

Rejoice in God's Providence

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[0:00] And we're going to turn to our Bible reading now. Willie Phillip, our senior minister,! In the Visitor's Bible, that is page 45. Exodus chapter 2, beginning then at verse 1.

Now, a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months. When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the riverbank. And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him. Now, the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river while her young woman walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman and she took it.

When she opened it, she saw the child and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, this is one of the Hebrews' children. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew woman to nurse the child for you? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, go. So the girl went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages. So the woman took the child and nursed him. When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses because, she said, I drew him out of the water. Well, amen. This is God's word and we'll return to it shortly.

[2:30] Do turn with me, if you would, to the passage we read together in Exodus chapter 2, the first half of the chapter. Now, despite the wonderful encouragement that we saw last week in chapter 1 of Exodus, that God never forgets the people he loves, that he never forgets the purpose for those that he calls his own. Nevertheless, the last verse of chapter 1 is one of terrible threat, imminent tragedy. Every boy child of the Israelites to be massacred, exterminated, a planned ethnic cleansing, a real genocide. That word is banded around rather a lot today, isn't it? But this is a real planned ethnic terrible genocide. And the fact is that even today, the church of Jesus Christ faces many threats, a great deal of danger, threat to its very existence through violence, through persecution, even in many places outright state-sponsored persecution and intimidation. That's going on today in many parts of India. We've heard frequent reports, haven't we, of these things. It's going on in Iran. It's going on in other parts of the world.

So what comfort is there for desolate believers as they stand amid burnt-out churches, seeing the dead bodies of their loved ones? What hope is there for a God who seems to have gone silent, seems to have deserted them?

And what comfort is there for you and for me in times of loss or in hardship or in times of opposition? Nothing like the terrors that some people face. But still it can feel, can't it, like God is absent at times, that God doesn't care for you, for your life, for your family, for your future? And when we feel like that, it's no answer, is it, to just try and pretend, to pretend reality away. God's Word never offers pretense. It only ever tells us to face up to reality.

But it does help us, it does help us greatly to see where our assurance does lie. And verses 1 to 10 of Exodus chapter 2 does give us an answer for these kind of times. Because if chapters 1, if the message of chapter 1 was that we're to remember God's purpose, then the message of this passage is just as powerful. Again, it's telling us not to fear. However fragile we feel, however, the church may seem very fragile and precarious, we have a faithful God. And we can rejoice in God's providence. Because God's providence is marvelous. It is audacious. And it is working wonders for all of God's people, ultimately. Even if, at times, we face agonizing mysteries.

And it seems very dark and difficult for many of His people at particular times. And this passage reminds us that however silent the unseen God seems to be, He is, nevertheless, absolutely sovereign.

[6:12] He is ordering even the minute details of events in the world at all times for the good of His people. And this passage teaches us, once again, that God will always frustrate the purpose of His enemies and His great enemy. And He will use the purposes, even of His enemies, even in their present prosperity, even in their apparent present power, He will use them for the ultimate glory and blessing of His own beloved people. See, when we read a passage like this, God wants to open our eyes. So they often silent, the often very hidden workings of His eternal providence. So that we'll learn to look beyond just the visible, just the here and now. And we will see instead with the purpose of eternity.

Because it's when we learn to see the invisible that we learn to rejoice in God's wonderful providence. And therefore, that we will learn to live with a sure and certain hope, whatever our present circumstances might be. And that is what the Bible really means by faith and by living by faith.

It's the language that Hebrews chapter 11, the great faith chapter, uses to describe the faith of the great saints of old. By faith, Moses left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king because he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. Seeing the invisible God. And seeing the invisible God is at work in all circumstances at all times, no matter how it looks to us. That's what Paul means in Romans chapter 12, verse 2, when he says that believers are not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. In other words, our minds opened, our eyes opened to see, how God really works and what God is doing in this world. And it's that seeing that enables us to live as Paul urges us there. To be people who test and prove in their experience what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect, as he puts it. And only if you're someone who sees the invisible God at work who rejoices in his providence always, even when it seems very difficult, only then will you be someone who can accept that whatever circumstances do before you in life, you can receive them as God's good and acceptable and perfect will for you and for your life. I'll never forget the morning after my father had a major stroke and I'd gone through to Edinburgh to visit him and I was staying at home with my mother and in the, after we had breakfast in the morning, we read together the Daily Light, which was their custom. And the reading for that morning contained that verse from Romans 12 about God's good and acceptable and perfect will. And I'll never forget my mother praying and thanking God for his good and perfect and acceptable will. As we were about to go off and visit my father, having had a stroke. And see, if we, if we want to be people who can stand in the face of hardship and tragedy and trial, then we need to be able to pray like that too, don't we? So let's have a look carefully at this story in scripture and see how it teaches us to rejoice in God's providence, to see how it is audacious, how it's marvelous for all his people, including all of us ultimately. Even if sometimes it is agonizing, it's mysterious for many of us, even in this present world. So I want to summarize it under, under two headings. The first is this God's, God's providence should always delight our eyes in the present. God's workings and ways for our ultimate blessing and glory, they are audacious, they're marvelous. And we should learn to rejoice in that always, whatever the circumstances.

[10:39] That's what the New Testament tells us plainly, isn't it? It's God's will for our life. Paul writes to the Thessalonians, rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.

But this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. You want to know what the will of God for your life is? Well, that's God's will for you and for me today and every day. But to do that, we need to be able to see how God is at work, even when it seems that he isn't at work. And that's what this story helps us to do.

See, when you read that last verse of chapter 1, verse 22, we're meant to think, well, all's lost, surely. I mean, that must have been what the Israelites felt when they heard that decree, disaster looms. Every son we bear is going to die.

No doubt many of them were praying to God to save them, to deliver them, maybe to send a great deliverer to rescue them. And the people of faith surely begin chapter 2 expecting that their God will do something.

And that's often the way, isn't it, in a tragic situation when we fear something, then we'll pray. And because we do believe in God, we're looking to God to act, to answer our prayers. And we're looking to God usually to act visibly and to act soon, and maybe even to act dramatically.

[12:12] But you see, God's mighty acts for our redemption, which he is at work doing perfectly all the time, very often the truth is they wrong-foot us. God isn't afraid of turning our expectations right upside down.

What did we sing? Judge not the Lord by feeble sense. But that actually is what we do most of the time, isn't it? We judge the Lord by our own human sense.

And we want a great intervention. We want some visible splash. And that's what God's people surely wanted here in chapter 2, to turn things around. But instead, what do we get? Well, we get a total anticlimax.

And the story is also mundane. You have verse 22, this great looming threat. And now, what we're being told about? Some man and some woman getting married? There's no mention of God, is there? There's certainly no word from God, no great miracle from God. It's also low-key. Nobody's even named. Do you notice that?

Nobody gets a name until Moses is named in the very last verse, verse 10. Just a man and a woman and a marriage and a conception and then a birth of a son.

[13:30] Not a son, surely. Well, that can't be good, can it, after verse 22? Couldn't it have been a girl? And there's still no sign of God.

But perhaps there is just a hint that the action of this unnamed woman is more than just a desperate attempt to save her son.

We're not told why she thought about this floating basket idea. We're not sure if she'd seen Pharaoh's daughter going down to the river. We're not sure of any of these things. But it does seem remarkable, to say the least.

If you look at verse 3, the word there, basket, is exactly the same word that you find in one other place in the Bible. It's in the book of Genesis, in chapters 6 and 7.

It's the word that describes Noah's ark. She took for him, verse 3, an ark. The only other time that word's used in the whole Bible is of that ark of salvation.

[14:32] And she daubs it, you notice, with pitch, just like Noah did with his ark. And she puts her son in this little ark of salvation to seek safety for him through these waters of judgment.

So maybe there is an unseen act of faith here. We can't be sure. But it seems that she's committing her son and his salvation into the hands of this unseen, unheard God.

But look at the drama of the story. You can feel the tension, can't you, as you read verses 5 and 6. Sisters hanging around waiting to see what happens. And surely what looks like it's about to happen must possibly mean disaster.

Not just, oh, someone's going to find out about this, but look who it is. The daughter of the very arch enemy of all God's people himself. Pharaoh's daughter. Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river while her young woman walked beside the river.

She saw the basket among the reeds. She sent her servant woman and she took it. She opened it and saw the child. And behold, the baby was crying.

[15:43] She took pity on him and said, this is one of the Hebrew children. A Hebrew child. Well, surely he's going to get thrown to the crocodiles. But no, you see, God has other plans.

You ought to be impressed, by the way, haven't you, with these feisty females in amongst these Israelites. We had the midwives last week. And they were a match for Pharaoh. But now we have this sister of Moses who's bold as brass.

Out she pops. Shall I get a nurse for you, she says. It's hardly what you'd expect, isn't it? You'd think she'd run out and go, have mercy, have mercy. Please, please don't throw him away.

He's my little brother. No, no, no. It's almost as if she's saying out loud, you, daughter of Pharaoh, you are going to serve the extraordinary, audacious providence of God.

Now, don't waste many more time. Get on with it. These Bible women, they're not wallflowers, are they? They're not doormats. And that's good.

[16:44] So off she goes, and she gets the child's own mother. And not only does Moses' mother get her son back, she gets a salary paid from the royal purse.

And she's going to get her son brought up under royal state protection with all the highest privileges of the royal household of Egypt. Do you remember Psalm 2?

What it says about God sitting in heaven laughing, laughing his head off at his enemies and their puny and pathetic things that they try to do against God's people.

And we're meant to laugh, aren't we? We're meant to be thrilled with delight at what God is doing here. The marvelous, audacious providence of God at work. Silently, invisibly, but frustrating his enemies for the blessing of his people.

And the whole drama of this story is actually structured to point that out to us so sharply. It shows God's total control and God's direction of the whole thing in his plan.

[17:48] Can you see how it's arranged so symmetrically? It begins in verses 1 and 3 and it ends in verses 9 and 10 telling us about the boy's mother. And then there's sort of inner brackets focusing on the sister in verse 4 and then again in verses 7 and 8 and right at the center in verses 4, 5 and 6 is Pharaoh's daughter, the one on whom everything seems to hinge.

And yet it's not a matter of fate at all, is it? It's not all dependent on this pagan princess, whether she's having a good day or a bad day. Not at all.

Behind it all is the silent, invisible God. And he has woven every tiny detail. So not only does he save his servant Moses, but he does so in such a way as to show beyond all doubt who is actually in charge in this land of Egypt.

He frustrates utterly the decree of his enemy. And he turns it into glory and blessing and salvation for his people. See, this is a passage that's telling us open your eyes when you look out at the world.

See the invisible God at work and learn to rejoice in his providence. Because it's at work, even when it seems to us that everything is lost and we may be in despair, we need to recognize God's hand, his providence, his hidden ways, but his marvelous ways.

[19:15] And we need to do that so that we also will learn to rejoice in his providence. And this story is here to help us see these sorts of things. Not just that God is always at work, but the ways he's at work, in ways that often baffle us.

God is other than we think. We sang his ways are far above, far above. And he's not afraid to turn our expectations upside down. Just think about how he's at work here.

Three D's that I hope will help us remember how he is still at work in the world today and in our own lives today. First of all, God is not afraid to use the domestic.

Do you see? In order to bring about the long-term purposes of his grace. God's people are praying for deliverance. They're praying for some great intervention. They're praying for God to do something.

And God's not deaf. They may have thought he was, but he's not. Look at the end of chapter 2, by the way. Look at the end there, verses 23 to 25.

[20:17] What God's saying? I've seen. I've heard. I know. I'm not dead. And he wasn't slow to answer to what he'd seen and heard and known.

But he wasn't going to offer a dramatic answer. No doubt they wanted God to send them a great champion. But instead he sent a little child. No doubt they wanted a spectacular divine visitation. But actually God sends an incognito answer. An apparently very weak answer. Certainly a very unhurried and long-term answer in this little baby Moses.

But read through the Bible. Isn't that so often the pattern that we see? He sends his answer in the realm of the domestic. The seemingly ordinary. The seemingly insignificant.

And so often actually in the Bible it is in the birth of a child. Think of the story of Samson later on in Judges. Or the story of Hannah and Samuel. Or the story of John the Baptist at the beginning of Luke's Gospel.

[21:28] Or indeed the story of the Lord Jesus himself. And that above all should remind us, shouldn't it? That God's greatest and most wonderful interventions of all in our world so often begin so very silently and small and invisibly.

How silently, how silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given, we sing at Christmas. And God is still the one who uses the weak things of the world to confound the wise, says Paul.

Because God's foolishness is far wiser than even men's wisdom. So he mustn't despise the domestic, the ordinary, the unspectacular, the everyday things in the lives of God's people or in our own lives.

So often, we're always looking for these big things, aren't we? The big splash, the big event, the big crowd, the exciting thing. But that isn't God's way, usually.

Far more often, God's quietly at work just in the realm of the domestic through ordinary people, unnamed people. People of faith.

[22:43] And that's where he likes to work out his great purposes. And that's what he's doing in your life and in my life. It's often like that, isn't it? It's just that little conversation, that meet-up with someone for a coffee, a word about Jesus, an encouragement to come to church.

That's how God is drawing people into his kingdom for eternity, all over the world. We mustn't go looking for the spectacular all the time when God actually loves to use the domestic. And you notice how through the Bible, God so often answers prayers by raising up children who will become his servants, real soldiers of Jesus Christ in the long term. That's still so often the way that God answers prayers.

We want something immediate. But God says these things take time. I remember my father speaking to me about how after the last war, he and others, many in this country, were praying for a great revival, a great revival of the Christian faith in the church.

But as he looked back 20 or 30 years later, he would say, well, no great spectacular revival like that came. But what they had seen was that many, many who were born in those years when so much prayer was being made for the nation were now coming through and serving Christ as evangelists and ministers and teachers of the Word of God throughout the nation.

[24 : 15] God had answered the prayers, but in the domestic way. And maybe it's the same today. We're going to be celebrating as we were praying this morning, 20 years of the Cornhill training course next month.

Well, 20 years on from when we began that, there are people all over the country teaching God's Word, bringing people to faith in Jesus Christ, building the church.

It didn't look like much when we started down in the basement of Bath Street. Bob File called it Sheol. It was so ghastly down there. But God was working, even in Sheol.

And shouldn't we be praying for that sort of thing still ourselves? For God to be giving us children now, who will be a new generation of Christian leaders, evangelists, teachers, gospel proclaimers. Moses, you know, who wrote this book, he's writing this here about his own mother, isn't he? He's clearly commending the place of godly parents and the faith of his parents. And he taught that very plainly to the Israelites as well.

[25 : 26] Have a read of Deuteronomy chapter 6, just for one example. Teaching God's people a responsibility that we have to raise real servants of God.

Yes, through precepts to teaching them, but through prayer and by example. And what a great example these parents were. We don't know how much Moses' mother knew about what might God be thinking or planning for her son.

But it seems that she knew enough, didn't she? She'd want to fight for her child's spiritual destiny. And God surely wants us to fight for our children's spiritual destiny.

Who knows what God might do through our children and our grandchildren for his kingdom in the days to come.

Surely that's something we should be praying for, mothers and fathers. In fact, all of us. Don't despise the domestic. God might be answering our prayers through the birth of little ones in our fellowship in these days.

[26 : 32] Wouldn't that be a marvelous and wonderful thing? Secondly, God's not afraid either to use the daring and the dangerous. Moses, even as a child, was pitched into the arena of, well, the influence of the great enemy, Egypt.

And yet God seemed to be much less fearful than we often are as parents. We don't want to cause it to our young people, protect them. But the very best way to protect our children is to entrust them wholly to God by prayer.

And to bring them up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord by way of precept and example. To train them for their true spiritual destiny. To teach them where their true treasure lies.

So they'll be able to withstand all the influence of the enemy. The world, the flesh, the devil. Everything that Egypt could have dazzled Moses with.

And Hebrews 11 tells us that when Moses reached the age of independence, he therefore chose mistreatment with God's people rather than the pleasures of everything that Egypt could have given him.

[27 : 43] And were in his hand. And that speaks volume, doesn't it? Of the solidarity, of the boldness in upbringing of his true parents even in the midst of utter pagan surroundings.

He wasn't kept closeted away from that. But he was prepared for it. His parents clearly were not on the back foot. They were bold in their faith. They taught him.

They trained him in the truth. So he could plunder the very best that the enemy had. Their education, the culture, the learning. Everything he was exposed to in Egypt. But he plundered it and

used it for his true calling as a servant of God.

And that's the answer for us, isn't it? Surely with our children. With our young people. The Bible calls us to raise children in faith, not in fear. To trust God.

To be unafraid. To be daring. To challenge our children in the way of true faith. Even if it means losing out on many of the more immediate and apparent pleasures that our materialist society can give.

[28:51] But you know, a lot of Christian parents today do bring up their children much more in fear than in faith. Fearful that they'll turn away.

Fearful that they won't follow Christ. Fearful that the world will entrap them and ensnare them. And you know, if that is your fear that you constantly live with, then you will bring about the very thing that you fear.

If we take the softly, softly approach, desperate not to put our children off the gospel, friends, there is nothing more calamitous than that.

The Bible would have us daring in our faith for our young ones. To entrust them to God's purpose and therefore to help them to use all that the world affords with its education and its learning and so on.

Use it all to serve their true purpose as lifelong servants and soldiers of the Lord Jesus. They mustn't be afraid to ask a lot from our children, from our youngsters, to challenge them to faith, not to closet them in fear.

[30:00] God isn't afraid to do that. Look at Daniel. Look at Moses here. It's how God works.

William Still used to tell of how when he was being interviewed by the vacancy committee to go to Gilcompton Church in 1945, one of the questions asked of him was, what will you do for our young people?

And his answer? Do for them nothing. Ask of them everything. Well, it's not an accident that his ministry thrust out so many people into lifelong gospel service.

So God uses the domestic. He uses the daring and the dangerous. But also, God isn't afraid to work in sheer defiance of his enemies. And surely verse 9 is a perfect example of that, isn't it? God's servant cared for his way, but at Pharaoh's expense. And we see that so often through the scriptures. We see it in history. Think of the Acts of the Apostles.

What happened to the church through the great persecution that was unleashed on it? Well, the gospel spread everywhere from Jerusalem. Read Acts chapter 12 and you hear about James, the apostle, being killed.

[31:22] You hear about Peter being put in prison. And the next sentence, but the word of the Lord increased and multiplied. Think of how God used the apostle Paul's Roman citizenship to get him at last to Rome to the very heart of the empire from which he proclaimed the gospel.

Rome's mighty protection to protect the man whose preaching ultimately would lead to Rome's downfall. Mentioned last week, I think, the missionaries being thrown out of China by Mao in the 1950s.

But decades later, when the country opened up a bit again and people went back, what did they find? The church had mushroomed. It hadn't died. And it's abiding principle, God will act in utter defiance of his enemies for his own greater glory and for the blessing of his people.

It's always true what the proverb says, that those who build a pit will fall into themselves. Every enemy of God that seeks to defy the Lord will be defied absolutely by God himself.

And we've got to remember that. Especially, it's so important, isn't it, when it seems like God's enemies have the upper hand. That God's not afraid to act in defiance.

[32:42] And in his time, he will. And we need to be people who see that and know that, to see the invisible. To know what the psalmist of Psalm 73 knew.

When he speaks about how difficult it is to look at the prosperity of the wicked until you realize God will, in the end, bring them to ruin.

You see, when our eyes are open to the ways that God really does work, the things that are illustrated for us in this chapter and many others in Scripture, then his providence will delight our eyes much, much more in the present.

We'll be able to be thankful for all that God is doing, even when sometimes we find it very difficult to see. Because we'll know that he is working always in ways that are marvelous, in ways that are audacious, even when it doesn't seem to be so, but he is working all things for good to those that

love him, as Paul says to us.

But the second thing, and more briefly, is this. God's providence should always direct our eyes to the future. Because God's work and God's ways for his people may, and often are, in the present time, agonizing and very mysterious to us.

[34 : 11] 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 our sufferings, knowing, because we see, knowing, that suffering produces endurance and endurance character and character produces hope.

And hope will never put us to shame because God's love has been poured in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And that is the guarantee of our future. And God's providence must always direct our eyes to that future.

And that's so important because, well, here's the thing, you see, not all babies in Moses' day were saved, were they? Most of them, we must assume, were murdered.

So most of the families in Israel knew that tragedy, knew that grief. And that reminds us, you see, that the real certainty of God's promise, the real guarantee of His providence is not that we will never suffer now.

It's not that we will never face hardship or disappointments or grief or sorrows. Dale Ralph Davis says this, He does not promise that His people will never suffer, but that no suffering will ever eradicate His people.

[35 : 46] He doesn't promise that we will never die for the kingdom of God, but that the kingdom of God will never die. And that's a very different thing, isn't it?

And it's so far away from what you and I want to believe, isn't it? And that's why there will always be those in the church who will offer a different hope, a false hope, that God will always intervene to prevent your suffering or your illness or your loved one's death.

And that God will always bring health to you and wealth to you and healing to you now. I remember a friend of mine working in an African country and he told me that in one particular town there was only one pastor among all the many churches, only one, who wasn't preaching a prosperity gospel like that.

And guess what? He was persecuted. He was persecuted. But you see, you just cannot read the Bible seriously and find anything of that kind of thinking.

Jesus himself said, in this world you will have tribulation. But his hope was to say, be of good cheer for I have overcome this world.

[37 : 13] In other words, look to the future. God's providence is ordering all things for the ultimate glory, for the ultimate blessing of all his people, all his people.

even though many babies did die in Goshen then. God's providential care was for his deliverer.

And he was bound up, wasn't he, with that present tragedy. But God was working an ultimate purpose of deliverance and salvation for all God's people Israel whom he led out of Egypt ultimately under Moses to freedom.

And in just the same way, many babies died in Bethlehem, didn't they? Under Herod's command, centuries later. And it was amid the weeping of many mothers that Mary nursed the Christ who would bring ultimate salvation to all of God's faithful.

It's so hard to understand why, isn't it? It's so hard to understand why God's people's suffering are so bound up with God's deliverer.

[38 : 27] And Moses himself actually did suffer. We'll see that next time. But it's God's pattern, you see, all through the Scriptures. And though God's people do suffer with him now and for him now, the Bible shows us that is so that we will be united with him in a future that is truly glorious beyond all of our possible imagining.

God's providence should always direct our eyes to that future just as the gospel always does. We read last week from Romans 8, verse 17, speaking about what makes us genuine heirs of God in Christ.

And he says we're heirs with him provided we suffer with him in order that we will also be glorified with him. See, God's people are bound up with our great deliverer's work with his destiny.

And we're saved, aren't we? Paul teaches us through our very union with him in his death and his resurrection, in his suffering and in his glory. Jesus said unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. And so it was for him in whose suffering God was working in eternal glory for all of his people.

[39 : 49] And so it is for all of his own. He goes right on to say, if anyone loves me and serves me, he must follow me. Like Jesus, like disciple.

And Moses wrote all of these things down in this book of Exodus for people who were about to enter the land of Canaan after their great redemption out of Egypt, after their desert wanderings. And he does it, doesn't he? To remind them. That God's plan and purpose, his providential power at work to fulfill it all, it still pointed to the future.

It wasn't over. There would be many battles still to come for the Israelites. There would be many mysteries they couldn't understand. But he wanted them to see what he saw, to see him who is invisible, and to rejoice in God's providence, knowing that through God's working in ways, even though they might seem to be agonizing, mysterious, dark in the present time, that he is always working his purpose out for his people's ultimate glory.

God moves in a mysterious way. He does. But we're not to judge him by our feeble sense. But we're to trust him for his grace, we sang.

[41 : 10] And we're to know that behind what does often seem to us like a frowning providence. There is always that smiling face that radiates God's grace and his purpose.

Friends, that is the genuine gospel of God. Don't be taken in by anything else. Don't be taken in by anything that wants to pretend away the reality of that present suffering.

If you read Acts chapter 14, here we read about Paul and his colleagues going around all the churches that they planted, visiting them to encourage the new believers.

How did they encourage them? By saying to them, through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God. We will enter, but there will be many tribulations.

Christians. And when we see the future, you see, when we see him who is invisible, who is working out his plan and purpose for the ultimate glory, the ultimate good of his people, then we can learn to rejoice even now.

[42 : 26] Even when things are deeply mysterious to us, even when they're agonizing to us, we can learn to rejoice in what God is calling us to go through even in the present time.

So I don't know what's facing you in your life at this time, but you may be feeling that mystery right now. You may be feeling some of that agony, frustration, even despair perhaps in your life of faith. But the message of this chapter is saying to you, don't fear. Don't fear. However fragile you feel, however forgotten you may feel, however feeble we may feel and we may be as the church of God, if we see him who's invisible and live seeing what he has revealed to us in his word, then we can rejoice in his providence.

And we can know that it is audacious, it is marvelous, for all of God's beloved ones ultimately. Even if it is sometimes agonizing, mysterious, for many of us right now perhaps.

Let his providence direct your eyes to the future. And when he does that and we see the glory of what is promised, of what is guaranteed by his Holy Spirit poured into our hearts, then he'll be able to teach us to delight our eyes also in his providence, even at the present time, and to receive and to accept his good and acceptable and perfect will for our lives, whatever the circumstances that surround us just now.

[44 : 25] Well, let's pray. the Apostle Peter says, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as if 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.

Lord, so often we see things and analyze the world and our own experience things and we see only by our own feeble sins, but you've given us your word as a light in the darkness.

So, Lord, open our eyes, help us to see always him who is invisible, to walk looking upwards to the God who is there, and to walk looking forwards, to the promise and the crown that you are keeping for us even now, unshakable and undeniable.

So, help us, we pray, to rejoice in your wonderful will and purpose, to be amazed by all that you do, and to stand sure in the faith and in the trust that all things, all things work together for good and only for good to everyone who loves God in Jesus Christ.

[46:33] And we ask it in his name. Amen.