

Lev 05-07-31a

This is Sunday, the 31st of July, 2005. We continue our worship by taking a moment at this point in preparation for the study of the Word of God to exercise the function of our individual priesthood. We are gathered as a group.

We enjoy the benefits of fellowship and the ministry of God's Spirit through each one who is here. But this is a moment where we individually go before God and ensure that our hearts are prepared to meditate on the Word of God, to receive the personal ministry of God's Holy Spirit so that we can be ready to function as we are supposed to in the plan and purpose of God in the days ahead. So let's pause for just a moment and go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we are thankful for this day. We are thankful for the opportunity to set aside the normal tasks of the week and to assemble, to spend time in worship, in singing great songs that remind us of the truths of Scripture, of the truth of your character, of the greatness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank you for each one who is assembled with us, for all those who study your Word with us.

We ask your special blessing on them wherever they may be. We thank you for the preservation of your Word and the nourishment and strength that it provides to our souls. We thank you that we live in a country where we have so many positive opportunities for application.

We are not oppressed. We are not hounded. We are not in fear of our lives, as is the case in many places.

We instead are in relative prosperity and have the opportunity to exploit the great victory that the Lord Jesus accomplished on the cross. We ask your blessing on us as we study your Word together. May each one find the particular aspects of your truth that are necessary, helpful, encouraging for the portion of your plan that is set before them.

We pray that each one will come away encouraged and refreshed and strengthened for the days ahead. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Turn with me for our scripture reading to Psalm 62. Psalm 62. This is subtitled in the New King James, A Calm Resolve to Wait for the Salvation of God.

I find this particularly apropos because we are looking at the Levitical feasts, which are the outline or are a major part of the calendar of Israel. They have a prophetic element. They are predictive from the time that they were given.

Four of them have been fulfilled. Three of them remain to be fulfilled. So when we come to Psalm 62, which is a psalm dedicated to the chief musician, to Jeduthan, a psalm of David, the theme is waiting for the deliverance of God.

David knew a lot about waiting for God's deliverance. My first in a long list of examples in

scripture of people who waited on the Lord is David, who was anointed by Samuel as king over Israel, but lived for many years and went through many trials before he ever actually became king. He had the anointing.

He had the promise. It was a certitude, and yet God had things for him to experience and to learn under pressure, in adversity, before he was prepared to sit on the throne. The Lord Jesus himself spent 30 years of preparation before he embarked on his three years of active ministry in Israel.

And there will be yet another seven years in the age of Israel to run before the Lord Jesus fulfills the promise of God, the Davidic covenant, to sit on the throne of his father David and begin ruling the millennial kingdom, which will make him how old on an Israelite clock? If he was 33 when he left, then how old will he be when he begins to rule? 40. 33 plus 7. The 70th week of Daniel, the remaining seven years of the age of Israel. And that is a significant number for many reasons.

At any rate, we are here at Psalm 62, which says, truly my soul silently waits for God. From him comes my salvation. And hopefully by now, after these months and perhaps years of study, you know that the word salvation in the Bible generally speaks of deliverance other than from the lake of fire.

Once in a great while, it talks about our absolute deliverance from the penalty of no relationship with God and no redemption by Christ. But most of the time, salvation doesn't have the sense that Christians assign it today in the Bible. Most of the time, salvation means deliverance.

And you have to determine the type of deliverance from context. So, we will watch for that as we go through this psalm. From him comes my salvation.

He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense. I shall not be greatly moved.

How long will you attack a man? You shall be slain, all of you. We should memorize this psalm just so we can quote it when people are giving us a hard time. How long will you attack a man? You shall be slain, all of you, like a leaning wall and a tottering fence.

They only consult to cast him down from his high position. They delight in lies. They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.

My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. I left out, by the way, Selah in verse 4. This particular Bible sticks the Selah way over in the right-hand margin. My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him.

He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense. I shall not be greatly moved.

In God is my salvation and my glory, the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God. Trust in

Him at all times, you people. Pour out your heart before Him.

God is a refuge for us. Selah. Surely men of low degree are a vapor.

Men of high degree are a lie. If they are weighed on the scales, they are altogether lighter than vapor. Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery.

If riches increase, do not set your heart on them. God has spoken once. Twice I have heard this, that power belongs to God.

Also to you, O Lord, belongs mercy. For you render to each one according to his work. That ought to ring a bell.

The Apostle Paul, of course, quotes this in the New Testament, talking about the judgment seat of Christ, where God will render to each one according to his works. This psalm is interesting, because if you pay attention, being an English major, this is the kind of thing that just makes my day. Look at the change of person as you scan through this psalm.

He begins speaking in the first person, doesn't he? Truly my soul silently waits for God. From Him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation.

He is my defense. I shall not be greatly moved. One of my favorite gospel songs.

I shall not be moved. Like a tree that's planted by the water. Then there is an address to some second-person plural parties.

How long will you all attack a man? You shall be slain, all of you. So the individual is speaking. He addresses God, and then he addresses this group of enemies.

Then you have what appears to be sort of a chorus, a commentator group that sings and talks about the man of verses 1 and 2 in the third person. Like a leaning wall and a tottering fence, they, the enemies, only consult to cast him down from his high position. They delight in lies, they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.

Selah. And at the Selah, you have a break. And this means that one cycle in the psalm or the psalm has been completed.

Now we begin again in verse 5 with the first-person speaker. My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation.

He is my defense. I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory.

The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God. And notice the second time, he doesn't turn around to the enemies and talk to them anymore. They are the tottering wall and the leaning fence.

God's going to handle them, so he's no longer talking to them. So, then you have the chorus

kicking in. Trust in Him at all times, you people.

Pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us. Selah.

Then you have sort of a third portion that doesn't match the first two sections. Surely men of low degree are a vapor. And here in verse 9, we have a statement about the transient nature of opposition.

The transient nature of what seems to be a huge problem. You can think back, I can think back to periods in my life where it seemed like there was this enormous issue that just overshadowed the sky, blocked out the sun. All I could think of was this big issue, this horrible problem.

And yet, I would have to stop and really think back to a day or an episode because it's not there now. It was big at the time, but now it's gone. I remember once where I got a brand spanking new pair of boots.

They were linemen boots. Those orange ones with the white soles. I was in about the 7th grade.

I was really proud of those boots. I liked them a lot. And I wore them to school.

And I had school and I even started walking into school and a girl in my class came up and said, what's that on your feet? And obviously not with admiration. And so then it just overshadowed my whole day and I kept putting my feet under the desks. I thought, well, these must be real ugly boots.

I like them, but maybe I have no sense of style. And so then I didn't want to wear them anymore because it just overshadowed the day. One comment, when you're young, you tend to be subjective and hypersensitive.

And I had to give myself a talking to. Fortunately, at that age, I was already starting to pay attention to the Word of God and the very next Bible class I heard was all about subjectivity and worrying about the opinions of people. You know, God will do this.

He'll set you up and then, you know, give you a lump right where you need it. And so after a few days, I thought, well, you know, perfectly good boots. It doesn't matter what people think.

And it was a great, obviously, a lesson that has stuck with me for a long time. But there are issues that come up, and generally they're more serious than that when you're an adult, that loom large, and especially when they involve people. People are unhappy.

People are dissatisfied. People are looking at you askance. And maybe it's somebody you don't want.

We seldom want anybody looking at us askance, especially if it's family or especially if it's a client in a business. I've gone out and tried to do computer support for somebody. You knock

yourself out, but for reasons totally beyond your control, the great hidden workings and mechanisms are such that you just can't fix their problem when they want it fixed or how they want it fixed or they've lost data or their email disappeared or whatever.

And it's not my fault, but I feel just terrible because I was there when it happened and I'm associated with it and I couldn't fix it and they're all perplexed and distraught. Great dark cloud over the day. Men of low degree.

What is a man of low degree? Somebody whose judgment and opinion don't really count in the great eternal scheme of things. Now, they may count at the moment. Are they going to pay you for your services or not? Are they going to let you in the house or not? Are they going to speak to you or have any further truck with you or not? But men of low degree, this doesn't mean these creepy, kind of slimy, greasy, unshaven, alley-lurking people.

Low degree is a matter of spiritual objectivity. In God's view, how important? And it could be King Nebuchadnezzar. And if he's thinking ill of Hananiah and Mishael and Azariah or Daniel, he's a man of low degree.

His opinion doesn't count if he's not thinking from a divine point of view. Men of low degree are a vapor. You want to take a guess as to what the word is here that's translated vapor? I have inflicted this Hebrew on you enough that you should know this.

This is Hevel. H-E-V-E-L or B-E-L. Hevel.

This is Solomon's word over there in Kohelet, over in the Ecclesiastes. And it says, Hevel, B'nai Adam. Surely, the sons of Adam, B'nai Adam.

B'nai Adam looks at man from an earthly standpoint. It's one of Jesus' favorite titles for himself. Why? The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Because this is the point of contact with heavenly things. We looked at this Friday night in the letters to the seven churches. Remember where Jesus introduces himself as the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand? Speaks of his heavenly power, but it's from an earthly point of view.

It's heavenly power, heavenly authority as it pertains to the earth, as it is visible and viewed from the earth. Same thing here. The B'nai Adam are of vapor.

They are of low degree. And men of high degree are a lie if they are weighed on the scales, they are altogether lighter than vapor. Now, this is men of high degree from a human point of view.

Ultimately, it isn't human opinions that count at all, is it? God does not take, as I have said many times, God is not going to take a popularity poll at the judgment seat and ask the onlookers. It's not going to be like American Idol or one of these where you sing a song, now let's have everybody give a vote and see who's the most popular. That isn't how the judgment seat of

Christ works.

So, men of low degree, men of high degree, men, pretty much, period, are lighter than vapor. Well, that's pretty light. Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery.

If riches increase, do not set your heart on them. Why are these particular things in view? This psalm is talking about deliverance from God in a fairly general sense. We know that the type of deliverance in this context is from the machinations of people, from their opinions, from their evaluations, from their assignments.

If they are men of high degree, humanly speaking, they have authority, don't they? They can say whether you pass or fail, whether you stay or go, whether you get a raise or not, whether you are acceptable or not, whether they're going to speak to you or not, whether they're going to badmouth you to others or not. They have influence. They have power.

They have some sort of leverage. Do not trust in oppression. Do not vainly hope in robbery.

These are the tools of men. How do you get over? How do you make things happen? You apply pressure. You apply leverage.

Now, this oppression in this particular verse makes us think of some sort of awful affliction that's put on somebody. But oppression is really just any kind of pressure. It's not necessarily evil, dictatorship type of abuse.

You can oppress somebody to get something done and meet a deadline. You can oppress someone. You can put pressure on someone for a lot of reasons.

But do not trust in oppression. Do not vainly hope in robbery. Oppression is where you're pushing on somebody.

Robbery is where you're pulling something away from somebody. And the push and pull, the give and take, the leverage, the squeezing, and the pushing and shoving that goes on in the human world, don't put your confidence in it. A lot of people say, well, if I butter this person up, I'll get ahead.

If I compromise, if I give in, if I do whatever it is to say or do, whatever makes them happy, that's going to enable me to prevail. The psalm says, do not trust in that. Now, it doesn't mean just go make yourself obnoxious.

But what are you relying on for things to turn out for the good? Are you relying on people to make decisions and accept and judge well? Or are you relying on God? The theme of this psalm is waiting for God's deliverance. I was often comforted by a statement that my pastor at the time made when I was a young, budding military officer. If God does not promote you, you are not promoted.

There is a lot of human interaction that seems to factor into whether you make it in a

structured environment like that. Well, did you show up at the commander's call and were you able to go play golf with the major or the colonel or whoever? And guys that are good at playing golf tend to schmooze and be familiar with the higher-ups and that kind of thing. And you say, well, I don't have that kind of personality.

I'm not a schmoozer and I don't like playing golf. I like doing other things. I've got better things to do with my time than sit out there and hope this guy is going to think well of me.

I just find it demeaning to be out there doing something I really am not good at and don't like anyway just because I think it might help my career. Well, that's looking for your deliverance. That's looking for your promotion by human means.

Oppression. Robbery. I'll edge this other person out.

I'll compete. I'll leave cleat marks in their back because I climbed to the top. Do not trust in it.

If riches increase, do not set your heart on them. If you do wind up advanced, if some happy confluence of circumstances, somebody says, hey, you really do good work. Step up here.

Do this. Many of us have had businesses and you do a good work for a client and word of mouth spreads around and you get more clients and that's great. But even then, don't set your heart on that.

Don't say, okay, well, now I'm set because these people are all on my side. This person, this relationship is on a good footing at the moment so now everything's great. Whether it is a time of adversity from a human standpoint, whether it is a time of popularity or prosperity from a human standpoint, that's not where to put your trust.

God is the God of deliverance. God has spoken once. Twice I have heard this.

That's a great thing. God can speak once and you can hear it twice. Power belongs to God.

Power belongs to God. This word for power in Hebrew, there are several different ones just as there are in Greek, but this is oz, o-z. And this is power in the strength of physical or material might.

We're talking about God's dealings in the material world. This is not necessarily God is the God of creation or God is the God who orders the stars. This is like iskuos in Greek where it is the implemented power in a practical realm.

Oz, power belongs to Elohim, to God. Also to you, O Lord, belongs mercy. This is one of the things that you don't find in the human realm on a consistent basis.

Not only does God have the power to order the circumstances of our lives, but God is always in our corner. He is always on our side. He always wants the best for us.

He doesn't get petty. He doesn't get jealous. He doesn't get disgusted.

He doesn't get with those who are making some attempt to live the life we are called to at least. I think He does get disgusted with us when we go our own way. But for those who love Him, God is nothing but on our side.

He's in our corner. He has compassion. He has mercy.

And this word is kessed. C-H-E-S-E-D This is the word for loyal love. This is the word for commitment, for positive influence.

It's the word for grace. You render to each one according to his work. To each one according to his work.

Are we in a position to avail ourselves of this? And are we willing to wait? Over and over again. Almost every study, every time we go to the Scriptures, we find this idea that you have to persevere. You have to endure.

I was thinking about this yesterday when I took my run. Those of you that do any sort of exercise or have done, you know that some days when you go to do your weight lifting or your running or whatever it is, you feel like somebody just gave you a shot of adrenaline. You go and there's a spring in your step.

You hit the free weights and it just seems like, yeah, stack on another 20 pounds here. And you're on a physical peak and you just feel like you are doing the very best you've ever done. And then there are other times when as you begin, you feel like you do normally when you quit after you're done.

I had one of those runs yesterday. I can't remember when I've had such a horrible run. I went out to run and I felt like an engine with all of its bolts loose.

I couldn't get a rhythm in my stride. Every step jarred me. I was immediately out of breath.

I was immediately fatigued. All of my pain sensors went off at once and I thought, boy, I feel like I'm sick. And of course your body says, now see, you ought to quit.

Just turn around and go back. Just wait for another day. It will be better at a different time.

You just can't give in to that. And you think, sometimes after the first half a mile or first mile or something, it will kind of even out and you will kind of hit your stride. It never happened.

The whole way it just went from bad to worse to worse. I kept thinking up all these reasons why I ought to stop. Well, you know, it's hot.

I ought to save my strength. I've already done all these other things. Well, you rationalize and you find reasons to stop.

You have to endure. If you want things that are worth having, you have to endure. In the political realm, which I don't often bring up, but there's this huge, you know, President Bush's popularity is down.

More people think the war in Iraq is a bad idea than a good idea, etc. The President said from the beginning, you know, this is going to be tedious. It's going to drag on.

It's going to take some time. We've got to be patient. We've got to be willing to pay a cost and absorb some badness to get this goal accomplished.

This is going to be a long road. He said it from the beginning. And people, you know, right after 9-11 and right after the invasion and all that, say, well, yeah, okay, weapons of mass destruction, etc., etc.

Well, now it's starting to drag on. Now it's getting tedious. We keep seeing casualties and we don't see much by way of positive, you know, how come there's still quote-unquote insurgents? How come there's still bombings? How come there's still terrorists? And why do people keep blowing stuff up? And people are getting tired of it.

Well, this is the time when the tough keep going. This is where you have to have your goals firmly in view. And you say, this is worth keeping.

Somebody, I was writing a note to somebody yesterday. I don't ordinarily, even in other contexts, talk about politics much, but it just annoyed me that somebody was saying, well, you know, what are you going to say to some Arab man who walks up and says there have been 30,000 civilian casualties in Iraq? And why? What good has that done? Well, I just felt like that needed an intelligent response. And so I went and did some research.

There have actually been just under 25,000, 24,865 civilian casualties since we first went to Iraq. That includes the invasion. Only 37% of those were actually killed by Americans.

That's 9,200 people total that weren't in uniform have died from American bombs and bullets. 37%. Since the invasion, 36% of the people who have died in Iraq those deaths are attributed to what they call it, post-invasion criminally related activity, i.e., these are Iraqis killing other Iraqis during the perpetration of crimes.

36%. So that's over 9,000 people, which is nearly the same number that we have intentionally killed, have died because the Iraqis are trying to take advantage of lack of structure, one thing or another, and committing crimes. Only about a third of the 9,200 civilian casualties total, a third of those occurred during the invasion.

So that leaves about 6,000 people that we have killed since then. Now, do quote-unquote insurgents wear uniforms? They don't. So which count do they get included in when Iraqbodycount.com or whoever.org counts them up? They go in the civilian column.

So all of the insurgents that we have killed are in and among that 6,000. It goes without saying that people who have been shooting at us are the ones that we tend to target. So in the last two years plus, we've killed 6,000 people, most of whom were shooting back at us, most of whom have as their goal the reassembly and reinstitution of the Ba'ath Party and the kind of regime that Saddam Hussein had.

So when people say, oh, you've gone over there and now 30,000 people are dead, when you break down the numbers and start looking at it, that we have not gone over there and killed 30,000 people. It's only 24,000, 25,000 casualties. We are only responsible for less than a third of those, and of those, most of them are people who were shooting at us.

We ourselves have lost about 1,800 troops over there. What's my point? You know what the population of Iraq is? As a nation, I looked it up. 26 million.

There are 26 million people who are no longer under an oppressive, murderous regime. 26 million people. To free those people, to remove that evil government, which would have perpetuated itself, you think Saddam was bad.

Look at his two sons that we killed. You want to talk about the 6,000 that we put bullets in? Those guys weren't wearing uniforms. I bet their deaths are in the civilian category.

Those guys would have followed their father, and they make him look like a baker of birthday cakes. So what's my point? It's hard. It's tough.

It takes perseverance, and there is sacrifice involved. Freedom doesn't come cheap. That's the last thing I put in my little note yesterday.

Freedom doesn't come cheap. It never has. Our freedom here came at the cost of lives.

Freedom in World War II. Freedom throughout history is not cheap. And if you want it, you have to be willing to pay for it.

You have to be willing to sacrifice. And many times, people give their lives. That's why we celebrate July the 4th.

That's why we celebrate Veterans Day. That's why we celebrate Memorial Day. Our holidays, as opposed to the Jewish feasts, tend to commemorate events in our history.

And those are worth commemorating. 26 million people are not under a brutal totalitarian dictatorship because we have been willing to go over and lose 1,800 troops, because we have been willing to go over and kill 6,000 people, the vast majority of whom needed killing. By the way, it's interesting to me that in a nation of 26 million people, how many people would you lose if we had not gone over there? You look at just one episode.

I went back and looked at the human rights violations. There's a page of human rights violations under Saddam. And back in 1991, after the Kuwait debacle, the mother of all retreats

and so on, Saddam took out his frustration in the north against the Kurds by killing something.

And they don't even know how many he killed. Somewhere between 60,000 and 120,000 Kurds were slaughtered. Then he went down to the south against the Shiites, who were hoping he would get deposed in the process and that we would kick him out.

And when he didn't get kicked out, they kind of got the Bay of Pigs syndrome. And he went down there and killed somewhere between, they don't know how many were killed down there, somewhere between 40,000 and 130,000 Shia in the south. So, conservatively speaking, 150,000 people were killed in one year by Saddam Hussein because he was ticked off that the Kuwait thing didn't work out.

That's just one episode in a very long list of abuses. And they're still finding mass graves and things over there. So, what's the point? Well, I have two.

First of all, when you hear people bad-mouthing the President, bad-mouthing the United States, saying, oh, 52% of us think the war is a bad idea, that's shallow thinking. Do your homework. If you're going to have an opinion, at least base it on facts.

And the facts are, we have done a very good deed for 26 million people. Yes, it's costly. Yes, it's tedious.

Yes, it takes endurance and patience. But it's worth it. It's worth removing evil.

It's the same philosophy, and we understood it a lot better in World War II. In the Marine Corps, sort of a very simple philosophy, see the hill, take the hill. See the bad guy, shoot the bad guy.

I mean, it's pretty simple. Here's Hitler? Knock him out. Here's Saddam? Knock him out.

It doesn't take a lot of agonizing and philosophizing and, oh, can't we use sanctions? And, you know, all that stuff was tried. It didn't work. Now he's gone.

And that did work. And whatever else you want to say, all of the previous measures did not work. That measure, invading, worked.

There's no proof like success. So, what's the spiritual application from Psalm 62? There is deliverance that comes from God, but it comes to those who wait. Wait on the Lord, be of good cheer, and He shall strengthen thy heart.

I don't remember where that is, but there's some memory verse I had a long time ago. Wait on the Lord, be of good cheer. Have a good attitude.

Be confident. Wait on the Lord. Wait on His deliverance.

He knows about the workers of iniquity. He knows that they are a vapor. All flesh is like grass in His sight.

The grass withers. The flower fades. But the word of our God shall stand forever.

That's Isaiah 40. So, we all face challenges, and specifically in the human realm. We have people testing all the time.

Sometimes it's of short duration. Sometimes it's of long duration. Sometimes it's relatively unimportant.

Sometimes it's major. Sometimes it seems like potentially life changing. But the person does not hold our life in their hands.

These people do not determine our fate. And anytime we start believing that, we've lost sight of Psalm 62. Everything is in God's hands.

Our fate is not determined by any person or any group. Our fate is only and always and securely in the hands of God. He is the one to whom we appeal.

He is the one before whom we operate and seek to be pleasing in His sight. He's the one to please. He will determine the length of the test.

And many times the reason our testing continues is because we're busy. We've gotten all wrapped up in the story problem and forgotten that He's the evaluator. If we learn the lesson, if we figure out the issue, if we catch the point, we get the drift, then the exercise can end and we go on to something else.

But as long as we keep our eyes lowered to the earth and we forget the one with whom we have to do, the test continues. Not always. That's not the only reason tests continue, but that's one reason is that we haven't figured out what's really going on.

And God says, well, if it takes you 40 years in the wilderness, if it takes you 70 years in captivity, if it takes however long it takes, until you finally wake up and smell the coffee and learn the lesson, and then I can remove this and move you on to Part B and Part C. So, Psalm 62 is a great one for reminding ourselves, like it says, I like the subtitle that's put in the New King James, a calm resolve to wait. A calm resolve to wait. When you look at the feast calendar in Israel, you have the spring feasts and the fall feasts.

Spring feasts, Passover. In fact, Passover is often used to comprehend the first four in their entirety, particularly the first three, which is the Passover, the Day of First Fruits, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. A lot of times Passover comprehends all three, and then you have Pentecost or Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, which is the first four.

All of those have been fulfilled. Then you have this long summer season where there's nothing. Then in the fall, you get to October.

It's going to be October this year. You have the Feast of Trumpets, and you have the Day of Atonement, and you have the booths. Those are yet future, but there's this long period of

waiting.

We have been waiting for close to 2,000 years for the return of the Lord Jesus. And then when we come back from the break, I'm going to give you some interesting calculations. I've been playing with numbers and calendars and so on, looking at the feast schedule, and we have the chance to do a little educated guessing as to how much time it remains in this age.

But in our life, we have these periods of endurance that are built in. And it doesn't matter if you start running and you feel like the rambling wreck from Georgia Tech, if you feel like every step jars you and every breath burns your lungs and you just think this is not worth doing. Yes, it is.

In fact, what I told myself all the way through my miles yesterday was this is where you make your money. You know, when you're feeling good and you've got a spring in your step and you're on some kind of an adrenaline high, your body is not really being challenged and so it doesn't build you up. It doesn't enhance your strength and your cardiovascular endurance.

The times when you make your money and the times where you get a real lasting benefit is when it's hard. It's the last part of your workout that does you good. You know, guys that do weight training, the first set or two, you're just using up stored energy.

If you stop after those, you've done nothing. You haven't even hardly maintained yourself. It's after you burn out the resident sugars and stored energy and you start stressing your muscles and you start doing what's hard and unpleasant, that's when your body says, oh well, you know, next time I'm going to be ready for this.

I'm going to build this up. I'm going to pack some more bulk in there. I'm going to put some more strength in there.

I'm going to ramp up the cardiovascular. So the worse it feels, the better it is for you, basically. And that's the whole no pain, no gain truth of the universe.

Well, that's what's being pictured here. Don't fade in the stretch. Finish well.

We are in the days of finishing. And there has never been a time in human history where it was more important for believers to endure, to persevere, and not wilt and fade and fold and fall down and give up in the stretch. This is the time for the tough to keep going.

And if anybody ought to be able to do it, it's us. We have the power of God's Spirit. We have the power of God's Word.

And we of all people ought to understand it. We have seen it in book after book, study after study, example after example. We are without excuse.

We know how God's plan works. We know where God's power comes from. And we know that we don't have to endure in our own strength.

We just have to keep our focus on God's strength, remember where it is, remember how to access it, and remember how to rest in it to understand the distinction between the six days of our labor and the seventh day of rest where we look to God for Him to complete and to do the things that we can't do and aren't supposed to do. It's a matter of discernment. It's a matter of thinking our way to the finish line.

Thank the Lord it is not an actual physical test to spiritually overcome. It's a matter of thinking the thoughts of God. It is a matter of operating by faith, motivated by hope, in the sphere of love to accomplish God's objective for us.

This is a great psalm to remind us of that and its connection to God's great timetable in human history. We'll pause here and take our break. When we come back we're going to resume looking at this great picture of human history to be found in the calendar of Israel and delve into those fall feasts.