

The Righteous Will Live by Faith

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Preacher: Billy Nye

[0 : 00] I am really excited. Habakkuk is a, I'll let you have like 10 minutes to find it because it's a little one of the minor prophets stuck there in the middle, so keep turning. Habakkuk is a sober book. It's a surprising book. It's kind of a puzzling book. It requires some thought, but the payoff is awesome.

And I can't wait to go through step by step with you. Today is going to be sweet. And so let's begin. I bet some of you all can relate to something like this. One of the hardest questions I'm asked is a question that I'm asked probably several times a day.

Are you ready for it? Hey, how are you? Is that a hard question to answer sometimes? It is for me because normally we answer by saying, fine, good, because that's normal small talk.

But if you're an overly introspective person like me, then you might think, well, I'm not really doing that fine, so I should be honest. And then you're like, well, actually, I'm not really that fine. I really, I'm going through some rough stuff.

I had a rough week or whatever. So, but today I'm not going to be very nice to you because I'm going to ask you that question. You don't have to answer out loud, but I'm going to give you three options. A, B, or C. So you don't have to answer out loud. Just say it in your head.

[1 : 24] Pick between these three options, or you can go between the middle of two of them if you want to. So first option, if I ask you how are you, and you would say, A, I really am fine.

Like, life is good. I feel good. There's lots of good stuff going on. Fine. That's A. B is not fine, but eh. I'm all right. Not great. I'm kind of stressed out. My kids are going crazy.

Life is, work is hard. It's not terrible, but I could be better. You're eh. But maybe you're not A or B. Maybe you're C, and you're ouch. Maybe you're feeling the ouch of life.

Maybe you got, you're just feeling sad. Maybe you got, physically you don't feel great. Maybe you're dealing with some depression. Maybe some severe disappointment.

Well, I'm not sure where you're at right now. We probably cycle through these different experiences on a weekly basis, right?

[2 : 35] We're either at a fine or an eh or an ouch. Maybe on a weekly basis. Maybe on a daily basis we cycle through those three. But I want to ask the question, where's God in all that?

Where's God in how we're doing with life? The daily ins and outs. The hard circumstances, the eh circumstances, the good circumstances.

Where's God in all that? Sometimes if we're in the eh, and especially if we're in the ouch kind of times of our lives, or days, we might be tempted to ask the question, where is God in all this?

Does He care? Why isn't He making this better? Is it even fair that I'm going through this right now? Sometimes we voice these questions to Him. Sometimes we voice it to others.

Often times we go internal. I don't know about you, but this is what I do. Sometimes I go internal, and I get a little cynical. It might even be that it's a very small little voice in my head that when things aren't going the way I want them to go, I might tell myself, man, a guy might be there way up there, but he's pretty distant.

[3 : 53] And to be honest, for all practical purposes, you're on your own, Billy. You just got to muddle through this. You just got to do the best you can with what you got. God might be there, distant, but He isn't really looking out for you.

And you kind of need to look out for yourself. I don't know about you, but that's what I tend to do. Regardless of our responses, sometimes life just forces us into a situation where we have to reconcile two things.

We have to reconcile, especially if we're a believer in God. We have to reconcile the God that we know. The God that we know He's there. The God that we've been taught about. He's good.

He's faithful. He's just. He's loving. Sometimes we have to reconcile this God with our reality. The reality of disappointment.

The reality of unfulfilled desires. Unexpected outcomes. The reality of broken relationships. The reality of depression. The reality of wayward children.

[5 : 01] The reality of abusive parents. And we're all facing this at some point or another. The reality of sickness. Or disability. Or death.

That's why I'm really glad Habakkuk is in the Bible. Because Habakkuk was asking those questions too. And we get to ask those questions along with him. The book of Habakkuk was written for the express purpose of helping us to answer this question.

How do God's people respond when God brings circumstances that make him seem distant? Or maybe not even just.

Maybe not even loving. How do God's people respond when God brings circumstances into our lives that make God seem distant?

Or even just. Not unjust. Or maybe not even loving. So. If you're in Habakkuk. Hopefully you found it.

[6 : 05] Let's look at it. And just. Get a feel for what this book might have to offer us. If you look at it. Especially chapter 1. Into chapter 2. You might notice a couple of things.

First of all. You might notice that it's not a typical prophetic book. When you open to the prophetic books. Like Isaiah or Jeremiah. It's generally God speaking to his people through a prophet.

But this is different. This is God's prophet speaking to God about God's people. It's a little bit different. It's a conversational book. And I like this about Habakkuk.

Because I like to have conversations. I don't know about you. But this helps me. It helps me realize I can have a conversation with God. Just like Habakkuk is. And we can just jump right into relating to this.

So your Bible might have some headings. That say something like Habakkuk's complaint. The Lord's answer. Habakkuk's second complaint. The Lord's answer. Etc.

[7 : 03] Etc. So that's how the book of Habakkuk is kind of arranged. And so we're going to look at the first part of the conversation this morning. Next week we'll look at God's extended answer to Habakkuk.

And then the week after that is chapter 3 when Habakkuk responds back to God with a psalm-like prayer. But for right now, let's just jump in.

Raise your hand if you send text messages. Okay. If you send text messages, you're probably used to seeing a little bubble pop up with your text. Right?

Bloop. There's your thing. And then the other person's bubble. Bloop. And then your bubble. Bloop. Bloop. And then, okay. So that's what we're going to do. I'm going to give us little bloops. Little text messages that will kind of help us anchor to this passage.

And it'll give us a quick way to walk through it. There are four little messages. Bloop. Bloop. Bloop. Bloop. That we're going to look through. Habakkuk is going to ask a question.

[8 : 03] Bloop. God's going to answer. Bloop. Thanks for dealing with my sound effects. I appreciate it. Then Habakkuk is going to ask a second question. Bloop. And then God's going to respond.

Bloop. You guys got it. Well done. So, we're going to read the first four verses. And I'll give you the first message. Habakkuk's first question. Here we go.

The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw. Oh, Lord. How long shall I cry for help?

And you will not hear. Or cry to you, violence! And you will not save. Why do you make me see iniquity? And why do you idly look at wrong?

Destruction and violence are before me. Strife and contention arise. So, the law is paralyzed. And justice never goes forth.

[8 : 59] For the wicked surround the righteous. So, justice goes forth perverted. So, first, bloop.

Habakkuk says, God, how long until you make things right? How long until you make things right? From what we can tell in this text, there's a whole lot of bad stuff going on around Habakkuk.

And it seems like God's just letting it happen. The prophet's reality is remarkably inconsistent with the God that he knows. And it's affecting him very personally.

So, what was all this bad stuff? Well, basically, it's this. God's nation, Israel, specifically Judah, the southern kingdom, was falling apart at the seams.

This is God's holy people. The only nation in the ancient world that knew God. That God had revealed himself to. And they were completely ignoring him. And they were doing their own thing. [10:00] And it was a disaster. Verse 4 tells us that wicked people are surrounding the righteous people. We see that there's no justice in verse 4.

God's law is powerless, paralyzed. God's given the law, but the people are ignoring it. So, it's paralyzed. It can do nothing while the people are ignoring it. God's nation was running headlong away from him.

And it was full. This nation was full of evil. But it's not just that. It's not just that God's people were off the tracks. It's that Habakkuk has been asking God to make things right.

And it seems like he's been doing it for a while. And it seems like God is not doing anything. It seems like God is silent. It seems like he doesn't care. Look at verses 2 and 3.

How long shall I cry for help? And you will not hear. How long shall I cry to you violence? And you will not save. Don't you care that things are falling apart, God?

[11:01] Don't you care that this blatant evil is going on? And you're doing nothing? Don't you care that this is going on? Whoever Habakkuk was, we know he was a prophet.

But we also know he really cared about righteousness. And he really cared about truth. And he cared about justice. And he saw that all around him there was perverted justice. Bribes were going on.

Idolatry. Godlessness and wickedness. If you flip back to the story of Israel in 2 Kings or in 2 Chronicles, you get a picture of what that looked like.

It was blatant evil. Again and again, generation after generation. And it was coming to a head. Sin and sin's effects were all around Habakkuk. And he was torn up about it.

And it seemed that God was doing nothing. Anybody ever been there? Felt like stuff was falling apart? God was doing nothing?

[11:57] Well, let's see how God answers. So the first bloop, God, when are you going to make things right? And then here's God's answer. Let's read it. And then I'll give you the bloop.

Let's read verses 5 through 11. Look among the nations and see. Wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.

For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation who march through the breadth of the earth to seize dwellings not their own. They are dreaded and fearsome.

Their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves. Their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar. They fly like an eagle, swift to devour. They all come for violence. All their faces are forward. They gather captives like sand. At kings, they scoff. At rulers, they laugh.

[12:57] They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it. Then they sweep by like the wind, and they go on. Guilty men whose own might is their God. So here's God's bloop.

God, how long till you make things right? Bloop. Not long. I'm going to make it right. I'm going to judge evil with evil.

Whew. God listens to his prophet, and God agrees with his prophet. God doesn't rebuke Habakkuk for his bold question, even though it was pretty honest and bold.

He tells his prophet exactly what he's going to do about all the wickedness of his people. He's going to make it right. He's going to address it head on. And the solution is grim. And it isn't far away.

How's he going to do it? What's he going to do? He's going to pour out his wrath. He is going to judge evil with evil. His people had turned against him, and now a final stroke of dreadful judgment after centuries of patience was going to come.

[14:08] It was the only thing that was going to get their attention and satisfy God's justice in one blow. The Chaldeans, who are these guys? Well, they're also known as the Babylonians. They were a brutal pagan nation.

They were the rising superpower of the East at the time. They were feared, and they were already on the move. They had already been building their empire with blistering speed.

But notice, notice verse 6. I am raising up the Chaldeans. This is not just ancient world politics.

This is God's sovereign hand in history, bringing judgment, raising up nations, putting down nations. God is the sovereign God of all. He is not a tame lion.

Within a short period of time, the Chaldeans would brutally invade Israel. They would destroy their cities, and they would cart the survivors off to Babylon in captivity. In case you didn't notice, let's

just check out the character of these guys.

[15:10] They're not very nice. Look at verse 6. It says, look at the words used to describe them. They're bitter. They're hasty. They seize dwellings not their own. They're greedy. They're dreaded. They're fearsome.

Verse 7. Defining their own justice and dignity. Verse 8. They're swift, and they're fierce. They're proud, and they're devouring. Verse 9.

They're violent. They're gathering captives like sand. They're quite powerful. Verse 10. They laugh and scoff at fortresses. Verse 11. This gets at the heart of it.

They are guilty men whose own might is their God. And by the way, we're going to look at what their guilt was from next week. So yikes. Any Israelite reading this, any Habakkuk seeing God's bloop, they would be horror-stricken.

That spelled disaster. This is their worst nightmare. Their nation is coming to an end at the hands of a vicious, godless nation.

[16:11] And this was not just a temporary punishment. This, like the book of Judges, that cycle of punishments that happened over and over. This is the full onslaught of God's judgment that he promised back in Deuteronomy 28 when he outlined the blessings and curses of the covenant where he said, Israel, if you obey my commands, it will be good for you in this land.

But if you disobey my commands and disregard what I say, these curses will come upon you, and you will be plucked out of your land. And that's what is going to be happening here. So Habakkuk responds to this.

And let's see what he says. We'll see his little bloop, our third bloop, after we read from verse 12 through chapter 2, verse 1.

Are you not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof.

You are who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong. Why do you idly look at traitors and are silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?

[17:23] You made mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler. He, that's the Babylonian guy, he brings them all up out with a hook. He drags them out with his net.

He gathers them in his dragnet, so he rejoices and is glad. Therefore, he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings for his dragnet. For by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich.

Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever? I will take my stand at the watch post and station myself on the tower and look out to see what he will say to me and what I will answer concerning my complaint.

So here's Habakkuk's bloop in response. It's two parts. God, how can you use evil to accomplish your good purposes?

How can you use evil to accomplish your good purposes? And the second part, will there ever be an end to this evil?

[18:31] Will there ever be an end to this evil? Habakkuk sees what God's saying, and he is perplexed.

He knows that God is pure and holy. Look at verse 13. You who are of pure eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and are silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?

He's basically saying, God, don't you see how evil these Babylonians are? They go and they grab your image bearers out of the sea.

They're like a fisherman who just fishes for sport, doesn't even eat the fish, just tosses them in a trash can after he plucks them out. He just likes to be violent for violence's sake. And this guy, he likes to just keep on doing this destruction forever.

He's greedy, he's as fat as Jabba the Hutt, and he doesn't care. He just keeps going. He just likes to watch the forest burn. He's like Joker and Batman. He's such a bad dude.

[19:39] Why are you going to let him take us out? I mean, yeah, we're bad, but he's worse. Why don't you take him out first? You can't see how God can use this evil to accomplish his good purposes of bringing justice to the nation of Israel.

I imagine some of us have asked this question too. How can God use evil to accomplish his good purposes? Isn't he just? Isn't he loving? And is there ever going to be an end to all this?

But before we move on, did you notice how Isaiah started in verse 12? Look back to verse 12 with me. He's upset. He's confused. He's perplexed. But he's upset and confused for a reason. And it's a God-centered reason. Are you not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof.

So he's saying, God, I hear you. We need judgment. We need correction. But I know that you can't totally turn your back on your people. We shall not die because you are from everlasting, and the one who is from everlasting doesn't give up on his promises.

[20 : 57] You see, Habakkuk knew his Bible. He knew that God's covenant promises that he had made over millennia, they were going to still come true, even in the face of all of things coming undone.

He knew that God had promised to do good to his people and to redeem a fallen humanity, and God couldn't go back on his word. He couldn't do it. And he also knew that this God, not just on a whole nation of Israel, God's people basis, but on a personal basis.

He said, God, you're my God. You've made certain promises to me through your covenant of grace, and I know you can't go back on them. You are my God. You are from everlasting.

I trust in you that even though you are doing things that I don't understand right now, that you are still good, and you can't go back on your word. So Habakkuk asked God some hard questions here, but he does so faith-filled.

He does so expectant that God will keep his promises, dependent and trusting. Habakkuk trusts God that he'll make it right, that he'll bring about some good, but he just can't see how God can use this evil and whether God's going to ever put an end to it.

[22 : 09] So now Habakkuk has asked the question. So in chapter 2, verse 1, he gets up into a wash tower, and he waits to see what God's going to say because he feels like he might have crossed a line.

He's questioning the Almighty. But he's doing so in a faith-filled way, and so God's comeback is very interesting. So let's see.

Does God answer? Yes, he does. Let me read chapter 2, verse 2 through verse 4. Behold, his soul is puffed up.

That's referring back to the Babylonian in chapter 1. It is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith. So what is the final bloop?

God, how can you use evil for your good purposes? Is there ever going to be an end to this evil? And what does God say?

[23 : 36] I will give life to all who trust in me, even in the midst of judgment. I will give life to all who trust in me, even in the midst of judgment.

Instead of rebuking Habakkuk, God answers his prophet gently. Isn't that cool? Bold questions, yet faith-filled, are met with a gentle answer. God has pretty thick skin.

He can handle our questions. He has broad shoulders. So instead of a rebuke, God gives the prophet a vision to write down. We'll learn more about that vision next week.

But now, right before he gives the particulars of that vision, he gives Habakkuk a massive promise. I will give life to those who confidently trust in me, even in the midst of judgment.

Verse 4, But the righteous will live. How will they live and not die? God just said that death and destruction is on its way in the form of judgment.

[24 : 44] How are they going to live and not die? By their faith. God says, Those who trust in me will live.

They'll survive the judgment to come. They're going to ride the wave of my wrath. They're going to be sustained by trusting in me. They will come out of the judgment unharmed.

And by the way, God was faithful to this promise in history. A remnant, a small remnant, did survive the evil invasion of the Babylonians. They were carted off for 70 years.

And they did wind up coming back, they and their descendants. And they rebuilt Jerusalem. And they got their civilization going again by God's grace. You can read about it in the book of Ezra and Nehemiah.

But you might be saying, Billy, wait a minute. Sorry. You started talking to us about how we were feeling. And our eh and our ouch.

[25 : 44] And where was God and all that. I don't have Babylonians breathing down my neck. This is the 21st century. All that nasty armies coming stuff.

That's all gone and in the past. Right? I mean, I'm just trying to get through the rough patches of 21st century life. What does that have to do with me? Good question. Thanks for asking.

Let me answer that question by putting Habakkuk's questions in our own mouths. God, how long until you make things right? I'm so tired of seeing all this bad stuff all around me.

I'm so tired of being weighted down by my own sin. I'm so tired of being sinned against by this person or these people. I'm so enraged at the brokenness I see around me in my family, in my neighborhood, in my country, in the world, myself.

I'm just done with this disappointing world, God. Aren't you going to do something about it?

Anybody ask questions like that? And then here's Habakkuk's second question.

[26 : 54] Let's put it in our mouths. God, how can these bad things accomplish your good purposes? Are you just going to let this bad stuff keep happening? How are you going to redeem it?

Is there going to be an end to it someday? I imagine we have all asked these questions. Maybe not in so many words, but we've all felt the pinch of living in a world where evil just keeps happening.

Happening to you. Happening around you. Happening in you. Happening through you. So what's God's bloop? What's his responses to these questions of ours?

He tells us very clearly. Yes, I am going to do something about it. In fact, I've already started doing something about it. And one day I will bring full and complete justice through judgment.

Just like in Habakkuk's day. The answer is still the same for us. You see, just as Israel's sin demanded God's justice, God's judgment, the sin of our day, our sin, yours and mine, also requires justice and judgment.

[28 : 03] Part of the judgment is living in a world that is broken and cursed. When we told God back in the garden through our ancestors and we ourselves tell God, I want things my way, not your way.

He said, okay, have it your way. And he gave us what we wanted. A world without him. A cursed world that mirrors our own broken relationship with our good creator and king.

We live in a world where there is so much evil because we have turned away from the God of all goodness. But that's not all.

We do, that's part of the judgment is living here in this broken world. But the evil that we experience now in this broken world is meant to get us to ask questions to God like Habakkuk did.

And God has been very kind to warn us like he did Habakkuk that there is a final judgment coming. A judgment much like the judgment he sent on Israel through the Babylonians.

[29 : 08] Swift, devastating, and just. God will use evil to judge evil. One day, and it may be very soon, God will accomplish his good justice through terrible judgment.

Because it's what our sin deserves. We know this is not the last word, but please just hang out there for a second, okay? Please listen to this.

Whether you're a Christian or you're not a Christian. There's good news that's coming. And bad news is never the last word. But don't let that bad news slip in one ear and out the other without letting it stay for a minute and making you a little bit uncomfortable.

Even if you are a believer and you know you're saved from the wrath to come, let it stick for a second. Your sin and my sin is deserving of a judgment like the judgment that Israel was going to receive, only far worse.

This is a physical judgment. Ours is an eternal judgment. Ours is an eternal judgment. Ours is an eternal judgment. Ours is an eternal judgment. Ours is an eternal judgment. If you have not recognized your part in this evil world before your maker and judge, please know that just as the Israelites were in extreme danger, we are too.

[30 : 25] It doesn't seem like it on beautiful spring and summer days. But it's true. The sadness and disappointment and evil that you experience in this life is just a drop in the ocean of sadness and disappointment and misery that you will experience through eternal separation from God.

Verse 4 warned us. Verse 4 warned us. Don't let your soul be puffed up in pride. But instead, humble yourself before the God who is fierce in justice but tender in mercy.

And on that note, we know this is not the last thing that God said in this passage to us. There's something else that God wants to tell us.

It's this. I will give life to all who trust in me even in the midst of judgment. The righteous shall live.

How? By their faith. The righteous will survive the judgment by trusting in God. Did you know that this verse is quoted three times in the New Testament?

[31 : 37] Romans 1, Galatians 3, and Hebrews 10. Check them out when you go home this afternoon. Did you know that this verse is basically the thesis statement?

The entire theme, the book of Romans can be summed up in this one verse. The righteous shall live by his faith. Why?

How is that possible? How does that have to do with us? Because the God who pours out judgment on the guilty is also the God who poured out judgment on his innocent son on behalf of the guilty. God judges justly, but he also saves mightily. And he saves by pouring out his wrath on the innocent son of God who substituted himself for us so that we might become righteous and live by putting our faith in him.

He gives life to all those who trust in God the son who live by faith in his perfect sacrifice for sin who have become righteous through his righteousness, not through our own.

[32 : 44] And the beautiful thing is it's not just that, right? Just that, being saved from eternal judgment. It's not just that. Part of that package is that he gives eternal life by empowering us to live lives now.

Live lives that are full of deep, warm trust in our Father as we pass even through the valley of the shadow of death.

Even as we experience the evil of this world that we're walking in right now, sadness and disappointment and stress, frustration, even sickness and death.

We are able to live not only through the eternal judgment that he has put on Jesus. We're able to live because of that.

We are now able, empowered by his spirit, to trust him that he's going to turn that evil into good for us. Romans 8.28 is true.

[33 : 48] All things, good and evil, work together for our good as we put our trust in him. And so, even as we walk through this hard, difficult world and we experience the prickliness of the judgment of living in a cursed world, God turns those judgments into blessings like we were singing about earlier.

God turns those deserts into springs of water. God turns those deserts into hell. God turns those deserts into hell. Just like Joseph's brothers that Ben told us about earlier, his brothers intended that for evil, but God turned that evil, and not just turned it, but he meant it for good.

We know that we can have life both now and forever. So, how do God's people respond? When God puts circumstances that are hard and that make him seem far away, how do we respond to that?

God's answer for us is clear here in this first part of Habakkuk. We are to respond by maintaining honest and unwavering faith. So, how do we do that?

Let's conclude with just three points of application. First, and most importantly, as you find yourself in hard, maybe even unfair circumstances, I want to encourage you to dwell on the unfairness of the gospel.

[35 : 19] Jesus asked the same question we did. Why have you forsaken me? Only his why was far more painful and undeserved than our why.

He took your judgment on himself. It was far worse than the Babylonian invasion. It was so unfair. The cross is so unfair.

The innocent one punished for the guilty. But we know that it was done out of love for the guilty like us. And so, as you experience and walk through the prickly, hard stuff of this life that causes pain, and we want to say, why?

Cry, why? But cry it with Jesus. Why have you forsaken me? Oh, yes, that's right. You forsook your own son for my sake.

That makes me know that you're intending these hard circumstances for my good. Help me to see it. Secondly, on the same nine, maintain warm and persistent trust in a heavenly father who cares for you.

[36 : 34] God tells us that he is near to those who call upon him in truth. So, as 1 Peter 5, 7 tells us, cast your anxieties on him because he cares for you.

You know that he cares for you because he has given you life as you've trusted in him. So, how do you do that? Let me encourage you. Sometimes our prayer lives are cold.

Sometimes they are not warm. But that way to maintain trust is through prayer. And that comes by remembering that you have a heavenly father who cares for you in the midst of your trouble. He is the God who is your God. And lastly, on the line of prayer, model the honest confidence of Habakkuk's prayers.

Habakkuk complained to God. He asked some hard questions of God. He never questioned God's character, accused him of wrongdoing, but he asked some hard questions.

[37 : 40] And he asked them because on the basis of a personal relationship. My God. My Holy One. The Sovereign Lord of History is also your God and he has broad shoulders.

He can listen to your problems and he wants you to come to him. So, let prayers like Habakkuk's, honest, warm, arise from your heart and your soul. Let God bear the brunt of your grief and your sorrow and your pain.

He's big enough to handle it. He is our rock. He is from everlasting. He is our Holy One. Let me pray. Let me pray. We thank you, God, that you are from everlasting and that you give life to those who confidently trust in you.

You steer us through the judgment, Father, by putting the judgment on Jesus for us. Thank you, God, for sparing us. Father, I pray for those in this room who have not come to Jesus by faith and asked to be spared the judgment.

I pray, God, that you would warm their hearts to you. I pray, Father, for those who have, that you would remind them of the goodness of grace.

[38 : 56] Father, would you cause our church to be a church that calls out to you in the midst of our pain. And I pray that you would guide us, give us life as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen.