

Do Not Destroy

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[0:00] Welcome to Built on God's Word, the preaching and teaching ministry of Highland Park Baptist Church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.! Pastor Mike Scrivani preaches on Psalm 57.!

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge. In the shadow of your wings I will take refuge till the storms of destruction pass by.

I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills His purpose for me. He will send from heaven and save me. He will put to shame him who tramples on me.

God will send out His steadfast love and His faithfulness. My soul is in the midst of lions. I lie down amid fiery beasts, the children of men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let Your glory be over all the earth. They set a net for my steps. My soul was bowed down.

[1:19] They dug a pit in my way, but they have fallen into it themselves. My heart is steadfast, O God. My heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody.

Awake, my glory. Awake, O harp and lyre. I will awake the dawn. I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the peoples. I will sing praises to You among the nations.

For Your steadfast love is great to the heavens, Your faithfulness to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let Your glory be over all the earth.

May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated? Martin Lloyd-Jones is one of my heroes.

He was a medical doctor who later became a pastor and faithful preacher of God's Word at Westminster Chapel in London for many years.

[2:18] When I wrote my dissertation, he was one of my primary sources. I studied many of his sermons and read nearly everything that he wrote about preaching.

Martin Lloyd-Jones would often talk about an acid test, which he said proved the genuineness of a Christian's faith. An acid test is a method used to determine whether a metal is genuine gold or a less valuable material.

To perform the acid test, a chemist would place a drop of nitric acid on a sample of the metal. If the metal dissolved quickly, it indicated that the sample was not gold since gold resists nitric acid.

And so Lloyd-Jones would ask, what is the acid test of the Christian faith? He said, is it orthodoxy? Is the real test of the Christian's faith that he or she believes the right things? He said, that can't be it.

[3:31] Because we know from Scripture that even the devil and demons believe in the oneness of God and shudder. So faith is more than merely an intellectual exercise.

Lloyd-Jones then asked, is the acid test of a Christian's faith morality? Is it doing good things? We all know people who do good things but don't believe in Jesus.

And Jesus said that the day is coming when many will present him with the good things they've done as justification for their salvation. However, Jesus said that he will tell them in Matthew 7, 21 through 23, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

Orthodoxy, right doctrine, and morality, obeying God's commands are good things. But Lloyd-Jones said that it can't be just those things that prove the genuineness of our faith.

[4:47] He then asked, is it experience? Is it the person who says, I've been born again? I know I'm a Christian because I've had a born-again experience.

Lloyd-Jones says it can't be that either because every religion claims experience. If experience was the only test of faith, he concludes then every faith would be true.

Jesus described seed which symbolized the gospel in his parable of the soils. And he talked about the seed that fell on the shallow soil, the rocky soil.

In Matthew 13, 20 through 21, Jesus says, As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. There's an experience. Yet he has no root in himself but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

And so this leads to what Lloyd-Jones said is the true acid test of the Christian faith. Trials and suffering. He referred to 1 Peter 1, 6 through 9, a passage that speaks about suffering in the Christian life.

[6:09] That passage says, Though you do not now see him, you believe in him.

And rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. When you're grieved by various trials, when you suffer, what do they prompt you to think, do, and believe?

Do you trust that God has a purpose in them for you? When trials and suffering act as an acid test of your faith, does your faith dissolve, or does it shine like gold?

The superscription of Psalm 57 tells us that David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote this psalm when he fled from Saul in the cave.

The Bible records a couple of times when David was in a cave, hiding from Saul. The first is 1 Samuel 22.

[7:42] When I preached on Psalm 34 a few weeks ago, I shared about the context of this cave moment in David's life. Remember, David fled from Saul and had no safe place to hide from him.

In desperation, he went to the Philistines, the chief enemies of Israel, and sought refuge in one of their cities.

David pretended to be crazy, and Achish, the king of the Philistine city of Gath, let him go. And then David hid in the cave of Adullam, where he was soon joined by his family and others who were sympathetic to his plight.

Later in 1 Samuel 24, Saul takes 3,000 of his elite warriors to hunt for David. As they pursued him, Saul went into a cave to relieve himself.

It just so happened that the cave he chose for his restroom was the same cave David and his men were hiding in. David's men saw this as a divine intervention.

[9:04] They believed the Lord delivered Saul over to David in this moment. David only had to give the signal, and they'd take Saul out.

Instead, David snuck up on Saul, and he cut off a piece of his robe. And then when Saul left the cave, David confronted him with the piece of fabric he'd just cut.

And David used that as proof, as evidence that he hadn't conspired against Saul. He hadn't sinned against Saul, and that he would not raise his hand against Saul.

Saul, in that moment, wept. He acknowledged that David was more righteous than him, and that God would, in fact, give to David the kingdom of Israel.

His only request was for David to not kill his family, nor destroy my name out of my father's house.

[10:20] That's 1 Samuel 25, 21. David vowed to not destroy Saul's family or his family's name.

And then Saul went home, only to change his mind about David, and again sought his death. The superscription of Psalm 57 identifies this as a mictum of David.

Bible translators aren't quite sure what a mictum is, so they've left that word untranslated in our English Bibles. A possible related word to mictum is the Hebrew word kadim, which means an engraving.

If the underlining meaning of mictum refers to an engraving, then the psalms which are called mictums may have been considered of such great value that they should be stamped upon stone tablets for long-term preservation.

Some scholars see the word mictum as meaning golden, a definition that would similarly assign great value to psalms so labeled.

[11:35] Thus, a mictum could be a psalm that was considered to be as precious as stamped gold.

These mictums of David may have been regarded as priceless inscriptions, words of God which were forged in the adversity of his faithful followers' life.

The superscription also provides instruction to the choir master that this was a psalm according to do not destroy. Psalm 58 and 59 also include this detail in their superscriptions.

Do not destroy was likely a melody, a tune which various psalms were sung to. Whatever that tune sounded like, it would have invoked in worshipers a prayerful, confident sense to trust in God in the face of problems and trials.

Songs of praise to the Lord stir our hearts, and they should prompt our minds to reflect on the truths of who he is as he's revealed to us in his word.

[12:57] Psalms played to the tune of do not destroy were intended to prompt worshipers to exalt God as they faced earthly problems, which is what David does here in Psalm 57.

And the main idea for this morning's sermon is that earthly problems should prompt you to exalt your heavenly Father. Earthly problems should prompt you to exalt your heavenly Father.

Again, the superscription of Psalm 57 tells us that David was inspired by the Holy Spirit to compose this psalm while he was in the cave.

Caves are neat. I remember as a kid going to Fantastic Caverns. Anybody gone to Fantastic Caverns in Springfield, Missouri? Okay, some of you have.

Fantastic Caverns is basically a drive-through cave. Everyone piles into this red wagon with seats, which is pulled by a big red Jeep.

[14:01] Everything inside of the cavern, the cave, is lit up, revealing all the awesome formations inside. There was a moment, though, I remember when our guide turned off all the lights.

And I remember being shrouded in a darkness that I'd never experienced before. Caves are fun places to be in if you have a guide and if you have light.

But if you don't, they are not fun places to be in. They're dark, dirty, drafty, damp, and dangerous. Without a light or a guide, you could easily get lost and you could hit your head on a stalactite. But the cave David took refuge in was not a fantastic cavern.

Obviously, they didn't have electric lights then, but he probably didn't keep his torches burning either because Saul and his commandos would have seen its glow and they would have been better able to track him down.

[15:09] Yet here is David in this dark place praising the Lord. David's heart and his soul glow.

As he reflects upon the goodness of God who's illumined his mind with truths more precious than gold. Though he may not have realized in this moment why God was allowing the earthly problems he faced, he knew what God wanted from him in that cave, in his suffering.

It's okay to ask God why in those moments where our faith is being tested, where we're suffering. We looked at that last week in Psalm 55. It's okay to ask why. But that isn't the only question or the best question that we should ask God during times of trial.

The better question to ask God is God what? What do you want from me right now? And the answer is that God wants to be exalted.

[16:54] As he approached his darkest hour on the earth, Jesus, after telling his disciples that they would experience tribulation in this world and then encouraging them to take heart because he had overcome it, prayed to his heavenly Father.

In John 17, Jesus begins that prayer saying, Father, the hour has come, this hour where he would be crucified, where he would endure the wrath for our sins and our place.

And Jesus says, glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you. As he faced the cross, Jesus prayed that the Father would receive praise and worship from the millions of people whose sins he would soon bear and atone for with his blood.

Suffering on the cross was the path to glory. The Father would be glorified in the redemption he'd secure for sinners through the sacrificial death of his beloved Son.

And this act of grace would result in the Father's highly exalting the name of his Son, Jesus, whom one day every knee will bow to and confess as Lord all to the glory of God the Father.

[18:27] Philippians 2, 9 through 10. Earthly problems should prompt Christians who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit with a desire to delight in him who solved our ultimate problem by suffering in our place to atone for our sins.

Things may be bad, but they could be infinitely worse. But in our flesh, as we do battle with our sin nature, we are sometimes prompted to do things when we experience earthly problems that are not

exalting the Lord.

We are tempted in those moments to doubt God's love, to question God's faithfulness, to lash out at others, to slap the face that slapped our face instead of turning the other cheek, to return cursing with curses instead of blessings, to feel lost in the cave that our problem has put us in.

But if you are in Christ, brother, sister, you always have reason to hope. You always have reason to endure. You always have reason to exalt him.

Because your earthly problems are temporary. Your suffering will come to an end. The acid test of suffering will determine that your faith in Christ is genuine, something more precious than all the gold in the world.

[20 : 20] And it will reveal to the world that you've been stamped, you've been engraved with the name of Jesus.

You are his, and you will not be destroyed. So earthly problems should prompt you to exalt your heavenly Father because you've been saved by your Savior Jesus Christ from your greatest problem.

You've been stamped. You've been sealed with the Holy Spirit, and you will obtain the outcome of your faith when you are glorified with him in his glorious heaven.

And so in Psalm 37, there are three principles here. Three principles to remember when you face earthly problems to prompt you to exalt in your heavenly Father.

The first principle. From verses 1 through 3, God has a purpose for you. God has a purpose for you. Psalm 57 begins with David pleading for God's mercy.

[21 : 32] Be merciful to me, O God. Be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge. In the shadow of your wings, I will take refuge till the storms of destruction pass by. The repetition of David's plea adds urgency to it.

David has physically taken refuge from Saul and from the Philistines in a cave, but his true refuge is God and his trust in God's sovereignty over his life.

As he says in verse 2, I call out to God most high, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. In our old house in Leavenworth, Danny and I had an outdoor shelf on our back patio that she used for plants. It was just to the left of our back door and one spring, a robin claimed the top shelf to build her nest. At that time, Hazel wasn't born, Jack was just a little boy and I remember lifting him up at times to peek inside the nest, to see the robin's eggs which eventually hatched.

[22 : 53] Through the window in our back door, we could watch Mother Robin feeding her chicks. One night, we had a really bad thunderstorm.

Rain was pouring, lightning was striking, thunder was loud enough to rattle the windows of our house. and we were concerned about how Mother Robin and her chicks were doing.

So I flipped on the light to our patio, looked out the window of that door and there she was.

Mother Robin, wings spread out over her nest as she was being pelted with rain, keeping her chicks safe and dry under the shadow of her wings.

Little children do something similar. Sometimes I'll be talking to a mom or a dad and they'll be holding their toddler in their arms and I'll say hi to their little ones and they'll just instantly turn their face away from me and bury their face in mom or dad's shoulder, pressing themselves closer into the person they know the best and who makes them feel safe and protected.

[24 : 22] David's problems don't prompt him to run away from God. They prompt him to run and press himself deeper into God.

in Matthew 23 Jesus laments over Jerusalem for their rejection of him and the consequences that will result from that.

We read in Matthew 23 37-39 Jesus lamenting, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stoned those who are sent to it.

How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you were not willing. See, your house is left to you desolate for I tell you you will not see me again until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Our Lord's desire is that we seek refuge in him, that we would be covered in his righteousness and sheltered from the consequences of our sin.

[25 : 35] It's tragic that many people turn away from God in times of suffering instead of pressing deeper into him. One time I was sharing the gospel with a man who said he was an atheist and as we were talking I was thinking of Romans 1, 18-20 where the apostle Paul said that all of the

attributes of God, his eternal power and divine nature are clearly perceived in creation like the mother Robin's self-sacrifice on my back patio to shelter her chicks.

And so I asked him, what happened in your life that made you not want to believe in God?

And I'll never forget the expression of his face after I asked him that question. His brows furrowed, his jaw clenched, his tone of voice changed and it was like he spit out the next words to me.

He said, you don't want to know and I'm not going to talk to you about that. And then he turned and walked away. something happened to that man.

Never found out what, but whatever it was that caused him to suffer or see someone probably whom he loved suffer, it prompted him to run away from God and not to him.

[27:17] I think this problem boils down to a question that many people ask. people ask. And that question is, why do bad things happen to good people? The Bible answers that question, but the answer isn't the answer that many people want to hear.

Again, David begins this psalm with the repeated phrase, be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me. David's been sinned against here.

But he knows that he is a sinner who needs God's mercy because the truth is, the Bible says there are no good people.

Romans 3, 10 through 12 says, as it is written, none is righteous, no, not one. No one understands, no one seeks for God, all have turned aside, together they have become worthless, no one does good, not even one.

You see, what we like to do is we like to compare our goodness to others. And it's not that hard to find someone who in comparison to, we look better than.

[28:42] People will think, you know, yeah, I've done some things, but I've never killed anyone. someone, and somebody who's killed someone can say, well, I've killed someone, but I'm not Adolf Hitler.

But God doesn't compare our goodness to other peoples. He compares it to himself, and he is perfectly, totally holy.

That's the standard. and that's a problem because none of us measure up to that.

In John 3, 16 through 21, Jesus is meeting with Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a man who many people thought was good, was very good.

And he said to him, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

[29:52] For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God.

And this is the judgment. The light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his works should be exposed.

But whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God. There's a lot more that could be said about the problem of evil.

There's a lot that's been written. what must be most understood is that the greatest evil ever done was committed against the greatest man who ever lived and it was sovereignly orchestrated by God to achieve the greatest good ever accomplished.

God himself took on the consequences of our sin so that all who come to Christ receive his forgiveness.

[31:16] They are saved from his wrath and they will experience his perfect peace when he brings all of sin all evil and all suffering to an end.

God isn't the problem. God isn't the problem. Sin is. we are. And in his grace and mercy he's provided the only shelter that will keep us safe in the shadow of his cross.

David takes refuge in the safety of God's protection and submits to God's purpose for his life. All humanity's attempt to end suffering have utterly failed, haven't they?

Our nation is more prosperous than any other nation in the world at present or in the past. We have comforts that no other country or culture has experienced.

But it hasn't made us any happier. more our culture has pushed God away, the more broken, depressed, angry, and purposeless people have become.

[32:45] Running from God isn't the answer. It hasn't helped. Without God, life has no purpose. and when problems come, all other refuges fail to shelter us.

David knew that God had a plan for his life and that his problems served a purpose. And these truths anchored his soul under the shadow of his Lord's wing.

God told David prior to all of this, long before this, that he would one day be king of Israel. As the current king of Israel sought his life, David chose to trust in God who had proven to be a person who promised things and kept his promises.

God's plans for you and me is not to become the king of Israel. That's not his purpose for us. He's promised us something better.

That we will one day reign with him. That he will walk with us in this life through the valley of the shadow of death so that we don't have to live in fear because we walk in the shadow of our good shepherd who will bring us to his house to dwell with him forever.

[34:23] The cross of Christ served a purpose. Jesus' suffering produced the greatest good. Our sins were atoned for with his blood.

Our eternal souls were ransomed by his life. And on the third day the cave that held his body was empty.

the cave could not hold him. Death could not defeat him. He was not destroyed.

He rose. And one day those of us who are in Christ will rise with him too. This truth gives us purpose and reason to exalt him always.

in this world we will have trouble. We will find ourselves at times in the cave but we take heart in Jesus who overcome it.

[35:28] Who has overcome it. Who has overcome the world. Who overcame the cave and who shares his victory with us. Jesus, friend, Jesus will not stiff arm you when you come to him.

He will welcome you under his wing. When earthly problems come, don't ask God why, ask him what. Lord, what are you teaching me right now?

What do I need to learn from you? And ask him how. How can I exalt you in my life right now through this thing?

Seek him and he will answer you. Second, God is more powerful than your enemies. Remember that God is more powerful than your enemies.

Verses four through six. My soul is in the midst of lions. I lie down amid fiery beasts. The children of man whose teeth are spears and arrows whose tongues are sharp swords. Be exalted, O God, above all the heavens.

[36:44] Let your glory be over all the earth. They set a net for my steps. My soul was bowed down. They dug a pit in my way, but they have fallen into it themselves. Here David compares his enemies to lions and fiery beasts with razor sharp teeth eager to tear his flesh once he falls into the traps that they have set for him.

But in the midst of reflecting on their strength, he praises God who is more powerful than his enemies. After Jesus told his disciples that he would soon die, he led them to the garden of Gethsemane.

And on the way there, Matthew 26, 30, tells us Jesus led them in singing a hymn. This was during the Passover. When Jews celebrated the Passover, they sang a collection of psalms known as the Hallel.

Psalms 113 through 118. And the last words of Psalm 118 say this, You are my God and I will give thanks to you.

You are my God, I will extol you. Oh, give thanks to the Lord for he is good for his steadfast love endures forever. In the garden, Jesus was deeply troubled.

[38:07] He wept, he sweat drops of blood. But on his way to the cross, he sang praise to the Father.

He didn't annihilate his enemies when they showed up to arrest him. In fact, he commanded Peter to put away his sword. He knew he would die, but he knew he would rise.

And on the day of Pentecost, Peter, emboldened by the Holy Spirit, stood up and he preached the gospel to the same people who raised their voice in opposition to Jesus, chanting, crucify him, crucify him.

And he said to them in Acts 2, 22-24, men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your

midst.

As you yourselves know, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

[39:17] God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it. The apostle Paul knew Christ's saving power which encouraged him to press on in spite of his enemies.

While he was imprisoned in Rome, surrounded by enemies, not knowing if his imprisonment would at this point end in his execution or his freedom, wrote this in Philippians 1, 18-24, yes and I will rejoice for I know that through your prayers the help of the spirit of Jesus Christ will turn out for my deliverance as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body whether by life or by death.

For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh that means fruitful labor for me yet which shall I choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two.

My desire is to depart and be with Christ for that is far better but to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. So here we read no matter what happened to him Paul trusted and exalted in the saving power of his Lord Jesus Christ.

He would either live to tell people about Jesus or he'd die and be with Jesus. Either way he wasn't afraid.

[40:46] His sufferings didn't deter his faith. Brother sister if God has saved you you have nothing to fear. Your problems aren't nothing.

Don't hear me say that. Sometimes it's when we feel powerless though that the Lord most demonstrates the greatness of his power in our lives.

You're enduring and the reason you're enduring is because he's the one sustaining you. In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul talks about a thorn in his flesh.

We don't know for sure what that thorn was. He doesn't say. Could be a number of different things. Paul had false teachers in the church there who were lying about him and no doubt he had all kinds of physical ailments from all the beatings that he took for preaching the gospel.

But Paul learned that all the problems he faced which demonstrated his weaknesses served a greater purpose.

[42:05] And he says in 2 Corinthians 12 10, The beauty of weakness lies not in the weakness itself but in how God's power shines through it.

Consequently Paul could call himself strong even in weaknesses even in suffering. Our limitations remind us of our finitude which in turn leads us to God exalting in his power who sustains us.

The bigger the problem the greater the enemy the more opportunity there is for God to be glorified in your life as you exalt him.

And now third, God is always worthy of your praise. When you're in the cave, when you're suffering, remember that God is always worthy of your praise.

Verses 7 through 11. My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody, awake my glory, awake, O harp and lyre.

[43:33] I will awake the dawn. I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples. I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be over all the earth. Earthly troubles, problems, tempt us to stay in our bed, don't they?

Not awake the dawn, as David talks about here. In the morning, our minds can be flooded with noise. We don't want to get up. We think, I don't want to do it.

I don't want to deal with it. We just want to be done with it. But here, David can't wait for the sun to rise and start his day praising the Lord.

There's been trouble today, there'll be trouble tomorrow, but David's heart is steadfast. God's worth and worthiness of praise isn't contingent on David's circumstances, but who he trusts God to be.

[44:55] When you suffer, it's like, again, I've said this before, it's like God puts the spotlight on you. People who know you, believer, unbeliever, they are watching you, especially unbelievers.

They want to see if you truly believe what you claim to believe. Suffering tests our faith, but the person who's truly been saved delights in Jesus all the time.

for all the reasons I've already mentioned and more. I know for me, when I'm going through things I don't want to be going through, when I'm tempted to feel sorry for myself, what I need to do is get alone with God and put on some Shane and Shane or some other praise music with words, with songs that speak truth, that are captured from God's word.

And this isn't a fake thing, this isn't just put on a happy face and pretend like everything is okay, it's just remembering that you know what, this is hard, but I don't go through this thing alone.

And my weaknesses in this moment will demonstrate God's power and ultimately my greatest problem has been resolved and I know that God is teaching me something here. And what I need to do is not whine and complain but try to learn.

[46:24] And I love how David is eager for his praise to be heard everywhere. In this moment, he wants his praise to be heard everywhere. He wants his neighbors to hear, he wants the nations to hear.

At our last business meeting, I introduced a new mission statement for our church and it's this, we exist to develop disciples of Jesus Christ who delight in him and demonstrate his goodness as we declare his gospel to our neighbors and the nations.

This is what we do. This is what the Lord has commanded us to be about. And when it comes to our suffering, when it comes to our struggles, our problems, he gives us wonderful opportunity to bear witness to him, to our neighbors and to the nations.

And so, how do we adjust our lives according to what we've heard? I think this is it. Perceive your earthly problems as opportunities to praise your heavenly Father, learn from the Holy Spirit, spirit and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Earthly problems provide opportunity for us to share the gospel with our neighbors. When they ask us, how are we doing, we should have a response that says something like, you know what, this is hard, I appreciate your concern, but I want to tell you about what's getting me through this right now.

[48:13] It's the hope that you have in Jesus and you have opportunity in this week time to demonstrate, to declare his awesome power in your life.

And this should be happening in our church all the time. You know, Paul prayed for all the different people that we have right now in our church who are suffering all different kinds of things. It's a good thing that we know each other, that we pray for one another, that we reach out to one another, that we encourage one another.

And when unbelievers come into this place, or when they see us gathering outside of this place, they should be able to tell a difference. What's going on there?

What is it with these people? And we have an opportunity to tell them we have a hope that is more precious than gold. We've been stamped by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We will not be destroyed by anything. We conclude with God's word having the final word from Romans 5, 1 through 5. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[49:37] Through him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Let's pray. Lord, what a comfort it is to us this morning to hear from your word and be reminded of your promises to us that, Lord, when we suffer in this life as you said that we would, it ultimately serves a purpose, that it's not for nothing.

And Lord, I'm sure that any of us who has walked with you for a significant amount of time can think back on those times when we were in the cave and things were dark, and you heard our cries for help, you saw the tears that we shed, but Lord, it was you who sustained us.

And we can look back on those moments and God has sustained us and helped us get through, and Lord, we can look back on those moments and remember the things that you taught us, how you strengthened our faith, how you made us love this world less, how you caused us to just yearn more for you and to be with you.

Lord, you know everybody here this morning listening who's heard this sermon, who's heard your word, God, you know their situation, you know whatever cave that they're in. God, I pray that you would encourage them not to run away from you, but to run to you, to trust in you, to keep their eyes

on you, to hope in you, and to endure knowing that it's all going to be worth it and that, Lord, you shelter us in your wings.

[52 : 17] So, Father, we pray for our church. God, we pray that in this place you would develop even more so a culture where we are helping each other better follow you, where we are encouraging each other to live our lives for you.

God, where we are sharing the goodness of who you are with our neighbors in the nations as we delight in you, no matter what it is that we're going through, because, Lord, we know that you have overcome for us.

Lord, thank you for this hope that we have. Thank you for all that you do, for all that you are, for all that you've done, and we look forward to that day when we are with you forever.

Until then, Lord, may we be focused on you, following you, declaring your goodness throughout the world, exalting your name. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. To learn more, visit us in person or see the website at highlandparkbaptist.net.