

Resist the Resistance

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[0 : 00] As we're at chapter 5, verses 1 through 17, if you would stand with me and maybe stretch a little bit in verse 5, beginning in verse 1.

And Shetharbozani and their associates came to them and spoke to them thus, Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?

They also asked them, What are the names of the men who are rebuilding this building? But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop, and they did not stop them until the report should reach Darius, and an answer be returned by letter concerning it. This is a copy of the letter that Tatani, the governor of the province beyond the river, and Shetharbozani and his associates, the governors who were in the province beyond the river, sent to Darius the king. They sent him a report in which was written as follows, To Darius the king, all peace. Be it known to the king that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built with huge stones, and timber is laid in the walls.

This work goes on diligently and prospers in their hands. Then we asked those elders and spoke to them thus, Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure? We also asked them for their names, for your information, that we might write down the names of their leaders. And this is what their reply to us. This was their reply to us. We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished. But because our fathers had angered the God of heaven, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house and carried away the people to Babylonia. However, in the first year of Cyrus, king of Babylon, Cyrus the king made a decree that this house of God should be rebuilt. And the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple that was in Jerusalem and brought into the temple of

Babylon, these Cyrus the king took out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered to one whose name was Shespazar, whom he had made governor. And he said to him, take these vessels, go and put them in the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its site. Then this Shespazar came and laid the foundations of the house of God that is in Jerusalem. And from that time until now, it has been in building and it is not yet finished. Therefore, if it seems good to the king, let search be made in the royal archives there in Babylon to see whether a decree was issued by Cyrus the king for the rebuilding of the house of God in Jerusalem. And let the king send us his pleasure in this matter.

[3 : 53] May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Please be seated. So just to recap here, if you remember, Ezra chapter 1 begins with a description of how God moved Cyrus the king of Persia and the Israelites who were living in exile to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple which the Babylonians had destroyed when they conquered the land. The Lord God raised up the nation of Babylon and used those people as his instrument to execute judgment on his people for their sin.

And so they went into exile where there finally God's people forsook their worship of idols. So there was an exile, but that exile was not permanent. God called Jeremiah. God gave Jeremiah his word, his instruction, his promise that his people would one day return to the land that he was driving them away from after they learned again to finally put to death their pursuit of idols. Cyrus then, in fulfillment of God's word, was moved by God to issue a decree to send God's people back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple that had been destroyed. And Cyrus further assisted them by providing the resources that they would need to get the need to get the job done. About 40,000 Israelites returned and began to work on the temple in earnest. And if you remember, when the foundation of the temple was laid, many of them celebrated with shouts of joy, but many of them

also wept with lament, realizing that this new temple would not be as spectacular as the first which they remembered. And so a division began to grow amongst this group that had been united in purpose to obey God's commands and to pursue God's will.

And seeing a weakness, Satan pounced. He used the Samaritans to further widen that division by discouraging the people from continuing the work. And by the time we get to the end of Ezra chapter 4, we see that their schemes, their tactics discouraged God's people from obeying him. The king of Persia ordered the rebuilding efforts to stop, and they did for 16 years.

For 16 years, the people of God obeyed the law of man, the law of the land, even though it defied the word of God. Sometimes we find ourselves in a situation where obeying the law of the land would cause us to defy the word of God. And in those situations, we are tempted to make peace with the world, to not rock the boat or stir things up. We don't want to be labeled as a weirdo. We don't want to be treated as an outsider or seen as an unloving, uncaring Bible thumper.

[7 : 49] We would rather avoid the cost that comes with following Jesus in those moments. We would rather put our heads down and make peace with a world that Satan rules in opposition to God, because we fear what people might say about us. We fear what people might do to us.

Scripture is full of examples of those who faced similar circumstances. Abraham lied about his wife, saying that she was his sister to avoid death. He did it twice.

Peter denied knowing Jesus three times to save himself. And the people of God at the beginning of Ezra chapter 5 are doing the same thing.

They defied the word of God and the will of God, because they feared disobeying the law of people. Now, please understand this. As Christians, we are commanded to seek the good of the nation, the good of the land in which we live. We are instructed to submit to governing authorities, and few passages make that more clear than Romans chapter 13, verses 1 through 7. Let's look at that passage and what it says. The Apostle Paul writes, let 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. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval. For he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore, one must be in subjection not only to avoid God's wrath, but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this, you also pay taxes. For the authorities are ministers of God attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them, taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

[10 : 44] So this passage makes it clear that we are to obey the government God places over us. God created government to establish order, to punish evil, and to promote justice. So we pay taxes. We should drive the speed limit and obey the other laws of the land which are meant for society's good, for society's protection. We are to respect and obey those who serve in roles to promote and enforce such things.

Understand this too. When Paul wrote to the Romans, he and they were under the government of Rome during the time of Nero, who was one of the most evil emperors Rome ever had. And Nero hated Christians.

Nero hated Christians. Many of our government leaders oppose what we believe, but at least for us, at this point, none of them are seeking to put us to death like Nero sought to put Christians to death. So if Paul recognized the Romans' rule over him, even under the tyranny of an evil man like Nero, how can we do any less? Now, having said that, the question then becomes, is there a time when we should intentionally disobey the laws of the land, the laws of our government?

And the answer to that question is yes. Yes. Now, we use Scripture to interpret Scripture. And the Bible has many examples of those who disobeyed the law of the land because doing so would cause them to commit an infinitely worse offense, which is defying the Word of God. We think of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refusing to bow down to the golden statue that Nebuchadnezzar had constructed. And they were thrown into the fiery furnace, but we know that there was a fourth man in the furnace, wasn't there, preserving them and protecting them.

[13 : 22] We believe that that was a Christophany. It was Jesus in the fire with them. There's many more examples. There's one in Acts chapter 5, verses 27 through 29. The church in Jerusalem had

been growing and thriving after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. More and more people were hearing the gospel and being saved. The Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jews who hated Christ, who opposed Him in His life, and who were opposing His church after His resurrection, ordered the apostles to stop preaching the gospel, ordered them to stop using the name of Jesus.

And we see Peter's response to that order in Acts chapter 5, 27 through 29, saying this to their face. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, we strictly charged you. So they'd already told them to stop it before. We strictly charged you not to teach in this name. Yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood on us. But Peter and the apostles answered, we must obey God rather than men. They kept on preaching. And obedience to Jesus' command and the gospel continued to spread far and wide. The word of God continued to prosper through those who were obedient to obey His instruction.

And so from this example, and from our text this morning, we learned this important truth. And it's our main idea. Those who obey God's word prosper. Those who obey God's word prosper. By prosper, I do not mean what the prosperity gospel teaches, the false idea that obeying God somehow puts Him in your debt. Or that He will bless you with material prosperity for your obedience.

By prosper, I'm referring to the abundant life that Jesus spoke of. I'm talking about the spiritual prosperity that comes to you and to those who obey God's word because they know God and they love Him.

[15 : 48] They understand what Jesus accomplished for them through His life and His death and His resurrection. They prosper in their knowledge of His grace and His goodness to save them, to transform them, and to give them a life that makes sense and has meaning and has purpose and has a hope for the future.

When you obey God's word, when you obey God's word, you are blessed. When you see God at work through your obedience in those around you and in yourself, there's no greater joy than being used by the Lord to accomplish His will.

But to accomplish His will, you must know His word and obey it, no matter what. The people of God at the beginning of Ezra chapter 5 had grown spiritually lethargic, lazy, disobedient, and God snaps them out of it.

He snaps them out of their lethargy by sending two men with a word from God. God himself. The church in America is lethargic, I believe.

We need men sent from God to preach and proclaim His word. And we need God's people to hear God's word, to receive it, and to obey it.

[17 : 29] If you want revival, if you want revival to take place in our church or in the church, in our nation, across the world, then understand this, that revival starts with you.

There must be a personal revival within you. And if you know God's word and obey God's word, you will prosper under the instruction and obedience to doing what the Lord wills spiritually.

And so we see four ways that God's word is at work causing His people to prosper in Ezra chapter 5.

The first way we see that comes from verses 1 through 2. God's word is proclaimed. It's proclaimed. Look again at verse 1.

Now the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the son of Edu, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. So Ezra begins in chapter 5 with a summary statement.

[18 : 44] God called two men to proclaim His word to His people. These men were prophets. A prophecy is a message from God, a message received directly from God.

These men had received divine revelation from God. And their prophecies are recorded in the Old Testament under the books that bear their names.

Now, we know that the Bible is now complete. There are no new prophecies. But there are still preachers. Men called by God to preach.

To proclaim God's message. Haggai and Zechariah were prophets. But they were also preachers. Haggai and Zechariah were different from one another. And the way that they proclaimed God's word was a little bit different as well. Regarding their styles of proclamation.

[19 : 52] Haggai's message was very direct. Very straightforward. And he got to the point. His prophecy is one of the shortest books in the Bible. It's only two chapters long.

And you could read it in less than ten minutes. We don't know much about Haggai other than what is written in the book that bears his name.

It covers about a four-month span here. At some point. Around or before the events we read in Ezra chapter 5.

Haggai records four sermons that he preached to God's people during that span. The people of God had been procrastinating.

They were saying that it wasn't the time to build the temple. You know it's just not the right time.

They were procrastinating.

[20 : 50] Are there any procrastinators here today? Anybody want to admit to having a problem with procrastination?

Right? We procrastinators, if I can say the word, will unite. And we'll talk about that. Maybe we'll do that tomorrow though. Right? I'm sure whether you struggle with that frequently, I'm sure that all of us struggle with procrastination at different times in our lives.

And I'm sure that we have that thing that we just haven't gotten around to yet. But we plan on doing it.

We plan on completing it at some point. But we're convinced that we just don't have the time. Or that, you know, the time just isn't right.

But one day it will be. I've been convicted of this. I've realized that I've used my doctorate as an excuse to put off a lot of things.

[22 : 02] And I'll do that once I'm done completing that degree. Amen. Monty was the one who pointed that out to me.

Thank you, brother. I have a friend who's got a garage full of just projects and a car that he's been working on for a long time.

You know, he got it. He was excited about it. He got to work on it. But then eventually he stopped.

You know, he hit a place where he was just stuck. And he didn't quit. And so, you know, just making conversations, I would say to him, Hey, how's it going?

How far have you gotten? And he would tell me, you know, it's kind of here. And, you know, I'm still piddling around with it. But, you know, this is my plan. And then I'd ask him again and again.

And finally, it got to the point where he just kind of shrugged his shoulders and said, Oh, one of these days. One of these days, I'll get around to it.

[23 : 00] Now, that's the attitude God's people had toward him in Ezra at this point. As they walked to and from work, to and from the fields, as they lived in this region, and they would pass the temple whose foundations had been laid 16 years ago, I'm sure they thought in their minds, well, one of these days.

One of these days, things will change. One of these days, we'll have the time. But today is just not that day. Have you ever done that with God before?

One of these days, I'll read the Bible from cover to cover. One of these days, I'll share the gospel with that person and my family or at work or my neighbor.

One of these days, I'll go on one of those mission trips that I hear so many people talk about. One of these days, we'll have family worship in our home, and we'll do that frequently.

One of these days, I'll actually pray for the people that I say that I'm praying for. We're too satisfied with intent.

[24 : 28] Convinced that our good intentions are good enough for God. But God isn't satisfied with good intentions. He demands action.

And he sends someone like Haggai to point out the reality of the spiritual lethargy that's going on.

To truly obey God, you cannot divorce action from intention and think that you've somehow obeyed God.

Jesus talked about this in Matthew 21, verses 28 through 32, in a parable that he told to some Pharisees. What do you think?

A man had two sons, and he went to the first and said, Son, go and work in the vineyard today. And he answered, I will not. But afterward, he changed his mind and went.

And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, I go, sir. But he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?

[25 : 38] Jesus asked the Pharisees. They replied, the first. Jesus said to them, truly I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes, go into the kingdom of God before you.

For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him. But the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

The point of Jesus' parable is that doing is more important than saying. A point James echoed in James chapter 1, verse 22. Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. And Ezra, God's people, were not doing what he told them to do. The law of man had discouraged them from obeying the commands of God.

And God sent Haggai to them to snap them out of it. And Haggai was not a man to mince his words. In chapter 1, verse 4, Haggai, as he's preaching, says to them, Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses?

[26 : 54] Why, the house of God lies in ruins? Apparently, the people of God prospered materially while they were disobeying God's commands to build his temple.

They were pouring all of their energy and all of their resources into building extravagant homes for themselves while God's house wasted away and became ruins.

At this time, wood paneling in home was something that only kings could afford. One commentator I read suggested that the wood that God's people were using to panel their houses was the wood that was probably supposed to be used to construct the temple.

The point being, God's commands can never be secondary to our desires.

Is the same true for you? Do you give God your best? You know, here's something I've observed in ministry.

[28 : 08] A church member will get a new TV, a new appliance, or something else, and they'll donate that old thing that it's replacing to the church.

Now, look, sometimes that can be a tremendous blessing. It really can. But sometimes, oftentimes, what it results in is the church being full of junk. People give those things, and they think they're being generous.

But that kind of sacrifice doesn't ask for much, does it? It's not very sacrificial. Haggai challenged the people of God to give their best, to stop being weak, to stop being lethargic, to stop being afraid. In his second sermon to them, he asked soul-penetrating questions. Questions like, is there commitment of the heart to spiritual things, or is there merely an outward kind of formulaic, humdrum, this is sort of what we do, we don't really know why we're doing it, kind of worship and attitude towards God?

Are they satisfied with religious rituals, going again through the motions, or is there an eagerness, a zealotness to engage God in worship?

[29 : 46] Is there brokenness of spirit? Is there an earnestness to plead with God for forgiveness and for help to truly seek what he desires?

He asked them, are you majoring on the minors and deceived into believing that somehow when you focus on these really little things that you're being holy, when really you've missed the whole point of what it means to be a follower of the Lord?

We need preachers like Haggai. We need to listen to men with a word from God and who don't dilute his word.

I know I hope to be like that, but I hope that I'm not the only preacher that you listen to. God has blessed us with men who preach this way.

You can think of a few, Paul Washer, John MacArthur, Steve Lawson. There are others. I listen to those preachers and I do so because I'm not anticipating, oh, I'm gonna have butterflies in their stomach.

[30 : 56] They're gonna make me feel so good about myself and who I am and what I can do. They are men who tell the truth, who tell it like it is. And I know that I'm gonna be convicted, but I also know that I'm gonna receive encouragement to pursue Christ more earnestly.

So that was Haggai. The other prophet was Zechariah. His ministry was different. He was more of a visionary, having received visions from God that foretold the future.

Through Zechariah, God enabled his people at this time to see the future, to see the future that he had preordained and to understand their role in their time, in their day, in his redemptive plan.

And at the heart of Zechariah's message is the future coming of a shepherd redeemer. That shepherd redeemer we know is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus quoted Zechariah in the Gospels, attributing his prophecies to himself. In one place he did that, Mark 14, 27 through 28. Jesus said to them, you will all fall away for it is written, he's quoting Zechariah, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

[32 : 15] But after I am raised, I will go before you to Galilee. Zechariah's prophecy snapped the people out of their lethargy and their disobedience to God and obeying the laws of man by promising that all they did in the present for the Lord would be eternally worth it.

For them in their time, it was time to repent and to focus on obeying God's instruction to build the temple. For us, in our time, it's to snap out of it.

It's to get busy about obeying our Lord's command to go and make disciples and to be the church that he's called us to be, to be temples of the Holy Spirit.

The preaching, the proclamation of God's word had a profound effect on Zerubbabel and Yeshua, the leaders of those who had returned from exile.

We read about that again in verse two. Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua, the son of Josedach, arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

[33 : 24] This is what the word of God does. It challenges, it motivates, it convicts, and it energizes God's people to perform acts of obedience which cause the word of God and the work of God to prosper.

Listen to such men and pray that God's word will be at work in our church through our obedience to his instruction. We need to be, and I pray that you will join me in praying that our church would be like the church in Thessalonica.

And Paul talks about them in 1 Thessalonians 2.13, and this is what he says, and we also thank God constantly for this, that when you receive the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it, not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God.

And this is what I want you to see, which is at work in you believers. May we be praying and pleading with God that in our church as it's been, so it will be, and even more, that God's work will be at work in us.

How about you? Is the word of God at work in you? Are deeds left undone because you have taken your eye off the main thing or the main things and given your attention to something that is far less important?

[34 : 58] Understand, again, we don't work to be saved. We work because we are saved. We obey God even if it means defying the law of the land because when God's word is proclaimed, the second way we see it at work is to separate those who are truly of him from those who aren't.

So God's word is proclaimed. Next, we see that God's word is protested in verses three through 10. As governor of the land, Tat and I had authority from Darius, the king of Persia, to enforce the decree which permitted the Jews from rebuilding the temple.

So here he gathers his cronies and they go speak to the Jewish leaders who were moved by God's word, spoken through God's prophets to resume construction of the temple.

They protested the project by first questioning who gave them the authority to break the decree that was issued by the Persian king.

And when that failed to intimidate the Jews from rebuilding, they asked for a list of names so they could identify them and tattle on them.

[36 : 17] And we're going to tell on you, we want your names and we're going to tell Darius and you're going to be in trouble. You know, asking for names is usually an effective form of intimidation, especially with young people.

But God's word proclaimed from the mouths of God's prophets emboldened the leaders of God's people and they would no longer obey the laws of men which caused them to disobey God. And I love what verse 5 says. But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews and they did not stop them until the report should reach Darius and then an answer be returned by letter concerning it.

They were still going to tattle. Ezra provides us of a copy of their tattled tale in verses 6 through 10. But even still, when God's word is proclaimed, God's people obey, the protest of unbelievers who oppose God's will should be of little concern to God's people.

These people trusted that God would preserve them and he did. So God's word is proclaimed, it's protested, and now we see that God's word preserves.

[37 : 46] God's word preserves. It was proclaimed his word through his prophets and even though it was protested by those who opposed his will, God's people understood that God through his word promised to preserve them, promised to protect them and would prevent those who opposed them from succeeding in what God had called them to do.

God's word is true. And they knew that they were on the right side of this conflict. They were on the side of truth. And their trust in God's preservation to protect them from those who sought to prevent them from obeying his word is clearly stated in verses 11 through 16 as they issued their response to the letter that Tat and I sent to Darius.

God through his word, proclaimed by the preaching of his prophets, reminded God's people of who he is and who they are.

Look at what they say at the beginning of verse 11. We are the servants of the God of heaven.

Through God, through his word, proclaimed by the preaching of his prophets, they were reminded of their true identity.

and they were reminded of what they were specifically called to do in obedience to his will. The rest of verse 11, they said, and we are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago which a great king of Israel built and finished.

[39 : 21] And in the rest of their response, we see a humble acknowledgement of past sins which resulted in their exile which they were now returning from. They knew God had orchestrated the past grim situation and would continue to work through pagan kings in the present to preserve his people and to give them a hope for the future.

They knew they were on the right side of the truth and that truth set them free from the fear of disobeying the laws established by men which opposed the divine will and commands of God.

we have an example to learn from here don't we? Especially since we live on the other side of the greatest promise God ever gave and kept.

The sending of the Redeemer shepherd. The coming of the servant king. The Messiah. The son of God.

Jesus Christ. the one who was prophesied about from the very beginning when sin entered this world. Romans 8 28 through 31 speaks about how God preserves us.

[40 : 47] It says and we know that for those who love God all things work out 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 firstborn among many brothers.

And those whom he predestined he also called. Those whom he called he also justified and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things if God is for us who can be against us?

You see there's nobody that falls through the through the cracks here. Those who are called are those who are justified. Those who are justified are those who will be glorified.

No one falls through the cracks. What God saves God keeps. And so if God is for us who can be against us?

You know I have a lot of Bibles I don't think I have as many Bibles as Tyler does but I have quite a few and under Romans 8 31 I'm always sure to write this little note if God is for us it doesn't matter who's against us.

[42 : 08] It doesn't matter who's against us. If God is for us it doesn't matter who is against us. Christian God is for you. He's not against you.

In his word he has promised to keep you. He has promised to preserve you. You need to know his word so that you stand firm in the reality of who you are in Jesus Christ.

Refusing to bow down to those who protest the truth that God has revealed to you. You have been redeemed in Christ.

God's approval. You have been set free from your sin. You have a new and abundant life in Jesus. No one, no one, nothing can separate you from the love of Jesus Christ. You don't need to work to get God's approval.

[43 : 14] In Christ by grace, you have God's approval. And knowing that changes everything, doesn't it? It should.

The church in America is a lot like the temple left in ruins at the beginning of Ezra chapter 5. But the Bible reminds us that God always preserves a remnant.

And God's word reminds us that though we are sinful and though we are fickle, God is faithful. His word is proclaimed, His word is protested, His word preserves, and now we see that God's word prevails.

It prevails. Verse 17, therefore if it seems good to the king, let search be made in the royal archives there in Babylon to see whether a decree was issued by Cyrus the king of the rebuilding of the house of God in Jerusalem and let the king send us his pleasure in this matter.

Now we'll see Darius' response in chapter 6. So spoiler alert, God once again demonstrates his sovereign authority of all things and Darius is moved to issue another decree which enables and promotes and protects the people of God and they're continuing to rebuild the temple.

[44 : 36] The word of God proclaimed through the preaching of his prophets, though protested by his enemies, preserves his people in the conflict and ultimately it prevails in the work of his people in obedience to his will prospers.

Now let's connect all of this to Jesus. Jesus Christ is the incarnate word of God. John 1, 1 through 4 makes that very clear.

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made.

In him was life and the life was the light of men. Jesus is God. He is the exact representation of God the Father. He is the ultimate revelation of who God is and what God is like.

He is the way. He is the truth. He is the life. No one comes to the Father. No one is saved apart from faith in him. That truth was protested all throughout Jesus' earthly life and ministry.

[45 : 54] The protest led him to the cross where there he was put to death by the hands of sinful men. But in the tomb his body was preserved.

just as God's word said that it would. His holy one would not be permitted to decay. And on the third day Jesus rose from the grave.

He prevailed. He prevails. He's won. And he shares his victory with you.

he shares it with you who believe in him, who trust in him. Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness and Jesus cannot be overcome.

John 1 16 through 17 says for from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. And you should underline that in your Bible.

[46 : 59] grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth come through Jesus Christ. God's commands were given in the Old Testament to Moses to reveal our sinfulness.

That we would see our need for a Savior to prevail against Satan, against sin and death. And Jesus Christ is that Savior. He is the one who provides those who are in him whom he saves with a super abundance of grace.

Grace upon grace. Such a king is worthy of obedience, isn't he? His grace is sufficient.

His burden is light. There's nothing left for you to do in regards to your salvation. And there should be no turning back. But looking forward.

Looking to what's up ahead. We know what to expect in this life. We know what to expect in our time. Jesus told us if they hated me they're going to hate you. But we must also be people who like him are of good courage.

[48 : 19] Who stand firm. because we know that Jesus has prevailed. He has overcome and he is worthy.

And our efforts to make much of him and his name and his gospel as we proclaim his word will prosper.

Galatians 6 9 says and let us not grow weary of doing good for in due season we will reap in due season we will prosper if we do not give up.

how should we adjust to what we've heard. I think it's this persevere in Jesus Christ the word of God.

I know it's frustrating isn't it? To watch the news it's frustrating to read through posts on social media especially this time of year about what our culture is celebrating and it can seem to us that we're losing but understand this no matter how it might seem no matter how it might feel Jesus Christ has prevailed and we have won and we shouldn't be shocked by a world that has been

turned over to a depraved mind but what do we do?

[49 : 54] Do we just say ah well or I'm just going to do my business and take care of myself over here and just kind of you do that whatever you're doing over there or whenever they should start to impose laws that would cause us to defy God's command are we going to sit there and take it or are we going to be like the people of God as we've been called to be are we going to stand firm and say no we obey God not men we obey the Lord not people and if we do that we can hope that there will be revival but if we do that we can be sure that God's word will prosper in us and that our church will prosper as well when I first started out in ministry there's still a lot of them but it seemed like really when I first started out there's just a new church growth book coming out every week every month and you know any pastors conference I went to there'd be hey there's this church growth book that you should buy and it's got some practical things that you can use at your church and it's going to help you and I had a shelf full of these church growth books and I would consult them and I would read them and I would try some of these things but in the end I was reading Acts chapter 2 and Peter as he gets up to preach and proclaim

God's word and I was convicted God's word creates all things God's word was incarnate in Jesus Christ the son of God God's word was preached and his church was formed God's word is what feeds and nourishes his sheep and so I threw a lot of those books away because what I became convicted of and still am is that God's word will cause his people to prosper like nothing else and so I challenge you brother I challenge you sister preserve in Jesus Christ who is the word of God know his word so that when the time comes and you are in a position where you have that decision to make what will I do will I bow the knee to men or will I stand firm in what I know to be true that you would stand firm and that together we as

God's people would prosper in a nation that's in desperate need of the courage to be the courageous and bold witness that God has commanded us and enables us to be if we'll just be obedient to him let's pray Lord we come to you and we acknowledge God that so often when it comes to your word that we are neglectful that we tend to be lethargic in our reading of it and our study of it and in our doing it God we pray that you would forgive us and we pray God I pray that as we've gone through Ezra chapter 5 that we like them Lord would be stirred by your spirit to be people who are doers of the word and not hearers only

Lord we pray for our nation God we ask you for revival Lord we pray that the men whom you've called to proclaim your word will proclaim it like Haggai like Zechariah like so many others that they would be unafraid of what men might do or say God that your people would be emboldened that they would be compelled by your spirit to obey that as a result of that Lord I pray that our churches would be strong I pray that our churches would be formidable I pray that our churches would be used by you to have an impact in this world that's in desperate need of your people being the kind of church that you've commanded them to be God it starts with each one of us and making that commitment to you that we will be those who follow you who obey your instruction no matter what the cost because we know that you've prevailed and in the end it will be worth it you are sovereign you are holy you are in control we have nothing to be afraid of

God may we live in that truth in Jesus name I pray amen Thank you.