

The Believer

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[0 : 00] So we could turn together to Psalm 103. I've simply entitled this message this evening, The Believer.

And there are two main points I'd like to attempt to bring out this evening. But I'll begin just by informing you that I'm delighted to be able to say, I went to the surgery this week and I met the nurse, the practised nurse, and I got 10 out of 10 on my blood pressure.

I'm sure you're all thrilled at the news. I was expecting a lot worse, quite frankly. Somebody, one of the doctors had stopped a certain medication which had been on for a good number of years and I thought that's gonna do.

Lasty things, I would imagine. He said, come back in a month and you'll see what things, how things are going. Well, she said, that's wonderful, 10 out of 10.

Excellent, go away. So I did, very happily. And there I was, sitting at the desk and she's saying, just relax.

[1 : 14] And of course that's the last thing you like doing, relaxing. Anybody who's been there knows that. And they put your arms through this sleeve and then she presses a button on the computer and it pumps and pumps and pumps.

It pumps to the point where you think your arm is about to fall off and then the pressure is released. And she can see these readings appearing on the computer screen.

Very clever, very wonderful. Very comforting if of course the readings favor you at that point in time. But whilst this was happening, I was thinking, I wonder about Sunday evening.

And I wonder if each and every one of us could be examined, shall we say, by a gadget, a similar gadget, that measured our excitement.

How excited are you tonight? It measured the level, the degree of excitement that you are experiencing at this moment in time. My hastens are why I'm not because time's standing here.

[2 : 22] What's exciting you tonight? You see the machine that I'm thinking about, not only measures the level of excitement, but actually identifies the cause of excitement.

How would you get on? How would you, how would I get on this evening? I've drawn your attention to this arm, this evening, because I think this is a arm of a man who is incredibly excited.

And I think it's a wonderfully joyous thing to see and to read and to reflect upon. And one of the first things we see about this man is that he's the man who talks to himself.

And of course that is quite often derided. We tend to make jokes about, oh, he talks to himself as he did the other day, he talks to himself as he did the other day.

That sort of thing. Oh, he's one of those fellows who likes committees of one. He likes his own opinions, he talks to himself. He's only interested in his own views. But this man is talking to himself, this man is David.

- [3 : 33] And he's talking to himself because he says, praise the Lord, oh my soul. Oh my inmost being, praise his holy name. It goes on and repeats roughly those words.
- He's talking to himself. And I would suggest this evening it's a very, very good spiritual activity to talk to oneself. I think it's all part and parcel of what we call meditation.
- And of course we find in the very first Psalm that it was the delight of the man, the man of God, to meditate in the law of the Lord day and night. He was a meditator.
- And if you sit down quietly with the word of God making space for it in your life, you'll talk to yourself. You'll start saying when the word comes to you, how am I getting on in that regard?
- The Lord is speaking to me now. And how are you doing in relation to what he's saying to you? You will talk to yourself. It's not a bad thing. Ask questions of the word.
- [4 : 44] Ask questions of the Lord. Ask questions of yourself. It's not the only place where this occurs. You remember Psalm 42?
- Why are you downcast, oh my soul? Why are you so disturbed within? And it goes on and counsels himself. What's your trust in God, your Saviour?
- He's talking to himself. He's counselling himself through the counsel, which is the word of the Lord. And what is he actually aiming at?
- Well, he's aiming at these words. Very shortly afterwards, he says, Praise the Lord, oh my soul, and forget not all his benefits.
- I read that little passage. I'll just read it to you, folks. It's down into the Oronomy. Here's to chapter 8. It's verse 10. The Lord is saying, When you have eaten and are satisfied, Praise the Lord your God, for the good land he has given you.
- [6 : 00] And be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws, his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your heads and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase, and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud.
- And you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
- And David the Samistice here, I don't know, let him imagine him in his, what we'll call, his study. And he's talking to himself, and he's saying, Oh my soul, do not forget the Lord your God.
- Why? Well, because then he says, we're talking about the benefits that the Lord has bestowed upon me.
- And you can say it yourself, Christian, tonight, the benefits the Lord has bestowed upon you, all your days as one of his people, all this day as one of his people.
- [7 : 22] How about the oxygen you're breathing at the moment? How about the meal you've had today? How about the fellowship you've enjoyed? How about the beauty of the landscape through which you've travelled this evening?
- The benefits. But he reveals the benefits that are particularly on his mind at this time.
- He says, Praise the Lord, oh my soul, and forget not all his benefits. These things, these are what I'm thinking about. This is what is causing me to get excited. He's forgiven all my sins.

All of my sins are forgiven. Every one of them. Now, I'm sure there are people in here, in this room tonight, who are yet thinking about something that they have done in times past, which still flares up periodically and bites you, grabs you, throttles you if it were possible, frightens you, causes you to think, I'm getting older and I'm getting near the end and it won't leave me alone.

It keeps chasing me. It's like a big black shadow. It's like a horrible storm. It's hanging over me. And the psalmist thousands of years ago says, Praise the Lord, oh my soul, forget not all his benefits.

[8 : 48] Who forgives all your sins? All your sins. Don't forget that. He has done a perfect work.

Your is an savior. All your sins. And he's healed the diseases. That's a wonderful thing as well. I suspect that that's probably referring to the things that beset us, the desires that cling to us.

You know, there are things that you can reflect upon now that once used to come to you so readily, but now you don't have the struggles with them that once you had.

Like diseases that have been cleared up by a doctor who's medicating you. And it's probably also a good thing to remember this. That in a sense, Christian, you have been spiritually inoculated.

There are some things that you will never engage in, but you might well have done. Had you not become one of the Lord's people. Or the traps that he has led you away from, the death into which you may yet have plunged, had the Lord not intercepted you on your path and spoken that word of life.

[10 : 12] Forget not all his benefits. Who forgives all your sins. Who heals all your diseases. He whose eyes are too pure to look on evil as Habakkuk reminds us.

He has stooped down. And he who is Emmanuel. He who is Jesus, God with us. He who will save his people from their sins.

He has stooped down low. And he has plucked you and saved you. He has cleansed you, washed you, made you fit.

He's excited by this. Am I excited by this? Are you excited? I'm excited by this. He says, then who redeems your life from the pit.

And he seems to elevate the whole thing here. Not only is he talking about the ugliness of sin, the sort of the negative aspect, but he says let's look now at the positive. He's redeemed your life.

[11 : 23] He's paid such a price as to restore you to elevate you. Many years ago, I was on building site in Bristol. And I was with a little Irishman.

And we were at the bottom of a big pit. It was the lift shaft to be of what is now, sort of 10, 15 story office block, in the centre of Bristol.

And we were there on this miserable, wretched cold February day or something. The rain was pouring down. We were in this hole. And this oily, liquefied clay was washing around in our wells.

And we were trying to shovel this stuff out into buckets. Another man was pulling out the buckets to throw away his debris so that they could pour out concrete in.

The foundation for the lift shaft and then the building to go. Not very sophisticated, were they? Well, that's where we were. And we looked at each other through time to time.

[12 : 24] We would almost laugh or cry. This is ludicrous. We were cold, we were wet. Covered in this slimy mud. And you know what? I'd still be there till this day, you really speaking.

If they hadn't, at one point said, that'll do. The concrete's here. Get the ladder down. Get them out. And we could outweigh the ladders.

I'd still be in that pit. You'd still be in the pit. If Jesus had a pack that washed you, cleansed you, healed you, redeemed you, crowned you with love and compassion.

We see the deals of the sin and the elevation to the status of being a child of God, fit and well-being. And we were trying to get the load out of the concrete.

And we were trying to get the load out of the concrete. We were trying to be a child of God, fit and well-being. And we were never being able to save Him.

[13 : 26] What a wonderful thing it is to be a child of God. How exciting it is to be a child of God. He goes on though, he says, look, all desire is satisfied.

The words exactly, Who satisfies your desires with good things. And essentially the good things really are He Himself. What greater satisfaction can there be, remember?

And reading in Psalm 73, one of the lovely bits of the Psalms, that yet I am always with you. You hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel. Afterward, you'll take me into glory.

Whom have I in heaven with you? And earth has nothing a desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Satisfaction. It satisfies you, your desires, good things. What a construction this is, you and I, in the position of facing outer darkness, weeping, wailing, and gnashing the teeth.

[14 : 38] Jesus is worth. From that, the plenum is restored. Pull back from that pit and redeemed and elevated and satisfied.

And then this beautiful picture so that your youth is renewed like the evil. And we have this glorious picture, so appropriate for Scotland, the great evil.

I've never actually seen one not in nature, but they are majestic creatures soaring up on the sermons.

That's a picture for the Christian man and woman, soaring up on the sermons of glory. That's the work of Jesus, a complete, a full, an entire work.

And this man is excited as he ponders it. Paul speaks about being predestined and all that justified and glorified.

[15 : 41] Because he knows Jesus is risen. And because Jesus is risen, my friends, so are you, Risen. Are you excited? You know, I think in our day in age, in these days, I fear there's a certain quality that is kind of like infected us to be cool, not to show excitement.

And perhaps it explains why too often we who gather in the name of Christ, claiming the merits of Christ, the benefits of Christ, claiming that we are inheritance of glory, we don't mention his name very often together.

Why don't you and I come up to one another and say, brother, sister, in Christ, I love you because the love of the Lord has been bestowed upon me.

And I can't but help love you because I can see in you that work of grace. And it's going on. And it's beautiful. Let's be excited. Let's be excited.

And let the world see that we are excited. We have something that thrills us to our core. And it is Jesus Christ who gave himself to the uttermost on our behalf.

[17 : 04] Well, these are the benefits that he reflects upon. He said to himself, oh, my soul, don't forget. Heed the words that God spoke through Moses all those years ago.

Heed the words. Don't forget your God. Remember the benefits that God is bestowing upon you, has bestowed upon you, will bestow upon you.

Spend time in these things. Reflect, meditate. Talk to yourself over these matters. And speak with others about them. Don't be embarrassed for Jesus, of Jesus.

Love Jesus. And show your love by speaking frequently to one another of Him. Why did they meet in the early days in the New Testament?

We find them as we read our New Testament, they were always meeting. And they were given the counsel, meet regularly, do not put off, meeting one another. They encourage one another daily.

[18 : 07] Or what? They have had a good wage increase. Well, my cows, they've multiplied this year. Well, maybe those things cropped up in conversation. But I would say those people met and encouraged one another in Jesus Christ.

That's what they met on. That's what they fed upon. I know the Lord, and I know my neighbor. He's come to the Lord. Isn't it wonderful? And there would be all of this excitement, you see.

Jesus creates excitement when we spend our time with Him, thinking on Him, meditating upon Him. What's exciting you tonight?

What did you bring with you tonight? That was exciting. That was taking up your time, your mind. What was filling me? I've seen a lot of excitement this past year.

I've seen people involved in the World Cup. They're so excited. There's been this week of the Commonwealth Games, and lots of excitement. In my own family, I've seen the excitement of first-time parenthood.

[19 : 07] I've seen marriages in our family in recent times. Bying houses, starting new jobs. All the reasons for excitement. There's people outside, and there's thousands that are excited tonight about going to this or that event.

What's exciting me? What's exciting you tonight? Is it the blessed safety, Jesus? Well, look at the response of David.

He says, what is it? What is it? Well, praise the Lord, oh, my son. Praise the Lord. Billy was asking this morning, how do we define some of these words, bless and praise?

In the authorised version, we've actually got bless here. Praise, bless. It is difficult. Do we mean the praise that we do by singing, standing up to sing?

We talk about praise, and that's what they think about. Well, it's not easy to identify. I thought of one illustration in my town.

[20 : 11] We know these programs we did on television where the cooks all get together. And there are all these experts in the food. And they say, oh, I can taste the tarragon.

And somebody else will say, that hint of lemon, will that lie? Does he get excited about these things? And they can break down a meal.

Well, when you praise the Lord, I think when David praises the Lord, I think we find all different qualities in his idea of praising. I think we find affection for the Lord here.

And I think we find gratitude. And I think we find devotion, a sense of commitment to the Lord, praise the Lord.

He's looking at the Lord, and he's saying, I'm going to give myself to you. Because he recognises how much the Lord has given of himself to him. And so his response is to give himself to the Lord.

[21 : 10] And that's what Paul did when he called himself a servant or a slave. He was giving himself to the Lord gladly. This is his immediate response. But David, who is remarkably gifted by God, he's a great wordsmith, he's a poet, a man of words.

And nonetheless, finds it quite a challenge to put into words. Even though this is a beautiful composition, it's quite a challenge to put into words what it is to praise this God, this saviour.

Look at the ideas that swirl in his mind, that help him to express how incredible he sees this work of God in him.

He says, in verse 11, having just said he doesn't treat us as our sins deserve, he says, for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.

How high are the heavens above the earth? But a scientist here, no doubt. And no doubt you could give me some kind of answer to that. But how high are the heavens?

[22 : 37] I can remember as a little boy looking out at night into the vast darkness thinking, where does that go? I'm a big boy now, and I still ask that question because I don't really know.

I'm not a scientist. But I know it's huge. And that's the point that David is making. It's that high. It's impossible to reach.

It's impossible to see. It's impossible to evaluate. How high is this love of God for me? How far he has removed my sins from his presence.

So great is his love for those who fear him. Then he goes on and he says, well, let's try this one. He says, as far as the east is from the west, have you ever traveled east?

Sure you have. You've probably gotten a bus one day, and you went east. You went towards the water, the North Sea. You were going to visit somebody. You went east. And when you got there, there was still an east to go to, wasn't there?

[23 : 45] You could have gotten another bus, but in this case, you would have gotten a ferry. And you'd gone over the water, and you'd ended up in the continent. There was still an east. And then the mode of transport, there's still an east.

And eventually, you end up back where you started. But the same must stop. But there's still an east. Far as the east is from the west, he says here.

So far, as he removed our transgressions from us, you see, he's intoxicated with what the Lord has done for him.

And as he writes this composition for the use by others, for us, we are to key into this intoxication, this excitement.

How do you measure this infinity idea? Well, the only answer I can give is by looking at Calvary. It's the only way I can really conclude on the matter.

[24 : 47] I see for God so loved the world, he gave his one and only son, who so ever believes in him, will not perish, but have everlasting life.

Oh, my soul, forget not all his benefits. As I survey the ones who cross, I mean, with these hymns, with glorious hymns, written by people who were being mightily impressed upon by the Holy Spirit during times of revival, when Jesus was lifted up in a very special, remarkable way.

And these men were composed in these stunning hymns. As I survey the ones who cross, on which the Prince of Glory died.

I see intoxicated with Jesus, with this great work of God, and the soul. I suppose really having looked at Calvary, we then realize Calvary gives to us everlasting life.

The Old Testament knew it as well, Psalm 23, and surely I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. And that's what we need forever to evaluate what the Lord has done for us.

[26 : 22] Paul had the similar thoughts to the David. I was thinking of that passage in Ephesians in chapter 3.

And again, I'll just read a few verses to you. He's speaking to the saints, and he says, I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, you may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep was the love of Christ.

And to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled through the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to immeasurably, more than all, we ask what we imagine according to his power.

That is of work within us to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever, amen. See, what are we going to ask for imagine?

He's struggling for words as well. Like David, the wordsmith is struggling for words. You can just say, look, I've got to take you to infinity ideas. I've got to ask you to just use your minds and try and imagine how do you measure these things?

[27 : 30] You cannot God's love, God's compassion, God's mercy, God's forgiveness, God's dealing with us, goes way beyond all of this. It's beyond your wildest imagination, Paul says.

You just cannot grasp it, but I pray that he will minister this knowledge of his love to you, that you will be knocked out by it, stunned, thrilled, excited, that it will take your life over.

Not that you'll become crazy fanatics, as some do in religious circles, but that you will become men and women of love who love others.

You just cannot but love because Christ's love burns within you. It's just the work of grace, in effect. It goes on, though.

I won't take much longer, but he goes on, and he says, oh, now, look, oh, my son, God's love.

[28 : 35] How can I praise the Lord for this? Well, he goes to verse 20, and he says, you, his angels, you, join in with me. You, praise the Lord.

You mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word, he's calling upon the angels to engage in some great choir with him to sing the praises of this, his Lord.

And I think verse 21 is probably just a reiteration of the idea, but perhaps by the use of the word heavenly host, it's just enlarging the idea to say, it's not just a choir, it's a massed choir.

It's a host of voices, uniting with me in my joy to praise this, my Lord, my Savior. Join with me.

And then he goes on again, and he says in verse 22, praise the Lord all his works. All his works, and so he's speaking to the entirety of creation.

[29 : 44] Now, have your eyes been opened of light, my friends? Have you seen the early swallows, the beautiful blue skies we've had of light, the wonderful colors in the flower beds?

Have you thought about the great mountains that cover the face of the earth and the depths of the ocean? Wonders of creation.

Every little bird you see is doing exactly what it was made to do, flying across your vision, a little sparrow there, and you're a beautiful little creature. Well, the clouds that come across and bring the rain, and you think, ooh, a bit of a dark day, but we need that rain.

Lord's gift, Lord's benefit, Lord's speaking to us through his handiwork, the grass as it grows, the seasons as we come, and they grow.

Many years ago, when we just moved to Scotland, I'd always been a city man. We were now living in school, and we were in the country, in effect.

[30 : 50] And I remember taking Tom, who was that big, for a walk. And we went up into this hillside over looking the little flat where we stayed initially.

And I said, can you hear that, Tom? What's that, Dad? Can you hear that? Oh, aye. I said, can you see it?

And eventually, I think I heard it. And it was a sky lock. Tiny little message to Tom. I said, you know, if you had that bird in your hands now, you'd hardly know it.

You might feel it's fluffy little feathers, but it's made bones. But it wouldn't weigh a thing. But it was up in the heavens, and it was pouring out melody, sweet melody, in praise of its creator.

How am I doing in my life, you and yours, pouring out the melody of the person you are meant to be, as the saved sinner you are tonight.

[32 : 01] And I trust you all. If you're not, my friend, don't delay. Come to this glorious savior tonight. Come to him and ask him to deliver you in the way that you've seen outlined tonight, to relieve you of all of your sin, all of your transgression, all of the offence that you have given him.

Ask him for mercy and pardon for Jesus' sake. Don't delay. And he will do it. He calls on the creation.

He calls upon the heavenly house. Unite with me and worship this, my glorious Lord, and Savior. But look how he ends the psalm. He can't get away from it.

He ends. Praise the Lord, oh my son. You see? You can go on this great journey thinking about all of these things. You can call on the heavenly host.

You can call upon the creation. But you end up back home in your study talking to yourself. That's where it begins. You and I, Christian, we have to say, Lord, forgive me.

[33 : 15] Pardon me. Strengthen me. Take me forward. Show me your will. Help me to be yours, more and more, day by day.

Help me to be excited in you. Help me to put aside the things, even the legitimate things, of this life that encumber me and prevent me from being yours truly, fully, sincerely, and in a way that affects others so that they might just say, look how this woman, this fellow, turns the world upside down.

It's possible for you and for me. That that can happen. You look at the people in scripture whom God dealt with, by and large, they're very ordinary people. And he made of them great servants.

We've been looking at the catechism of late. Well, the shorter catechism begins, in my opinion, in that brilliant way, what is man's chief end?

To glorify and enjoy. That's what we're called for. So enjoy him and glorify him and glorify him and enjoy him.

[34 : 37] And let that be the recurring theme in your life. Go out tonight rejoicing that he has stood down low, that he has plucked you from the bearing, taken you out of the mighty clay.

He has put your feet upon the rock that are in effect the shoulders of Christ. And he is carrying you on and will finish the work that was commenced. There is no shadow of doubt.

Why? Because God is faithful. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. You are secure in him, Christian.

Fear not, little flock, he said to us, because he knows best. He says, follow me, because he knows best.

And when we do that, we will know the joy of the Lord and what it is to be in glory to his name. Amen.