

Comforting and Conquering

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 December 2024

Preacher: Rev. Thomas Davis

[0:00] Good evening and a very warm welcome to you all to our service tonight. It's lovely to see you here. Thank you very much for coming as we gather in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to worship together. A very warm welcome to you all. I hope you've all had a lovely day and a lovely week. You've got the notices for this week. Please do remember the New Year's Day service. It would be wonderful if you're able to be there for that. Please also pray for the ferries because Gordon Matheson is currently on the mainland and is due to come home on Tuesday and all being well he will. But the forecast is a little bit mixed so we want to pray that he'll get home. And if he doesn't get home then it's a fight between Boyan and Paddles for taking the New Year's Day service. I'm sure it'll all be fine.

We're going to begin our service by singing to God's praise from Psalm 46. Psalm 46 from the beginning. God is our refuge and our strength. It straits at present aid. Therefore although the earth remove we will not be afraid. And these verses are wonderful verses to sing as we reach the end of our year. So much changes in our lives but God never changes. And the unchanging God is the rock in whom we find refuge, strength and security. And we can sing our hearts out to his praise in these wonderful words. So Psalm 46 verses 1 to 7 to God's praise.

[illegible]

O'er the hills thy swelling seems to shame, a river whose wings to glad the city of her God,
the holy glist with the heart of Shia, this abode.

God is a mist of where does dwell, nothing shall remove.

[3 : 48] The Lord to her and help her, and not right early through.

The heathen rift sure must just leave, that kingdom's moving when the Lord God has added, and his voice, the air, his veils for fear.

The Lord of wounds and water's light doth constantly remain, the God of Jacob's directive has deeply to his day.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you so, so much that we can gather this evening in the name of your Son, and in the presence of your Spirit to worship you.

And as we come to you, we pray that you would still our hearts, that we'd come before you in reverence and in adoration, that we'd come before you with thanksgiving and with joy.

[5 : 44] And we can do all of that because of the Gospel. The Gospel in which you have revealed yourself, in which we see your glorious attributes revealed through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

And the Gospel gives us peace and hope and comfort that we would never have on our own. And we come this evening rejoicing in the reality of the resurrection of Jesus.

So thankful to you that death has been conquered, and that all who come to you can find peace and hope through the Gospel. And so we pray, Father, that as we come here this evening, as we gather once again in your name, that you would bless us and be with us, meet with us and nourish and strengthen us through your word, that we would grow in our faith and deepen in our love for you and for one another, and that we would be equipped, encouraged and prepared to go into a new week and to go into a new year with our eyes fixed on Jesus, seeking to serve and honour you.

We are conscious, Lord, that so much in our lives is constantly changing. We go from one day to the next, one week, one month, one year to the next.

And it seems to go so by so quickly. And so much changes. Sometimes things change for the better, and we see wonderful blessings coming into our lives, and we rejoice in that.

[7 : 08] And other times things change for the worse, and we experience difficult times, and we suffer loss, and things happen that we don't want to happen. And in all of that change, Father, we thank you that you are the unchanging God.

You are our refuge and our strength. And though the nations might rage around us, though it might feel like the whole earth is shaking, though we see storms and tiles around us and within us, we thank you that you are the one in whom we can find shelter and security, protection and peace.

And so we come to you this evening seeking you and praying that we would be drawn closer to you. Thank you for everybody who's gathered here tonight. Thank you that we have this opportunity to be together.

Please bless us as we meet. And for everyone who is here, you know us, and we thank you that you know us, and we thank you that we can come to you as we are. We pray that you would speak to us all, help us and encourage us, and strengthen us when we feel weak.

And we pray that we would all hear your voice speaking to us as we sing your word, as we read your word, and as your word is preached. So we just thank you so much that we can gather here.

[8 : 28] And we also want to pray for all our brothers and sisters meeting across the island, across the nation, and indeed across the world. And we rejoice that as we gather today to worship you, we are adding our voices to the voices of millions and millions of people who are meeting to praise the name of Jesus.

We thank you that there is one church, that there is one family, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, and one Saviour, one Gospel.

And we thank you for that, the way in which that Gospel has transformed our lives, and transformed the lives of so many others. And we pray that that would continue, that Jesus would continue to build his church, that your word would continue to go forth in great power, because we know that it will not return to you empty.

And so may that be our experience tonight. May we be built up as your people. And in the days ahead, we pray that we would see your church be built up in this community. Please draw more people to come and hear the Gospel.

Please bring back those who have maybe wandered or who are maybe still like they're stumbling and struggling in their faith. And we pray that we would see many, many more people come to trust in Jesus, that the work of the Gospel would thrive here in Kalanish, Kalanish, and all across our island, across our nation, and to the ends of the earth.

[9 : 43] So may your blessing be upon us in our time together just now. And we pray for all your love and grace. And we pray that you would be with us and lead us on in all that we do. In Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing again from Psalm 18.

[10 : 54] As we sing these words, we think of the oppression that we feel and experience in our hearts because of sin. But we also rejoice in the deliverance and in the protection that we have through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And the psalm would have been written in the context of conflict, where they had enemies threatening them. And all of that is pointing towards the reality of sin.

Psalm 18, 1 to 7, through the

My God,
my treasure, I will trust a partner to thee.

All praises will I try, and then shall I be serviced, and if all my deadly be.

He promised death, I'll learn my voice, to hear His ears give my cry.

[14 : 34] So, just near the start of the Bible, and near the very end of the book of Deuteronomy. We'll read the whole chapter together.

He shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints. From his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people. All his saints are in thy hand.

And they sat down at his feet. Everyone shall receive of thy words. Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tithes of Israel were gathered together.

Let Reuben live and not die, and let not his men be few. And this is the blessing of Judah. And he said, Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people. Let his hand be sufficient for him, and be thou an help to him from his enemies.

Downloaded from <https://vetanothersermon.host> - 2025-12-14 05:21:17

They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law. They shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands.

Smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again. And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him, and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.

And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath. And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth, and of the fullness thereof, and for the goodwill of him that dwells in the bush, let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.

His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns. With them shall he push, he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth, and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.

[17 : 24] And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out, and Issachar in thy tents. They shall call the people unto the mountain. There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness, for they shall succour the abundance of the seas, and of treasure hid in the sand.

And of Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad, he dwelleth as a lion, and taith the arm with the crown of the head. And he provided the first part for himself, because there in a portion of the lawgiver was he seated, and he came with the heads of the people, and he executed the justice of the Lord, and his judgments with Israel.

And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's web, he shall leap from Bashan. And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord, possess thou the west and the south.

And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children, let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be.

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help and in his excellency on the sky.

[18 : 45] The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them.

Israel then shall dwell in safety alone, the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine, also his heavens shall drop down due. Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy health, and who is the sword of thy excellency, and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

Amen. May the Lord add his blessing to his word. Let's just bow our heads in prayer for a moment. Father, we thank you that as we come to you and as we come to you in prayer, we can lay before you all that's on our minds and all that we are experiencing.

And as we come to you, we want to come confessing our sin. And we acknowledge that over the past week, the past month, the past year, and indeed our whole lives up to this point, we have struggled to follow you and yet we found it so easy to wander from you.

And in our thoughts and our words and our actions, we have sinned against you and we're so sorry. And as we confess our sin before you, we do so openly and freely.

[20 : 11] We don't want to conceal anything before you. But we also confess our sin so, so thankful for the gospel. For the promise that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

For the promise that Jesus didn't come for those who are well, but for those who are sick. That the Son of Man did not come to call the righteous, but sinners. And we thank you so, so much that in Jesus we have the healing and the restoration and the salvation that we desperately need.

And as we rejoice in your forgiveness, Father, we also acknowledge before you that we freely and fully forgive those who've sinned against us. And we have no desire to keep a record of wrong.

We leave all things in your hands and we thank you that the gospel washes us clean and you each day as we come to you. We also come not just confessing our sin but also aware of the effect of sin in our lives and in the lives of people around us.

We pray for those who are suffering, for all who are struggling in this community, for anyone who are going through difficult times and for people suffering more widely. We pray for all those affected by the plane crashes that we've seen this week in the news.

[21 : 25] Please help everybody affected by these awful tragedies. And please help those who live in areas caught up in conflict and war. We pray for those who are unwell, those living in poverty, those who feel lost and broken in their lives, those who are struggling with their mental health, those who feel rejected and those who feel lost.

And we also pray for those who feel like everything's great and yet they don't know you and they're on a path to a lost eternity. We pray that you would call them to you and that by your grace they would respond.

We pray that you would bless the work of the gospel here in Kalanish. We pray for the congregation that you would encourage them and enrich them and help them and uphold them as they go into a new year together. And we pray that it will be a year in which you continue to encourage them and provide for them and help them and especially we pray Father that you provide a pastor for them and that you lead and guide us all through this vacancy process.

And we thank you that there is never a moment where you are not behind us, before us and you are the one upholding us. And so we just pray that you would continue to help us and look after us and lead and guide us.

Bless all the ongoing ministries of this congregation, their work with the young children and all the other activities that the congregation is engaged in. May that work be blessed and thank you for everybody who contributes to the life of the church family here.

[22 : 58] And as we turn to your word in a moment Father, please prepare our hearts. Please help us to hear your voice. May your word take root deep in our hearts. May it shape our thinking and may it shape the way that we live our lives.

All to your glory. Amen. But before we come back to Deuteronomy, we're going to sing again. This time from Psalm 89 and we're singing from verse 13. Psalm 89 at verse 13.

I love this little section of Psalm 89. It's one that speaks just beautifully about the attributes of God. Thou hast an arm that's full of power, thy hand is great in mind and thy right hand exceedingly exalted is in height.

And we rejoice in that reality and we find joy and blessing in the brightness of his face. So it's 4 Stans, 13 to 16 to God's praise.

■ And thy right hand The great house exceedingly exalted is in high.

[24 : 29] Justice and judgment of thy throne are made the dwelling place.

Mercy, a company withdrew, shall go before thy place.

O greatly blessed people, the joyful sound of love.

In brightness of thy face, O Lord, they ever on shall go.

In thy name shall all the rich rejoice in thee.

[25 : 40] And in thy righteousness shall we exalt thee on high.

Amen. Well, I'd like us just for a wee while to turn back to Deuteronomy chapter 33.

And we're going to focus on the words of verse 27. The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.

And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee and shall say, destroy them. Everyone here who likes football will have often heard the phrase describing a match as a game of two halves.

And so often that will mean for a team, maybe one half goes really, really well. The other half, not so well. Although I support Carlisle, Aberdeen and Scotland.

[26 : 47] So I'm used to both halves not going so well. But still, we have that phrase, a game of two halves. This verse is a verse of two halves.

The first half is one of the most beautiful statements that you will find in the whole Bible. It's the kind of statement that you want to memorise. One that you want to always take with you.

And it's the kind of verse that you'd find on a plaque or on a calendar or maybe on a key ring or something like that. It's beautiful. The language, the eternal God is thy refuge.

And underneath are the everlasting arms. The second half of the verse is not like that. And I've never seen a fridge magnet that says, he shall frustrate the enemy from before you and shall say, destroy them.

Very, very different to what's just come before it. Now, we believe in our church, along with the rest of the Reformed Church across the world, that the whole Bible is the inspired, inerrant word of God.

[28 : 02] And that applies to every verse and it applies to every part of every verse. And, but even though we believe that, we come to a verse like this and we read the first part and we think this is so beautiful.

But then you come to the second part and I think if we're being honest, we will say, we find ourselves thinking, why does it have to say that? And, and as a preacher, I have to acknowledge that I come to verse 27 and I think the first part and you think, oh, I definitely want to preach on that part of the verse.

And then you read on to the second half and you think, oh, I'm not so sure. This is not so easy. But we must stay through to our convictions that the whole of the Bible is God's inspired, inerrant word.

And that means that the second half of the verse has got just as much to say to us as the first half. The second part is just as valuable to God as the first part.

And we want to look at it all together. And as we do that, and as I've looked at this more and more, what I've realized is that the whole verse is saying something amazing.

[29 : 17] And the truth is, the second half of the verse makes the first half even better. And I hope that I'll be able to show you that tonight.

And as we do that, the title for our sermon is Comforting and Conquering. And these are two headings as we look at each part of the verse together.

Deuteronomy 33, 27, Comforting and Conquering. So, looking at the first part of the verse together, the eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting.

And this is, for me, this is one of my favorite statements in the whole Old Testament. And it's one of the most beautiful. As we come to it, it's important to remember when these words were spoken in the context of the history of God's people in the Old Testament.

The words were spoken by Moses, and he is saying these words shortly before his death. If you go back to verse 1, you'll see that Moses addressed the people of Israel.

[30 : 26] He blessed them before his death. And in many ways, the whole of Deuteronomy is Moses' final word to the people of Israel. They're on the brink of entering the Promised Land. And the whole of Deuteronomy is really like a sermon recording Moses' final words to the people as they stand.

They're standing on the brink of the Promised Land. He is standing on the brink of death. That means that for the Israelites, two massive changes lie ahead of them.

They're about to enter the Promised Land. So 40 years earlier, they'd escaped Egypt. For four decades, they'd wandered in the wilderness. Now, at long last, they're about to enter the land that had been promised to Abraham, their ancestor.

But the second massive change is that they're about to lose Moses. The man who God raised up to confront the Egyptian Pharaoh. The man who led the people out of slavery.

The man who met with God at the top of Mount Sinai. The man who had delivered the Ten Commandments to the people. The man who had led them, prayed for them, guided them, and loved them over these past 40 years is about to die.

[31 : 38] The Israelites are going to have to enter the Promised Land without him. And in the face of these massive changes, the words in the first half of verse 27 are so needed and they are so precious.

And so I want to unpack them a little bit more together. They start by speaking of the Eternal God. Now, the word translated eternal is actually a really interesting word because it's not the word that's always used for eternal.

It's a word that can also mean ancient and it actually appears again in this chapter in verse 15. You see it referring to the ancient mountains. So same word, ancient and eternal.

And in other parts of the Old Testament, it's the word for east in terms of the direction. And so it's a word that is looking back and it's speaking of that which is ancient and longstanding.

And in doing so, it's evoking the idea of an idyllic state. And so maybe there's a connection between this word and the beauty of a sunrise in the east.

[32 : 52] And maybe there's a connection with the beauty of the Garden of Eden. And the word is related to Eden as well.

Sometimes it's translated days of old. Again, it's looking back to times of blessing. Here, the word is being applied to God.

He is the ultimate one from of old. He's the ultimate ancient of days. He is the eternal one. And this is telling the Israelites something crucial because for them, everything is about to change.

But God isn't changing. God doesn't change. God never deteriorates. Never decays.

His ancient perfection is new every morning. He is the eternal God. And that eternal God is their refuge.

[33 : 53] The eternal God is thy refuge. Literally, it says the eternal God is our refuge. But it's clear that these words are being applied to God's people specifically.

God is their refuge. Now, this makes perfect sense for them. Because if you think about the Israelites, in so many ways they have been exposed over these past 40 years.

They've escaped from slavery in Egypt. They've been wandering in the wilderness. They've not had a home. Everything has been changing. They've been homeless wanderers for 40 years. For the 400 years before that, they were slaves in a land not their own.

Now, at last, they are entering the land that had been promised to them. But their true home, their true place of safety and refuge, is actually the Lord.

Now, the word here, refuge, it can also be translated dwelling place. It can also refer to an animal's den. And I love that image. I think that's a beautiful image. Because you think about animals' den as a place of security, a place of belonging, a place of nurture, a place where the vulnerable are safe, where the hungry are fed, where the next generation is raised.

[35 : 10] In all the changes facing Israel, they have the eternal God as their refuge. And that image of safety is reinforced by the next words.

Underneath is the next word we have. I love that word. I just love that word. Because Israel have got so much behind them. They've suffered.

They've wandered. They've struggled. They've stumbled. They've succeeded. They've come through so much. They have got so much behind them. And they also have got so much ahead of them.

Because they're about to enter into the promised land. There's so much that's uncertain. They're going to need to defeat the enemies who are currently occupying it. They're going to have to tie and build a nation of their own. There is so much behind them.

There's so much ahead of them. But what really matters is what's underneath them. And underneath them are God's everlasting arms.

[36 : 14] Now, that language of arms is what we call an anthropomorphism. So, in the Old Testament, you will often get what you call anthropomorphisms.

And so, anthropos is the word for humanity, for man. And so, anthropomorphism is when something human is being used to describe God.

So, when you speak about God's arm, God's face, God's foot, and God's hand, all of these are what we call anthropomorphisms, where something human is being used to describe God.

So, God doesn't physically have an arm. But this is imagery being used to give a picture of strength. And so, when you see the language of God's arm in Scripture, that's the language of strength.

And that strength is never-ending. These are everlasting arms. And so, you'll see, if we paid it off now, you can see that you've got eternal at the start of the verse.

[37 : 12] You've got everlasting at the end of this first part of the verse. And so, you've got the eternal, speaking of the ancient perfection of God. You've got everlasting, speaking of unending duration.

And both of these ideas go hand-in-hand when we think about God. So, when you think about His perfection, it's sort of, in many ways, making you think vertically. You're stretching your mind up to think of how perfect and majestic and glorious God is.

He is the eternal God, where everything operates at the highest level of perfection. And so, you've been stretched vertically in your mind. And at the same time, you've been stretched horizontally, because everlasting means He stretches all the way back and all the way forward, reaching into the realms of eternity.

The infinite, vertical perfection of God, who is eternal, the limitless, horizontal, unchangeableness of the God, who is everlasting, is all pointing us towards how majestic and glorious and good God is.

and all the time He's holding you. All the time He is holding you.

[38 : 31] For the Israelites then, for everyone who's a Christian now, for everyone who becomes a Christian, God has placed His everlasting arms underneath you, holding you forever.

And for the Israelites then, and for you and me today, these words are so comforting.

How often do we feel like we are lost, going through life, and we don't know what's happening, we don't understand all the things that are going on, we feel confused and disorientated.

How often do we feel shaken, things happen that we never thought would happen, people do things to us that we never imagined that they would, and we are bruised and battered in a way that we never expected.

So often life hits us with things that we never saw coming, life is so full of uncertainty, things look stable one minute, and then all of a sudden, everything changes. How often does a week bring things that we never imagined?

[39 : 35] How often does a year bring things that we never imagined or wanted? How often do we find that our plans are ruined, our dreams are shattered, our hopes are lost?

How often do we find that our hopes for the future slowly get replaced with a yearning for the past? How often do we find that life knocks us and hurts us and shakes us?

How often do we feel vulnerable, weak, and exposed? how often do we feel as though everything is just slipping through our fingers?

And yet all of the time, God is saying to you, I've got you. I am your refuge.

My arms are everlasting. They are underneath you. I am holding you. So often in life, we are plagued by what lies behind us and we're crippled by what lies before us.

[40 : 47] So our past is full of mistakes, full of things where you think, oh, why did I say that? Why did I do that? We feel frustrated. We feel like our plans have failed and promises have been broken.

Dreams are left unfulfilled. Sometimes that happens because our dreams don't come through. Sometimes that happens because our dreams have come through that we've discovered that actually the thing that we thought would be amazing is not amazing and it's much more difficult than we ever realised.

So our past is so full of baggage that's just like a burden that plagues us. And at the same time, our future scares us.

Changes lie ahead for every one of you and for me. And whether that's finishing school and thinking what happens next, entering into adulthood and trying to figure out work and where you're going to live and sorting out all the different responsibilities that you have to carry as an adult.

Leaving home, maybe it's changing career, maybe it's moving house, maybe it's heading towards retirement, maybe it's racing into old age, maybe it's the threat of illness, maybe it's the desperate fear of losing people we love or facing death ourselves.

[42 : 19] What lies behind us casts a long shadow and what lies ahead looms large. But what really matters is what's underneath.

And in the gospel, God is giving us the promise that for all who trust in Jesus, the moment that you do that, God's arms come underneath you.

He becomes your refuge. He becomes your dwelling place and his everlasting arms will never, ever let you go. You think of all the storms that come here in Lewis.

We're going to get more this week. The forecast is pretty terrible. Again, we've already had loads this winter. You think of how every single one of you can feel it and have experienced it.

You go outside, the wind batters you. And so either you're walking into the wind and it's pelting you from the front or you're going along and it's battering you and buffeting you from behind.

[43 : 32] You can think about all the ways in which the wind affects the world around us. You see the trees bending, you hear tiles rattling, power lines whistling.

In so many ways, everything around us, and we see it all the time, gets shaken by the gales when they come every winter. But there is one thing that the wind never, ever moves.

The wind never moves the ground underneath you. And that's exactly what this verse is speaking about.

The fact that underneath, in God, we have an utterly immovable foundation. And that foundation is his loving arms that are holding you safe and secure.

And that is such a comfort. 2025 is going to bring changes for all of us. For some of us, those changes might be small.

[44 : 36] For others, those changes might be big. And for some, those changes might be awful. But in all of that change, God's arms are never moving.

for everyone who trusts in Jesus, he's holding you. And that is such a comfort. And I've got to ask the question, do you have that comfort?

Do you have that security? There may be a ton of things ahead of you and loads behind you, but can you look down and think the Lord's arms are under.

And to have that comfort, all you have to do is just rest in Jesus.

In fact, all you need to say to him is, Lord, please, please take me into your arms. That's all you have to pray.

[45 : 45] So the first half of verse 27 is one of the most comforting statements that you will ever read. But that's only half of what the verse says. Next it says, he shall thrust out the enemy from before you and shall say, destroy them.

That statement feels very different and it's much more confrontational and it doesn't have anything of the poetic, peaceful imagery of the first part of the verse. So we find ourselves thinking, why does it have to say that?

Why is this here? Why is this the next thing that Moses says? Well, in the context of Deuteronomy and the period of time when Moses is speaking these words, it actually makes perfect sense that he says this because Israel had been wandering through the wilderness, they're approaching the promised land, but that land is not empty.

There are people living there. And those people have got no intention of handing the land over to the Israelites. So that means that when we say Israel is about to enter the promised land, that's another way of saying Israel is about to enter into a war.

And that's exactly what you'll discover if you read on into the book of Joshua. And by the time of Deuteronomy, that fighting had actually already begun.

[46 : 59] If you want to read up more about it, you can go to Numbers 21 and you'll read that the Israelites had to fight against Zihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan.

And if you go to Deuteronomy chapter 1, it will refer to these confrontations and to the fact that Israel managed to secure victory over these enemy kings. And here, Moses is reassuring the people that even though he's not going with them, they can still be confident of victory.

And you can see the emphasis being made in the rest of the chapters. You read 28 and 29, you see the same language, the language of victory and of conquering and of overcoming enemies.

So, in the context of Deuteronomy, this statement makes sense. They're about to face enemies and so Moses is saying to them, go, you're going to win. You will be able to overcome them.

But there's a much bigger why question. And that's the question of why is it that passages like this speak so positively about destroying enemies?

[48 : 10] Why is it that entering the promised land meant attacking and killing so many people? Why is this part of the Old Testament so violent? And that's a question that many people struggle with.

And we find ourselves asking the question, why is one of the most beautiful promises in the Bible sharing the same verse as a command to destroy enemies?

Well, there's lots that we could say to try and answer that question. I just want to highlight two key reasons why this language is here. The first reason relates to the specific context of Israel going into the promised land.

And the second reason relates to the bigger story of the Bible. So when we're trying to answer this question, why is this kind of language there? One of the reasons is because of the context at the time, and the other reason is because of the bigger story of the Bible.

In terms of the specific context of this moment in history, and of this command to fight and destroy, if we're going to understand this, we need to make sure that we understand the word enemies correctly.

[49 : 17] Now, when we think of the word enemies, we can often find ourselves thinking about somebody we dislike, somebody we disagree with, or somebody who we feel is against us.

So that might be somebody in school, it might be colleagues at work, it might be competitors in business, or it might be people with a different political opinion. So we will think of these people, because they're different to us, because they disagree with us, we think of them as enemies, and sometimes they'll stay enemies, sometimes things will change, and maybe they'll become our friends.

In fact, in school, sometimes people will talk about frenemies, so you've got people who are best friends one day and then enemies the next, and then best buddies again after a week or two.

We often think, when we think of the word enemies, we think in all those kind of categories. None of that is what the Bible means by the word enemies. In the Bible, an enemy is somebody who is determined to kill you.

And so to be enemies enemies is to be in the situation where somebody is going to die, either them or you.

[50 : 31] And if that threat to kill subsides, then that person is no longer an enemy. We often refer to, we often use the word enemy to apply, we often use it in situations that's really just talking about rivalries.

So we think of Biden and Trump, we talk of them as enemies. They're not enemies, they're rivals. Because they're not trying to kill each other. And it's the same with their political leaders or different people of teams or whatever.

They're not enemies, they're rivals. the situation facing Israel was on a different level altogether. They faced enemies who had one objective, they wanted to destroy the Israelites.

And you get a very clear example of that in the confrontation with Zihon in Numbers 21, you can read that when you go home. Israel had asked, can we travel through your territory? And they said, look, we're just going to travel through, we're not wanting a fight, we're not wanting to do anything, we just want to travel through your territory because we're on our way to a different destination.

But Zihon said, no, you can't, and he came out to kill them. Not simply to be on guard, not simply to say, you know, you have to go a different way.

[51 : 53] He came out to meet them and to kill them. Because that's what being enemies mean. At that moment, Zihon, the foreigner, became Zion the enemy. And battle begins, and either the Amorites are going to destroy Israel, or Israel are going to destroy the Amorites.

All of it is violent, brutal, and tragic, but it's the unavoidable reality of what having an enemy meant in the biblical sense of the word.

And so that gives us a clearer understanding as to why the language is so severe. But in terms of the bigger story of the Bible, all of this is teaching us an even more important lesson.

And that lesson has two aspects. So when we want to understand language like this in Deuteronomy, or going into Joshua, or any of this in the Old Testament history, we need to understand how it fits in the big story of the Bible.

There's two aspects to this. The first is that this is actually there to teach us that war and violence and military victory doesn't actually work.

[53 : 06] And that's such an important point for us to remember. The Old Testament is all a shadow. And as we see in a moment, part of that is, part of the purpose of the shadow is to point forward to the full reality, but another part of the purpose of the shadow is to show that shadows don't work.

work. And everything in the Old Testament ultimately doesn't work. So the violence of entering the promised land doesn't ultimately work. The sacrificial system of the tabernacle and the temple doesn't actually work.

And the royal dynasty set up through David as king doesn't actually work. None of it works because none of it's meant to work. It's all a shadow.

And that's the second key aspect of it. The shadow shows us that the old doesn't work, but it's also pointing us to the fact that the full reality is on its way. And everything in the Old Testament is pointing towards that.

So the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament, this is so important to remember, it's a little bit like, it's a little bit like using a torch to find a light switch. So if you imagine, I don't know where the light switch is in here, so imagine you came in here and it was dark and you didn't know where the light switch was and you took your phone out and you thought, well I'm going to turn my torch on and I'll use that to find the light switch.

[54 : 28] And so it's helpful, it's guiding you, but when you find the light switch and turn it on, you don't need the torch anymore. Because the full light is there.

And that's very much what the Old Testament and New Testament relationship is like. The Old Testament is immensely helpful. It's pointing us towards so much.

But when the New Testament comes, it's showing us that although the shadow is helpful, it's actually inadequate. And so here, we have this relationship of shadow pointing towards reality.

Israel is standing facing an enemy that wants to destroy them. God is telling them, that enemy wants to destroy you. you need to stand up, you need to drive forward, and you need to go and destroy that enemy.

And all of it is a shadow. The enemy nations in the Old Testament are a shadow of the real enemy. The enemy of sin and death.

[55 : 38] That from the very beginning of the Bible and throughout every age of human history, that enemy has one aim. It wants to destroy you.

And the Israelite army is a shadow of the real warrior, the real conqueror, the real hero, Jesus Christ. And all of this is pointing towards the ultimate confrontation, the ultimate battle, the ultimate victory.

It's all pointing towards Jesus' mission to come and defeat death. Death is the enemy that wants to destroy every Israelite, every Amorite, and every single one of us.

God says to Jesus, I am thrusting that enemy before you on the cross. Go and destroy it. And that's exactly what Jesus did.

And all of this is the language of conquering. Israel would go on to conquer the land, to defeat their enemies, and to settle in safety. But it didn't last, and it was never meant to last.

[56 : 41] It was all a shadow pointing to the fact that Jesus is coming to conquer. Jesus has come to destroy death. Jesus has come to win a victory that lasts forever.

And he did it by dying on the cross. He did it by allowing the enemy to empty all of its ammunition onto him. He did it by falling under the curse that our sins deserve.

And as he did that, he destroyed death's power. He won the victory. And the reason we know that he won is because he rose again.

And that's the magnificent truth of the gospel. You have Jesus going to the cross. You have death hurling everything it's got at him. And he rises in victory.

And you just think, that's amazing! Jesus has conquered the enemy that threatens every one of us. Through death, Jesus has destroyed the power of death.

[57 : 47] Jesus is the ultimate warrior, the ultimate soldier, the ultimate leader. He has come, he has battled, he has won, he has conquered. And all of this means that in this verse we have the language of comfort, followed by the language of conquering.

The first half is the language of comfort, the second half is the language of conquering. And as we round it all up and close, the key point I want you to take away from this is that in the gospel, these two things, comfort and conquering, these two things go hand in hand.

In the gospel, we're given the most beautiful promises that provide us with so much comfort, and we desperately need that. In a world that's so full of suffering, and sorrow, and struggle, and injustice, where things go wrong, and where things hurt, and where things are so unfair, we need comfort so much.

But we need more than comfort. Because where sin has caused so much damage, where evil keeps on wrecking people's lives, and where death mercilessly robs us of the people that we love so much, and as day by day, death lures all of you and me closer to our own death, we don't just need comfort, we need a conqueror.

And that's the amazing thing about God. That's the amazing thing about the gospel, because when it comes to death, God doesn't try to soothe you by saying, don't think about it.

[59 : 28] Jesus, he comes to you and he says, I'm going to conquer it. And that's exactly what Jesus has done. And do you see what that means?

It means that the beautiful promise in the first half of this verse is not a nice piece of poetic religious comfort. This promise stands on the fact that Jesus has come and conquered.

This is why God can keep this promise. His everlasting arms are underneath you because death has been conquered. He is your refuge forever because death has been conquered.

You are safe with him for eternity because death has been conquered. And that's why on its own, the first half of this verse is beautiful. But with the second half added on, it is utterly amazing.

the gospel is full of beautiful words of comfort, but the gospel is so much more than that.

[60 : 33] It is comfort grounded on conquering. And it's all because of Jesus. And it's this combination of comfort and conquering that is something that only the gospel gives you.

And if any of you here today are not yet Christians or you're not sure where you stand, this is what you have got to recognize. Only the gospel gives you both. Only the gospel gives you both.

Without the gospel, it's one or the other. Because outside the gospel, you can find a lot of comfort, but no conquering. So you can find friendship and success and wealth and intimacy and attention.

And all of these things are nice and they're good and they can give you comfort, but they are only ever temporary. And in all of these areas, if you're chasing friendship or wealth or success or reputation or whatever, all you can ever say is that underneath me are the temporary arms.

But if you have the gospel, if you have your faith in Jesus, you have comfort grounded on conquering.

[61 : 52] The gospel is so much better than what the world around us will offer. The world around us offers us comforting with no conquering or it will offer us conquering with no comfort where you go to a naturalistic worldview that just says, well, we're actually just part of a machine.

We're actually all heading for destruction. We're actually all stuffed anyway. and so you're conquered by the aging process and by the ultimate disintegration of the universe.

And comfort is just an illusion. The gospel is so much better and so different. In the gospel, we have everlasting comfort because we have the ultimate conqueror.

conqueror. And as you head into a new year, another year, as we head into 2025, I just want you to think about that and I want you to think about where the gospel sits in your life.

Does it sit just to the side as something that you know is important but it's just a little bit in the way? Is it something that sits at a distance and you think, well, I don't even really want to go anywhere near that?

[63 : 03] Or is the gospel the rock that you are standing on? And if it is, if Jesus Christ is the rock that you are standing on, then you can say, you can look to God and know that underneath you are his everlasting arms and you can look at death and you can know Jesus has beaten you.

In the gospel, you find perfect comfort and perfect company and I hope every one of you is going to go into 25 with their eyes fixed on him.

Amen. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, thank you for the comfort that you give us and for the conquering that you've accomplished for us.

thank you for everything that you've done for us. Amen. We're going to close with Psalm 107, singing from verse 26.

Psalm 107 at verse 26.

[64 : 34] This is using the imagery of a storm at sea to speak about the same truth, to speak about the fact that it's in the Lord that we find protection, security, shelter and safety.

So we'll sing at 26 to 31. They mount to heaven and to the depths. they do go down again. Their soul doth faint and melt away with trouble and with pain. Down to 31.

Oh, that men to the Lord would give praise for his goodness then and for his works of wonder done unto the sons of men. 26 to 31. 26 to 31. To God's praise.

They mount to heaven and to the depths.

They do go down again. Their souls doth faint and melt away with trouble and through the■ and through the through the■ and through the And they took all the troubled kind Who there wrongs, it's a three The storm is changed into a calm

[66 : 20] At its commands and will So that the waves which reach before That quiet are unshilled Then are they glad because At rest and quiet now they be So to the heaven he then brings Which they desire to see Oh that men to the Lord would give

This for his goodness then And for his works of wonder And to the sons of men Now as we leave may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The love of God And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all Amen Amen Amen Amen