

Psalms 73

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[0 : 00] I want to speak to you from two verses. I thought that was better tonight. Verses 23 and 24. Two great verses of Psalm 73.

! And you'll find that they match the passages that Rebecca read to us and Cana read to us. Remember that epistle? God's keeping promise that he makes right through the changes and the chances of this life.

And right into the presence of God, the God of all grace. That lovely reading. It begins with our needs and it finishes with God's grace.

And then we read in the Gospel in John 10 that no one can snatch us out of the hand of Jesus. And no one can snatch us out of the hand of the Father. And he is the one that gives us eternal life and we will never perish. The Bible always speaks with one voice.

We've got this, I think, silly habit of dividing the Bible into two Testaments instead of seeing it as one book. It is one Testament.

[1 : 10] And we need to see that if we went to Jesus and we said, why are you always quoting the Old Testament? He would say to us, what do you mean? What is that?

He would then say to us, you mean the Word of God. And I want you to see that the message of Peter and the message of Jesus and the message of the Psalms are all one message for us. I want us to look at these two verses really simply tonight. It's really great truth. Look at verses 23 and 24.

Asaph, the writer says, nevertheless, I am continually with you. You hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel.

And afterwards, you will receive me to glory. Isn't that wonderful? I hope your heart lifts when you hear words like that.

[2 : 16] Look at the writer. We're just going to take the four clauses. I, that's Asaph, am continually with you, the Lord. I, the man, am continually with you, the divine Lord.

We have peace with God. I am continually at peace with you. And of course, God is continually with us. And Asaph is saying, I am continually with you.

I am in God's presence. And all is well between us. Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And I don't think we should be surprised by this.

And if you remember that first Easter day, Jesus rises from the dead. And John tells us that he comes to his disciples in the evening. And the doors are locked. They're shut for fear of the Jews.

But locked doors mean nothing to Jesus. And he comes and he stands right in the midst of them. And do you remember what he says? What does he say? He says, peace be unto you.

[3 : 26] And when he said that, he showed them his hands. And he showed them his side. And it was as if to say to them that this peace that I give to you is not a fancy.

It's not a fake thing. It's not positive thinking. It's real. To have peace with God through the blood of the cross. To have peace with God because Jesus says, I died in your place.

And I have made things right so that you can continually be with me. And I can continually be with you. It was his first words to them when he came rising from the dead.

As though to remind them that peace with God is the first fruit of Calvary. The very first blessing that comes to you through the cross of Christ is that we have peace with God.

That for the believer, for those who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ tonight, all is well. The war is over. Peace has broken out.

[4 : 26] And we have peace with God. I am continually with you. What's the second thing? Can you see it? What's the second thing?

Can you look down? You hold my right hand. Second thing is the power of God, isn't it? At work in our lives. We have the security of God's strength.

So back at the beginning of the psalm, just look at verse 2. They're quite famous words. But as for me, the psalmist says, my feet had almost stumbled. You might know the translation, my feet almost slipped.

You know that experience, don't you? You go out on one of these frosty mornings. And you suddenly feel that your left heel is moving much faster than the rest of your body. And you're almost over, aren't you? Your foot almost goes. And your kind friend who's next to you, they put a hand under your elbow. And they catch you. And you're all right again.

[5 : 27] And you are steadied. And you say, my step almost slipped. I almost stumbled. But your right hand holds me fast.

And we have the constancy of the Lord's presence. I am with you continually. But we have the strength of the Lord's hand. You know the story of the disciples in a boat.

And Jesus comes walking on the water. And then there's a really strange thing in that story. Peter says, if it is you, Lord, bid me to come to you, to walk on the water.

Peter. It's a really puzzling verse. Why would Peter say that? The answer I found is in the Lady Bird book. You know Lady Bird books?

They do great books. And they've a little book. I don't know where. I haven't seen one for years of this title. I had it when I was a little boy. But it was called The Little Boat That Almost Sank. You might have it in your home.

[6 : 23] The Little Boat That Almost Sank. And there's an explanation in that little book. Why does Peter cry out, Lord, if it is you, bid me to come to you, walking on the water.

And that little book, The Little Boat That Almost Sank, the explanation they give is brilliant. They say, because in a storm, it is safer to be with Jesus than in a boat.

Isn't that great? It is safer to be with Jesus in a boat when it's a storm. If you know that little book, mind you, the picture of the disciples would make you wonder why the disciples were even allowed out on the street, let alone in a boat, kind of a collection of old heads and gray hairs and long beards, not fit to go out on the street, let alone rowing.

But it was safer to be with Jesus than in the boat in a storm. Now, do you remember what happened, boys and girls? Do you remember Peter gets out of the boat and he is walking to Jesus. And he suddenly becomes aware, doesn't he, of the wind and the waves. And he takes his eyes off Jesus and he begins to sink. And he cried out, do you remember what he cried out? Lord, save me. And Jesus reached out his hand and took him.

[7 : 40] You hold me with your right hand. The power of God safeguarding us, keeping us along life's pathway.

What's number three? Can you see truth number three from Psalm 73, verses 23 and 24? You guide me with your counsel. One of the great problems of now and problems of all of life is that things happen and we cannot see any rhyme or any reason.

Some of you will feel like that today, tonight. You don't understand why something has happened. Trouble comes and disappointments and sorrow and difficult circumstances.

Difficulties with other people. Illness. Bereavement. And we see no purpose, but there always is, the Bible tells us.

You guide me with your counsel. And so our security is not in what we see, but the fact that God is working his purposes out for you and for me.

[8 : 59] Day by day. Hour by hour. Minute by minute. Come wind, come weather. That if we are in difficulties tonight, he has decided what difficulties they will be.

He's discovered, he has decided how long you will be in those difficulties, how difficult they will be, how long you will stay. And all that is part of God's marvelous plan.

You guide me with your counsel. And I need God's counsel at this moment, don't you? Sometime in the last century, there was an American, his name was Spafford.

His initials were HG. That's pretty much all I know about him as a person. But I know that he felt very much called by God to come from America to this country.

And to engage in the work of the gospel, to preach the gospel. He had a wife, he had four children. And the plan was that he would come to the UK and he would set up a home and then his wife and family would follow him.

[10:12] And so it was. He did come and he set up home. And he did send for his wife and family to come from the States. And there was a storm at sea. And they were all drowned.

And HG Stafford left behind him for us, a most wonderful hymn. And you know it. And we sing it. It's got a verse in it that goes like this.

When peace like a river attendeth my way. When sorrows like sea billows roll. Whatever my lot. You have taught me to say.

It is well. It is well. With my soul. That's what this verse is telling us. That we are in the hand of God. And we can't be snatched out.

Where was I when the trouble fell? I was there. I was in the hollow of his hand. Where was he when the trouble came? He was there gripping my right hand.

[11:15] When peace like a river attends my way. When sorrows like sea billows roll. Whatever my lot. It is well. It is well.

It is well with my soul. Nevertheless. I am continually with you. You hold my right hand.

You guide me with your counsel. And lastly. Do you see that? It says afterwards. You will receive me to glory. If you've heard people.

How they talk about death. They'll talk about anything. But they won't use the word. And so they'll say. So and so has.

Passed on. Or passed away. Or they just stopped. They won't use the word. Insurance companies.

[12:12] They don't. They don't talk. Talk about death. They. They say. If anything should happen to you. But just notice with. With me. Will you in verse 24.

Can you see what it says? It says. And afterward. It's only. The teaching of the Bible. That can say. Afterwards. About death.

Isn't that marvelous? It's only. The Bible. That dares. To say that word. Afterwards. Afterwards.

What? Can you see? Afterwards. What? It's glory.

It's honor. Afterwards. A welcome home. Afterwards. You will. Receive me. I don't know.

You. I've been in the church building. This morning. And tonight. And I long for that day. When.

When you will all come again. And we'll greet one another. And there will be. There will be a feeling. Of being back.

[13:07] Won't there? And you're longing for that. And you know. What it's like. When you visit family. And you. You say. To the family. Or there's a date.

On the diary. And you say. Grandma. Grandma. Grandad. They're coming next week. Or. Maybe your son. Or your daughter. Are coming. It's only a month. Until we see them. You say. So and so. Will be here next week.

And we anticipate it. Don't we? And there's that glorious moment when we fling the door open and they're there. And you rush to embrace.

Some of you are far from family. And you know what that's like. You go through the hospital, not the hospital, the airport doors, and you run to be embraced by your family. And we anticipate, don't we, that glorious moment.

And don't you think the Heavenly Father is like that? Don't you think our Heavenly Father says to his son, isn't it lovely that so-and-so is coming home next week?

[14:14] Afterwards, you will receive me to glory. None of us wants to die. None of us wants to experience death for ourselves.

None of us wants our loved ones to experience death. But the Bible says in Psalm 116, precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

And the saints are you and me. Those who believe in Jesus, we are the saints. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

There's something valuable that he sees. He wears it like a bright jewel. Because it's when we die that he is able to bestow on us, to give to us the full reality and experience of our salvation.

We know it in part now. But on that day, we will know it wholly. The first Christian martyr was Stephen. And when he was dying, you read about it in Acts chapter 7.

[15:23] He cried out and he said, I see heaven opened. And then there's this really bizarre little phrase. Do you remember what the phrase is? He says, I see heaven opened and I see the Son of Man standing.

At the hand. And we know, don't we? We looked at the ascension. What is Jesus doing in heaven? He is seated. Do you remember that?

He's always seated because his work is done. His work is finished. The priest has sat down. But Acts 7 teaches you and I that there is something that fetches Jesus off the throne. There is something that causes Jesus to stand in heaven. And that's when he rises to welcome his own. When he rises to welcome his sons and daughters who have come home. Nevertheless, I am continually with you. You hold my right hand. [16:32] You guide me with your counsel. And afterwards you will receive me to glory. Let's pray. Let's pray.