

• *A psalm about pessimism or discouragement*

We are looking at the 'songs of David's troubles' ¹. They are about loneliness and guilt and sorrow and so on. This one is about pessimism or discouragement. David is tempted to be discouraged about society, about his nation. David's psalm was no doubt written at a time when Saul's kingdom was falling into chaos. The foundations of society were in ruins. Pessimistic people were saying to David, 'If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?' But David was not convinced they were right to encourage him to run too far away! There are people who are very pessimistic but David refuses to heed their pessimism. As always, David turns to God in prayer. He writes this song for us.

¹ Psalms 3-43

1. The righteous must not run away too quickly

1. **The righteous must not run away too quickly.** It is true that Jesus said 'When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next...' ¹, but we do not run to the next place prematurely. David sings a different song. He is being advised by his friends to run away from some difficult situation. But he is not willing to run just yet.

¹ Matthew 10:23

• *Praising God and rebuking the pessimists*

David is praising God and rebuking the pessimists. How can you say such things to me? — he says. Have you forgotten about God? He is refusing to allow them to depress him or make him run away.

*¹I am taking refuge in Yahweh!
How can you say to my soul,
"Flee like a bird to your mountain,
²for behold, the wicked bend the bow;
they have fitted their arrow to the string
to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;
³if the foundations are destroyed,
what can the righteous do?"*

2. We take refuge in God

2. **We take refuge in God.** David says bluntly to his friends: *I am taking refuge in Yahweh!* God does not like it if God calls us to something and we give up too easily! No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. We shall lose some of the blessings of the Kingdom if we give up our faith in God too quickly, amidst the problems and perplexities of life.

• *Not giving up*

3. We believe in God's sovereignty

3. **We believe in God's sovereignty.**

*^{4a}Yahweh is in his holy temple;
Yahweh's throne is in heaven.*

David has in mind the heavenly temple. The temple that Solomon would build would only be an earthly representation of the heavenly realm. In the hidden spiritual realm God is enthroned. He rules in the affairs of the human race, no matter how inactive he may seem to be. His hidden-ness and his slowness are the very aspects of God's character that leave room for faith.

• *God is King and He is bringing His plans to pass*

David says to his friends, 'Do you not know that God is a king? Do not be so pessimistic. Nothing is too difficult for God. God has his plans and he is a mighty King in bringing them to pass. He is reigning over the universe from the heavenly realm. If God is here among his people why should we be pessimistic?

Of course when we read this as New Testament Christians we remember that we are the temple. 'Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit' ¹. The Lord is king in his temple.

¹ 1 Corinthians 6:19

• We need reminding of the Kingship of God in this modern age

This is the missing note in modern churches. The modern Christian is too obsessed with his 'freewill', and not enough gripped by the sovereignty and kingship of God! In the Bible it is not you who are the king. It is God who is the king. If David could just 'take victory', then he would not be writing this psalm. If we can simply 'take blessings' there would be no pessimists. God's gifts are sovereignly given. But God gives powerfully and sovereignly achieving his will. David cannot be pessimistic because God is the king! David says 'It does not matter how weak I am! The Lord is king!' Do not put your faith anywhere else. Appeal to God's kingship.

I wish we could get back to the kingship of God. When you believe in the kingship of God you trust yourself less and you pray more! You do not talk so much about what you are going to do. You talk more about what God is likely to do.

4. We understand his delays

• Testing character

4. We understand his delays. We need to realise that something is happening even when nothing seems to be happening! When God seems not to be acting, we can be sure he is watching! He is silently and inconspicuously testing the character of everyone in the world.

*^{4b}His eyes are watching the children of the human race; His eyes see them and test them.
⁵Yahweh is testing the righteous, but He hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.*

• God is waiting to find faithfulness

If you see that it is God who has to move in sovereign authority, then there might be delay. What happens in the delay? He is testing the righteous. God is saying, 'I am not moving just yet. I want to see whether you will be faithful!' God is waiting to find faithfulness, loyalty to God's word. Maybe we shall not see God's working powerfully until we trust God's gospel and nothing else! God is testing us to see whether we shall be faithful to his gospel.

5. God's eventual action is inevitable

5. God's eventual action is inevitable. God will not be silent for ever! We can be sure his rewards and judgements will come.

⁶Upon the wicked he will pour down traps to trap the wicked. Fire and sulphur and a scorching wind shall be the portion for them to drink down.

6. The character of God is unchanging and we remember it

• To see His face

6. The character of God is unchanging and we remember it.

⁷For Yahweh is righteous; He loves righteous deeds; The upright shall behold his face.

We work and wait for the day when God will act. God's goodness and righteousness has not disappeared. He still loves his people for their deeds of faith. Their reward will be to see him - to see him in action, but better still to see his face.

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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