

Psalm 73: 21-28; “Whom Have I but You?”, A Communion Sermon prepared for those gathered to observe the Lord’s Supper, on the Afternoon of August 7th, 2016, and Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall.

The Psalmist Asaph begins this psalm by confessing that surely, God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. But then he goes on to describe the temptation and sin that he fell into; thinking that people who were rich, and who had lots of money, were actually in a better state than a righteous person who worships God, and lives for Him in accordance with His Word the Bible. He was, for a time, very envious of the prosperity of the wicked, he says in verse 3. They didn’t have any pains in their death, they were not in trouble as other men; they were not plagued like other men. They had more than their heart could wish. In comparing himself with them he thought that he had lived his life in vain, serving God and living the life of being taught spiritual truth by God; and sometimes having to learn it the hard way through being chastened by the Almighty. He had, for a time, fallen into wondering if it was really worth it all, being a believer in God. He let this line of thinking go for such a long time that it says in verse 21, “his heart was grieved, and he was vexed in his mind.” He was so foolish and ignorant that he was like a beast before God. In other words, for a time, he did not seek God in prayer. He left off having fellowship and communion with God in his heart. He thought hard things about God. He was in a spiritual funk. He did not reverence God in his spirit as he should have.

But something changed, it says in verse 17, when he “came into the sanctuary of God”. He came to see that it was not at all wise or good to think in the way that he had been thinking. And when he once again drew near to God in prayer, he realized that he had to confess his own sin and unbelief, and God’s entire faithfulness. Yes, he was a true believer, but he had to come back to God and confess to Him certain reasons why he should draw near to Him, once again. Let me ask you whether you can do the same this afternoon? Are you able to trust in God and hope in Him in all of the present circumstances of your life? Through Jesus Christ your Lord, you will be able to find the grace and strength to trust in God, in every situation; and then, even to be joyful in the thought of departing this life someday. Before we partake of the Supper, let me give you 4 reasons why you should trust in God and hope in Him continually.

1st of all – Because you are continually with God when you are trusting in Him.
(verse 23)

“Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand.” The psalmist was going through great questionings of mind and great searchings of heart in relation to what he saw as an inconsistency in life. Why does God, who is holy and who does not look upon sinners with favor, seem to bless the wicked rich more than those people who are righteous? The wicked rich seem to have everything in this life that they could possibly ever want or need. But the answer finally came to him, and this vexation of his heart and mind were taken away. God revealed to him that their outward prosperity was only for a time; whereas the person who has God, has One who cares for him continually and eternally. Have you discovered this great truth? Do you see yourself as being continually with God? The Psalmist in Old Testament times did not know that the name of the Son of God is Jesus. But still, he was a man of prayer. He called upon the name of the Lord, and the Lord saved him. He realized that even though he was a child in his understanding of why things were the way that they were in life, that still, if he trusted in God, God would hold him by his hand and teach him. Psalm 25: 8-10: “Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will He teach sinners in the way; the meek will He guide in justice, the meek will He teach His way; all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth as to such as keep His covenant and testimonies.”

You and I should realize that there are many things that we are not going to understand in this life; and we may often be asking the question “why”. You should know that God is well able to answer all of your questions, but He doesn’t choose to do so at many points in this life. He expects you to trust in Him. Do you trust in God when you do not understand why people are treating you badly, or when you have lost a person whom you love? Remember that God is the giver of every perfect gift. He is the only One who does all things perfectly and well. He can give you grace to forgive those who mistreat you. He can give you the assurance that you will see your loved ones again, if they too have believed in Jesus. He expects you to come to him in prayer just like a little child comes to their father, and seeks to be taught, and seeks to understand. He will hold you by your right hand. He will teach you and lead you in the path of righteousness for His name’s sake.

2nd – You should trust in God and hope in Him continually because He will guide you through this life and into the next. (verse 24)

“You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.” How does God counsel us? How does He teach us right from wrong, good from bad, and how to be wise instead of foolish? How can He take away our sins and change our heart so that we will be fit for heaven? All of this is found in the Bible which is God’s Word. All things which you need for life and godliness are found in the Bible. All things necessary to be forgiven of your sins and to learn how to live a righteous life are there. And if you did not know it now, let me tell you, that the Bible from beginning to end speaks of Jesus Christ our Lord as the fulfillment of all the counsel of God. Many things are made clear by reading the Bible, and continuing to read it every day, all through your life. But even though this is true, there are still many things that are not always clear; about why God permits evil in the world at all, why it is that bad things happen to good people, and why it is that we have to go through so many difficult situations on the way to heaven if we are trusting in God.

Remember that if you are trusting in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you also received the Holy Spirit the moment that you believed. This is how God will guide you with His counsel. He will do so by means of your reading His word and He will then begin to guide you by His Spirit. When you believe in Jesus and ask God through Jesus Christ to forgive your many sins, you were immediately given the grace and favor to be you be continually with God. And God is continually with you, whether you know it or not. And this blessed reality will never change. God has become your Father, and Christ your Brother, and the Holy Spirit is with you always. Therefore you should worship God, even when you do not understand. When you know that you have failed to do His will at a certain point where He expected you to obey Him, you should confess your sins to Him. Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you. Say to Him – “Rock of ages, cleft for me; let me hide myself in Thee.” “Let the water and the blood, from Thy riven side which flowed, be of sin the double cure; save me from its guilt and power.”

Praise the Lord for His great watch-care over your life, dear Christian. Speak to Him in declarations of praise such as David did in Psalm 32, verse 7 – “You are my Hiding Place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance.” Listen to the way that the Lord responded to David when he made that declaration of faith, saying that He was His Hiding Place. Verse 8 – “I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will guide you with My eye.” “Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you.” When you come to the Table in just a few minutes will you not breath out this prayer to God? Lord, let me remember that you died for me in order that I might be instructed by You; that I might be taught by You in the way that I should go. Let me not be stubborn in holding on to the things of the world. Let me not need to be dragged to do your will, but rather be submissive, as

You are the One who holds my reins in Your hands. Let it be a joy to You to teach me, and help me on to a sincere obedience. For Jesus' sake – Amen.

3rd – You should trust in God and hope in Him continually because He is the greatest of all beings, and all of your greatest desires are fulfilled in Him.

(verses 25 and 26)

“Whom have I in heaven but You?” “And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.” “My flesh and my heart may fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” It is good for us to remember this afternoon that heaven would not be heaven without God being there. God is the author of everything that is good. God is the summation of everything good and right and true and honorable and pure and lovely. It all is intrinsically in Him. He resides in heaven, this place where He is “other”. He alone is perfectly holy. You may have many reasons for wanting to go to heaven and they may all be selfish. But, if you want to go to heaven because it is there that you shall see God, and be with God, that is the best of reasons. Did I say that you shall see God there? How can a person see God if God is Spirit and therefore invisible? “Immortal, Invisible, God only wise, in light inaccessible, hid from our eyes.” “Most gracious, Most glorious, the Ancient of Days, pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.” But remember, it is not only the Father and the Holy Spirit who are in heaven, but the Son of God is also there in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Therefore, we read in the sermon on the mount: “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” When you see Jesus you have seen the Father. And even though you may be very eager to see all the other believers from all the other generations who have trusted in Christ, even though you may be very concerned to see your believing family members who have gone before you into heaven at their death, you will be most desirous to see the One who has loved you and given Himself for you on the cross; the Lord Jesus. The language of your heart, even now, ought to be: “Whom have I in heaven but You?” “And there is none upon the earth that I desire besides You.” No one should be more important to you than Jesus Christ, when you have true and saving faith. You realize that God is the strength of your physical life, and your spiritual heart; He is your portion forever, and so you are eager to go to be with Him. Is this you dear believer? Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid. You believe in God, believe also in Christ, and you will find this.

And then 4th – You should trust in God and hope in Him continually because then you will be able to declare all of His works. (verses 27 and 28)

“For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry.” “But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works.” Verse 27 shows us that unbelievers are people who are “far from God”. They are far from Him in their hearts. They do not know His blessed presence. They do not seek His face. They know His earthly blessings, and His goodness and kindness to them in this life; but they will perish when they die. Why? Because they have deserted Him for the things of this world which they thought were more important than Him. This is spiritual harlotry; spiritual unfaithfulness. But for the Christian, they know that the greatest of blessings comes to them through prayer. It is good for you to draw near to God as it says in verse 28. It is also good for the Christian to draw near to God through this special means of grace which our Lord has given to us in this Supper. You have put your trust in the Lord God, that you may declare all His works.

The greatest of all of God's works is not the physical creation, as great and glorious as that is. The greatest of all of God's works is the New Creation; the saving of your soul from the guilt of sin, the power of sin, and eternal death. If you have trusted in Christ for salvation, you now want to declare what all of these works of His grace have meant to you; that you are so thankful that they have been effectual to you, to take away all of your sins, to create in you a new heart,

and where necessary, a clean heart. As you partake of these elements of the bread and the wine, you will find it that it gives you joy to declare the goodness and the mercy of the Lord to you a sinner; one whom He has changed and made into one of His saints. You want to declare the infinite and eternal value of Christ's obedience and His sufferings on your behalf. And this is what we shall do now together.