

The Pattern of History

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[0 : 00] Father, thanks again that you continue to speak to us through your word and even these strange readings like we've had this morning. We do pray, Father, that you would help us to focus and help us to understand that we might be encouraged to keep living as your people in this world.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, at my old church, the youth group loved going ice skating. I think I've told you one story about that already where I went and I packed an extra pair of pants because I knew I was going to wet myself.

The ice, just to be clear. But there was another time after I'd fallen on the ice a few times, I realised I'm going to fall again and it hurts. So I thought this time I'm going to brace myself for impact.

The next time we went, I took a cushion and strapped it to my backside. So there it is there. And on the next slide, there I am skating along. And when I did fall on the next slide, thumbs up.

Did it work? Well, sort of. I still felt it, but it wasn't as bad. The point is, knowing what would come, I took measures to brace for impact with a cushion.

[1 : 14] Well, in today's chapter of Daniel, we meet, as I said, another weird and wonderful vision of Israel's future as God's people. And this vision was meant to help them brace for the impact of persecution that was going to come their way.

And not brace with a literal cushion, of course, but with knowledge, which would help them to persevere through it. And again, this is a timely topic. I mean, the whole book of Daniel seems to be rather timely.

After all, persecution of Christians is growing around the world. You've got places I've mentioned before, India, where they've recently changed more laws in more states, which make it illegal for Hindus to convert to Christianity.

There's changing laws in China. But even here in Australia, it seems to be growing. Just take our neighbours in New Zealand as well.

So I'm sure you've heard of the charity group Family First in New Zealand, which had its charity status stripped recently, simply because it held to the traditional view of marriage.

[2 : 23] And the charity's board said, and I quote, it was not deemed to be in the public's best interests. Traditional marriage, not in the public's best interests. Figure that one out.

Or a lady who appeared on an ad by the Australian Christian Lobby recently. She had threats against her. She's a GP. And she had people phoning her surgery and swearing down the phone at her, simply because she went on an ad which supported the traditional view of marriage.

In fact, there was a petition. I don't know if you heard, but there was a petition to get her deregistered as a doctor, even though her medical credentials had got nothing to do with her view on marriage. That petition was taken down last week.

But it got 5,000 signatures like that. Well, just two days ago, a church in Brisbane was holding meetings and protesters who were campaigning for the yes vote met outside and tried to push their way into the church.

It got to the point where the police had to be called two days ago. In fact, a number of church leaders, including myself, met with Kevin Andrews, our federal MP, about this postal vote.

[3 : 29] He's confirmed, by the way, that the unintended consequences of a yes vote are serious. He said that the people, you know, Ryan Smith, who put forward this, I think it was Mr. Smith, put forward this vote, he didn't mean for these other consequences to happen.

He doesn't think they will. But Kevin Andrews is saying, yeah, it's going to happen. He's in the thick of it, and he knows. And so he had a meeting with us to talk about this. But he had to change the venue at the last minute.

Again, because of this growing persecution. He said, he did point out, ironically, that those who vote no are actually abiding by the law because the law at present is marriage between a man and a woman.

So we're persecuted for upholding the law. It's ironic, isn't it? Now, of course, I could go on. It's not just marriage itself. It's also other topics.

So there's a social media push to deregister churches as non-profit organizations as well. I think the meme on Facebook is tax the church or something like that.

[4 : 34] I guess you can understand it at one level when some church leaders in the US, like Joel Osteen, for example, live in \$10.5 million mansions. You know, that's excessive. It's obscene.

But that's also the exception. The point is, there seems to be a growing tide of persecution against Christians around the world and even here in Australia. So what do we do? Do we, like some churches do, simply give up on God's word and go with the flow?

Do we do? There are church signs in the city that have done that. They've just given up on God's view of marriage and sexuality. Or do we seek to twist God's word like a lecturer from Melbourne's Trinity Bible College has done?

She's written an article on the ABC and basically said, oh, look, the Bible doesn't really say that. And she's trying to... Anyway, there's holes in her argument all over the place. But if we are not going to get rid of God's word, nor are we going to twist God's word, what are we going to do with this rising tide?

Well, let's have a look at the vision and see what it says about persecution of God's people in this world. So we're at point one in your outline, verse one in your Bibles. In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel, had a vision after the one that I had already appeared to me.

[5 : 51] Now, just pause here for a moment, verse one. Remember, Belshazzar is the arrogant king who oppressed God and had the writing on the wall back in chapter five. And so this vision has occurred back before chapter five of Daniel.

So we're seven years before chapter five. So it's out of chronological order. And notice it occurs during Belshazzar's reign, which links it with chapter seven.

So if you look at chapter seven, verse one, the first vision occurs in the first year of Belshazzar. And chapter eight, verse one, the second vision happens in the third year of Belshazzar.

So they happen, you know, only two years apart under the same king's reign. And so that kind of links them together. What's more, Daniel links the two visions together. He even says in verse one, I, Daniel, had a vision after the one in chapter seven that had already appeared to me.

Now, why notice this? Well, because it means, I think, we need to read this vision with last week's in mind. You see, last week's vision spoke in general terms and gave the big picture of history.

[7 : 02] And we saw different beasts rise and fall, which represented different kingdoms in the world, rising and falling. And those beasts could have represented any number of kingdoms in history.

They were unnamed, a very general kind of thing. But we also saw that God was still in control of them. And that despite some of these kingdoms opposing God and oppressing God's people, God's king, you know, the son of man who rode on the clouds.

Do you remember that? He rules and God's people would win. In other words, God's kingdom would triumph in the end. Well, this week we move from beasts that are not named to animals that are named.

We're moving from general kingdoms that could represent any number of kingdoms in history to particular kingdoms in history. We move from the big picture of history where God's kingdom triumphs to a particular point in history where God's people will be persecuted.

And it starts this vision with a ram. Do you see verse 2? In my vision, I saw myself in the citadel of Susa, in the province of Elam.

[8 : 14] In the vision, I was beside the Ulai Canal. I looked up and there before me was a ram with two horns standing beside the canal. And the horns were long. One of the horns was longer than the other, though it grew up later.

I watched the ram as it charged towards the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against it and none could rescue from its power. It did as it pleased and became great.

So in Daniel's vision, he's standing in the city of Susa, which is modern-day Iran. So on the next slide, I've got a map, I think, from Google Maps.

There's Iran. And Susa is actually in the modern-day city called Shush. It's a very quiet city, Shush. Sorry, I couldn't help myself. We've got some Iranians here.

I'm not even sure if I'm pronouncing it correctly, actually. But this city was where Susa was. And more to the point, it was the capital, the capital for the Persian Empire.

[9 : 16] And it's here that Daniel sees this ram. So given his location, we're already thinking that perhaps the ram represents Persia. And it does.

So if we kind of take a sneak peek at the interpretation over the page for a moment, just flick over the page. We'll do this just a couple of times. To verse number 20, towards the top of the page. Excuse me.

Verse number 20. It says, The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. We're told, which is great.

And we know from history that the Persian Empire was made up of two kingdoms, the Medes and the Persians. The Persians started off smaller, but they became the dominant kingdom.

Like the horn that started off small, but grew longer. Back in verse 3. In fact, the Persians became so dominant, it's why we just call it the Persian Empire. But notice, come back with me to verse 4.

[10 : 18] Notice in verse 4 that this ram is powerful. You see, it charges east, west. No animal could stand against it. And none could rescue from its power.

It's powerful. And no one can resist its power until that is the goat. So have a look at verse 5. As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between its eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground.

It came towards the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at it in great rage. I saw it attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering its two horns.

The ram was powerless to stand against it. And the goat knocked it to the ground and trampled on it. And none could rescue the ram from its power.

So here is the goat who now has greater power than the ram. And again, like last week, the horn of the goat represents a king.

[11 : 23] And back in verse 5, we're told that this big horn and goat moves so quickly across the whole earth, its feet don't even touch the ground. Kind of like in those cartoons, you know, the cartoons where the characters are moving so fast that they don't even touch the ground, you can't see their legs.

That kind of image. And then in verse 7, he attacks the ram who is now powerless. And so it's the goat who has all the power, it seems.

Although there's one who is more powerful than it. Do you see verse 8? The goat became very great, but at the height of its power, the large horn, the king, was broken off.

And in its place, four prominent horns grew up towards the four winds of heaven. See, at the height of its power, the big horn, the king, with all this power, is broken off.

But by whom? We're not told. The word power, though, comes up a lot in these verses, doesn't it? And it seems that there is someone even more powerful than the king of Greece.

[12 : 30] Because at the height of the king's power, this someone else can break him off. It can judge him. It can conquer him. Just like last week, where there was someone over the beast who caused them to stand on two feet, do you remember?

Or told them what to do? Or gave them authority to rule for a time? So, too, here, there is someone else who is even more powerful than this most powerful horn, this king.

I wonder who that someone could be. It's God, by the way. Just so you know. Well, while we're not explicitly told who that someone is, we are told who this goat is.

So, again, if we just jump ahead to the interpretation for a moment. So, just across the next column, verse 21. Verse 21. Towards the top of the page still. It says, The shaggy goat.

Kind of reminds me of Scooby-Doo. But the shaggy goat is the king of Greece. And the large horn between its eyes is the first king. The four horns that replace the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation.

[13 : 39] But will not have the same power. So, again, it's pretty clear the goat represents Greece. And the big horn is its first king, who was Alexander the Great.

On the next slide is a picture of one of his busts in the British Museum, one of his sculptures. And he conquered the known world with great speed. And his power was great.

In fact, Alexander never lost a battle. Can you imagine that? Never losing a battle. And he ruled the known world by the age of 32.

What have I been doing with my life? But at the height of his power, he did die. And it wasn't by another human. From history, we know he died from disease.

He was broken off, you see, by someone who was more powerful than him, God. You see, we are given hints here that despite all these kingdoms' power, there is one who is more powerful, God.

[14:44] And Alexander's kingdom was then taken over by four of his generals. I understand he had five generals, but one of them got bumped off. And the other four divided his kingdom rather unequally, actually. So on the next slide, we've got, I'm not sure if you can see the colours very well there, but the large yellowy kind of area in the middle and heading up towards the northwest there.

That kingdom was taken over by a general called Seleucid. And then beyond that, you've got a slightly green bit near the Black Sea. That bit was taken over by Lysimachus.

And then you've got to the pink bit at the top. That was Cassander. And then coming down to the bottom in Egypt, that was Ptolemies. So they were the four generals of Alexander.

That's what happened in history. His kingdom was divided between the four. And so that's the ram and the goat part of the vision. And that's how it's happened in history. It's been fulfilled.

But then the vision takes a turn for the worse. See, at the end of these generals' reign, there is another king who rises up from the solutions, which was the big yellow kingdom.

[15:53] Now, take a look at verse 9 in your Bibles. And let's meet this other king. Out of one of them, out of one of the generals' kingdoms, the four horns, came another horn, which started small, but grew in power to the south and to the east and towards the beautiful land, which was Israel.

The Old Testament describes Israel as a land flowing with milk and honey. And it grew until it reached the host of heaven. And it threw down some of the starry host to the earth and trampled on them.

It set itself up to be as great as the commander of the army of the Lord. It took away the daily sacrifice from the Lord, and his sanctuary was thrown down.

His temple or sanctuary was thrown down. Now, these verses are a little tricky to unpack, but the general thrust is clear. This king starts out small, verse 9, But he will grow in power such that, verse 11, he will set himself up to be as great as the commander of God's armies, which is actually God. But he will also seek to attack God. How? Well, verse 11, he will take away the daily sacrifice from God, and he will throw down God's sanctuary or temple.

[17:10] What's more, this king will trample God's people. So, in verse 10, you need to put your thinking caps on for a moment. He will grow and take on the starry host of heaven, throwing down some of them to the earth and trampling on them.

Now, the word host means army in the Old Testament. And so, starry host refers to God's angelic armies. Now, this king doesn't literally trample on angels.

Rather, the Bible seems to indicate that angels serve God's people in some way. And there's a couple of verses I could show you later. So, by trampling on God's people, it's as though he's trampling on God's armies, angelic armies.

That's the connection. In fact, in verses 12 and 13, the NIV talks about trampling the Lord's people, even though the word is literally army or host, because of that connection between God's people and his angels.

The point is, this little horn, this king, will set himself up against God, will attack God, and will trample God's people.

[18:22] Why? Well, verse 12, You see, it's because of rebellion.

Now, it's not clear whose rebellion, whether it refers to the rebellion of the nations around, or perhaps some of the Jews, God's people who rebellious.

Perhaps it's both. So, the picture we're given is God raising up this king, who was rebellious by nature, and using this king to judge the rebellious nations, and even some rebellious Jews around. Either way, though, God's temple and God's faithful people are going to be caught up in this judgment, such that they will be persecuted. They don't deserve the judgment, but they'll be caught up in it and be persecuted.

In fact, it says that they will be given over to this king. Now, immediately, we want to question God and ask, how can you do that, God? I mean, we know sin and rebellion is, they're serious, and so God must judge, which is what he seems to be doing with his king.

[19 : 40] In fact, in verse 19, he describes this time as a time of wrath. But what about God's faithful people? They are caught up in this too.

They are suffering not in terms of judgment, which is deserved, but they are suffering in terms of persecution, which is undeserved. And so we want to ask, how can God do that? And while there are answers we can give to that question, and I'll give you one in a moment, it's interesting to note that it's not the question the holy ones ask, which brings us to the question in point two, verse 13. He says, Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled? Not about the goat and the ram, but the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, the surrender of the sanctuary, and the trampling underfoot of the Lord's people.

He said to me, It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings, and then the sanctuary will be re-consecrated. You see, the holy ones don't ask, How can you do this, God?

They ask, How long will you do this for, God? You see, they don't question God's authority as though he's not allowed to do this, nor do they question God's wisdom as though he has no good reasons for doing this.

[21 : 09] But there are two questions that we often ask. How can you do this, or what are you doing? What's your reasoning? I remember hearing about the persecution of the Christians in Egypt, with the bombing on Palm Sunday earlier this year, and then on the bus later on, and I was thinking, What are you doing, God?

How can you let this happen? And as I said, there are some answers to that question, like it's part of living in a fallen world. If God was to stop it, he'd have to send Jesus back and judge the world now and put everything right, and that would mean no more chances for people to repent and be saved.

And so he allows it to happen, even uses it to achieve his purposes, and holds off so more people have a chance to repent. And perhaps he even uses the faith of these martyrs to provoke people to repent, like it has done for some Muslims, I understand.

There are questions, sorry, there are answers like that that we can give to the question, How, God, can you allow this to happen? But notice again, it's not the question the Holy One asks, is it?

They don't presume to question God's authority or his wisdom, which is a bit of a lesson for us. In fact, they seem to assume persecution is just part of this fallen world.

[22 : 32] So they don't ask, how can you? They ask, how long will you? How long will God's people be persecuted? And the answer, 2,300 evenings and mornings.

Then the temple will be restored and re-consecrated. Now, it's a bit hard to work out what 2,300 evenings and mornings mean, except for the fact that it's going to be limited.

It's going to be that and no more. In fact, I suspect the reason it's written as evenings and mornings instead of days or years, as it's written elsewhere, is to tell us that the persecution will not last even one morning more than God lets it.

God, who is more powerful than the most powerful king of Greece, who has allowed this evil king to rise up to achieve his purposes, will limit his people's persecution so it will not last one morning more than what they can cope with.

It's as though God will be watching closely so that persecution doesn't cause his true people to fall away from faith. It's kind of like my kids. Excuse me.

[23 : 40] When we divide up a chocolate cake or something like that, my kids watch us like a hawk so that their siblings don't get the slightest bit more than them.

Well, positively, God will watch that his people don't suffer the slightest bit more than they can handle. Not even one morning's worth more.

In fact, the number also suggests that God will even cut this short. So 2,300 days is about six years and four months. I'm just shy of that. In other words, it's short of seven years and in this weird and wonderful type of writing, numbers are very symbolic and the number seven is often seen as the perfect number, the complete number.

And so perhaps it seems as though God will cut short his perfect judgment on the rebellious for the sake of his faithful people. In fact, chapter seven suggests the same thing, though I won't go into it now.

In fact, I'll go to Jesus who says something similar on the next slide from Matthew 24. He speaks of the destruction of the temple again later on in history and he says, when you see the standing in the

holy place, the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel, which begins here in chapter eight and through to the rest of the chapters.

[25 : 01] And he says, and if those days of judgment had not been cut short, no one would be saved, but for the sake of the elect, God's people, those days will be cut short.

You see, the persecution by this king will not last one moment more and in fact is likely to be cut short for the sake of God's faithful people. Now, it's going to seem long for the people.

I mean, whenever we suffer, it's always too long, isn't it? It always seems too long. But from God's perspective of eternity, it will not last one moment longer and in fact, he will cut it short.

But who is this king who will persecute God's people and profane God's name? And when will all this happen? Well, point three, verse 15. He says, while I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before me stood one who looked like a man and I heard a man's voice from the Uli canal calling, Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision.

As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. Son of man, he said to me, which means human, understand that the vision concerns the time of the end.

[26 : 18] While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep and my face to the ground. Then he touched me and raised me to my feet and he said, I'm going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end.

Here, the vision concerns an appointed time of the end. Now, the end doesn't mean the end of all time when Jesus returns. Rather, it's talking about the end of the empires of the Persians and Greeks, the ram and the goat, when this nasty king will rise up.

This would be almost 400 years after Daniel's vision here. So in verses 20 and 22, we have the two kingdoms, ram and goat explained. We've looked at that. We've seen that.

And it's at the end of those kingdoms that this nasty king arises and that this vision is particularly concerned with. So verse 23, have a look there. He says, in the latter part of their reign, that is the general's reign, the four horns, when the rebels have become completely wicked, a fierce looking king, a master of intrigue, will arise.

He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy those who are mighty, the holy people, and he will cause deceit to prosper and he will consider himself superior.

[27 : 42] When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the prince of princes. So here, this vision is primarily concerned with this nasty king who will persecute God's people and profane God's name.

And it's concerned with how long this will take. In fact, the vision itself in verse 26 is called the vision of the evenings and mornings. So that's the focus of this vision.

And this fierce king, we know he's a master of intrigue and he rises against God and against his people. And God will use him to judge the rebellious when they've become completely wicked.

But the problem is God's own faithful people will be caught up. Verse 24, he'll destroy God's holy people. And verse 25, he'll act superior and stand against God, the prince of princes.

So who is this king? After all, given the ram and goat have been named as particular kingdoms, it's reasonable to assume that this king is a particular person.

[28 : 47] And given his description here, scholars are almost unanimously convinced that it's this guy on the next slide called Antiochus IV. And he was a master of intrigue.

He was not supposed to be king. In fact, he was actually a prisoner in Rome. But through political manoeuvring and intrigue, he managed to go from prisoner to king. I think that's pretty remarkable, isn't it?

Talk about verse 9, starting small and then growing big. And he did wage war that caused devastation. What's more, he thought himself superior. He changed his name from Antiochus IV to Antiochus Epiphanes.

The word epiphanes means God manifest. In other words, he's saying, I am God. And he also had a go at God's people. So in the Jewish history books of 1 and 2 Maccabees on the next slide, we read this about Antiochus.

After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the 143rd year, 169 BC. He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar.

[29 : 53] He erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of the burnt offering. And the books of the law, that's the Old Testament, that they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire.

The truth was thrown to the ground, you see. The desolating sacrilege that, I'll go back a sec, Aidan, the desolating sacrilege that it's referred to there was a statue of Zeus and he set it up in the Jewish temple, which is highly offensive, of course.

But you see, he was setting himself up as God and against God. And he did persecute God's people. So on the next slide now, he gave this law, anyone found possessing the book of the covenant, the Old Testament, or anyone who adhered to God's law was condemned to death. In fact, on one occasion, in just three days, he had 80,000 Jewish men, women, and children massacred. That was the persecution of Antiochus.

Such was his fierce persecution that people renamed him. So on the next slide, instead of Antiochus Epiphanes, which means God manifests, they called him Antiochus Epiphanes, which means Antiochus the Mad.

[31 : 07] That's what he was. He was mad. And so no wonder after seeing this vision, we read Daniel's reaction in verse 27. I, Daniel, was worn out and I lay exhausted or literally sick for several days.

Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision. It was beyond understanding. Now, not beyond understanding in terms of what it means because he's had it explained to him.

Rather, beyond understanding in terms of how can Persia and Greece, these insignificant kingdoms at the moment, become superpowers in the world. Or more likely, how could God allow such persecution of his people and such profaning of his name to happen?

That's beyond understanding for Daniel. No wonder he lay for several days feeling sick. And yet, he got up and went about the king's business, didn't he? How was he able to do that?

Was it simply because this persecution would happen 400 years later and say, hey, I'm going to be dead. Who cares? No. As we'll see next week, he cares deeply about his people. Rather, I imagine he would have reflected on four things.

[32 : 18] First, as we saw last week, God is in control. He is more powerful than even the most powerful king, like Alexander. Second, God will limit this persecution, even cut it short for the sake of his people who might be tempted to give up.

And he did in that situation. He rose up a guy called Judas Maccabees who led a revolt and freed Jerusalem from Antiochus. In fact, Jews today still celebrate that victory.

It's called Hanukkah. And third, God will judge these evil kings such that there will be justice. We skipped over the end of verse 25 which says, yet he, Antiochus, will be destroyed, not by human power.

And he was. Antiochus died by a rotting disease in his intestines, it said. Not by human hand, but directly by God's, it seems.

And fourth, Daniel had his first vision. Remember, got to read it with first vision in mind, which reminded him that God's kingdom would triumph in the end.

[33 : 29] In the words of our second reading, God is just, he will pay back trouble to those who have persecuted his people and will comfort those who have been persecuted when Jesus returns. But until then, what are we to do?

Well, we are not to live in fear, waiting for our turn to be persecuted. Like Daniel, we are to get on with life. But we are to be prepared for persecution to come.

And it will one day come, the Bible says. If we are lovingly standing for God's truth, it will come one day. It might be in small ways or perhaps even bigger ways.

I mean, if we follow Jesus Christ who died for us and rose again and who said, I am the only way to the Father, that's offensive to people. That will get you offside with people.

If we follow Jesus' teaching on marriage, that is clearly offensive to people. It may get you offside with people. It might end up in ridicule or worse.

[34 : 30] And when it does, we had a brace for impact, not with a cushion, of course, but with the knowledge that God is in control, that he will limit the persecution, even cut it short for the sake of his people so that it won't be more than we can bear, and that he will judge those who persecute us and restore us who have been persecuted.

Let me finish with a story. Campbell Markham is a Presbyterian minister I mentioned last week who is fighting an anti-discrimination case in the High Court this month because he upheld God's truth on marriage and sexuality.

He upheld it in a blog six years ago, 2011. Someone's gone back and found what he said and now they've brought an anti-discrimination suit against him in his fighting at this month.

He wrote an article in this month's Eternity magazine, actually, talking about what persecution has looked like for him, how some people have broken friendship with him, some people have left his church, even his kids' friends at school.

Well, they're losing friends at school it seems. And this is what he said. He said, While my heart aches, if loving Christ and submitting to his teaching means shattered relationships, then we must not be surprised.

[35 : 46] Jesus said it would happen. But weep and pray and leave it in the hands of him who knows best. In other words, trust God who is in control, who will limit persecution and more than that will judge all evil and bring us into his triumphant kingdom.

Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we do thank you for this chapter of Daniel today, although it's been a long chapter to get through.

We thank you that it reminds us of great truths that can cushion us and help us brace for impact when persecution comes. Truths, that you are in control, that you will limit persecution, that you will also judge all evil and bring us one day into your triumphant kingdom.

Help us to remember these things when persecution comes our way that we might persevere through it as your people in this world. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.