

# Do you do well to be angry?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, now we're going to have our reading from the Bible for this evening, and you'll find that in Jonah chapter 4. I think that's on page 775 in the church Bibles. Jonah chapter 4.

We're coming to the end of the story. Today, chapter 3 describes Jonah's journey to Nineveh and his preaching in Nineveh and the remarkable response of the people of Nineveh to the message they heard.

We'll start at chapter 3, verse 10. When God saw what they did, that they listened to the message and repented and turned around, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he'd said he would do to them.

And he did not do it, but it displeased Jonah exceedingly. And he was angry.

Do you do well to be angry? Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there.

[ 1 : 45 ] He sat under it in the shade till he should see what would become of the city. Now, the Lord God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah that it might be a shade over his head to save him from his discomfort.

So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant so that it withered.

When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, it is better for me to die than to live.

But God said to Jonah, do you do well to be angry for the plant? And he said, yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die. And the Lord said, you pity the plant for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night.

And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left and also much cattle?

[ 3 : 08 ] Amen. This is the word of the Lord. The phrase is Jonah and the?

Everybody knows that. We know, we've recognized in week one that this is one of the most popular, one of the best known stories in the whole Bible. This week we come to the end of the story. And in many popular renditions of the story, all the important stuff is done. We've had the storm, chapter one.

We've had Jonah be thrown into the sea, dramatically, chapter one. We've had the fish coming and swallowing him up. We've had the journey to Nineveh after he's been vomited up on the shore.

We've had the preaching.

We've had the dramatic response. All the exciting stuff is done. And all we're left with is a rather angry man sitting in the hot sun waiting.

[ 4 : 10 ] Seems such an anticlimax given what's come before. Well, that is what we have this evening. An angry man sitting in the hot sun waiting. But far from being an anticlimax, this is the pointy end of the book of Jonah.

This is the conclusion. This is the climax. This is where the real action happens in the book of Jonah. This is where the big issues are dealt with in chapter four.

Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. That was the key content of Jonah's message in Nineveh. And amazingly, the people of Nineveh, from the biggest of them to the smallest, believed that message and called out to God for mercy.

Chapter four, verse one. Jonah is exceedingly angry at that response. Verse three.

He prays to die. He's so angry. Please take my life from me for it's better for me to die than to live.

His anger is self-destructive. Verse five.

[ 5 : 20 ] He goes outside the city to watch it, to see what will happen. Presumably to see what will happen when the 40 days are up. Jonah waits.

This chapter is all about waiting. Waiting to see what God will do. Will God respond to Nineveh's change of heart?

Jonah waits to see. The sun rises and sets and rises and sets and rises and sets. The clock ticks. For 40 days. Jonah waits. Now, we the readers, we know what's going to happen because we've had chapter three, verse ten. When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, he relented of the disaster that he'd said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

We've had a preview in the story of what's happening in God's mind. But Jonah hasn't had this kind of preview. He has to wait to see.

[ 6 : 26 ] Look at verse five. He sat under the booth in the shade till he should see what would become of the city. Oh, he has his suspicions all right.

That is why he's angry. But it's only in verse 11, right at the very end of the story, that he is told for definite of God's pity for Nineveh.

And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city? Meanwhile, the sun rises and sets, and the clock ticks, and Jonah waits suspiciously.

And out of his suspicions, his anger grows. And the big question of this chapter is this one. Do you do well to be angry?

It's there in verse four. Do you do well to be angry? There's no response at that point. It's repeated in verse nine. Do you do well to be angry about the plant?

[ 7 : 32 ] And this time there is a response. Yes, I do. I'm really angry. This is the great question of this chapter, and I think it's the great question of the book. Here is a man very angry at what God has done.

It's important that we realize his anger is not a new development. Look at chapter four, verse two.

He prayed to the Lord and said, Oh, Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country?

That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish. For I knew what you were like, he says. This statement takes us right back to the beginning of the book. Look at chapter one, verse three.

Jonah, having been told to go to Nineveh, rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

Jonah was angry from the minute God told him to move.

I was so angry that I wanted out of that enterprise straight away. I went in the opposite direction. A little illustration at junior school about the only thing that I was any good at was playing marbles.

[ 8 : 37 ] It was an unexpected skill. I didn't anticipate it. I started with a little bag of small, ordinary marbles. We called them in those days smallies. And I won, over about three or four months, heaps of marbles.

A huge shoe bag full of them. Smallies, biggies, fancies, fancy biggies. I had the lot. But one afternoon, I went round to Ian's house.

What a bad afternoon that was. We played marbles. And he took all my biggies off me, every one. He beat me fair and square. There was no cheating.

It was a dreadful afternoon. It was full of despair, dismay, anger, outrage. It was a dreadful afternoon. I still had plenty of marbles left in my bag.

But for me, the game was basically over. I just didn't want to play that anymore. It had been so traumatic. Well, I think that, according to chapter 4, verse 2, I think that's Jonah in chapter 1.

[ 9 : 40 ] I don't want to play in your game anymore. I've had enough. I quit. I'm out. Of course, he found that there was no escape from this game. Because as he said back in chapter 1, his God is the God of everything.

The God who made the sea and the dry land. And via storm and sea and fish, he finds himself back in the game. But he still wants out just as much now as he did back then.

Verse 3. Oh, Lord, please take my life from me. For it's better for me to die than to live. I hate being in this. This is unendurable.

I want nothing more to do with it. The same is repeated in verse 9. This time in connection with the plant. Do you do well to be angry? I do. Angry enough to die.

I want out of this. I hate it, what you've done. Do you do well to be angry? That's the big question of this book. And I take it that it's also the big question that the book raises for the reader.

[ 10 : 46 ] Now, I've been making three assumptions in the weeks that we've been looking at this book. First, that we have this story because Jonah made the story known. Now, we don't know

precisely when the finished version of this book came together.

But Jonah is the only human witness of all the events. And I take it it's reasonable to assume that the information comes from him. Second, assumption that he tells the story against himself. He is not portrayed positively in this book. The story ends with an angry little man sitting in the desert. And you don't know quite which way he's going to go. But I take it that he looks, as he looks back on the questions God raised about his anger, he now knows that those are questions that needed to be raised.

There was something wrong with that anger. Jonah is the source. He tells the story against himself. And third, the story needs to be told to other people.

What could have made Jonah pass on this embarrassing story? I mean, if this had happened to you, would you pass this story on? The only adequate reason I can think of is that he knows that other people need to learn what he learned.

[12:00] That that kind of anger is not legitimate. Who are the first readers of this book? Well, I take it that the first readers of this book are Israelite people a bit further on in history.

The events of the book of Jonah probably occurred somewhere in the middle of the 8th century BC, when things are going quite well back in Israel.

By the last quarter of that century, just a few decades further on, all of that has changed. Because in 722 BC, Israel experienced grim judgment from God as the Assyrian army came through and wiped everything out.

Assyria, the nation that the city of Nineveh is part of. And my guess is that the first readers of this book knew just what it was like to be angry at what God was doing with Nineveh.

And that they needed also to face the question, are you right to be angry about this? Why exactly is Jonah angry?

[13:14] Well, he gives some explanation in verse 2. It's something to do with God being merciful to Nineveh. But why exactly is he angry about that?

Is it because he doesn't like Assyrians and doesn't want God to have mercy on them? Is it because he'd rather be back home with his successful ministry among Israelites than out here in the desert watching Nineveh probably not be destroyed?

Is it because he's losing his comfort or his status back home that he's angry? Is it because he sees in God's call to Nineveh a sign that the days of mercy and privilege for Israel are coming to an end and God is taking his privileges elsewhere?

Is it because that means that his work back in Israel, which has been good, will ultimately prove unfruitful? It's impossible to know.

It could be a combination of a number of those. The passage gives us absolutely no information to work on. So instead of speculating about what this passage doesn't say, why precisely Jonah is so mad, for the remainder of our time, let me try to focus on what this passage does say.

[14:34] So here are three important things that Jonah chapter 4 obviously tells us. Number one, God is very patient with Jonah.

Remember what this book says about who God is. He's the owner and absolute ruler of everything. Remember who Jonah is?

Well, Jonah is just a small person. A person God has used, to be sure, but just one little human being. And the little human being, the servant of God, the creature of God, says to God, I'm angry with what you're doing.

I'm angry enough to die. I don't want you to be my creator anymore. I don't want to live if this is what living means.

I have the right to be angry that you are behaving like this. Remember who's who in this story?

Jonah is a little person, furiously shaking his fist at kindness on a grand scale.

[16:01] You, Yahweh, you ought not to be doing this in your world. I know what's right. I know what's just even if you don't. I know what ought to be done even if you won't do it. I think what you're doing is so bad, I want nothing to do with it anymore.

It's beneath me. Kill me now and put me out of my misery. I'd rather die than have anything more to do with the whole thing. In response to his furious fist shaking, God is exceptionally patient with Jonah.

In fact, he shows to Jonah precisely the same sort of kindness that Jonah is so angry about being shown to others. Look at God's patience in chapter four.

Look at verse four. Do you do well to be angry, Jonah? Such a patient question. It's not at all what's deserved. The same kindness is there in verse six. The Lord appointed a plant and made it grow up over Jonah that it might be a shade over his head to save him from his discomfort.

[17:08] Isn't that a kind and gentle and generous thing to do? I'd have let him fry a bit if it had been me. But God is just kind to this angry little man.

It's there in verse nine. Do you do well to be angry for the plant? Again, such a patient question, inviting Jonah to understand.

It's as big as it gets in verses 10 and 11. Verse nine, You pity the plant. Verse 10. Should I not pity Nineveh?

Patient question and explanation again and again in this chapter. God is very patient with Jonah. Why such patience?

Why does this chapter make such a big deal of that? Well, apart from the fact that it shows how patient God is, perhaps because this kind of anger is commoner than we would imagine among God's people.

[18:12] It's very easy to write Jonah off as a specially nasty, grumpy little man. But if this story is here because others need to know how Jonah had thought of God and how God related to Jonah, then we ought to think that it might be possible that it's not all that uncommon for God's people to be angry at what God does.

So let's put ourselves for a moment in the shoes of the first hearers. Imagine we are some years on from Jonah's visit.

Two things would be absolutely clear to an Israelite living a few decades later. One, the Assyrians are coming.

They were a devastating military force towards the end of that century. They might have already arrived by the time this book was written. Quite clear by now, either way, that Nineveh's response to God back then did not have any lasting impact in their attitude to God's people.

Their repentance was only temporary. Second thing you'd know only too well was that God had brought them. The Assyrians have come because of Israel's disobedience.

[19:33] His patience with Israel has run out. This once-privileged nation has been overrun by fierce enemies at God's command.

Now put those together. We have lost our privileges at the hands of those people and you've done it. How can it be right for you to have had mercy on people like that?

How can that be right? It's very easy to understand how a later generation could be angry at God's mercy to such undeserving people.

And it's not just that they're undeserving. It's what they're going to do to us and what we will lose as a response. And so Jonah tells a story about God's patient kindness to him.

A thoroughly undeserving creature as he's revealed in this book. If God's patience to Nineveh is a problem, remember, says Jonah, that God was very, very patient with me.

[20:41] Now here's the next step in the story, the next step in the climax. God is very patient with Jonah, but even more so, God has been very, very patient with the people of Israel.

Now it's quite clear from right back at the beginning of the book that Jonah knew what God was going to do. How did he know? Well, here in verse 2, we find out how he knew.

How did Jonah know that God was like that? Well, Jonah knows his Bible. And in verse 2, he quotes from the Bible. For I knew that you were a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and relenting from disaster.

This is from the scriptures. These are famous words spoken by God to Moses from the book of Exodus, chapter 34. You can look it up later if you want to know the story.

Jonah knows what God is like from the scriptures. And so he knows what God is likely to do for Nineveh because he knows the God of the Bible.

[21:54] And that's why he's angry. However, for all he knows of God's character, there is something he's forgotten. You see, that wonderful statement in Exodus 34 comes in a particular setting.

Right back at the very beginning of Israel's history as a nation. Just after the people of Israel have been rescued from slavery in Egypt, God brings them to Mount Sinai.

He gives them his commandments. He makes them his special people. He urges them to remain faithful to him, the true and loving God. What do they do? Well, immediately, they prove themselves unfaithful.

They make a golden calf as an aid to worshipping Yahweh. It's a terrible act of rebellion and disobedience. It happens right at the start of their national life.

The whole relationship between God and Israel is nearly over before it's begun. And it's into that situation that God speaks these words about his amazing mercy and kindness and forgiveness.

[ 23 : 05 ] You see, the Bible story teaches that right from the outset, the people of Israel had only existed because of God's undeserved mercy shown to her.

Now, Jonah had been a faithful prophet in Israel, but it was not true that the people of Israel had been a faithful people. Any privileges that Israel had ever enjoyed were absolutely undeserved. And the fact that the nation was still existence at all at this point is the consequence of God's completely undeserved mercy. For Jonah to burn with anger at God showing mercy to undeserving people over there is to have lost the plot about his nation's history.

Are you right to be angry with Jonah? Yes, I am, you can hear Jonah say. I know what those people are like. I know they're not really repentant. I know what they're going to do.

Yes, we are. You can hear the people of Israel object later on. Their repentance isn't going to last. We know it hasn't. Look what they're doing now. To which the question comes back from Scripture to Israel.

[ 24 : 27 ] Was your nation ever a deserving recipient of God's kindness? Was Israel's repentance ever, at any time, proper and deep and lasting?

To which the answer is absolutely not. Right out of the gate they proved themselves rebellious and unfaithful. Jonah knows the character of God through the words of Exodus 34, but he seems to have lost the context into which those words are spoken.

The context that makes those words so very precious. God is a God who's merciful to the thoroughly undeserving, the flagrantly unfaithful, the inadequately repentant, like the people of Israel have always been, like human beings always are by nature.

God is merciful to those sorts of people. That's the way he's always been. That's the kind of God he is. This is a perspective that Jonah has lost.

In chapter 2 of this book he sees himself as one of the faithful guys. Look at chapter 2 verse 8. His words recanting his prayer in the belly of the fish.

[ 26 : 00 ] Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I, sharp contrast there in his mind, I, with the voice of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you.

He pictures himself as one of the faithful guys. Not like those pagan sailors in chapter 1 who pray to their own gods. Not like the people of Israel that I'm being sent to, those idol worshippers.

The truth is, of course, that he and the nation he belonged to were thoroughly unfaithful recipients of God's mercy. And they have been right from the very beginning.

But he doesn't see himself that way. God has been very patient with Jonah and God has been very, very patient with the people of Israel as the words of verse 2 make absolutely clear.

But the clock is ticking. And God's patience is running out. God is very patient with Jonah.

[ 27 : 04 ] He's been very, very patient with Israel. And third, and most importantly, he has the absolute right to be patient.

Verse 5, Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade till he should see what would become of the city.

Now the Lord God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah that it might be a shade over his head to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant.

It's so kind of God, isn't it? A plant. It's just a small green thing. Well, probably quite a big green thing. It seems to give him some shade. But it's very short-lived.

However, it brings him comfort. In verse 6, we meet the only thing in the whole book that Jonah is glad about. Isn't it kind of God?

[ 28 : 07 ] He does something unnecessarily generous to bring joy to this angry little man who's getting hotter and hotter in the desert. God has the right to do that.

He has the right to be generous. He has the right to provide a plant, even for a horrid little angry man like this man. He also, of course, has the right to take it away.

But Jonah doesn't think so. When dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant so that it withered. When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and he asked that he might die and said, it is better for me to die than to live.

When the plant disappears, Jonah is once again fuming with rage. Yesterday, I had a lovely plant to take the edge of the sun. Now God has taken the plant away. I'm so angry again I could die having been quite pleased yesterday about the plant.

This is just what I've come to expect of him. I'm reminded again of how much I want to be out of his game. For those of you who've been angry with God, you may recognize this pattern.

[ 29 : 25 ] Little joyful moments of rejoicing about small good things followed by fuming rage when loss needs to be endured. Once again, the patient question comes back.

Jonah, do you do well to be angry for the plant? I jolly well do. It was my plant. You gave it to me. I'm angry that you took it away. The patient argument comes back.

You pity the plant for which you did not labor. It was a small thing and you're angry about it even though you didn't make it.

It wasn't actually your plant. You didn't have any call on it. You didn't own it either. It happened to be next to your shelter but it wasn't yours. It was always a gift.

It was always a generous kindness. That's all it was. You weren't its creator and frankly, says God, your interest in the plant was small.

[ 30 : 31 ] How much more then, verse 11, should I, the creator, have pity on Nineveh, that great clueless city and all its inhabitants and all its creatures?

You see, God is the maker and owner. He cares intimately for all that he's made. He has the right to be patient with what he's made even if it's in rebellion against him.

He has the right to be patient with Nineveh despite the fact that her proud arrogance, her violence are real and gross and deserving of judgment.

he has the right to be patient with Jonah despite the fact that he's a fuming little ball of rage and his proud rebellion is absolutely unfitting for a prophet of God.

He has the right to be patient with Israel despite the fact that her existence and all her privileges has only ever been a consequence of the same undeserved mercy that God has shown to Nineveh.

[ 31 : 51 ] He has the right to be patient with what he has made. We human beings are often angry at what God is doing.

Often what makes us angry is that God does not seem to be doing the right thing. He does not seem to be acting justly in the world. He doesn't seem to be doing what we would do if we were him.

He's bringing mercy to Nineveh not judgment. Where is the justice of God gone? Famous words from Robert De Niro if there is a God he's got a lot to answer for.

And many people think precisely that. If there is a God he's got a lot to answer for. He's not doing the way I would do it. I cannot stomach the fact that he's letting this happen or that happen or the other happen.

And often that's especially related to people getting away with things. I can't believe that God allows that dictatorship to continue if there really were with a God there.

[ 32 : 55 ] he wouldn't let North Korea go on. I can't believe that he allows that corrupt government to remain in place. I can't believe that he allows that dreadful Christian leader to continue to manipulate people.

Does he not know that their protestations of repentance are shallow and will be short-lived? Doesn't he know? I do. I can't believe that he allows that horrible person to escape justice while innocent people go to jail all over the world.

I cannot believe that that person who did me wrong is prospering and I, the one they've hurt, continue to be dogged by the real effects of their behavior. I can't believe that he would do that.

these things are especially difficult at the personal level when I've been deprived of a position of privilege and especially when we suspect or know that those who prosper care little about God.

These things raise huge angry questions about God's justice which very quickly overflow into precisely the same sort of stubborn, angry, willful disregard for God that we know that those people over there have.

[ 34 : 17 ] See, Jonah behaves like a man from Nineveh in his attitude to God in this book. We see some of that kind of anger of distress coming out in Christian attitudes to our changing positions in our society.

We find ourselves outraged at the loss of this, the loss of that, our loss of position, the fact that no one listens to us anymore, protest after protest from Christians about things being lost. Now, many of those are good and right and legitimate, but sometimes there's an anger about the protest that reflects an underlying assumption that we have a right to a seat at the table, or that we ought to be in the driving seat.

We've lived through a period of huge privilege in this country, two or three centuries of unprecedented privilege. I can't think of another example in the world of when a culture has been so affected by the gospel for such a long time, and there's been such peace for Christians. That privilege is not a right. It never has been, and it isn't now.

[ 35 : 42 ] Recent figures show that the church in the UK is the ninth slowest growing in the world. The latest figures of church attendance in the UK say that over the last five years, there's been a five percent total decline in church going, 15% decline of Methodists in England, 29% decline in attendance in the Church of Scotland in the last five years.

Sometimes God does things we don't like. We find them uncomfortable, threatening, and from where we sit, we sometimes think he does that because he lacks concern.

If he cared more, he wouldn't let all this happen in society. If he cared more, he wouldn't let that happen over there in the world. If he cared more, he wouldn't have let this happen in my life.

This book flips that idea on its head completely. Jonah's fuming rage is a product of his small concern.

his nation is losing their position in the world. His ministry back home may have been in vain. His status as a successful prophet is disappearing.

[ 37 : 05 ] Those horrid people over there are going to get off. I want out of that. I'd rather die. His anger shows how small his patience is. When we are angry at God's slowness to judge and quickness to forgive, we are like that because we are less concerned than he is for the world that he has made, not because we are more concerned.

This is a difficult lesson to take on board. Thinking of a friend who went through great difficulty in this sort of area, who said this, the most alarming experience, the most alarming thing for me about experiencing loss was what I found inside myself as a result.

Poke me in the right place and horrible stuff comes out. Into a world where such realities exist, God says, do you do right to be angry when I'm patient?

Into a world where fuming rage often overflows in response to what God is doing. Jonah talks to Israel about his own fuming rage and God's undeserved patience towards him.

God's patience is a big thing. It comes from him being the creator of everything. It comes from him being deeply concerned for everything that he's made.

[ 38 : 39 ] God's love. It comes from him relating to sinful humanity on the basis of undeserved mercy, not deserved right. He has the right to do that.

It's his world. Everything is made by him. We finish the book like Jonah, waiting. The clock ticks. The sun rises and sets. What will God do? Now there was much more to God's justice than Jonah could see at the time.

Much more. Israel was in the end judged. For her, mercy did run out. Assyria was also judged. For her, the reprieve was temporary.

It seems however that in the end, Jonah turned round from his angry rebellion. Why else would we have this book? He wouldn't have wrote it if he was still angry. But for the moment, for Jonah, for Nineveh, for Israel, mercy is still held out to be taken.

[ 39 : 47 ] God is very patient. Now we know a lot more than he did about God's mercy. We know a lot more than Israel did about God's mercy.

We know something of the lengths that God will go to, to have justice and mercy perfectly done. Sending his son into the world, a sacrifice for sins, absorbing in himself all the injustice of the world, all the hurt of hostility and rebellion so that wicked rebels can receive mercy.

We know much more about God's capacity for mercy than Jonah did. There, of course, is plenty that we don't know.

We don't know how it'll all work out in the end. God will right all the wrongs perfectly, whether they've ever been wronged, and put everything right, and put wrong people right with him forever. How does he do that? It's an unknown, but he's big enough to do it. And when we find ourselves fumingly angry about what God has done, we've got to ask ourselves, is that really because we're more just than he is, and more concerned for right for his?

[ 41 : 08 ] Or is it really, as Jonah suggests, a reflection of our creatureliness, our smallness, the fact that we cannot see so much of what God is doing, and what he will do in the end.

Let's pray together. We'll have a few minutes in the quiet just to reflect on what God has said to us, and then I'll lead us in prayer for the kind of areas of perplexity that we find ourselves having to deal with.

Let's have a moment of quiet, and then we'll pray together. Let's check over painting.

Amen. The Apostle Peter writes these words, The Lord is not slow, as some count slowness.

God is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. We thank you, Heavenly Father, for the book of Jonah.

[ 42 : 50 ] We thank you for what it teaches us about your character. We thank you that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, relenting from disaster.

We confess to you and acknowledge once again that that is our only hope. We have no right to privileged position with you.

We have no right as creatures to the kind of kindnesses that you have shown to us. Help us, please, to have that perspective as we meet the difficulties of this world.

We bring before you the nations of the world. We confess to you that so often we look at what's going on in the world and it seems as though you don't care. We think that we would do things differently.

We long for justice to come. We pray that you'd help us to remember that we are creatures, that there is a great deal that we cannot see.

[ 44 : 02 ] We pray that you'd help us to remember how much you've shown about your merciful character, especially in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Help us, please, not to be dismayed, overwhelmed, when we see injustice going unchecked in our world. We pray for our own nation.

We recognize with gratitude the privileges that we've had in these last centuries. We thank you for the degree to which the Bible has impacted this society and the gospel has brought forth great fruit and many good things in the rest of the world in consequence.

But we recognize that that has all but disappeared. And we pray that you would deliver us from bitter anger concerning that. Help us to be grateful for your generous mercy towards us and all the good things that we still have.

And help us to long for the advance of your gospel in our nation. Please would you make your truth spread for good, we pray.

[ 45 : 25 ] We think of those situations in which we find in our own lives, where we suffer hardship, injustice, loss, bitter disappointment. We thank you that the things that we've been given have all been yours and from you.

And we pray that you would please help us in our weakness, in our frailty, in our disappointments and hurts, to remember that you have been kind also to us.

We pray that we might never lose sight of that. And that that would be profoundly helpful in giving us perspective in difficulty and a generous spirit in the face of injustice.

Father, we pray that you'd hear our prayer for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.