

Trusting in the God who is Sovereign

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[0 : 0 0] Despite all the many wonderful and very positive things that we would say about what it means to be a Christian, to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, we would surely have to acknowledge all the same that the experience of life in what is a fallen world, a world which is no longer as God intended it to be, is surely one that is filled with many trials.

It is a life which is filled with much heartache. Acts chapter 14 verse 22 says, through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

Jesus himself said, if the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own.

As it is, you do not belong to the world. That is why the world hates you. Now clearly none of us are currently faced with the most extreme forms of persecution and opposition on account of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, living in the relative safety of a place like Scalpy or elsewhere in Scotland as we do.

But nevertheless, the trials faced, the hardships experienced are surely as ongoing as they are often widespread.

[1 : 4 6] Not only do we face the many afflictions which are common to all men, whoever they are, and whether or not they believe in Christ at all, things like illness and sadness, weakness, pain.

But then on top of that, we also face those trials which are particular to Christ's own people. There is an increasing intolerance of biblical morality amongst Western civilization.

There is pressure on the church to conform to the moral so-called revolution of our day. And then of course, to top it all off, we even see certain church denominations themselves, increasingly abandoning the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

The point is, you do not need to think too hard or for too long about some of these realities, the things which are taking place in our world today, before you could very easily become somewhat jaded, somewhat disheartened, if not completely weighed down with a sense of despair, even hopelessness.

Well, one man who was extremely familiar with the pressures and with the conflicts and with the uncertainties of this world was King David.

[3 : 1 9] We can't be sure of the exact circumstances that led to this particular psalm. Some have said that it was another of the psalms that would have been written around about the time of 2 Samuel chapter 13, when, remember, David's son Absalom betrayed him.

Then he managed to get all of Israel turned against him as well. That is certainly a possibility. But whatever it was that was going on, one thing that's very clear in all of this is that David was not only feeling isolated and extremely weakened in human terms, but he was also facing the prospect of death itself at the hands of wicked people.

In verse 10, he says, my life is spent with sorrow, my years with sighing. In verse 12, I have been forgotten like one who is dead.

In verse 13, for I hear the whispering of many as they plot to take my life. In other words, far from the idea that life for the man of God is one big bed of roses, as is often implied in certain quarters of even the professing church, particularly those advocates of the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel, here was David basically testifying to the fact that his own experience could not be further removed from that particular fantasy.

And yet, right in the midst of his own personal darkness, a life that was under real threat, a body that was seriously weakened, he says these great words in verses 14 and 15, words which I believe are pivotal to the rest of this psalm.

[5 : 28] He says, but I trust in you, O Lord, I say you are my God, my times are in your hand.

In other words, he's saying, yes, the experience is real, it is most certainly painful, even at times perplexing, but as for me and my life, I am entrusting the whole of my being, all of my future, into the capable hands of the living God.

And what we effectively have here then in the rest of this psalm, both before and after those pivotal verses, is really an outline as to the reasons why David was able to say such a thing.

In other words, what is it that David knew to be true, which enabled him to express this sense of resting in God, entrusting his entire future into God's care in the face of hardship, opposition, uncertainty, uncertainty, and even the threat of death itself.

Five things that I want to highlight for you this evening. First, we see that David's trust, his ability to say these words, was based upon a salvation already received.

[6 : 57] at the very beginning in verse 1, he says, in you, O Lord, do I take refuge. Then in verse 5, into your hand I commit my spirit.

Why or how am I able to do that? Because you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God. Later in verse 8, you have set my feet in a broad place.

And then finally in verse 18, he says, O how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, and you have worked for those who take refuge in you.

In other words, in a world of great uncertainty and so many difficult and dangerous possibilities, there is this one thing that David knows to be true of his life.

And that is, he has come to know the refuge and the redemption of the soul which has been freely given to him by the grace of his God.

[8 : 14] The account of David's life, the main problem of his life, namely the problem of his human sin, had been settled already with the Lord.

You know, when you think about it, there are multitudes and multitudes of people in this world this evening who might never face opposition, they might never know what it is to experience a serious illness.

They'll always have enough money, they'll always know job security, they'll always have plenty of friends and they'll kind of walk through life as if they don't have a single care in the world.

but there's just this one thing that they lack and it's the most vital thing which is that all is not well with their soul.

They have never come into a personal reconciled union with their creator in and through the person of his only begotten son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[9 : 33] They have never come to see their sin and to then delight in the promises of a faithful and redeeming God. And do you see it's the very antithesis of that position that David was able to testify to concerning his own life.

Actually in the very next psalm, Psalm 32, he sums up this point well in the opening two verses where he says, blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity. Here he says, into your hand I commit my spirit. Why or how can he do this?

He says, for you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God. In other words, to have this resolved is to have everything.

To not have this resolved and yet to have everything else besides is to have nothing. God is to be to have the first basis on which we can rest in the Lord, we can entrust our present and our future circumstances into his hands.

[11 : 05] It is only ever on the basis that we have first and already come to acknowledge our sinnerhood before the living God and to trust in his redemptive promises made known to us, given to us in the person of his beloved son.

Now the reason that this is our crucial starting point is that to have this redemption from God is to then be building on a secure and a solid foundation.

In other words, first of all we need to have this salvation in Jesus Christ, but secondly, we need to know what this salvation is really like.

And David tells us in verse 3, he says, for you are my rock and my fortress. Then at the end of 4, for you are my refuge.

Now of course our danger, all of us, is that we read these expressions so often in the scriptures, it becomes very easy for us to end up being kind of glib or superficial, even unappreciative, complacent as to the truths that are actually being conveyed by these words.

[12 : 29] But what is being said here by David is that not only does he know this God to be his personal redeemer, but he's very aware of the fact that to have that redemption foundation is always to be building on a solid and secure foundation.

And of course as we read on through the scriptures we know this to be the case don't we? We know this to be the truth concerning our salvation from all that is said in the pages of the New Testament.

Jesus told the story in Matthew chapter 7 about two men who went about the process of each building a house in order to convey for us these two ways that man can live his life in this world.

One man built upon the sand and so when the rivers rose and the wind blew the storm battered the house it fell to the ground. It was utterly destroyed.

It was insecure. It was unstable. It was unable to stand. It lacked this solid foundation. That is the description of all who fail to make peace with God through his son.

[13 : 44] The Lord Jesus Christ the other man. Well he built his house in a completely different way. He built his house upon a rock.

And so when the rivers rose and the winds blew and the storms came that house stood firm. It was secure. It was stable. It could not be moved in any way.

And so says Jesus this is the picture of all who come to find salvation in his name. To have made our peace with this God through the Lord Jesus Christ is to be established on a rock that cannot be moved and from which we cannot be taken.

Now then why is that the case? why is this such a certain foundation? Why can we describe this redemption as being the person living upon and building upon a rock?

Three reasons very briefly. First because this is the fulfillment of God's own sovereign purpose in election. For those whom God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son.

[15 : 07] It is his sovereign will. It is his sovereign design. His work. Second, it is a work which God himself has completed on our behalf.

Jesus Christ said, it is finished as he hung on the cross. Not because of anything that we've done for ourselves, but simply because of who he is and all that he has done.

By his atoning sacrifice. Third, because just as we were saying to the children earlier on this morning, God refuses to let go of any who are his chosen and redeemed people.

No one, said Jesus, can snatch them out of my hand. The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Romans 11, 29. And so do you see that when we speak as David did of old, of the Lord being our rock and our refuge, our strength and our fortress, we're not just throwing about some empty words in some kind of frivolous or superficial kind of way, way.

[16 : 29] But underneath those words are layer upon layer of biblical truth concerning who this God is and concerning the nature of the salvation which he himself has procured on behalf of those who fear him.

on Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

Now the third great truth that gives rise to this resting, this trusting is David's apprehension of the God who knows, the God who knows.

He says in verse 7 I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love because you have seen my affliction, you have known the distress of my soul.

Now you think about the logic and what he's saying there. There is a connection here between his being able to fix his mind on the love of God and his understanding of the fact that God is all knowing concerning his circumstances.

[17 : 49] I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love because you have seen my affliction, you have known the distress of my soul.

In other words, if God was not all-knowing, then trying to somehow make God aware or wrestling with the fact that he might not be aware would end up being the thing that preoccupied David's mind.

But as it is, he understands the omniscience of God. He reminds himself of the fact that God is precisely aware of all the threatening circumstances of his life.

And you see, it is this reality which, in a sense, frees David up in such a way that he's able to rejoice in that which is unchanging, namely the love of his God.

one of the most comforting and faith-inspiring truths for God's people to remember is that whereas the future may be extremely uncertain, even confusing, perplexing in our own experience, there is nothing that is confusing or unclear to this omniscient God.

[19 : 17] God. Psalm 94 tells us that he knows all the thoughts of man. Psalm 44 that he knows the secrets of the heart.

In John 10 he is the good shepherd who knows his sheep. In Jeremiah 1 he is the God who knows us by name.

In Matthew 6 he knows all that we need. In Isaiah 46 he knows the end from the beginning. A.W.

Pink put it this way, he said God knows everything, everything that is possible, everything that is actual, all events, all creatures of the past, of the present and the future.

he is perfectly acquainted with every detail in the life of every being in heaven, in earth and in hell.

[20 : 31] you think to yourself, no wonder the apostle Paul wrote those words of Romans 11 33, oh the depths of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, how unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out, who has known the mind of the Lord, who has been his counselor.

now one of the dangers that comes sometimes with this particular truth, this doctrine, God's omniscience, is that we can sometimes make the mistake of responding to that great doctrine by saying well, you know, if God is all knowing, maybe there is no point in actually praying about all the things that I am actually struggling with in the course of my own life.

I mean, after all, if he already knows what's on my mind and what's laying heavy upon my heart this evening, why would I then spend time detailing all of that to him in prayer?

But what do we see here in David? We see actually that the exact opposite is the case. Because not only does David understand the fact that God knows his every circumstance, he also appears very aware that God is a father who cares about his every circumstance.

And because that is the case, he is therefore willing for his people to express to him through prayer the burdens that we carry as a result of those same circumstances.

[22 : 24] Jesus. And friends, that is precisely what we see throughout this particular psalm and indeed we might say all the way through the Psalter.

That David's not simply sitting back and saying, well, God knows all about this and so he, Sarah, Sarah, whatever will be, will be. Instead of that he is exercising the muscle of faith, as it were.

he is unburdening himself, releasing over to God all that he feels and all of his thoughts and his wrestles and his anxieties concerning his experience of life in that moment.

I'm not going to read it all just now, but if you just were to scan your way down from verse 9 to verse 13, just look at how much David is simply describing to God, pouring out to God how he is feeling in the light of his present circumstances.

He says, my eye is wasted from grief, my soul and body also. I have become a reproach to my neighbours. I have been forgotten like one who is dead.

[23 : 42] I have become like a broken vessel. In other words, one who is viewed by those around as being worthless. he is not asking for anything at this point.

He is just laying it all out there before his father in heaven. You see, the great danger that I think we face here as Christian men and women is that those of us who have a high view of God, the way that we ought to view God, the way that it is presented to us in scripture, we understand his absolute sovereignty and his omniscience and so on.

What we can end up doing is spending all of our time in prayer, almost being kind of theoretical about the situations of our lives, almost second-guessing what God may or may not be doing to the point where we actually fail to do the very thing that we need to do, which is to come like a little child and to actually express ourselves to our Father who is in heaven, to unburden our lives from those things which are weighing us down, holding us back from who and what we really are intended to be.

Philippians 4 verse 6, do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God.

1 Peter chapter 5, cast all your anxieties on him, why? Because he cares for you.

[25 : 42] I wonder how much damage we do to our own lives and indeed to the lives of those around us simply because of this particular outworking of our own unbelief, our failure to speak out loud to our Father in heaven about the way that we are feeling, the experience that we are enduring, the trials that we are facing.

Dear friends, please understand this, this is not an indication of spiritual weakness or immaturity, this is the exercising of a robust faith, a mature understanding of the God who in Jesus Christ is our Father in heaven.

So how could David say my trust is in you, my times are in your hands? First, he rested in a salvation received.

Second, he remembered the foundation then which is secure. Third, he was trusting in the God who knows. Fourth, he believed in the Father who cares.

And finally, he was confident in the Lord who reigns. The Lord who reigns.

[27 : 15] First, in verse three, he says, for your name's sake, you lead me and guide me. Then in verse eight, and you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy.

Again, in verses 17 to 18, O Lord, let me not be put to shame, for I call upon you. Let the wicked be put to shame. Let them go silently to Sheol.

Let the lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against the righteous in pride and contempt. And then finally, verse 23, the Lord preserves the faithful, but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.

In other words, no matter how dark and how difficult, no matter how perplexing or how painful David's circumstances at this particular moment in his life, the one truth which seemed to be at the forefront of his mind was the fact that his God was still on the throne.

his God was still in sovereign control and therefore able to overrule in all things according to the perfect counsel of his own will.

[28 : 44] First, there was his trust in the fact that whatever came to pass, God would still be guiding his servant for the sake of his own glory.

that's verse 3. Second, a confidence that if temporal deliverance was in the sovereign will of God, then he was absolutely capable of granting that deliverance.

That's verses 15 to 18. And then finally in verse 23, we see in David this deep seated trust in the fact that whatever was to transpire in the days which lay before him, justice, justice would be served in the end.

That just as it says at the end of the very first psalm, the Lord knows the way of the righteous, therefore he will vindicate his people, but the way of the wicked will surely perish.

It is friends, one of the most mysterious truths concerning our God, and yet at the same time, it is one of the most comforting and reassuring.

[30 : 09] to know that in the security of our union with the Lord Jesus Christ, we belong to a God who is not only in sovereign control over every nuance of our lives, but to know that this good God is working all of those things together for the good of those who love him, and that as such he will deliver his people in the end.

There is a Lord in heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ is Lord of lords, King of kings.

Our God really does reign, he really is in sovereign control over the nations this night, and he is in sovereign control over every nuance of our lives.

He will deliver his people in the end, justice will be served. From what? From what will he deliver?

Those who fear him, those who have come to know him, in the person of his son, he will deliver us from Satan, he will deliver us from sin, he will deliver us from death, he will deliver us from hell, he will deliver us from illness, from sadness, from afflictions of the body, from every manner of pain that is known to men and women upon the face of this earth.

[32 : 01] And why? Because this is to the praising of his glory. And this is his wonderful promise to all who will take refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he who begun a good work in us will bring it to completion.

That no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived the things which God has prepared for those who love him.

And so how then, how then do we respond after all of these glorious truths of God's word? How do we respond as we consider a salvation received by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone?

A foundation which is secure, a life established on that rock, our redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, the God who knows our every circumstance, the Father who cares about our every predicament, and the Lord who rules over heaven and earth.

How do we respond to these truths? Well, how did David respond? He said, love the Lord, all you his saints.

[33 : 31] Be strong, let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord. Dear loved ones, I say the same thing to you as I prepare to leave this wonderful place in the morning.

Love the Lord, all you his saints. Be strong, let your heart take courage, all who wait for the Lord.

Why? Because in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, all of your tomorrows are safe and secure in his hands.

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