

# The Worship of God & The Radiance of Faith

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[ 0 : 00 ] Back now to the book of Psalms and to chapter 73. And we can read at verse number 23. Psalm 73 and at verse 23.

Nevertheless, I am continually with you. You hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel. And afterwards, you'll receive me to glory.

And so on down to the end of the psalm. It was mentioned in beginning to read the psalm and also in speaking to the children. The psalm was written by Asaph, who was at oversight for the singing at the temple of God.

And there are a series of psalms here that run from Psalm 73 to Psalm 83. They are psalms of Asaph. And when you read these psalms, we realize that faith does meet with challenges.

Challenges that are really serious. And we saw one of these challenges in the last psalm that we sang in Psalm number 77. That we can come to the place where we can even begin to question if God has forgotten to be kind.

[ 1 : 11 ] Or if his heart has switched off from his compassion and his mercy. And the psalmist went through these kind of exercises and challenges to faith.

And came to realize the things that were precious to him. In other words, he met with crisis after crisis in his faith. And such was the crisis in this psalm that he nearly fell from his faith.

That he nearly stumbled and fell away from God. And such was the power of the attraction of the world. As he looked upon the world and how they prospered.

And how nothing seemed to faze them. And everything went so well with him. And his own life was so different. The life that the world lived seemed so attractive.

And of course, once we see the life of the world like that, then we are, as he was, on a slippery slope. Slipping away from God.

[ 2 : 15 ] And the question is, what is the solution to that? What is the thing that's most important in rescuing us from that slippery slope? It is the worship of God.

And whether we're at close to the beginning of a year or the end of a year, the worship of God is the most important thing we can do. It rescues us from these stumblings.

It recovers our faith. It gives to us a sense of rediscovering what faith is about and what faith rests upon. It gives us a new understanding and a greater appreciation of who God is.

And today we want to think about that because the worship of God on the Lord's Day is key to the life of faith. Not only is it a mark of the people of God, but it is also a reflection on their trust in God and their dependence upon Him.

Let's not forget the importance of the worship of God. And in this psalm today, we want to think of the worship of God and the radiance of faith.

[ 3 : 30 ] How the faith that was dwindling away was revived and refreshed by entering into the worship of God. I want to see three things that show to us that His faith was revived and that now radiates once more in all of its brightness.

And the first thing I want to notice is that there is a reality which faith must always lay hold of, never to forget the reality of faith.

And the reality of faith is essentially having communion with God. And that's what we see in verse number 23. Nevertheless, despite everything that's happening out there, despite how much I was attracted to what's happening out there, nevertheless, despite all of that, I am continually with you.

He was at the point of discontinuing his connection with God. Discontinuing that connection because of the attraction of the world.

Discontinuing that connection with God.

[ 5 : 12 ] That as the people of God, we are with Him. He's talking to God. Nevertheless, I am continually with you. And that's what we rediscover at the center of our worship.

That as we come as God's people, we come into the presence of God, the God who has promised to be with us, and we rediscover that He is with us, learning the fact that God is by our side. And somebody can be by our side and not make any difference to us. Somebody can be beside us, be the coldest person on earth, and even in our time of need, unable to give encouragement to us. But there are other people, and when they come beside us, and we know that we are with them, they're inspiring. There's a warmth about them that changes what we are feeling, that even changes our attitude to the situation in which we find ourselves, and that bring about a transformation. And when Asaph realized that he was continually with God, he realized the different ways in which that changed his life, and gave to him a sense of the riches of the grace of God.

[ 6 : 41 ] You, he says, hold my right hand. And we know that Jesus is at God's right hand. The right hand of God is the place of authority and the place of power.

We read also, for example, in the life of Cyrus, when God is talking about Cyrus, who is going to lead God's people back from Babylon to Jerusalem, God says of Cyrus, I will take him by the right hand.

It's a sense of royalty. It's a sense of being sons of the king. And it's a sense of taking hold of that person with the activity of God going to be present and everything that that person is going to do. And you can see how instantly realizing and recognizing that is going to change exactly the way Asaph is feeling.

That suddenly he feels like a royal son of God. That suddenly he rediscovers what he had lost sight of. Who are the privileged ones?

[ 7 : 58 ] Not the ones who are wandering in the world aimlessly, finding satisfaction without God. The privileged ones are those who are walking with God and God walking with them.

They are raised. God is, like we were saying earlier, God is the one who comes down, who humbles himself to come down to where we are, to raise us up and to give to us that sense of being the sons of God, of being in the family of God.

The royal sons of God. The initiative of God. And when Asaph was saying, you hold me by my right hand, it's not just something that happens from time to time.

It's something that is continually true. That's how God is with them. He holds them by the right hand.

And today, as we worship God, may God help us to discover or rediscover that. That in the powerful, invisible presence of God, with us in this time of worship with Him, that we may sense His hand on our hand, His hand in our hand, and may we sense what it is to be moved in our hearts with our sense of the way in which God communicates power and blessing and His love through that very holding of our hand.

[ 9 : 39 ] That it's not a meaningless touch of a cold hand, but that it speaks of God communicating to us all that He is in Himself and all that He has provided for us.

And so that as we worship God today, we may sense the hand of the Lord Jesus Himself as our shepherd, as our King, as the one who raises us up through what He has done by becoming poor so that we may be made rich.

That communion, that listening to God through what we feel. And feeling God is with us is a powerful emotion.

and we cannot have faith without, from time to time at least, feeling that God is with us. And in this moment of worship, perhaps we can look at our hearts and consider what we feel right now.

Do we feel the closeness of God, the presence, the touch of God, the hand of God communicating to us all of the riches of His grace.

[ 11 : 05 ] And in that communion, God gives direction and God shows Asaph's destiny. You guide me with your counsel.

Here is the shepherd. The world that he envied, they are wandering around aimlessly in life. But Asaph discovers and rediscovers that he is so different and the people of God are so different because they are guided by God.

They are steered through life. Conducted by God along the right path. So that when they are liable to stray off the right path, that God brings them back to ensure that they remain on Kursh.

That's exactly what he experienced himself. He was beginning to wander away. But God was not going to allow that to happen. Instead, the hand of God was upon him ensuring that he was brought back and doing so with his counsel.

If you like organization, you will like the word counsel. That's what it means in the Old Testament. Jethro organized the life of Moses.

[12:29] Moses. He gave Moses a plan so that he could manage his work. And here, Asaph is saying that that's what God does with us when he guides us with his counsel.

He gives us a plan to organize our lives about and in. And of course, that plan that he gives to us is the plan that we have in his word.

How we come to know him. How we come to be saved. How we come to have our sins forgiven.

And how we come to have peace with God. And from that moment onwards, how we can walk with God.

The path that God has set out for us. He guides us with his counsel. Paul in 2 Timothy 3 speaks about the way in which the Bible, the word of God is breathed out by God and is sufficient for everything that we need in order to be disciples of God.

It's his counsel. It's his organizational plan for our lives. It's what gives structure to our lives. So we don't simply go through life haphazardly from day to day.

[13:45] We awaken every morning and we have God's plan for our lives. We have that structure. That's what God said to the people through the words of Jeremiah in chapter 29.

I know the plans I have for you. Plans for welfare, to give you a future and a hope. He sets the scene for life. And today, God wants you and I to rediscover that.

the sense of a purpose in life, the sense of knowing where we are going, the sense of knowing what we are doing tomorrow as we move on from the Lord's day to live our lives, recognizing every morning as we read the Word of God and pray over the Word of God that this is the way that God is saying we should walk in it.

He gives direction. His touch, His presence, His communion gives us that direction. And it also reminds us of our destiny.

Asaph came to know where he was going. It's one of, perhaps, the things that sometimes can overcome us with anxiety, the uncertainty of life.

[15:11] And we don't know what today will bring, never mind tomorrow, that our lives can change like that. And it's that uncertainty that can shake a very being, not only as a people of God, but in general terms in the world, that we don't know what a day will bring.

But God's communion that is rediscovered in the worship of God is one which sets out our kush so that we know exactly where we are going.

And afterwards, you will receive me into glory. When my life comes to an end, after following your paths, after having my life organized by you to live and commune with you day by day, after that, at the end of that, you will receive me into glory.

You will honor me with that high position of true royalty as the sons of God around the throne of God in the glory of God.

And Paul says with regard to the people in Rome, as he was writing to them, that we shall be glorified with Jesus if we suffer with him.

[16:40] It's that sense of the glory of paradise, of the end of all suffering, of the end of the temptation that draws us out to wander away from God, the end of all of these distractions, leaving them all behind and entering in to the paradise of God.

The reality of God's holding our right hand, of God directing our lives, and of God giving to us this hope of glory in our hearts.

And glory is a wonderful thing spoken of in the Bible in so many different ways. It's the paradise of God. It's the new heavens and the new earth.

It's where it's really true at last that all of the old things have passed away and everything that has now become new.

The reality that comes from worship, how that can change your life and mine, that from now onwards we know where God is taking us.

[17:55] And because it is God that is saying that to us, we know that we shall certainly be there. The assurance of God's presence now, the assurance of being in glory with Christ around the throne of God.

May we together rediscover all of these things from our worship today, the reality of faith. Secondly, that leads us to think of the response of faith.

What is our response or what should our response be in the light of the reality of faith that God gives to us in this time of worship? the response is a response that's reflected in our desire.

In many ways, our desires drive and motivate what we do in life. If we have wrong desires, they can take us a long way because what we are doing is fueled by the desires of our hearts to do something and to go somewhere, then sometimes nothing can stop us.

Desire is powerful. Desire sums up who we are. And we see here the psalmist's desire in verse number 25.

[ 19 : 24 ] Whom have I in the heavens but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. literally, Asaph is saying, who to me?

Is there anyone else or anything else that's precious to me? He is looking at the spectrum of life and scanning the whole of life's experience.

Those whom he knows, those around him in life, he is scanning everyone, whether it is in his home or his family or amongst the people of God or in the world around him. Who to me?

It's a simple question that he is addressing himself with. And the answer is simple. Whom have I? Who to me in heaven but you? When I think of glory and the destiny of the people of God, who to me? You.

[ 20 : 31 ] the only true and living God is the one who is precious to him. And because of that preciousness, recognizing his special relationship with God, there is that emotional movement of his whole being, his affections are fixed, and the whole of life is lived under the perspective of the God who lives in heaven.

And the God whose dwelling is there, the dwelling to which God is taking him. Who to me in the heavens nobody but you.

And because of that, there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

With me. Who with me? I change who to me and who with me. In other words, who is precious to me? Who do I desire?

And as we mentioned at the outset, desire is so powerful. whole. We desire something because of how attractive it is.

[ 21 : 52 ] We long for that object of our desire with all of our hearts and all of our passions, and we reach out to it, and we are prepared to sacrifice everything else in order that we may have what we desire above everything else.

And who, there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. With you, there is nobody in this category. As much as he loved the people of God, as much as he loved those who were in his own family, there is a preciousness around the living God, the God whom he is worshiping that makes him desirous above everyone else and about everything else.

And the response that God requires of you and of me today is in this moment of worship to make all the adjustments that are necessary so that God indeed comes to be the priority in our lives, that Jesus becomes the person that's desired above everything else, and that because of that, my love for God drives everything that I do and wherever I go.

Who do we desire? more than anything today. And we may answer and give the response that may give the right impression, but God is not mocked or deceived.

And it's a real question for us today as we do worship God, where is our desire? desire. The Greeks came to the festival, and they came announcing to the disciples, we want to see Jesus.

[ 23 : 48 ] That was their desire. And in a sense, they had no right to be there, but because of their desire, they overlooked everything that could be obstacles. they wanted to see Jesus.

And where is your desire today, or who is your desire? What is it, who is it that you want more than anything else? And in this moment of worship, because of your understanding of God, are you willing to make all the adjustments in life?

That moves everything else one step down on your priority list, and so that the priority, the space of the first person in your desire, would be given to God alone, and to Jesus alone, and to the Word of God alone, through which we can know Jesus and know God.

The desire, let's ensure that the response is like Asaph's. Let's ensure that our response reflects our professional faith, and it reflects the desire of our hearts.

And that response that we see in desire is one that is reflected also in the confidence that Asaph had.

[ 25 : 26 ] My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Asaph knew he had limitations.

He had limitations in every area of life, but especially in his relationship with God, he had limitations. And there was nobody perhaps more aware of these limitations than himself.

Others may see that we have limited ability, but we are whom God has made us. But we come to worship God and to serve God and to follow Jesus.

a good illustration of our failings and of our limitations.

When the battery goes flat, there's not much we can do about it, but we do learn in life that we have our limitations. But in the face of his limitations, he saw that God was limitless in the way in which he was able to help him.

[ 26 : 38 ] But God is the strength of my heart and to my portion forever. He is giving expression to the way in which he is going to lay hold of God.

He is his portion forever. The Psalms in Psalm 16 speaks about God is of my inheritance and cup the portion. He knew what was precious. And in that preciousness there is the sense of God being my strength.

It's the same as saying what Jacob said that God is the rock. He is the rock of our salvation. There is no rock like God, says David.

He is the strength of our heart. God and that's the marvel of the provision that God has given to us. That we come with our desire to trust in him because we know him to be precious. That we come understanding our feelings and our limitations but that we know God will supply all of our needs that he is sufficient for everything.

[ 27 : 54 ] limitations and without limitation we come to God. As Abraham Lincoln said before coming into office as the 16th President of the United States of America without the assistance of the divine being who ever attended Washington I cannot succeed.

With that assistance I cannot fail. That's the confidence that Asaph gives expression to hear. Yes we will fail but we won't fail if we trust in God because we are more than conquerors and he gives us the victory that Jesus secured that victory becomes ours.

There is the reality of faith there is the response of faith and finally there is the resolution of faith. he learned how foolish he was.

And verse number 27 those who are far from you shall perish you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. How foolish he was to in any way be drawn and be attracted to the life of those who were going to perish that God was going to judge eternally and would be eternally lost.

That's perhaps part of the reality that completes the picture and the images that he had from the worship of God.

[ 29 : 40 ] Here are the people of God. Here is God and here are those who are not the people of God. and there is the firm conviction that they will be judged.

They will be judged by the wrath of God and that they will perish under eternal judgment. And as we think of the resolution of faith let's not lose sight of that reality that today if we don't have faith then there is only one other reality and that reality is this judgment of God.

So the question of what we discover in the worship of God and the response to that reality is so serious and so urgent that we have the right response to it today and if you have not as yet put your trust in the Lord God, remember that here is your destiny that if you continue without faith that you will enter into the eternal judgment of God whereas the people of God will be received into glory that you will be sent into everlasting!

lostness and if you are without faith you need to bring that reality with you as you come to make the resolution that Asaph made.

What was that resolution? For me it is good to draw near to God. What is the resolution? It's a declaration that for him the worship of God is the best thing that he can do.

[ 31 : 38 ] It is good for me. And the psalm begins by saying that God is good to Israel. It's recognizing the goodness of God and we can take the goodness of God as an umbrella term for everything that God is and God has given and God pours out in his grace.

It's the goodness of God. And when Asaph says it is good for me to draw near to God he sees the benefits of this connection with God where all the goodness of God flows into his life through the

hand of God that takes him by the right hand and through that there is satisfaction for him. And goodness or good in the Old Testament means fit for purpose working according to design and that's key to what Asaph is saying here.

With every respect he sees God as fit for purpose. He sees a suitability in God that he sees nowhere else as his God as his shepherd as a saviour as the one who walks with him.

He is suitable. He is most precious. And he also sees that in his encounter with God that he finds satisfaction because the life of faith is the life for which he was made.

[ 33 : 22 ] And when he exercises faith in God he is working according to God's design. And when our hearts are working in accordance with God's design there is a connection and there is communication and there is the outpouring of the goodness of God into our hearts and we go on to live life in a sense of being satisfied in God.

And that's our resolution for today. To reaffirm to say to God you are good to your people. And to say to God it is good for me to worship you every Lord's day in public.

Every day in my family worship it is good for me to draw near to you to worship you. And to be committed because we're driven by our desire to discover to discover more of the goodness of God and every day that we are faced with our limitations to discover how great this good God is and how good his greatness is and how much he embraces our lives every day.

And so let's continue to 2025 grasping the realities of faith as we come to worship God responding in the way that shows our faith and our love for God and for the Lord Jesus and resolving today and every day that to worship God is the best thing that we can do and that there we taste and see that the Lord is good and who trusts in whom is blessed.

May God bless his word to us. Let us pray. Most gracious God, we rejoice in you as God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, our Savior, our Lord, our God, our King, our Comforter, our Helper.

[ 35 : 30 ] We seek to put our trust in you and we ask you to bless us in our hearts with that faith and with that grace which enables us because truly without you we can do nothing but your word reminds us that with you and with your help we can do everything.

So help us we pray and bless your word as we ask and go before us we pray these things for Jesus sake. Amen. At closing psalm is psalm number 86 in the Scottish Psalter on page 341 psalm 86 at verse number 10 on page 341 because thou art exceeding great and works by thee are done which are to be admired and thou art God thyself alone.

We stand to sing from verse 10 to the verse marked 13 to God's praise. Because the world exceeding great and was by thee are done which are to thee and part and!

heart God thyself alone teach me thy way and in thy truth O Lord and O great life unite!

my heart may fear may fear not in one thing O Lord my God with all my heart to thee!

[ 37 : 46 ] I will give praise and die the glory with the last time unto thou have him always Because thy mercy toward me in greatness thou hast held and thou delivered thou delivered as my soul out from the lowest hell the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the

Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more Amen