Sermon transcript

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Topic: Psalm 74: "O LORD, remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old, the rod of thy inheritance, which thou hast redeemed!"

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We have already read Psalm 74 as an opening word. I would like to repeat it.

"***Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed.***" [Psa 74:2]

There was a church of the Old Covenant. And there is a church of the New Covenant.

In the case of the former, the blood of the lamb was shed, put on the doorposts, and the exodus took place, redemption was accomplished. In the case of the New Testament church, it was the blood of the Lamb of God that flowed on the cross of Calvary for our redemption and reconciliation.

"***Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed.***" [Psa 74:2]

Oh, how our thoughts and prayers ought to rise up to God now. Lord, our Redeemer, remember us, for you have redeemed us.

It goes on to say, "***Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; even all that the enemy has done wickedly in the sanctuary.***" [Psa 74:3]

Not outside, but within the sanctuary he has destroyed everything and established his own rule, doing whatever pleased him.

In verse 8: "***They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together; they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.***" [Psa 74:8]

And now comes the passage that moves me most of all. "***We see not our signs; there is no more any prophet.***" [Psa 74:9]

It has often troubled me that there is currently no prophet of God in the land to whom one could go to receive an answer from God. On the other hand, we must say: God has not given us just one, but all the answers we need, whether from prophets or apostles, whether in the Old or New Testament, He has already given them to us in the Word of God.

We need not say, "***Who shall ascend into heaven***", to bring Christ down, or "***Who shall descend into the deep***", to bring Him up. [Rom 10:6-7]

It is all done. He came, accomplished redemption, ascended back to heaven, and waits until all His enemies are made His footstool [Heb 10:13], until the moment of the completion of the Bride. And then He will come again to take us home.

Verse 10: "***O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?***" [Psa 74:10]

That is what we too are asking this afternoon.

And indeed, it is a matter of God granting us patience and perseverance in conjunction with faith and trust. For thus it is written: "***he who endures to the end...***" [Mat 24:13]

And the longer it lasts, the more difficult it becomes. But God wants to make us the sort of people who truly endure to the end, come what may, in the certainty that "***whoever endures to the end will be saved***." [Mat 24:13]

I continue reading here: in verse 11. "***Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? Pluck it out of thy bosom.***" [Psa 74:11]

Put an end to it. Put an end to everything that does not belong in Your kingdom, in Your church. Put an end to all disgrace, to everything that does not come from God, that does not correspond to the Word. Put an end to everything that has no right to exist in the kingdom and in the house of God. Put an end to it, so that we may make a new beginning with that which You, O Lord, Yourself bestow and give.

In the last two verses we have read: "***Arise, O God, plead thine own cause; remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.***" [Psa 74:22]

Beloved, this is how it is. It is not only we who suffer reproach, for it is written that we must bear reproach for Christ's sake. [2Cor 12:10] And we are also to go out of the camp, as the apostle writes in the Epistle to the Hebrews. [Heb 13:13]

Here we are told that the Lord God too must plead His cause, and it says: "***Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.***" [Psa 74:22]

God knows full well that we are powerless to do anything. What He does not do remains undone. It is not only us, but our Lord too who suffers the reproach with us, for He is the head of the church and we form His body; what befalls us befalls Him, and what befalls Him befalls us. We do indeed form a divine unity.

Let us read some more scriptures from the prophet Zechariah, Zechariah chapter 8. Zechariah chapter 8, verse 9: "***Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets.***"

Up to here this precious and holy Word of God. It is connected with the laying of the cornerstone for the rebuilding of the house of God, the temple of the Lord. From a prophetic perspective, things run parallel, whether it be Israel in the Old Testament or the church in the New. There the temple was destroyed, here the sanctuary of God, the church. And then it is said: "***Take courage, you who in these days hear the promises from the mouth of the prophets.***"

How often have we said here before: True biblical faith is anchored in God's promises. Whoever has no promise has no firm ground on which to stand spiritually. Then faith spins in a vacuum. But the moment we have a promise from God and can stand upon it, God cannot help but respond.

What moves me deeply is another verse in this same chapter, Zechariah 8, the last verse: "***Thus saith the Lord of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.***" [Zec 8:23]

When I read these words, I thought to myself: at the moment when God turns to His people Israel, when their collective destiny is restored to the divine order and they are gathered on Mount Zion, as so many scriptures recount, the Word will go out from Jerusalem and the teaching from Mount Zion.

This too can be read throughout the prophetic Word. When God visibly declares His allegiance to Israel, the nations will know it, and ten men will seize a Jew, wherever his robe is long enough for a hand to grasp hold of, and say, "***We will go with you***." [Zec 8:23]

Why? Because they are Jews? Because they are going to Jerusalem? The answer is, here it is: "***We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.***" [Zec 8:23]

I thought to myself: if it pleases the Lord, as we have indeed read and know from the Scripture, that before the return of Jesus Christ, the building up of the church must take place again, that all things must be restored.

And that is indeed the meaning and purpose of God sending a prophetic message to place the words of the divine promise for our days, for us, for our time, into our hearts.

And we may say: the same cornerstone, the same foundation, as in the days of the apostles, has indeed been laid anew.

And we also have it here: when Ezra and Nehemiah and the men of God returned at that time, being among those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity, what did they do? They cleared away the remains of the temple of which only rubble and ashes remained; they cleared everything away until what point? Until the foundation became clearly visible.

All the rubble, everything that had been destroyed was cleared away, and then the original foundations became visible, and only then did the rebuilding begin.

Beloved, it was necessary for God to send us a prophetic apostolic message, not merely to make a few minor improvements here and there, but to clear away everything that had collapsed, to see the foundations clearly, and to rebuild upon them.

I believe it is clear to us that God could not build upon the rubble and ruins, but that He simply had to push aside what had collapsed.

And that is precisely what brother Branham's ministry consists of.

And if I may be permitted to make one further remark on this, we have after all observed how active he was in evangelism and how the gifts of the Spirit, right up to the sign of the Messiah, have been revealed everywhere.

But following the opening of the Seals, many things have been cleared up, many issues addressed that he had not previously tackled in this way, especially not in public.

It was necessary to do a thorough cleaning, so that the entire structure might be rebuilt by the grace of God.

I would be delighted if we could still witness it, namely that God acknowledges us.

Not for our sake, but this too has already been said several times in this place and elsewhere: if God does not acknowledge those who now believe Him and now walk in His ways, who believe the promises for this time, who have consciously taken on His name through baptism, who truly strive in all things – and thank God for that – to please God, to believe Him and to follow Him, if God does not acknowledge this multitude who are truly ready to the best of their knowledge and belief to walk the path He has laid out, if He does not acknowledge them, whom then should He acknowledge? If you know, tell me.

What has always happened? Take the people of Israel.

And brother Branham also made a powerful statement here that is worth reflecting on: he said more or less that God can only bless the people of Israel in the Promised Land.

And he goes a bit further and says: the prophecy does not speak – he uses the word 'crooked' – of the crooked Jew, of the somewhat twisted Jew who does business on Wall Street in New York, but he speaks of the Jews who return to the land of their fathers, to the Promised Land.

And it is simply very important, as has already been said: the two prophets will not appear in Zurich, or in Washington, Moscow or anywhere else. Where will they carry out their ministry? In Jerusalem.

So all those from Israel who wish to share in God's work of salvation at that time must be where God will be at work.

Otherwise, they will have no part in it.

It is exactly the same with the church of the living God. We must go to the Promised Land. We must bear God's promises, so that we may then be brought into the Promised Land, namely into the fulfillment of what God has promised.

From the Epistle of James I would like to read a passage concerning patience.

And it is simply necessary that we bear in mind: we need patience until it pleases God to fulfill what He has promised.

This scripture is familiar to us: James chapter 5, from verse 7.

"***Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.***"

So, perseverance.

Do not give up at some point and do not say, "Well, it is not happening." It must happen, it will happen, because God has said so, not because we want it, but because it is part of God's plan of salvation which is unchangeable, and our faith may be anchored in this.

We read on in verse 8:

"***Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.***"

Could James not have written this letter yesterday to us, who live in this age?

The critics have written chapter after chapter, arguing that the apostles were mistaken, erred, and so on.

It was not the apostles and prophets who were mistaken and erred; it was the philosophers and writers of the 20th century who have gone beyond all bounds of criticism, who were mistaken and erred.

The Spirit of God had to write in such a way that the right word in Holy Scripture could be found for every moment, for every period of time.

I am grateful to God for this.

What a proof that it was not people who devised or wrote these things of their own accord, but holy men imbued with the Spirit of God, indeed, driven by the Holy Spirit, whether in the Old or New Testament, who spoke and wrote. So: "***Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts.***" [Jam 5:8]

And remember one thing: the trials we must go through are becoming ever more severe.

Remember the word from the book of Acts, probably chapter 7, when the time for the fulfillment of the promise drew near, Pharaoh oppressed the people of Israel in Egypt all the more, all the worse.

So just before the very moment of deliverance and exodus, the distress had become unbearable.

Such were God's ways back then; what will they be like now?

He may even allow us to have to endure a great deal more for the sake of His name and for the sake of His Word.

Let us do so with joy, in the certainty that they may kill the body, but they cannot kill the soul.

We know after all that God is faithful and will be with us to the end.

Let us read a little further, namely verse 11: "***Behold, we count them happy which endure.***" And then it says, "***Ye have heard of the patience of Job***" [Jam 5:11].

When I read this verse, I was reminded of how the prophets persevered right up to the last day and did not personally see the fulfillment of what God had spoken through their mouths.

Take Isaiah for instance: "***A virgin shall conceive***" [Isa 7:14] and so on.

He did not see it.

David, in Psalm 22: "***they have pierced my hands and my feet.***" [Psa 22:16]

And all those scriptures: "***they have cast lots for my garments.***" [Psa 22:18]

There are after all these many prophecies that came from the mouths of the prophets.

They saw nothing of the fulfillment with their own eyes.

If one had asked all these prophets on their deathbeds: "Man of God, are you certain of this?", every man of God would have replied: "Excuse me, that is not my concern; it is God's concern, and I am certain that when the time comes, God will do what He has announced through my mouth."

The prophets were certain of the matter.

Why? It was not they who spoke; God spoke through them.

One question: why are we certain of our cause?

Because brother Branham said something, or perhaps brother Frank repeated it?

No, it is not a human matter; it is God's matter.

And if it is God who has spoken and the human mouth has merely passed it on, then it is and remains from beginning to end God's matter.

So, we can trust the Lord to persevere through all trials.

Please do not pray that the Lord should put an end to the trials, for I say it again: they will become even worse.

Let us simply ask God to persevere, to stand firm, to remain steadfast in faith, precisely because we are the bearers of God's promises.

I would like to read from 1 Peter, chapter 1, verses 7 to 11 – actually verses 2 to 9 in total.

1 Peter chapter 1. I will then highlight the important points, or rather the points relevant to this context.

Verse 2.

[2] ***Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.***

Then it goes on and on. Then verse 5.

[5] ***Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.***

What is the apostle Peter writing here? Just like a diary. Like something that was predetermined, so we are told here. "***Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation...***" [1Pe 1:5]

God who has saved us has the power to keep us. He has the power to be with us, to guide and lead us until we see him.

"***Kept by faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.***"

Now we have the privilege of living in this last time, in which it is to be revealed and will be revealed, as surely as God has said. Someone might ask me whether I was not afraid to write that the great event of our Lord's return, whether it becomes before, around, or after the turn of the millennium. But it will come, it must come. God has said so and Scripture is being fulfilled before our very eyes. If you believe this, say Amen. Amen. Blessed be the name of the Lord. We cannot help but testify that God carries us through by faith. He preserves us so that we who live in these last days may persevere to the end, to share in the salvation, the transformation, and the rapture, which are to be revealed in the last time. Yes, will be revealed. For this is what God has decreed in his Word and so it shall be.

Now let us read on here. "***Wherein ye greatly rejoice.***" [1Pe 1:6]

Have we actually begun to do so yet? Have we begun to rejoice that the Lord is coming again? That he will preserve us until the moment of his return? Here it says:

"***Ye greatly rejoice in this.***"

I read on. "***Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be***"—not because for some arbitrary reason, but— "***if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.***" [1Pe 1:6]

None of us can choose the nature of the trial or affliction, but each is expected to bear what they can. And it is also written that the Lord does not lay burdens upon us unless we can bear them. No one has ever been tested or tried beyond their capacity. [1Co 10:13]

We may sometimes think: "this is beyond my strength." Yes, perhaps up to that moment, but God has already granted new strength and we can carry on once more by the grace of our God. How often have we experienced this? Where we have reached the end of our tether, that is when God truly begins to intervene and take matters into his own hands.

It goes on to say here, "***That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.***" [1Pe 1:7]

Everything that comes into our lives, whatever befalls us in the form of trials, temptations, suffering, hardship, tears, whatever it may be, in whatever area of our lives, we need this preparation. And that is why God grants it to us out of grace. And in the end, we shall say that all his ways have been faithfulness and mercy.

And then surely the moment will come when we can say, "Lord, I thank you for all the things you have sent my way. They served to help me walk your path, bowed and humble, right to the end. I thank you for sending them to me, so that I might reach the destination." Not an easy path, but a steep, thorny path, yet a path that leads to the destination, a path that leads to glory.

I shall read verses 8 and 9. "***Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.***" [1Pe 1:8-9]

One must keep one's eyes on the goal, as Paul writes to the Philippians. "***I forget what lies behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.***" [Phi 3:13-14]

And then he says, I do this because "***I too am apprehended of Christ.***" [Phi 3:12]

He's honest enough to write straight away, "***not that I have already attained it, or have already been made perfect, but I follow after, if that I may***

apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." [Phi 3:12]

Dear brothers and sisters, dear friends, can you testify that you have been apprehended of Christ? To have been saved by him, pardoned by him, redeemed by him, seized by him? Is the goal before your eyes? Then thank him for everything that comes your way.

Hebrews chapter 10, also a very well-known passage. Hebrews chapter 10. But we are to comfort one another with these words until the Lord comes. And the comfort found in Holy Scripture is still the best. Hebrews chapter 10. We might read from verse 35 here. "***Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.***" [Heb 10:35-36]

We know these Scriptures. May they serve us as comfort, edification, and strength to us. Let no one sit here thinking to themselves, "we have heard this many times before." May it be new to you and me, truly a word from God that speaks to your heart and mine at this very hour. A word that we do not let pass us by indifferently, as if it concerned others, but a word through which we are addressed, a word meant for us, a word that matters now, namely to make our calling and election sure [2 Pet 1:10], all the more so as we see that this day is drawing near, as has also been said to us here in the Word of God.

Every proclamation is after all addressed to us, to all who will yet hear it. We do well to allow ourselves to be addressed quite personally and to enter into this conversation with God, giving him the answer, giving the answer in our hearts in prayer to the Word with which he has addressed us.

In 1 Thessalonians 4 verse 18 we read these wonderful words. "***Therefore, comfort one another with these words.***"

What are we to take comfort in? Previously, there is mention of the Lord's return, of those who have fallen asleep in Christ that they will be raised, of the transformation of those who remain until the Lord's return. And then in verse 17 it is written, "***then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.***" [1Th 4:17]

And then comes the verse:

"***Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.***" [1Th 4:18]

When you visit the sick, when you see suffering and distress and you realize that your comfort and your words are not enough, remember that soon all this will be over. It will be behind us. Let us comfort one another in every situation we may find ourselves in with these words. Our Lord is coming, yes, our Lord is coming soon.

And there may well be critics again, not believers, but the critics. They too have found these Scriptures in which our Lord specifically says in Revelation, "***Behold, I am coming soon.***"

Revelation chapter 22. Revelation chapter 22 verse 7. "***Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.***" [Rev 22:7]

The critics write: Jesus promised "***Behold, I'm coming soon***" and nearly 2,000 years have passed.

But the apostle wrote to us that this great day will only come in the last time and that then the church will be caught up into glory. "***Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.***" [Rev 22:7]

I ask you today, it was not until the 3rd century that the individual books were compiled into the New Testament. Who throughout that entire period could possibly have preserved and kept what is written in the last book of the Bible, especially since it had not yet been opened and revealed? There are passages in the Word of God that were simply addressed to the church that would be on earth at the end. We are very grateful for that too.

In the last and second to last verse of Revelation 22 we read: "***He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.***" [Rev 22:20-21]

There are people with whom grace is and will remain until the end, people who persevere, who are bearers of the divine promises, people who are patient until the hour of God strikes when something happens. Let us conclude with a glorious word of the Psalm we read in the opening word. "***Remember thy church which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed.***" [Psa 74:2]

Let this be our prayer which we send up today to our Lord and Savior. Remember your blood-bought multitude. And remember also that it is not we alone who are reviled, but that you too, O Lord, and your name and your Word are reviled. And then we can pray in faith, Lord our God, arise, take hold of your power, put an end to your and our disgrace, confirm your Word and fulfill it. If indeed throughout the entire charismatic movement, which after all runs through all the churches and denominations, it is increasingly expected that great signs and wonders will occur, how much more must we, as the restored church of the living God, expect that the resurrection power, the creative power of God will be revealed in the body of the Lord, so that even the foolish virgins may one day say, "***Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.***" [Mat 25:8]

We are convinced that it will be God himself. And I can read this to you from Isaiah 28 and from the prophet Haggai and other passages, that it is the Lord himself who

will rise up and bring his work to completion, his act, his strange act. [Isa 28:21, Hag 2:6-7]

Thus it is written there: he himself will bring it to pass. But to do so, he needs a church, he needs members of his body who are joined together and stand at his service.

And by God's grace, that is what we would like to be. And why do we wish to be so? Because we have been predestined by God for this purpose.

Just as God has a messenger and a message for the end times, so he has a church in the end times that will once again be the "***pillar and foundation of the truth***" [1Ti 3:15], a church as the place of revelation of the living God.

To him, our Lord, be praise, glory and honor now and for all eternity in the precious and holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let us stand for the closing prayer.

Heavenly Father, once again I thank you with all my heart for today's service, for your Word, which guides us, and for enabling us to distinguish between and clearly recognize and see current events, including those of a most pious nature, which are attributed to the Holy Spirit, that we can discern and clearly recognize and see that the Word should never come from Rome but always from Jerusalem, always from Mount Zion, always from the mouth of the prophets, always from the mouth of the apostles.

Beloved Lord, whoever proclaims your Word today, proclaims it in accordance with how the prophets and apostles proclaimed it, from Jerusalem. Hallelujah. Lord, I thank you for this certainty of faith and also for the opportunity to test it that we thereby have. You have placed the standard, the Word, in our hands, in our hearts. We may test everything against it to see if it is so. We also give thanks for your prophet whom you have sent to us to make us alert, to give us guidance, indeed to give us a sign.

Lord, our God, how faithful you are. Indeed, you do nothing without first having revealed your counsel to your servants and prophets [Amo 3:7], not to the false prophet or false prophets, but to your servants and prophets whom you have sent at all times.

We give thanks, O Lord, for the men sent by God right up to our own time. They have proclaimed to us the true Word of God. We give thanks for this. Bless us and with us your entire worshipping people and be with us all by your grace until the end. You have promised it and so you will do it. "***Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.***" [Mat 28:20]

Lord, stay with us and bless us. We thank you for everything in Jesus' name. Amen.