have to worry, oh, am I doing this right? Am I doing that right? Oh, maybe I've made a long choice because God commands it. It's there in black and white and I'm doing it. So, I get to feel good about that.

Spiritually, I'm blessed if I'm doing that. Spiritually, I'm filled with that joy like the faithful sheepdog that delights when it's master is pleased with him or her and delights in the master's blessing and approval.

[14 : 00] That's what the dog lives for and that's what the soul lives for is to know the Lord's pleasure and delight. Spiritually, we are filled and satisfied with God's blessing, God's delight.

Thy commandments, when we are able to do that which we know, God approves because he has said it. God commands and we do it, we can delight spiritually in that.

Whether or not it's something we would choose, whether or not it's something we would decide for ourselves off our own back, if God commands it and we do it, we can delight in it because we know we must approve of it.

And in that sense then, as well as spiritually, well that connects in with, personally, personally it becomes our delight and as individual people we become those who desire and seek and will eventually walk more and more with the Lord and whose lives will be conformed more and more to what he teaches.

Now, you think, okay, you've already said that big deal but the point is that just like with the sheepdog as we were talking with the children earlier, it has to be a gradual process. You can't train up a dog in a day and it has to be a little bit day by day, simple commands, simple steps, go over it, go over it and then the dog went suddenly changed mind and forget everything and the Christian might slip back and backslide all the way back down to goodness knows where and then they have to be brought back up again.

[15 : 34] You see, those who love the Lord, they can fall. They can fall and they can sin and they can eat themselves for it but they still love the Lord. It's not that they've turned their backs on the Lord, it's that they fell.

They got caught out saying pull the carpet from under them or they got caught out by something that they just got let into or they just got sucked into or that yes, they took the decision and yes, they made the bad choice and yes, it was sin and yes, they hate themselves for it and they're convinced there's no way back and God can't possibly want anything to do with them anymore but he does because he has invested so much of himself in them not only time not only so-called training not only bringing them on but he has invested himself he has given of himself that they might be saved God so loved the world God loves sinners he has invested himself in them and when those who are his children do fall and we all fall at times he brings them back on gently step by step he is not impatient if love is not impatient as we're told you know 1 Corinthians 13 charity suffers wrong in his time and that is true of love itself

God is love and he suffers wrong he takes patience with us the amount of time you will be given will be exactly right for the amount of time you need nobody is really snatched away before their time although we tend to think that sometimes they are everybody is given exactly the amount of time they need and if we with all the time that we're given we never accept Christ we never close in with Christ we never embrace or delight ourselves in Christ then a hundred lifetimes would not make us do it we've been given enough time and if we are using that time or the Lord used that time to bring us back out of the ditch in which we followed to restore us to get us back on track to bring us back again to be a service of a profitable member of his kingdom then he has given us just enough time that we need for that he won't waste so much as a day thy commandments are my delights we delight in them personally the whole being the whole person our spirit and body and soul personally everything in us delight in them and people see that people see a change in us or they see a consistency in us and even if they don't agree they will respect that Christians who live according to their beliefs do so we sometimes tend to think especially nowadays there's a tendency to think yeah we've got to make ourselves as much like they were we meet them halfway and we go along with them and then they'll like us they'll see that we're not sort of doom and gloom and we're not all kind of really thinking ourselves just love along just be like them and give and take a little and what you'll find is that the gospel will do all the giving the christian will do all the giving and the world will do all the taking they won't give anything back it'll just suck you down more to the point it will not even respect that kind of so called christianity it will look at it and see no difference between that calling and the way they live their own and say well why should I want it if that's what they want to do that's

a little club or a little social event they want to do once a week that's fine but why should I think more than it doesn't change their lives it's not going to change mine so why should I worry about it yeah they're fine yeah we can run along okay but you know nothing to do with me whereas if they see lives transformed if they see standards lived up to they see commandments obeyed which the human nature might not choose to do but which because God commands his people delight in it their lives are changed their standards are changed their behavior is changed their beliefs are changed their souls life body spirit is conformed to that which God himself reveals and they delight in it they consider effort well spent time well spent life well spent when it is given to the Lord thy commandments are my delights we delight in them spiritually we delight in them personally but also we delight in them philosophically I don't want to use too long a word there what do I mean about philosophically well basically philosophically literally means the love of wisdom but I mean philosophically means when we think about things when we think about things what's the meaning of this what's the meaning of life all of us have thought what's it all for what is our life really for what does my life amount to and that's sometimes you think could be quite a depressing thought because even if you've given all the years of your life to a particular career or service or whatever you think well what did it amount to what did I actually achieve if you become a millionaire and you've been so successful in business well think what did I actually do sometimes I think on your work Teresa May there and the career she followed and all the years of faithful service and so on in the service of her country and achieve the top prime minister you know that's what she got to be the absolute top of the tree it doesn't become any more powerful than prime minister and yet and yet would you say well what a successful life

I've had what a successful prime minister she's ever had you think she's got no regrets do you think you know all those who have held that office somebody you may have in church and I can't remember they said all political careers ultimately end in failure because one way or another you're always having to leave or resign or get sacked or lose an election or eventually it comes to an end so it will always feel like a failure one way or another no matter how high you climb we will think well what did we actually amount to what did I actually do sometimes perhaps worldly men and women may think in terms of what is my legacy never mind what your legacy or your footprint is here what is your legacy going to be for eternity when are you going to be in eternity what will your life have amounted to here and this philosophically when we ask these questions we can know that delighting ourselves in the Lord in his commandments in being fulfilled in him satisfies and delights us philosophically because the one who has given their life to

[22 : 24] Christ even if it might never set the heather on fire in this world even if they may never become sort of tycoons of industry or business or government or politics or whatever it might be even if they may never become sporting heroes or great celebrities or whatever and even if they do of course it's only for a little while when the next generation forgets about them but even so they will know that a life given to Christ a life lived in Christ is a life lived to the full that you have given everything you could and you will receive back a riches and a payback if you like a reward beyond computation you know it's an investment that is going to just pay so well you will never doubt that your life was spent in something not worthwhile the humblest believer who has given their life to Christ the most impoverished peasant anywhere in the world who is a true believer in the

Lord and delights in his commands will know that their life has had purpose it has had fulfillment it has had worth it has counted because they have been a child of God in a world that is otherwise falling away down the drain thy commandments are my delight we are fulfilled delighted satisfied philosophically but also of course if we seek to follow the Lord and if we seek to obey his commands there will be side benefits as well there will be in a sense physical benefits so in proverbs chapter 3 these well known verses of course trust in the Lord with all thy heart and be not unto thine own understanding in all thy ways acknowledge it and he shall direct thy paths these are often quoted verses but if we go on into verses 7 to 10 be not wise in thine own eyes fear the Lord and depart from evil it shall be health to thy navel and marrow to thy bones honour the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thy increase so shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thy cresses shall burst out with new wine now if we can not get sidetracked with focusing literally upon the belly button here health to thy navel and so on it's a metaphor for physical health health to the physical body rather it shall be health to thy navel and marrow to thy bones you'll be well strengthened physically if we obey God's commands and our lifestyle and our practice conforms to what God teaches then we will be as healthy as it's possible for us to be it's not that old

Christians don't dabble in all these harmful substances and so are oh what funny dummies they are oh they're so narrow minded it's no it's because

God wants our bodies which are temples of his Holy Spirit to be preserved in purity and there are practices in which the world engages and in which the unbeliever will engage and will see nothing wrong with if he hasn't got any standard to mention it against and they will do which will be harmful to themselves they will be harmful the diseases they will contract the illnesses they will get the harmful things they will ingest or inject or inhale into their bodies all that will be done which somebody following the Lord's commands and teaches will not do not because God says you mustn't do this you mustn't do that you mustn't do the next thing but rather because your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost and you are to honour it because you are to honour the Lord and he's the one who's giving you this body there will be physical benefits side side benefits you might say spin off benefits to following the Lord people get healthier as a general rule when they turn from harmful lifestyles and start following the Lord their health improves their life improves their strength improves but also when their life and when their resources are not being wasted on that which cannot satisfy as we went on to read honour the

Lord with thy substance with the first groups of all an increase so shall my barns be filled with plenty thy presents shall burst out with new wine you'll be also financially better off how can you be financially better off if you're giving you're giving you're tying off how can you possibly be better off when only having 90% of your goods of your goods than if you had 100% of yourself because if you have the Lord first then the 90% that you get to keep for yourself in all faithfulness and conscience to the Lord he is able to bless he is able to make more fruitful than 100% you might hoard for yourself plus the fact that if you're in Christ if you're following the Lord and obeying his commands there will be things you simply don't waste your money on anymore there will be things you no longer just fritter away your resources because you see and you know it's just a waste it's just vanity it doesn't satisfy it won't fulfil honour the

[28 : 03] Lord with your substance and you'll see that substance blessed now don't get me wrong I am not in any way going down this health and wealth gospel route which is a complete and total heresy and sadly a lion kicking that particular heresy in many parts of the world you know Jesus Christ became poor so that you might become rich and to interpret that in pure financial terms is a blasphemy Jesus made himself poor he emptied himself of all the glory that he had in heaven he became human so that he might die the accursed and death on the cross so that we might inherit the riches of his grace and the glories of heaven it wasn't about pounds shillings and pennies nevertheless it is undoubtedly the case that if we are following Christ and obeying him and delighting in his commands there will be these side benefits there will be these if you like spin off benefits when we're more focused on what we use the

Lord's resources for how we steward what he has given us we will find ourselves prospering more and even the giving off of our tithes and offerings and so on which you would think would make us poorer is rather like saying well when the farmer takes his handful of seed and he takes out a portion of seed so that's not anymore the seed that he's able to bake and turn into flour and make bread with so you would think he's got less food but no he takes off the seed and he scatters it in the ground he plows his field and he sows it in the ground now God teaches us the way of investing our resources in him it's not ultimately for financial gain it's not ultimately for any physical benefit but there are in fact these benefits just as a side benefit just as a blessing just because he can because following his laws and commands does benefit us physically and in terms of our personal health and financially in terms of our resources trouble and anguish have taken hold of me unless they do this work yet thy commandments are my delights delight thyself in the

Lord and he will bring blessing to you 1st Timothy chapter 4 remember says that bodily exercise profiteth little but godliness is profitable unto all things having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come now we tend to think oh that just means bodily exercise is useless it's nothing so just discard it and that's the opposite of what you've just been saying no but in a day when people thought to some extent the body the image was so important people wanted to be beautiful the body beautiful the Greek athletes and all the Roman gods and goddesses people wanted to be like that but he's always saying bodily exercise profiteth little yes there's some benefit to it of course it's sensible it's good to have a healthy body it's health to your navel man to your bones it does have benefit that's what he's saying it's not rubbish it's not nothing it does have benefit that's the point he's making it'd be better if it said if there was an in there profiteth a little there is a benefit to it but

godliness is profitable unto all things having promise of the life that now is all the benefits all the improvements all the blessings you get in the world now which is what we've been talking about and of that which is to come which is what we spoke about first to be in the presence of Christ for all eternity that's what the believer ultimately desires you see the bodily exercise the health to your navel marrow to your bones yes it's a benefit it's good but it's only for a time this body is going to pass away no matter how fit healthy and godlike it might seem in terms of magnificent physique you might achieve it is going to pass away if you live a long time it's going to get old and shriveled and you won't be so beautiful anymore and if you don't live a long time well there wasn't an awful lot of point in making yourself so brilliant anyway but we give to the lord all that we are and we receive from the lord the best that we can be why does god want you to be healthier because that's the best you can be in this world why does he want you to have more resources because that's the best you can be because he knows that those who love him will deploy those resources for that which is profitable that which is a blessing to others that which is a furtherance of his kingdom and will have plenty left to enjoy themselves god desires to delight in his children but he needs them also to delight in him and the more they delight in him the more he delights in their obedience trouble and anguish have taken hold of me that's what the world will give you without the lord yet thy commandments are my delight so you don't escape the trouble and anguish but the commandments of the lord the teachings of the lord that which points us to christ causes us to delight in him to be fulfilled in him to be satisfied in him spiritually personally philosophically physically financially in every aspect of this world thy commandments are my delights psalm 37 we read of course in verse 4 delight thyself in god he'll give thy heart's desire to be thy way to god commit from trust it bring to pass shall he and in psalm 40 we read it verse 8 of course i delight to do thy will oh my god yea thy law is within my heart now this psalm 40 is ultimately of course a messianic psalm it's

looking forward to christ and it is about christ and it's saying then said i lo i come in the volume of the book it is written of me i delight to do thy will oh my god yea thy law is within my heart there's nobody for whom that was more true than it was for jesus but it is also true that which is true for christ is intended to be true also for his children that we delight to do the lord's will delight in his commands delighting in the master's will is what we are to aspire to and it's what we are to be made more and more like the christian walk the christian life is not meant to be a drudgery and a root march there will be occasions of course there will be occasions when we have to just grit our teeth and get on with our duty there will be times when we are striving through the dark and the echo of the wind and the wind and it's a hard grind but it's not going to be all like that and it's not meant to be all like that ultimately however long the journey and however hard the road we are walking with christ then we delight in that company delight in that presence delight in what he teaches you see what we read about the disciples on the road to a mess we never read about how stony the road was and how hard it was and what the weather was like was the rain beating in their faces and were they finding it really steep and all stuff to go up and oh it was so tiring and oh they were so foot sore and when they got to the end of thank goodness we've got here because we're just so absolutely shattered we don't read a word of that why don't we read a word of that because that journey is taken up completely and totally with the fact that jesus was there with them jesus was there with them opening to them the scriptures enabling them to know what god had revealed what was already written there for them but which christ enabled them to know as they journeyed their feet may have been sore they may have had blisters it may have been a steep incline it may have been foul weather we don't know about that we don't hear about that all we hear about is the fact that jesus was with them and he opened to them the scriptures and their heart burn within them when he dies thy commandments are my delights this is what we are called to do and to be those who walk that road of jesus those for whom he opens his word and he's only able to do that because they know what he's talking about and that's only possible because they have read it and gone into it and turned to it again and again and sometimes you will come across things that god commands you like well i don't understand that why would he want me to do that but the fact is he does and so that we conform to what god says or do we just go our own way we can go our own way if we want but there'll be a measure of emptiness and misery with that we go god's way and we have the clear conscience delight of knowing we are pleasing him by obeying him delighting in the master's will trouble and language up there can hold of me yet their commandments are my delights and this should be part of our privilege as well as part of our journey that we delight ourselves in the lord let us pray to God's