

Undeniable Contrast

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to turn now to our Bible reading as we began last Sunday. For our Sundays in August, we're spending every Sunday looking at just one psalm.

It's psalm number 48. If you have one of the Blue Visitors Bibles, you'll find it on page 472. And we're meditating on this psalm over this month of August.

Sometimes it's just good to take time and really immerse ourselves in a portion of Scripture like this. And this is a great psalm. And what we're doing in doing that is both focusing on the words of the psalm, but also on tracing these things that are spoken of in this psalm right through the whole Bible and seeing how the Bible speaks with one voice.

Wherever we open its pages, it's always speaking of the same God, the same gospel, the same future, the same faith with great clarity. And I hope that we're going to see that very clearly today and on our other Sundays as we look at this psalm.

So let's read together the whole psalm. Although this morning we're particularly thinking about the central part, verses 3 to 11, I suppose. But let's begin at the beginning, a psalm, a psalm of the sons of Korah.

[1 : 2 1] Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God. His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth.

Mount Zion in the far north, the city of the great King. Within her citadels, God has made himself known as a fortress.

For behold, the kings assembled, they came on together. As soon as they saw it, they were astounded. They were in panic. They took to flight. Trembling took hold of them.

Their anguish as of a woman in labor. By the east wind, you shattered the ships of Tarshish. As we've heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God, which God will establish forever.

We have thought, we have meditated on your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple. As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth.

[2 : 3 1] Your right hand is filled with righteousness. Let Mount Zion be glad. Let the daughters of Judah rejoice because of your judgments. Walk about Zion.

Go around her. Number her towers. Consider well her ramparts. Go through her citadels, that you may tell the next generation that this is God.

Our God, forever and ever. He will guide us forever. Amen. But please turn with me, if you would, to the psalm, Psalm 48 that we read there together.

Last week, as I said, we began a four-week study in this psalm for the Sundays of August. And our aim is to slow right down. It's to be able to meditate on the truths of this psalm together throughout this month.

So that we can ruminate on it. So that we can maybe even memorize the whole psalm. As a psalm that we can go back to again and again in our lives in times of need.

[3 : 3 9] In times of trouble, perhaps. In times when we feel shaken. There's a prayer in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer.

It's a collect for the second Sunday in Advent. And it has this wonderful plea that in coming to the scriptures, we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.

That by patience and the comfort of our holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of eternal life. Which has given us in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

It's a great prayer. And in fact, that is what we're seeking to do, of course, every time we open God's word. But in a way, for these few Sundays, perhaps we are chewing a little bit more slowly.

So that we can really digest every morsel that this psalm has to nourish us with. And last time we just looked at verses 1 to 3 and focused on that absolute claim that these verses express about our God.

[4 : 46] About the God of the Bible. And about the Christian gospel today. And therefore, the unashamed confidence that we as Christians must have in that gospel of Jesus Christ today.

Despite all the hostility that there is around about us. And that is especially so, isn't it, in our Western culture today. There is great hostility against any such claim of a unique revelation, an ultimate revelation of God to man.

There is one true God who is found in one place alone. That his dwelling alone is the place of salvation, of joy for the whole earth, for every tribe, for every people, every nation, every culture, every religious background.

And the psalmist has an unashamed confidence in that unique and exclusive message about God and about salvation.

And that's a message that is exactly the same all through the Bible from beginning to end. But it's illustrated very, very clearly for us here in the Old Testament language of this psalm.

[6 : 02] Psalm 48. Indeed, many other psalms. That there's one God alone. That there's one place alone. That salvation can be found. In the words of this psalm, you can only be safe inside the city of God.

Both now and forever. Remember that word occurring twice in this psalm, the end of verse 8 and at the end of the whole psalm, verse 14.

The psalmist has unashamed confidence in that exclusive message of salvation. That is, salvation, as the whole Bible teaches us, can be found only in the place where God has really chosen to reveal himself.

Only where he has chosen to make his dwelling among human beings. And that means, in the language of this psalm, at the very heart of the kingdom where God has revealed himself and where God rules.

In the city of our God, verse 1. The holy mountain, the mountain that is the joy of the whole earth, is Jerusalem. It's the city of the great king. And it's there, says verse 3, within her citadels, no others, that God, do you see, has made himself known as a fortress.

[7 : 17] As a fortress of salvation. Because there, with his people, the true and living God really was presencing himself in the midst, in the temple, at the heart of his city.

And, of course, in the language of the New Testament, as we explored last time, we find just the same unashamed confidence in the unique revelation of God.

In one place alone. And, therefore, one salvation. In one place alone. And that is, of course, through the Lord Jesus Christ. Because he is the full and final revelation of God forever, for the whole world, for all time.

And he's, therefore, the only place of salvation for every person of every nation. He alone is to be the joy of the whole earth.

And his gospel, the joy of the whole earth. Because Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of everything that the temple and God's presence there pointed to and prophesied.

[8 : 22] And foreshadowed all throughout the history of Israel. He, the Lord Jesus, is the one who is Emmanuel, God with his people forever.

Remember, that was the angel's promise, wasn't it? Right at the beginning of Matthew's gospel. When he appeared to Joseph and said, This is the one who's going to fulfill those words of Isaiah. That, behold, the virgin will conceive and bear a son.

And you'll call his name Emmanuel. Emmanuel, which means God with us in the midst. And Jesus spoke to his own disciples before his death, didn't he, in the upper room.

And said that after his resurrection, after his ascension, he wasn't going to leave them as orphans. But he was going to send his own Holy Spirit to them so that God would still dwell in the midst of his people.

If anyone loves me, says Jesus, he will keep my word. And my father will love him. And we will come to him and make our home with him. Emmanuel in the midst.

[9 : 22] And Jesus promised, didn't he, in the Great Commission, just before he ascended to glory, as he sent his church out into the world to make disciples. And lo, he said, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

That's why he said in Matthew chapter 18, when he was talking to his believers about the church, that even when two or three gather together in my name, there am I in the midst. It's the place where the name of God dwells on earth, through the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, in the midst of his temple, the people of God, the church of Jesus Christ. Until at last, he comes to reign. And the final chapters of the Bible that we read at the beginning of the service are fulfilled. And he'll dwell forever and reign in the midst of his people forever and ever. And we'll see him as he is. So the whole Old Testament and the whole New Testament are absolutely united in being unashamed and confident in this gospel, which is the power of God for salvation.

[10 : 24] For the Jew, but not just for the Jew, for every pagan Gentile the world over, says Paul. For all the peoples of the whole earth. But of course, when we speak with that kind of confidence today, of course, in our pluralistic culture, inevitably that will provoke a reaction.

But that message has always provoked a reaction in opposition. It's produced a reaction in equal and opposite directions.

And that's exactly what we see in the central section of this psalm here in Psalm 48. The central verses here speak, don't they, of an undeniable contrast.

That there is between those who are members of Zion's city, of God's city, by the grace of God, and those who are outside, who don't know God.

In fact, whether they realize it or not, are actually opposed to God and his city and his people. Well, again, that kind of talk about inside and outside, or being friends of God, or enemies of God, or being righteous and wicked and so on, that kind of talk is very offensive today.

[11 : 33] But here's the truth. That kind of offensiveness is just not possible for us to avoid. If we're going to talk about the Bible's message and take it at all seriously.

So let's look here at verses 3 to 11 today. And let's notice as we do the undeniable contrast that these verses illustrate for us. In both the permanent end and destiny, but also the present experience and demeanor.

Of those who are outside the city of God as enemies. That's what you see in verses 4 to 8 particularly. And those who are inside. See that in verse 3 and in verses 9 to 11.

And it is an undeniable contrast. And it's one that has been there all through the history of this world. And it's true for the psalmist.

And it's just as true for us today. Look at verse 8. He says, As we have heard, as we heard it was in the past. So now we have seen with our own eyes and our own experience today.

[12 : 39] What is it they've seen? Well, they've seen that some are rejoicing inside the city of God in the presence of their great king. Entering that city with joy and gladness and singing. But others are outside.

They oppose. They remain enemies. They rage at the king. They don't rejoice. There's an undeniable contrast. Pictured here in these verses.

Between those inside the city. As verses 9 to 11 describe. Who experience deliverance amid great rejoicing. And those who are outside the city.

That's verses 4 to 8. And their experience is one of destruction. Amid great raging. On the one hand, the walls of the city of God. Are for some a great tower of deliverance.

But on the other hand, for others. They are a great terror of destruction. And that absolute contrast is seen both in the present demeanor and experience of each of these two groups.

[13 : 40] But also in their permanent destiny. In their end. And in that Psalm 48. It's just the same as many other sounds. Like Psalm 2, for example. Where the raging of the enemies against God and his anointed is contrasted sharply.

With the rejoicing of those who kiss the sun and who find refuge in him. And it echoes all through the Bible. It echoes the very words of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He makes it so clear.

In fact, he makes it even more stark, doesn't he? As he talks about the sheep. Who are welcomed into the blessing of the Father forever.

And the goats who are cast out into what Jesus calls eternal punishment. Eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. So this is something that runs all the way through the Bible.

And all the way through the teaching of Jesus. We really have to take it seriously. So first then. Let's think of this contrast in the permanent end. Let's look at what the fact of God's presence in his city means.

[14 : 43] For the permanent destiny of those who are enemies on the outside. And for those, by contrast, who are God's own. Who are on the inside. The permanent end and destiny.

Look at verses 3 to 8. If you look carefully, you'll see that there's a sort of symmetry in this psalm. There's often symmetry in the Bible. Particularly in poetry. Hebrew poetry doesn't use rhymes like our poetry tends to.

But it often uses other devices. Including symmetry. And you have a sort of bracketing here. Of the beginning and the end. Beginning and end with God.

Verse 3. Within her citadels, God has made himself known as a fortress. That's how it looks for the inside. The end of verse 8. We're in the city of the Lord of hosts.

In the city of our God. Which God will establish forever. Inside those walls is great security. That's the line that we sang, isn't it?

[15 : 40] With salvation's walls surrounded. You can smile at all those foes. But to the enemies, it's very different, isn't it? Look at verses 4 to 7.

They're outside. Behold, the kings assembled outside. They came on together. Outside these walls. And as soon as they saw the city and its walls. They were astounded. They were in panic.

They took flight. Trembling. Took hold of them. Anguish. Like a woman in labor. What a total contrast. To God's own people, the city is a fortress of refuge.

Verse 8. Where God's establishing it. And they're rejoicing. They're safe in the city of the Lord of hosts. But in the middle there, there's panic.

There's fight. There's trembling. There's anguish. John Calvin, the great reformer, writing on this, says, It's the very reverse, isn't it? Of what Julius Caesar said. Veni vidi vici. I came.

[16 : 35] I saw. I conquered. They came here. They saw. And they were conquered. Absolutely. You see what it's saying? It's just showing us very graphically, very pictorially, the absolute sovereignty of God.

Both in time and in eternity. It's God who keeps in by the walls of his salvation. It's God who keeps out those who are his enemies.

Not about his people being superior, is it? In any way. Not about having superior weapons. It's not even about having superior walls or citadels. It's all about God.

It's the fact that God is in the midst. He's the one who protects his people. He's the one who destroys his enemies. Look at verse 7. It's you who did it all. You shattered the ships.

We just watched verse 8. We've heard this sort of things. It happened always. And now we've seen it with our own eyes. The only thing that really matters, you see, is whether you are inside his city, having taken refuge there, or whether you are outside his city, having refused that refuge, and therefore having set yourself inevitably with all the enemies who are outside, hostile to the city of God.

[17 : 49] It's the only thing that counts. And that is what determines your ultimate destiny. And so it is, friends, with the church of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth.

It is utterly secure forever. If it had been possible to destroy the church of Jesus Christ, do you think it would still be here after 2,000 years of world history?

It would have been destroyed by Nero in those first centuries, wouldn't it, when he set out to destroy the Christians. And many times through history, it would have been absolutely expunged in all those years of darkness behind the Iron Curtain, when Eastern Europe was oppressed, and there was an expurgation of the church.

Or in China, when the Cultural Revolution tried to completely snuff out, and increasingly since, that's happened. Or in even Western secularism, which has done everything it can, and still is, to tell us that religion is of the past, and Christianity in particular is finished.

We mentioned Iran earlier on, one of the most nefarious nations on this earth today, never out of our news. But the church of Jesus Christ is flourishing in Iran today.

[19 : 02] And not only inside Iran, but among Iranian people who have escaped from Iran, and its powers all over the world today. Wherever you go, you will find Iranian people becoming Christians, and joining the church of Jesus Christ.

Come along this afternoon, you'll find a hundred of them in here, singing in Farsi. The church of Jesus Christ has walls, which are indestructible.

And so it is, also in terms of eternal destiny. You see, the New Testament is very clear, isn't it? The reality about our world is that there is a great cosmic warfare.

And the real battle, the Apostle Paul tells us, isn't just against flesh and blood, the powers of this age, but the rulers and the powers of the spiritual realm, which are arrayed against God, and his people, and his Christ.

It's the secular people of this world who are the blind ones, who are the flat earthers, who are still living as though the entire universe revolved around this earth, and that's all there was.

[20 : 06] It's the people whose eyes have been opened by faith through Jesus Christ to see the greater reality, that see that this world wasn't created from what was within it, but from what was invisible. And Ephesians chapter 3 verse 10 tells us, doesn't it, that God's plan and purpose for all eternity is that through the church of Jesus Christ, the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in these heavenly places, these great powers, far greater than any earthly power.

The vast unseen to our eyes part of God's creation. And all foes that are arrayed against God and his people will be shattered.

And the New Testament, you see, tells us that that plan and purpose came to its great climax and denouement and fulfillment in the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as in verse 5 of the psalm here, those enemies that day they saw and they fled in terror.

And so every enemy in the heavenly realms saw the triumph of the Son of God on the cross and they fled in terror. That's what Paul tells us in the New Testament, isn't it?

Colossians 2 verse 15. He disarmed rulers and authorities and he put them to open shame, triumphing over them in his cross. I wonder how much we ever even think about what that really means or ponder it.

[21 : 37] I wonder how much we think even as Christians of that unseen world which the Bible tells us is the solid world and the lasting world that none but Zion's children, the people of the Lord Jesus Christ, even know anything about.

You see, just as in our psalm in verse 8, God's people see that truth and they know that they're secure forever in God's city. we've seen it.

And so it is in Jesus Christ who gives us every victory. Thanks be to God who gives us that victory, says Paul, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Victory even over the greatest enemy of all, the enemy of death itself.

Friends, I hope we as New Testament Christians can see this even half as clearly as our psalmists could see it all those hundreds of years ago. And remember it. So whenever evil assails us, whenever our enemies seem to be coming against us, whether it's enemies from outside who want to mock us and frighten us and oppose us in our Christian life and witness, or whether it's the enemies within.

Those powers from the unseen world that tempt us, that accuse us, that want to destroy our faith. But to see that we are safe inside, the saving walls of the city of our God.

[23 : 02] Now the Lord of hosts and all his vast power will protect you. That our God, verse 8 here, is the God who establishes his people forever.

Forever. It's so important, isn't it? You see, because it's not through your feeble strength that you'll prevail. That's not what you're relying on.

It's God who makes you secure. It's God who establishes his people forever. The ultimate destiny of God's people is in his powerful hands, not in our feeble hands.

It's God who guides. It's God who guards. It's God who protects his city. He will not allow the enemy to defile any of those who are inside those walls.

God's people and we need to know that because there are many Christians who live so much of their life with great fears of all different kinds. Some Christians really do fear that unseen world with evil spirits, demon possession, fears of the occult and that kind of thing.

[24 : 08] Some Christians have been brought up with that kind of background and that fear but the truth is that if Jesus Christ is within us, if we are shut in with him, then we are in a mighty fortress with citadels that will protect us and we are secure forever, says verse 8.

We cannot be prey to the evil, to the magic, to the spells, whatever it is that we fear is out there in the darkness. Those powers have seen like verse 5 and they have fled astounded in terror.

Remember Jesus in the gospels wherever he went and those evil powers came against him. They saw him, they heard him, they fled powerless in the face of the Son of God.

There are Christians who live in fear constantly of their own sinfulness and that their salvation can be lost because they are unworthy of God or because something in their background is just too much to give them assurance of salvation.

or that they have sinned, the unpardonable sin or something of that kind. But listen, this psalm is telling us it is not our citadels that protect us, it is God's.

[25 : 26] It is the citadel of grace through the Lord Jesus Christ himself with salvation's walls surrounded. You can smile, laugh at every one of these foes.

None can harm you. the city is surrounded by God himself. He is within his city, his church and he will make it secure forever.

That ought to be a wonderful comfort to us as Christian believers today. It is certainly a wonderful comfort to me as I struggle always, as you struggle, with sins and with weaknesses and with fears. My destiny does not depend upon the strength of my faith in the sense of me feebly hanging on to God. It depends on the fact of God's arms of salvation surrounding and hanging on to me.

It is the fact of his presence. That is where our security is. Of course, that is a challenge as well, isn't it? Because the fact that God is present to save there within his city and not outside his city that has stark implications for those who would choose to side with his enemies outside and refuse to seek that security inside because for them there can't be any safety, any security of their own.

[26 : 52] It can only be shock, it can only be the shattering of this ultimate defeat. And friends, we can't avoid these horrifying truths in verses 4 to 7. If you doubt that and if you're tempted to say, well that's just a psalm in the Old Testament, let me just put these things in the words of Jesus himself.

In Matthew chapter 25, Jesus says, the king will say to those on his right, come you who are blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. But then he will say to those on his left, depart from me you cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

It's the words of Jesus Christ. Let me come back to the very end of the Bible in Revelation where we read at the beginning of the service, I saw a new heaven and a new earth. I saw a holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God and he'll wipe away every tear from their eyes and death will be no more.

[28 : 14] But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, the sorcerers, adulterers, idolaters and liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur.

That is the second death. It is an undeniable contrast, isn't it? And it's there from the beginning to the very end of the Bible about people's permanent destiny and end.

But it's not just, you see, that permanent end that's being spoken of in this psalm. It's also speaking about the present experience and demeanor and the great contrast that there is there.

The fact of God's presence inside the city and his church and with the people who are his own, it also reveals an undeniable contrast in that present experience and attitude of those on the inside and those on the outside.

Because those walls mean, even now, very different things to those two groups of people. And that contrast in experience and attitude is very evident right here in the psalm, isn't it?

[29 : 26] There's a contrast between rage on the outside and rejoicing on the inside. Jealous misery on the outside, but joyous meditation on God on the inside.

Look at verses 4 to 7 again. On the outside, there's bitter opposition, isn't there? There's ferment, there's rage, there's utter defeat. But on the inside, despite the presence of all of these enemies, inside the temple, look at verse 9.

There's great rejoicing and great joy. We're meditating on your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple. And the New Testament uses exactly that kind of language of outside and inside. Read it in Ephesians chapter 2 and 3 later on. If you like, outside Christ, Paul says, people are foreigners, they're without God, they're without hope, they're objects of wrath. Inside Christ, they're made alive, they're seated with him in the heavenly places already, they're under grace.

You see, it's the same, isn't it? Verse 5 here, they, that's the enemies, they saw and they fled in terror and anguish and trembling.

[30 : 37] But verse 8, we have seen what God does and it leads to joy and security and rejoicing. A totally undeniable contrast.

And that is the contrast between the true Christian believer and the unbeliever today. Often, of course, it's hidden in the humdrum of life, but when people are faced with a crisis, when they're forced to consider the things of God, very, very often that contrast rises to the surface and becomes very, very obvious.

The rage of those who consider God and talk of God and the presence of God as a powerful scourge on their life. And others are rejoicing because they see God as a present saviour, the joy of their life.

You see it on people's faces at funerals, for example. You see faces of people who are facing up to the horror of grief with no hope. And often they'll sit through a funeral service in a church in great discomfort.

You just sense it. They're desperate to leave it. They want to blank out that reality. And what you often see on the faces is bitter anger. Anger at the God who could allow this to happen, this death.

[31 : 53] A total contrast in the grief of believing Christians. Of course they're grieving, of course they're sad, but they have hope and there's joy even in the midst of that pain.

Because they trust and know a God who does all things well. They trust his judgments, his righteous. And so they can sing the words of verses 10 and 11 here about God's name.

Your praise reaches the end of the earth. Your hand is filled with righteousness. We're glad on Mount Zion in your church. You sometimes see it just in a church service this morning in the great contrast between people who are there and who really love the Lord Jesus Christ and rejoice in his righteous judgments and others who really don't.

Inside the church building, they're inside the church service, but actually in their hearts, they're outside the city of God. Actually, they too will sit through a service of them with growing discomfort, like a woman in labor as first success.

I've seen people sitting as though they're having labor pains, sitting through church, desperate for it to end. Maybe that's somebody here this morning, probably is. And yet others have faces radiating with joy of the knowledge of the God of all the earth.

[33 : 18] And notice this praise, this joy, it's nothing to do with a sense of self-righteousness. Look where the focus of the praise is in verses 9 to 11. There's nothing smug about it, is there?

The focus is not on their own achievements, their own merits. It's all on God and what he does, verse 9. They're thinking about your steadfast love, your covenant love, that's your grace and your mercy.

Verse 10, they're praising his name. Verse 11, they're praising his righteous judgments, all that he does. It's not a song about us, is it?

It's not a bunch of Christians all singing about me, me, me and look what Jesus has done for me. A lot of Christian songs actually are like that, but this is a song all about God rejoicing in him and in knowing him and being known by him.

And it's an undeniable contrast, isn't it? Now, in the present, in the attitude to God of true believers and those who really, although they might not be aware of it, in fact, actually are enemies of God.

[34 : 26] Because you see, there's lots of different kinds of enemies of God, aren't there? There's the enemies who know they're enemies. His attitude to God is one of frank hostility and anger. And so he or she will rage against God whenever the subject of God comes up, whenever somebody's faced with that thought of God.

And that's all around us, of course, in our society today. The new atheists, people like Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and so on. In fact, Christopher Hitchens' brother, Peter Hitchens, wrote a book called *The Rage Against God* to describe the hostility of the culture we're living in. But there are also lots of enemies of God who don't really realize that they're enemies of God. They might even talk about God, they might even think they're talking to God in prayers and devotions and religion.

But actually, their attitude is about themselves. It's about what God can give them. It's what God can do for them. It's what they think they deserve to get from God. And God is really that person's servant.

And very often that sort of person has an attitude to God which is full of resentment because God maybe hasn't done for them what he thought that they should have done. God should have done.

Or God has done something in their life which they think God shouldn't have done.

[35 : 41] And quite often that can be the attitude among some people who actually profess to be Christians. But you see both of these attitudes and demeanors towards God are in an undeniable contrast to the attitude and the demeanor of the true Christian believer.

Because his attitude or her attitude is simply one that reflects verses 9 to 11 here. they rejoice in the name of God and in the love of God and in the judgments of God that they know are right and just and true even when things haven't turned out in their life the way they wish they would.

The real Christian believer can look at the world and all its turmoil and all its enemies and even in their own life and they can still sing we have meditated on your steadfast love of God in the midst of your temple.

we rejoice in your name and we want his praise to reach the end of the earth. We know that your right hand is always filled with righteousness and that all that you do is just.

There's an undeniable contrast isn't there in the present experience and attitude and demeanor towards God of those who are inside his city truly in heart and those who are not.

[37 : 00] those who can say as we've heard so we still see it in the city of our God the Lord of hosts. He's our God. And that's been so from the very beginning and it will be so till the very end.

So friends let me ask you this morning which side of this undeniable contrast describes your attitude your demeanor towards God.

is it resentment of God and could it even sometimes be rage against God when he's puzzled you or when he's disappointed you when he seems to have done something or not done something that you feel is not just and right in the world or maybe maybe in response to your own particular prayers.

Is it resentment rage even or is it rejoicing in his name and in his love and in his judgments.

No matter how bad things seem to be at times in this fragile world, in this fallen world, no matter how difficult circumstances seem to be in your own personal life. You see we need to take that answer really really seriously because that undeniable contrast in our present demeanor promises an undeniable contrast in our permanent destiny.

[38 : 30] It's the undeniable and absolute contrast between ultimate deliverance inside and ultimate destruction outside those walls of salvation.

Between safety and security forever for those who are rejoicing inside his walls of salvation and the shock and the shattering forever that these verses portray for those who are insistent on keeping themselves outside through resentment or through rage towards God their creator.

And that is something for us to think about every one of us and perhaps in a Christian church like this especially especially for those of us who think maybe well that doesn't really apply to me because I've been a Christian for a long time.

Don't forget Jesus told a very penetrating story with a strong warning didn't he to some of those who thought they were very very devoted to God but in fact the truth was they were actually refusing to enter the father's house of grace and forgiveness and rejoicing.

Do you remember? We call it the story of the prodigal son don't we? But really we should call it the story of the two brothers because the real punch comes in the older brother because the prodigal son remember was humbled by his experience in life and he repented and he came back and he was welcomed into the great joy and the feasting of the father's house.

[39 : 54] It was the older son who had never gone away and who thought he was worth so much more. It was he who refused to go in wasn't it? He kept himself out in the place of resentment in the place ultimately of rage.

Let me just read it as we close. The older son was in the field and he came and drew near to the house. He heard music and dancing and he called one of the servants and asked what do these things mean?

And he said to him your brother has come and your father has killed the fattened calf because he's received them back safe and sound. But he was very angry and he refused to go in.

Inside God's city is the place of music and dancing and great joy. Mount Zion is glad. The daughters of Jerusalem rejoice in God's wonderful salvation inside the father's house.

And you see this psalm and the whole Bible and the Lord Jesus himself speak with one voice and their message is this. Yes there is an undeniable contrast either side of the walls of that great city and that great house of joy.

[41 : 14] so don't refuse to go in. Enter by the grace of God through Jesus Christ. Join the joy forever and ever.

Why? Why on earth would anybody choose raging over the rejoicing that's in Jesus our Savior? That's the message of this psalm.

That's the message of the Bible from beginning to end. Well let's pray. Heavenly Father we thank you that your word is so clear so consistent and so compelling and the message before us today and every day is the same.

Rejoice rejoice in your great salvation through Jesus your son and enter that joy of the security of your heavenly city forever and ever.

so hear us Lord and help us everyone to enter and to remain safe in Zion city for we ask it in Jesus name Amen amen Amen the name maker ■■■ empowering