

A Song of Degrees

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon on Psalm 121 emphasizes God's unwavering help and vigilance, urging believers to seek Him directly in prayer as they journey toward Him.

Duration: 44:53

Topics: "Song of Degrees"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that God is not bound by time and that Christianity goes beyond the grave. He criticizes the idea of preaching that only focuses on personal redemption and argues for the importance of social redemption. The preacher also highlights the need for sincere and meaningful prayers, rather than asking God for foolish or selfish things. He concludes by emphasizing the personal nature of life and death, reminding listeners that each person faces their own journey and encounters God individually.

Transcript

Now, it's afternoon, and I honestly didn't know whether anybody would be here or not, but there's almost as many as there would be at night, except for a little corner over there, and they're coming in there. So you evidently want to hear the Word. I'm a little shy about preaching on the Psalms, because I have found that when the preacher fishes all week and hasn't any time to prepare, he takes refuge in a psalm.

Anybody that can't preach on a psalm was never called to preach, because all you have to do is just stand up and the psalms preach themselves. But I want to talk to you a little about the Lord in the 121st Psalm. Will you turn to it, everyone? Turn to it, please, Psalm 121.

Suppose we do this. Suppose we read it responsibly. I read verse 1, you verse 2, and then we come to verse 8. We'll all read that together.

Psalm 121. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.

He that keepeth thee will not slumber. The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.

The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. He shall preserve thy soul. Going out and coming in, from this time forth and even forevermore.

This psalm is one of the psalms called A Song of Degrees, or A Song of Steps. And there are those who say that it ought not to start out, I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, but it ought to start out by saying, Shall I lift up mine eyes unto the hills? No, my help cometh from Jehovah. But that sounds a little too slick to be true.

Whenever an interpretation sounds real cozy, you can be pretty sure some fellow thought that up out of his empty head. This is A Song of Degrees, and it was one that they sang as they marched up the steps toward the temple. You know, the temple was on a hill, and they had steps leading down the hill, and they used to come marching up the steps to the worship at the temple.

David explained they had singing women and singing men and instruments, and they sang as they marched up the steps to the temple, which was, I think, a very nice, pretty thing to do. And David wrote, and all other of the writers wrote, the songs to be sung as they marched up the hill toward the temple. And naturally they lifted up their eyes, for the temple was built on the hills of Jerusalem.

So, I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, and this is one of those songs of degrees which they sang as they marched up toward God, coming from every part of the holy land, as we come here to Mahaffey or go to some of the great conventions. Only they went to one place only, and that was Jerusalem, and then they went to one place only in Jerusalem, and that was the temple. So they sang, My help cometh from Jehovah.

Their help didn't come from the hills, and their help didn't even come from the temple, but their help came from Jehovah, which made the heaven and the earth. The Jehovah whose dwelling place was in Zion, and toward whose presence they were marching. I always like to think that we're marching with our faces toward God.

Somebody said that whoever turns his back on God is forced to walk in his own shadow from that time on, and whoever faces God is walking in the light of God's face. That's the light we talk about, and when they walked toward the presence of God, they were walking into the light. We have a little saying, I and my friend Francis Chase and some of the other fellows of the Church, that we're not so concerned with how far a young man has gone as we are with the direction that he's taking.

You see, if you go out on the highway and start toward Pittsburgh, it doesn't make so much difference just where you are on the road. The thing that matters is, are you headed toward Pittsburgh? If you got on the wrong road and were purring along at a nice, comfortable 55 miles an hour, and finally found you were on your road to Cleveland or St. Paul, that wouldn't be so good. You would be traveling along, but you'd be aiming wrong.

The main thing is, get a young fellow started in the right direction, and after that, he'll make it all right for himself. When I was a very young preacher, I think it was my second passport under Dr. H. M. Shulman, who was for 28 years or longer President of the Alliance. He was then Superintendent.

I had in my home, and I was honored to have in my home, the great Dr. George Shaw, who was one of the great Bible teachers and great Saints of the Alliance, and I was wanting to know about reading. I said, Dr. Shaw, give me a little advice about reading. I said, what should I read, and how much time should I give to it, and so on.

And he shrugged me off and wouldn't answer me. He said, I am not worried about you. He said, you're aiming in the right direction.

He wouldn't give me any advice, but he saw that my face was in the direction of the library, and so he didn't worry. It's only the young fellow that never goes beyond the little adner that they need to worry about. But if the fellow is aiming in the right direction, that's the main thing.

And these people were aiming in the right direction. They were walking toward God. So they said, my help comes from Jehovah, which made heaven and earth.

Now, we don't have to say that, and when Jesus gave us his prayer, when you pray, say, our Father who art in heaven, he didn't include who made the heaven and the earth. He didn't need to. But you see, back there in David's time, they were right in the middle of the pagans.

Pagans were all round about them, heathen of every kind, and the heathen believed in gods that had not made the heavens and the earth. They had local gods, you see. There were gods that had little local parts of the country they ruled over.

For instance, Aeolus ruled over the wind, and Neptune ruled over the sea, and Pluto ruled over hell, and Ceres ruled over the fruit, and Venus ruled over love, and Jupiter ruled over war and Minerva. They had little local jurisdiction with the gods of the heathen, and David never quite got away from always having to fight a little. David never was restful, and all through his psalms he was taking little bows at the dumb heathen gods that had no eyes and couldn't see.

He was everlastingly saying, among the gods will I praise Jehovah, because there were gods everywhere, just anything that you could pick up that they'd worship, and lug it off somewhere and anoint it, and they'd be down on their knees to it. David knew that, and so David wanted to make it very clear here that the god that he was looking to for help made the heaven and the earth. He didn't have a limited jurisdiction, but he had made the heaven and the earth, and normally he would have the jurisdiction over what he made.

That was what we have here. The god we serve, my brethren, the god we adore, is not a local god that isn't good outside the state of Pennsylvania, although some of you imagine that in a sly sort of way, I think. But God does spill over sometimes into Ohio and Illinois.

God just made the heaven and the earth. He made everything, and therefore nobody can run out somewhere and serve a paper on God and say, just a minute here, God, you don't have any sovereignty here. Your jurisdiction ends there.

I get a kind of a sad and sour kick out of some thorough, some fellows will commit a crime and then run across the state line. I heard about a fellow once that had a house built right on the boundary line of two counties, and he'd commit a sin in the kitchen and then go to the bedroom, and they couldn't arrest him because he just walked across the boundary. The fellow over here didn't have the right to come over there, his jurisdiction didn't extend.

In Chicago we have Chicago, then we have Cook County, then we have the state. If you commit a crime in the city, you can be arrested by certain police, but if you spill over into Cook County outside the city, the county police have a county police to get you. Then if you get out into the state, state police will get you.

So they'll get you, all right, probably, if you don't buy them off. But they'll get you, but it depends on who has what jurisdiction. Brother, God made my heart too big to ever be satisfied with anything local.

That's why I'm not such a good alliance man as some of you are, because I'm tempted sometimes at low moments to have sneaking suspicions that there'll be people in heaven that don't belong to the alliance. It's just a little bit, just slightly off color, but I honestly think there'll be people in heaven that don't belong to the alliance, unless, of course, we think John the Baptist founded this society like our Baptist friends think. But Jehovah made the heaven and the earth.

That means everybody ought to be a Catholic. Don't think, Mother, I'll explain what I mean. I don't say a Roman Catholic, just a Catholic.

Roman means belonging to Rome. Catholic means universal. Incidentally, Roman and Catholic, those two cancel each other out, for Catholic means universal, and Rome means right here in Rome.

So how can there be both at once? I think they'd get straightened out on that sometime. It's like a guinea pig that's neither a guinea nor a pig. A Roman Catholic is neither a Roman nor a Catholic.

He's just something. We ought to all be Catholic. I can say I believe in the Catholic Church and not faint or fall dead, because I know what I mean.

I believe in the universal Church of Christ, everybody that's born of the Spirit and washed in the blood, no matter what way his eyes slant, nor the color of his skin, nor how high he is, nor what language he uses, nor when he was born, nor where. If he was born of the Spirit and washed in the blood, then he can raise his eyes and say, Our Father which art in heaven, he is my brother, no matter when he lived and no matter where he lives, he is still my brother. So I say we Christians ought to all be universal Christians.

Are you bothered any about this ecumenicity, or hadn't you heard of it? Ecumenicity. Now, that's a big word to mean the same thing that I've been saying, only meaning it wrong. Ecumenicity means we're all over, and they're trying to get the Church together and get it solidly formed, consolidated.

I don't know whether that'll go contrary to the Antichrist laws or not, we'll ask you about that later. But according to the ecumenical idea, everybody that says, I'm a Christian, all over the world, all gets into one Church. I'm not sure, but that may be the Antichrist way of getting us together for the final big blow-up.

But I don't believe in ecumenicity, because that means that I've got to take my Church and take it into a movement that doesn't believe Jesus was the Son of God, he didn't die on us. Some people in it do, but a lot of people don't. It means the Christian Missionary Alliance has to unite itself up and shake hands and say, Brother, we're the man that does not believe the Bible to be the Word of God, doesn't believe Mary to be a virgin mother of Jesus, doesn't believe Jesus to be the very God of very God begotten, not created, and doesn't believe the blood of Jesus Christ redeems men, doesn't believe you have to be born again to be saved, and they're trying to get us all united in an ecumenical movement.

So every time you hear the word ecumenical or ecumenicity, don't try to pronounce it unless you have your own teeth. But it's a big word, Brother, but what it means is simply that they want us all to band together and forget all our differences. I won't forget my differences with these men at all, for my differences are fundamental and vital, and they're the differences between heaven and hell, between life and death.

And I will not call any man, Brother, who denies the Deity of the Savior of mankind, or who holds this book up and says it's got good ideas in it, but God didn't write it. God did write this book, so I didn't intend to preach that part, but that got in somehow. What I meant to say was that God made heaven and earth, and he has jurisdiction over heaven and earth and all things that be, and that everything that is belongs to God.

And the Christian believer, you see, when he goes to his knees in prayer, he goes past all secondary things. I don't believe in these office boys and virgins standing between me and the Lord. When I come to pray, I don't want to have to ask the Virgin Mary whether I may or not.

She was a dolly little girl, and she gave us the son, so it was in her body that God prepared that body for which Jesus later took to the cross. But she had to be redeemed by the blood of her own son. For that reason, they don't astonish me, nor awe me when they talk about Hail Mary, Mother of Jesus, and so on, because Mary doesn't stand between me and God.

There's only one mediator between God and man, and that one is himself God and man, Jesus Christ our Lord. So when a Christian goes to pray, he goes back of all secondary things, back of all matter, and back of all space and time and form and motion and life and mind. After all, when I've named those six or seven things, I've named about all there is in the universe.

There really isn't so very much in the universe. Matter and space to contain it, and motion to keep it moving, and form to give it shape, and life if it is a living matter, and mind, that's about all there is in the universe. And you and I go back of that, you see, when we go to God.

We go to the unbeginning one, we go to the uncreated one, we go to the primal source of all things that are. The praying Christian never deals with subordinates. When a Christian gets on his knees, he's having a meeting at the summit.

We hear of the meetings at the summit. The biggest dogs there are, you know, meet somewhere, and they call that meeting at the summit. But a Christian, my brother, when he comes to God, meets God at the summit.

You can't go any higher than God. I never like office boys. I never like to meet the second in command.

I always wanted to talk to the boss himself, and when I go to prayer, I want to know that no archangel is straining my prayer, so as his, and that no virgin is deciding whether my prayer can get through or not. And I want to know that I'm going straight to God at the summit. So I worship, he says, my help cometh from Jehovah that made heaven and earth, and you can't go any higher than that.

Then he said, he will not suffer thy foot to be moved. Now, that doesn't mean so much to you. Nowadays, if David had been writing that, he'd probably say he will not suffer thy engine to stop, because nobody walks anymore.

They ride around, and my secretary lives less than one block from the office where she works, and she drives the Studebaker, and drives it right up and parks it out in front of the church. Then I assume to get in. I usually leave a little ahead of her, so I suppose she goes and gets in that thing and drives it back.

There it is. We don't walk much, but Brother David, he didn't do much else but walk in those days, and if a man cramped looking away, cramped on a round stone, he'd take a plunge straight forward. David said

that God will not suffer you to stand cramped on a round stone.

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved. He'll not suffer it to slide. God will not suffer it.

Now, that word suffer there means permit, but it also means permit with a connotation of pain. God will not endure the pain of seeing your foot stumble and seeing you fall. If you don't walk in the light, if you leave the path of righteousness, then the Lord will have to endure the pain of seeing you stumble.

David, that the Brother preached about last night so terrifically, left the path of righteousness. Did you ever hear this passage of scripture, or notice it? It says that, Thou shalt hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, when ye walk to the right hand, or to the left. At first that bothered me, because the scripture said, God is ahead of me, leading me.

Then it says you'll hear a voice behind you saying, This is the way. Do you ever wonder why that was like that? Well, it's easy to explain. As long as you stay on the path he's on, he's always ahead of you, he's in front of you.

But when you leave the path and turn your back and start to the right hand or to the left, then you hear the voice behind you. He's not ahead of you, he was ahead of you as long as you were following him. But when you stop following him and take a side road, then you hear the voice back on the path saying, Come on back here, you've missed the road.

You'll hear a voice behind you saying, This is the way, walk you in it. So the Bible's always right. It just sounds odd sometimes, but if you'll stop to figure it out, you'll find it was there ahead of you, and you don't have to apologize for it.

Well, it says this God will never slumber nor sleep. Now, the pagan gods, of course, they could be caught asleep. I read quite a little of the stories of the Greek and the and the Egyptian and the other gods, particularly the Greek and the Roman gods, and some of those old boys were scoundrels.

They were really rascals, and if they could catch another god asleep, they'd just as likely as not rape his wife or do almost anything. They did those things, you know, and they have great big books about these gods, and you could overcome them. If you caught one somewhere asleep, you could run and tie him up, and then you could rule over his dominion until some other god got you.

That was the Roman idea of God and the Greek idea of God. But the scripture says that Jehovah's eyelids never close. Now, why do God's eyelids never close? Because God never sleeps, and God never sleeps because he doesn't need to sleep.

Why do you need to sleep? You need to sleep to recoup your waning powers. Sleep is recharging of your battery, and you have a certain amount of energy, and when you do anything, even fan, you discharge a certain amount of that energy. Then you have to stop and sit down and let your energizer work until the dial begins to move over again to show that you've got more energy than you've expended.

When you expend more than you took in, you're exhausted. When you take in more than you expend, you feel like a million dollars. That's why you have to sleep.

When I was very young, much younger than I am now, I fought for years against sleeping. I thought it was an awful waste of time, and I wondered why God ever ordained it in the first place. I went to bed against

my will and got up as soon as I could.

I didn't think I ought to sleep, but somehow or other I'm getting wiser now, changing my mind on some things. Because the hills are steeper than they used to be, I notice, and the miles are longer since Eisenhower has been in, and it costs me more energy to walk a mile than it did under Truman. Because I'm getting older, that's what I'm trying to say, and you're not getting it.

Well, here's what it is. That Jehovah doesn't expend energy, and therefore he never needs to recoup energy. If God expended energy, where would it go? And if God had to recoup energy, where would he get it? If God expended power, where would the power go to? And when God had to plug in somewhere and recoup his power, where'd he plug in? You plug into a baked potato or a steak, but where would God plug into? Where did God get any energy? God has all the power there is, and all the energy there is, and therefore there's no place for God to go to look for energy.

God does everything he does without expending any energy, therefore God never gets tired, therefore God never sleeps. So rest about that, and don't imagine God ever fell asleep. But somebody says, How about Jesus? Well, Jesus was a man, and it was the man who did Jesus you saw walking around on the earth.

My brethren, Jesus never did a miracle as God. He never did anything as God. He did what he did as a man filled with the Holy Ghost.

If he had unveiled his deity as he did on the Mount of Transfiguration, nobody could have lived in his presence, because deity was veiled there. He veiled his deity, but he did not void it. It was still there, but it was as a man, a human being, a perfect human being, full of the Holy Ghost that he wrought his miracles.

It wouldn't have been any wonder if God the Eternal God should still the waves, or quieten the winds, or raise the dead, or cast out devils. But for a man to do it, there was the wonder. And Jesus, as a man, cast out devils and stilled the waves.

A man full of the Holy Ghost. But he never did it till he was full of the Holy Ghost, and he said it was God to the Holy Ghost that did it. And whoever complained about it, blasphemed the Holy Ghost, for it was not a man, it was the Holy Ghost doing it through the man.

So, of course, as a man, Jesus got tired, and naturally he slept, and he slept in his mother's arms, and he slept in bed, and he slept when he got older under a tree or wherever he could sleep. He slept in the back of a boat because he was tired. The man Jesus expended energy and had to eat fish to recoup it.

God never expended energy, so the scripture says God never slumbers in their sleeps. Thank God forever. Then he says here, The Lord is thy keeper.

Now, I want you to notice a little verb here, a little verb is. He doesn't say, The Lord will keep thee, though that also is true. But he said, The Lord is thy keeper.

And that's something quite otherwise than to say, The Lord will keep thee. You see, brethren, the difference between the Alliance and most other movements is this, that we started out all enthusiastic about what God is, where a great many movements are satisfied with what God will do. And if we begin to talk about what God does for us, that's good, I suppose, but that's secondary.

It's what God is that matters. It took Dr. A. B. Simpson to retell the world that sanctification wasn't a hunk of glory that you could go to God and get and take and walk away with. He said, Sanctification isn't a thing at all.

Sanctification is Jesus Christ. He is sanctification, and he is our wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. And we went out to tell the rest of the religious world, much to their astonishment and delight, that God will be all these things to us, not only give them to us, but be that to us.

I would rather have God be my wisdom than to have God give me a bushel of wisdom, wouldn't you? I'd rather have God be my energy than to have God give me a battery and say, Now here, you can have this much, and be careful, because when that runs out, you're sunk. God is my energy, God is my wisdom, God is my strength, God is my sanctification, God is my tomorrow, God is my today, God is my yesterday, and God is my hope for heaven, and God will be our heaven. What would heaven be if God wasn't there? What would it be? Brother Shuman down here used to hear old brother, I won't mention his name because he did a baddy and we kicked him out, but he used to say that if he went to heaven and Jesus wasn't there, he'd sit down in the corner of heaven and cry for a thousand years.

I think he was perfectly right, but it's not. When John, you know, and I may get in a jam here, but I've been in them before and got out, but we train to think about heaven in too materialistic terms. We think about heaven as a very wonderful summer home, a very wonderful summer home, infinitely past and beyond anything we've ever seen, but nevertheless still a very wonderful summer home quite like yours, only of course marvelously better.

John almost had to use language like that. He said the streets were of gold and the walls were jasper, and the gates were made of pearls, and he pictured a heaven there. Now, I'm going to whisper this to you, and please give it some thought before you write into headquarters about me, but give it some thought anyway.

I'd feel horribly lonely if I was committed for eternity to a place that had gold streets and jasper walls and pearly gates and nothing else. After a while that gave you an awful prison to your friends, an awful place to stay. What makes heaven heaven? The gold on the street? No, you got that in your teeth.

What makes heaven heaven? The jasper walls? No, you can go to the jewelry store and buy jasper. Or the pearly gates? No, some of you got pearls hanging around your neck. Came from Woolworth.

What will make heaven heaven? Heaven will be heaven because the triune God will be there. The Garden of Eden was the Garden of Eden because God walked in the cool of the day with his boy Adam and his wife Eve. God came down in the cool of the day and walked with them, and the presence of God in the garden was made the Garden of Eden.

And what makes hell hell? It is because God does not show himself there. Wherever God does not show himself, that is hell, and wherever God reveals his face, that is heaven. So heaven will be heaven because God will be there, and we'll meet our loved ones.

Some people blow their noses like a trombone and weep over the people they'll meet in heaven, and that's true, we'll meet people in heaven. But if I were to go to heaven and meet all the brethren that I've known and loved, and would look around and there was no God there, no Christ there, no Holy Ghost, no triune God for me to gaze on, I think, as a brother said, I'd weep for a thousand years, for God is thy keeper, he

is thy shade, he is thy wisdom, he is thy righteousness. So if you have God, you have everything, and if you don't have God, you have nothing.

Remember Levi, when God was apportioning out the land, he said, Well, Reuben, you can have this over here, and Gad, you can have that over there. He got a surveyor and he went around and surveyed the whole thing, and when they were done, it was all taken up. Then Levi said, But just a minute, God, where do we come in? And God said, Levi, you don't get any.

I am thine inheritance and thy exceeding great reward. I'll be your inheritance. And when God said that, he made Levi richer than all the other twelve to eleven tribes, because he got God.

He was the priesthood, his was the priesthood. He walked into the presence and saw God and sprinkled on the altar. He saw God, and that was enough.

Well, most of us want God for what we can get out of him, as Brother Mason said. He's a Santa Claus and not too much inclined to question when we ask him for anything. He gives us what we want.

We want to go into the prize ring and knock another fellow out, we say, Please, God, help me to knock this fellow out. Let me see if I'm up on my prize fighters. When Floyd Patterson beat Moore, was it Moore for the prize? He said, He said, The Lord helped me, the Lord helped me, he helped me to do it, and I wasn't asking him not to do it with reasoning about it.

I said, Now, just wait a minute. What kind of sportsmanship would that be? You put two persons in the ring against Moore, Floyd Patterson and God. I said, If Floyd Patterson helped God knock the other fellow out, or God helped Floyd Patterson knock the other fellow out, that fellow is fighting against two people.

That's not fair. You can't have two men in against one, and it wouldn't be any wonder if the fellow wouldn't get knocked out and then say, Well, God did it. If God knocks a man out, you can't pray and ask God to help you paralyze an opponent in a prize ring.

And you might just as well stop it, you big square-shouldered fellow, if you imagine that it won't do. And then there are pitchers that stand up there, and if the atmosphere is right, their curves break, and they win the game when they say, solemnly, God helped me, I pray. What about the other pitcher? Who is on his side? It isn't right, my brother, it isn't right.

There are only nine men supposed to be on a team at a time. You can't get God on there, and if God helps you win, you haven't won at all. No, God will help you, but God won't help you do nonsense, and God won't help you do foolish things, and God won't answer you when you're asking God ridiculous things.

The fellow wants to get the best of a financial deal, and so he gets on his knees and asks God, Oh God, in the way. Well, they break his way, and then he thanks the Lord and gets up in prayer meeting and testifies. But how about the fellow that didn't get the break? How about that fellow? Who helped him? Who's his helper? No, no, God will never help you to cut corners and put over a shady deal, mister.

Not even if you give a tenth of your dirty money to God, he won't even help you. You can't buy God off like that. God won't help you.

Some missionary you know is being on the field somewhere, and he wants a house, and the Devil won't give it to him. He can get on his knees and say, God, I'm here in the name of thy son, and I want that

house. He's likely to get the house.

God will work as long as he's working for his own glory and for the good of all, but God will never take sides to help a man win a game or help a fellow paralyze another fellow while they count ten over him. Might as well get that straight. Some people don't like that at all.

But I've written that, and people have read it and written in about it, and some of them didn't like it, and some of them did. Intelligent ones did, and the rest of them wrote in about it and said they didn't. Now, another point here.

The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in. Preserve means to guard and shield and secure, and the idiom here describes just about all human activities. Now, isn't it? Just think back over your life, my friend.

What have you been doing all these years? Going out and coming in, that's just about it. You say, God said to the Devil, Where have you been? He said, I've been walking up and down the earth. That's about all he had done.

And I ask you, what have you been doing since I saw you last? Going out and coming in, that's it. That's just about our life. I heard of an Englishman who was bored to death with life, and he was talking about suicide, and somebody said, What's the matter with you? Why do you want to commit suicide? Oh, he said, life is awful.

He said, I am so sick of getting up in the morning and putting on my socks, and then coming in at night and taking them off, and then getting up in the morning and putting them on, and then coming back in at night and taking them off. He said, I've put on socks and taken socks off until I'm bored to death. He said, I'm sick of the whole thing, and I want to die.

Well, I understand the brother, of course, and it does get wearisome after a while if you didn't have anything in between. But you think about it now. Going out and coming in, going out and coming in, that's about it.

And the scripture says God will preserve your going out, and he'll preserve your coming in. He'll preserve it, and he'll look after that. But that's just about all we do from this time forth, even forevermore.

You see, God never stops with time, as I've tried to tell you. And ultimately, the only thing that will matter will be evermore. Evermore, that's all that matters.

We look at the clock now, I'm watching my watch here, and I've got two minutes to four, if my time is right. We watch our watches, and we hear this miserable thing down here, somebody pounds. We hear whistles, and we see the seasons change.

We're always changing. But God never stops with time, and I couldn't embrace Christianity if it didn't go beyond time. It's a cheat, it's a cheat and a fraud if it only carried us to the graveyard and left us there to rot.

But forevermore is in the Bible, forevermore. I heard a young woman one time rather flippantly say that a certain preacher always preached sermons that always ended in heaven. I didn't say anything at the time, but I've thought over that thing since, and I wonder what would criticize a man like that on a thing like that.

Where should a sermon end but in heaven? Where should it end? Where does the Bible end? The Bible begins this way. In the beginning, God made the heaven and the earth, and it ends with, I saw a new heaven and a new earth, and I, John, saw the holy city. Take the 23rd Psalm.

Incidentally, that 23rd Psalm is personal. The old Schofield Bible and some of these teachers kind of intimidated me so that I got afraid to say, I and me and mine. I was afraid that was bad.

But do you know that the Psalms are all full of the personal I? If it's an uncrucified, rebellious I, it's wicked and bad. But if it's a redeemed, worshiping I, it's wonderful. Take my brother Schumann and I. He'll know who I mean, and you won't.

We know a dear old brother who has now gone to heaven and has a high place there, but somewhere he'd gotten the idea that you never ought to say, I, you ought to say, one. And he'd tell a story of when one was in Philadelphia, one thought he meant himself, and he didn't like to ever say, I. And I said if he'd written the 23rd Psalm, he'd probably have said, the Lord is one shepherd one shall not want. He maketh one to lie down in green passage.

You see what that would have done to it? It would have taken David out of it. And what's the good of religion if you're not in it? Religion is a relationship between you and God, and there are just two of you. They're talking about social religion all the time, social religion.

They say this fellow condemning Billy Graham, he said, we ought not to preach personal redemption, we ought to preach social redemption. How can you? Suppose that there were 5,000 people, all of them sick, and I had the power to heal all of them. How could I heal the whole business in the mass? You'd have to heal them one at a time.

Do you ever stop to think, brother, that you were born, everybody in the world was born one at a time, even twins or cripples? They were born one at a time, and when they die, they die one at a time. There's something personal about this business. If a plane goes down and kills 50 people in one instantaneous crash, each one dies alone.

Each one dies by himself alone. Others were around him, but the dying was his alone. So why should I allow a grammatical and semantic old-made idea scare me away from I? David said, the Lord is my shepherd, my shepherd, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

And he had I, I shall dwell, will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. David and God linked in a bundle of love forever. So David wrote the 23rd Psalm, and it ended in heaven, in the house of the Lord forever, in the hoofs of the Lord forever, our Scots friends say.

All right, and the Bible itself is like that. Well, after I'd heard this about never preaching any sermons or singing any songs that end in heaven, I got to wondering, what is the matter with that person? And I thought about the songs I knew, and you know the great songs all end in heaven, every last one. Rock of ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in need, you remember how that ends? When I rise to worlds unknown, and behold thee on thy throne, rock of ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.

He wasn't going to die when they dug a hole in the ground and chucked him in. He was going on to see God on his throne. When Wesley wrote Jesus, lover of my soul, let me hide myself in thee.

Do you remember how he ended it? Spring thou up within my heart, rise to all eternity. And the man who wrote Love Divine also, Wesley, he said, Love divine, all loves excelling, and he prayed for God to come and take his dwelling place in his soul, and deliver him from the love of sinning, and all the rest, and finally ended. Till in heaven we take our place, till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love and grace.

Him is no good unless it ends in heaven, and the man who sins it is no good unless he goes to heaven. Absolutely not. Then look at that Welsh song by William Williams, Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land.

He ends, he says, When I come to the verge of Jordan, says land me safe on Canaan's side, and hear my God to thee, top laddie's great hymn. He said, No, no, this was a woman who wrote this. Sun, moon, and stars for God upward I'll fly, she says, and my faith looks up to thee.

O bear me safe above a ransomed soul, my hope is built on nothing less. When he shall come with trumpet sound, O may I then in him be found, and amazing grace how sweet the sound. What would amazing grace how sweet the sound? Why, it wouldn't have any finish to it unless we sang, When I've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, I'll have no less days to sing his praise than when I first begun.

So, my dear friends, the gospel of Jesus Christ begins wherever you are, and the saving, redeeming power begins wherever you are. I don't know where you may be in your migrations and peregrinations inside your soul, but wherever you are, it begins there. Spurgeon said the gospel begins where you are and ends in heaven.

I hadn't thought of that, but I just remember he said it, and he was right, perfectly right. So, the Lord will come anyplace. He came to old David's ranch in the cab of his locomotive and saved him there.

One farmer said he fell in a well, and the mightiest prayer he ever made was upside down in the well. Wherever you are, and I don't care where, I've prayed in airplanes, and I whisper I think my prayers have a little more suction in airplanes than they do anywhere else, because I don't like airplanes. They are uncertain, you can't get your feet on the ground.

But I pray up there, wherever you are, wherever you are spiritually, wherever you are theologically, the gospel of Jesus Christ will come right where you are there, and God will be your helper and your protector and your keeper and your shade and will preserve your going out and your coming in as long as you live and from this time forth and forevermore. But John, you'll see a new heaven and a new earth when the old heaven and the old earth pass away, and there will be no more sea. Thank God.

Thank God for a gospel that's enough. Thank God for a Savior that you don't have to apologize for. Thank God for a God whose boundary knows no boundaries, but who has sovereignty over heaven, earth and hell.

This is the God we adore, our faithful, unchangeable friend whose love is as great as his power, and neither knows limit nor end. Now, it's afternoon, and I honestly didn't know whether anybody would be here or not, but there are almost as many as there would be at night, except for a little corner over there, and they're coming in there. So you evidently want to hear the word.

I'm a little shy about preaching on the Psalms because I have found that when a preacher fishes all week and hasn't any time to prepare, he takes refuge in a psalm. Anybody that can't preach on a psalm was

never called to preach, because all you have to do is stand up and the psalms preach themselves. But I want to talk to you a little about the Lord in the 121st Psalm.

Will you turn to it, everyone? Turn to it, please, Psalm 121. Suppose we do this.

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