

BEING CONVINCED OF GOD'S LOVE FOR US

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Psalm 63.

In this Psalm, David is again experiencing difficulties, as in Psalms 60 to 62. Yet he is assured that God is near to him and he has great confidence which he expresses in this Psalm. He is able to speak about being joyful and rejoicing (verses 5, 7 and 11).

What were the difficulties that he was facing when he wrote this Psalm? It is possible that it was the troubles caused by his son, Absalom, when he tried to seize the throne from his father. David is certainly the king at this stage, as we see from verse 11. David also has great clarity about the downfall of the person causing his troubles (vv 9 -10). Whilst facing these huge challenges, David expresses vehement longing (v1) and believes that there will be satisfaction for his soul (v5). His deep conviction about the Lord's goodness towards him comes through in v3.

1. God's loving-kindness – better than life.

This is not a rash statement. Although it is spoken in a phase of David's life when under great pressure, it is measured and rational. He is 'telling it as it is.' He knows that in the heart of God is an abundance of mercy, generosity, warmth, and kindness. Neither is David simply speaking something that is true but which he does not know personally about. David has himself experienced the love of God and declares the experience of it to be better than life. The love of God towards His people gives us more than life can ever give us. Life, at its best, cannot compare with the love of God.

It makes us stop and ask what life is. Is it about quantity? Would life, if we could hold on to it many years, offer us something more than God can? Society has been taken up with the subject of death over the last year. Policy has been to try to extend life as long as possible to help people live longer, even if it costs the economy and other aspects of health dearly. Yet how ever long we extend life, we all must die. God's love outlasts life, however long we live.

Or could life, even if short, yet if it was full of rich and deepening experiences, offer us something better than the love of God? David had a life full of things that other might judge to be good and liberating. He had power, success, fame and rewarding work. Yet David did not make the mistake, that many people make, in believing that all these things will offer contentment and absolute fulfillment. He knew that the love of God

was more vital and important than all these things. Neither is it the other way round, that life for David was so wretched that anything else seemed good by comparison.

Where do we stand in all this? Do we think that this life will supply all our wants and needs, and leave us totally fulfilled? Are we thinking that our work, our family, our relationships are more than adequate in making up for whatever God could supply in our lives? Are we thinking that living long and full of experience will be sufficient?

2. What did David know?

What had so persuaded David about the wonder and sufficiency of the love of God? How had this experience eclipsed everything else?

Firstly, whether we acknowledge it or not, God is full of loving-kindness. This can be found in a number of places in Scripture, such as Exodus 34: 6-7 and Jeremiah 9:23-24. David knew it to be true, even in the immediate aftermath of his sin with Bathsheba having been unmasked (Psalm 51:1). The truth is that we are owed displeasure, shame, God's opposition to us, His justice and death. Instead, we receive forgiveness and mercy, something the Pharisees were unable to comprehend (Matthew 23:23). The Son of God bore all the disgrace of our sinful nature so as to remove it far from us (Psalm 103: 11-12). That disgrace and wretchedness is now gone for the believer. We know that we were once seen by God in the light of our sin but that now He looks on us differently.

The experience of His love is not an experience of a fact but a living experience of contact and connection with a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. He has established a relationship with us and made an indissoluble link with us. As it dawns on us, this revelation of the love of God in Christ Jesus is something that can never be forgotten. It leaves a deep impression and becomes a conviction held deep in our hearts. A glimpse of the glory of Christ becomes something that is never to be forgotten. It absorbs our full attention, calms our fears, engenders hope in our souls and prompts us to respond in love to Him.

Once experienced, that knowledge of His love is carried forward for the rest of our lives. We are able to appreciate that we are loved and that we are forgiven. We are able to go through life knowing that God is for us. Whatever people might try to do or whatever hardships we might encounter in life, nothing can remove this knowledge from us.

It is a truth that is proved more and more through experience in life. David knows that the Lord is his help (v7) from actual experience. It is something that David has learnt about the Lord through all the harsh realities of life. He now knows that he is capable of surviving through the most difficult and challenging of times because of the love of God.

We should then, each of us, do all we can to know that love of Christ for ourselves personally. We must part with all our sins and idols and every inadequate 'god' that we have so that we too can know that the loving-kindness of Christ is better than life itself.