

# Marriage and Singleness

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] As we look then at this psalm that we read previously, we see first of all in the title, which in the original Hebrew would have been the first verse, a song of degrees for Solomon.

Now the songs of degrees are usually those which were sung as the faithful ascended up towards the temple or the Mount Zion, as they're approaching the city or as they're progressing through the city up towards the temple mount.

And it is not without its poignancy that as the pilgrims or the worshippers were coming nearer and nearer to the temple, remembering that the temple of Solomon would have been arguably the most glorious building in the ancient Near East, or certainly one of them in purely outward and aesthetic terms.

Obviously given that the Lord had covenanted to dwell in the midst of his people there, that made it even more precious and special. But given that it was the glory of the kingdom, there would have been the temptation perhaps for some, as indeed became the case later on, to idolise the temple for its own sake.

Now to think, oh wow, what fantastic stones these are, as of course the disciples pointed out to Jesus centuries later, that it might become almost a kind of sacred space in which any kind of worship could be carried out as some of the subsequent kings of Judah did.

[ 1 : 3 0 ] And they profaned the holy temple with pagan altars and with false worship and with all manner of evil and idolatry and so on. So in and of itself, in and of itself, the temple, though sacred in the sense that God had covenanted to dwell in the midst of his people, whilst they remained faithful to him, in and of itself, and we can say it with all reverence, it was simply a building of stone and cedar.

And the first point that this, our verse one seeks to make here is that the glory of the temple is not its stonework. The glory of the temple is not its outward aspect or appearance.

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. However beautiful it might be outwardly is that the pilgrims would be looking at it as they draw near to Jerusalem and they'd be working their way up the hill towards the courts of the temple.

However outward much glory there might be, the glory of Israel is the Lord. And as long as Israel remained faithful to the Lord, the Lord dwelt in the midst of them.

And when Israel turned its back on the Lord, the glory departed. And we have that, of course, depicted graphically for us in the prophecy of Ezekiel. When in his vision he sees the glory of the Lord, as it were, hovering over the temple and then uplifting and going and settling on the Mount of Olives and then vanishing, as it were.

[ 3 : 0 0 ] Because the glory had departed from the temple. There was nothing left except an outward shell that was steeped in sinfulness at that time. So except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain but build it.

All the human effort in the world will not make it glorious. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. So recognising here that it is the Lord not only who is the glory but the one who actually does all that we do.

And we might think, well, you know, that's surely only true up to a point. I mean, human hands build these things and human hands keep the city and raise the stonework and so on.

Well, yes, human hands can do so much. But except the Lord be in it, except the Lord effectively do it, it simply won't happen. That which is meant to be for him and in him will not happen except he be in it.

And although the Lord chooses to use human hands and feet most of the time, and if you think about it through Scripture, most of the time the Lord chooses to use human beings, often the most weak and insignificant of human beings.

[ 4 : 13 ] We think of Gideon who says, you know what, who am I? I'm just, my house is the least in Manasseh. If the Lord is with us, why are all these bad things happening to us? Because an angel says to go in this thy might and the Lord will be with you.

And Gideon thinks he doesn't have any might. But the Lord becomes his strength and he works a tremendous victory. The Lord uses human beings. Think of David slaying Goliath.

God could just have, you know, sent an angel and zapped Goliath and made him drop dead there in the valley of Elah. And all the Israelites would have gone, yeah, the giant's dead by magic. No, it wasn't by magic.

David, when he faced Goliath, he said, you know, you come against me with a spear and a sword and a shield, but I come against you in the name of the Lord, whose armies you have defiled, and you will learn today that the battle is the Lord's.

And because of the testimony of these weak human vessels, David and Gideon, goodness knows how many others throughout Scripture that the Lord has chosen to use, He demonstrates through the use of these weak vessels how great He is.

[ 5 : 21 ] Yes, God could have acted without any human agency at all. He doesn't need us. But He chooses to do so, to act with us. Not because He needs our hands and feet, but rather because the contrast between our human weakness and what the Lord achieves, choosing to use the likes of us, points only to Him and glorifies His name, rather than the human instrument of His choosing.

If the Lord is working through that instrument, then the victory and the power of it, the achievement will be glorious. And this is one reason why so often, you know, if we think of what Paul says to the Corinthians, you know, not many mighty, not many powerful, not many great, you know, amongst you are called.

If you think of your calling, chapter 1, verse 26, you see your calling, brother. Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

And God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen. Yea, and things which are not to bring to naught the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

And this also should be a guard against us falling into the trap of thinking, oh, well, the Lord uses human hands and feet. So really, it's all a cooperation between us and God.

[ 6 : 56 ] You know, God couldn't do it without us. He needs us. And so, even our salvation, we do our bit and God does His bit. And this is a particular heresy, of course, that some do fall into.

And some branches of the visible church become particularly susceptible to the idea that God does His bit and man does His bit. And between the two of us, we get the sinner into heaven.

No, you don't. It is all of God. And here we have it again in this verse. Except the Lord, though they labour in vain.

The building. We have no more locus in the work of our own salvation than the St. Hugh's illustration in the past.

Now, the paintbrush does in the hand of the artist. You know, somebody might say, oh, Rubens didn't create this masterpiece. Or Rembrandt didn't make this masterpiece. You know, Michelangelo didn't paint the Sistine Chapel.

[ 7 : 51 ] We happen to know it was the paintbrush. And look, we've got the paintbrush here. See, this is the thing that did it. It wasn't him. It was this. This is the equivalent of what the atheists say about creation.

They say, oh, God didn't do it. You know, there's all these, we see all these volcanic eruptions and rock that is cool and these layers of sediment and so on. Look, we know that it's these things that happen and these chemical reactions and these things that animal life and plant life and we see them developing here and so on.

And say, oh, God didn't do it. Look, it's doing it by itself. That's like saying, here's the paintbrush. This is the thing that did the Sistine Chapel. No. It is in the hand of the artist.

It is in the hand of the master craftsman. Our salvation. We are passive in that sense. Yes, we must respond, but we're only enabled to respond because of the grace of God at work in the heart of the sinner.

It is not, although we must ourselves respond to the Lord, it is not we ourselves that are doing it. It is the Lord's grace. Jesus says to his disciples in John 15, verse 5, I am the vine, ye are the branches.

[ 9 : 07 ] He that abideth in me, and I am him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me ye can do nothing. John the Baptist said at the end of chapter 3 in John's account of the gospel, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.

It is the Lord who worketh in us, as the apostle says, as we're both to will and to do of his good pleasure. It is true, as Paul writes, you know, to the Corinthians, we are labourers together with God.

Then he goes to say, ye are God's husbandry. Ye are God's building. We are labourers together with him in the sense of the paintbrush, or in the sense of the hammer and the chisel in the hand of the sculptor, or in the sense of the clay in the hand of the potter.

It is that which he uses, but it is not itself the artistic genius. It is not itself the thing which does the achieving. As Paul wrote to the Philippians, you know, I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.

And if we seek and strive to be faithful in the Lord and to the Lord, he will and does choose to do great things. If it is true that except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it, then it must likewise be true that if those who labour, labour in the knowledge, fear and love of the Lord, seeking to glorify him, then it is not in vain.

[ 10 : 40 ] It is that which the Lord will honour, that which the Lord will raise up and glorify. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. The watchman has to do his duty.

And Jesus himself teaches of the danger of servants and watchmen who fall asleep at their posts. But nevertheless, though we must be diligent, though we must be watchful and faithful and dutiful in our tasks and callings, yet it is only the Lord that sustains us.

It is only the Lord that protects us and keeps us. The watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

Now, if we are going to sleep, then it must be that somehow we are able to switch off, to relax. Now, if you are in a permanent state of tension or anxiety, you can't do that.

You can't sleep if you are really, really nervous or wound up or anxious. And that means that you are all agitated. You know, if an enemy, an army in a camp one night and they were expecting an attack any hour, then everybody would be on edge, even if they were in their tents with the lights out, they would be fingering their weapons and they'd be waiting and watchful.

[ 11 : 59 ] They wouldn't dare go to sleep because they expected an attack any minute. But if they're in barracks in the middle of their own home country and in peacetime, then they'll sleep peacefully enough.

They're not anticipating any attack. And there is a sense in which this verse 2 speaks of our need not to be lacking in diligence or vigilance, but rather to give over our safety and in that sense, not only our day-to-day needs, but also the question of our salvation, to give it over to the Lord.

It is a verse about faith. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Now, it's not a criticism of, you know, diligence in one's calling, one's task.

Yes, it's good to rise up early, to get on with your work, but it's also good to lie down to sleep and to leave the Lord to take care of you and your loved ones. So he giveth his beloved sleep.

If we are trusting the Lord, if we are committing our souls to the Lord and all our tasks, callings and duties and committing the day to the Lord at the end of the day, then we should be able to lay us down in peace and sleep.

[ 13 : 12 ] I think it's Psalm 4 that says, For thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety. And so we give ourselves to the Lord and he giveth his beloved sleep. Now, of course, when we are asleep, we are at our most vulnerable.

Even the strongest, most dangerous warrior can be overcome if somebody comes upon him when he is asleep. He can be murdered in his bed.

He can be defeated. He can be tied up, whatever, if he is asleep. When he is asleep, he is defenseless. When we are asleep, we are defenseless. And we know that every night we need to become defenseless.

But we are not defenseless if we are protected by the Lord who sets his angelic messengers around his children, who protects them, who they trust him to watch over them.

So he giveth his beloved sleep. He allows them rest because he takes the watch, not only over their souls, but over their protection.

[ 14 : 15 ] In a sense, this psalm divides neatly into these two couplets of two verses each. Because the third and fourth verse, it seemed to change subject. The low children are in heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward.

As arrows are in the hand of the mighty man, so are the children of the youth. So in the last three verses, I think it's important. But in a sense, it's not really a change of subject because the subject has been defense.

It has been protection. Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman maketh, but in vain. Vain for you to rise up, worry to sit up, wait to eat the brown souls. So he giveth his beloved sleep.

When there is danger, when there is a need for watchfulness, when there is the possibility of an enemy, when there is a need for defense. Because what it's talking about here is as arrows in the hand of a mighty man.

So it's like a defensive weapon at a distance. And the sense here is of children, as they grow up, being protection for you. And the sense here is of, you know, speaking with the enemies in the gate, it's of perhaps an old age, when somebody might be perhaps taken advantage of, or perhaps people would argue around them in a legal case or whatever, whether their children, their grown-up sons or whatever, would argue for their father with the elders in the gate, would be there to present the case, to protect his interests.

[ 15 : 37 ] That's the sense of it in its original context. We have perhaps a slight question mark or difficulty with this word that we've translated in English as reward.

Because it implies that there's reward. A reward is something that, you know, you get in exchange for either some faithful service or doing some good. And having done some good, the Lord rewards you, as though it's a kind of contract of payment.

Service rendered and so payment is made. There is nothing that we can render to the Lord to cause him to reward us. There is no sense in which the Lord is adding his special blessing to those who have children, but we're holding it from those who don't.

And I realise, of course, that these verses can perhaps be especially difficult or painful for those who are either in a childless marriage or who have never married and for whom there isn't going to be any children in a physical sense.

One of the things I think we learn from Scripture, taking it as a whole, is that that which is purely in the physical sense is never intended to be the whole story.

[ 16 : 52 ] The physical land of Israel is intended to point to the ultimate promised land. The blessing of physical, biological children, yes, it may be a great joy, a blessing in the short and immediate term, but it is not meant to be an end in itself.

It is meant to point us to the fact that the Lord desires to be our father and to make us his children. And that which he does, he does not do in the natural sense.

He only has one son, one child of his nature, and that is Christ. The rest who are all his children are his children by adoption.

They are not his biological children. They are, yes, he's not ashamed to call them brethren, but they are his brethren by adoption. There are more ways of people having children than the purely biological.

And this is, I think, something that Scripture wants us to recognize. That although it is, yes, there is a certain sorrow, a certain pain, no doubt, and let's not belittle it, associated with those who may go through their lives with the sorrow of never being able to be perhaps a father or a mother.

[ 18 : 13 ] And there will be pain and sorrow and a sense of perhaps loss, perhaps, for the children that never were, or for the lives that never were brought into being.

But we should never believe, either on the one hand, that the Lord is insensitive to that cost. Nor on the other hand, should we believe, so it means the Lord is forgotten about me.

Or it means the Lord doesn't really care about me. Otherwise, he'd have answered my prayer for a husband, a wife, children, what have you. The Lord, remember, does not make mistakes.

The Lord also is no man's debtor. Let us deal, first of all, with the question of the sorrow of there not being, perhaps, a spouse or children or whatever.

Remember what Jesus says to those who will be his, to those who will follow him. He speaks in Matthew chapter 19 where he talks about those who have forsaken houses or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my name's sake shall receive a hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life.

[ 19 : 32 ] Now, it always surprised me when Jesus mentions this in Matthew 19 verse 29 and the other parallel Gospels accounts that we tend to think in terms of the husband or wife being the immediate closest next of kin, which of course they are.

And it's surprising perhaps that this comes so far down the list in houses, brethren, sisters, father, mother, or wife, or children, or lands. I would suggest to you perhaps that one reason why Jesus lists wife or children so far down the list is that perhaps he is speaking in terms of his own human experience.

That when there is a sense in which when one seeks to follow the Lord depending on the particular calling it may be that if, let's say, he calls you to a mission field in a different country and there may not be opportunity there for you to meet or, you know, acquire a husband or wife or to fall in love or whatever the case may be and all the time the people that you might have met are interacting with are back in the home country and the years go by and opportunities pass and you come to realise well, all the years that I might have given to romance or family or children I've been serving in this other country.

The Lord is not insensitive to these costs. Everyone that hath forsaken and I suggest that means not decided to walk out and stand at all but rather who have given up the opportunity of houses, brethren, sisters, father, mother, wife, children, lands for mining's sake in other words those who have put me and the gospel cause before all these other things and perhaps at quite high cost it may be that the person that you fell in love with or the person that you were close to you wanted to marry them and they didn't want or they might want to marry you but one of you was a Christian and the other wasn't and that became an insurmountable problem and so you parted perhaps or the person parted and there is a pain with that there is a cost with that and the heart breaking that should never be discounted or diminished but it is faithfulness to the Lord and he is not unmindful of it we should never believe that the Lord is forgetful of the pain of such cost but there is also the sense in which we have to recognise that these things which yes the Bible says arrows in the hand of a mighty man so are children of youth happy is the man that at this quiver full of them there is also with these things a cost which perhaps the world doesn't always recognise

Paul recognised it in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 of course he says I would that all men would even as I myself that every man had this proper gift of God one after this man or another after that and he goes on to say he'd rather people were all unmarried and single of course this is what Jesus was he himself was single there weren't any physical children for Jesus in the same chapter verse 28 he says nevertheless such that as those who marry perhaps a family shall have trouble in the flesh but I spare you and he talks about how those who are married perhaps with families they cannot attend on the things of the Lord with the same single mindedness as those who are free of these attachments and commitments and likewise those who are single and able to devote themselves to the Lord in these days they don't have perhaps the benefits of married life and so on but I think one of the problems in our society nowadays is not simply the downgrading of family life and marriage it is not simply that marriage as an institution has now been effectively trampled underfoot with people moving into relationships shallow commitmentless relationships in and then out again and illegitimate children multiplying and so on and demanding to be treated with their partner here their partner there as though it is the equivalent of the sanctity of marriage which of course it isn't and now of course we have got gay marriage and all these other things as well trying to claim that it is the same it is not just that marriage itself has been downgraded in the eyes of the world but also with all these casual relationships the nobility of the single life has likewise been downgraded and the single life is something which remember as we said

[ 24 : 29 ] Jesus himself epitomized and likewise Paul says you're better off if you're single like me but not everybody's got that calling the single life is that which if lived out in chastity and faithfulness is every bit as full and honouring to the Lord as the marriage state not everyone is called to the marriage state some are called to singleness of life and there is a cost with both kinds of life and there is not only as we say one kind of family one kind of children that people can have that the Lord is mindful of the cost of the absence of these things we know from just to take the prophet Isaiah as an example we think of what he says here in chapter 56 of Isaiah he says thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths and choose the things that please me and take hold of my covenant even unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters

I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off now of course in the ancient pagan world of course there was often those who were physically eunuchs Jesus himself when he talks with the disciples about this matter and he talks about commitment and how you shouldn't be putting away your wife and so on and the disciples say if the case of a man be so with his wife it is not good to marry in other words if we can't just divorce easily then you know you're better not to get married in the first place and he says all men can't receive the say say they to whom it is given not everyone can live the single life there are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb and that could mean somebody who's physically in that condition or it is perhaps somebody who from the womb never felt the inclination to be joined to another person they were content and complete in their singleness of life there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men and that again can refer either to those who have become physically eunuchs as was often the case in the great courts and royal houses of the pagan nations round about or it could mean because of circumstances in their life because of men they ended up never marrying never entering into those relationships and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven sake he does not mean who have engaged in the physical act of mutilation in order to make themselves eunuchs he means those who have chosen to devote themselves single-mindedly to the service of the lord not to entangle themselves with the married state and with all that that entails but they have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven sake how can we be so certain he doesn't need mutilation because the lord never advocates it never at all it is pagan kingdoms which practice the making of eunuchs it is not the lord's people it is not the lord's command but those who may have been in that condition isaiah as we says makes clear that if they love and serve the lord there is a place and a family of the lord's people for them likewise if one is in the feminine situation isaiah 54 the verses one sing oh bannin thou that didst not bear break forth into singing and cry aloud thou that didst not travail with child for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife saith the lord enlarge the place of thy tent let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations spare not lengthen thy cord strengthen thy stakes for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left and thy seat shall inherit the gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited and a little further down says for the lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and breathed in spirit and a wife of youth when thou wast refused saith thy god for a small moment have I forsaken thee but with great mercies will I gather thee in a little wrath

I hid my face from thee for a moment but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee saith the lord thy lord promises them effectively that those who are not involved with these physical relationships who are not in a position to bring forth physical children that the lord will make it up to them with perhaps spiritual children think of somebody like Mary Schlessler for example who never married and never produced her own biological children but she made a home for orphans hundreds or perhaps dozens we might say of orphans in Africa in Calabar where she was she became a mother to far more people than she could ever have physically been a mother to if she had been in an ordinary domestic situation now likewise the lord promises that we will have fathers mothers children brothers sisters a hundred fold in this world he means the family of the lord's people and everlasting life to come that is not the say don't worry about the pain it's alright when you see other people having their families or getting married and perhaps you're not in that situation it's not something just get over it he is not insensitive to the cost the lord rejoices in the salvation of his people that he is not insensitive to the cost even to his own son upon the cross do we really imagine when it says and I've mentioned this in the past

I realized that you know it says Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin now whilst we cannot conceive our lord ever being tempted by anything that was inherently sinful or bad I would suggest to you the temptations that the devil would have presented to Jesus would have involved the temptation or the desire to do that which could be presented as good but in the wrong way you know if I'll give you all these kingdoms of the world if you'll fall down and worship me well he already has in a sense all the kingdoms of the world but to have their glory acknowledging him as Messiah that would be so good if you throw yourself down from the temple pinnacle this must be the Messiah and the temptation could be say wouldn't it be good if people all recognized the true Messiah wouldn't it be good if we could wow the nations wouldn't it be good if they would all bow down and worship me that's what we want isn't it that's what we want the

Messiah that he worshiped we want the Lord's kingdom to come but not that way do we imagine that our Lord never wanted or thought or crossed his mind of having a sanctified perfectly holy marriage that there were no pretty girls in Nazareth that he never thought wouldn't it be nice to have a wife children a family that in the purest sense there may have been a longing after that but a longing that had to be overcome a temptation perhaps a temptation to say well I could do these things and serve the Lord I could do these things and just you know leave my wife and kids behind and then go and serve the Lord and accept my calling but he knew that if he was to do his father's will completely totally and unreservedly there could not be a diluting of his calling of his loving of his service

[ 32 : 45 ] I personally find it hard to believe that the idea of the temptation in the clean sense of marriage of family life would never have crossed our Lord's mind it must have done but as such it would be a temptation as such it would be that which would potentially dilute the single mindedness of his calling and devotion he gave himself wholly to the task the father had prepared for him that to which the Lord calls us whether it be in the married state whether it be in the parental state whether it be in the single state I would suggest to you that just as our Lord himself personifies singleness of life and likewise the apostle Paul and so I would suggest that we have to in this day and age lost sight not only of the sanctity of marriage but of the nobility of the single state and it is both of these which ought to be reclaimed and restored as honouring to the



Lord and it is because people have said oh we mustn't be alone in any circumstances and we just drifted this relationship and we drifted out of it and we settle for a while and maybe have a few kids but we drifted out again there's no commitment there's no sanctity there's no public declaration of unity together there's no married state in it it's just drifting drifted out and that denigrates not only the married state it denigrates the single state because it implies oh no it's not good enough just to be on your own it is if that is what the Lord has called you to and likewise he will call some people into the married state but not choose to bless them with children I say to bless them with children yes children are the Lord's blessing the womb's fruit it says his reward and happy is the man that is quiver full of them I would just caution us if we think in terms of what 3rd John says 3rd John mentions this telling verse which of course is so true

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth yep great if you happen to be a parent and your children walk in truth that's wonderful but for the believing parent there can be no greater heartbreak then children who having perhaps been nurtured in the love and knowledge of the Lord grow up to reject it grow up to turn their back on the Lord grow up to cast away the heritage of their fathers and perhaps the upbringing of their mother's knee and who become cold and dead towards the things of the Lord that is heartbreaking enough in this life the thought of what it entails for eternity must be soul destroying and there are multitudes of Christian parents and grandparents whose younger generations in their family are in exactly that place and in a sense it is like it says in

Isaiah 54 it's not there it is better surely for the heart to be in that protected state than to have the grief and so I know myself of one former elder of a different branch of the church who he and his wife never had any children and it was his explicit decision that they would not enter into the parental state because he at least perhaps she as well but certainly he could not bring himself to be responsible for another immortal soul which might end up in a lost eternity he could not bring himself to be in the situation of having cooperated and bringing a soul into the world which might end up in a lost eternity better he's not to have any at all that was his position never had any children for all his life no longer of course with us in this world but there is that agony there is that agony of the heart that soul destroying knowledge for many that their children do not walk in the ways of the

Lord that perhaps their grandchildren do not walk in the ways of the Lord that there will be generations who have turned away from the water of life to drink at not only the broken cisterns but basically the ditches of stagnant water of the world and that is surely one of the greatest heartbreaks of all there are worse things than never having entered into the state whereby children are produced in the world marriage is entered into and people may say well that's easy for you to say you've got marriage you've got kids and that is true but only a fool would say I'm okay because look I've got a Christian marriage I've got Christian kids and so on you can only pronounce these things in completion as one experienced midwife once said you know there's only the only thing a natural birth is in retrospect only when a baby has been safely delivered can you say yep that was a straightforward natural birth once it is complete and likewise you can only say oh yeah this couple they're faithful to each other all the way through until one of them dies there was a time when you could have said oh yes they've been married 30 years now that's okay

[ 38 : 59 ] I have seen and known of people married 30 plus years in one case friends of my own parents who had been married 42 years and walked out and his wife so you cannot say oh just because they're old it means they're definitely going to go all the way or just because all their kids just now maybe church going or may have acknowledged the Lord as their saviour you can't say so they're going to continue in that all the way through until they do to the end so you never stop praying you never stop bringing them to the Lord you never stop holding them up before the Lord you never stop praying for your marriage you never stop praying for your children you never stop praying for their children and you never stop praying for perhaps those whom the Lord may bring into your life to whom you may be a mother or a father or a grandfather or a grandmother who are not in fact your biological children but you can still be such a blessing to them and the

Lord knows and sees the pain and the cost of not having had the short term blessings and joys that these things bring and God is no man's debtor God will make it up will bind up all the broken hearted will affirm the faithfulness and dignity of those who stayed loyal to him whatever the cost but it must be him that sustains us for except the Lord do the house they labor in vain but do it make a go go and thank you