

3. When our enemies are active

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[0 : 00] Now let's pray together. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

He does not deal with us according to our sins. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him.

As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father who shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

For he knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust. And oh God our Father, how we praise you for your steadfast love.

That you, although you are so great and so high, remember us who are human and vulnerable. You are eternal and we are mortal. You are wise and we are foolish.

[1 : 03] You are holy and we are sinful. And we come to you in all our vulnerability. Thanking you for the gospel. That great rock on which we can build our lives.

Thanking you that although our sins have separated us from you. That you have provided a way back through the dying and rising again of your son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is these great truths we want to think about for these moments. We have come from the good things and the bad things. From the routines, from the everyday, which we will return shortly.

But we pray that in these moments here that we will gain strength to continue. We will gain a reassurance of your loving purposes. That you will be with us.

That you will strengthen us. And when we leave here, you will go with us. We know we live in a troubled world. And we think of the situation in Libya developing by the hour and the tragedy that has befallen that country.

[2 : 12] Through the activities of a ruthless dictator over these past decades. And we pray that the transition to peace may be just.

That a stable and humane regime may emerge in that country. We think of those still suffering from famine in the Horn of Africa. Those whose lives are short.

Those whose lives are threatened by danger and by hunger. And we pray that you will bless them. And we think of the crisis throughout the developed world.

The financial crisis which has so much come because we have trusted in uncertain riches. Rather than the living God. And so we pray Lord.

And as we open your word. That that word will be to us. Your word for us today. We do not know but you know what is in everyone's hearts.

[3 : 09] You know but we do not know what burdens people are carrying. What sorrows. What fears. And indeed what hopes and ambitions.

But we know that in your riches in glory in Christ Jesus. That your gospel. And your grace. Are able to come into all these situations. And transform them. So bless us now Lord.

Bless us as we read your word. As we look at it together. And may we indeed. Have the assurance that comes from knowing. That you are the faithful and unchanging God.

We ask this in the strong name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Now our psalm today is Psalm 62. Which is on page 479 of the Bibles. This cluster of psalms.

[4 : 05] Where David is passing through great times of trouble. And of hardship. Psalm 62. To the choir master. According to Jedethon.

A psalm of David. For God alone. My soul waits in silence. From him. Comes my salvation.

He only is my rock. And my salvation. My fortress. I shall not greatly be shaken. How long will all of you attack a man to batter him.

Like a leaning wall. A tottering fence. They only plan to thrust him down from his high position. They take pleasure in falsehood. They bless with their mouths.

But inwardly they curse. For God alone. O my soul. Wait in silence. For my hope is from him. He only is my rock.

[5 : 04] And my salvation. My fortress. I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation. And my glory. My mighty rock.

My refuge. Is God. Trust in him. At all times. O people. Pour out your heart. Before him. God is a refuge.

For us. Those of low estate. Are but a breath. Those of high estate. Are a delusion. In the balances. They go up. They are altogether lighter.

Than a breath. Put no trust. In extortion. Set no vain hopes. On robbery. If riches increase. Set not your heart. On them. Once.

God has spoken. Twice. Have I heard this. That power belongs. To God. And to you. O Lord. Belongs steadfast love. We will render to a man.

[6 : 00] According. To his work. Amen. That is the word of God. May he bless it to our hearts. I'm sure you all know the saying.

You're not paranoid. They are actually out. To get you. And. We all know that experience. I'm sure. When the world seems to crash around us.

When. Our friends seem to be distant. Or unhelpful. And when those who wish us ill. Seem to be. Particularly. Prominent. And.

David could have been forgiven. For thinking that. About the experiences. He's in. In these psalms. 60 to 64. These probably refer to the time.

He was driven out of his palace. Driven out of his city. And had to take refuge in the desert. When he's much loved. But overindulged son. Absalom. Had driven him.

[7 : 00] From the throne. And here. He is still reflecting. On these experiences. He's under increasing. Pressure. In psalm 61.

He had rejoiced. In God's protection. But. That's. That doesn't seem to be lasting. What he needs now. Is a deepening. Experience.

Of God. As I said last week. Because one trouble is over. That doesn't mean. We can simply. So well. Never have any troubles. In the future. We know that's not true. So he writes this.

Jeddoth mentioned. He is also mentioned. The book of Chronicles. As one of the chief musicians. And probably later on. Once David is restored. To his kingdom. This musician. Set this. To music. For the temple worship. The other thing. Is. It's a personal experience. But it's not. A private experience. I think that's very important. The Bible often talks.

[7 : 55] About the personal experiences. Of the people. In its pages. But these are not. Private experiences. The call to trust. In verses 8. And so on.

These are plurals. Trust him. All you peoples. It's not just about David. And about his experience. It's about us. When we feel surrounded.

By enemies. So what are we to do then? And David. In this psalm. There is a progression. First of all. In verses 1 to 4. We need to get our bearings.

We need to ask. What's actually happening? When our enemies. Are active. Our last week. When we've lost our way. When we feel surrounded. By circumstances.

We can't handle. We need to get our bearings. And once again. There are two realities. First of all. There is God. And we need to begin with God.

[8 : 49] Verse 1. From God alone. My soul waits in silence. The great Baptist preacher Spurgeon. Who wrote a very long commentary on the Psalms.

In three massive volumes. Called the Treasury of David. Says of this Psalm. It's always better to begin with God. And then. We can confront. Our enemies.

Because if we begin with our enemies. Then we'll. We'll cut God down to size. We'll begin with our seen enemies. And the unseen God. Will appear very far away.

That means we need to think great thoughts. About God. We mustn't domesticate him. Hard to many people see God. Almost as a kind of slot machine. You press the button. You say the prayer.

The old chorus. The blessings come down. As the prayers go up. Now there's a profound truth in that. But it's awfully mechanical. And by the way. The blessings come down. Whether the prayers go up or not.

[9 : 45] Because God is faithful. Even when we are unfaithful. That's not to say we don't need to pray. Of course we need to pray. But that view of prayer. Sees it as a kind of magic. You press the button.

You say the prayer. And automatically. The blessing comes down. No. We need to begin with God. In God. For God alone. My soul waits in silence. It is God alone.

For whom I wait. From him. Comes my salvation. Now salvation. Is a very big word. A glorious word.

It doesn't just mean saving from the present situation. It means eternal salvation. All through this life. And beyond. Not just rescue. In particular crisis.

And it's not just present help. It is future help. And notice these metaphors that David has used over and over again. He is my rock. And my fortress.

[10 : 41] I can build my life on him safely. It's not. It's not like the kind of building on shaky foundations that falls down. Remember Jesus told the story.

About the man who built his house on the sand. And when the storms came. That immediately disappears. And fortress. The one in whom we can hide. In other words.

When we are surrounded by enemies. When life is getting on top of us. We need to begin with God. For God alone my soul waits in silence.

And then. After we've done that. We can look at our enemies. And that's the second reality. In verses 3 to 4. Notice what David doesn't see. Doesn't say I trust in God.

So it doesn't matter. He doesn't say I trust in God. So I don't need to worry any longer. That kind of super spirituality. Has actually caused many people.

[11 : 34] To fall away from the faith. Because they believed unrealistic things. No. The enemies are still there. How long will you attack a man?

Like a leaning wall. A tottering fence. Enemies are relentless. They will always attack weakness. And vulnerability. Bullies of every kind.

A tottering fence. The leaning wall. So. These enemies first of all attack the weak. But notice they also attack the strong.

Verse 4. They only plan to thrust him down. From his high position. The envy of the mediocre. For the excellent. The envy of the small and petty.

For those who are. For those who are. Much larger in their vision. And so on. And of course the flattery. Which hides their true intensity.

[12 : 30] They bless with their mouths. But inwardly. They curse. Now you see what. David is saying. David is saying. Our enemies are going to attack us. Even if we are strong.

They are going to attack us. Not just because we are weak. But when we are strong. Life is like that. You hear. We talk about the downtrodden. And the disadvantaged.

We also talk about the rat race. And the jungle. Which shows how pressurized life is. We can't rely on ourselves. We can't rely on favorable circumstances.

But if we do. We will be depressed. By the sheer pressure of living. And the sense of being got at. Now this is realistic. God.

And our enemies. Not our enemies first. Otherwise we will simply collapse. Not a super spirituality. That sees God. And then pretends the enemies.

[13 : 26] Are not there. But a true realism. We've got enemies. And they are hostile. They are active. But there is God. The invisible God. And the visible enemy.

That is always a problem. In the life of faith. The letter of the Hebrews says. Of Moses. That he endured. Because he saw him. Who is invisible. That wonderful paradox.

Seeing him. Who is invisible. Looking beyond the visible enemies. To the invisible God. That is the first thing. Get our bearings. Get the true picture. Don't just look at half the picture.

Get the whole picture. But secondly. Taking action. Verses 5 to 8. Now very often in the Psalms. Different voices speak.

Sometimes the psalmist is speaking about God. Sometimes he is speaking to God. Sometimes there are others speaking. And probably when they were sung in the temple. This would represent different voices.

[14 : 21] Solo voices. And choir pieces. And so on. So David now acts. On his belief. You notice verse 5. Is a repetition.

Verses 5 and 6. Appear to be simply a repetition. They are not. He is not simply stating that. He is reminding himself of that. But now he is going to act upon it.

But verse 8. Since that is true. Trust in him at all times. O people. Pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us. Now trust is a very active thing. Trust doesn't just mean saying all be fine. Trust means. Essentially. You look at the circumstances.

You look at God. Then you say what is the right thing to do. And you go ahead and do it. Because you see the situation in proportion. Trusting. That God will. Bring.

[15:18] Will bring you. Out of this. And ultimately lead you to glory. That's the. That's what the psalm. Is saying. These blessings. Are gifts. But they must be used.

They are not just songs to be sung. They are actions. To take. Sometimes you read. Sad stories. Of an old person.

Dying in squalor. In an attic. And when they've gone. They are discovered. Literally tens of thousands of pounds. In paper bags.

Elsewhere. Around the flat. Which have never been used. In other words. The person died in squalor. Not because they had to. But because they didn't use. The gifts they had been given.

And the life of faith. Is rather like that. It's not just a question. Of saying certain things. The question of acting on them. Now we all find that difficult. Of course. Many find it more difficult.

[16:13] Than others. Sometimes people say. I wish I had your faith. I always say to them. My faith is very weak. My faith is very fickle. I don't rely on my faith at all.

If I relied on my faith. It wouldn't last five minutes. It's not my faith. It's the faithfulness. And the greatness of God. Faith in the Bible. Faith in the Bible. Faith in the Bible. Faith in the Bible. Faith in the Bible.

Is putting your empty hand. In the strong hand of God. Saying to God. I can't cope. So I need you. To take over my life. So. David acts on his belief.

He says. This is not just truth. For the temple. This is not just truth. For the church. This is not just truth. For Sabbath or Sunday. This is truth. For every day. Of the week.

So. One of the reasons. We hold these lunchtime services. Is so that people. Will be strengthened. During the week. We hold these services. So that people.

[17:12] Can come here. And. Find their faith. Quickened. Find their hearts. Warmed. And that's what. That's the other thing. That David does. In taking action.

He shares this. With others. Trust in him. At all times. You people. Pour out. Your hearts. In other words. Put your whole self.

Into this. When the. When the psalmist. Talks about. Heart and soul. They mean. All of you. Praise the Lord. Oh my soul. All of you. Bless his holy name. The heart. In Hebrew.

Is a bigger thing. Than in English. The heart. Is you. The heart. Is me. Where the heart. Is. Because the heart. Is. Is the deepest level.

Of our lives. This is life. Changing. And once again. Notice. God. Is a refuge. For us. God. So. The first thing. David does. Is he gets his bearings.

[18:05] There is God. There is the enemy. How am I going to steer. This voyage of life. So to speak. And we need to take. The two realities. Into account. But then we need to take action.

We need to set out. And then verses. Nine to twelve. What I would call. Assessing priorities. What kind of people. Does this. Make us. Once again.

And once again. He does. What he's done. Throughout the psalm. Looks at humans. And then ends. The psalm. With God. Verse nine. Those of low estate.

Are but a breath. Those of high estate. Are a delusion. Low estate. And high estate. Essentially. Means everybody. The Old Testament. Often does this. It takes two opposite. Means everything. In between. Heaven and earth. Means. The whole. Of creation. Low estate. And high estate. Now. What he's really saying. Is not. That there is.

[18:59] There are no divisions. At all. Among humans. What he's saying. These are not. The basic divisions. This is not. What defines you. Your class. And society. Or your. Or nowadays.

The postcode. The postcode lottery. As they say. Many people. Are very proud. Of their postcodes. Other people. Perhaps. Want to hide them. Because. That is. That is. The world. Worth looking. If you live. In an attractive. Part of town. And so on. Then. Then you seem to be. You may imagine. You're more important. David is saying.

That actually. Doesn't matter. That matters. Of course. In human terms. All of us. All of us. Would like to live. In nice places. And so on. That's not the point.

The point is. Low and high. Are merely. Human. Divisions. And what they amount. To the amount. To a breath. That's the word. Used in ecclesiastus.

[19 : 53] That is sometimes. Translated. Vanity. If you simply. Look at. If you like. Horizontally. If you look around you. At people. And places. And so on. And identify you.

In that. That all ends up. As nothing. At all. It's simply. A breath. If God's left. Out of the picture. Then. That's what these. What these amount to.

In the balances. As they go up. You are altogether. Lighter. Than a breath. And the balances. There of course. Is talking about. God's judgment. Not about human judgment.

In human judgment. They matter a great deal. In God's judgment. They don't matter. At all. Now notice. Of course. David is not having. Contempt. For human beings. This is not.

This is not. Writing people off. This is simply. Saying. Look. It's who you are. What. Where your heart is. That matters. Not where your house is. It's who you are. Not what you are.

[20 : 49] And so on. That's what he's saying. That's right. Put no trust. In extortion. Set no vain hopes. On robbery. If riches increase. Set not your heart. On them. Now obviously.

There are illegitimate ways. Of gaining wealth. Extortion. And robbery. That's what he's talking about. But there's also legitimate ways. Of gaining wealth. If riches increase. No suggestion here. That is dishonest. But remember. Life does not consist. Of possessions. And of course. We are learning that. An economic crisis. It's affecting the whole world now.

I mean. A few weeks ago. We heard America. So many trillion pounds. In debt. I have no idea. What that means. It's such a. It's such a. I mean. It simply seems. Gigantic figures.

The crisis in Greece. The Eurozone. And all the rest of it. And surely. An awful lot of that. Has to do. With the fact. That we have trusted. Uncertain riches.

[21 : 45] Rather than. In the living God. So. Wealth. Whether honestly. Or dishonestly. Gained. Is not. Lasting. Once again.

You notice what the psalmist is saying. He's not saying. You can get by. Without money. What he's saying is. Don't put your heart. In it. Don't build on things. That will not last.

So. In other words. What he's saying is. Don't be afraid. Of people. Now. We're all terribly afraid. Of people. Aren't we? Always wondering. What people will think of us.

Always frightened. Of certain individuals. Sometimes frightened. Of everybody. Why do you think. The Bible says so often. Don't be afraid. Because we are.

Absolutely. Full of fears. And so. He ends the psalm. As he began. With God. Once. Has God. Spoken. Twice. Have I heard this. It's again.

[22 : 39] A Hebrew expression. Once. Twice. Not meaning God. Has only spoken. Twice. But. Emphasizing. That what God. Has said. Is. Is final.

And can be. Rested on. He has spoken. Now. God's speaking. Is very different. From. Human speaking. Human words. Of course. Can have authority. And human words.

Do have authority. Human words. Often. Are vital. In the second world war. Churchill. Fought the war. For almost. 18 months. By words alone. Because there was nothing else.

To fight them with. And. Many words. Have power. But God's words. Are always powerful. I thought it was God's words. That created heaven and earth. The very heart.

Of Israel's faith. So God is powerful. Power. Belongs. To God. It's not just power. That belongs. To God. Verse 12. Steadfast love.

[23 : 34] Belongs. To God. It's not just that God. Is some. Powerful dictator. Who manages to do. Everything he wants. God's power. And God's love.

God's covenant love. Go together. For you will render. To a man. According to his work. Now that's not the gospel. Of good work. Smuggled in the back door. That means.

As God looks into your heart. And my heart. He sees exactly. What's there. We can make no pretense. Before him. We often pretend. To other people.

Don't we. We often pretend. To ourselves. As God looks into our heart. God sees. And. That's both terrifying. And reassuring.

It means we don't have to pretend. It means that we. It means that what we need. Is to be open. Biddable. And teachable. So what this psalm is saying.

[24 : 28] Is God knows. God cares. God understands. And God will fulfill. His purposes for us.
Amen. Let's pray. God our Father.

How we praise you. For your power. And for your love. And we pray. That these great realities. Will
become more than words. More than wonderful ideas.

That will shape our lives. And shape. Our destinies. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Ash
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