

Listen & Wake Up!

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[0 : 00] What a joy it is to be with you. This morning, we will be walking through Isaiah 51 and most of chapter 52, piece by piece. It will help you to follow along if you have the Bible open in front of you.

It can be found on page 572 of your pew Bibles, page 572. And if you're not familiar with the Bible, the big numbers are the chapter numbers, and the smaller numbers are the verse numbers.

Let's ask for God's help this morning. Father in heaven, we ask for your help this morning. Would your spirit be among us, applying these truths to our hearts, to your honor and praise.

Would the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Suspected of being a spy for the British government, the missionary Adoniram Judson was imprisoned and sent on a long death march.

Judson was America's first missionary to be sent overseas. Educated at what is now Brown University, he had renounced an easy life to bring the gospel to Burma, now Myanmar.

[1 : 14] But after leaving, three of his children died. And then a civil war broke out. And for 21 months, he was falsely accused and subjected to insult and cruelty.

His prison guards tormented him, beating him, starving him, and finally forced him on a death march across the hot Burmese climate. The God he risked everything to serve had handed him a bitter cup to drink.

You know, how could Judson trust God when all the circumstances in his life seem to argue he should do otherwise? Have the God he served abandoned him in his suffering?

Well, friend, this is the situation that God's people face as we come to Isaiah 51. Because in the exile, God's people, likewise, were forced to trudge the hot desert on a long march to Babylon. And to give context in where we are, Israel as a nation had forsaken God. And after much long suffering, God had banished an unfaithful people from Jerusalem. God shattered Jerusalem.

[2 : 17] And he used Babylon as his means of accomplishing that. As Adam had been exiled from the garden, the people were once again exiled from the land because of their disobedience. But through this devastating storm of judgment, a remnant of faithful Israelites were caught up in the exile, ripped from their homes to an unknown land.

Notice to whom the Lord is speaking to in chapter 52, verse 1. Look with me. God says, listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord.

Or in verse 7, listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law.

These are people who are sincerely seeking to be what is right before God, to live under his authority.

You know, the term righteousness often means God's salvation, but here it means living under God's authority to the honor and praise of God. But despite living for God's honor and praise, these Israelites are experiencing humiliation.

Look down at verse 23. Their tormentors have tyrannized them, demanding that they bow down, that we may pass over. And you have made your back like the ground and like the street for them to pass over.

[3 : 28] Remember, God's people are Babylon's doormats, forced from their homes to be walked over. Is there any hope when you unjustly suffer?

Isaiah 51 gives us a compass to navigate the storm. In these chapters, God will pursue his people in the desert and speaks comfort to those who are suffering under tyranny.

And the structure of this passage is God calls us to listen or pay attention in verses 1, 4, and 7. He then calls us to action, telling us to awake, awake in verses 9, 17, and verse 1 of chapter 52.

So to navigate the storm of suffering, we will look at three ways that God tells us to listen and three ways for us to awake. So there's six points today. Be comforted by Christian by, one, looking to your history.

Two, look to your future. Three, look to your maker. Four, awake to God's deliverance. Five, awake to God's wrath. Six, awake to God's great salvation.

[4 : 32] Look to your history. Look to your future. Look to your maker. Awake to God's deliverance. Awake to God's wrath. Awake to God's salvation. So number one, be comforted by looking to your history from verses 1 to 3.

To comfort his people, God commands the righteous to look to their history in verses 1 to 2. Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you, for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him.

God commands Israel to look. The same verb God used with Abraham in Genesis 15, verse 5. Look up at the night sky and count the stars, Abraham. And God commands Israel to look where you came from.

Look to Abraham and Sarah. Now, what is it about Abraham and Sarah that we must remember? Is it their greatness and their good works? No. The end of verse 2, Isaiah points us to the promises that God made to them.

God had called Abraham and Sarah out of an idolatrous nation, out of an idolatrous family, and promised them blessing. God would recreate the world one day through that family.

[5 : 37] And their family would be as numerous as the stars of heaven, and through them all the nations of the earth would be blessed. And like Israel, Abraham and Sarah left their homes to an unknown land, and likewise had endured suffering and affliction and despair.

But God had been gracious to them. He had kept his promises and preserved them. And he is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And as God preserved Abraham and Sarah, God would preserve his people in a foreign land.

In this desert of the exile, God promises that Zion, his people, will have joy and gladness again. Look down at verse 3. For the Lord comforts Zion. He comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord.

Joy and gladness will be found in her. They all remember that and realize that although they were going to Babylon, God will still comfort them. The day will come again when Jerusalem will flourish. Joy, gladness, and God's presence will be found in Jerusalem just like in the Garden of Eden. He can make the desert green as a garden. And God gives water to the thirsty soul in the desert.

[6 : 40] And the way these Israelites could have joy in their suffering is recalling that God is faithful. And that faithfulness is to be trusted. And God certainly kept this promise to comfort his people in the exile.

He encouraged and comforted Daniel while in Babylon. As Christians, we are also strangers in exiles. And we must rely on God's word. We must know God's acts and his past faithfulness to his people.

We must know the promises of God and what God has not promised. As Thomas Watson once said, Better to be in a prison with God's presence and God's promises than be on a throne without them. There is a spiritual principle that Isaiah wants the suffering heart to hear.

Do not let your circumstances determine your assurance, but God's unchanging promises. I'll say that again. Do not let your circumstances determine your assurance, but God's unchanging promises.

We must know these unchanging promises. So parents and grandparents, teach your children and grandchildren God's promises. Serve them well by teaching them to rely on God's promises and so persevere through trials as adults.

[7 : 43] Church, are we in the habit of reminding each other of God's promises and his past faithfulness? Is there anyone in your life that is reminding you of that in your despair? You know, thanking God for his past faithfulness is great medicine to the suffering heart.

So here's an idea. Younger Christian, invite an older, more mature Christian to lunch, maybe today, and plan to ask them how in dark times God's promises comforted them. And listen.

Or if you work near someone, like at the hospital or the university, invite them to study the Psalms with you on your break and learn together the former saints who have relied on God's promises in

affliction. As a church, we ought to be reminding each other of these promises.

And we look to God's faithfulness in the past to give us assurance that he will be with us today. And this is vital to the Christian life. If you find that life is a big pile of trash, God can still give you joy by relying on God's promises.

When we are dejected, the Spirit gives us assurance to help us believe in God's Word. But God calls us not only to look to our past. Point number two is we must look to the certain future in verses 4 to 6.

[8 : 48] God calls these Israelites his own in verse 4. They are my people and my nation. All the promises to David and Abraham are theirs. What was that promise to Abraham?

You know, God originally promised salvation in Genesis 3, 15, that he would send a male offspring to crush the head of the serpent. And as the story unfolded, God promised that this offspring, this Savior, would come through the line of Abraham, which would extend to the entire world.

That salvation of this promised male offspring will surely come. In verse 6, God declares that this salvation will be forever. What God will do for the children of Abraham, all the world will come into its light, fulfilling the promise that God made to bless the whole world through Abraham.

God declares in verse 4, I will set my justice for a light to the peoples. And this sense of justice echoes Isaiah's description of the servant's work in chapter 42, verse 4. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth, and the coastlands wait for his law.

Justice here refers to God restoring order to chaos, making straight what sin has bent. And the servant would come to establish justice in the land, and that light would extend to all the nations.

And in God's mind, this recreation of the world is as good as done.

[10 : 03] The reality of God's salvation is so clear that Isaiah uses the past tense in verse 5. God's salvation has gone out, and nothing will stop him, but future is certain. And notice the contrast of the permanence of salvation to the fleeting nature of the earth and even the heavens.

God calls these exiles in verse 6 to lift up your eyes to the heavens and look to the earth beneath, for the heavens vanish like smoke. The earth will wear out like a garment, but my salvation will be forever.

In the end, heaven and earth will vanish as quickly as smoke vanishes in the wind. The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the only thing that will remain is God's salvation. And God promises eternal vindication to his people in verse 8.

You see those people who would oppose you, who oppose me? Don't worry about them, God says. The moth will eat them up, and the worm will eat them like wool. They will be consumed in judgment. Any attack on God's people is an attack on God himself.

God will deal with it. He will vindicate his people. The future is certain. The people were tempted to think the kingdom of Babylon would outlast God's promises. But God says no. His promises are permanent. And isn't that true?

[11 : 07] We are living witnesses to the truthfulness of Isaiah's word. Where is that great city of Babylon who exalted itself above God? It is a pile of rubble in Iraq.

But here we are in this room, and God is still ruling and reigning because he is a sovereign creator. The people need not be afraid. His salvation has gone out. To place your hope anywhere else than God's salvation is like relying on a mirage in the desert to give you water when you are dying of thirst.

Like a mirage in the desert, anything created will vanish away when you need it the most. And to comfort us, God reminds us to look to our past and then to the certain future of God's salvation. And the next point, God reminds us that he is a sovereign creator.

And point number three, look to your maker. In verses 12 to 16, look to your maker. Now this section gets to the heart of why we lose hope when we suffer unjustly, when others harm us.

And the reason why is we live as if God were not our maker, and we become afraid of mere people rather than God. The people thought Babylon was bigger and more powerful than God himself.

[12 : 09] Could God really deliver us from our enemies? Because their hearts were full of fear, as verse 13 said, because of the wrath of their oppressor, whom they continually fear. They were enslaved because they were afraid.

In the end, their tyrants were spiritual emperors who shackled the people in a spiritual dungeon. Now I think if we asked one of these Jews in the ancient synagogues and asked them the question, you know, who is your maker? They would immediately reply, God is our maker.

We've read Genesis 1 and 2. We know God is our maker. The point isn't to say that they forgot some truth intellectually, but in their heart they lived as if God was not their maker. But there is one command in this section.

Do not be afraid, verse 12. Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass? God gives an avalanche of reasons to not be afraid.

Notice in verses 12 to 16, it contrasts the supreme greatness and transcendence of God with his close intimacy to comfort us. He is incomprehensibly powerful, verse 13.

[13:09] He is the maker. We are the creatures. He is the creator. He stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. He stirs up the roaring waves. The Lord of hosts is his name. He is the king of glory.

Again in verse 16, God established the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. But in the same breath, God says he is near to his people. He uses his sovereign power as the world's maker to comfort us.

I, even I am he that comforts you. The transcendent God is near to the brokenhearted. In verse 16, I have put my words in your mouth and covered you in the shadow of my hand. The transcendent Lord encircles and covers his beloved people.

And God will protect his people in the exile. In verse 14, the people who are bowed down will be speedily released. They shall not die and go down to the pit. Neither shall his bread be lacking. It's as easy for God to release the people from captivity as easy as it is for me to hand over a pen to you.

Their tormentors are accounted as nothing before the Lord of hosts. These people are made like grass, God says. You know, fear of men is a lot like being afraid of grass. I would gather one thing universally true of all of us here is that none of us are afraid of grass.

[14:23] You mow the lawn. I want to give a second thought to how scary grass is. You know, as far as Charles Spurgeon commenting on this verse says, You see the grass cut down by the mower's blade lying in long rows and withering in the sun.

Are you afraid of that grass? No, you say, certainly not. Then be not afraid of men, for they shall be cut down after the same fashion. But just like Israel, many of us from day to day are terrified of grass.

Many of us can relate to anxiety, this anxiety. We are afraid of others' opinions of us. It paralyzes us. You know, when preparing for the sermon, part of me was afraid of what you all thought about this sermon, and then what God thought about this sermon.

None of us are immune. We are mastered by other people. They control us. People are giants and God is tiny in the end. In the end, we are afraid of grass. In Ed Welch's book, *When People Are Big and God Is Small*, he writes, The fear of man goes by other names.

When we are in our teens, it is called peer pressure. When we are older, it is called people-pleasing. Recently, it has been called codependency. With these labels in mind, we can spot the fear of man everywhere. We never expect that using people to meet our desires leaves us enslaved to them.

[15:30] And the people were enslaved because they were afraid. They feared the Babylonians because they forgot the foundational truth that God is their maker. And likewise, all of us have spiritual amnesia. Our hearts have a tendency to forget what God is like in our suffering.

Rather than recognizing that the creator God is glorious, infinitely wise, holy, and strong, in our trials, we live as if he is small, as if he were one of us. We all have spiritual amnesia.

And that's one of the reasons why here at Trinity, we make it our aim to preach the gospel each week. To constantly be putting truths before us to remind us of them. We need to be reminded that God is powerful to save, even most discouraged saints.

The gospel helps us to not lose heart, to avoid falling back into slavery. You know, a church member once asked Martin Luther, Why do you preach the gospel to us week after week? Why don't we move on to other things?

And Luther replied, Well, because week after week, you forget it. Because week after week, you walk in here looking like a people who don't believe the gospel. And until you walk in looking like people who are truly liberated by the truth of the gospel, I'm going to continue to preach it to you.

[16:36] And we are the same way. We need to remind you of the gospel. And the Lord is our maker to not lose heart in our suffering and to avoid living in slavery. So, friend, in your suffering, look to your maker.

And these calls to look and listen are paired with calls for God to act. Awake, awake. These people are crying out for God to deliver them. And point number four, awake to God's deliverance. In verses 9 to 11. Awake, awake. Put on strength, O arm of the Lord. Awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Was it not you who dried up the seas, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea away for the redeemed to pass over? And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing.

Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Isaiah, standing as a representative for the voice of the people, cries out to God to awake and put on strength.

[17:38] What an audacious claim. That's an accusation that God has not been active on the people's behalf. The power of that arm has not been available to them. But this rings with so much biblical faith.

One thing to notice is how faith can reach the depths of despair. There is a place to feel broken, express deep sorrow, to lament. We've lost the ability in our day and age to lament well.

I think some of us may be even embarrassed or too proud to admit these emotions are part of the Christian life. There is room in the church for the brokenhearted. Think of the despair of Abraham, of David, and Jeremiah.

And Jesus himself lamented. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. We read that in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus became greatly distressed, troubled, and sorrowful.

And likewise, God's people in the exile are expressing sorrow. One area that Christians are prone to experience sorrow is the situation here. You can sincerely believe that it is possible for God to do something, yet be deeply troubled because he does not rescue you now.

[18:42] Is he even paying attention? Why does he not do something in our slavery? Isaiah speaks with the voice of the people calling on God's act as he had done in the days of old. And the Exodus is on his mind.

He calls on the arm of the Lord, echoing when the Lord brought out Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with the great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders. He is calling on God to awake as he did in the Exodus.

I think the question arises, who is Rahab in this dragon Isaiah is referring to in verse 9 to 10? You see that? When we hear Rahab, we normally think of the woman who performed courageous deeds of faith at the Battle of Jericho, mentioned in Hebrews 11.

But the word Hebrew named Rahab literally means pride or arrogance. So other time, Rahab is used as an image of Egypt or here of Babylon.

Isaiah is comparing Babylon to Egypt. And God cut Egypt in pieces and pierced Pharaoh the dragon. And likewise, God's people are calling on God to judge the nation of Babylon and free his people from slavery.

[19:46] And we know this is an allusion to the Exodus because the next verse in verse 10 mentioned Israel crossing the Red Sea. Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea away for the redeemed to pass over?

Israel needs another Exodus. God must save his people through his outstretched arm. And God responds to this cry for freedom by giving a vision that has been used to encourage many a weary saint.

In verse 11, Just as the Lord made a way in the dramatic crossing of the Red Sea, he will do something new to save his people. And the ransom of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing, everlasting joy shall be upon their heads.

They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sin shall flee away. This is a vision of hope for the Christian suffering at the hands of the tyrant. This is promise for the ransomed of the Lord, those who are freed from slavery.

Though mistreated now, soon everlasting joy will crown your head. Sorrow and sighing will flee away like a shadow flees when the sun comes out. When God's work of salvation comes, the released captives will be given a crown, eternal joy on their heads.

[20:58] In their suffering, in the mind of God, the people are glorified as they triumphantly march back into Zion with singing. God will defend his people from any nation that would seek to tyrannize them and will bring his people safely home again.

As the psalm says, many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. And this is a picture of heaven. As 1 Peter reminds us, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the day of Jesus Christ, the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And that day will come. As Adoniram Judson said, when Christ calls me home, I shall go with the gladness of a boy bounding away from his school. This truth caused Christian slaves on the plantation to form choirs singing, sweet low swing chariots, coming to carry me home.

Christian, this is not our home. But God will one day bring us home. And God gives us a glorious picture of the future to help us endure suffering in the present.

And these calls to listen are paired with calls for action. Point number five, awake to God's wrath in verse 17 to 23. God reverses the call to awake, and now it is Israel who must awake from her drunken stupor.

[22 : 09] Wake yourself, wake yourself. Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord, the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs, the dregs, the cup of staggering. There is none to guide her.

Among all the sons she has borne, there is none to take her by the hand. Among all the sons she has brought up, these two things have happened to you. Who will console you? Devastation and destruction, famine and sword.

Who will comfort you? Your sons have fainted. They lie at the head of every street like an antelope in a net. They are full of the wrath of the Lord, the rebuke of your God. Through the devastation of the exile, Israel experienced the lightning storm of judgment.

The Bible uses the image of drinking from the cup of God's wrath down to its dregs. The people experienced the Mosaic covenant curses for their disobedience. Verse 19 are images of those covenant curses that God promised through Moses in Deuteronomy.

Devastation, destruction, famine and sword. But now God will turn the tables on Babylon in verse 22. Jerusalem will rise from the ashes and Babylon will go down into the ashes.

[23 : 14] Verse 21, Therefore hear this, you who are afflicted, who are drunk but not with wine. Thus says your Lord, the Lord, your God who pleads the cause of his people. Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering, the bowl of my wrath.

You shall drink no more. And I will put it into the hand of your tormentors who have said to you, bow down that we may pass over. And you have made your back like the ground, like the street for them to pass over.

God gets their attention. And behold, he will put the cup of wrath into the hand of the tormentors. And God will take up the cause of his people. God has been the prosecutor in the courtroom, but through the exile.

But now God will switch sides and be their defender in the courtroom from every charge that can be brought against them. God, he is the faithful husband who defends his wife Israel. And God is committed to saving his people.

As in the Exodus, God will once again deliver them from slavery. And this brings us to the last point, awake to God's great salvation. Awake to God's great salvation. Chapter 52 sets the table for Isaiah 53 and the description of the suffering servant who had come to save.

[24 : 18] The crescendo, the drama of God's salvation is getting louder and louder as Isaiah progresses. God will reverse the curses into blessing. Verse 1, chapter 52, awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion.

Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city. For there shall no more come into you, the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake yourself from the dust and arise. Be seated, O Jerusalem. Loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

For thus says the Lord, you were sold for nothing and you shall be redeemed without money. For thus says the Lord God, my people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there. And the Assyrian oppressed them for nothing.

Now therefore, what have I here, declares the Lord, seeing that my people are taken away for nothing. Their rulers wail, declares the Lord, and continually all the day my name is despised. Therefore, my people shall know my name.

Therefore, in that day they shall know that it is I who speak. Here I am. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, your God reigns.

[25 : 23] The voice of your watchmen, they lift up their voice. Together they sing for joy. For eye to eye they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem.

For the Lord has comforted his people. He has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations. And all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Depart, depart, go out from there.

Touch no unclean thing. Go out from the midst of her. Purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the Lord. For you shall not go out in haste. You shall not go in flight. For the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

The people were tempted to think that God's arm was too short to save the people. Back in chapter 51, verse 9, the people cried out for the arm of the Lord to awake to save the people.

God declared, my righteousness draws near. My salvation has gone out. My arms will judge the people. The coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait. The world is waiting and waiting for the Lord's arm to appear to lead another exodus.

[26 : 25] But we begin to see in Isaiah that the arm is a person. He is the Messiah, the servant. God responds to his people's cry for the arm of the Lord in Isaiah 52, verse 10.

The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. In Isaiah 53, we learn the suffering servant is called the arm of the Lord.

53, verse 1. Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant. The servant's strength, the arm of the Lord, is supremely displayed in his humble service.

The arm of the Lord is someone strong enough to shatter the shackles that bound his people in slavery. And God's salvation will come through the servant who will show God's strength when he saves his people, like in the exodus.

But this exodus will be greater than the first one. God calls him in verse 11 to depart, depart, go out from there, touch no unclean thing. In the first exodus, God's people took some of Egypt with them.

[27 : 35] In the second exodus, they'll leave it all behind. There will be a complete separation. In the first exodus, the people were called to take jewelry from Egyptian houses to make haste.

This time, they're commanded to touch nothing, to come out and be pure, not to go out in haste, because God himself would be with them. They're called to leave behind more than Babylon in the second exodus, but all ungodliness.

This coming exodus would rescue them, not from a geopolitical reality, but deliver them from much deeper slavery. And the servant, the Lord Jesus, would redeem those out of the darkness of slavery, the slavery of the heart, and to bring good news.

Paul quotes Isaiah 52 in Romans 10, as Tosin read earlier. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news. Jesus came to bring good news.

And the gospel is a joyous proclamation of good news that sets the slave free, speaks peace to the rebel, and gives hope to the downcast. And the joyous proclamation of the gospel is this, that God is your maker, and your maker is holy.

[28 : 41] And he's made us in his image to know him. And because he is the maker, he has authority over us. But we've sinned against this good God. In our natural estate, we are citizens of Babylon, God's enemies and slaves to sin.

And because of this sin, we all rightly deserve God's wrath and condemnation. We deserve to be consumed in judgment for reproaching God and his people. Consumed as the moth eats the garment, and the worm will eat them like wool.

That is what we've all deserved, because we show contempt for God and his people by our sin. But here's the good news, the joyous news of happiness, of salvation, that Isaiah saw dimly. In his great love, God would bear his outstretched arm by sending Jesus the servant, who was fully God and fully man.

Jesus put on strength by humbling himself. And this is the strength of God's arm that Isaiah wants us to see to prepare us for Isaiah 53. The supreme power of the servant is displayed by humility. Jesus would come to the servant and give his life as a ransom for many. This Jesus completely and fully obeyed his father, even to the point of death. He laid his life down and willingly went to a cross.

[29 : 47] Christ made his back like the ground was trampled, so that we would not be trampled under God's judgment. Christ paid the horrific penalty as a cup of God's wrath was poured on him as our substitute.

He drank the cup the Father gave him for you and me, and for all who would have ever turned from their sin and trust in him. On the third day, he rose from the dead, and he now commands everyone everywhere to turn from their sin and trust in him alone.

And he has not done these things in secret. He has done it in the public square, before the eyes of all the nations. And this is the good news that makes Christians sing for joy while suffering. In the most distressing circumstances, plantation slaves could form choirs singing gospel hymns.

In the book of Acts, the apostle Paul and Silas sang hymns to their prison guards. Christ gives joy to Christians who suffer unjustly. And if you are here and you are not a Christian, awake, awake to God's salvation.

Run to Christ. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. His arm is not too short to save. He can reach across the universe with his outstretched arm to save even those broken and vile sinners.

[30 : 52] And for you, Christian, this suffering will not last forever. Things will get better. Do you see how much joy is bursting from the seams when the servant would appear? The people were in darkness in the exile, but the Spirit of God triumphantly is working out their salvation for their eternal joy.

Adner, I'm Judson. This missionary drank the bitter cup of suffering. Where did Judson find hope during his death march and after losing his children? Look at the comfort he found in Christ in the midst of painful loss.

Listen to the comfort he gave to a fellow missionary, Sarah Boardman, who had lost her husband. He wrote about finding the sweetness in the bitter cup of suffering. He writes, My dear sister, you are now drinking the bitter cup whose drags I am somewhat acquainted with.

And though for some time you have been aware of its approach, I venture to say that it is far bitterer than you expected. As to your beloved, you know that all his tears are wiped away and that the crown which encircles his brow outshines the sun.

Little Sarah and the others have found again their father. Not the frail, sinful, mortal that they left the earth, but an immortal saint. A magnificent, majestic king.

[32 : 00] What more can you desire for them? While therefore your tears flow, let a due proportion be tears of joy. Yet take the bitter cup with both hands and sit down and drink the cup. You will soon learn a secret that there is sweetness at the bottom.

You will find the sweetest cup that you have ever tasted in all your life. You will find heaven coming near to you. Judson learned that Christ is the sweetness at the bottom of the suffering. And you can find the same.

When we face unjust suffering, Christ is there for you too. He can make the waste places green as the Garden of Eden. Let's pray. Father in heaven, O Lord, give us water in the desert.

Make these waste places green as the Garden of Eden, as you comfort us with your presence. Help us, Lord, to move forward to that crown of joy that would be placed upon our heads.

And sorrow and sighing shall forever flee away. Amen. Amen.