

A Victory With Layers

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Preacher: Josh Johnston

- [0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our Bible readings this evening. Josh Johnson is preaching for us and began last week a study in the prophet Nahum. If you have one of our church Bibles, they're around at the sides if anybody needs one.
- It's page 782. Otherwise, it's after Micah and before Habakkuk. It's one of those tricky little ones that you can pass over quite easily. But it's a message not to be passed over because it is indeed a very serious message from God.
- He's speaking about judgment that is to come from God upon the mightiest nation on earth at the height of their powers.
- When no one could remotely believe that such a powerful entity that was ruling the world would within a few short years be no more. Those days it was the empire of Assyria and its capital city, Nineveh.
- And we read the first eight verses of the prophecy last Sunday. We're going to pick it up at verse 9.
- [1 : 16] And God is speaking through the prophet to the Assyrians. What do you plot against the Lord? He will make a complete end.
- Trouble will not rise up a second time. For they are like entangled thorns, like drunkards as they drink. They're consumed like stubble, fully dried.
- From you came one who plotted evil against the Lord, a worthless counselor. Thus says the Lord, though they are at full strength and many, they will be cut down and pass away.
- And though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more. And now I will break his yoke from off you and will burst your bonds apart.
- The Lord has given commandment about you. No more shall your name be perpetuated from the house of your gods. I will cut off the carved image and the metal image.
- [2 : 23] I will make your grave for your vile. Behold upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace.
- Keep your feasts, O Judah. Fulfill your vows, for never again shall the worthless pass through you. He is utterly cast off. The scatterer has come up against you.
- Man the ramparts. Watch the road. Dressed for battle. Collect all your strength. For the Lord is restoring the majesty of Jacob as the majesty of Israel.
- For plunderers have plundered them and ruined their branches. Amen. And may God bless to us his word.
- Let's pray together before we come once again to these words. Let's pray. Almighty and gracious Father, since our whole salvation stands in our knowledge of your holy word, strengthen us now by your Holy Spirit that our hearts may be set free from all worldly thoughts and attachments of the flesh, so that we may hear and receive that same word.
- [3 : 46] And recognizing your gracious will for us, may love and serve you with earnest delight, praising and glorifying you in Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

A world that is layered and full of depth. When someone treats you terribly for being a Christian, it's not a straightforward, one-dimensional hatred.

Of course, some people may not treat us well because we're obnoxious and don't treat them well. Of course, that can happen. But when you or I or any other Christian face opposition and vitriol for their faith, then the individual may well have a particular hatred or anger against you.

Certainly manifests like that. But it is also born out of a deep-seated hatred of God. And it is also born out of a deep-seated affiliation with and allegiance to the evil one.

There are layers and depth to such things. And this is important for us to understand as we are living in days of ever-increasing opposition. But also because there are layers to how God will deal with such things.

[5 : 05] The opposition that you or I face is very real. But it's also part of something much bigger than just your life or my life. We've seen already in Nahum that this is a book all about judgment.

Three chapters devoted to God's judgment upon Assyria and its capital, Nineveh. A poetic, beautifully crafted, and utterly clear three chapters.

But three chapters of judgment. And we've seen that whilst it is a prolonged message of judgment, its purpose, the reason Nahum wrote it, is to bring comfort to the people of God.

Nahum's name even means comfort. And the comfort and judgment that Nahum proclaims finds its root and its reason in the very character of God.

He's jealous for his name and he's jealous for his people. He takes vengeance on those who set themselves up against either him or his people or both.

[6 : 09] And Nahum assured us last week that this is God's goodness. Verse 7. His actions are born out of his commitment to his covenant people.

He will deliver them. He will protect them. He's good. And one of the things that Nahum lays before us throughout his book is that there is no salvation without judgment.

We see it in the structure of the verses we'll look at this evening. Three times a message of judgment for God's enemies is followed by a message of salvation for God's people.

Verses 9 to 11. Judgment. But verses 12 to 13. Salvation. Verse 14. Judgment.

And so verse 15. Salvation. 2 verse 1. Judgment. 2 verse 2. Salvation. And this is a reality that's not some sort of Old Testament idea, not for today.

[7 : 15] For what is it we pray in the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray? Deliver us from evil. The Lord doesn't just perish at his people away from evil.

He reveals over it for them. And so Nahum speaks words of great comfort to the true people of God in his day. Words of great comfort for those tyrannized by Assyria.

But also words of great comfort about ultimate things. Things that transcend the ebb and flow of nations or ideologies. And so the first thing we see in our passage is the defeat of the enemy and the enemy behind the enemy.

Verses 9 to 13. The defeat of the enemy and the enemy behind the enemy. God won't just deal with the immediate enemies that oppose his people.

He has dealt with and will deal with the ultimate enemy. Well, first look at verse 9. It's a rhetorical question, I think.

[8 : 22] It isn't begging for an answer because the answer is irrelevant. There are two possible ways to take verse 9. The first one is the way we have it in our church Bibles in the ESV.

It would be a rhetorical question addressed to Assyria. What do you plot against the Lord? What are your schemes? And Nahum's point is that no matter what evil can be devised, no matter the might that can be mustered, no matter how all-pervasive your control appears, God will make an end of it.

What kind of an end? A complete end. Another option for verse 9 is that it's directed to the Lord's people, and the question is, what do you think of Yahweh?

What do you think of the Lord? Do you think he's up to the task? Is your faith in him going to prove enough for this situation? Is the God you belong to enough to overcome the might of the world?

And Nahum's answer is, you'll make a complete end of your adversary. Nahum is trying to stir the faith of the Lord's people. What can Assyria devise?

[9 : 33] It matters not. What limits do you have in your mind as to what the Lord can do? It matters not. God will make a complete end.

Trouble will not rise up a second time. God's defeat of Assyria, his defeat of his enemies, will not be like that very common scene we see in films. You know the one, there's a great struggle and good reveals.

The monster, the baddie, lays on the ground, defeated. And just as you're wondering if the final crushing blow should perhaps be dealt before running off to see of the girl or the friend or whoever, suddenly the monster's eye flicks open.

Or the baddie's hand moves towards the weapon, and there's a sting in the tail. Well, Nahum says, when God deals with Assyria, there'll be no reawakening.

The eyes of this great empire will not flash open again. God's victories are definitive and final. And this was absolutely true of the Assyrian empire.

[10 : 39] It was put down for good. Now, Nahum isn't saying here that no other trouble will present itself, but what he is saying is that Assyria certainly won't rise again.

Verse 10, God will do all of this because Assyria were entangled thorns. Think of Genesis 3, God's curse is there.

The cursed ground would bring forth thorns and thistles. Isaiah uses the image, the picture of thorns, as a picture of judgment and curse.

But notice, it isn't just thorns, it's entangled thorns. The picture of Assyria as of an ever-tightening, entangling bunch of thorns, more and more ensnared, destined for only one thing.

I think it's a similar picture with the drunkard drinking. Another common judgment picture throughout the Old Testament is the picture of the cup.

[11 : 43] Jesus speaks of that, doesn't he? Drinking the cup that he would drink, the cup of wrath. And the picture of drinking this cup is picked up later on in the Bible, in Revelation 17, that the harlot of Babylon drinks the cup, but there it's a cup full of abominations, a cup full of the blood of the saints.

And she gets drunk on wickedness. Assyria had gotten drunk on wickedness, drinking ever more wrath upon themselves.

Their barbaric treatment to the people of God would be dealt with. And so the last line of verse 10, there's only one outcome, fire.

Back to the thorns again. There'll be a speed to which Assyria are done away with. The thorns will be burnt up like stubble. When God's judgment falls, it is awesome.

And so Assyria will be consumed like dried bushes. Think of a forest fire when the wood and the shrubs are bone dry, tinder waiting to erupt in flames. And think how quickly such devastation spreads.

[12 : 57] Apparently the average speed of a spreading forest fire is over 14 miles an hour. Gone. And verse 11.

From you came one who plotted evil against the Lord. A worthless counselor. Talking about a figure in the past. From you Assyria came one who previously pitted themselves against the Lord.

It seems likely that this is a reference to Sennacherib, a previous emperor of Assyria who reigned during good King Hezekiah's reign. And Sennacherib was enraged by Hezekiah's unfaithfulness to him.

And so he set about besieging Jerusalem, wreaking more havoc upon the Lord's people. You can read about this in 2 Kings 18 and 19. And on that occasion the Lord intervened and struck down 185,000 Assyrians in the night.

It has been Assyria's pattern to raise up leaders who stood hard-heartedly in opposition to God and to His people. And so there's confidence here for the Lord's people because such things have happened before.

[14 : 16] There was a worthless counselor before. And the Lord can deal miraculously with the most terrifyingly powerful forces in this world. But there are layers to this picture and layers to the story of the Lord's people.

Layers to gospel realities. The word translated as worthless, the Hebrew word which means worthless, is the word belial.

Belial. And that's a word which speaks of a supernatural enemy, a word that became another name for Satan himself. Over in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, Paul uses it in just that way.

He says, What accord has Christ with Belial? Nahum is making clear that behind Assyria are the powers of darkness.

There was an enemy behind the enemy. And that is always the case for the Lord's people who are on the receiving end of strife and suffering at the hands of unbelievers. When you've been tormented by colleagues or classmates for being a Christian, not buying to the world, then it is not an innocent disagreement.

[15 : 31] It is in some shape or form a manifestation of Satan's hatred for the Lord and His people. Now, don't hear me wrong. That never excuses someone.

It is not only the devil's fault for how someone behaves. James Philip helpfully says, Evil does not exist in disembodied form, nor does opposition against God, but it is incarnated in individuals who lead it against the people of God.

Ashurbanipal, the emperor, when Nahum likely wrote, and Sennacherib, the previous emperor referred to here, were not unwilling puppets perpetrating wickedness.

They were bought in at the deepest level possible. Their allegiance, their love was for the evil one. And that's a reality we need to behold today.

Tyranny today is not yet wielded with military might for us, but we need to be clear that behind the opposition that Christians face today, behind the companies who will discipline and sack you for being a Christian, behind the smiling politicians and professionals who talk about the taking of lives as healthcare, behind the people who bully you for believing, behind the neighbors who hassle you because of your church, behind the appeals of the need to protect children by extracting them from the influence of their parents in order to mutilate them, behind the flag that must be flown in the name of equality, behind all of these things lies a deep affiliation and deep allegiance to the evil one.

[17 : 19] Nahum later on talks in war language, chariots, shields, officers, and it's easy for us to think such things are so far from us, easy or tempting to remove ourselves from warfare language, but the Bible repeatedly casts the Christian life as battle.

There is in this world a program to assert as king someone or something other than the Lord Jesus, to put on the throne someone who doesn't deserve to be there and such a program will inflict only evil and only destruction.

We see it all around us, don't we? Think of the awful consequences that will be borne by children who are treated as the arena upon which to fight ideological battles. Think of the hundreds of thousands of babies whose lives are ended in the UK alone each year in the name of health care.

Think of the destruction wrought upon families and society by the complete disintegration of the lifelong commitment of marriage. When we pray, your kingdom come, we're praying for the triumph of God's kingdom over the kingdoms of his world and that will be a certain triumph.

And when we face opposition, when the world goes after our wealth, our relationships, our worship, our reputations, and eventually our health and our lives, then those who do so are doing so for the triumph of another kingdom.

[18 : 59] We must not be naive about that. But nonetheless, look at verse 12. Thus says the Lord, though they are at full strength and many, they'll be cut down and pass away.

Assyria was at the peak of its powers, dominating a whole chunk of the world that even today we would find it hard to fathom a single nation ruling. And back then it was without planes and vehicles.

Assyria was a behemoth of power. And Nahum speaks these words at the very peak of that power. He didn't look for the way the wind was blowing and think, this empire's on the way out, I'm going to get ahead.

No, he's looked at what was unassailable and declared on God's behalf, you are done. Despite your great might, despite the heights of your power and influence, you'll be cut down and you'll pass away.

Such words ought to shake nations, shake hearts. For such words can destroy nations. Such words herald defeat for any earthly opposition to God.

[20 : 20] As mighty as Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal were, Belial, Satan, stands behind them. And though he might be the prince of the power of the air as we were seeing last week in Ephesians 2, though he might have the whole world held under his power as we saw recently in 1 John, God's word spells doom for him too.

As serious as God is about judging in history the enemies of his people, he is just as serious about judging the enemy behind the enemy. And these are calamitous words of judgment upon Assyria.

Calamitous words of judgment upon those who proudly oppose God and his people. But, look at verse 12, but they're precious words of joy for his people.

Though I have afflicted you, though it was me he orchestrated Assyria to be a tool of judgment on my own people, when they went over the top, when they pursued unending cruelty, it marked the end.

And as I end Assyria, it will be a relief to you, you, my people. I will afflict you with them no more. Their doom will be your deliverance.

[21 : 47] Verse 13, it's hard for us to grasp just what this would have been like for the Lord's people. The picture is of imprisonment, bondage, servitude.

The yoke will be broken off, the bonds burst apart. And in the ancient world, if your nation and king were vassals to a great empire, then life in every way was shaped by that.

Your very existence was now to be given for a cruel master. Everything you have and do was put to use for the preservation of their legacy, their empire.

So wealth and warriors and all sorts of other things were poured out of your nation into theirs. And any shimmer of disloyalty would be cruelly punished so as to make the point for everyone else.

And so to hear the promise that the yoke will be broken and the bonds burst apart would be words of exceeding comfort. Friends, the hold that the religion of the pride flag and movement has upon our nation, the hold that an ever-worsening morality has on our nation, the grasp of ideologies burst in universities and pushed by the media, the grasp that that has over people, God can smash them to pieces.

[23 : 13] And wouldn't that be good news? But God's patience could mean that many of the evils we encounter today, many of the things that afflict us will not meet their downfall until they've reached their peak.

That's what happened to Assyria. Assyria were faced with doom, only at full strength. And remember as we saw last week, God's character is slow to anger.

There's time for repentance, time to look to God and put trust in him, as long as we hear his warning. You and I may not see the end of the tyranny that is in our present world.

It could become worse and worse. But its downfall is certain. Nothing is so powerful and so all-encompassing as to frustrate God's judgment and our salvation.

We need to know that. It's not beyond God to deal with the perplexing powers that are at play today. In a month where the flag of our culture's all-pervasive religion flies nearly everywhere we look, we need to remember that even the greatest empires at their peak are no match for God.

[24 : 31] Verse 9, what do you plot against the Lord? What do you think of Yahweh? He will make a complete end. And even if we don't see such a turning of the tide in our day, we knew that the Lord has and will deal finally with the enemy behind the enemies.

as it was, a great day of judgment fell on Nineveh in 612 BC, but greater days of judgment are in view here, because Belial is in view, Satan is in view.

And any judgment in history is God upholding his justice, but it is also grunting a forties, it's also picturing in microcosm the great and terrible day that is to come, the day where the great enemy will that laugh be crushed underfoot.

Of course, we knew that the fatal blow was struck at the cross, Satan's mortally wounded, his day is coming. And so not until the final day of judgment will we see the full effect of the defeat of Satan.

But, if it doesn't happen sooner, at the final day of judgment, then we will see the defeat of every layer of God's enemy. God won't just deal with the immediate enemies that oppose his people.

[25 : 55] He has dealt with and will deal with the ultimate enemy. Well, secondly, in verses 14 to chapter 2, verse 2, Nahum pictures for us a deliverance beyond this deliverance, a deliverance beyond this deliverance.

God's work of real deliverance in history promises and pictures his deliverance at the last day. Verse 14, the Lord has given commandment about you.

Talking about Ashurbanipal, the emperor. The Lord has given commandment about you. The defeat will be calamitous for Assyria, not just now, but long into the future.

The repercussions are incalculable. No more shall their emperor's name be perpetuated. This is the end of your line. No more emperors.

There's a record of Ashurbanipal's inscription that he had prepared for his own memorial. You can look it up and see it.

[27 : 06] And on it he prays that the son who comes after him would honor and protect his name and he warns on that inscription that anyone who dares to remove his name shall be judged.

And then he lists they'll be judged by twelve different Assyrian deities. Surely that would preserve his name and his line. Well, the true God had other plans.

There was to be no next son on the throne. for there will be no throne for Assyria after judgment falls. And more than that, all the gods that Ashurbanipal put his trust in, all those he looked to to protect and secure his name, well, the Lord says verse 14, from the house of your gods I'll cut off the carved image and the metal image.

They too will cease to have prominence. I will make your grave for your vile. The defeat is thorough and complete, not just the individuals, but all the apparatus that facilitates their evil.

God will make an end of it all. The throne will disappear, the idols will be smashed. And the great emperor has his grave prepared for him. And notice those words that begin verse 14.

[28 : 28] The Lord has given a commandment about you. It's not a warning anymore. It's not a command that has already issued. God's word wasn't to return to him empty.

I wonder at this point what the threat for Nahum was. As the Lord's faithful prophet, he declares the dreadful command of the Lord against his king's king.

Nahum has taken on the might of Assyria, becoming a deeply subversive influence. I wonder what that might have prompted from his immediate king in Judah.

What might Manasseh or Josiah, whichever one it was, what would they have thought at this stage? Oh no, Nahum, please don't rock the boat. Let us just keep our heads down, get through this.

I wonder what mockery might have come his way. That's speculative, of course. But what we are sure of is that Nahum, against the most fierce of backdrops, stood tall and declared the kind of message that would provoke the most almighty of backlashes from the prevailing power of the day.

[29 : 43] One writer says, even though spoken by the trembling lips of a mortal man, these words would shake the sure foundations of empires. However powerful you are, God says, I'll make you grieve.

And those same words come to any and all who set themselves against the Lord and his people. And yet the words of the faithful prophet are always words of comfort to the true people of God.

For they tell of the wonder of the gospel message, which is what we see in verse 15. Behold on the mountain the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace.

Nahum says, look over at the mountains around Judah. One will come running with an urgent message and it will be a message of good news. One will come running in a day not too far off to proclaim Nineveh has fallen.

They come with good news. They come publishing peace, not just peace because war is over, but shalom, the peace, the Bible idea of peace, fullness of blessing in the whole of life.

[30 : 59] God's judgment upon his enemies is a message of good news. It's over. Tyranny has been defeated. Evil has been eviscerated. defeated. The large shadow that loomed over your existence, the shadow that sucked you dry of your substance, it's defeated.

Think of those who had only known what it was to be subservient and evil power. Think of them seeing a messenger in the distance rushing towards them, calling out, it's over, it's over, good news.

Nineveh has been destroyed. The tormentor of your life has been conquered. They're done. It's over. Think of the relief that would sweep through.

Think of the tears, the joy. Of course, if this isn't the sound of comfort for you, it isn't too late.

Whilst we can hear the Lord's warning, there is time to turn to him for salvation. We'll look to what accompanies this good news.

[32 : 07] It's the way to respond. Nahum says, keep your feasts, O Judah, fulfill your vows. The response is worship. Celebrate the victory, feast on it, take delight in every evidence of the kingdom of God prevailing over this world.

Mark it, let it regularly nurture your ongoing spiritual life. The Lord is good and he's delivered his people and so the only fitting response is to worship him and through worship to continue to receive the abundance of what he's achieved.

The one who tramples our enemies, the one who rescues us from the clutches of Satan says to us, keep your vows, celebrate your festivals, worship God as you gather on Sundays and worship God as you live.

Receiving the gospel word, receiving the good news of God's defeat of Satan beckons us to worship both in feasts, the fixed ceremonies of the religious calendar Sundays and to worship by fulfilling our values, our everyday allegiance, to him.

O. Pamela Robertson says that the Christian gospel provides the fullest possible framework for permanent celebration and victory. Celebration by keeping the values of the Christian life is always in order.

[33 : 36] Now, this was wonderful news to Judah, life-changing news, but Nahum again casts the view beyond God's defeat of Assyria. The good news in verse 15 is where the term gospel comes from.

That is what the gospel is. It's a message of good news. And significantly, when there is a message of good news, a gospel message, it is always a message of victory in battle and defeated enemies.

It is the news of the kingdom of God triumphing over the kingdoms of this world. And these words in verse 15 are better known from Isaiah, where it's the beautiful feet.

But the two instances together illustrate the nature of the gospel. Isaiah focuses on the joy of salvation, whereas Nahum focuses on the defeat of God's enemies.

But those things are two sides of the gospel. They go together. Indeed, we see something similar in Revelation 18 and 19. the end of history. The picture is of the Lord's people singing in response to the defeat and judgment of the harlot of Babylon, the symbol for all that opposes God.

[34 : 51] And the Lord's people sing hallelujah, salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just. And he's judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.

Hallelujah, the smoke from her goes up forever and ever. The gospel is always a message of doom and deliverance.

In Romans, Paul picks up the language of verse 15 and of Isaiah, the language of good news coming from the mountains. And he brings these things to bear on the church today.

The gospel we cling on to is still the message of the victory of God's kingdom through the defeat of his enemies. And it's a victory that none of us armor up for.

It's not a victory that we win for ourselves. It's a victory that God definitively wins and then declares. The Lord's people hear the good news and trust it and cling to it.

[36 : 04] And this picture is the gospel, doesn't it? The good news for Judah was that they were set free from affliction at the hands of Assyria, which they brought upon themselves.

And they were set free because God intervened to defeat the oppressor. And the good news today, the good news for us, is that we were set free from affliction at the hands of the evil one, which we brought upon ourselves, because God intervened to defeat the oppressor.

Of course, we mustn't flatten Nahum out to being only about sin and Satan and Jesus. But that is unmistakably one of the layers upon which Nahum is talking.

Notice part of the good news in verse 15, the last phrase, never again shall Belial, the worthless one, pass through you. He's utterly cut off.

True of Ashurbanipal. True of Satan. And so, the message is that God is not indifferent to the real opposition in history that his people face.

[37 : 14] He's a jealous and avenging God. And we can take great comfort in that. These words are words for wartime. Words for the church under attack from the world around, hated by society, under threat all the time.

Which has actually been the vast majority of the church throughout the vast majority of history. And we must rejoice in these words when times are hard. God won't let evil pass.

He will not let oppressors off. But God is also not indifferent to the havoc that the great enemy wreaks upon his people. God deals with that too.

The gospel has layers. Every small victory we see when God defeats his enemies, be it on a personal level where someone who's tormented you, made your life of misery at work, and they suddenly lose their job.

Or on an institutional level where God shuts down things like the Tavistock Center for all the evil that it's done. These are tastes of the great victory to come, the great day of judgment that will encompass all earthly judgments.

[38 : 26] to borrow an illustration from someone, think of the Lord of the Rings. God deals with the Sauron figure, and he deals with the Saruman and the Nazguls of this world, or for Harry Potter fans.

He doesn't just deal with the Voldemort figure. Along the way, he deals too with the Bellatrix Lestranges of the world. So that there is relief and salvation along the way, before the great salvation that is the climax of the story.

Well, finally, look at chapter 2, verses 1 and 2. Judgment again, verse 1. Nineveh. Get ready. Man the ramparts. Watch the road. Dress for battle. Collect all your strength.

The scatterer has come up against you. Get ready. Pull together all that you can muster. And then the scatterer will scatter it all.

That word scatter in the Bible is a terrible thing. Think of the Tower of Babel and what happened afterwards. A great scattering. That's what's in Assyria's future.

[39 : 43] Judgment. And then 2.2. Look at how Nahum finishes this. The victory has a future. The kingdom that once was will be once again.

Verse 2. The Lord is restoring the majesty of Jacob as the majesty of Israel. What the Lord did with Jacob, taking him despite all of his weakness and failures, and making out of him the great nation of Israel that prospered under David and Solomon.

Just as he's done that before, so once again his people will be a great kingdom. The Lord's defeat of his enemies sets up a grand future written into Nahum's gospel message for the people of Judah is the message of the eternal kingdom of God, where the majesty of his kingdom will at last be made plain to all.

I wonder if this isn't in view in how Nahum deals with the emperor back in verse 14. The Lord is restoring the majesty of Israel, restoring the majesty of his kingdom under the one in David's line.

The Lord is restoring the forever kingdom under the forever king. That's what David was promised. And then look at verse 14 again. By contrast, Nineveh, and by extension the kingdoms of this world, no more shall your name be perpetuated.

[41 : 09] From David will come one who reigns forever. From Assyria, it's the end of the line. Nobody who opposes God and his people stands a chance.

There is only one forever line, and it does not belong to this world. God deals with the enemy behind the enemy, and he promises a deliverance beyond this deliverance.

And Satan himself doesn't stand a chance. for our allegiance to the king, whose throne will be established on earth as it is in heaven. So friends, in the difficult days that lie ahead, we can press on with confidence because the Lord is good.

Let's pray. Amen.

Father, in days of great opposition, would you bolster us? And days when it can seem like the evil untriumphs, reassure us, for these days seem like our days.

[42 : 26] And so grant us your very great grace to press on with our work and to be found faithful to you, knowing that you're restoring the majesty of your kingdom.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.