

Don't Stop Believin'

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Psalm 7, our seventh week studying these first seven psalms in this altar. So, Psalm 7.

Psalm 7, Shigeon of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush of Benjaminite. O Lord my God, in you do I take refuge.

Save me from all my pursuers and deliver me. Lest like a lion they tear my soul apart, rending it in pieces with none to deliver.

O Lord my God, if I have done this, if there is wrong in my hands, if I have repaid my enemy for evil or plundered my enemy without cause, let the enemy pursue me and overtake me.

[1 : 09] And let him trample my life to the ground and lay my glory in the dust. Selah. Arise, O Lord, in your anger.

Lift up, lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies. Awake for me. You have appointed judgment. Let the assembly of your peoples be gathered about you.

Over it, return on high. The Lord judges the peoples. Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me.

O let the evil of the wicked come to an end. And may you establish the righteous. You who test the minds and hearts.

O righteous God. My shield is with God who saves the upright in heart. God is a righteous judge.

[2 : 11] A God who feels indignation every day. If a man does not repent, God will wet his sword. He has bent and readied his bow. He has prepared for him his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts.

Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies. He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made.

His mischief returns upon his own head and on his own skull his violence descends. I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness.

I will bless. I will sing praise to the name of the Lord the Most High. May God bless.

Hearing of his word. Preaching of his word. This morning. The Christian satire site, the Babylon Bee, has been on a roll lately.

[3 : 22] Several months ago, headlines read, With April Fool's Day over, nation returns to believing all politicians, reporters, and websites.

Late last month, they reported, Do not forsake the assembly of the saints unless there's a virus with a 99.8 recovery rate going around.

It's close to home a little bit. Another article recently said, Nations four-year-olds condemn actions of entitled whiny protesters. Yeah, the article continued, The four-year-olds across the nation vocalize their condemnation of entitled whiny protesters saying they're acting like babies.

My mommy says, says Jessica, that when grown-ups talk, it's time for the kids to listen. Maybe they need to be calmer and use their big girl words. It's like Daniel Tiger says, When you feel so mad that you want to roar, take a deep breath and count to four.

The article continues, At publishing time, the nation's four-year-olds, when asked what ought to be done to these protesters, exclaim they need to be put in their room to think about what they've done.

[4 : 33] You know, it hits a little bit close to home. I'm not trying to make a political statement. You know, I support protesting the ideal that is America. But it does hit close to home.

It is funny. It's satire. And if we're honest, as we open Psalm 7, it seems like all the psalmist is doing is whining. Like he's an entitled whiny singer.

You know, several folks have told me or told me when we began this series on the psalms that they didn't really like the psalms. And I wonder if it's because of the whining. Isn't that what we've seen so far?

Psalm 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 are dominated by his cries. He's so emotional. Maybe he needs a little thinking time or a little time out.

But in actuality, David's not whining about little inconveniences or first world problems like having to cancel our vacation. David's whining and crying out about real trouble.

[5 : 33] The psalms alert us to the trouble and injustice in a world that does not fear God. The psalm, this psalm, pushed us to peel back the layers of this world to see the deep evils of gossip, slander, and lies.

To notice the abundance of deceit, whether it's fudging a few numbers on a tax return or intentionally cutting corners in a construction project, assuming no one will notice.

To pick out the wicked manager who treats people unequally, overlooking the flaws of the beautiful and well-connected and penalizing the not-so-beautiful.

To find where opportunities in this world are not equal and advantages limited. To step back and to look at the tragic death toll of abortion and the unseen ills of our society, like child abuse, child neglect, sex trafficking, porn, and so much more.

The psalms, I think in so many ways, are seeking to instill in us moral courage, where we long for and pray for our world to be more just, more pleasing to God, not merely for our lives to be more comfortable and convenient.

[6 : 48] The psalmists are not teaching us how to whine, in one sense. They're teaching us how to whine rightly, maybe. They're teaching us how to pray in an unjust world, particularly when injustice comes to our door.

When this world threatens, confuses, and damages us. And this psalm lifts our gaze. In so many ways, where we're going, rest assured the Lord is coming and will establish His people forever.

Rest assured the Lord is coming and will establish His people forever. We're going to break this out in three points, as usual. First one, it is right to proclaim your innocence.

It is right to proclaim your innocence. Now, we saw in the little subscript, if you look at there, that this psalm has a story behind it. It was a song which David sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, Benjamin Knight.

Now, we don't exactly know what that refers to. Now, I've said that like seven weeks in a row, but we don't exactly know what that refers to. But it's very possible that this was a song David sang when he was running from Saul.

[7 : 52] If you remember that, Saul's trying to hunt him down. He's hiding in caves and things like that. He was innocent of any wrongdoing before Saul, except being picked as God's man. And yet Saul was ready to take him out, throwing arrows at him.

And so he announces immediately his need. Look at verse 1 and 2. He says, Oh, Lord, my God, in you I take refuge. Save me. Deliver me. Lest like a lion they tear me apart.

David is afraid for his life. David's not describing the slow, dignified decline of old age in America. He's describing the sudden agony being caught by a lion.

A fate he was very familiar with. He was a shepherd and walking along the hills around Jerusalem, he saw sheep. Or actually, maybe he just saw the evidence of lions coming for sheep.

And so he's worried they were coming for his life. But before he continues his cry for help, he announces his innocence before God. If he had lied, if he had done something, if he was running from the law, why should the Lord hear him?

[8 : 59] But if he wasn't, the Lord should come. And so look at verse 3. He has these conditional clauses there. Oh, Lord, if I have done this, if there is wrong, if I have repaid my enemy with evil, if I have plundered my enemy without cause.

He's setting up his argument then as to why he's innocent before God. Now, ancient Egyptians held to a list of 42 things that they should not do and prepared to defend when they stood before the scales of justice at death.

And so there's this 42 list of things they're not doing. I have not sinned. I have not committed robbery. I've not done violence. I've not stolen. And so David could have proclaimed his innocence

that way.

He could have said, I didn't do those things. But strikingly, he doesn't do it. He proclaims his innocence by invoking a curse on himself if he's guilty.

That's what those conditional clauses are. If I've done all this, if I've done that, if I've repaid, if I've plundered, let my enemy pursue my soul and overtake me. Let him trample me down to the ground. Lay my glory in the dust.

[10:12] Not merely death, but let my death be an ignoble death. Which for God's king was a big deal.

Now in the U.S., we take a similar oath when we go into court. Do you solemnly swear to tell the whole truth? I mean, do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

So help you, God. That's an oath. Now you can get judged for perjury. But ultimately, that's an oath to God that he'll deal with you.

But this oath is more powerful. Because he outlines how he wants to die if he's dishonest. So he's saying he's innocent. That's the point of all this.

He's saying, I'm innocent of any wrongdoing. And so what are we to make of David proclaiming innocence? Now we know he's the king after God's own heart, but we also know he took another man's wife and then killed that man.

[11:11] We know that from Psalm 51. We know from Psalm 6 last week where he confesses his sin to the Lord. So what's all this talk about innocence, David?

Look in verse 8. He says, judge me according to my righteousness. Oh, really? And according to the integrity that is in me. This is God that said he's been a sinner since birth.

In sin did my mother conceive me. Psalm 51. Well, you know, David is, I mean, this psalm is kind of David in the courtroom of justice. And that's often the way we think about justice.

But there's an important distinction going on here. You know, we often think of ourselves on trial, in a criminal trial before the Lord. In which the sins committed by us will be held against us and will be judged.

The punishment assessed to us because of our sins. And the Bible says that's true. The Bible says, 2 Corinthians 5, that we all must appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. Where we're either guilty or innocent, according to whether we've trusted in him.

[12:22] But in this psalm, this is not a criminal trial. This is a civil case. David, in this case, he's like a plaintiff.

He's not the one on trial. He's a plaintiff. He's the one bringing charges against another. That's what's going on here. David is bringing his case to the court and trying to get the court to help with his damages.

So in a criminal trial, if you're innocent, you just want to be exonerated. You just want to be released. You want to be pardoned. Like OJ was pardoned. In a civil case, though, if you're innocent, you're fighting for justice.

You want them to pay. You want the wrongs to be righted. And so that's what's going on in this psalm. It's crucial to see this and we want to understand this psalm. David is not proclaiming that he's righteous before God.

He's proclaiming that he's righteous in this scenario. Now, let's pretend there was some injustice in your house. This is a routine week in your home here in McMinn County.

[13:20] Let's pretend one of your children stole something from another child. Now, this wouldn't happen, so let's just pretend and hid it or broke it or misused it, mishandled this item.

Maybe it's a brand new American Girl doll or a Nintendo Switch controller. They get nice and small or some new Pokemon cards. I don't really know what kids are into, so those are my three shots. You know, in this hypothetical scenario, that wouldn't happen. You're the parent and you're the judge, right? You're the one who's got to determine the innocent and the guilty in your household and rebalance the scales of justice at home.

So you may gather the children into the living room or, for our purposes, the courtroom. Ask questions, interrogate both parties. Let them present their case.

Let them be the plaintiff against their other sibling. Try to determine what happened, who's guilty, and who's innocent. Now, if you're a good judge, you don't just punish the one who's usually the one that does the wrong.

[14:29] You don't just punish the one who usually disobeys or maybe annoys the family the most. That doesn't matter. You punish the one who's committed the wrong. That's what's going on in this passage.

That's what David is calling on God to do. David's not calling him to evaluate him before the throne of God. Now, David is calling to evaluate him according to this scenario.

When David proclaims his innocence, he's not saying he's never sinned. He's saying he's not guilty of wrongdoing in this scenario. David talks his way in numerous places. When he's running from Saul and could easily have killed Saul, he even cut off a robe.

I think we have this passage for you in 1 Samuel 24. He says, Sounds a lot like this song, doesn't it?

Paul talks in a similar way as we saw at the end of Acts. You know, when he was before those courts, he defended his conscience as a witness against him that he obeyed God according to what he knew.

[15:40] And so too with us, it's right to proclaim your innocence when appealing to God for justice. So when do we pray this prayer? We pray this prayer when we suffer unjustly.

We pray this prayer when we suffer unjustly. We pray this prayer when we're the object of gossip and slander. When we've been profiled and pigeonholed by an ungodly boss.

When we're wrongly accused. Years ago, I read the story in a book of suffering about a mother, a nurse practitioner, a pediatric nurse practitioner mother, accused of child abuse because of a bruise on her daughter's head.

Her daughter fell out of a chair at dinner, hit her head. Three days later, they went to a routine doctor's visit. She told the doctor everything about this. He said, let's get a skull x-ray.

So they got a skull x-ray. This is the doctor. This is the mother, you know, working together. Three days later, DCS came to her house. Three more days later, all her children were taken from her.

[16:46] It was nine months before they stayed with her and were not supervised while they were with their kids, all three of their kids.

That's when you pray. And it was a bogus thing. It finally went to court after nine months and it was dismissed immediately by the judge. That's when you pray this prayer. There is suffering in this world, as we talked about last week.

There's suffering in this world that is a result of our sin. There's suffering in this world that is a result of natural calamities. There's suffering, though, in this world that is unjust.

And even though we're sinners against God, we still suffer in ways that are unjust. And that's when we pray this prayer. We also pray this prayer when we see others suffer unjustly. We pray this prayer for the unborn. That's why we support full circle.

We pray this for people that have been maliciously maligned or objectified or when somebody's not given a fair trial, an opportunity to defend themselves. That's why we hate the Internet in so many ways.

[17:44] Because no one's able to present another side. It's right to defend our innocence where and when appropriate. Point two, it's good to call on the Lord to hear.

To call on God to hear. It's good to call on God to hear. So after proclaiming his innocence, David calls the Lord to hear. David's now in the courtroom and look down there. He says, arise in your anger.

Lift yourself up. Awake for me. You have appointed judgment. Let the assembly of the people be gathered about you and over it return. He's essentially saying, come and take your bench. Come arise and sit at the bench.

I think the message captures this very well. What's going on here? Look with me there. He says, stand up, God. Pit your holy fury against my furious enemies. Wake up, God.

God, my accusers have packed the courtroom. It's judgment time. Take your place on the bench. Reach for your gravel. Throw down the false charges against me. I'm ready.

[18:42] I'm confident to hear from you, to hear the verdict. Innocent. You see, David's not afraid of being judged.

So he comes in the Lord's, you know, he's not afraid of being judged for the Lord. He comes in proclaiming his innocence. That's why he says to the Lord, judge me. See, David just wants his case to be heard.

You know, the idea is that if the righteous God hears his case, he will answer in his favor. That's what David believed. If the righteous God hears, then he'll answer. That's the way a civil case works.

And that's the way it's going on here. Now, several years ago, I read the book, 1944, about President Roosevelt and the year before we joined the war against Germany. So that was a big year if you go back and study it in our history.

One of the main arguments, though, of the book was that Roosevelt delayed to join the war with Britain, even though he knew the real threat of Nazi Germany and the horrific treatment of Jews. [19:41] Now, Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, the prime minister of Britain, were good friends. They talked often, met often, I guess, as often as you did in those days. And during the war, Churchill repeatedly communicated with Roosevelt.

He wrote him letters. He sent him telegraphs telling him about the prison camps. He told him about the concentration camps. He told him about the extermination camps.

He sent this information along. I remember reading once, Roosevelt was down in the Caribbean on vacation, and Churchill found him there. He said, you've got to hear about this.

The idea, or what Churchill believed, is that in light of America's love for humanity and freedom, Churchill assumed that if Roosevelt heard, he would come. That was his assumption, based on the way America's built.

If they hear, they'll come quickly, and they'll help us defeat this enemy that Churchill called evil from day one. Now, in the end, Roosevelt did go.

[20:43] He did declare war in January of 1944, 1945. He said, because you can't have a friend unless you be a friend. But he never mentioned going to the war because of the horrific treatment of the Jews.

Now, unless I get into history, unless I'm not going to do that. Well, David makes a similar assumption in this song. If the Lord hears, he will come. If the Lord hears, he will judge.

He will establish justice. If the Lord hears of my innocence in the way I've been hunted and chased around, he'll intervene and deliver. And so really, all that Psalm 6 through 8 is, it's not really a cry to do something.

It's just a cry to hear. In fact, if you go through the Psalms, if you go through the book of the Psalter, so many times, he's not really focused on the answer. He's just focused on being heard, and that's what's going on.

The idea is that if the Lord hears, that's all it takes. He comes. He delivers. That's who he is. If he hears the cry of the righteous, he's coming. It's amazing.

[21:48] So then in verse 9, the crux of the Psalm is right here. David turns from his prayer to declaring his confidence in the Lord who will judge and establish him.

He concludes his prayer. Look in Psalm 9 in the first flow part. He says, let the evil of the wicked come to an end. In so many ways, he refuses to trust in secondary causes and secondary means. He goes straight to the source. You're the one who can stop evil in its tracks, and so let it come to an end. Stop and intervene, Lord. Please have mercy and intervene.

Let the evil of the wicked come to an end and establish the righteous. That's his prayer. That's the whole Psalm right there. That the evil of the wicked come to an end and establish the righteous. Make us immovable. Make us stand by your power alone. And then in this third little bit, he turns in confidence in the Lord. You who test the minds and hearts.

[22:48] Oh, righteous God. You know, in so many ways, David enters the presence of God confident because of his innocence before God. But his confidence increases as he remembers God's boundless sovereignty and commitment to uphold his people.

He says, you test the minds and hearts. You're not limited in any way. I'm not worried. The Lord does not look on outward appearance as man does. The Lord looks on the heart.

The Lord searches our heart. The Lord discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart. The Lord understands all plans and all thoughts of all heart. The heart of the king is a stream of many waters in hand of the Lord. No creatures hidden from his sight.

All are naked and exposed to him because he sees all and knows all. But that's not all that he's mentioning here. He says he is the righteous God. He's the one who tests all hearts.

But he's the upright God. He is faithful. He is just. He is true. He is all powerful. As he says in verse 17, he is God most high.

[23 : 47] In so many ways, this little part of the psalm is when David's cares melt away. The Lord knows his heart and the Lord will uphold him. The Lord is coming. The Lord will establish him by his sovereign power alone.

You know, the sovereignty of God is a hard doctrine. And one many people struggle with, but it's precisely the sovereignty of God that establishes our hearts in trouble.

If we're in the hands of someone that can't do anything, we're no better than any man beside us. You know, as a child, Jonathan Edwards, the great American pastor whose son shot, or grandson shot Alexander Hamilton.

A little bit different ethics there, but similarly struggle with the sovereignty of God. Look at this quote. He says, From my childhood up, my mind had been want, had been kind of preoccupied with, to be full of objections about the doctrine of God's sovereignty.

But I remember the time very well when I seemed to be convinced and fully satisfied as to this sovereignty of God and his justice, and thus eternally disposing of men according to his good pleasure, sovereign pleasure.

[25 : 01] But, he continues, I have often times, since that first conviction, had quite another kind of sense of God's sovereignty than I had then. I have often since not only had a conviction, but a delightful conviction.

Vitalisics added, The doctrine has very often appeared exceedingly pleasant, bright, and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God.

The idea is, it's a doctrine that's pleasant, bright, and sweet. You know, in so many ways, it's a doctrine that brings joy because you hand everything over to the Lord.

It's a doctrine where you say, Only you can intervene, Lord. None can stay your hand. None can say to you, What have you done? You're in the heavens. You do what you please. What man is going to stand up before you?

There's no joy in trying to handle things yourself. But there's great joy in handing everything over to the Lord, knowing He can handle it. In so many ways, joy in the Psalms, if you go study this, Joy in the Psalms flows from taking refuge in a sovereign God.

[26 : 18] Joy is not a feeling. It's not an emotion. It's not something that just comes on you suddenly. It comes from taking refuge in a sovereign God. That's what we saw a couple weeks ago in Psalm 511.

Look down there with me. Let all who take refuge in you rejoice. I love that.

Last night, or several nights ago, Kim and I were talking before we were going to bed, and she was anxious about a number of things. I didn't ask her for permission for this story. But that's happened before, too.

But she was anxious about a number of things. And what we began to talk about was, in so many ways, and she was hopeless about a number of things.

And I was like, honey, I just don't think you're hopeless enough, actually, because you're still holding on to it. If your God is a God whose heart, or who holds the king's heart, and directs it wherever he wills, then why wouldn't you put everything in his hands?

[27 : 33] And so she said, next morning, I'm trying to do that. You know, amen. Amen. That's what I'm trying to do. So, I mean, I think, in so many ways, the psalm would ask us, where's our joy today?

How's your joy? Joy is a tricky thing to try to measure. I mean, is it out of the reach of the coronavirus? And mask, or no mask, or whatever it is, is it out of that reach?

Is it out of the reach of the political back and forth, or are you yo-yoing up and down this week? It was a big week. President Biden, or not President Biden, but a running for president, appointed a running mate.

Is it out of the reach of your financial and marital struggles? Is your joy out of that reach? If it's not, I think you're in trouble. Is it out of the reach of your overbearing mother?

Is it out of the reach of your wicked, controlling boss? Call on the Lord. He has all power in heaven and on earth, and he hears, and he establishes the righteous.

[28 : 39] You know, as we prayed in Psalm 1, I mean, he's kind of returning to Psalm 1, which you see again and again through the Psalter. The wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. But the Lord knows the way of the righteous.

And if the Lord knows the way of the righteous, he will establish them forever and ever. John Flavel, another Puritan, said it like this, The power of God is a supreme and sovereign power from which all creature power is derived, and by which it is overruled, restrained, and limited, according to his pleasure.

Nebuchadnezzar was a great monarch. He ruled over other kings, yet he held his kingdom from God. It was God that placed not only the crown on his head, but his head on his shoulders. That's John Flavel lower in the boom right there.

That's who the Lord is. So cry to him. This is not Santa in the sky. This is the Lord. This is Yahweh. Point three, it is wise to wait on God with confidence. It is wise to wait on God with confidence. David transitions in this prayer, and, you know, for almost over a third of it, it's kind of this statement of faith.

[29 : 56] He just turns, and then he just begins declaring these declarative sentences. He begins, all the feeling is kind of out of the way, and he's just declaring who God is.

Look in verse 10. He says, My shield is with God, who saves the upright. God is a righteous judge, a God who feels indignation every day. These verses won't fit on the Hallmark card, but they declare who God is.

There's no longer any doubt what God thinks about the wicked and what God thinks about the righteous. He loves the righteous. He protects them, but he's angry with the wicked. He's filled with rage.

Look in verse 11. He feels indignation every day. The Lord burns with anger, ready to pour out his wrath. Nahum 1, verse 2, it says, The Lord is a jealous and avenging God.

The Lord is avenging in wrath, or the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. The Lord does store up goodness for those who fear him, but he stores up wrath for those who don't.

[30 : 57] And then he kind of unpacks this, as if to protect us from the thought that the Lord is just after those people over there that do wicked. The Lord unpacks who he's judging. Look in verse 12. He says, For if a man does not repent, God will wet his sword.

He has bent and readied his bow. He's prepared for him his deadly weapons and makes his arrows fiery shafts. He's coming. The reference is, if a man, the idea is it's not just those wicked men that are after him.

This is the Lord. He's over all men. So if any man or any woman does not repent and bow their knee before the Lord, the Lord is coming in wrath. The imagery is devastating.

Men in battle are the men the Lord takes up battle with. He has a sword. He has a bow. He has weapons, deadly weapons, fiery shafts, arrows.

It's devastating. It's one thing to fall into the attack of another man. It's a whole other thing to fall into the attack of the all-powerful God. It's so concrete, so vivid.

[32 : 16] In the end, look in verse 14. In the end, the wicked man tries to take people out, ends up being taken out. The wicked man conceives evil. He's pregnant with it.

You know, some Hollingsworth imagery there. He conceives it. He's pregnant. He gives birth to lies. Just the pregnancy part, not the evil part. He makes a pit.

He digs it out. He falls into the hole that he's made. That mischief returns on his own head, on his own skull. His violence descends. The evil he plans comes upon him.

The mischief he devises captures him. The pit he digs traps him. The Lord brings down judgment. Now, this is not stuff every pastor...

No pastor likes to preach on the wrath of God, but we believe in it. Jonathan Edwards, again, in his famous sermon that got him kicked out of every high school class, he said, The wrath of God burns against them, against the unrepentant.

[33 : 22] Their damnation does not slumber. The pit is prepared. The fire is ready. The furnace is now hot, ready to receive them. The flames do now rage and glow.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over a fire, abhors you and is dreadfully provoked.

His wrath towards you burns like fire. He looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire. You are a ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes than the most hateful, venomous serpent is in ours.

And yet it's nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. When Jonathan Edwards first preached his sermon, there was so much moaning in the congregation. He preached at Enfield, Massachusetts. So much moaning, so much crying out, so many people falling down. He didn't even finish. He preached a couple nights later in the midst of the second great awakening. Is it harsh?

[34 : 26] Is it harsh? The Lord of horses says, Well, if it's harsh, it's because we're warped. If we have a man-centered view, the Lord is too pure to look on the evil. He's three times holy.

The Bible never says God is love, love, love. The Bible never says God is mercy, mercy, mercy. But the Bible does say the Lord is holy, holy, holy. This is who he is.

No man stands before him on their own two feet. The question is, will we stand in the judgment? No sinners will stand in the congregation of the righteous. Will we stand in the judgment?

Everybody in Athens believes in Jesus Christ.

Not everybody, but most everybody. The question is, is the Jesus they believe in, the Jesus we believe in, the real Jesus? I fear that so many, so much of our belief in Jesus in this area is just, we're just inoculated with knowledge on it.

[35 : 44] We just, we've had a vaccine of Jesus Christ. Now we're all waiting for a vaccine or hoping. Some of you wouldn't even take a vaccine anyway. But, you know, we're waiting for a vaccine.

We've got a vaccine of Jesus Christ. The idea is we've been inoculated with Jesus. We've got just enough Jesus to think we're okay. We've got just enough Jesus to think we'll be all right.

Just enough Jesus that gets us out of bed on Sunday morning. But just enough that we don't turn completely to follow him. We don't bank our life on him. We don't really believe him. So who is Jesus you believe in, is what this text would say.

What the Bible would say, is he the real Jesus? Is he the Lord of heaven and earth? Is he the judge of all the earth and of you? Is he the one that will stand on the throne? The one that is love, but also the one that is holy, holy, holy.

If it's a Jesus that rubber stamps your lifestyle and always says yes, he is not the real one. If he's a Jesus that never challenges you or calls you to hard things.

[36 : 44] If you've never repented, if you haven't repented the last six months, he cannot be the real Jesus. If he's a Jesus that makes little change in your daily life. And no one says, wait, why did you do that?

Then he's probably not the real Jesus. The real Jesus demands your life. He demands you follow him. He says if you turn away from him, no one is worthy of the kingdom if they put their hand on the plow and turn back.

And so Jesus calls you. He's the real Jesus Christ. These verses are meant to warn the wicked.

And before we pray against the wicked, we must find out, are we the wicked?

Are we the ones? Have we turned? Have we repented? If we have not, we must be warned. Today we are dangling over that fire. Fire like a spider dangles over a fire in our homes.

And if we're not following the real Jesus Christ, we have no hope of sinning. And this is not a condemning message. This is because the message of the gospel is the message that makes you right before God.

[37 : 44] Once for all, Jesus Christ, he came, he died, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. So that we stand not on the stone of any merit of our own, but on the merit of Jesus Christ alone.

We're saved by the righteousness of another. And so God can say, if any man does not repent, I'm coming. So be warned.

I heard that message a million times before I gave my life to Christ. But these verses are meant to warn the wicked, but they're also meant to help God's people wait.

Now, if we saw the whole context here, you know, that's what's going on. I mean, how much difference would it make if we knew what the rest of the year held? Because 2020, let's admit it, we spent a doozy.

One of my cousins posted on Facebook the other day, instead of NyQuil, he posted this year quill. Just take this and 2020 is over. I'm like, get me a box, man.

[38 : 50] I'm ready to be done with this. I love you, Lord. I want to follow you. But 2020 has been a little too much. You know, how much difference would it make, though, in our life, you know? How

much difference would it make if we knew whether we were going to get the coronavirus or something like that?

Or if we knew who was going to be president? If we knew whether we were going to be homeschooling in a few months? Maybe. Well, David's saying all that you need to know is certain. All that you need to know is certain. Just because there's some uncertainty in your life, don't act like the certain things are uncertain now. That's what he's saying. All that you need to know is uncertain. So he's saying, don't avenge yourself. Don't take matters into your own hands. Never avenge yourself. Leave it to the wrath of God. That's what he's saying. That's why he's mentioning that wrath. Don't do it. Call on the Lord.

Don't, though, don't lose patience. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness. But he's patient toward you all, and toward the whole world, not wishing that any should bear it, but that all should reach repentance.

[39 : 50] The idea is that the posture of the people of God is a posture of waiting with confidence. The posture of the people of God is a posture of waiting.

Waiting for justice. Waiting for righteousness to rule throughout the earth. Waiting for the will of God to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Waiting for his kingdom to come.

So it's so fitting that he concludes in verse 17. I will give thanks to the Lord, do his righteousness. And I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High.

That's a wonderful contrast from those opening verses, being afraid of the snare and entrusting himself to the Lord. Who judges justly.

In so many ways, following our Savior. Who before his shears was silent. Doesn't mean we don't cry out. Doesn't mean we don't fight injustice in this world. But it does mean we have a posture of waiting, knowing the Lord's coming.

[40 : 55] There's so much certainty. And yet I wonder, do we live like it? Rest assured, beloved. The Lord is coming.

The Lord, Yahweh, is coming. The one who promised you. The one who gave you his only son. The one who did not spare him. And he will establish you forever. Let us be found waiting with confidence.

Father in heaven, we thank you for just a few minutes before this word. Lord, this word searches us. It knows us. It's living and active. It's sharper than any two-edged sword. Piercing to the division of soul and spirit.

Joint and marrow. Able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart from afar. And so we offer our life. Search us and know us, God. See if there's any unclean way in us. And lead us in the way everlasting.

Everlasting. Establish us, God. In these days. In these times. That we might be a people that trusts you. That has hope in this world.

[41 : 55] Even when the world does not. That we'd have hope even in the difficulties of our daily lives. That we'd be a people who wait with confidence. Lord, let us wait for the Lord.

We shall see the goodness of God in the land of the living. We trust you. We cry out to you. We lean on you, God. Not on our own understanding. In all our ways. Acknowledging you. Trusting you'll make our paths straight, God.

Oh, Lord. Keep us. In these things. God, if there's any person that is wondering where they will spend their eternity. This morning. We pray that you'd open their eyes to see the invitation from Jesus Christ.

Oh, Lord. Oh, Lord. Oh, Lord. How merciful. And gracious. Slow to anger. Abounding in steadfast love you are.

Lord, we will not fear, though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea. For God is with us. We are your people, a temple of your Holy Spirit.

[43 : 04] So keep us. We praise you and we thank you. In Jesus' name.

Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com.

Thank you. Thank you.