

Trust God

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[0 : 00] Let's pray.

It says, For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of your God which is in your hand, and also to carry the silver and gold that the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, with all the silver and gold that you shall find in the whole province of Babylonia, and with the freewill offerings of the people and the priests, vowed willingly for the house of their God that is in Jerusalem.

With this money, then, you shall with all diligence buy bulls, rams, and lambs for their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and you shall offer them on the altar of the house of your God that is in Jerusalem.

Whatever seems good to you and your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold, you may do according to the will of your God. The vessels that have been given you for the service of the house of your God you shall deliver before the God of Jerusalem.

And whatever else is required for the house of your God which it falls to you to provide, you may provide it out of the king's treasury. And I, Artaxerxes the king, make a decree to all the treasurers in the province beyond the river.

[2 : 20] Whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, requires of you, let it be done with all diligence. Up to 100 talents of silver, 100 cores of wheat, 100 baths of wine, 100 baths of oil and salt without prescribing how much.

Whatever is decreed by the God of heaven, let it be done in full for the house of the God of heaven, lest his wrath be against the realm of the king and his sons.

We also notify you that it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll on any one of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or other servants of this house of God.

And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province beyond the river, all such as know the laws of your God.

And those who do not know them you shall teach. Whoever will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be strictly executed on him, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of his goods or for imprisonment.

[3 : 34] Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king to beautify the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem, and who extended to me this steadfast love before the king and his counselors and before all the king's mighty officers.

I took courage, for the hand of the Lord my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word.

Would you please be seated? For over 160 years, the phrase, In God We Trust, has appeared on United States currency.

In 1861, Mark Richards Watkinson, a Baptist minister, sent a letter to the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury urging him to put the recognition of the Almighty God in some form on our coins.

The Secretary of the Treasury agreed and ordered the director of the Mint to prepare a motto to be imprinted on those coins. In 1956, Congress passed a joint resolution signed by President Dwight Eisenhower declaring that In God We Trust was our nation's official motto.

[5 : 04] Despite much opposition, the phrase, In God We Trust, is engraved on most of our important national monuments, government buildings, landmarks, and of course, still on our money.

Though people have sued to have that phrase removed, judges and courts have ruled in favor of keeping it because in their estimation, the phrase as well as the statement in our Pledge of Allegiance, One Nation Under God, is viewed as being unspecific.

Although the original intent was specific, the God we trust in is the God of the Bible. The courts say it's more of a customary thing, sort of like ceremonial deism.

It's part of our tradition, which doesn't impose any kind of religious beliefs on anyone. Accordingly then, a Christian, a Buddhist, a Muslim, a Hindu, or followers of any other faith can interpret the phrase, the motto, In God We Trust, however they want.

Most Americans believe in God. 81%, according to a recent Gallup poll, say that they believe in God.

[6 : 42] And I think it's safe to say that what Americans believe about God is very different. It varies a lot from person to person.

I'm sure also that we could say the level of trust that people who say they believe in God varies a lot as well. Artaxerxes believed in God, but he wasn't a believer in God.

Artaxerxes believed in many gods, of which the God of Israel, in his mind, was just one, thus, breaking the first commandment, you shall have no other gods before me.

Artaxerxes was not singularly devoted to the one true God who is. His devotion really was to himself and to the preservation of his own empire.

Artaxerxes came to power about two or three years before the events covered in Ezra chapter 7 that we just read. During that time, he faced a major challenge, an Egyptian revolt that successfully defeated his satrap or his governor of the region of Egypt.

[8 : 03] Additionally, some Athenian Greeks allied themselves with Egypt against Persia and the resulting conflict severely weakened Artaxerxes' army, although ultimately he did emerge victorious.

But at this point in time, when Artaxerxes wrote this letter, this revolt, this revolt had not yet been put down. And so from a political standpoint, the last thing Artaxerxes needed was this revolutionary spirit in Egypt and in Greece to spread to Jerusalem.

From a militaristic standpoint, Judah bordered Egypt. He needed the inhabitants of that land to stay loyal to him.

And so from a spiritual standpoint, Artaxerxes sent Ezra, a Jewish priest and scribe, to reestablish law and order in the land and provided Ezra with an abundant amount of resources for the temple and for the worship of God in Jerusalem.

Artaxerxes trusted that these actions would strengthen his support from the Jewish people and would purchase favor for him from the God that they worshipped.

[9 : 38] So on the surface, Artaxerxes makes what appears to be a very shrewd maneuver. But underneath it all, Ezra knows the truth.

This king believed he was using God to achieve an end that would benefit him, but truly God was using this king, Artaxerxes, to fulfill his redemptive plan.

Ezra understood this. At the end of this chapter, Ezra does not rejoice in Artaxerxes' kindness, but in God's graciousness.

Ezra believed that despite the external conflicts happening in the world at that time and despite the internal conflicts among his people, as well as any personal doubts that he might have had about his ability to bring reform to Jerusalem, he knew that God is sovereign over all things.

And that truth gave him courage. Ezra trusted in God, as should we all.

[10 : 59] In God we trust should be the motto of all of our lives and it serves as the theme or the main idea of this morning's sermon. In God we trust. That's what we learn through this passage.

That's what we're reminded of. In God we trust. Our nation may imprint that phrase on money and buildings, but Ezra had the truth of that phrase imprinted on his heart.

How about you? Like Ezra, we live in turbulent times. Nations are either at war or rumored to be at war soon.

Israel once again is at the center of that conflict. We will soon elect a new president for our nation, which can add to our cause for concern as we think about our nation's current problems and our nation's future and who might be leading us into that future.

Like Ezra, God's people today, his church needs reform and needs revival. So many things in our world, in our nation, and in our churches seem to be falling apart.

[12 : 30] But the reality is that they're falling into place. And they're falling into place according to the divine plan of our sovereign God.

God, you may be worried, but God is not. Today's message is timely given all the things that we are concerned about.

Today's message is timely and it contains a timeless theological truth that like Ezra should be imprinted on all of our hearts.

in God we trust. If you don't trust in God, I'm glad you're here or listening online to hear this sermon. It's hard for me to imagine my life and what it would look like without knowing Jesus Christ, without knowing the truth that God is sovereign.

[13 : 41] I would probably be living in a bunker somewhere in the middle of nowhere with my family. Hopefully they would go with me. I would be scared. I would be depressed.

I would feel hopeless. And maybe that describes you. And if so, you're in the right place because God has a message for you to hear today.

If you do trust in God today, you might realize as we go through these verses that while you say that, your actions and your inactions may be saying something completely different.

And so I hope that today God will convict you and give you courage in place of your fears and your concerns and your anxieties.

And so from this text today we see two aspects of what it means to trust God. Two aspects of what it means to trust God. The first comes from verses 11 through 26, the major chunk of this passage.

[14 : 56] First aspect, trust in God's sovereignty over the world. Trust in God's sovereignty over the world. before I get into the contents of this letter, I think it's important to spend some time addressing what the Bible says about God's sovereignty because it says a lot.

John Piper said, sometimes we need to plunge our minds into the oceans of God's sovereignty. We need to feel the weight of it like deep and heavy water pressing in against every pore the deeper we go.

Sometimes we need to be reminded by God himself that there are no limits to his rule. We need to hear from him that he is sovereign over the whole world and everything that happens in it.

We need his own reminder that he is never hopeless, never frustrated, never at a loss. God's sovereignty simply describes his absolute rule and authority over all things.

All things. In our text today, we see specifically God's absolute rule and authority, his sovereignty over people in authority.

[16 : 09] This is a truth that God proclaims throughout the Bible. I'm going to read a bunch, we're going to go through a bunch of verses here. Proverbs 21.1 says, the king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord.

He turns it wherever he will. In Jeremiah 27.5, God declares, it is I, who by my great power and by my outstretched arm have made the earth with the men and the animals that are on the earth and I give it to whomever it seems right to me.

Isaiah likewise reflects on God's position as the absolute sovereign ruler of the world in Isaiah 40, 22 through 23. It is he who sits above the circle of the earth and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them like a tent to dwell in, who brings princes to nothing and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.

In Psalm 33.10, we see that no power, no matter how great that power is, can thwart God's plan. The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing.

He frustrates the plans of the people. Great nations, world empires have risen and they have fallen but God reigns permanently.

[17 : 36] As Job testified to in Job 42, 2, I know, speaking of God, that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

Daniel likewise recognized that God, his name should be blessed, the name of God forever and ever to whom belong wisdom and might. He said he changes times and seasons.

He removes kings and sets up kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul gives instruction to Christians.

He says there, let everyone, every person be subject to the governing authorities for there is no authority except from God and those that exist have been instituted by God.

God is sovereign. He has total authority which he shares completely with Jesus Christ, his son. In John 3, 35, Jesus says the father loves the son and has given all things into his hand.

[18 : 39] Jesus came in fulfillment of God's redemptive plan. Everything that preceded his first coming prepared the way for his arrival and his mission to die on the cross to save sinners.

Jesus prayed in John 17, 1-2, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your son that the son may glorify you since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

On the third day after his crucifixion and his death, Jesus rose again. We read in Ephesians 1, 20-23 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Jesus is king of kings. Jesus is lord of lords. While nations and rulers rise and fall, Jesus died so that we might live and reign eternally with him.

[20 : 02] Luke 1, 32-33. The angel speaking to Mary, telling her about this son of God that she will soon bear. He will be great and he will be called the son of the most high.

And the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there will be no end.

So as we look now at Artaxerxes' letter on the surface, it appears that this decision primarily served his own interests.

And in his mind I believe that's what he thought, that that was the case. He believed that there was a God, some kind of God in Israel, but he didn't believe that the God of Israel was the only God that there is.

It was common for people living in this time to believe that there were many gods and that these gods ruled over different specific kinds of territories.

[21 : 12] They believed that that deity's power was limited to that region, to that place where they were worshipped. And so that's one of the reasons why when a nation conquered another nation, they would take their people out of that land so that that God would lose its influence over them, it wouldn't be worshipped, and it would lose its power.

They believed that that deity's power was limited to that place. There aren't many absolute monarchs living today in our world, but the king of Saudi Arabia is one of them.

In his country, he has absolute authority over everyone and everything. But if the king of Saudi Arabia visited the United States of America, the authority he has over his region would not transfer over here.

he has no authority here because he is outside of his jurisdiction here. He might be given respect, but his authority is limited to a certain place.

And so that's what Artaxerxes and those who came before him, that's what they kind of believed, that they needed to get the people away from their God, that God would lose his influence and his power.

[22 : 39] forever. But Artaxerxes believed that, but he took a different approach. He was okay with the people in the nations he ruled worshipping their God so long as their religious laws maintained peace and order for himself.

himself. He also requested that they pray to their God on his behalf. You can worship your God however you want, just make sure that you pray to that God and make sacrifices on my behalf for my good.

And so in this way, he thought that he was covering all of his bases. Loyalty from his people, from his subjects, and gaining the supernatural support of the God or the gods that those people worshipped.

Look again with me at verses 11 and 12. This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, a man learned in matters of the commandments of the Lord and his statutes for Israel.

Artaxerxes, King of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, peace. Now I think it's safe to assume that Ezra, being the great man of God and leader that he was because, remember, if you recall last week, because of his hard work to study the scriptures, that he had earned Artaxerxes' trust and was influential as he probably shared some of what scripture said to him.

[24 : 33] Artaxerxes would have been informed, he had to have been, about the Ten Commandments. He would have known something about who the Jewish people worshipped and how they worshipped and what that entailed.

He believed, from what he understood, that the law of God was good and that Ezra, having demonstrated both the knowledge of that word, that law, and practiced it before his eyes was the right man to lead and to protect his interests in Jerusalem.

In his letter, Artaxerxes mentions! the law of God five times and the house of God six times. So it was clear what he desired.

He desired that the law of God be implemented in Jerusalem and obeyed and that the house of God where he was worshipped was fully supplied with all that it needed for his people to worship him.

In the midst of this, Artaxerxes issues two decrees, the first in verse 13. He says, I make a decree that anyone of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom who freely offers to go to Jerusalem may go with you.

[25 : 55] He then specifies the extremely generous gift that he is personally sending with Ezra for the worship of God in verses 14 through 20.

In verse 21, he issues another decree. There we read, I make a decree to all the treasurers in the province beyond the river.

Whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of God of heaven requires of you, let it be done with all diligence. So here, he proceeds to order that on top of his generous gift that others contribute generously to Ezra and to his party as they go back to Jerusalem.

In verse 24, he states that all those who work in the ministry of the temple are exempt from paying taxes. to which I'm sure they were greatly and exceedingly thankful.

In verse 22, Artaxerxes specifically addresses Ezra to rule in his place with his authority. Look at those verses again.

[27 : 08] And you, Ezra, in this letter, now he's singling him out. According to the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, that would refer to the Bible, scripture as it was at that time, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province beyond the river, all such as know the laws of your God.

And those who do not know them, you shall teach. Stop and think about that. Don't you wish that was the case in our nation? Hey, we want you to not only rule by the word of God, but we want you to teach the people that you rule the word of God.

He continues, whoever will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be strictly executed on him, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of his goods and imprisonment.

So again, on the surface, Artaxerxes had his reason for doing what he did to preserve his title, the title that he gave to himself, king of kings.

However, we know that this king was only doing what God had put on his heart to do. His objectives served God's objective.

[28 : 30] To prepare the world for the arrival of the true king of kings, Jesus Christ. Christ. The Persian empire obviously has not lasted.

Eventually, Alexander the Great, you may have heard of him, would come and he would take them out. But we see the providence of God in that too. Through the different exiles, synagogues were established by God's people in foreign lands.

And when Alexander the Great came through and conquered most of the known world, he instituted the Greek language as kind of the common tongue. And so by the time Jesus came, died, rose again, and commissioned his disciples to go and make disciples throughout the world, there was a common language for people to hear the gospel through.

And there were synagogues established in these foreign nations for his disciples to go to. As the gospel was shared and the gospel was spread all the way to places that his disciples didn't even know existed like right here in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

The Bible demonstrates that God is sovereign over world events. And that reality continues to be the case.

[29 : 54] God is not scared, concerned, worried, anxious, helpless, or frustrated. He's fully, completely, and totally in control.

And that truth should give us hope. And it should give us courage. But I want you to think about this. Artaxerxes knew of God, but he did not fully trust or obey God.

God. He worshipped and he sought the help of gods who weren't God. He had his own motives for doing that.

He had his own motives for what he did for Ezra and for God's people. However, I wonder, are the true worshippers of God today as generous as this pagan king was back then?

Do you, a Christian today, invest as much of your time, talents, and treasures in promoting the worship of God today as Artaxerxes did back then?

[31 : 16] Or think about this. Are you as interested in law and order and having people follow scriptures today as a believer, as Artaxerxes was back then, as an unbeliever?

Do you study the Bible to determine how God wants you to live and how he wants you to treat other people? Are you as devoted to knowing and doing what the Bible teaches today as much as Artaxerxes was devoted to God's people, knowing and doing what scripture taught back then?

Are you more devoted to doing what you think is best and doing whatever you feel is right even though God's word commands you otherwise? Artaxerxes wanted everyone.

to know that Ezra was to lead them to know God's word and was to hold them accountable for their disobedience to God's word.

Are you as committed to your leaders in the church? Are you as willing to let our leaders hold you accountable as God says that we should in his word?

[32 : 39] are you willing to submit to their leadership trusting them as the Lord's under shepherds or do you as Hebrews 13 7 warns cause them to groan in that task instead of ensuring that they do it with joy?

Artaxerxes was committed to that. Are you? Artaxerxes was an idolatrous worshiper of all sorts of gods. He was shrewd and calculating in his governance of his people.

But the good news is that our sovereign God used such a man to achieve the greater good for us in accomplishing his will.

God draws straight lines with crooked sticks. We know how this world is going to end don't we? God hasn't left us questioning that.

All the events that have happened in the past prepared the world for the first coming of Jesus. All the events that are happening now and that will happen in the future are preparing the world for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

[33 : 56] Jesus talked about this a lot did he not? And what did he tell us? Be worried. Look through these words and come up with some kind of code and see if you can crack it and find out when the date is and then you know you'll know when I'm coming.

No he never said that. He didn't say be worried. What did he say? Be prepared. Be ready. Be serving me. Be trusting me.

Because I'm coming at a time that you don't know and you'll be blessed when the time I come you will be busy doing what I've told you to do and doing it in the way that I've commanded you to do it. Ezra knew that Artaxerxes' plan wasn't really his plan. Ezra trusted in God and God we trust was the motto of his life stamped on his heart.

He knew God is sovereign over the world and in his sovereignty over Artaxerxes. It was God who put this plan on that king's heart to accomplish his will.

[35 : 00] God is sovereign over the world. That is the truth that he declares and that we see in his word. Now the second aspect. Trust in God's sovereignty over your life.

Artaxerxes gave Ezra a lot didn't he? Man he gave him a lot. He gave him a tremendous amount of funding.

He gave him a great position of power and influence over other people. He had the complete support of the most powerful man in the world at that time.

But notice who Ezra gives the glory to. Ezra understood that this great thing that he was a part of was God's doing.

He understood that God's discipline to send his people into exile in the first place achieved his purpose. God was the one who works in the heart of people to move them to accomplish his will.

[36 : 44] I think this is a good time for us to pause and look at 1 Timothy 2 1-4. Timothy or Paul excuse me writing to Timothy a young pastor is giving him an instruction for the church for his life.

He says first of all then I urge that supplications prayers intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people and he's talking about this is what Christians should do in the church for kings and for all who are in high positions that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life godly and dignified in every way.

This is good and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. So many people so many of the leaders in our nation are hostile to God.

They're hostile to his word and as a result we often become the target of their anger and so often we respond in turn and we make them the targets of our anger.

in bitterness and our animosity. We pray against them more than we pray for them.

[38 : 17] Wouldn't you say? This is a tough pill to swallow and it's even harder to swallow when we consider who the king was in 1 Timothy chapter 2.

The king was the Roman Emperor Nero and Nero hated Christians. Man of all rulers this world has ever known Nero hated Christians.

Paul says pray for him. People in the church should pray for him. So how should we pray for leaders in our world, in our nation?

I think maybe we pray something like this. God, I know that you are sovereign over all things and over all people. I know that you have placed people in authority for reasons that achieve the end you have ordained, though I may not understand.

God, I pray that you will save them and like you did with Artaxerxes, you will put in their heart to do what is right for the sake of your people and for the glory of your great name.

[39 : 33] Later, Nehemiah prayed for Artaxerxes. He prayed for him to answer his request that he would be able to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls that had been destroyed.

Ezra doesn't mention it in this book, but I'm sure that he did the same. I'm sure that he prayed for Artaxerxes before Artaxerxes sent him to Jerusalem. What we do know is that Ezra understood that God was sovereign over his life and he was thankful that God would use him in service to him however he saw fit.

In verse 28, he acknowledges that it was God who extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors and before all the king's mighty officers.

Again, we see Ezra's humility here. Ezra doesn't take a moment to pat himself on the back and say something like, well, of course, of course.

If God was going to do this thing, yeah, I would be the one that he would ask to do it. After all, I'm smart. After all, I'm skilled.

[40 : 44] I know the Bible. I have the heritage. I am heroic. I'm more qualified than anybody else. Ezra doesn't say that.

Ezra didn't think that. Ezra knew that these events were God's doing. And God had put him in this time and in this place and had prepared him for this task that he was about to set out to do.

And knowing that God is sovereign over the world and sovereign over his life, Ezra took courage. In verse 28, I took courage for the hand of the Lord my God was on me.

And I gathered leading men from Jerusalem to go up with me. Now you might be thinking, that's great for Ezra, but I don't sense the hand of God on me.

Let's look at Philippians 1.6. And I am sure of this, no question, that he, God, who began a good work in you, Christian, will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

[42 : 02] When God saves you, the Bible says that he keeps you. And he keeps you in his hand. He doesn't give up on you when you sin.

He won't discard you. He will discipline you for your good as he molds and shapes you by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit making you more like Jesus Christ.

He will do that. Ephesians 2.10 says, for we, brothers, sisters in Christ, are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.

I love this part, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. God formed you in the womb before your birth.

He's reformed you and he's reforming you in the new birth through faith in Jesus Christ. He has preordained the days of your earthly life in preparation for your eternal life with him.

[43 : 03] Your task in advancing his kingdom in this world may not seem as great to you as the task that Ezra had but listen to me, it's not any less important.

It's not any less important to God. Speaking from personal experience, God did not send Ezra to my parents to pray for my brother when he was sick and dying in the hospital.

God did not send Ezra to invite my parents to go to church with him. God used a different man. That man's name is Gail Milhoff. You have only heard that name if you've ever heard me share that testimony with you before, I'm sure.

God didn't use Ezra. He used a man. He wasn't a priest. He wasn't a pastor. He was just a guy who loved the Lord and he's important to me.

It's important to me how God used him in that place in that time to share the gospel with people who needed to hear it and needed hope.

[44 : 15] God put him there in that place in that time and that's important to me and that can be you and maybe it already has been you.

What you do for God no matter how unnoticed it is God sees it and it's important. It's important to God.

Young person God has a plan for your life. He has a plan for your life and I ask you are you seeking that plan are you seeking his will are you asking him what he wants you to do with the life that he's given to you what he wants you to do to advance his kingdom and while you wait for that answer be like Ezra Ezra who as a young man growing up in exile studied God's word he studied the Bible he worked hard at it Ezra's study of the Bible as a young person prepared him for the hard work that God had to do for him to do as he grew older be like Ezra immerse yourself in the word of God seeking his will God will use you to do important things

Artaxerxes was a letter writing king and so is Jesus the Bible is his letter to us and through it he says to us don't you see that I'm in control I am ensuring the end from the beginning I am determining the future for my people I am aligning the events of history to ensure that my purpose for the redemption of my people will be accomplished according to my plan Ezra's study of the Bible was a good starting place for what God had prepared for him to do if you want to change the world if you want to change the world study your Bible study your Bible that's what Ezra did for those of you who are set in your career or maybe you're retired you never retire from your service to Jesus Moses was in his 80s when God spoke to him said you're going to lead my people out of Egypt if God has you here God has you here for a reason to do important things for him keep trusting in him even in the bad times even in the hard times Romans 8 28 through 30 is one of my favorite verses sets of scripture in the Bible and it's one of my favorites because it's one I needed to be reminded of and still reminded of often there it says and we know that for those who love God all things work together all things meaning the things that we perceive as being bad things the things that we perceive as being troubling things worrying things just all the bad stuff as well as the good stuff how we perceive it all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the first born among many brothers and those whom he predestined he also called and those whom he called he also justified and those whom he justified he also glorified you see nobody falls through the cracks those whom

[48 : 13] God saves are those whom God keeps those whom God saves are those whom God will glorify one day with him eternally in heaven the ultimate example the ultimate and supreme example of God working all things together for the good is the cross of Jesus Christ his son on the cross Jesus death seemed like defeat to his disciples this seemed like the worst thing that could have ever happened on the surface that's what they thought but we know that what God was doing was providing atonement for our sins through the death the crucifixion the blood that his son shared on the cross that by faith in him we are saved and we are given eternal life and ultimately friend that's the truth that you must trust in that

Jesus Christ died for sinners that Jesus Christ died for your sins he took your place and if you trust in him and if you believe in him you receive his righteousness and you are saved and you are kept and you will be throughout all eternity and God wants to use you and what he's doing today in this time in this place and so as a result of this we know that God is sovereign over the world we know that God is sovereign over our lives well then how should we adjust I think it's simply this in God we take courage so you're telling me that God is in control of all things and all events and you're telling me that God is in control of my life doesn't mean that you don't have a responsibility to be obedient to him but you're telling me that God has a sovereignty over my life all these things are in his hands and he's in control and he's good

I'll take courage in that Charles Spurgeon said obedience is the highest practical practical courage knowing God's word knowing this truth walking in his ways him no matter what the cost might be that is the person who is truly courageous the person who trusts in God and in God alone and we need people more people like that in this world let's pray Lord we thank you for the amazing truths contained in a letter written by a pagan unbelieving king to do and accomplish your will Lord so often to us on the surface it looks like things are out of control

Lord even in our own lives we feel like things are out of control and so God I thank you for this truth that you've reminded us of this morning that Lord things are never outside of your control that God you're sovereign over all things the big things and the small things and Lord that should give us courage today and it should give us hope for tomorrow no matter what is going on in our world or what is going on in our lives Lord we understand from your word too like Ezra you put us in a time and a place for a reason and it's up to us Lord to do what you've asked what you've commanded us to do and so Lord I pray for each one of us that this truth that we've heard would be a truth that we trust in and that it would change how we live that we would be courageous people that Lord we would not fear men that we would not fear the future but that we would be trusting and assured that the

God who is the God who was is the God who will forever will be and that Lord we will walk in your ways and God will give you all the glory for whatever you decide to do in our lives in Jesus name we pray amen