

THE SIGHING OF THE NEEDY: Psalm 12:5.

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Psalm 12.

How real are we? How honest with ourselves and before God? How in touch are we with the life of people whose words we have in the Bible? How aware are we of the range of feelings that people in Scripture have? Feelings are being spoken about a lot in these days. But how in touch with those feelings are we? Often, for all the talk of feelings, we actually understand ourselves less and less well. Bad theology, or no theology, have left us not understanding who we are. Often there is a blank space in us where joy, or perhaps sighing, ought to be.

1. Are you happy all the time?

We are sometimes uneasy about the fact that we are not happier as people in our walk with the Lord. Yet are we really expected to be happy all the time. Is that what the Bible expects of us?

In fact, at various places, we learn that the Lord's people can and should feel a variety of things. In Psalm 12:5 we learn of the sighing of the weary and the oppressed. It is spiritual to feel dissatisfied, even unhappy, to have unmet yearnings that make us sigh. It is not spiritual to have fake joy or base our joy on something delusional. See what Paul felt about the poor spiritual state of the Jews (Romans 9:5 and 10:1). Our Lord knew joy as we see it in Luke 10:21 but He also felt overwhelmed with grief at times as we find in Luke 19:41-44.

The Psalmist has the prospect of joy and safety in verse 5. But it stands out to him because it is like a light shining in a dark place. The society that he was among was full of vileness and uncleanness (v8). The people were proud (v3) and they were godless (v4). This was made all the more acute a problem because the godly seemingly had been taken away (v1). The faithful had vanished.

All of this can be overwhelming, and we can be moved to anger, despondency, despair, sadness and sighing. This is all the experience of the needy and the humble. These are the experiences of spiritual people. At times, our sighing and longings can be barely coherent. We may be feeling more than we can actually express or articulate. The Bible talks of the groaning of saints (Romans 8:23-24 and 2 Corinthians 5:1-5). We are feeling things that are beyond words. We look at some of the needs of the church in society today and can feel that the burden is too great for us.

We are at times, as the Lord's people, greatly oppressed. That can be our experience today in an increasingly ungodly age with less and less time for the truth. Are we happy all the time as Christians? It is to be hoped that we are not!

2. We sigh that God is not honoured.

'Who is lord over us' is the proud boast of the people (v4). Their words are an affront to us and even more so to the Lord. The honour of God is at stake in this and we feel the way that these are proud words dishonouring God. It is a rejection of the Lord as Creator and the Giver of all good gifts. It is a rejection of His Son and the reason why He came into the world as a baby. It is a rejection of the cross and the reason why He had to die there for the sin of His people. We sigh that He is hated by so many or that they take liberties with the truth by re-inventing His ministry.

All of this dishonouring speech, thinking and behaviour is the highway to condemnation. It is as we find in Romans 10:21. We sigh at the response of people who have heard the gospel but who have made no response.

3. We sigh the church is so weak.

Unfortunately, too many parts of the visible church have actually joined with the enemies of the gospel and are teaching things that are against what the Bible teaches. Too many evangelical churches are too anxious about how they appear to the world at large and want to appear cool and trendy. The true church can often be small and quite elderly. We might often wonder 'What are we among so many?'. We sigh that we are so disregarded and despised. Today's so called cancel culture would dearly love to cancel us! Today's 'High Priests' of diversity declare that we are the wrong kind of diversity. The 'High Priests' of tolerance declare that we are not to be tolerated. It makes us sigh and long for safety.

4. We are sighing for home

The true child of God longs for heaven in the midst of all these foes and things that cause us to sigh. We long for the safety which the Lord has promised to us (v5). We long for the Lord to be honoured and glorified, and the place where this will finally and fully happen is heaven itself.

So we find ourselves sighing and longing for a heavenly country (Hebrews 11:16). And the Lord will honour our longing for that place and faith in Him by bringing us to it at the last. We are not meant to feel too at home here on the earth because our real home is heaven. As we see in 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 and Roman 8:23-24, we are meant to groan for heaven. We, as Christians, are new creatures with new longings and desires, and the earth is not able to satisfy these.

So our sighs are, in fact, very understandable, and part and parcel of the normal Christian life here on earth. These sighs actually take us to the Lord and open the way for us to find the safety here on the earth that the Lord is able to give His people. God arises for us and places us in safety, in the local church, giving rest to our souls. He comforts us that all is well with us in the most ultimate sense.

We should not be feeling guilty or discouraged if we find ourselves sighing much. Our sighing will not do us spiritual harm or damage. It is part of what we are to expect in our Christian walk. It is real Christianity, and it is also part of our fellowship with the real and living Christ.