

In Unity and Strength: Facing Adversity Together | Ezra 4:1-5

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[0 : 00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we're dedicated to encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. Located in Ontario, Oregon, Pastor Patrick Daly preaches insightful sermons from the Word of God, offering practical applications for modern living.

We're delighted to share this sermon with you. All right. Well, good morning, everyone. You guys can hear me loud and clear. Well, it's great to be with you this morning as we are continuing our sermon series on the Book of Ezra.

This last week, we concluded Chapter 3, where the people of God, they were celebrating the foundation of the temple being laid.

As a reminder, the Holy Spirit in the Book of Ezra, it stirred the hearts of over 40,000 families, and the King, King Cyrus, a stirring that led people to return to Jerusalem, to rebuild the altar, and to rebuild the temple.

It was the stirring of the Holy Spirit. As the foundation was laid, it was a time for celebration, for praising God and thanking Him for His faithfulness.

[1 : 10] And this reminds me of a spiritual parallel that we have with our foundation that we have in Jesus Christ. Our foundation is laid when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ through faith in Him.

When we believe in His death, His burial and resurrection, we are taken from the domain of darkness, and we are entering or transferred into the Kingdom of Light.

And just as the foundation of the temple was laid and celebrated, we too, as Christians, as the body of Christ, we should celebrate when somebody becomes a believer in Christ, when someone grows in Christ, and you're seeing the transformation that comes by the power of the gospel.

Can I get an amen for that? And this brings us to today as we are entering into Ezra chapter 4, where we are entering the theme of dealing with adversity.

This sermon today is based off of Ezra chapter 4, verses 1 through 5. And in these five verses, we will see that the people in the land were against the people of God, and they wanted to stop the progress that had been made.

[2 : 26] Perhaps maybe you have dealt with opposition. Maybe you have been through a time where you've had people against the progress you've made in Christ. Today, we will see in Scripture how the leaders of the people of God, they stood firm, but they also stood together.

And this is a great lesson that we can learn today, and also a lesson that we can apply to our very lives today. And here's the thing, let us remember as we're reading this, because this chapter 4, you're going to see there is the adversity, right?

The adversaries that are coming and opposing the building of the temple. They're going to get dirty. They're going to play unfairly. And it's in chapters like this, we have to be reminded that you cannot stop what God has started.

This is why we place our faith and our trust in our Father. We trust in the living God who never fails, the God of light, the God of truth, the God of healing and restoration, the one who always delivers on His promises and His prophecies.

That's why when we open the Word of God and we see the fulfillment of prophecy, we see that God is consistent, He never changes, and how often do we change?

[3 : 47] Let us come to the Lord. And you know what? Let's pray before we go any further. Will you pray with me? Let's bow our heads and pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You for giving us this time and this opportunity to come together as the body of Christ.

May we be united as one in You. We pray today that truth is spoken here. And as we hear from Your Word, may we learn the lessons within Your Word and apply them to our everyday lives. We ask that You send down Your Holy Spirit to be with us, to stir our hearts, our minds, and our spirit to know You, to grow in You, and to be moved to do good in Your holy name. It is in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God that we pray. Can I get an amen? So we begin on the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin.

In Ezra chapter 4 verses 1 through 2, we are introduced. It says here, when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the Lord, the God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of the Father's houses, who said to them, let us build with you, for we worship Your God as You do.

[5 : 04] And we've been sacrificing to Him ever since the days of Escheridon, the king of Assyria, who brought us here, right? So we're seeing these adversaries, they were well aware of what was going on.

The word adversary, when you see that in the text here, it speaks of people who were directly opposed. They were against God. They were against the people of God. These are enemies. These are troublemakers, as it were. Those who would bring forth division and opposition. The adversaries approached the leaders of the Father's houses. And when you're reading this, it looks like they're saying, hey, we want to come alongside you and help build with you. And on the surface, it looks like they legitimately want to help. And from the way they're saying it, it's like, well, OK, that looks good, but we have to be reminded of that first verse, that they are adversaries.

We see in verse 3, if you go in there, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of the Father's houses in Israel, they said to them, you can join us, right?

[6 : 11] Is that what it says in here? No, it says, you have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God. But we alone will build to the Lord the God of Israel as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, has commanded to us.

You notice in here that there is a difference of who they are referring to. They're building in the name of the Lord, and they're talking about the decree of Cyrus, as opposed to the days of Escharidon, the king of Assyria.

So there's a difference in who they're referring to. So these leaders, Zerubbabel and Jeshua, they had enough insight, what we would call discernment, to recognize the intentions of these adversaries, knowing that they were not pure, that they were against God.

The discernment displayed by these leaders is critical, it is crucial. They understood that the mission they were on, it was divinely inspired. And any external influence that didn't align with the plan that God had set could derail the entire project.

And this teaches us, we should observe here, the importance of discerning our own walk with the Lord. Being mindful of people that we come and interact with, we need to ensure that our decisions and that who we associate with will align with the will of God.

[7 : 33] And it says, and we have to think that the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, despite their offer to help, despite what appeared to be their good intentions, it was identified by the people, the leaders of God, to have impure motives, and to be obedient to the rejection, no, we're not going to work with you.

I'm reminded of 2 Corinthians 6-14-16, which says, don't be unequally yoked with unbelievers. What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?

We then go to the second observation, the importance of spiritual discernment, which is found in Ezra 4-3. You see Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the leaders, right? Again, they are responding.

They're saying, we want nothing to do with you. It is so important as leaders, even back then in the Old Testament, to have insight from the Lord on who to associate with and who not to associate with.

And we're talking in context here of people who are working with the building, the rebuilding of the temple. And when we consider the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit can reveal to you whether someone is good or bad.

[8 : 48] Sometimes you may get a really strange feeling, or sometimes you may get a really good feeling. And that's something by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The leaders did not want to work with these adversaries because it could lead to distraction.

You ever heard the word being infiltrated, right? Infiltration. Imagine if they had said, you know what, come on in. I realize, you know, you're against what we're doing, but let's come on in. Think of the infiltration or the division or the divisiveness that could happen in such a project as that. And so what we're seeing here is it could lead to distraction, distortion, derailment, or a change in the direction of the trajectory of what they're doing.

And this situation is directly parallel to our study in Colossians, right? The Apostle Paul, he emphasized the importance of remaining true to the Word of God.

And in the same way, the leaders in Ezra, they wanted to focus on the mission. It's the idea of you stick to the plan that God has given to you, right?

[9 : 57] We focus on the direction, the divine guidance from the Holy Spirit, right? That's what the people of God are doing. So the leaders, they exercised spiritual discernment to protect the mission given by God, rejecting those who intentions did not align with his purpose.

I'm reminded of 1 John chapter 4 verse 1, which says, Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

And it's so important, again, when we're seeing in the Old Testament, we also see it in the New Testament, the importance of spiritual discernment.

And so that leads us to our Ezra chapter 4 verses 4 through 5, the adversary's attempt to discourage and to divide.

I'm going to read it here, the people of the land, discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build. What else did they do? It says that they bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose.

[11 : 07] All the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius, the king of Persia. So that's a long time for a time of discouragement and frustration, right?

We are reading here that the people of the land, they are discouraging the people of God, right? Making them afraid to build. So just think about this.

Despite the fact that the leaders of the people of God said, no, we don't want you to work with us, they still were able to do damage. They still were able to frustrate.

And you'll see later on in the chapter, they're going to up their game in opposition. But it's a great reminder for us that even though we're seeing this terrible thing that these people are doing, that will not change the will of God, amen?

And so we have to think here, look, they bribed counselors against them, right? And this frustration, this discouragement was going on from Cyrus to Darius, the king of Persian, right?

[12 : 11] The people of God, the leaders of the people of God, they stood firm and they worked together in continuing the work of God that God had set before them. Because the leaders stood firm, the adversaries, they took their opposition again to the next level.

They sought to divide the people, to instill fear and to even use their political influence to stop the building of the temple. We'll find that later on in chapter 4. If you go on to verse 7 through 16, you don't have to go there, but keep that in mind.

They end up writing a letter to the king and saying that the people of God are rebellious. I mean, talk about escalating something, right? But that's because the people of God were standing firm in their faith and they were standing together here.

These verses are challenging because they reveal a testing phase, as it were, where the people of God, they were tested to see if they would let adversaries in, see if they would let people infiltrate the work that was happening.

But the leaders, they passed the test by rejecting the adversaries and they stood firm. And as a result, though, we'll see that the opposition will intensify.

[13 : 27] And so the adversaries, they employed various tactics, fear, division, political influence to hinder the work of God testing the faithfulness of the people.

Does that happen to us? Have there been times where this is... I mean, that's happened to none of us, right? I'm sure there have been times where it's happened to us, right? Where we have had testing, where people have tried to instill fear and division in our own lives, dividing the body of Christ, or even using political influence.

Man, that gets really heavy for us. In Nehemiah chapter 4 verses 8 through 9, it's the next book, right? It says they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and cause confusion in it.

It's that next part. We prayed to our God and set a guard as protection against them day and night. So there's even in the next book, opposition still continues.

And it can be very discouraging for us when we're reading that. Why are these people opposing the people of God? Well, we see it throughout Scripture. We see it throughout history. And quite honestly, it happens in our own lives.

[14 : 39] And so in all of this, there are lessons that we can learn in terms of the verses here in Ezra chapter 4 verses 1 through 5. The first one is the importance of spiritual discernment.

Spiritual discernment, it helps us to recognize and kind of have an evaluation of people and their intention, their heart, right?

Sometimes we have to reject people that may seem good on the surface, but they have... It's just like, you know, as a kid, I always... It was very difficult for me when I heard the phrase, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

I would take that a little literally. I would imagine a wolf that was dressed literally in sheep's clothing and walking around and hanging out with the sheep. But you could tell he was a wolf, right?

And that's just a kind of a kiddish way of looking at it, but that's an idea of discernment, knowing the difference between good and evil in the eyes of God.

[15 : 42] The leaders of the people of God, they rejected the adversary's offer to help build the temple because they discerned that the offer was not genuine. There was something sinister going on here.

This discernment was guidance by the Holy Spirit who can reveal the true intentions of those around us. And as Christians, when we read and study and we learn the Word of God and we grow as a Christian, our ability to discern will grow over time.

Just like when I mentioned 1 John 4 verse 1, it tells us, right, to test the spirits. We must be aware of, when we think of us as Christians today, false teachers and false prophets, as Jesus warned in Matthew chapter 7 verse 15.

Right? We need to practice and discern good from evil right from wrong. Isn't it interesting that when we're thinking about, in the Garden of Eden, right, you have the tree of knowledge of good and evil and then the tree of life.

When we're thinking of the knowledge of good and evil, it's the reliance on self rather than the reliance on God because you see, God will still, he will give you the direction on what is right and wrong.

[16 : 59] As opposed to what happened in the Garden, I will try to figure it out. Right? I'm going to eat of this apple and I'm going to decide what's right and wrong compared to, you know what? I'm going to seek God and his wisdom and his insight to guide my life and to help me know the difference between right and wrong.

That's the difference here. In Philippians chapter 1 verses 9 through 10, it encourages us to let our love abound more and more as we, right, we grow in knowledge and discernment because my friends, we are always a work in progress growing in the faith.

Or at least we should be on a path. Discernment comes from studying God's Word and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We can make decisions by this guidance, by the Word of God of what aligns with the will of God and to avoid any pitfalls or any distractions that could derail our spiritual journey.

And the second lesson that comes up is standing firm in the face of opposition. Right? We have to stand firm in our faith when facing any sort of opposition, right, remaining true to the mission that God has set before us.

The leaders of the people of God, they stood firm and they stood firm together. That is so important, right? You stand rooted in Christ. You stand rooted in the Word of God.

[18 : 29] And this faithfulness is an example for us as Christians. Even when we face difficult days, even when we may have a friend or a family member, a coworker or a classmate who opposes us, we stand firm in the truth of the Word of God.

Jesus commanded us to go and make disciples of all nations. And the Apostle Paul reminds us that we are ambassadors for Christ. I've always loved that phrasing to be an ambassador, a representative of Christ when you go out into the public.

We must keep the Great Commission and the Great Commandment central in our lives, right?

Loving God and loving people and making disciples and also baptizing believers. Let's not forget

that.

We're to take up the armor of God so that we can withstand any evil that goes against us. It may be discouraging, it may be frustrating, much like the people of God were when the adversaries were trying to infiltrate the mission that was happening.

But we stand firm, we put on the armor of God and knowing that God is always going to be there with us in times of good, in times of testing and in times of trial.

[19 : 46] We also see in James chapter one, verse 12 that there's a blessing, a blessing that comes for those who remain true, who withstand those trials.

The verse mentions the crown of life of those who love God. That's beautiful imagery that we can think of. The third lesson is recognizing the reality of spiritual warfare.

Spiritual warfare, my friends, is a reality. And we as Christians, we must be equipped to face it through prayer, through reading the Word of God and being united in Christ is also important.

These adversaries, they used various tactics. They used fear. They used discouragement. They used slander even. They used all of these things to try to get people to stop.

In fact, you'll see in your notes here, there's a little diagram here. The adversaries' tactic, discouragement. Sure, many of us have been discouraged by people before if you haven't.

[20 : 58] Man, you're pretty lucky. The fear to build. How many of us have been afraid? The Scriptures tell us that we're not to be afraid of the gospel.

But yet sometimes we do get afraid. The bribery of counselors. That's a tough one, right? And then slander, libel, which is found later in Ezra.

And we see in here, because I know that this is heavy. It's almost discouraging when you're reading this. There is encouragement in this, is that God encourages us when we face difficult days.

And that God is with us and there is nothing to fear, even though we can get afraid at times. And then when we're thinking of those who are doing wrong, the bribery of counselors, the slander, the libel, right?

All these things that these people will reap what they sow. That's something for us to be mindful of. We must be prepared to face these challenges by remaining faithful to God in His Word.

[22 : 07] We talk about the armor of God and the importance of putting it on, right? That we engage in spiritual warfare through prayer, through reading Scripture and supporting one another. And also realizing that God's with us where we are.

And in those seasons of trials and tribulations and even triumphs, right? Even when good things are happening. And we are to fight the good fight.

We have to think, let's go to, in all of this. You might ask yourself the question, alright? So I see that there are these adversaries who are coming against the people of God and the people of God reject these people for bad intent.

And then these adversaries, they're taking it a step further by instilling fear and discouragement. So what do I do with that? How can I apply these verses, these very difficult verses to my own life?

And the first thing that comes up is growing in discernment. We grow in discernment by studying God's Word, by seeking wisdom from God and praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

[23 : 21] Can I get an amen? That's pretty simple, right? Open the Word of God, start reading it and understanding it. And if you lack wisdom, like what the Scripture says, you ask God for that wisdom.

Say, God, I don't understand what this means. How many of us have been stumped by a Bible verse before? Don't raise your hand, you don't have to. Right? But we've been stumped by Bible verses before.

Sometimes it's very appropriate for us to ask God, I need the wisdom and insight to understand this. Or, God, I'm going through a very difficult trial in my life. I need your help. I need wisdom to know how to deal with this.

I know you are there with me in this trial. And even though, look, sometimes we do feel alone and isolated. That's a great time for us to lean into God and to trust in God, knowing that he's there with you.

It's important for us to read and study the Word of God and to learn how to test the spirits, right? Or to become more discerning when we are equipped with the Word of God.

[24 : 27] I mean, isn't it amazing the Bible being as popular as it is even today? Is it the number one selling book of all time here? For good reason. It being divinely inspired?

I mean, I'd kind of laugh if we had like a science book that was the number one or something, but there's something to say about the Word of God being the number one book in all of history. That goes to testify to the power of who our God is. Pray for wisdom, right? Pray for that discernment. Learn discernment, right and wrong. And Scripture talks about practicing it. That man practicing knowing right and wrong.

That's another one to think about. But we have to think about it not only in our daily lives, but our daily interactions with those in the community. Sometimes God will tell you, hey, you got to speak to this person. And you don't know why.

Or sometimes you shouldn't go and talk to this person. It's like, what? But that's part of the guidance that happens. And again, I always love James chapter one, verse five.

[25 : 31] If you lack wisdom, ask God for it, right? We all need wisdom, right? So we should be asking God for it. Proverbs chapter two, verses four through five, it emphasizes that we are to seek wisdom as if it were silver, right?

Precious gems, right? You know how some people, they use technology to try to find gold and rubies and diamonds and natural resources? All of those efforts goes to show an idea, a concept of how we are to search for wisdom because of its value.

It leads to the knowledge of God and helps us grow in our faith. First Thessalonians chapter five, verse 21 through 22, it tells us to test everything and to hold fast to what is good and abstain from every evil.

By growing in discernment, we can better navigate the complexities of life, making decisions that align with God's will, right? It requires us reading the Word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The second thing that we can take away is supporting one another in faith. When we stand firm in the Word of God, we shouldn't do it alone. That we have the body of Christ, our brothers and sisters in Christ who are there to help us, right?

[26 : 52] Supporting each other in faith, it strengthens the body of Christ like a bundle of sticks, and I'll put that image next pretty soon here, right? It helps us to stand firm together against opposition, right?

It's essential for us to stand firm in faith when people are opposing us or people are against us. And just as we are called to stand firm, we're also called to support one another because we are stronger when we are together.

Ecclesiastes, a book often overlooked in chapter four, verses nine through twelve, it says that two are better than one because they have good reward for their toil.

When one falls, the other can lift him up, but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up. And I want to put this image on here. It's this image of the bundle of sticks here.

And I want to think of this as kind of an imagery of what we can think about. So you see on one side, you have one stick, right?

[27 : 55] Now, most of us, if not all of us, we can break a stick, right? It's pretty easy to break. You break it in half, you break it over your leg, whatever. It's broken, right?

But the more sticks that you have together, it is a representation of the body of Christ. That when we are together, we are stronger together, united in Christ.

Now, the more sticks you put together, eventually there comes a point. Try this with a kid sometime. It's really great activity. Not that I've done that with my own kid before, right? But you think about it. One stick is easy to break and you keep going, and then next thing you know, you have ten sticks, and you end up hurting yourself in the process trying to break the sticks.

And it's just a wonderful imagery when we're thinking that two or three is greater than one, the verse says, when Scripture says, we're two or three are gathered in my name.

There I am in the midst of them. That's what Christ is saying. And it shows how powerful it is when the assembly, when the church comes together, united.

[29 : 05] That we can face adversity together and we can help one another when we fall down or in the event we sin or in the event that something tragic happens in our life, we can support one another.

In Hebrews chapter 10, verse 24 through 25, it encourages us to consider how to stir up one another, to love one another. Let us remember, like these bundles of sticks, we're all going to come

from different backgrounds as it were.

But we all should be together in a journey in Christ, having Christ work in and through us individually, but also working in and through us as a collective body.

By supporting one another, we build a strong, united body of Christ that can withstand the challenges of life and remain faithful to God's mission. For some of us, when we have gone through a hard time and we've had a brother or sister in Christ pray with us, just show up and be there with us. There's power in that.

And that's something that is very different than what the world has to offer. We go into the third one is trusting in God's sovereignty.

[30 : 25] Trusting in God's sovereignty, it says here that it gives us peace and confidence.

Knowing that He is in control and His plans for us are good and very often in Scripture, we may not see how God is working behind the scenes.

I'm reminded of Habakkuk. That's one of my favorite books in Scripture, where you have the prophet saying, God, all these terrible things are happening. What is going on? And God replies by saying, I think it's Habakkuk, chapter 1, verse 5, where God ends up saying, I'm doing some things that you wouldn't even believe if I told you to.

If I told you what was going on, you would be completely shocked by it. And then he goes on and explaining what he's doing. And it's showing, wow, God works behind the scenes.

And very often we may not understand what God is doing, right? And so it's a call for us to trust in God and His plan for us. No matter what is happening in our lives, again, the good, the bad, or the ugly, things may be happening with our friends or our families, even the country or in the world.

We as Christians are called to trust in the living God with all of our hearts. Scripture repeatedly tells us not to be afraid and not to be filled with worry or anxiety, but rather to recognize that God is with us.

[31 : 51] And He will not abandon us. And He will comfort us. He will help us. And He will be there even in the darkest of times. Can I get an amen for that one? Romans 8, chapter 8, verse 28, reminds us that God works all things together for the good of those who love them and are called according to His purpose.

Jeremiah 41-10 encourages not to fear, for God is with us. He will strengthen us. He will help us. And He will uphold us with His righteous hand.

I always love that imagery. Some of you may know the song. He's got the whole world in His hands, right? And there's lots of songs that talk about this imagery of how God is the caretaker for us, that He will care for us in the palm of His hands.

And I know that's kind of a children's story, Sunday school thing, but it's still a great reminder, right? Maybe you've ever, maybe you've picked up a little ladybug or a lizard, right?

Or a small little creature, a bird or something. And you've held it in your hand, protecting it, wanting to nurture it. What an amazing imagery that we can think of that it's not exactly the same, but it's a good imagery nonetheless of how our God will take care of us when we're hurting, when we need that healing for our lives.

[33 : 13] And by trusting in God's sovereignty, we can have peace and confidence in Him, knowing that He is in control. We can face any challenge with the assurance that God is with us, and He will be with us.

He'll always be there with us. And so in all of this, I want this to be an encouragement for you, even though these are some very discouraging verses, right?

Perhaps you may have gone through a time where you might have had someone enter your life with ill intent. In times like that, seek God and His wisdom, and don't be afraid to reach out to your brothers and sisters in Christ, right?

Don't be afraid to have a conversation. Don't be afraid of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the love that God has for us. Let us stand firm in the truth of the Word of God and the promises of Jesus Christ, and let us stand firm and let us stand together in the grace and the truth that is brought to us by Jesus Christ.

Let us focus on the mission that God has set for us in our own lives, but also in our church. Many of us have faced opposition.

[34 : 29] Many of us have faced an adversary before in our lives. It's in moments like this where we encounter these difficulties that we have to trust in God, pray to Him, and seek our brothers and sisters as well.

Seek support from our brothers and sisters. And I pray that as we're getting closer to our close here, let us be a church that is not infiltrated by evil.

Let us be a church that is not divided or is not weakened, but rather is a church that is united in Christ, a church that will send out people to go out into the community and make a difference being an ambassador for Christ, doing good in the name of Jesus Christ, a church that stands firm and keeps Jesus Christ as the main thing.

This story in Ezra reminds me of things that have happened, times where people have opposed the church, our own individuals, even a few years ago.

Let this message not discourage you, but rather let it encourage you to trust in the living God. Let us remember the simple gospel that tells us to trust and to believe in the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[35 : 54] That all of this, 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 1 through 4, all of this was done in accordance to the Scriptures, proving that God speaks the truth, and he fulfills his promises and his prophecies.

Our main thing is to believe in Jesus Christ as the firm foundation for our lives. We build our lives upon that foundation, and we learn, we grow, we go from immaturity, from babies as it were, to growing into mature adults, learning to discern, to test the spirits, so that we can know through the Lord the difference between good and evil.

We support one another, no matter where we are in our spiritual journey. Some of us may be new believers, some of us may be mature believers, but we all should be on a journey together going towards Christ, going towards the kingdom of God.

This is much like how I mentioned earlier in Ezra. The 40,000 families, they were traveling home to the place that God had called them to be.

And what a powerful image we can think of, that as a church body we should be on such a journey as it were, going towards the Lord and the promises that he has for us.

[37 : 16] For God will continue to work in and through our lives for all of our life. We are our work in progress. If you don't think you are, you are. It doesn't matter what you've been through or what you're going through, what matters is that you believe in Jesus Christ, you are trusting in the Lord, and you are following what the Word of God has to say.

And part of that growth is continuing to trust no matter what is happening in your life. No matter what opposition you may face, or no matter what the government may pass.

Right? We trust in the living God and we remain faithful to him. For living in God, living for God, there is nothing to fear.

There's nothing for us to worry about. We continue to move forward in our new life in Christ until the very end, where we will be part of the kingdom of God with Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together. And gracious Father, we thank you for giving us this time once again to open your Word and to read, to study, to observe, to learn, and to apply these living and active words to our lives.

[38 : 31] I pray, Father, that we will understand the importance of discernment and that it comes from the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the truth of your Word. I pray that we as a church, we will stand firm, but we will also stand together.

I pray that we will be united in you, that we will remain focused on the mission that you have given to us. I pray, Father, that we will trust in you, knowing that no matter what happens, you will always be there with us in the highs and lows and in the hills and the valleys of this life.

As we close with this final song, may we lift up a shout of praise. May we honor and glorify you and be thankful for who you are.

May we know that you are the constant in our life, everlasting to everlasting, and that nothing can stop what you are doing. It is in the name of Jesus Christ, our saving King, that we pray together. Amen.

Thank you for tuning in to the Ontario Community Church sermon podcast. For more about our church and how you can get involved or support our mission, please visit ontariocommunitychurch.org.

[39 : 46] May God's blessings be with you.