

# Southern Kingdom of Judah

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's get started. Okay, great. So, 9 o'clock. So, let's open with Psalm 62, if you have a Bible.

All right. And let's start reading from verse 5 of Psalm 62.

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence. For my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress.

I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory. My mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all time, O people.

Pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us. Those of low estate are but a breath. Those of high estate are a delusion. In the balances they go up.

[ 1 : 21 ] They are together lighter than a breath. Put no trust in extortion. Set no vain hopes on robbery. If riches increase, set not your heart on them.

Once God has spoken. Twice have I heard this. That power belongs to God. And that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work.

So, last week, we looked at, in the history of Israel, pretty early on, after the first couple of kings, the kingdom, the monarchy splits in half.

And last week, we talked about the northern kingdom of Israel. The northern half of that split. And the big takeaway from that is it was a morass of sin and idolatry from beginning to end.

There's really nothing good to say about it, at least in terms of their leadership. And this week, we're talking about the southern kingdom of Judah, the southern half after the split.

[ 2 : 23 ] And if the northern kingdom of Israel is just idolatry from beginning to end, one might wonder, what hope does Judah have? What hope is there in the southern half of this split kingdom?

But, in fact, things go a lot better in the southern kingdom. The contrast is striking, especially at first. There is this refrain of, especially among the early kings, the heart of Asa was wholly true to the Lord all his days.

Jehoshaphat walked in all the way of Asa, his father. He did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord. Jehosh did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all his days, because Jehoshaphat the priest instructed him.

Amaziah did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not like David his father. He did in all things as Jehoshaphat his father had done, etc., etc. The first several kings, it goes splendidly in the southern kingdom of Judah.

Strategically positioned. So, the contrast is striking. You know, as King Ahab is doing all sorts of horrible stuff in the north, in the south we're seeing kings like Jehoshaphat doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord.

[ 3 : 54 ] So, one might wonder, reading this, what makes the difference for them? Why is it so different? And the contrast is God's promise.

All the way back to King David in 2 Samuel 7, which we looked at several weeks ago. Recall God saying, When your days are fulfilled, and you lie down with your fathers, David, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. So, God promises David in the house of David, his own presence in the temple, this house for his name, and that David's descendants would always be on the throne in Jerusalem.

And if they're always on the throne in Jerusalem, then they have to be doing something right, or else God would sweep them away. So, God protects them to be different from the kings in the north.

And let's get this right then. You know, if their distinction is God's promise, then it's not their own effort, their own merit. It's about God's promise that protects them.

[ 5 : 17 ] I think there's a lesson for us here, too. That anything good that happens in the church, by the church, which is unfortunately not as common as we would like as we look at church history, but anything good that the church does, or anything good that happens in the church, is not really to be credited to us.

There's no place for Christians to be saying, well, look at us, we're so much better than all those idolaters out there. But if it's God's promise, and God's faithfulness to his people, that protects Judah, at least at first, especially at first, then it's the same for us today.

Jesus says to us, I will be with you always, to the end of the age. If God's presence protects Judah, at least at first, well, it's the same for us.

God's presence is with us and keeps us in Christ. But Judah goes horribly wrong after several generations at first.

First, we see kings like Ahaz. Ahaz, the son of Jotham, king of Judah, began to reign, and he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God, as David his father had done, but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel.

[ 6 : 43 ] And as we look in the prophets, so that's the books in the Old Testament from Isaiah to the end of the Old Testament, we see part of what makes the prophets so challenging to read is that a lot of it is God saying through the prophet how horrible his people are being.

And just, it's a litany of sin. So this week I poked through the prophets of Judah, especially Isaiah and Jeremiah, and said, well, what are the major categories of things that God has against his people Judah?

And I think the root of all of them, and we're going to talk about some of these, the big ones, the big categories of ways that Judah goes wrong, but they all come down to this root problem of not trusting in the faithful God who had made these promises to his people, and who had proven his faithfulness over centuries.

So, one of the ways that they go wrong, the worship of idols. Jeremiah writes, do you not see what they're doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven, and they pour out drink offerings to other gods to provoke me to anger. Or in 2 Chronicles, we see about King Ahaz, in the time of his distress, when other nations around him were besieging Judah, in the time of his distress, he became yet more faithless to the Lord, this same King Ahaz.

[ 8 : 40 ] For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had defeated him and said, because the gods of the king of Syria helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.

That bit in 2 Chronicles, I think, really gets close to the heart of what is going on when Judah worships idols. This whole idea of idol worship might not connect with us so much, because people don't make idols and worship them, today in the West, at least.

We talk about idolatry of money or power, or we can talk about idolatry in this kind of metaphorical way, and that works, that sound.

But no one actually, you know, makes a wooden idol and sacrifices to it or bows down to it. So we might not totally connect with what's going on here, but I love this bit in 2 Chronicles 28, because we see the kind of heart dynamic in King Ahaz.

He says, well, Syria defeats me, so that must mean their gods are stronger than I am. So I'll, you know, Yahweh, the god of Judah, hasn't come through for me, so I'll worship these other gods of Syria.

[ 10 : 07 ] They seem to be, Syria seems to be doing pretty all right. The gods seem to be helping them, so I'll sacrifice, I'll worship to them. Fundamentally, Ahaz's idolatry is not trusting in the god who had brought them out of Egypt, who had brought them into this promised land, even though they were a lot smaller than the people who were in the land.

Not trusting in the god who had protected them for centuries. Even though God had promised always to keep a son of David on the throne in Jerusalem. He's not, it's fundamentally not trusting in the promises of God.

And similarly, we see the prophets bring against Judah a reliance on political alliances and on military effort, human effort, instead of God.

In Isaiah 31, woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong.

But do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord. Now, you can sympathize with this, I think. You know, humanly speaking, if you are this tiny nation and everyone around you wants to wipe you off the map, it makes sense, humanly speaking, to get these political alliances with some of the nations around you.

[ 11 : 38 ] Egypt is the big bully on the block, so it makes sense. Make an alliance with Egypt and then they can help you. And of course, if you're being besieged militarily, then of course you're going to trust in horses and chariots.

Chariots were the great military technology of the time. Of course you're going to trust in it. And yet, how did Judah persist so long already?

You know, it was because, you know, the God of Israel who brought them up out of Egypt was protecting them. They didn't have chariots when they were crossing the Red Sea.

So, again, this is fundamentally not trusting in this faithful God who had already proven his past faithfulness to them.

Early on in Isaiah, God confronts them about empty religious ritual. What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?

[ 12 : 42 ] Says the Lord. I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts. I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or of goats or in Jeremiah.

Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal and go after other gods that you have not known and then come and stand before me in this house, the temple, which is called by my name and say, we are delivered only to go on doing all these abominations?

I think, you know, Baptists, we like to think that we don't do a bunch of empty rituals.

But we do have some, you know, sort of religious ritual practices like going upstairs and singing hymns and praying, you know, reading your Bible in your devotional reading of scripture.

And to rely on these good things to the exclusion of this trust and obedience to what God has said is trying to come to God on our terms instead of God's terms.

[ 14 : 08 ] It's trying to mold God to our will instead of molding ourselves to his will. It's not trusting that God will actually embrace us if we're open and honest with him and with others about our messiness.

To put on a show with these sort of religious practices that have become empty is not to trust that God really will still love us if we're open about our mess.

Or maybe it's not trusting that God's commands are for our good. You know, we like to keep up appearances, but we don't want to actually change our way of living because we're afraid that if we actually start obeying God's commands, then that'll be too arduous, too onerous.

It's, you see what I'm doing here. I'm taking all these different categories of sin that come up in the prophets and saying, well, really, this comes down to not trusting in God.

And I think this can be a really helpful sort of exercise for ourselves when we're looking at our own lives and thinking maybe about certain things that we're doing that God would have us repent of.

[ 15 : 43 ] Well, it can be really helpful to look at what is the root of it? What are the, you know, deep beliefs and desires? What is it that I'm believing about God that makes this behavior make sense?

and a lot of times it comes down to not trusting in, not trusting that God is for us. That's what it comes down to for Israel and for Judah.

And then this last category that I pull out, that's probably one of the really, really big ones that comes up in the prophets. Injustice to the poor and marginalized.

Like in Isaiah, woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees and the writers who keep on writing oppression to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right that widows may be their spoil and that they may make the fatherless their prey.

What will you do on the day of punishment and the ruin that will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help and where will you leave your wealth? Or elsewhere, also in Isaiah, those who accumulate houses are as good as dead.

[ 17 : 01 ] Those who also accumulate landed property until there is no land left and you are the only landowners remaining within the land. Throughout history and today, you don't need to look very hard to see that the rich and powerful oppress the poor and marginalized.

But it wasn't supposed to be that way in Judah. In the New Testament, James equates the mere possession of wealth with oppression.

So this is an indictment that spans the whole breadth of scripture. Now, why do people do that? Why do the rich and powerful oppress the poor and needy? Well, I think in Judah especially, it's not trusting that you'll have enough.

And for Judah, it's not trusting in the God who brought them manna in the desert, who gave them water from the rock when they were wandering in the wilderness.

[18:12] the God who brought down bread from heaven six days a week when they were wandering about in the desert and didn't have any food, is the God who can be trusted to make sure you have enough even if you don't subject the poor to injustice.

in Matthew six, let's actually turn there for a moment. In Matthew six, verse 24, the turn between verses 24 and 25 had confused me for years.

Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew six, verse 24, no one can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.

That therefore perplexed me for a while. You know, don't, you cannot serve God and money, therefore, don't be anxious about money, basically.

[19:45] Don't be anxious about food and clothing. Well, I think what's going on here is Jesus is saying if God is for us, if God loves his people and is fundamentally for us and not against us, then we can trust that he'll provide the bare essentials of life, food and clothing.

without us needing to accumulate resources at the expense of others unjustly. I think that's what's going on in this therefore. You don't need to serve money in order to have enough to get by. Not if God is for his people. And this is so important to Christ that in Matthew 25, Jesus describes the way that people treat the poor and marginalized as the sole criteria in judgment when Christ returns.

There's no mention of faith or of the gospel there. It's just how you treat the least of these, my brothers and sisters. The way that God's people treat the poor and marginalized reveals whether God's people are trusting in God to provide for their needs.

It's fundamentally, again, do we trust in God's character? Do we trust in God's fatherly kindness? And Judah doesn't.

[21:23] They stumble and turn away. So at this point, I'm going about 25 minutes, at this point, are there any comments or questions or concerns?

Am I articulating, am I making enough sense? I think this is, yeah.

I'll just have been on the injustice toward the poor. I think wealth in many ways it's a tricky thing, right? Because I don't think the Bible says it's a sin to be rich, but on the other hand, there's so many warnings against loving money, hoarding money, not being generous with money.

I think we need to be, I mean, in the U.S., it's like the goal is to become rich, or at least have plenty that you don't have to worry about anything bad happening to you.

So, I mean, I think we need to question ourselves more, probably generally more than we do about, you know, am I trusting money? Am I being generous?

[22:42] Like, that's part of, in some ways, like, am I willing to let go with some of my money to give it to God's purposes? Well, that's probably a good sign that, you know, we're at least not totally idolizing it, you know, or attached to it.

So, yeah. But I think it's a tricky thing because it's not so clear as some other, there are other commands where, um, sometimes it can seem, like, very clear, like, you broke that, you've either lied, or you haven't lied.

Like, you've either told the truth, or you've lied. It's like, well, have you been greedy, or have you been responsible? Well, like, the line is just a little more, it's just a little harder for us to see that line. But I think it's, it is a big theme, both in the Old Testament and New Testament, so. Yeah. I was going to say, I think, to hold it up, that it's all relative.

I mean, we, each one of us is really rich compared to people in other nations. You go to look at Haiti or something, it's like, we are super wealthy, even though we may feel like, oh, we're just barely making it and all that.

[23:50] So, I think it's, what are we doing, because it's all relative, what are we doing around us to help people with what we do have?

And I found that, like, the more you give away, the more God seems to supply. And it's always the tension of maintaining that balance, because we get caught in the cultural constraint of excess is honorable, and we get sucked into it.

This is as noble as desirable. Yeah. Yeah. It's a challenging word for people who live in the wealthiest per capita nation in the history of the world.

I think that's still, I think China might be beating us, but not per capita. Whatever, that doesn't matter. Yeah. And I should say, you know, I say, you know, James equates the mere possession of wealth with oppression.

It is, James lived in a different economic world also. You know, our economy, the global economy is growing at a rate that is unimaginable to the ancient world, right?

[ 25 : 14 ] In a growing economy, it is actually possible for everyone to be getting better off every year. It is imaginable. If the pie is getting bigger, then everyone's slice is getting bigger.

In a way that just, that's not how it worked in the ancient world. If you were rich in the ancient world, it probably was due to defrauding the poor. Well, James specifically says you've kept back by fraud the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields.

Right. And he just sort of assumes, he begins by speaking against the rich, and then he just sort of assumes that, well, if you're rich, you must be doing something like this. In a way that is not necessarily so certain.

In a global economy that is growing unimaginably faster than, you know, in the Greco-Roman world. But it's still, it's still something to take very seriously.

Okay. Now, Judah having not, you know, over the course of centuries, right, so the kingdom splits in, like, nine, in the 930s B.C.

[ 26 : 34 ] Uh, but then, uh, centuries later, in the 500s, uh, B.C., um, God's had enough. Uh, Ezekiel writes, thus says the Lord God, behold, I, even I, am against you, and I will execute judgments in your midst, in the sight of the nations.

There's sort of, like, this dynamic from, that we were talking about in Numbers chapters 13 and 14, when Israel's about to enter the land, uh, is Israel's thinking, uh, well, would that, you know, if only we had died in the wilderness, instead of having to go up into this land that God promised us, and then just get slaughtered by the people living there.

Uh, and God says, all right, you don't trust that I'm for you. You would rather die in the wilderness? Fine. Um, you know, this dynamic of God gives us what we really want. Uh, well, if Judah's not trusting that God is for them for centuries, well, God turns around and says, fine, behold, I, even I am against you.

Um, it's, this chilling kind of a dynamic. Um, and we, we see in 2nd Kings, uh, 24, the Lord sent against Judah bands of the Babylonians and bands of the Syrian and bands of the Moabites and bands of the Ammonites and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by his servants, the prophets.

Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the Lord to, to remove them out of his sight for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done and also for the innocent blood that he had shed.

[ 28 : 12 ] For he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood and the Lord was not willing to forgive. Uh, you know, if, if even God says, uh, even I am against you, then, then what hope can Judah have?

Um, well, once again, the hope for Judah is this faithful God who had promised. Uh, after all, we read at the beginning, uh, here that God had promised to always keep a son of David on the throne in Jerusalem.

Um, and if God sends all these other nations to destroy Jerusalem, then at some point there must be another king coming because God had promised.

Um, and even earlier in, in Deuteronomy 30, God promises, you know, when you're disobedient, I'm going to send you out of the land.

I'm going to exile you out of the land. Uh, but then I'm going to restore you and bring you back. Uh, so even all the way back in Deuteronomy, uh, before Israel had even entered the land, God had promised, well, after all this happens, I'm still going to be with you.

[ 29 : 21 ] I'm still going to bring you back. Um, the hope that Judah has is even after persistently not trusting in the faithful God who had promised.

Even so, this faithful God had promised. Um, and, and for us, if the root of Judah's sin is not trusting in, in the promising God, in, in God's fatherly kindness and promises, uh, will we trust that God is for us?

Uh, and, and we have strong assurances, uh, that God is for us, um, on this side of the cross. Uh, we can say that with Paul in Romans 5, God chose his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We can look at that historical reality and say, if God did this, then I can trust he's for me, uh, in any circumstance, no matter what. Um, and then there's this glorious bit at the end of Romans chapter eight.

If God is for us, who can be against us? It's like the inverse of that thing in Ezekiel, right? If God is against us, who can be for us? Well, if God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

[ 30 : 51 ] I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Um, and I, I, I love this sort of reasoning that Paul does here, right? God has already done the hard thing, giving us his son.

Well, that means we can trust him in all the, the easy little stuff, comparatively. Uh, if, if, uh, you're arrested and put in prison and, uh, bail is set at 10 grand and your buddy bails you out, you can trust him that he'll, you know, he's good for, for the bus fare to get you home.

You know, if he's already paid 10 grand, what's bus fare? Uh, you know, if God has already given us his son, uh, then he could be trusted with all things were, were said.

Uh, he did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. How will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Uh, and I think what Paul means there by all things is all things.

[ 32 : 02 ] Um, if not now, then, then in the age to come, uh, uh, Psalm 84 puts it, uh, no good thing does God withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Um, this is, this is stunning to imagine. Uh, I, I think sometimes we need to, we need to cultivate our, our imagination of, of how wonderfully kind God is towards us.

Uh, I think in, in 1 Corinthians 6, I should have put this on the sheet. Um, I think in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul says, uh, to the Corinthian church, do you not know that you're going to judge angels?

So a few weeks ago, Nick, Nick was preaching upstairs and talked about angels as these, uh, spiritual beings that are, uh, so glorious that usually in the Bible, when someone encounters them, they fall down in worship because you think, well, something this incredible must be God.

Well, if you're in Christ, you're going to be judging angels. I don't, I can't even fathom that, right? Uh, in, in the, at the end of, of Revelation, uh, a wonderful place to sort of sit and try to cultivate this imagination of what God, how wonderfully kind God is towards us.

[ 33 : 23 ] Uh, I'm reading from Revelation 22, uh, describing the, the new creation. Uh, we're told, uh, the Lord God will be their light, they being God's people, and they will reign forever and ever.

And if you're in Christ, that they reigning forever and ever is you. Uh, if, if, if you ever, you know, uh, look at the news and think, wow, I could do a better job, uh, than, than these organizations or governments.

Uh, well, something, there's something in there that's actually good, because in the age to come, you will be participating in that. Uh, I, I, I, do you see how, how wild that is?

Um, what, what I'm getting at here is, uh, if, if we look at scripture and see what God has done for us, particularly on the cross, and we look at what God is promising for us when Christ returns, uh, and that, that can give us, uh, fertile soil to just imagine and, and, uh, not imagine as if it doesn't exist or that it's not real, but, uh, to image, to imagine just how wonderfully kind God is towards us, how reliable his promises are, how faithful he is to us.

Uh, and that sweeps the legs out from underneath this, uh, pattern in Judah of not trusting in God and therefore disobeying in all these different ways. Uh, if we look at what God has done for us, then we can trust him.

[ 35 : 01 ] And if we can trust him, then, then that sweeps the legs up from underneath. Um, there, there is this, uh, wonderful bit from a sermon I found on, online.

Surely, it's about this bit in Romans 8. Surely if he would not spare his own son one stroke, one tear, one groan, one sigh, one circumstance of misery, it can never be imagined that he should

ever, after this, deny or withhold from his people, for whose sakes all this was suffered, any mercies, any comforts, any privilege which is good for them.

Uh, you know, God has already done the hard part. Everything else in life he can be relied upon.

Um, now our idea of what is good for us is not, is not always accurate.

Right? I'm, I'm not saying that God's going to give you a jumbo jet or something. Uh, because our idea of what is good for us is not, is not always right. Um, but the God who gave his own son can be relied upon for, for everything good.

Um, everything that, that is ultimately good for us. Um, are there any other many, uh, a heck of a lot?

[ 36 : 02 ] Uh, we got to the end of the handout and it's, and it's quite early yet, but are there any, are there any other thoughts on this? Have you, have you ever, uh, engaged in this sort of practice of looking at when examining your life through the lens of, you know, how, how am I not trusting or, or examining maybe patterns of sin and thinking, well, what is, what is the root belief of not trusting or what am I believing about God that makes this sin make sense?

Uh, has that been helpful in the past or, or any other, any other thoughts? I don't know. You know, I was just maybe a, a slightly different perspective.

One of the challenges of being a Christian is to look at life through God's lens and identify his hand in our lives.

And it's so easy when things go right to say, oh, God did that. Hmm. But, you know, even going back to, um, your, uh, Ahaz, um, that you talked about early, that because Syria defeated them, he assumes that God is stronger.

One of our, his challenge there was believing that in God's economy even loss has value. Okay.

And I think our challenge, just like the people of Judah, is believing that God is good when, when we don't see it.

[ 38 : 05 ] And believing that God does have value in loss. Hmm. Yeah.

Yeah. Our idea of what is good and, and what God might do for our good is not, is not always what, what's in God's mind of what is good for us and what, what is actually ultimately, uh, helpful.

Yeah. Yeah. Um, what does that look like for you in the day to day?

It's very easy, I think, to be a cynic. It's very easy to, um, assume that everyone has an angle, um, to assume that, uh, God has an angle, to assume that the biblical authors have an angle, uh, and that every relation is a power relation, and to, to be a cynic.

Um, I, I think cynicism is, is one of the, uh, great sins, uh, an understandable sin, but, but I, I think sin nonetheless, of, uh, of my generation, at least.

[ 39 : 51 ] Um, and trust is really the opposite of cynicism, right? Uh, if you're a cynic, then you're not trusting anyone. Uh, you're, you're assuming that, that everyone is hiding something, and that everyone's duplicitous, and everyone's a hypocrite.

Uh, and that can even extend to God. Um, even though it doesn't make any sense to say that God is duplicitous. No, it doesn't make any sense at all. Um, so, yeah, trust is a muscle that I think is, in today's cultural context of, uh, this society, at least this, part of the country, um, is a muscle that, that easily atrophies.

Um, yeah. I think it's interesting that, like, the problem of evil is, there's evil having God be all powerful and for our good.

Sure. And know what's going on. And trust is running the argument the other way. I know God's good. I know God's powerful. I know God knows what he's doing.

So this evil can't be inscrutable. Yeah. It's funny how, uh, kind of the strongest argument against Christianity is what trust is that is directly attacking.

[ 41 : 33 ] Yeah. Yeah. And what, what's needed there is to look at, uh, look at the world through the lens of the cross. Right. Uh, I mean, what is, what is the greatest horrific evil that's ever happened?

If not the, the, the, the, the crucifixion of God. Right. Uh, and yet somehow that, that is actually the, the foundation of our being able to trust God.

Um, yeah. Sometimes it feels like trusting God is taking a blank check, signing it, giving it to God and keeps upping the amount.

Catch it in. Hmm. Who, who was it who said, um, I think this is Bonhoeffer.

Uh, when, when Christ calls a person, uh, he calls him come and die. My goodness. Um, that's putting it awfully starkly.

[ 42 : 34 ] Uh, but that's like that blank check that you're giving to God and saying, it's, it's all, it's all yours and I can trust you with this because you went to the cross for me.

Yeah. I think the easiest times to die is also the moments when we realize, well, I can't trust me with my life.

Yeah. Yeah. John. Yeah. No, it certainly wasn't the perpetrator that you chose to start with Psalm 62. Oh, of course. Yeah.

Just to make some of those connections. And the Psalm ends with two things I can confirm about God. He's strong and he is awesome.

And I will choose to take those affirmations to look at all the ups and downs of my life. Therefore, in verse five, God alone, O my soul, wait in silence for my hope is from him.

[ 43 : 49 ] We can look at the downers of our life and respond and stand back and wait because our hope is in him. And we can go ahead and exegete the rest of that.

I think it's all applicable to some of these issues. God has purposes. You may not understand, but we can trust him. Yeah. Yeah.

Amen. All right. With that, let us pray. Once God has spoken, twice have I heard this, that power belongs to God and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.

Lord, you are loving and faithful to your people. And we can see that preeminently in the cross.

We know that if you went as far as to give your son for us, we can trust that you are for us in all things. And we know that you, your hands are not bound, that you are strong.

[ 45 : 17 ] And so we can take refuge in you, knowing that you are loving and for us and that you are strong to act for our good.

Lord, give us hearts of trust, of implicit trust in you.

That we might trust that you are always for us and that we might not stray from that way as your people have in the past, as they did in Judah.

Lord, and as we go upstairs, soften and open our hearts to love you and one another, we pray. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. Amen.