

PSALM 73 FOR TODAY

Address given by Mr Rowland Wheatley

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Introduction

For those of you who don't know me, I am Pastor Rowland Wheatley from the St David's Bridge Strict Baptist Chapel, Cranbrook and the title that I have been given, the subject for this afternoon, is "Psalm 73 for the Present Day".

Now the occasion of this psalm was a temptation Asaph fell into and was delivered out of. He was tempted to think that there was nothing in religion, that it was vain and a useless thing. This is because he had noticed that the wicked had prosperity in life and not a care in death, whereas God's people had trouble in life and concern in death. He continued in this temptation until he went into the house of God, into the Sanctuary and was then taught lessons. He then acknowledges his foolishness and penned this psalm to set forth the goodness of God to His people and to prevent others falling into this same snare.

The aims of this lecture

I want to show:

1. Firstly that this is a common temptation and why particularly so today
2. Secondly that the way of deliverance, the only way of the deliverance, is found in Christ alone. And in doing this we will look at the significance of each part of the Sanctuary that Asaph went into and would be very familiar with.
3. Lastly give some points to help overcome this temptation through our Lord.

But first let us know a little bit about the man that penned the psalm, Asaph, Then we'll read through the psalm noting how it is broken up, just summarising each part of it.

About the man that penned Psalm 73, Asaph.

Verse one tells us that Psalm 73 is a psalm of Asaph. Now the tribe of Levi descended from Levi's three sons. His sons were Gershom, Kohath and Merari. Asaph, descended from Gershom (Aaron's line) and the high priests go down the Kohath line. The descendants of Gershom were responsible for when the Tabernacle was broken down in the wilderness, and moved; for the Tabernacle covers, the curtains, the screens, the chords and they moved them with ox carts. Asaph lived during the reign of David, Solomon and the beginning of the divided kingdom (that would be Rehoboam). And he saw the transition from the tabernacle built in the wilderness to the temple that Solomon built.

And he was a prophet - we're told in the scriptures a prophet, a composer, singer and a musician of whom it was specifically said, making a sound with cymbals. (1 Chron 16:5, 5 Chron 5:12, 2 Chron 29:30)

Asaph wrote 12 Psalms; Psalm 50, this Psalm and from Psalm 73 right the way through to Psalm 83. There is a lot in the Word and in the Psalms that tells us about Asaph. In fact there is more written of Asaph than of many other writers in the Bible.

A summary of Psalm 73

Now if you've got your Bibles you can follow through with me as I summarise each section.

He begins with a sacred principle which he held fast even though he was tempted against it. And by the help of that principle he held his ground until he was delivered. ***The principal is; That God is good to those who walk in his ways sincerely from the heart.*** So this is what he held as a principle from the start. It was this that he was being tempted and assailed against.

So the words of verse one; “A Psalm of Asaph. Truly God *is* good to Israel, *even* to such as are of a clean heart.” This is a heart that is taught by God. A heart in which the Lord has given a new heart and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now verses 2 and 3 tell us the snare that he had nearly fallen into “But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

Then in verses 4 and 5 he has seen that those who do not believe in God had peace and no trouble when they died. “For *there are* no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They *are* not in trouble *as other* men; neither are they plagued like *other* men.” He is doing a comparison of those other men and the people of God. And he sees this! These are the ungodly and they are about to enter eternity and they have not a care in the world and they are free of the burdens and troubles that God's people have.

Then in verses 6 to 9 he notices the effect that this has on their lives, the lives of the ungodly. We notice today that the idea is at funerals, instead of preaching the Word of God, to have a celebration of life. So the people are being told what a wonderful life this person had and how they died without a care. We're just celebrating. There's no thought of where they are now and this kind of message is being portrayed to generation after generation. People are noticing this and what is the effect it has on their lives? Verses 6 to 9 “Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them *as* a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.” That's the effect on the ungodly.

Now what about the effect on the godly? That's in the next verse, verses 10 to 14. We notice the effect of seeing this - what it has on God's people. Verse 10 begins “Therefore his people [God's people] return hither: and waters of a full *cup* are rung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.” It's not worth me being religious, it's not worth

me trying to pattern my life according to God's word because the wicked, they have a better life and a better death.

Now he gives in verses 15 and 16 a reason why he was keeping these thoughts of the uselessness of living a godly life to himself and how painful it was to think of what looked like unfair treatment by God. He says “If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me;”

I would say two things here.

There might be those of you here and you have these questions, these uncertainties and these things are painfully going over in your minds. And you think; I cannot speak to anyone about this because if I do they'll say, “what? You're thinking that? How can you be a Christian? How can you be brought up under the sound of the truth and have those thoughts going through your mind?” And yet if you but knew it you would have quite a few others feeling the same.

But the other thing is, he didn't say it. And it was good counsel in a way to keep it to himself, bring it before the Lord, or come into the sanctuary and have it answered there. And then this psalm resulted and then he can speak, not to strengthen all the doubts of those around him, but to say; I had those things, I had those questions; but here is the answer.

And that's what we have in this psalm here. So if you have thoughts like this, take it to the Lord. Maybe you have a pastor, those you can speak to that can direct you, but the psalmist here, Asaph, he directs as it were in a personal, a better way. A way that we may be acquainted with the truth, and with the Lord Jesus Christ personally. It's a lot better than following through others, because it leads us directly to the Lord.

So we come to verse 17 which is a changing point in the whole psalm. “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end.” *So in verses 18 to 20 he understands now what was waiting for the wicked on the other side of death.* Hidden from view until they woke up in hell. Completely hidden from them, they had no idea of it until too late, beyond the grave. “Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.” What a contrast to what they were saying before - pride was compassing them about, eyes were standing out with fatness, they were speaking loftily but now they are consumed with terrors! There can't be a greater contrast from one side to the other, this side of the grave to the other side.

“As a dream when *one* awaketh; *so*, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.” (v20) *In verse 21 and 22 he berates himself for being so foolish.* He says “Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish *was* I, and ignorant: I was *as* a beast before thee.” *But then in verses 23 to 26 he balances his foolishness with these thoughts* “Nevertheless I *am* continually with thee: thou hast holden *me* by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory. Whom

have I in heaven *but thee*? And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: *but God is* the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.” We've heard of some of that this morning.

And then he concludes the psalm with a summary or comparison of what the truth is. Verse 27 “For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. 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 thy works.” Just noticing in that summary, what is being so emphasized? It's the relationship of the sinner with Christ. Those that are far off from him shall perish. Those destroyed that go a whoring from him. It is good for me to draw near. The whole of salvation brings a people alienated by sin and by wicked works into communion and fellowship with God and to enjoy him forever and to be with him forever. In the garden of Eden man was banished, but in the gospel there is a bringing nigh by the blood of Christ.

Our first aim was to show that this is a common temptation and why particularly so today.

A common temptation

Paul writes to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is **common** to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.” It is easy to judge by what we see and we expect to have those in the right clearly shown to be so openly in this life. All of us have that in us. If there's been a dispute between two people, we'd like the Lord to come along and to take our hand and lift us up and say, “This one is in the right, they're in the wrong.” We like to be vindicated, we like to have that. Yet this seems to be going against it; God seems to be applauding the wrong and not the right. When our Lord appeared to the two on the way to Emmaus after His resurrection and they told the Lord (they didn't recognize the Lord, remember) and they told Him all that had happened. Wicked men had triumphed. They had had their way, or so it seemed, at Jerusalem. They'd crucified the Lord of life and Glory. And you know that they said “But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel:” (Lu 24:21). They were right that that was the Redeemer, but the way He was going to redeem Israel, they mistook that way. What they meant was clear when the Lord met with all of the disciples later. And they asked Him, they said “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6) Wilt Thou say away to you Romans, away to these other nations, Israel is my people, I will establish you. Are you going to do it at this time? They were looking for a visible, earthly conquest. But the Lord told them to wait for the Spirit. His kingdom was within, changing the heart and preparing for a heavenly kingdom – **not** of this world.

We read earlier in Psalm 37 David's exhortation. A common temptation, we have Asaph, we have David speaking almost the same things. "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." (v1) The same message. "For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." (v2-3). The same temptation addressed. The same need of this exhortation.

Solomon says in Proverbs 23 "Let not thine heart envy sinners: but *be thou* in the fear of the LORD all the day long. For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off." (v17-18).

Then what does John say in his first epistle chapter 2 and verse 15 to 17 "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

But this is a common temptation because of God's purposes of grace. Now we've heard this morning of God's plan and way of salvation. God's people are saved by the faith He gives them, not by what they see with their natural eyes. And we all start off in life the same. All mankind, as we heard this morning, are dead in sin and cannot, will not hear God's voice. Paul is very clear in this in Ephesians chapter 2. He says "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (v2-3). All are under the same condemnation.

I want us to just think for a moment - suppose there was no Gospel, no Salvation, no work of God, nothing at all. The whole of mankind would just go on in this way. But you say but what the psalmist was troubled about was that these people, they prospered, they got on well. But do we not read when God created the world that everything that He did was good. Sin has marred it but sin hasn't changed a good God. God is good to all, His tender mercies are over all His works, He openeth His hand; He satisfieth the desire of every living thing. He is the Saviour of all men especially of them that believe. Not a Saviour saving me eternally but He gives us food and bread and health and strength. Don't ever be deceived in this. You go into a hospital and you see the sickbeds there and one of them is one of the Lord's dear people. And that dear person will say I begged of the Lord for healing. And the Lord has healed them through the doctors and through the means and afterwards they give thanks to the Lord and ten others in that ward, they said we don't believe in the Lord, we didn't ask Him to heal us and we got healed. And your faith is just

vain. You don't need faith in God because we haven't and we got healing and we've got health now, what's the difference? At the last Judgement Day God shall say to those, "You never asked me for healing and I healed you. I healed you and you never returned to give thanks. I gave you all these blessings. This, one of my children, has sought this from me and I gave it to them and they thanked me for it." That is the difference. You say, where do you get that in Scripture? We had ten lepers and the Lord healed every one of them but only one returned to give thanks unto God. May we never think there are as it were two forces at work in the world, one that looks after the ungodly and the other one that looks after God's people. Some things by chance and some things by the providence of God. The Lord is a good God. The grace and favour and goodness He bestows is to them that throw it in His face, that don't want to know Him. That sit down at their meal table and never give thanks, never give Him the praise for anything.

So may we remember that without salvation, without God's work man would continue in this way. Every single man, woman and child would. Taking of all the blessings and all the good of the Lord and just go straight through death and to meet God and to meet the judgement and to give an account unto their Creator. So we need to remember that is the course of this world. And it is God's purpose that that course just goes on like that but into it comes His salvation, His way of escape from the wrath to come - that which we heard this morning. We are told in 2 Corinthians 4:3 & 4 "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." They cannot see because they are dead. The only way that there can be any change, and any seeing, knowing anything of God, is God passing by us in our blood and bidding us Live. We read in Ecclesiastes (8:11) "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." That's our fallen nature isn't it? If we drive on the roads, if we break the speed limit, we get away with it, we do it next time, we get away with it again, we'll do it next time, we'll keep on doing it until suddenly we get caught up with and we realise well there is a law and there is a reckoning time. And we're like that in everything in our lives. As long as we can get away with it, we'll do it. And we'll go in that way. And those that are held in that way, they think, *'well God hasn't said anything to me against my sin. He hasn't forced me to stop. He hasn't put something terrible in the way. I'll get away with it, I'm going to do it, I'm going to keep doing it, there's no reason to stop.'* Is that where you are? May we be delivered from walking in that way.

Only when through the Word and the Gospel God calls His people into spiritual life, do men see their danger and are drawn to Christ the only Saviour. And the Lord then uses trials, He uses chastening. All to teach and correct His people. May we remember that the only ones who know what an evil thing sin is, is God's people. The only ones to be troubled because of sin are God's people. The only ones who know what a solemn thing it is to die are God's people. They're the only ones that know there is a judgement and eternity beyond death. No wonder they view death differently than the ungodly. No wonder they view things much more seriously. What of their soul that shall never, never cease to exist? The Lord says "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

(Matthew 10:28) May we fear Him! And may we remember death, well we might think that just happens to everybody automatically, but death is a sentence – “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Gen 2:17) The courts of our land - they have their guidelines, but when the evidence is put to them they execute the sentence. God’s sentence is; “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Ez 18:20) And the same God that has put that sentence has made a way of escape from it - “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb 9:22). But the Lord has made a way of escape.

We have in Psalm 94 “Blessed *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law; That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked. For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.” (v12-14). The Lord said in John 17 (it’s a beautiful prayer) “I have given them (That is his dear people) thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” (v14). And we have in Peter in his epistle a beautiful passage; we haven’t got time to quote it all now. “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” It’s a beautiful passage I Peter 4 and verses 12-19 - you can read it at leisure.

But why would temptation be stronger today?

We mentioned one reason being *the way many funerals are conducted as a celebration of life today*, the solemnity of death and judgement is ignored.

But also you think of the prosperity of the ungodly. It is so much easier to see in our day. In the prophecy of Daniel we read “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, *even* to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” (Dan 12:4) And when we think of it the first working steam train, that’s mechanical locomotion, was made in 1804, that’s twenty-four years after the church that I’m pastor of was formed. Many people, they only saw the wealth and prosperity just in their little locality. But now you think with the aeroplane invented in 1903, the first passenger jet in 1952 – we flew on that (The BOAC, Comet 4) when we emigrated to Australia in 1965 when I was 4 years old,– the first phone call that was made in 1876 and the first mobile in 1973, personal computers in 1975. The first time I had a personal computer at work was in 1988 and it was a terribly fast computer for its day. It had 8 Megahertz processor speed and I could press a button and make it go 10 Mhz. It had a massive hard disk of 20MB and that was what I did drawing on – computer drafting. And that’s only in 1988. (Computers today run at 4 Gigahertz -500,000 times faster) and then the World Wide Web in 1990 – that’s only 27 years ago. And we have all that this world has to offer – it is brought into our homes, it’s on our screens, you can travel, you can see the world of prosperity of the ungodly very, very easily.

Also false expectations are more easily raised. You think of a photo and a video – it used to be said the camera will never lie but that is not true anymore. We only see what people want us to see. We are so removed from reality. There’s hardly an advert that you can see that you would say was not airbrushed. You can buy anything in a supermarket and you

look at the packet and you think ooh look, beautiful, bright red colours and lovely and you open the packet and you think, is that the same thing? And this is the expectations all the time that are facing us.

Also personal contact is less. Using social media to interact - sometimes we don't even know who we are contacting. You think of the paedophiles that make out they're someone they're not and trap and draw people into their nets. And it is a web of deceit that is there.

We live in a day when God has give men much knowledge. It's always been there, all of the things have been, many great inventions have been made by those like Sir Isaac Newton that knew God was a God of order and there must be order and they sought it out and they found it. God has given men that knowledge but man thinks he is has got it himself and he's above God.

The Word of God calls us to ponder, to consider, to meditate. Paul to the Philippians gives us a list of profitable things to think upon. Many, especially young people, they will have the constant contemporary music, soul-destroying music into their ears to shut all serious thinking out.

So with those thoughts we can see that the temptation would be stronger today.

Our second aim is to show that the way of deliverance is found in Christ alone.

Now Asaph he understood the end of the wicked when he went into the sanctuary. So what did he see here? Now he saw the way of salvation through Christ, in types. Psalm 73 for the present day is seen in the light of Christ's coming and fulfilling these types.

In Asaph's day the tabernacle that Moses made was pitched at Gibeon. Sacrifices were still offered there, it still had the holy of holies but the ark of the covenant was not in it. In his days the ark was taken from Kirjath-jearim to a tent that David made for it at Jerusalem. Remember when they first brought it they put it on a cart, Uzzah touched the cart when it shook and he was killed. Then the second time they did it as was properly instituted carried on the shoulders of the Levites. The ark was then brought to a tent that David made for it at Jerusalem and then later into Solomon's temple that closely replicated the design of the tabernacle that was in the wilderness with ***the three sections; the outer court, the holy place and the holiest of all where the ark was.*** But really for a short period of time, in David's time there was no veil and no separation it was just the tent of meeting and then there was the ark. In a sense it was just a short time of showing what it would be in gospel days when the Son of David came and the veil would be rent in twain and when Christ would be fully set forth. But when Solomon's temple was built again it was brought into the holiest and only the high priest once a year was to see that. Now the important thing is the apostle Paul he writes to the Hebrews that the whole tabernacle and the temple were types showing Christ and the eternal truth to that generation. They were fulfilled in Christ. Hebrews chapter 9 beautifully sets forth this teaching.

So what does a tabernacle teach? And what would Asaph have clearly known of its arrangement and setup?

The outer court

This was a fenced court 150 foot by 75 foot wide and it had only one opening, a veiled door to the east. What does that suggest? Only one opening? We read in John 10 “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” (v9) Asaph knew, We know, only one way and that is Christ.

Just inside the door was an altar, it was made of wood and yet overlaid with brass. It had horns on it, the fire was burning on it perpetually, the horns were to tie down the beasts being sacrificed. Brass was used for everything in this outer court. It set forth judgement and God’s hatred of sin and the altar was fulfilled at Calvary when Christ willingly, not unwillingly like the beasts, but willingly offered Himself a sacrifice for the sins of His people. Those who die ungodly whose sins Christ has not put away will have the wrath of God poured on them.

We’ve heard this morning that it is a particular redemption. Those that were going into the tabernacle were the Levites, they were given to the Lord as a redemption for the firstborn of the Israelites. If you like to read in Numbers chapter 3 at your leisure you have there a very clear description of particular redemption in the redemption of the firstborn of the Israelite, God’s people matching the number of the Levites. It’s a very strong one-for-one redemption.

Remember also that brass was used to make the serpent of brass. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:” (Jn 3:14) You think of how the altar was used when Adonijah had usurped the kingdom and his life was forfeited, he fled into the temple and he held on to the horns of the altar and his life was spared for a time. It was a place where there was hope and life. The Lord says “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” (Jn 12:32) You won’t learn the bitterness and evilness of sin at Sinai but at Calvary when you look upon Him whom you have pierced, your sins have been laid upon Him and the sufferings He endured were in putting away your sin. And it was the very first thing that coming into that court Asaph would have been faced with. Here is a blood sacrifice, here are the sufferings of Christ. Christ is setting before us “Tis He instead of me.” “Who maketh thee to differ?” (1 Cor 4:7)

Next he would come to a brass laver. It was a large bowl for the priests to wash in before they ministered in the holy place and Exodus 38 verse 8 tells us it was made from the brass looking glasses of the women. In those days they didn’t have mirrors like we have, they had pieces of brass and they polished it up and they saw their faces in it. And so when the priests came to be washed they would also have a mirror. Well often we have a mirror in our bathrooms, we have a washbasin and mirror don’t we? And they had that but how significant. What would they have seen as they looked in – they need washing and also can see themselves. You think of what the Word of God is to us, how Christ uses that word to show us that we are sinners and He uses that same Word to cleanse us. Isaiah says “We are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all

do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isa 64:6) We cannot really describe how vile, depraved and unclean the natural heart is and how we are by nature.

And in that first part of coming into the tabernacle, Asaph, and we in gospel days more clearly, see what we are. And so the Word of God, it uses it both ways, we have that passage in Ephesians “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he, [not the church themselves, but Christ] that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Eph 5:25-27) James says if any man “...be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” (Jas 1:23-25) God’s people are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. Those He redeems He sanctifies, He washes, He makes them fit to be with Him. They are clothed with His righteousness - that is their title for heaven. Those that are so clothed and so pardoned and forgiven, their lives will be different because of the Word, because of the effect of the Word.

Christians are to be in the world but not of it. When we are mixing with the world we are learning its ways, getting wrong ideas, thoughts like Asaph had, but when we read God’s Word it has a mirror effect. We can see ourselves as God sees us and also it has a washing effect as we remember God’s ways. It is God’s means. A blessed thing to have that hearing ear and willing heart so we can see the present gospel days - Psalm 73 for the present day - this gospel day to be seen clearer than Asaph in this outer court, Christ is the door, the only way. God’s hatred for sin – our need of Christ’s sacrifice to take our place and experience the judgement that should have been ours. Now continually we see ourselves as we really are and to be cleansed by the Word. Of course that is not a requirement of salvation (that is by faith in Christ alone) but it is essential to the Christian life. We cannot separate the two. The Lord will chasten every son whom He receives. They cannot, will not, go through their life just carelessly in this world, God will, as a loving parent, correct them. It’s not the child deciding that they are going to be chastened; God says you are my child, I will correct and I will instruct you in the way that you should go.

The inner court

So then inside the outer court, is the tabernacle, which is a closed tent 45 feet long by 15 feet wide divided into two sections. The entrance of it again is one way a curtain of blue, purple, scarlet – setting forth the grace, the kingship and blood of Christ. Again Jesus is the only way. The only way but what does this section set forth? No brass in the holy place, all is gold. ***There are three items – the candlestick, the table of shewbread and the altar of incense.*** What we have here is what the world knows nothing of. It is fellowship

with Christ. An inner court worshipper. John in 1 John 1:3 says “And truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

The only source of light in this first, this holy place of the tabernacle is ***the candlestick***. There’s no other light. The candlestick has seven branches all made of pure gold. We have this in The Revelation where John saw the vision of the seven golden candlesticks. We have the interpretation of that, that they are the churches and the Lord is in the midst of them. Also our Lord says in John 8 “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (v12) And His people will reflect that light. He says in Matthew 5:14 “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.” And dear David says in Psalm 119 verse 105 “Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Those still dead in sin are blinded by the god of this world, they cannot see the light of the gospel. They cannot. Those who love evil do not want to come to this light, cannot come to the gospel. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (Jn 3:19) We flee from and shy away from the light, from the Word – is not the reason because our deeds are evil?

Then we have ***the shewbread*** - the twelve loaves on it representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Again Christ is set forth. He says in John 6 “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” (v35) Deuteronomy tells us that “Man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.” (Deut 8:3) This is the Christian’s meat, and which dear Jeremiah (remember Jeremiah saw Babylon come, he saw the enemies of the Lord completely demolish the temple. He saw the adversaries of the Lord lifted up and the Lord’s people brought into captivity) he says, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.” (Jer 15:16).

Then lastly there was ***the altar of incense***. That was made of plain wood but overlaid with gold, used by the high priest to burn specially formulated incense that couldn’t be used for anything else other than that. And this incense it was burnt every day, morning and evening. In the present gospel day it’s not Aaron, it’s the Lord Jesus Christ, it’s our great High Priest. This is so clearly seen. Paul explains it that “this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” (Heb 7:24, 25). And David says in Psalm 141:2 “Let my prayer be set forth before thee *as* incense; *and* the lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice.” This is the way to come to God by prayer through Jesus presenting our petitions perfumed with the merits of what He has done. This sweet incense, it filled both the holy place and the most holy place where the ark was.

The Holiest of all

It was 15 foot square and one thing in it – ***the Ark of the Covenant***. Again there is the veil that is said to be some 4 inches thick, very strong veil. Again it is the blue, the purple, the scarlet – the heavenly grace, the kingship of our Lord and His precious blood. And the

ark. About 4 foot long, 2 foot wide, 2 foot high carried on poles all overlaid with gold and there in that ark was the two completed tables of the law – not the broken law, the fulfilled law of God. There was Aaron’s rod that budded that clearly showed the line to the priesthood. There was the pot of manna that was the bread through the wilderness. And over the top of it was the mercy seat with the cherubims over it. And every year, not without blood, the high priest would go in and he would sprinkle blood and make intercession for the people. And we are told in Hebrews 9 that “after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;” (v3) and then it sets forth the preciousness of Christ’s death in heaven itself because we are told that Christ He hath not gone into those earthly tabernacles but into heaven itself to make intercession for us. And the reason given in Hebrews 9 verse 8, “The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest.” So Asaph he knew there was something hidden from his sight. He knew what was there. They knew every time they moved the tabernacle because they had to drape the veil over the top of the ark and the ark always went before them to show them the way and he knew there was that which was hidden. When our Lord died that veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom. The Lord Jesus Christ is the way into the holiest of all. He is the first fruits, He is the forerunner, He has entered into heaven, He has given His Holy Spirit here below and His people are to run the race that is set before them, looking unto Jesus who is in heaven, not in this world. “We look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen.” (2 Cor 4:18) And so what we have is crucial here – it is faith in Christ that is vital. It was for Asaph to see Christ through types but it is for us too, 1 John 5 says “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (v 4-5).

And then our Lord says in John 16 verse 33 “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” How these things put everything right. With Asaph, God had made a difference in his life, God had granted him life, he could see what all of these could not see. He had Christ, he had faith in Christ, he could see the beautiful, wonderful plan of salvation, that plan which you had set before you this morning - God’s ordered way. May we never be deceived by those who are yet around us who are dead. Bless God, those of you here that the Lord has opened your eyes to see, and those of you here that actually hear these messages, that hear the Word of God set forth. The illustration was used this morning of Lazarus and the Lord using His word to bring to life. The Lord didn’t say to Lazarus in the grave, ‘Lazarus come back to life’, then say ‘Lazarus are you alive? Can you now hear me when I say Lazarus, come forth?’ He just said “Lazarus, come forth” (Jn 11:43) and the same word of command actually brought him to life and the Lord uses the authoritative declaration of the gospel, as we heard this morning to quicken souls. That word enters in and that same word that enters in gives life. You come under the sound of the truth as dead as dead and go out alive. Not my work, not your work, but what the Lord has done. He passed by thee and bid thee live. And that is vital.

Our third aim was to give some points to help overcome this temptation through our Lord.

Firstly, we spoke of the first verse “Hold fast”. This is how the psalmist began. It’s good to hold fast that God is good to His people and it is worth serving Him. When we are tempted we need to do this – hold fast – until the Lord delivers us out of temptation. Don’t immediately go with the temptation and strengthen the doubts. Hold fast. That’s what the psalmist did here. In his time he went into the sanctuary, and he was delivered. So hold fast those of you that may be tempted to waver and pulled this way and that. The dear man that was born blind “one thing I know” (Jn 9:25) and they couldn’t move him from that could they? And so hold fast.

Secondly, we have a word in Ephesians. Now Mr Gerald Buss a little while ago in the *Friendly* said that often those of us in the ministry quote things wrongly. One of the quotes I have noticed being quoted wrong in writings going back many hundreds of years, It is the quote “the truth as it is in Jesus”. As if well, there’s truth elsewhere but there’s truth in Jesus as well. But when you look at where it is, and its in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 21, the whole verse reads “If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, [that’s Christ] as the truth is in Jesus:”. Well if you take that last part and you just take off the “as” you have a very clear statement “**the truth is in Jesus**”. *Always remember that. “The truth is in Jesus”.*

Thirdly, beware of the company that we are with. In Psalm 29 and verse 9 David says “in his temple doth every one speak of *his* glory.” And we must remember this principle. Perhaps to give a current illustration; If we were to go to a political rally, if I would go to the one that is not a Tory party, I would come away saying nobody follows Mrs May. But if I went to a Tory party rally I would come away saying everyone follows Mrs May. In the same way don’t expect the ungodly and the world to speak well of our Lord or His ways. They won’t. But when you come into the House of God amongst His people that’s where He will be well spoken of. Listen to the people of God, who say “Come *and* hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul” (Ps 66:16). Listen to them. Not the multitudes that are still dead in trespasses and sins.

Fourthly, we spoke of the veil – well death is like the veil. It hides the terrors of judgement and hell. It hides the glories also of heaven and the blessings awaiting believers. Only faith pierces through. We think of the beautiful hymn:

There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.

And then the next verse:

Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heavenly land from ours.

(Gadsby’s Hymns no. 1022)

We're told of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus by our Lord. But the rich man had everything in this life. Lazarus the beggar had nothing. Afterwards he shows us what was the other side of the grave and there is the rich man in torments in hell and there is Lazarus in Abraham's bosom in the covenant being comforted and the great gulf between. That parable shows not that the rich go to hell and the poor and beggars go to heaven but it really illustrates the contrast between what we see in this life and what we see in that which is to come. And when the rich man wanted word to be sent back to his brethren then the message was they wouldn't believe even if one rose from the dead. They had "Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." (Luk 16:29) "Faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17). That is how we are quickened.

Fifthly, worship where the atmosphere and message is that of the sanctuary. And I feel I must say that today. Our churches should reflect this; not bringing the world in, not bringing the music of the world in, the atmosphere of the world. You think of when Asaph came into the tabernacle the awe, the sacrifice. Do you come into our churches and Christ crucified is set forth? Sinners in all of their filthiness and their need of washing and cleansing is all set forth. Is Christ set forth in every way? The apostle says that he "determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Co 2:2) May we put that test when we go and worship. What kind of a gospel or message do we actually hear? And so may we have that reflected in our assemblies.

Sixthly, don't forsake the assembling of ourselves together; we read "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Heb 10:25)

Lastly, may we bring our perplexities and temptations to God in prayer. Take everything to God in prayer.

Well may this be a help to you, a help in the difficulty, the same snare that Asaph was in here. May we be delivered out of that snare, and you may count that the most blessed thing that could ever be given to a poor sinner is eternal life. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish" (Jn 10:28). We have no need to envy any, any of this poor world and any of those dead in sin. Having Christ we have everything. An eternal inheritance in heaven.

May the Lord bless the word and bless you each. Thank you.