

Nahum Chapter 2

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[0 : 0 0] to read now from Nahum, which is on page 938, if you've got the blue copy of the Bible, just check with Peter, it says chapter 2 verse 1, is that it? Just the one verse? That's what I thought, just thought I'd better check. So Nahum chapter 2, page 938, and this is about a proclamation that Nineveh is going to fall. An attacker advances against you, Nineveh, guard the fortress, watch the road, brace yourselves, marshal all your strength.

The Lord will restore the splendor of Jacob, like the splendor of Israel, though destroyers have laid them waste and have ruined their vines. The shields of his soldiers are red, the warriors are clad in scarlet. The metal on the chariots flashes on the day they are made ready. The spears of pine are brandished. The chariots storm through the streets, rushing back and forth through the squares. They look like flaming torches. They dart about like lightning.

He summons his picked troops, yet they stumble on their way. They dash to the city wall. The protective shield is put in place. The river gates are thrown open and the palace collapses.

It is decreed that the city will be exiled and carried away. Its slaves, slave girls, moan like doves and beat upon their breasts. Nineveh is like a pool and its water is draining away.

Stop, stop, stop, they cry. But no one turns back. Plunder the silver. Plunder the gold. The supply is endless. The wealth from all its treasures. She is pillaged, plundered, stripped.

[2 : 0 0] Hearts melt. Knees give way. Bodies tremble. Every face grows pale. Where now is the lion's den? The place where they fed their young. Where the lion and lioness went. And the cubs with nothing to fear. The lion killed enough for his cubs. And strangled the prey for his mate. Filling his lairs with the kill and his dens with the prey. I am against you, declares the Lord Almighty. I will burn up your chariots in smoke. And the sword will devour your young lions. I will leave you no prey on the earth. The voices of your messengers will no longer be heard.

Thank you, Barry, for leading us in the first part of our service. And again, would you turn back to Nahum, chapter 2. This is only a very short series. There's only three chapters to this prophetic book. It's one of the minor prophets. And last week in the evening we began with chapter 1, naturally enough, and considered there the very character of God. And the perfection of God's attributes in himself. And this week we've read chapter 2 and we're going to be in chapter 2, but we're going to be going, treating the letter as a whole, the prophecy as a whole.

And so there's going to be points drawn out from all three chapters, particularly. Well, it's World Cup rugby that's going on. And if you're a rugby fan, you were very pleased yesterday. England beating Fiji. Yeah, thank you. And of course, when there's ever a World Cup, whether it's football or rugby or cricket or something else, then of course the flags of St. George come out and you get these strange people sort of dressed up like knights as if they're St. George and this sort of patriotism built around him. But St. George is really very little more than a fairy story. Unlike St. Patrick of Ireland and St. David and St.

Andrew, who were real saints, if I can put that, real godly men, George is really more of a story that you'd find in a Disney sort of movie than in reality. And in that story, it's typical of a fairy story, typical of a Disney because you have the hero, St. George, you have the villain or the baddie, which is of course the dragon, and you have the heroine to be saved or the damsel in distress to be saved. There's three elements you'll find in almost every single story. A hero, a baddie, and somebody to be rescued and saved. But this is just the outline of the story of St. George. There was a town in Libya in the Middle Ages by the name of Silene. And at that town, there was a lake in which a dragon lived. The people of Silene, to keep the dragon at bay, would feed it a sheep every day to keep it keep it on its good side. But one day, eventually, they ran out of sheep. So they decided they would have to feed their children, one of their children, to the dragon. Well, who on earth could they choose?

So they all chose by lot, all the people of the town. And it happened that the king of that town, or the mayor, or the noble or dignitary of that town, it was his daughter who was chosen to be fed to the dragon. Of course, the king was destroyed. He was upset. He offered all his money for somebody else, for their children to take his place, their child to go in the place of his daughter. Nobody, of course, was willing to do that. And so she was sent out to the lake to be fed to the dragon.

[5 : 56] St. George happened to be passing. I don't know whether he's on his way to the co-op or something. And he rose past the lake. And there he sees the princess trembling, crying out to him, please, will you save me? Please, will you help me? So George vowed he would remain and help her.

And so when the dragon reared out of the lake, while they were talking together, George charged at him on horseback with his lance, gave him a grievous wound, and then led him back in chains to the villagers who killed him. The conquering of the monster led to the blessing and deliverance of the daughter.

What's that got to do with what we're doing here? Well, when we come to Nahum, we realize that in this book we have a prophetic declaration by God of the destruction of a monster, the superpower that was Assyria, and whose capital city was Nineveh. For several generations, Assyria had been terrorizing the whole region, terrorizing every people group, and crushing and destroying people under its powerful regime. And the reason that God tells Nahum this prophecy and reveals to him this vision of what will happen to Syria, that it will be destroyed and conquered and crushed, is so that God's people, his daughter, we might call it, may be spared, delivered, rescued.

We saw that. The very reason that God was writing was to encourage his people there in chapter 1, verse 7, the Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.

But with an overwhelming flood, he'll make an end of Nineveh. The two go together. God wanted to encourage his people, Judah. He wanted them to hear the good news, the end of chapter 1. We saw there, verse 15, look on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news. What's the good news? It's peace that the enemy, Assyria, would be destroyed. And so these two are inseparably linked. Destruction brings deliverance. And God had sent Assyria. They'd been, in one sense, under his command because Israel, the northern part of God's people, there was Israel at the north, Judah in the south.

[8 : 30] Israel had gone away from God, gone away into idolatry, gone away into worshipping idols, spiritual adultery. God had sent Assyria to discipline his people, to correct his people.

And when Assyria came, they conquered the north, but they also held power over the south, over Judah, and they were ruled Judah. They didn't take all the people away in exile, but they ruled over them.

They kept them under their control. But now this was all going to change. Now they were going to be able to celebrate, verse 15, their festivals and fulfill their vows.

No more would the wicked invade them, for they would be completely destroyed. The only way that things could change for God's people was that God had to, first of all, overthrow Nineveh.

God had to, first of all, face up to and deal with that enemy of their faith and life. And that theme of God setting his people free and blessing them through the defeat of his enemies is a theme that goes all the way through the Bible.

[9 : 33] And again we see, don't we, hopefully as we've come to name perhaps an unknown passage to us before, that ultimately it's again expressing to us and teaching us the very nature of our salvation.

The whole theme of God's redemptive history, the whole theme of God's rescuing of his people, overthrowing his enemies, is there from beginning to end. So when we go right back to Genesis 3, we have that wonderful description of what the seed of the woman would do.

He would crush the head of the serpent. Right at the start, there is to be a battle. Of course we've seen that when we've been looking at Exodus early in the year, and I hope we can return to Exodus in the coming months.

There most clearly we see God's people being delivered out of the slavery that the Egyptians had brought upon them by God's overthrowing Egypt through the plagues, and ultimately of course through the Passover and the death of the firstborn.

And we see that cycle all the way through the history of God's people in Judges. Judges is that incredible time where God's people fall into sin and they are oppressed. God raises up a deliverer.

[10 : 49] The oppressors are defeated and God's people are set free to worship him and return to him. And that went on and on and on and on throughout the time. But the best, of course, we understand, the best way for us to understand this is for the church.

We realize for us to enjoy the blessings of our salvation, a battle had to take place. A battle in which certain of God's enemies had to first be destroyed. And the great hero of the scriptures, the great hero of the New Testament, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Find it in Hebrews in chapter 2. And you can turn there if you want. And it gives that picture, I hope, very clearly. It tells us why Jesus had to become human and come into our world.

It's verse 14. See, the same thing.

Why did Christ come into the world? He came to overthrow the works of the evil one, didn't he? That's what John tells us. He came to destroy Satan and a very powerful weapon that Satan had, which was sin and death in the lives of God's people.

[12 : 11] And so, once more, in the cross, we have the greatest exhibition of the power of God in setting his people free. Without Satan's defeat and the destruction of death, we could never be set free from slavery to sin and death.

And so, too, then, God's people here in Judah. Their deliverance would come about by the overthrow of Nineveh. The destruction of the Assyrian rule. You see it, as we've just read there from verse 7 and 8.

The Lord is good, a refuge. He cares for those who trust him. With an overwhelming flood, he'll make an end of Nineveh and pursue his foes into darkness. That's why so much of this book of Nineveh is violent language, isn't it?

In fact, many of the prophets as well, many of the minor prophets have that similar theme because they're dealing with similar situations where God's people were in need of God's powerful overthrow of their enemies and deliverance.

That's why we find that in the Bible, God speaks those terrifying words at times against nations, wicked nations, that they should be destroyed and overthrown.

[13 : 19] One of the things that the world finds difficult, perhaps even as Christians, we sometimes find difficult. Why is the Old Testament so full of violence? Why is it so full of bloodshed? Why is it so full of battle scenes?

Let me just point the thing out to you. Just look in the world today. Look in the world through history. The Bible only reflects the reality of what is going on in the world. So the Bible speaks about battles and conflicts and killings and wicked nations and despots because the world is full of those people.

Because all through time and history there has only been warfare as sinful men have stood up against God and against his people. God shows them.

The whole point of God's word is to say to God's people, do not be afraid, the victory is the Lord's and you are on the Lord's side. And that same power that will crush the evil Assyrian forces which have caused so much bloodshed, and we thought a little bit about that last week, the same power that will raise up God's people, Judah, will fulfill his promises to them, will do them good.

Because that's why he's written this book to them. That's why he writes this book to us. We too need encouragement, don't we?

[15 : 10] We too know and feel something of the sense of the fact that we're in a battle, spiritual battle in the world in which we live. Not just Christians here, but not just Christians in Assyria who are persecuted, and North Korea who are persecuted, in Saudi Arabia who are persecuted, but the church has always suffered and always had an enemy that has stood against it.

And though our enemy in this day and generation in the West is subtle, yet he's just as real. We need encouragement. We need encouragement. We need encouragement because I'm sure, like Judah of old, we feel, in comparison to the empires of the world, very small and insignificant.

Who were Judah, this tiny, tiny little country, sort of the size of Wales, standing up against the might of the great empire of Assyria? They didn't have a chance. And here we are, dear friends, as God's people, standing up against the might of militant Islam, standing up against the might of militant atheism.

We may ask ourselves, where is our God in all of this? When they rule over the media, when they rule over education of our children, when they rule over every aspect of our lives in government, making laws which crush and defeat the word of God.

Where are you, Lord? What are you doing in all of this? What hope is there for the church when we are surrounded by our enemies? All sorts of rumours and gossips that Islam will overtake the United Kingdom and the church will be thrust out.

[16 : 46] But God has promised and his word cannot be changed. Jesus has said, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matthew chapter 16, we know it only too well. But again and again, throughout the scriptures and throughout the Old Testament and the New, what do we have? Promises of God to bless his people, to increase and to gather in his elect, to bring those who are far near.

And so we have the wonderful picture laid before us at the end of the New Testament and Revelation. We have that picture of the multitudes from every tribe and nation and tongue under heaven worshipping the Lamb.

How is that going to happen when the world is so antagonistic? Well, as we consider what God has to say about the defeat of the Assyrians, here we can see, I hope, God willing, that this is how he fulfills his promises to his people today.

This is how he overthrows the enemies that stand against him today. So what can we glean? What can we draw by way of encouragement as we surely need it? Well, we're going to go back to chapter 1 for a moment before we come to chapter 2.

[18 : 03] The first of all thing we see is that God's power is greater than all of nature. Verses 3 to 6. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power.

The Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm. The clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and dries it up. He makes all the rivers run dry.

Bashan and Kamal, their mountains, wither the blossoms of Neverland. That's another mountain. Fade. The mountains quake before him. The hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it.

You have this great picture of the power of God over all of his creation, over all nations. Mountains are nothing to him. The great seas are nothing to him.

He can dry them up and rebuke them. Again, what can we see? We see again clearly that if we believe in a God who is a creator of this world, then we have no problem in recognizing he is a God who controls this world.

[19 : 05] If we do away with God as a creator of the world, if we go down the route of saying this world came about by accident over billions of years and has not been created by God, then why should we believe that God can control creation and nature?

We belittle God. Though hurricanes, droughts, earthquakes, volcanoes, many other powerful displays in nature all show how helpless human beings are in controlling the world around about us.

There in verse 6, who can stand against his indignation? God has used his nature, his creation over and over again to defeat his enemies and fulfill his promises.

Again, where do we think of that? Think of Exodus. Think of the Red Sea. There are God's people. God has led them directly, purposefully, through the wilderness till they get to the Red Sea.

There's no way forward. Charging up behind them in chariots is all of the Egyptian army hell-bent, literally, upon their destruction and they are trapped.

[20 : 16] What does God do? Parts the Red Sea, leads them through, destroys the forces of the enemies against them. That was God's doing. Think of Joshua in that great battle where God stops the sun from moving in the sky for 24 hours so he can continue the battle and defeat the enemy.

Think of that earthquake with Paul and Silas enchained by their enemies within the Philippian jail. God sends an earthquake to set them free. Again and again. The whole of his creation is under his power to accomplish his purposes.

It's important for us to recognise that, to remember that. We can get, we aren't, I don't want to get off into too much of a side sort of thing, but we needn't be those who are overly concerned about the greenhouse effects.

I'm not saying that we shouldn't be careful and we shouldn't be green-minded and all those things, but so often we get swept along with the media, the ice caps are going to melt, the world's going to be flooded, we're all going to boil up and all this sort of thing.

Our God controls creation. Whatever man may do, and a man should be a better steward of the creation that God has entrusted him in. We needn't fear.

[21 : 31] God's power is greater than nature and he uses it. But more importantly, I think, and especially, we find that God's power is seen in history. And that's particularly chapter 3.

I know we're going to come to chapter 3 next week, but particularly verses 8 and following, God reminds his people and speaks to the Assyrians about the fact that he is a God who has authority and power over history.

He mentions there Thebes. Now, Thebes was a great city in Egypt, but it was destroyed by the Assyrian army in 663 BC.

It was a very natural stronghold. As it says there, the river was her defense. It was surrounded and straddled by the Nile around about us by a series of canals. It was thought to be impregnable.

It also had many allies. Cush and Egypt were her boundless strength. Put and Libya, these were all countries which were on her side who promised to fight for them, but they were still destroyed.

[22 : 39] They were still overwhelmed. Why was that? Because God had promised that they would be. God had prophesied through Ezekiel, the prophet, in chapter 30 that this is what would happen to Thebes.

Ezekiel 30, verses 14 to 16. I will lay waste up at Egypt, set fire to Zoan, and inflict punishment on Thebes. Pour out my wrath on Pelusium at the stronghold of Egypt and cut off the hordes of Thebes.

I will set fire to Egypt. Pelusium will writhe in agony. Thebes will be taken by storm, and so on. That's years earlier, decades, centuries earlier.

God had said that Thebes would be destroyed, and indeed, Thebes was destroyed because God had promised they would be by the Assyrians, but now the Assyrians would be destroyed themselves.

When the Assyrians had taken Thebes, they had acted in the utter, most despicable way. There in verse 10, her infants were dashed to pieces.

[23 : 41] Dreadful atrocity, these war crimes. This is what the sort of Assyrian people were like. But here was Assyria. It thought itself impregnable.

It thought itself like Thebes of old. Thebes had thought itself impregnable, but was destroyed. Assyria thought itself impregnable, but God had destroyed it. God rules history. He raises up rulers, and he brings them down.

The affairs of this world are under his sovereign hand. He is the Lord, our God. He governs as he chooses. Whether it's the fall of Thebes or the fall of the stock market, God has his hand in history.

And all of history teaches us that God's hand is for the good of his church, for the blessing of his people. I'm sorry if you missed out on Wednesday when we had David Gregson with us talking about the English Bible.

That was so helpful. But one of the things that he brought to our attention, if we didn't realize, was that the reason that we have the English Bible now, and why the Reformation took place, which was the recognition and the restoration of the gospel, was because of the Renaissance, a worldly event, the recapturing and re-understanding of the arts and languages and Greek and so on, and through the invention of printing press.

[25 : 04] Things completely unconnected, we might think, with the church, but God had brought them together all at exactly the right time so that ultimately we might have the word of God in English and so that the Reformation may take place.

All of history, you see? All of history is under his hand. And here we are, we're looking out over the whole of Europe and we're saying there's this incredible swathe of people pouring out of the Middle East and North Africa and even into, what's happening?

Well, God's in control. God has his hand upon these things. God has a purpose in these things. We are to see as the world sees it, we're to see it from God's perspective, from a heavenly perspective.

How many of those people is God bringing into Europe to hear the gospel to be saved? How many of those people is he bringing out of places of darkness into light that they might be missionaries back to their own country?

We don't know. But we know him and we know that he is at work and that he is more mighty and powerful over all of history.

[26 : 22] And thirdly, here we see as well that every power is subservient to God's power. That he triumphs over all authority.

That's where we're in chapter 2 particularly. I am against you, declares the Lord Almighty. I am against you.

You see, the Syrians had many reasons to feel secure. They had this great empire. It had been there for many years, decades in fact. Every enemy that they'd ever stood against had fallen.

Every foreign god who had set itself up against them had fallen. But God points out to them that every one of their confidences is ineffective.

That they are powerless. Every human power and resource cannot withstand God. First of all, there's the strength of their army and the size of their army.

[27 : 23] You can see that back in chapter 1 again just for a moment. Verse 12 where we're told that although they have allies and are numerous, they'll be cut off and pass away.

Chapter 2 verse 1, an attacker advances against you. Guard the fortress, watch the road, brace yourselves, marshal all your strength.

They were powerful. Their army was great. Their number dwarfed the number of God's people. The number of God's people was a tiny little remnant, a beleaguered group. But it wasn't by their strength that they were to overcome this great nation, but by God's promises.

See, God is not, how can I put it this way, thwarted, worried, concerned by the strength of all his enemies.

None of them can stand against him. None of them can hold a light against him. We have, again, a wonderful picture. Remember, Gideon. What a wonderful story that was, wasn't it? Gideon with his, how many was it?

[28 : 29] 300 against 135,000? You see, what his enemy didn't have, the Midianites, I think it was, he had God.

God, one plus God is the majority. Any number without God is the minority. No, the Assyrians had great armies, but they couldn't stand against him.

Again, we think of our present situation. What is the popular thinking of the world today? What is the, what is the majority thinking of the world today? Well, we don't need to ask that really, because we can just see it in church attendance, especially amongst evangelical churches.

What, 5%, 8% maybe? 10% for really, really feeling hopeful? 90% of the population of the UK do not worship regularly in church and are not believers.

Oh, well, therefore, they must all be right, mustn't they? They must be right. If the majority say it, they must be right. Not numbers. God is for us.

[29 : 43] It's not the size or strength of their defences as well. And we see that Assyria was a very strong, forceful place. God of the fortress there in chapter 2, verse 1.

But notice what God says later on as we go into chapter 3 in verses 12 to 13. What he has to say about their fortresses, their castles, their walls. All your fortresses are like fig trees with their first ripe fruit.

When they are shaken, the figs fall into the mouth of the eater. Look at your troops, they're all women. The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies. Fire has consumed their bark.

What's he saying? Well, he uses the illustration of a fig tree. A fig tree is not like an apple tree or some other sort of fruit tree which has a strong central trunk which gives it a real sense of solidity and strength.

A fig tree, especially when it's heavy laden, is sort of quite gangly. Remember that way. And the slightest wind and the slightest shaking means all the fruit just simply drop off.

[30 : 50] And so Nineveh's walls were going to fall without that much difficulty. That's the thing. They were just gangly. They may have seemed thick and impressive but really with the first shake, with the first attack, they were going to fall flat.

In fact, says God, the bars of your defenses and the gates that you've set up and trusted and hidden behind, well they're just wide open and they're just going to be consumed.

What do we think of? We think of Jericho, don't we? Jericho, that impregnable city on the plains, that impregnable place that God's people came up against. What on earth are we going to do?

How are we going to bring this down? How is it brought down? Just with the voice of God's people. With the voice of God's people. So when God determines to break into a situation or when he determines to break into the heart of a person or when he determines to break in, no defense, no argument can stand before him.

Again, when we look at our situation, we find that all sorts of people are standing up to speak against God. All sorts of learned and intelligent people, the Richard Dawkins and the Stephen Hawkins of this world.

[32 : 05] Oh, there is no God. There is no need to be a Christian. Wasn't it Richard Dawkins who with his followers put up a poster on London buses, there probably is no God, therefore enjoy life.

They couldn't even be certain of that. They couldn't say there definitely is no God, they just could say probably. They weren't sure. But all these things, militating against, the arguments, how can you believe in a God you can't see?

How can you believe in creation when science tells us it must be by evolution? And all of these things, there's no problem for God. All these so-called defenses, all these so-called unpenetrable arguments, they're just to be blown over by the Lord.

One of the things I think is common to every enemy of God, particularly the Assyrians and many people today, is the size of their ego, the size of their self-confidence.

See, verses 11 to 12, I hope when you were listening you heard about all these lions. Where is the lion's den, the place where they feed their young? Where the lion and lioness went and the cubs with nothing to fear?

[33 : 18] The lion killed enough for his, the symbol of the Assyrian empire was a lion. In fact, if you see any archaeological effects from Assyria, you'll see often there's a lion as part of their sort of, we have the three lions of course in England, but they had the lion.

That was their, that was their, that was their boast. We're like a nation of lions. Who's going to stand against us? We're fear invoking. And none more so than their kings, their emperors.

They thought of themselves as being able to go and swallow up nations as a lion would its prey. One of their kings and emperors was called Esarhaddon. This is what he boasted.

They found it written on one of the columns. He boasted this, I am powerful. I am all powerful. I am a hero. I am gigantic. I am colossal.

I am honoured. I am magnified. I am without equal amongst all the kings, the chosen one of Ashur, Nabu and Marduk. That's what three of the gods that the Assyrians worshipped.

[34 : 21] He either had an inferiority complex or he had a very self-inflated opinion of himself. Pride. confidence in himself.

The Assyrians were confident. What does God say? Verse 13, I am against you. Reminds me of the scriptures, doesn't it? God is opposed to the proud, gives grace to the humble.

Those who set themselves up against God are setting themselves up for a fall. That's the reason they were defeated and why God's people were restored. God was against them. God was against them. But let me assure you, dear friends, that God's word declares that God is for us.

Romans 8, 31, Paul makes that wonderful declaration. If God is for us, that rhetorical question, if God is for us, who can be against us? Well, lots of people can be against us, but they don't matter, do they?

If God is for us, let the whole world be against us. Let the whole of Satan's forces be against us. They don't hold out any hope. Whenever we're attacked, whenever we are faced with opposition, whether it's from the world or the rule of this world, Satan, God is at work for us.

[35 : 41] Notice he says it again in verse 9 of chapter 3, I am against you, declares the Lord Almighty. He is against them and he is for us.

He works in all things in our lives, in the life of his church to bring about the blessings and the purposes and the promises he has. There's that lovely incident, I think, in Philippians where Paul writes, he writes from prison, he's enchained.

What does he have to say to the Philippians in chapter 1? Oh, what a terrible time. Where is God? Why has he left me like this? Everything's going against me. This is what he writes. I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me, being imprisoned, arrested by the Roman authorities, held for trial, I want you to know that everything that has happened has really served to advance the gospel.

How can that be so poor? Because God is for us, not against us. We can have confidence in our God in the face of all the opposition, the trials, the difficulties that you may face as an individual Christian, from your family, from your work colleagues, from your friends.

We can have confidence that because God promised and declared that Nineveh would fall, and it certainly did because the Babylonians invaded the Assyrian Empire in 612 BC and destroyed them and overtook all of their power, that all of God's promises to us, his people, must come true, must be fulfilled.

[37 : 21] And for that reason, like the people of Judah, we are called upon to celebrate, verse 15, to fulfill our vows, to carry on living for Christ and serving him in the face of what opposition comes because the good news is that our God reigns, rules, and conquers.

We don't need to doubt. We don't need to fear. We don't need to be discouraged. We may have to wait.

We may have to wait and watch and look, but we can be sure that his promises, his purposes, will be fulfilled. That's the message of Nahum. Message for his people then, message for his people in all of time, and the message for us.

And it keeps in, it keeps in line with the rest of Scripture. Hebrews and chapter 10, finish with this verse. Hear again what it says.

Let us hold unswervingly, steadfastly, without being diverted. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope, what is hope?

[38 : 33] It is the belief in the promises and faithfulness of God. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Let's pray together. O Lord, our God, we thank you that your ways, though they are high and above anything we can truly understand, yet your ways have been made known to us in your word.

We thank you again, O Lord, that you have always been the victor. There's never been a moment in history when you have been defeated by your enemies. Never been a moment when your purposes have been thwarted, your plans unfulfilled, unfulfilled, your promises have been left undone.

You are always faithful, always mighty, always victorious. And we thank you that by your grace and mercy, we who were once your enemies because of our sin, Lord, have been brought over out of the dominion of the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of your Son.

Thank you that we are on the Lord's side. We thank you, O Lord, that because we are on your side, we are on the winning side. Not because of our strength or power, we are small and, Lord, insignificant in that sense.

[39 : 54] We have nothing to boast of in ourselves. Our boast is all in Christ and all that he is and all that he's done. And our boast is in your promises and your faithfulness.

And, O Lord, we pray that as we continue to live in this evil age, as we continue to see the hosts of darkness and Satan at work around about us, we ask that you would take from us fear and anxiety, that you would cause our eyes to be ever lifted up to the Lord Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith, the coming king and conqueror.

And that, Lord, you would grant us boldness to live for you, to speak for you, to stand for you, and that, Lord, even through our lives and in our lives you would fulfil your great desire to save sinners, to build your church until the day that Jesus comes again.

Thank you for your word to us. Give us great courage, we pray, as we go into this new week. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Be self-controlled and alert.

Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

[41 : 18] And the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast.

To him be the power forever and ever. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.