

2. Be not afraid! - Our fragile church has a faithful God: Rejoice in God's providence

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[0 : 00] Let's turn to Exodus chapter 2 and to the passage that we read together. Last week we saw what a real message of hope there is in Exodus chapter 1 for very hard-pressed and struggling believers.

Rest in God's purpose was the message. His purpose is unchanged and it's unchangeable. However circumstances might seem to suggest otherwise, to us and often they do. Because God never forgets the people that he loves. Their names, we're told, are ever before him. And he will never forget the purpose that he has for those that he's called to be his own either. Neither time, nor trouble, nor terror or tyranny can ever overcome God's purpose. His good purpose for his people. And Exodus 1 showed us that very, very plainly, didn't it? And therefore, even the greatest tragedy imaginable, the greatest tragedy we can think of in the future, will never be able to separate us from his love, from his perfect purpose of grace.

[1 : 15] And the chapter ends, as we said in verse 22, with just such a threat. A very real and present danger, an imminent tragedy. Something that was going to utterly, in the end, destroy and wipe out all of God's people.

Because if every male child was to be exterminated in a planned ethnic cleansing and a genocide, then ultimately it would wipe out a people. And you know, the fact is that still today, sometimes the Church of Jesus Christ faces just such real and present danger.

Very, very real threats to its very existence. Threats of violence and intimidation and even outright war. Let me just read to you something that came in this week.

I know some of you will have seen it if you read the Barnabas Fund news. I think some pictures there will come up on the screen. Just listen as you look at these. Hindu extremists launched a spate of violence, meticulously planned attacks on Christians in Kandamai district, Orissa State, on the 24th and 25th of December 2007.

A total of 95 churches were burnt to the ground, as well as 730 homes of Christians. In cases where a Christian ministry operated from rented premises owned by a Hindu, the attackers were careful not to damage the building, but took all the contents outside and set them on fire.

[2 : 40] Taking into account all known cases of arson, murder and assault, the violence was, in the words of the All-Indian Christian Council, the largest attack on the Christian community in the history of democratic India.

The attackers were armed with guns, knives, spears, homemade bombs and other weapons. They shouted slogans including, Only Hindus to stay here, no Christians to stay here, Christians must become Hindu or die and kill Christians.

And at least nine Christians were killed. If you were at the prayer meeting on Wednesday, you'll have heard me read some very similar things from Pakistan, from our brother Imran, who's working there.

Well, what comfort can there be for hard-pressed believers there, right now? What hope can there be for them in a God who seems to have totally let them down, and so dreadfully badly?

And what comfort is there, friends, for you and me in situations of tragedy or loss or hardship when we feel that God's absent, when we feel that he just doesn't care about our lives, doesn't care about our future?

[3 : 55] We may not face the brutality that our brothers and sisters in Orissa have faced recently, but of course we do. We do face plenty of struggles of different kinds in our lives.

What hope and what comfort is there at these times? Well, Exodus chapter 2, verses 1 to 10, give us the answer. Because if chapter 1's message was rest in God's purpose, then the message of this passage is just as powerful.

Again, we're told, be not afraid. Remember, our fragile church does have a faithful God. And rejoice in God's providence.

Because it is audacious and marvelous, working wonders for all of God's people ultimately, even if, even if it is agonizing and mysterious for many of his people at the present time.

See, this passage reminds us that however silent and unseen God may seem to be, he is still in absolute sovereign control, and he is ordering even the minute details of every event in this world.

[5 : 10] And it teaches us once again, as we saw last week, that God will always, always frustrate the purpose of his enemies and his great enemy, and use them, even in their present apparent prosperity and power, use them for the ultimate glory and blessing of the people that he loves.

When we read a passage like this, you see, God wants to open our eyes. He wants us to see the silent and the hidden workings of his eternal providence.

So that we learn to see beyond the mere visible in this world, the here and now, and so that we learn to see with the perspective of eternity. Because it's when we learn to see the invisible that we learn to rejoice in God's providence, even in the present time.

It's when we see the invisible that we learn to live in sure and certain hope, whatever the present circumstances may seem to be. That's what the Bible really means by faith, and living by faith.

In fact, it's the very language that's used in Hebrews chapter 11 to describe the faith of the great saints. Hebrews 11, 27, By faith Moses left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

[6 : 35] That would be another good title for this message, seeing the invisible God at work.

Because you'll note, I wonder if you did, as we read the passage, God isn't mentioned anywhere, is he?

He never speaks. He's quite invisible. But he certainly is at work, isn't he, for anyone who has eyes to see. Seeing the invisible God at work, in all things, and in all circumstances.

That's what Paul means in Romans chapter 12, verse 2, when he says that as believers, we're not to be conformed to this world, but we're to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. In other words, our minds opened, and our eyes opened, to see how God really works, and see that he is working in this world, and in our lives.

And it's that seeing, the invisible, that leads us to be able to live our life, as Paul says in that verse, by testing and proving, in our experience, what is the will of God, what is good, and acceptable, and perfect, whatever should befall us.

Only if you are someone, who sees the invisible God at work, who rejoices in his providence always, will you be able to be someone, who can accept, everything that befalls you, in your life, and receive it as the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

[8 : 03] So there's nothing vague, there's nothing impractical, or an abstruse about this doctrine.

It's absolutely real, it's absolutely right down to earth. That verse, Romans 12 too, has been etched on my mind, ever since, at a time when my father, had a major stroke, and I flew up from London, to see him, and see my mother.

And we sat around the breakfast table, and read the daily light together, as is the custom in our family. And it included that verse. And I listened to my mother, praying and saying, thanks to God, for the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Well, if I want to be a kind of person, who can stand, in the face of tragedy, and trial, and if you want to be that kind of person, then we've got to learn, to be able to pray like that, haven't we?

So let's look at this passage of scripture, and learn how to rejoice in God's providence, and see that it is audacious, and marvelous, for all of God's people, including all of us, for all of his people, ultimately, even if sometimes it is agonizing, and mysterious for many of us, very much of the time.

Now, to summarize the message under two headings, the first is this, God's providence, should always delight our eyes, in the present. God's working, and his ways, for our ultimate blessing, and glory, are audacious, and marvelous, and so we should rejoice in them always, whatever, whatever the circumstances.

[9 : 43] That's the New Testament's clear message, isn't it? It tells us, that's what God's will is, for our lives. Listen to Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5, rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God, in Christ Jesus for you.

I often read that verse, to somebody who's struggling, with God's guidance, and asking the question, what's the will of God, for my life? And I say, well that's the will of God. Rejoice, always, give thanks in all circumstances.

You do that, and God really doesn't care, what job you do, or where you live, or who you marry, or whether you get married. All of those things, are inconsequential, in comparison with that. But you see, to do that, we need to be able to see, God at work, don't we?

Even when it seems, that he isn't at work. And that's what, this story helps us to do. See, when we read that last, verse of chapter 1, we want to say to ourselves, oh surely, all is lost.

I'm sure, that the Israelites, thought that very thing, when they heard that decree. Disaster looms for us, as a people, surely. Surely. No doubt, many of them, prayed to God, to save them, to deliver them, maybe to send, a great deliverer, to free them from Pharaoh.

[11:03] And so, the people of faith, may very well, begin chapter 2, expecting, that God would do something. That's often the way, isn't it? When tragedy strikes us, people of faith, we pray.

Of course we do. We pray, because we believe God, and we trust God, and we're looking for God, to act. And often we're acting, we're wanting God, to act soon, and to act visibly, even to act dramatically.

But you see, God's mighty acts, for the redemption, of his people, which he is at work, doing, and perfecting, all of the time, so often, they wrong foot us, don't they? And God isn't afraid, of turning our expectations, of his interventions, absolutely upside down.

Judge not the Lord, by feeble sense, we sang. But that's exactly, what we do, most of the time, isn't it? At least I do. We expect, some great intervention, when we pray, we expect, some great visible splash.

And that's what we're looking for, in chapter 2 here. We want something, to turn the whole thing around. And yet instead, we have something, of a total anticlimax, don't we? It's also mundane, to begin with.

[12:15] It's also apparently, insignificant. There's no intervention, of God. There's no word, from God. There's no mention, of God. It's so low key. Nobody even gets, a name in this passage.

Did you see that? Until the very last verse, Moses. It's just a mother, a woman, a daughter, a sister. Just a man, and a woman.

Then a marriage. Then a conception. And then a birth. Of a son. Oh no, not a son. We know what that means.

Surely that means disaster, doesn't it? There's still no sign of God. But perhaps there is a hint, that, in this unnamed mother's action, there's more, than just a desperate, human attempt, to save her son.

We're not told, why she thought, of this floating basket idea, or if she'd, observed, Pharaoh's daughter, bathing there, and had some kind of hope, that perhaps she would intervene, and help. We don't know. But it does seem remarkable, doesn't it, to say the least, that in verse 3, the word basket, is actually the word ark.

[13:25] The very same word, that we saw, just a little while ago, in Genesis chapter 6 and 7, to describe Noah's ark. She took for him, and made an ark.

It's the only other time, this word is used in the Bible, apart from the story of Noah. Moses' mother, builds a little ark. She daubs it with pitch, just like Noah did. And she puts her son, in the ark of salvation, to seek safety for him, through the very waters of judgment, of Pharaoh's command. So I don't know, maybe there is, an unseen act of faith there, as she commits, her son's salvation, to the unseen God. We don't know. But look at the drama, can you feel the tension, as we look at verse 5 and 6?

The sister waits, to see what happens. Well, surely we know, what's going to happen. There's going to be disaster. Not just, oh somebody's going to find out, about this, but, the daughter of God's people, arch enemy, Pharaoh, is the one, who's going to find him.

Now the daughter of Pharaoh, came down to be, he's at the river. While a young woman, walked beside the river, she saw the basket, among the reeds, and sent her servant woman, and she took it. And when she opened it, she saw the child.

[14:45] And behold, the baby was crying, she took pity on him. He said, this is one of the Hebrews' children. We're just waiting, for somebody to say, throw him to the crocodiles.

But no, you see, God has other plans, doesn't he? You've got to be impressed, haven't you, with these feisty Israelite women, in this story. First of all, we've got the midwives, who stand up to Pharaoh, and don't seem to mind, standing up to him.

Now there's this sister, she's bold as brass, isn't she? Isn't that extraordinary? Shall I get a nurse for you, she says. That's just astonishing. It's hardly what you'd expect. You'd expect her to run out, and kneel down, and beg for mercy, wouldn't you?

That's quite different. And it's almost as though, she's saying out loud, you're going to serve, God's audacious providence. So don't waste any time, get on with it. Shall I go and get a nurse for you? I love it. These Bible women, are not wallflowers, they're not doormats, are they? So there you are, Christian women. Good example for you. Be feisty. Just don't tell my wife, I said that.

[15:54] So she goes and gets, guess who? The child's own mother. And not only does, the mother get her son back, she gets a salary paid, from the royal palace. And God's servant, gets brought up, under state protection, and then has the highest privilege, of the whole royal household.

You remember Psalm 2? He who sits in the heavens, laughs. I think the whole heavens, were roaring with laughter, as they watched this.

And we are surely, meant to laugh, aren't we? We're meant to, clap our hands with delight, at the marvellousness, at the audacity, of God's providence, of God at work. Silently, not mentioned, invisible, but working, to frustrate his enemies, and to bless his people.

The whole drama, of the story, points us to that, so sharply. In fact, its very structure, points to the fact, that God, is in total control, of every, single aspect of it.

I'm sure you can see, it's all symmetrical, isn't it? It begins, with the mother, in verses 1 to 3, and it ends, with the mother, verses 9 and 10. Then there's inner brackets, about the sister, in verse 4, and then verses 7 and 8, and right at the centre, in verses 5 and 6, is Pharaoh's daughter, the one on whom, everything hinges.

[17:14] Yet, of course, it doesn't all hinge on her, at all, does it? It's not a matter of fate. It's not all about, this pagan princess, and whether she's coming down, and has a good day, or whether she's having, a bad hair day.

No! Behind it all, is the silent, invisible God. And he's woven, every tiny detail, so that, not only does he save, his servant Moses, he does it in such a way, as to show, beyond any possible doubt, who the real power, in Egypt is.

By frustrating, the very decree, of his enemy, and turning, it to glory, and blessing, for his people. You see, this story, is being told, to open our eyes, to see, the invisible God, at work, to rejoice, in his providence.

Which is at work, even when it seems to us, as though all is lost, and we might be in despair. We need to recognize, his providence, in his hidden, but marvelous ways, so that we can rejoice in it. And this story, helps us to see that. Not just that, God, is always at work, but the way, he's at work. Even if it often, baffles us, and is beyond us.

[18:30] Our God, is other than we think, his ways, are far above. And he's not afraid, of turning our expectations, upside down. Let's think for a minute, just how he is, at work here.

Three things, beginning with D, to help us to remember, that he's still, at work, in the same way, in our world, and in our lives, today. First, notice in this story, he's not afraid, to use, the domestic. He uses, the domestic, in order, to bring his long-term purpose, of grace, to fruition. God's people, were praying, for deliverance.

They were praying, for his intervention. They were praying, for him to do something. When we get to chapter 3, it tells us that plainly. And God isn't deaf, nor is he dead. He's heard their prayers. I have seen, he says to Moses. I have heard. I know. And he wasn't slow, to answer. Though they thought he was. But he wasn't afraid, of sending, a domestic answer.

[19:36] They wanted, a great champion, no doubt. But he sent them, a little child. They looked, no doubt, for a special, divine visitation. But God sent them, something quite incognito, hidden, apparently, very, very weak.

And certainly, a very long term, an unhurried answer. And that's so often, the pattern of God, isn't it, in scripture, and in our lives.

He sends his answer, in the realm of the domestic. Something that, seems so very insignificant. So often, in scripture, it is, in the birth of a child, isn't it? Think of the story of Samson, in the book of Judges.

Think of Hannah, and Samuel. Think of John the Baptist, in Luke chapter 1. Think of the Lord Jesus himself. That, above all, should remind us, that so often, God's greatest, and most wonderful, interventions, in our world, are very often, things that occur, so silently, and unseen at first. Isn't that right? What were we singing, at Christmas? How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift, is given. And our God, says the New Testament, is still the one, who uses the weak things, of the world, to confound the wise.

[20 : 56] Because God's foolishness, is still wiser, than men's wisdom, and strength. And that means, doesn't it? Surely, that we, as Christian people, mustn't despise, the domestic, and the ordinary, and the unspectacular, and the everyday things, in our lives.

So often, we're looking for, big splashes, aren't we? We're looking for, the big events, the great crowd, the great exciting thing, as if that was God's way. But it isn't God's way, most of the time. Far more often, God is just, quietly at work, in the domestic, in the ordinary realm, of our lives, through ordinary, unnamed people. And that's where, he likes to work, his great gospel purposes out, in your life, and in mine.

And it's so true, isn't it? We know that, in our own experience. It's just that, little conversation, or that meeting up, for coffee with somebody, or a word about Jesus, at work, or an encouragement, to somebody, to come to church.

That's how God, is drawing people, into his kingdom. That's how he's, building his church. And so we mustn't, always be looking, for great, spectacular things, great interventions, of God.

[22 : 12] God loves, to use the plain, the ordinary, the domestic. And God, still answers prayers, very specifically, doesn't he? By raising up children, who will be servants, and soldiers, for Jesus Christ, in the long term.

And often that, is still very much, the way he answers prayers. We are, praying to God, asking for something, much more immediate, than God, maybe having a much, longer term plan. I always remember, my father speaking, about the time, after the second world war, in the late 40s, and early 1950s, when many, many Christians, in this country, were praying, for God to intervene, for God to bring revival, to the dire situation, in our national churches.

And it seemed, as though God, wasn't answering. Nothing was happening. And yet, 20, 25 years later, when they look back, they were seeing, at that time, many, many men, being raised up, and being called, into the ministry, of God's word, into the mission, of his church.

And they said, that is exactly, what we were praying, for God to do. But God was not, bringing us, mighty revival, as we wanted it, but he was giving us babies, and bringing people, into the world, who would grow, and mature, and be trained, and be committed, to be servants, and soldiers, of Jesus Christ.

And maybe, he's doing the same today. And shouldn't we, be praying, for him to be doing, these things today, for God, to give us children, who will be, a new generation, of Christian leaders, of evangelists, of missionaries, of teachers, of God's word.

[23 : 47] Moses, you see, when he's writing this book, it's interesting, isn't it? He's writing, about his own mother, and father. And he's clearly, commending the place, that true Christian, and godly parents, can play.

And he taught that, to Israel, very, very plainly too. Read Deuteronomy, chapter 6, when you go home, about the responsibilities, that we have, to raise our young ones, to be servants, of Jesus Christ.

We don't know, how much, Moses' mother knew, about what God, might do with her son. But it seems, that she did know enough, to know that God, wanted her to fight, for her son's, spiritual destiny.

And we know, that that's what God, wants us to do, with our children, isn't it? Fight for their, spiritual destiny. Who knows, what God might do, through our children, through our young ones, in our fellowships.

So mothers, and fathers here, and mothers, and fathers to be, and in fact, all of us, because whether we have, our own children, or not, as part of a fellowship, we all have a role, to play. Don't despise, the domestic.

[24 : 54] God doesn't. He uses, ordinary circumstances, of our lives, in his marvellous providence, to prepare the way, for the growth, of his kingdom. Second, God's not afraid, either, to use the daring, and the dangerous.

See, Moses, even as a child, was pitched, into the arena, of the influence, of the enemy, wasn't he? And yet, God, seemed to be, much, much less fearful, about that sort of thing, than we are often, as parents, and as adults.

We so often, want to cause it, our young people, don't we? And to protect them. But you know, the very best way, to protect our children, is to entrust them, wholly to God, by prayer, and by precept, and by example.

To train them, in their true, spiritual destiny. To teach them, where their true, treasure does lie, so that, they'll be able, to withstand, all the influence, of the enemy. All that this world, and the flesh, and the devil, throws at them.

Hebrews 11, tells us plainly, doesn't it? When Moses, reached the age, of independence, he therefore, chose, mistreatment, with the people of God, rather than, the pleasures of sin.

[26 : 02] Rather than, everything that, Egyptian culture, could offer him. And surely, that speaks volumes, of the solidity, and the boldness, of the upbringing, that he had, from his true parents, even in the midst, of that, totally pagan surroundings.

They, as his parents, clearly weren't, on the back foot, were they? They were bold, in the faith, teaching him, training him, in the truth. So that he could, plunder the enemy's, very best, and put it to God's use.

Their education, their culture, their learning. Moses could, plunder it, and use it, for his true calling, as a servant of God. And that's surely, the answer for us too, isn't it?

With our children, and young folk. The Bible calls us, to raise our children, in faith, not in fear. To trust God, and to be unafraid, to be daring, seeking from the earliest time, to challenge our children, as well as to train them.

To challenge them, to the way of true faith, even if it means, losing out, and missing out, on some of the, much more immediately, pleasurable things, that could be theirs, in a world without God.

[27 : 16] In a materialist society. It's a tragedy, you know, when Christian parents, do bring up their children, in fear, instead of faith.

Fear that they'll turn away, fear that they won't, follow Christ. Fear that the world, will entrap them, and ensnare them. Because you know, if that really is our fear, if that is our driving force, then alas, all too often, that will be fulfilled.

We take the softly, softly approach, so scared, that we might put our children, off the faith, that we don't want to expose them, to it too much. That's a counsel of disaster.

The Bible would have us be daring, in faith, for our children, to entrust them, to God's purpose, and therefore, to help them use, all that the world has to offer, in terms of education, and learning, and all of these things, to serve, God's purpose, and to fulfill, their own destiny, to be soldiers, and servants, of Jesus Christ, all of their days.

So we mustn't be afraid, to ask a lot, from our youngsters, to challenge them to faith, not, not to cause it them in fear. God isn't afraid, to do that. Did it with Moses. Think about Daniel.

[28 : 39] Think about others. It's how God works. He uses the domestic. He's daring, sometimes dangerous. But God also isn't afraid, to work in sheer defiance, of his enemies, is he?

Isn't verse 9, a perfect example of this? God's servant, cared for his way, but at Pharaoh's expense. And we see that, so often through scripture, don't we? And through history.

Think of the Acts of the Apostles. Persecution breaks out. But what happens? The gospel spreads everywhere. God is defiant. Read Acts chapter 12. You find that James, the apostle, is killed, and Peter, is thrown in prison.

What do we read, at the end of the chapter? But the word of the Lord, increased, and multiplied.

God is defiant. Think of how God used, the apostle Paul's, Roman citizenship, to get him to the very heart, of the empire, so that the gospel, could flourish, and spread, all through the ancient world.

Think of Rome's, mighty protection, on that single man, whose preaching, ultimately led, to the downfall, of the whole of the Roman empire. Because God is defiant, in the face of his enemies.

[29 : 53] We were mentioning last week, the very same thing, in China, weren't we? The CIM, thrown out on mass, in 1950. But that, in God's, audacious providence, is what has led, to the flourishing, and the growth, of the church, in China today.

And it's an abiding principle. God will act, in defiance, of his enemies, for his own, greater glory. And for the blessing, ultimately, of his people. Just what the book, of Proverbs, teaches us.

He who digs a pit, will fall into it himself. And ultimately, that will always be so, for God's enemies. And we're to remember that, friends, especially in days, when enemies, seem to have the upper hand.

Days like now, in Orissa, in India. God is not afraid, to act in defiance, and in his time, he will. And we need to be people, who see that.

Who see the invisible. To see what the, psalmist of Psalm 73, saw. That although now, evil and enemies, may seem to be, absolutely in the ascendant, God will always, always, in the end, bring them to ruin.

[31 : 13] You see, friends, when our eyes, are open, in our lives, to the way that God works, just as it's illustrated for us, in this chapter, then, his providence, will delight our eyes, in the present.

Because we'll know, that his working, and his ways, for our ultimate glory, and our goodness, truly are audacious, and marvelous, always. Even when at first sight, it just doesn't seem to be so. God's providence, should delight our eyes, in the present. But the second thing, is this, much more briefly, God's providence, should direct our eyes, to the future.

Because God's work, and his ways, may nevertheless, in the present time, very often, be truly agonizing, and mysterious, for us, as his people.

And yet, when we do understand, the future, as the gospel, reveals it to us, we can rejoice, even in the midst, of trials, and turmoil, and even tragedy. We rejoice, says Paul, in Romans 5, even in our sufferings, knowing that suffering, produces endurance, and endurance, produces character, and character, produces hope, and hope, does not put us to shame.

[32 : 28] For God's love, has been poured, into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee, of our future. God's providence, must direct our eyes, to the future.

You see, that's so important, because, not all babies, were saved, like Moses was, in that day, were they? Most of them, were murdered.

Most families, experienced, the real pain, of tragedy, and of grief. You see, that reminds us, that the real certainty, of God's promise, the real guarantee, of God's purpose, is not, that we shall never, suffer now.

It's not, that we shall never, face hardship now, or disappointments now, or griefs, and sorrows, and bitternesses, in this world. Ralph Davis, puts it this way, he does not promise, that his people, will never suffer, but that no suffering, will ever eradicate, his people.

It is not promised, that we will never die, for the kingdom of God, but that the kingdom of God, will never die. But that's so far away, isn't it?

[33 : 44] So far away, from what most of us, want to believe, a lot of the time. Isn't that true? When tragedy comes. And that's why, there will always be those, in the church, who will offer, a very different hope, but a very false hope, that God will, always intervene, to prevent all suffering, for his people now, and to only bring, health, and wealth, and prosperity, and happiness.

The prosperity gospel, is rife, in our world, and in our churches. We had friends, staying with us recently, from Namibia. Some of you would have met, and spoken to them, their missionaries there. They were telling us, that in one town, that they know, there is only one pastor, one pastor, among all the churches, who doesn't preach, such a prosperity gospel.

And he's being persecuted, by all the rest, because he's a thorn, in their flesh. But you know, you just can't, read the Bible seriously, and find that kind of thinking.

Jesus said, in this world, you will, have tribulation. But he said, be of good cheer, for I have overcome, the world. In other words, look to the future.

God's providence, is ordering, all things, for the ultimate glory, and blessing, of his people. But it is, for the ultimate glory, and blessing. And even though, many babies, did die in Goshen, then.

[35 : 16] God's, providential care, allowed that. Nevertheless, they were bound up, with Moses, God's deliverer. And God was, working, an ultimate purpose, of deliverance, and salvation, for all his people.

Just as later on, Matthew tells us, in Matthew chapter 2, that in Bethlehem, many babies, were similarly butchered, by Herod's knife. And amongst, the many weeping mothers, there was Mary, who was, nursing her son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who would bring, ultimate salvation, to all, all of God's people.

But it's so hard, to understand, isn't it? Why God's people, are bound up, with his deliverer, and suffer, alongside him. As indeed, Moses himself, did suffer, we'll see that next week.

But you see, it's God's pattern. And though God's people, do suffer with him now, and suffer indeed, for him now, it's so that, we may also, be united with him, in a future, that is glorious, beyond our imagining.

That's the gospel. And that's why, God's providence, always directs our eyes, to the future, that we might see that, just as the gospel, always does. Last week, we quoted Romans 8, 17, where Paul is speaking, about the marks, of genuine heirs, of God, provided he says, that we suffer, with him, in order that we may, also be glorified, with him.

[36 : 48] And God's people, you see, are bound up, with their deliverer's work, with his destiny, that's how we're saved, we're saved, through union, with our saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, in his death, and resurrection, in his suffering, and subsequent glory.

See, Jesus said, unless a grain of wheat, fall into the ground, and die, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit, and so it was for him, in whose suffering, God was working, an eternal weight, of glory.

And so it is, says Jesus, for all who are mine. If anyone serves me, he must follow me. You see, Moses wrote, all of these things down.

He wrote this book, didn't he, for his people, as they were about, to enter the land of Canaan, after their great redemption, out of Egypt, after their desert wanderings, and he wrote it all down, to remind them, about God's plan, and purpose, to remind them, that his providential power, at work, to fulfill that purpose, still pointed to the future.

There would be many battles, for the Israelites, still to come. There would be many tragedies, for them to face. Many mysteries, that couldn't be understood.

[38 : 10] But still, they were to see, the invisible, and to rejoice, in God's providence, knowing that God's work, workings, and ways, may of course, seem agonizing, and mysterious, in the present time.

But yet, he is, working his purpose out, for his ultimate glory. And for your, ultimate glory. If you belong to him.

Yes, God does move, in mysterious ways. But we're not, to judge him, by our feeble sense. We are, to trust him, for his grace. And we are, to know, for sure, that behind, what does, so often seem like, a frowning providence, he does hide, a smiling face.

A face of mercy, and of grace, and of glory, and of blessing. And that, is the genuine, gospel of Jesus Christ. Don't be taken in, by anything else.

That, that, is the true, gospel. We were hearing, on Wednesday night, Brian was reading, from Acts 14, the apostles, going around, and encouraging, the believers, in the new churches, and saying to them, continue in the faith, for through, many tribulations, we must enter, the kingdom of God.

[39 : 30] But we will, enter. We will enter. And when we see, the future like that, and when we see, him who is invisible, who is working out, his plan and purpose, for our good, and our blessing, and even our glory, then friends, then we will be able, to rejoice, even now.

However much, it may seem mysterious, however much, it may even seem, agonizing, what God is asking us, to go through, in the present time. So if you are feeling, today, that you are in the midst, of that mystery, and agony, perhaps frustration, even despair, in your life of faith, whether that be, in real and present dangers, such as we have heard of, in India, and that may very well be, for some of those, who listen to this message, on the internet, or whether it be, something much closer to home, the struggles, and the agonies, of many, many other kinds, that many of us do face, and some of us are facing, right now.

Then this passage says to you, be not afraid. Remember, our church, at our fragile human lives, we have, a faithful God.

See him, who is invisible, and rejoice, in his providence, because it is, oh it is, audacious, and marvelous, for all of God's beloved ones, ultimately.

Even if it is, agonizing, and mysterious, for many of us, right now, and will be again, in the future. Let his providence, direct your eyes, to the future, so that you see, the invisible.

[41 : 19] So that he may also, teach you, to delight your eyes, in his providence, even at the present time. Rejoice, in the providence, of the God, who loves us.

Let's pray together. Beloved, be not surprised, at the fiery trial, when it comes upon you, to test you, as though something strange, were happening to you.

But rejoice, insofar as you share, Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice, and be glad, when his glory is revealed. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time, he may exalt you.

Casting all your anxieties, on him, because he cares, for you. And after you've suffered, a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you, to his eternal glory, in Christ, will himself, restore, confirm, and strengthen, and establish you.

To him be the dominion, forever and ever. Amen.