

Trust in the Lord

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Preacher: Rev W.R.Mackay

[0 : 00] The words for meditation for a short time this evening, you will find in the psalm which we read together a few moments ago, the book of Psalms and the fourth psalm, Psalm number four, and we might read again at verse four.

Psalm number four, reading at verse four. Stand in awe and sin not. Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still.

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord.

This psalm comprises an evening petition.

And belongs to the same period in David's life as the preceding one. But it differs from it in this respect.

[1 : 29] That it seeks the conversion of his enemies rather than their destruction. And in it we find less of complaint and more of joyous confidence.

The fourth and the fifth verses detail four steps. Four important steps which belong to the religious life.

And there are four steps which it would be wise for us to consider as we are met together on the fast day of a communion season.

When we seek to prepare our hearts for the days which lie ahead. And these four things all concern our personal life.

And remember that religion is something which is intensely personal. You see sometimes we are inclined to look upon it as something which is in the mass or in the crowd.

[2 : 46] But religion in the final analysis is something which concerns the individual. Something which concerns you.

And something which concerns me. As we think of our relationship to God. And so those four things which concern us ourselves as individuals are these.

First of all we have self awakening. Stand in awe and fear not. And then we have a self communion or self examination.

Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still. This is followed by self confession. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness.

And finally by self abandonment. Put your trust in the Lord. First of all then we have self awakening.

[4 : 06] Stand in awe and sin not. Now this language seems to be far removed from much of the phraseology of present day religious life.

In these days in which we live. We may hear much of happiness and joy and peace and contentment. And it is right and proper that we should hear of these things.

Because they are all part of that heritage. Which God gives to his people. But we hear very little.

About fear. And about trembling. You see. Sometimes we can get caught up. In what one might call a sentimental emotionalism.

And we find. That there is this lack of reverence. And this lack of humility. In our approach to God. But these.

[5 : 19] Are the words of a man. Who has had a vision of God. A vision of God upon his throne. A vision which was very similar to the vision of the prophet Isaiah.

About which we read a few minutes ago. He saw the Lord high and lifted up. And it made a tremendous impact upon him.

He saw there God in all his majesty. In all his wonder. In all his glory. And then he looked at himself. In all his sin.

In all his degradation. And all his misery. He said. Woe is me for I am undone. I am a man of sinful lips.

And he became awakened. To a true sense. Of his condition. In the sight of God. He had a vision of sin.

[6 : 16] In its true perspective. And the result was. Woe is me. And you see. We must ever remember.

That sin. Is not a moral mistake. And nothing more. Sin is not something which is trivial. Something which we can lightly gloss over.

As many people might be prepared to make us believe. In these days. Sin. Is rebellion against God. It is puny man.

Shaking his fist in the face of the eternal God. And saying. I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul. And there you have the spirit of rebellion.

Coming to the surface. You remember the answer. Which our shorter catechism. Gives to the question. What is sin?

[7 : 21] In that answer. We have the two aspects of sin. Brought before us. The negative aspect. And the positive aspect. Sin. Sin.

Sin. Is any want of conformity unto. In other words. It's a coming short. It's failing to fulfill. Something which we should fulfill. Israel. It's a missing of the mark. So to speak. In the book of Judges. We read about.

The bowmen of Israel. And they used to draw. A bow. And they used to shoot an arrow. They were so accurate. They didn't miss the mark.

And the word which is used there. For missing the mark. Is the same word. Which is used in the epistle to the Romans. When sin is described. Sin is a missing of the mark.

[8 : 19] A coming short. Man's chief end. Is to glorify God. And to enjoy him forever. And when we sin. We're not doing that. We're coming short.

Of his requirements. Of his standards. And we stand guilty before him. And that is something. Which is common to us all. For all have sinned.

And come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous. No not one. But sin as I suggested a moment ago.

Is more than a missing of the mark. Sin is an act of rebellion against God. Pitying our own puny strength.

Against the strength of the eternal. And seeking to do battle against him. Oh the futility of it. Oh the folly of it.

[9 : 19] That sinful man. Should think for a moment. That he can do battle with the most high. That one who is but a poor creature.

A frail dust of the earth. Should seek to enter into conflict. With the almighty. But that's what sin is. And that's what we're all guilty of. Coming short. Missing the mark. And then seeking to pit our strength.

Against the strength of the eternal. And so. There must be. This. Self awakening.

That's the first step that is necessary. We must realize. The true situation. We must realize. How we stand.

[10 : 16] In the presence of God. And when we do. We say. Against thee. The only have I sinned. And done this evil.

In thy sight. You remember that beautiful little poem or hymn. Which was written by. Murray McChain. How he describes.

This very thing. This awakening. Which came into his soul. And when he said. I once was a stranger. To grace and to God. I knew not my danger.

I felt not my Lord. When friends spoke. In rapture of Christ. On the tree. Jehovah Sidkenyo. Was nothing to me.

And then he goes on to describe. How he was aroused. How he was awakened. By God's grace. And he says. When free grace awoke me.

[11 : 14] By light from on high. Then legal fear shook me. I trembled to die. No refuge. No safety. In self.

Could I find. In self. Could I see. Jehovah Sidkenyo. My savior.

Must be. A man. Who had been awakened. By the grace of God. A wonderful experience.

That God's free grace. Should so work. In the heart of a man. In the heart of a woman. That he or she. Should see themselves. As they really are.

Sinners in the sight of God. Under his wrath. And under his condemnation. But then from self awakening.

[12:14] The psalmist goes on. To talk about self communion. Or self examination. The scriptures tell us.

That a man. Should examine himself. And we don't find it very easy. To do that. We would find it much easier.

To examine our neighbors. Or our companions. And if we were asked. For an opinion of them. We could rattle it off. In a few moments. And tell how bad they were.

And how many faults they had. But we're not. Asked to do that. We are asked to turn the searchlight. Into our own lives.

And when we do that. Alas. It's not a very pretty picture. Which presents itself. When we see ourselves. As we truly are.

[13:12] In the sight of God. And in order to help us. In this self examination. Which we are called upon.

To undertake. There are certain questions. Which we should address. To ourselves. And the first one is this. Does my heart.

Choose and follow. That which conscience. Tells me is right. Conscience says to us. Fear God. And keep his commandments. For that is the duty of man. But our hearts do otherwise. So we endeavor.

To lull conscience to sleep. So that we may enjoy. The desires of our hearts. And this surely is something.

[14:06] Which is exceedingly dangerous to do. Because conscience. Will not always sleep. Conscience will not always slumber. And perhaps conscience.

May disturb you on a death bed. When your heart is so hard. That it will no longer. Be willing to respond. If only we realized it.

My dear friends. What a wonderful blessing. Conscience is. In the providence of God. Conscience may make cowards of us all.

As the popular saying goes. But how much worse it is. If our conscience is so dead. That it doesn't prick us at all.

Thank God if your conscience pulls you up from time to time. Because it's his word to your soul. His word to remind you.

[15:13] That now is the time. When you have to make your peace with God. That now is the time. When he calls upon you to repent. And to turn unto himself.

And he is reminding you. In his love. And in his mercy. That though the wicked forsake his way. And the unrighteous man his thoughts. Yet if they return unto the Lord.

He will have mercy upon them. And that our God. God will abundantly pardon. Conscience.

Is a touchstone. A warning system. I don't know whether out in the island. You have had to get the length of putting burglar alarms in your house.

But in the mainland. That is something which is very common nowadays. And the alarm goes off. When something takes place.

[16:11] Which shouldn't be there. Now conscience is very much like that. It's God's alarm system. Saying to you.

What is your life? How are you ordering things? What is your relationship to God? How are you going to face the future?

But then there is another question. Which we might ask. And it is this. Is my conscience instructed. By the word of God. You see sometimes we may think we are doing right.

When we are doing otherwise. You remember Saul of Tarsus. The Pharisee. A Pharisee of the Pharisees. He describes himself.

He was on the Damascus road. And he had one specific purpose in mind. He was going to persecute. And bring into captivity.

[17:11] And perhaps even kill. This new sect which had arisen. The followers of Jesus Christ. Now Saul was doing this in perfect sincerity.

He was doing it in the name of his God. He believed that here was something which was wrong. Something which should be stamped out. And so he went on his way.

Until suddenly he was apprehended. When he had that vision on the Damascus road. That vision which transformed his life.

That piercing question. Which pierced his inner being. And made him realize that he was fighting against God. And you see sometimes we.

May think we are doing that which is right. When we are not. The scribes and the Pharisees thought they were doing right. When they brought Jesus Christ.

[18 : 17] Into Gethsemane. And from there into the cross. Onto the cross. They thought they were doing God's service. And so we must ask ourselves.

As to whether our conscience is instructed by the word of God. And then let us put this other question to ourselves too. Have my pursuits after sinful enjoyments brought me satisfaction? If not. Then have you any reason to believe. That they ever will. You see as Augustine said. Our hearts are restless. Till they find their rest in God. God has planted desires in the human hearts.

In the human heart. That this world cannot satisfy. And yet how many there are who are drinking. And seeking to find satisfaction.

[19 : 20] And slake their thirst. From the broken cisterns of the world. Which can hold no water. You go and take a drink to begin with.

And there's some water there. And it seems to satisfy. And you go back again. And because the cistern is broken. The cistern is empty.

And it lets you down. You see that's what the world does. The world promises so much. But it gives so little. The world pays wages.

To those who want to work for it. The wages of sin. Is death. Death. That's surely a poor recompense.

For a life spent in the service of sin. That at the end of the day. All it has to offer. Is death. And destruction.

[20 : 22] But how different it is. When we partake of the gift of God. For the gift of God. Is eternal life.

Where are you seeking to find satisfaction tonight. My friend. Is it at the broken cisterns of the world.

Or have you taken a. Draft of that refreshing water. Of which our Lord said. If any man drink of this water.

He will never thirst again. Never thirst again. Something which carries you through time.

Something which carries you into eternity. That is the thing. Which is worth possessing. And there's still another question.

[21 : 19] And the other question is this. Will the course. Will the course I am pursuing. A duel to die with. If so.

Then pursue it with all your might. But first be well satisfied that it will. For has not our Lord told us. That except a man be born again.

He shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. And unless there has been that rebirth in your soul. Then the gateway is barred.

And if you are hoping that the course you are in. Is going to be sufficient at the end of the day. Then surely you are going to be sadly.

Sadly disillusioned. Have you ever thought seriously about that? What better time to think about it.

[22 : 22] Than at the beginning of a communion season. And if you value your soul's redemption. Remember who spoke those words.

Except a man be born again. He shall in no wise enter. Into the kingdom of God. That's what we have to strive after.

Lay hold. On eternal life. And there's still one final question. Comes under this head.

And it's this. If I should die in an unconverted state. Can I endure the wrath. Of an offended God. If you can. Then let everyone say to his brother. And everyone say to his neighbor. Be of good courage. Laugh at death. Set judgment at defiance.

[23 : 22] Make a joke or a jest of the hereafter. But if not. Then pause. And consider. Do you remember that story.

In the New Testament. About the man. Who had so much of this world's goods. That his barns wouldn't hold it all. He made up his mind.

He was going to. Build more barns. Everything was going to be good. The future was bright indeed. As far as material things went. And then you remember.

You remember the message. That came to him. So dramatically. Thou fool. Thou fool. This night. Thy soul shall be required of thee. And you see. It's not so dramatic. By reason of it being confined. To a single instance.

[24 : 26] For that's something. Which happens. Every day of the year. And every night of the year. That's something. Which is going to happen tonight. Of someone.

It's going to be said. Thou fool. You have lived for this world. But tonight. Tonight. Your soul. Will be required of you.

And if your soul. Is to be required of you. Tonight. My friend. Are you ready. Ready.

Ready. To face your maker. Commune with your heart. On your bed. And be silent. It's wonderful. Sometimes. In the night watches. When one can commune. With one's maker. And realize. His presence. And feel and know.

[25 : 25] That he is near. But then. And very briefly. We come on to self. Confession. Offer.

The sacrifices. Of righteousness. When the children. Of Israel. Of Israel. Of old. Brought their sacrifices. The first thing.

They did. Was to lay their hand. Upon the victim. And make confession. Of their sins. And what sacrifice.

Are we called upon. To offer. What sacrifice. Can we offer. To God. For the atonement. Of our sins. All our righteousness.

Is there before him. But as filthy rags. And yet. We thank God. That there is a sacrifice. Which he has promised.

[26 : 22] To accept. A broken. And a contrite heart. Lord. Thou wilt not despise.

That's what we need. A broken heart. Heart. Which has been broken. By reason of sin.

That heart. Which has been made. Contrite. The prayer. Of the psalmist. Was answered. When he was given. The broken heart. When he said.

Do thou with hyssop. Sprinkle me. I shall be cleansed. So. Yea. Wash thou me. And then. I shall be. Whiter than the snow. And we rejoice.

To remember. That the all sufficient. Sacrifice. For sin. Has been offered up. Once and for all. For our savior.

[27 : 19] Died upon the cross. And he died. For our salvation. And here again. Here again.

You have the personal aspect. Of the gospel. Becoming alive. You remember. How Paul. When he referred. To this great salvation.

And to this great sacrifice. How he. Connected it with himself. With his own life. And he said this. The son of God.

Who loved me. Me. And gave himself. For me. Just think. Think of the wonder.

Of God's love. That he should have. Given himself. For poor. Guilty sinners. In order.

[28 : 15] That the gateway. To glory. Might be opened. To Adam's fallen race. And yet he did it. God so loved the world.

That he gave his only begotten son. That whosoever believeth in him. Should not perish. But have everlasting life.

We need the broken. And the contrite heart. And we have that glad assurance. That glad assurance. Which has been given to us.

That if we confess our sins. He is faithful and just. To forgive our sins. And to cleanse us.

From all unrighteousness. Isn't that something. To pillow your heads on. That your sins will be forgiven.

[29 : 18] If you confess them unto him. Then finally. We have. Self. Abandonment.

Put your trust. Says the psalmist. In the Lord. Trust him first of all. My friend. As the one who is willing.

To receive you. Him that cometh unto me. He says. I will in no wise. Cast out. How precious.

Are these words. I will in no wise. Cast out. Come now. Says. The Lord. Come now. And let us reason together.

Let us talk things over. What more than that. Could he do. Though your sins be as scarlet. They shall be white as snow.

[30 : 17] Though they be red like crimson. They shall be as wool. Just think of it. The eternal God. The high and the holy one.

The one who Isaiah saw in the vision. High and lifted up. And he says. Look. I'm willing to talk things over with you.

And I'm reminding you even now. That no matter how great a sinner you have been. No matter how great a sinner you are.

Your sins will be forgiven. They shall be made. Whiter than snow. What a wonderful savior we have.

What a wonderful savior indeed. Can you lay claim to him. As your savior. Can you say that your sins have been washed away.

[31 : 19] Can you say that you are resting in his promises tonight. Can you say I know whom I have believed. And I'm persuaded that he is able to keep.

That which I have committed unto him. Against that day. Oh how wonderful if you can say that. Then the future holds no fear for you.

You can go on. In the strength of the Lord God. And then the other thing is this. Trust the merits of that sacrifice.

Which were offered up. Once and for all. In other words. In other words abandon self. Nothing in my hand I bring.

Simply to thy cross I cling. The provision has been made. The gate has been opened. The invitation has been given.

[32 : 22] But have you availed yourself of it? Or are you still outside? With no desire in your heart.

To enter within. And then there is this further thought. Trust the power of the Holy Spirit.

To renew us. It's the Spirit and the Spirit alone. Which can work that great transformation. In the lives of men and women.

And we rejoice to remember. That he still does that. He can recreate us. He can renew us. He can refashion us.

And remould us. You remember. That story which is told. In the book of Jeremiah. About the prophet.

[33 : 17] When he was told to go down. To the house of the potter. In order that he might learn a lesson. And even as he watched the potter. Ply his trade. There was a vessel.

In the hand of the potter. And it was marred. It was broken. And what did he do with it? Did he seek to patch it up? Did he seek to give it a little glaze.

A glaze of varnish. So that the crack or the flaw. Might not be detected. No. It was marred. God. So he broke it.

And he made it again. And you see. That's what God still does. With the lives of men and women. We have to be broken.

We have to come to the end. Of our own resources. We have to see ourselves. As we really are. Sinners in the sight of God.

[34 : 16] We have to be awakened. As I said at the beginning. To see our real state. And then God's gracious spirit.

Takes the broken vessel. And he makes it again. A vessel. Fit for his glory.

A transformation. A transformation wrought. Not by ourselves. But by the spirit of God. And so my dear friends.

Let us come to him tonight. Let us come with that daring trust. That ventures all upon the promises of God. God. The end of the road.

May be enshrouded in mist. Shrouded in mist. You know sometimes. You can set off on a journey. And you go into the mist. You can't see very far ahead.

[35 : 16] But you know that that road. Is leading you somewhere. And sometimes. As the Christian journeys. Along the road of life. The mist may be very thick.

And you wonder. What the future holds in store. But you go forward. In the strength of the Lord God. Who sheds light upon the path.

And one day. The clouds are going to lift. And the mist is to be no more. And you're going to find yourself. Basking in the sunshine of his love. And enjoying his favor.

Throughout the countless ages of eternity. If you put your trust in him. Take a step at a time. Step out.

On the promises of God. And especially in that promise. That he will never leave you. Or forsake you.

[36 : 16] Jesus. Jesus I will trust thee. Trust thee with my soul. Guilty. Violent. Helpless. Thou canst make me whole.

There is none in heaven. Nor on earth like thee. Thou has died for sinners. Can you by his grace tonight.

Make it a little more personal. Can you say. Thou. Has died. For me.

The son of God. Who loved me. And gave himself. For me. Stand in awe.

And sin not. Commune with your own heart. Upon your bed. And be still. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness.

[37 : 19] And put your trust. Put your trust. In the Lord. Will you do that.

May the Lord. Through the gracious operation. Of his spirit. Enable you to do that. Even tonight. So that you may be found.

Resting. On his promises. And then. All. Shall be well. Let us pray. O Lord.

Our God. Thou knowest. That our poor lips. Are badly suited. To tell others. Of thy love. And of thy concern.

But it. But we thank thee. That it has pleased thee. In the past. Through the appearance. And foolishness. Of preaching. To draw men. And women.

[38 : 23] To thyself. And so. We pray. That thy word. Which has gone forth. In weakness. May be accompanied. By the power.

Of thine own spirit. Work out. O Lord. Thy gracious. Purposes. Tonight. In the hearts. And lives. Of some.

Who are here. In our midst. Give to them. No peace. And no rest. Until they enter. Into an experience. Of the peace of God.

Which passeth. All understanding. And bless us. Each and all. As we go. Our several ways. At this time. Take us.

In safety. To our homes. And grant unto us. Refreshing sleep. And if it be. Thy good will. Fit and prepare.

[39 : 17] Us through sleep. For the tasks. And duties. Of the morrow. If it be. Thy will. That we see it. And above all. Give us.

That assurance. Of thy presence. Which shall drive. Out our every fear. And make us. Feel and know. That the Lord himself.

Is our portion. And our God. And all this we ask. With the pardon. Of our every sin. For Jesus sake. Amen.