

Introducing Elisha and The God-who does not give up

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[0 : 00] Well friends, I'm very grateful to be with you and what a beautiful place this is. I've never been here before. I mean, I've been around Lake Macquarie before, but I haven't been to this particular spot.

It really is lovely, isn't it? I'm looking forward to seeing it in the morning. And congratulations on getting here. It's very difficult on a Friday afternoon, Friday evening to get to places in particular.

Congratulations to anyone who's come with children. I always admire very much parents with young kids who manage to get away to weekends like this.

It's really, really hard work. You probably won't get any sleep tonight if you're in that category. They'll sleep tomorrow night. They'll be absolutely exhausted. But well done for coming because it really is worthwhile and a great contribution to everyone else that you make the effort to be here.

I'm sure that a number of people in that category will have understandably decided to come tomorrow. They're the wimps, of course. But that's understandable.

[1 : 04] We look forward to welcoming them. Friends, this weekend I'm doing something I haven't done before and I warn you of that. I'm not sure it's going to work all that well.

So you're the guinea pigs. I want to look with you a little bit at this extraordinary, extraordinary man in the pages of the Bible by the name of Elisha.

We'll only be having some glimpses. And particularly tonight I'm going to be just really talking around introducing the subject, looking at why we're looking at this subject, trying to set some sort of context for it.

And we will before we get to the end, at least that's my plan, we will actually meet Elisha briefly tonight. And then we'll be dipping into just a few little points in his life.

The story is a big story, a really, really important story for reasons that I hope will become clear. But it's a strange thing to be doing.

[2 : 13] Elisha lived round about 850 years before the birth of Jesus. So we're going back a long, long way. He was living in Israel, that part of the world that always seems to be turbulent.

And it was turbulent in his days. But you could be forgiven if you start wondering, come on, of all the things we could be doing this weekend, of all the things we could be thinking about in our troubled world, if all the things we could be putting our minds to, you're going to take us back 2,000 plus 850 years to look at a man way back then?

Yes, that's what we're going to do. And I hope that you will see that it really is a very, very important thing that we're doing. So before we introduce him, I want to spend a few minutes thinking about why we're doing this.

The Bible is remarkable. Now I think if you're a Christian person you know that.

But I wonder whether we appreciate just how remarkable. I've been reminded recently of the dimensions of how remarkable the Bible is. I've been reading what I think is quite an important new book by a highly respected historian by the name of Tom Holland.

[3 : 40] He's not a Christian believer. That's important to remember. He's not a Christian believer. But he demonstrates in this major book, it's a big book, and it's been very widely read and it's very widely respected.

And he demonstrates that it was the Bible that introduced to the world ideas like human rights, equality, freedom, tolerance, and quite a number of other really important values that are recognised and valued by almost everyone in a country like Australia.

We have debates around them, of course. But there are not that many people in Australia who want to dismiss those ideas as not valuable ideas.

And what he demonstrates is that apart from the influence of the Bible, societies and cultures have not developed those important concepts.

And he has come to understand that almost everything that he loves in today's world, although he himself is not a Christian believer, has come from the influence of the Bible.

[5 : 02] He has this really intriguing question. He asks, this is one of many questions. He asks, how did the human race ever learn, listen to this one, how did the human race ever learn that it is more noble to suffer than to inflict suffering?

Now, I think if you talk to almost anyone in Australia today, they'd agree with that proposition as a generalisation. Okay? That it's more noble to suffer than to inflict suffering.

Tom Holland points out that no ancient society believed that. And it was the suffering of Jesus on the cross and the impact of the gospel message about the death of Jesus on the world where that message has gone that taught us, that was unheard of in the world before.

Or in the world uninfluenced by Jesus, that is, by the Bible. I found the Tom Holland story quite fascinating.

I still can't quite work out why he isn't a Christian, but he's not. And he's quite emphatic that he's not. That's another story. But he's a man who, in his youth, in his childhood, did go to Sunday school and learnt the Sunday school stories.

[6 : 30] And he tells the story of how, in those days, he found that he was much more interested by all the bad people in the Bible. He was fascinated by the Egyptians and the Romans and the Babylonians and the Assyrians.

And he grew up to become a historical scholar. And he's written major books, major scholarly books on those groups of people. But he came to a point about something like 15, 20 years ago, when he said, I'm fascinated by the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Egyptians and the Romans, but I don't love them.

I love the culture that I have been brought up in, and I love lots of things about it, but I don't love any of these cultures. And so he set out on a scholarly exercise, and it took about 15 years, and only last year this book was published, where he came to the conclusion, and it's being widely accepted, it is being debated, but it's being widely accepted.

I'm quite sure he's right. He's right on the money and the conclusions he's come to. But he's come to the conclusion that all of those things that he loves, like respect for human rights, like the equality of human beings, like it's more noble to suffer than to inflict suffering, the things that he sees as quite distinctive have all come from the Bible.

However, it's more than that. And I'm not sure that Tom Holland actually grasps this bit. Because the Bible has had this powerful impact on the world, and so much of the world, as a side effect of its main purpose.

[8 : 26] See, the Bible's own claim is that in this book, God himself addresses the human race. That's what the Bible claims. It is not primarily a book about human rights, and equality, and freedom, and tolerance, and suffering, and so on.

It's a book about the God who created all things, and who has done so purposefully, and is committed to bringing his good purposes for all things to completion.

The Bible tells us the story that makes sense of the world and of human life. True sense. As we read and learn from the Bible, we're learning from God himself, from our Creator.

The Bible is what God wants humans to know, as they live the lives that he has given them in the world that he has made.

If that's what the Bible is, and Tom Holland doesn't get this, but if that's what the Bible is, it's no surprise that it's had a huge impact, and that the impact has been so very, very largely for good, indisputably for good, on the societies and cultures into which the Bible has come, and been heard, and had an impact.

[9 : 50] But that is a side effect of the purpose of the Bible, which is summed up in the words, I'll just take the words of 2 Timothy 3, verse 15, if you're taking notes, which describes the Bible like this, the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Now friends, that's what God wants us to know. That's how our lives connect to God's purpose for the whole of his creation.

As we listen to the Bible, any and every part of the Bible, we can learn lots of things. We can learn about human rights and equality and freedom and so on.

That's fine. But God's purpose for the Bible, that he has given us, is that we will be drawn to Jesus Christ, and that we'll learn to trust him, and so be saved.

Now let's remember that, as we travel back in time, to the 850s BC, to meet the remarkable man whose story we'll be glancing at together.

[11 : 08] We'll just be dipping into his story. We'll start in a few moments. We're going to leave an awful lot of his story untouched, but that's all right.

That's the limited time we have. The man's name, as I've mentioned, is Elisha, and his story starts in the passage that was read to us a few moments ago at the end of 1 Kings 19.

His story continues into the book of 2 Kings, and since my guess is that these books, 1 and 2 Kings, are not exactly the most familiar books in the Bible, I want to take a few moments now to sketch what 1 and 2 Kings are about.

Okay, we're doing a lot of introductory work tonight. Sorry we're doing that on a Friday night when everybody's a bit weary, but just see if you can bear with me. Stand up and walk around if it helps, whatever you want to do.

But I want to sketch what these books of 1 and 2 Kings are about, and we're going to think, well, what's the significance of the story they tell before we come back and look at this particular character?

[12 : 15] 1 Kings, and the notes might help you just to follow what I'm saying here. 1 Kings begins with who? Tell me who's at the beginning of 1 Kings.

Who's the big guy at the beginning of 1 Kings? Solomon, yes. Solomon. Solomon, the son of? The great King David.

And at the beginning of 1 Kings, Solomon becomes king. King of God's Old Testament people, Israel. And what a king he was. I don't know whether you've read the story of Solomon's kingdom recently.

I have. You may remember that God had made a promise to David, Solomon's father, that a son of David would one day reign over a kingdom that would never end.

That promise is back in 2 Samuel chapter 7. Christians know that the son of David who fulfills that promise really is Jesus. But long, long before Jesus, there was David's son Solomon.

[13 : 20] And for a short time, it would have been possible to think that Solomon's kingdom was the promised kingdom because it was so good. It was a kingdom of peace.

There was no war. There was no conflict. There were no external threats. It was a kingdom of prosperity. The economy went really, really well in King Solomon's kingdom.

And Solomon himself was a good king. A wise king. And I reckon, if you'd been there, then, you may well have thought, this is it.

We've arrived. This is not only what God promised David, it's what God promised Abraham centuries earlier again. That the descendants of Abraham would enjoy God's blessing and they would be a blessing to the world.

That's what Solomon's kingdom felt like. It felt like we'd arrived. It was so, so good. One of the things that Solomon did, perhaps the most important thing he did, was to build a magnificent building in Jerusalem.

[14 : 33] We often call it the temple. The Bible doesn't actually call it the temple. Sorry, in 1 and 2 Kings, it's not called the temple. It's called the house for the name of the Lord. We're not going into any more details of Solomon here, but life in Solomon's kingdom could be summed up by the words of 1 Kings 4, verse 20.

It goes like this, Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and they drank and they were happy. Good days. No bushfires.

No coronavirus. None of the troubles of our world. It was a great, great time. It was, in fact, an anticipation, a kind of foretaste, if you like, a kind of picture of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We can now see that looking back. The kingdom that Jesus will finally bring. And as such, Solomon's kingdom was the high point of the whole Old Testament story.

But, as I'm sure you know, Solomon's kingdom did not last. Indeed, one of the lessons of the story of Solomon's kingdom is this, that Solomon, great and good though he was, was not great or good enough.

[16 : 01] And indeed, in his old age, he lost the plot badly. He got involved with a whole lot of foreign women who, we're told in 1 Kings chapter 11, turned away his heart after other gods and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God.

And he introduced the worship of these other gods into Israel. And with them, the corruption that always goes with having gods that are not God.

And to cut a long story short, Solomon's great kingdom collapsed. After he died, it split into two inferior kingdoms. That's 1 Kings chapter 12.

In the north, was the kingdom that retained the name Israel. To the south, there was a smaller kingdom that was known as Judah. Judah had Jerusalem.

Judah had the house for the name of the Lord that Solomon had built. The throne in Judah was passed on generation after generation to descendants of David and Solomon.

[17 : 10] But in Israel, the northern bit, the northern breakaway kingdom, the throne kept changing hands, very often by an assassination or a coup of some kind.

The kings in the north consistently adopted and maintained policies to keep their people away from Jerusalem, away from the house for the name of the Lord, away from the son of David who was reigning down there, away from any possibility of them hearing the promises that God had made to his people, promises that they may well hear if they went to Jerusalem.

Well, eventually, a king came to power in the north who was the worst king Israel had ever known.

He was the seventh king up there in the north in the first 50 years of the breakaway kingdom of Israel and his name was Ahab.

He married a foreign pagan wife. His name has become quite famous. She was Queen Jezebel. Jezebel was a fanatical worshipper of the pagan god Baal.

[18 : 28] All this is at the end of 1 Kings chapter 16. And these were very dark days in Israel.

Jezebel, I tell you, she was one powerful lady. Ahab was weak, really. And the worship of Baal, which Jezebel was so keen on, was pushed and promoted while the worshippers of the Lord were persecuted.

Many of them, in fact, were killed. Well, it's in these days, King Ahab, Queen Jezebel, it's in these days that an utterly extraordinary man suddenly appears in the story.

You're not given much background. He just sort of appears. His name was Elijah. Not Elisha yet. Elijah. And the meaning of Elijah's name is my God is Yahweh.

Are you familiar with Yahweh? Yahweh is the name of God in the Old Testament. It's represented in our Bibles when they put L-O-R-D in capital letters.

[19 : 36] Behind that is the Hebrew name Yahweh. My name is Yahweh. My name is the Lord. I sort of imagine Elijah coming in.

You've got to remember that in the Hebrew language, the names, the meanings of names are very obvious. If you're a speaker of the language. And so Elijah would have come in and said, Hello, Your Majesty.

My God is Yahweh. He was sort of introducing himself, but he was making a statement at the same time. And Elijah, giant of a man that he was, made a huge impact on Ahab and on the people of the Northern Kingdom.

I'm sure you can remember the most famous event in which that happened. That was on Mount Carmel when Elijah confronted the 450 prophets of Baal and demonstrated who really is God in no uncertain terms.

That's 1 Kings chapter 18. Well, it was not long after that spectacular event that Elisha enters the story. We're going to come back to that moment very shortly.

[20 : 46] 1 Kings ends, however, with the death of Ahab and his son Ahaziah comes to the throne in Israel.

But Ahaziah was no better than his dad. And you turn the page and you come to 2 Kings. Ahaziah's still on the throne, at least for the first chapter. Elijah's still around, but not for long.

And when Elijah departs from this world in a rather unusual way in 2 Kings chapter 2, which we'll look at tomorrow morning, Elisha's story begins in earnest and continues through to 2 Kings chapter 13.

And then the rest of 2 Kings, I can sum up fairly quickly, the rest of 2 Kings tells the story of the continued decline of that northern kingdom until eventually it was just utterly destroyed and wiped off the face of the earth by the Assyrians.

That's 2 Kings 17. The year is about 722 BC by now. And then we're told for the rest of the book how the southern kingdom of Judah, you don't hear all that much about the southern kingdom of Judah up to this point, but now we turn our attention to the southern kingdom of Judah.

[22 : 10] It followed the ways that had been introduced in Israel in the north. And by the end of 2 Kings, the surviving inhabitants of Judah have been taken off into exile by the Babylonians to Babylonia, while the city of Jerusalem and the house for the name of the Lord were flattened, destroyed, demolished.

The story of 2 Kings is not a happy one. Now, I hope you're still awake. I can see some of you still are.

I won't worry about those of you who dropped off. I've sketched this rather long story because we need to see Elisha's story in its historical context. But we do need to ask the question, what is this story about?

What is this history of this people of Israel really about? What are we meant to learn from this sad story of a failed state so long ago and so far away?

It was so wonderful at the beginning in Solomon's day and gradually it just crumpled away and in the end death and destruction everywhere.

[23 : 33] Well, it seems to me that as we follow the decline and fall of this people, as they and their kings turned their backs on the God who had given them so much, it is frankly depressing.

I find 2 Kings a terribly depressing book. I'm supposed to be doing some work on the book of 2 Kings and I've started it. It's hard to write a little commentary on the book of 2 Kings and I get so depressed every time I open it.

I haven't written anything for months. It's a very depressing book so some of you can come and encourage me and tell me it's not all that bad. But I think what is particularly depressing about the book of 2 Kings is that Israel and Judah are so like the world in which we live.

Israel's miserable history, Judah's miserable history is too much like the miserable history of our world. That's why when you get into it and start to take it seriously I think it really is so depressing.

The story of Israel, and I say Israel because originally the whole nation is Israel and then you've got the two nations Israel and Judah but by Israel I mean the whole lot. The story of Israel is a kind of small scale version of the story of our world.

[25 : 02] If you think about it, think of Solomon's kingdom there and how it all ended up. God gave us so much.

The beginning of the world as the Bible presents it to us was sort of like Solomon's kingdom and indeed as you read through 1 Kings 1 to 11 and if you do that in your own time over the coming weeks you might like to look out for this.

You hear all sorts of echoes and reminders of Genesis 1 and 2 and as we follow the kings and the people turning away from God refusing to live lives of thankfulness to God refusing to trust God refusing to obey God it's sort of like a rerun of the Genesis 3 story and so it is like the world we now find ourselves in and as Israel and Judah collapse we're quite right to see a reflection like in a mirror of the disintegration of our world at so many levels and in so many ways.

The history of Israel in the pages of the Old Testament is like a kind of representation in miniature of the history of the world. That's a cheery thought isn't it for this time on a Friday night?

But the history of Israel in 1 and 2 Kings raises the question that the history of our world raises namely what hope is there?

[26 : 46] I don't know whether you think about these sort of things seriously most of us do at certain times of life and I think I've got to a stage of life where I find myself thinking about these things a lot.

You could very easily think, couldn't you? as you look at the world we're in at the moment you could very easily think that God has given up on our world and I'll tell you what, you could easily think that he was fully justified in doing so.

a friend of mine a Christian leader up in New England I'll leave his name out because when I'm telling a story about him it's a good story but I was driving with him round Armidale way at one stage and he just turned to me and said you know I wouldn't be surprised if God never sent rain on this land again.

he was thinking just of the godlessness of Australia and the well it's not too much to say is it the hatred of Christianity that is starting to permeate our public life that's not true of every individual of course it's not but of the national life the public life you could easily think couldn't you that if God has given up on us he'd be justified in doing so how we humans have messed up God's good world it's quite difficult if you take seriously the state of the world at the moment and the state of how things are going it's so difficult to imagine the story of our world ending well don't you think in our own day we find ourselves in a world that is busy at its own destruction it seems clear to me in so many ways at so many levels and so many issues and you say what hope is there we're so determined to destroy ourselves we're so determined to abandon God what hope is there and as you read one and two kings you could very easily think that God had given up on Israel look what happened that story didn't end well by the time you get to the end of two kings you could sigh and say well what a sad sad story it ended so badly except for one thing except for one thing if you had been paying careful attention as you read the history of Israel through one and two kings and I'm hoping you'll get inspired to read the story of one and two kings all the way through over the coming weeks and months and when you get to two kings get in touch with me and tell me why it's not all that depressing after all but if you do read carefully through you will notice that there are some very clear indications that God does not give up that's not what the God who really is there is like he doesn't give up yes the history of Israel is terrible and tragic like the history of our world but it is not hopeless well friends

I think that's a good point at which we introduce Elisha can you cope with just a few more minutes yeah you're not allowed to say no are you you're getting into trouble please turn to one kings 19 I said we're only going to get a quick glimpse of him to start with tonight I'm going to leave you again you might like to do this tonight before you go to sleep if you're able to stay awake for long enough or tomorrow morning or something to read the dramatic story of one kings 18 the Mount Carmel story about Elijah and his momentous confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel that was a moment of hope that really was a moment of hope even King Ahab apparently joined the people and at that moment at least no it didn't last but at that moment they turned back to the Lord with with a bit of prompting from Elijah and the climax of the story in one kings 18 we see the people falling on their faces and crying out the

[31 : 23] Lord he is God the Lord he is God that's chapter 18 verse 39 but that didn't last and in one kings 19 Queen Jezebel laughed out and threatened to kill Elijah again I'll lead you to read the story of Elijah's escape through the first part of one kings 19 suffice to say that Elijah fled for his life and he fled a long long long way south far out beyond Jezebel's reach and he came to a mountain a famous mountain has two names Mount Horeb or Mount Sinai same mountain two names you remember the story of Mount Sinai and there at Mount Sinai Mount Horeb he had a remarkable encounter with God in which to cut long story short God told Elijah to get back to work because God had not given up God had not given up on Israel even if Elijah thought he had and this is what

God said to Elijah I'm picking it up at chapter 19 verse 15 the Lord said to him go Elijah return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus and when you arrive you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall appoint to be king over Israel and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Mahola you shall anoint to be prophet in your place and the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him we're not going to pause on the details here just notice that Elisha was to be Elijah's successor you will have noticed and you probably noticed from Sunday school days that the names are strikingly similar

Elijah and Elisha said earlier that in Hebrew names very often almost always actually have meanings the Eli bit Eli and you come across that E-L-I in a number of names that means my God L is the word for God the I is the word for my my God the JAR bit in Elijah is that name Yahweh so my God is Yahweh is Elijah's name which summed up his message Ahab and Jezebel their God is Baal and they were confronted with a man called my God is Yahweh the SHA in Elisha means saves so my God is Yahweh is going to have a successor called my God saves see already just a little bit of a hint God does not give up my God is Yahweh my God saves let's see what happened when Elijah found

Elisha very quickly verse 19 so 1 Kings 19 verse 19 so he that's Elijah I'm reading from the ESV departed from there that was way down south at Mount Sinai Mount Horeb way outside the borders of Israel and he found Elisha the son of Shaphat he'd gone all the way back to Ahab's territory in a farming town in the Jordan Valley Elisha who was ploughing with 12 yoke of oxen in front of him and he was with the 12th it sounds as though Elisha was from a rather well-to-do farming family and Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him this was Elijah's hairy cloak it was part of his rather well-known distinctive dress we'll hear more about that cloak but here Elijah threw his cloak onto the unsuspecting farm boy and Elijah said nothing but just kept walking verse 20 and he this is

Elisha left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said let me kiss my father and my mother and then I will follow you he'd got the message and his eagerness to follow Elijah is remarkable his request to kiss his mum and dad goodbye no coronavirus in those days he was allowed to kiss his mum and dad goodbye emphasises of course his readiness to leave home for who knows what and verse 20 Elijah said to him to Elisha go back again for what have I done to you it's a rather strange way of putting it but I think he's saying go and say your goodbyes but don't forget what I've just done to you which you've understood you've got it's significance verse 21 and he Elisha returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people and they ate and then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him try and imagine the scene it's described very briefly but we mustn't miss what was happening

[36 : 46] Elisha was putting on a farewell party for the people of his community and they ate the oxen there would be no going back to the ploughing you see you could call this a decisive break with his former life don't you think Elisha left everything he had known to follow Elijah and to be his off-sider and we know from what we read a few lines earlier that Elisha will become Elijah's successor there was something here more important than the farm there was something here for Elisha more important than the family there was something here more important than the community Elisha left everything he had known to follow Elijah finish off with two points first if we'd been reading the whole history and we'd been starting to get a bit depressed about how things were going to end in

Israel as Elijah had indeed been a little bit earlier can you see how the call of Elisha is a pretty sure sign that God had not given up God was still dealing with Israel God's word would still come to Israel God was still God in Israel my God saves will succeed my God is Yahweh and with Elisha leaving everything for who knows what don't you get the impression that whatever this is about it was more important than anything it sort of symbolically represented to us in Elisha walking away from everything he'd known in life to follow Elijah there is something very very important going on now we will follow Elisha and see a little bit of what happens but at this early stage we can see that it will be very important if you want to know and you want to see how

God had not given up on Israel watch Elisha second many years later there was a similar scene listen to this account of it from Matthew chapter 4 I think the reference is on your notes while walking by the sea of Galilee Jesus saw two brothers Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea for they were fishermen and he said to them follow me and I will make you fishers of men and immediately they left their nets and followed him and going on from there he saw two other brothers James the son of Zebedee and John his brother in the boat with Zebedee their father mending their nets and he called them and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him and this friends is the first of a number of places where we're going to see similarities between the life of Elisha and the story of

Jesus in the New Testament Gospels in this case Jesus was acting rather like Elijah he called Peter and Andrew and James and John in a way that reminds us of Elijah calling Elisha and here I just want to suggest that the parallel might get us thinking Peter Andrew James and John left everything they had known to follow Jesus this time it was fishing nets instead of oxen they left their father but it's a picture worth taking in something important was happening and if you like me are getting depressed about how things are going in the world look at Jesus and the call of these disciples God has not given up on his world what these men left everything for is more important than anything

God has not given up on his world just as he had not given up on Israel and if we want to see how God has not given up on the world we've got to watch Jesus and his disciples in an important way in Jesus God was doing again something that he'd done before in Elisha just go back to Elisha for one final moment in the pages that follow 1 Kings 19 right through to the end of the book of 1 Kings there are some pretty exciting stories involving Elijah and King Ahab Elisha is not mentioned again in the rest of 1 Kings but we can assume that he was there he was Elijah's assistant the next time we hear of

[42 : 09] Elisha is at the beginning of 2 Kings chapter 2 where Elijah's time on earth was coming to an end and the time for Elisha to fill Elijah's shoes so to speak or actually to fill his cloak is what he did had come now we are going to take up Elijah's story at that point next time would you join me as we just pray to conclude now dear God and Heavenly Father we thank you for these great figures of the past we thank you for the way in which you have worked through the centuries we thank you for the Old Testament history that prepares us for the coming of Jesus and gives us many insights into and understand and ways of understanding the extraordinary grace that you have shown us in Jesus we thank you tonight for this simple thought this simple truth but profound truth that you do not give up you do not give up you do not give up on

Israel you do not give up on your world and heavenly father as individuals it's wonderful for us to understand that you do not give up on us we pray this night that we be able to embrace that truth and understand it just a little bit so that we can be filled with hope hope in the God who does not give up we pray this in Jesus name Amen