

Faith in a Calamity

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 April 2020

[0 : 00] I'm singing, even if I can't see you and we can't be together, what a blessing it is to at least be able to hear that again. I long for the day where we can be back together and worshipping God.

We want to start today with a scripture reading from Philippians chapter 2, verses 5 through 11. Philippians 2, beginning in verse 5.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant.

Being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we praise you that there is coming a day when every knee will bow to Christ and proclaim him to be Lord.

[1 : 17] Lord, we pray that we would give him the glory that's due his name.

Lord, we want to pray for those in our body who are hurting. We think of Donna Bean. Lord, we pray for her with the news she received this week, that you would comfort her heart and encourage her. We pray for Sue and her father David, that she would be able to see him.

And we pray that he would trust in you. Lord, we think also of Diana and Maureen and the Yard family. Lord, we pray that you'd be with each of these, that you would continue to uphold them spiritually, that you would care for them, that that would be demonstrated clearly for them.

And Lord, we want to pray as well for this coronavirus that's going around, for our members in our community, that you would keep them safe, that you would protect them, that you'd give wisdom to our leaders as they consider when we can meet again.

And Lord, we pray, longing that we would be able to meet together again and worship you. We want to lift up to you the school system. We think of Emanuel Christian School in particular, who's still continuing to try to finish out the school year.

[2 : 27] We pray that you'd be with them. And for the parents that are homeschooling that are working on the school year, and even for the public school students who are done but are at home, and Lord, we pray that you would be with their families, that the interactions would be good and helpful, and that this would be a time of remembering your goodness in the life of the family.

Lord, we pray for our men, that you would be with them. We thank you for the time they've had together just to fellowship and to have some spiritual conversation on Friday nights. And Lord, we pray that you would help them to lead their home well and to bring glory to you in their home.

And Lord, we lift up to you the Spanish broadcast, the radio ministry that we have. Lord, we ask that you'd bless it today and days ahead. That as your truth goes forth, that there'd be people all over who are tuning in, maybe even looking for something to do in this time, but that they would tune in and they'd hear your truth and that you'd use that powerfully in their lives to draw them unto yourself, to teach them right understanding of your word.

We pray for our sister church, Grace Baptist Church in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and Pastor Craig Harris. We pray for your continued protection of the vulnerable that are in their congregation. And we pray that you use this time to save those who are unconverted.

So Lord, we pray that you would use the church powerfully in those ways. We want to lift up to you our friends in the Middle East as well. We pray for their protection, that you'd give them wisdom, that you'd give them success in their mission.

[3 : 53] And Lord, while they're missing this opportunity, they had planned to visit in the United States this summer and are not now able to because of the coronavirus. We pray that there would be a blessing in the fruit that's accomplished this summer, that there would be spiritual renewal even when they don't get a clear break from the work.

Lord, we thank you for them and pray that you would protect them. And Lord, we come before you praying for the preaching of your word today, asking that it would be done by the power of your spirit, that you would speak through your messenger.

Lord, we pray for humility from the messenger and from those who would hear that we would be open to the word of God, that we would hear it, that you would speak powerfully, and that it would be you who we would rely upon and who would receive the glory.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Well, we started a little series on the coronavirus, just a little break to talk about some of the issues that are related to the coronavirus.

And so last week, we looked at the idea of the fear of death. And this week, I've entitled the message, Control in a Pandemic. And we're going to be looking at Isaiah 45, verses 5 through 7, if you want to turn there with me.

[5 : 01] Isaiah 45, 5 through 7. So as I said, I've entitled this Control in a Pandemic.

And part of what I'm getting at is that we like to be in control. And it's scary when we're not in control. And we're going to see some of that even as we look at our passage.

But 45, verses 5 through 7. I'm going to start even further back. We're going to read a larger section so we get the context. We're jumping right into the middle of Isaiah. And so let's talk about what's being said here. So look back at verse 44, verse 28, the last verse of the previous chapter.

It says, And this is our text, beginning verse 5.

I am the Lord, and there is no other. Besides me, there is no God. I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know from the rising of the sun and from the west that there is none besides me.

[6 : 56] I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness. I make well-being and clouds rain down righteousness. Let the earth open that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit.

Let the earth cause them both to sprout. I, the Lord, have created it. Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots.

Does the clay say to him who forms it, what are you making? Or your work has no handles? Woe to him who says to a father, what are you begetting? Or to a woman, with what are you in labor?

Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him, ask me of things to come. Will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?

I made the earth and created man on it. It was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host. I have stirred him up in righteousness, and I will make all his ways level.

[7 : 57] He shall build my city and set my exiles free, not for price or reward, says the Lord of hosts. And so I was saying before that our sermon titled, Control and Pandemic, that we don't like the idea of not being in control.

And I think one of the lessons that the coronavirus has taught us, and one that I've said before, is that we're not in control. I think we've been reminded of this over and over again. And our lives have really been turned upside down by the virus in ways we can't even see.

We imagine that we're independent, that we're self-sufficient. But when we're in a time of quarantine, we're reminded that those things are not true. They're false hopes. There are many who cannot go to work, who need to go to work.

And yet there's others who have to go to work who are afraid to go to work. And our lack of control seems blatantly obvious at times like this. And yet I want to acknowledge that there are some, even at this time, who are equipped to deny God's control and eager to reassert our control.

I think a great example of this is this week in a press conference. On Monday, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said, The number is down because we brought the number down.

[9 : 14] God did not do that. Faith did not do that. Destiny did not do that. A lot of pain and suffering did that. Our behavior has stopped the spread of the virus.

God did not stop the spread of the virus. And what we do, how we act, will dictate how the virus spreads. And so probably many of you heard that or saw a recording of that, that speech.

And so in the midst of a time where we feel like things are out of control, there's still those who are reasserting their own control and saying, God has nothing to do with this. God's not involved in this. God's not stopping the virus.

We're stopping the virus. And admittedly, God's role in a global pandemic can be hard for us to understand or to acknowledge. Right? We may not want to argue that God's in control of a virus because we understand that it's causing sickness and even death for many.

But in today's message, I want to address the questions of what is God's involvement in the coronavirus. And I want to assert the sovereignty of God over all things, including this virus and the pandemic that we're facing.

[10 : 22] So first, I want to look at the sovereignty of God, how we see God's sovereignty in the Bible over all things. And of course, we see it here in this passage. And I believe it's important that we begin from the foundation that God's sovereignty is not limited to a virus, but it extends to all things.

So I'm not going to just argue, well, God controls viruses. What I want you to see is that God is sovereign over all things. And that's exactly what we see here in our text. And again, this text is not unique in the Bible.

We're going to see that throughout God's word, this same thing is said. But this passage, our text today, asserts that God stands alone and that there's none like him. He's unique.

He alone is God. That's what we see in verses 4, excuse me, verses 5 and 6. I am the Lord and there is no other. Besides me, there's no God. So there's some distinction being made here.

There's one God. There are no other gods. And we're going to see as we go on what defines God, what demonstrates this. I think the passage goes on and emphasizes further on as well in what I read that there is no other God.

[11 : 27] But what does it mean to be God? What is it that sets him apart? Well, there's a lot of things we might list. We might talk about his holiness and other attributes of God that set him apart, his righteousness.

But this passage in particular talks about or gives us an answer in verse 7. I form light and create darkness. I make well-being and create calamity.

I am the Lord who does all these things. So part of what it means to be God, when there are no other gods, he alone has certain powers. He's done certain things that no one else has done.

And so to begin with, it says he forms or literally he creates light and darkness. The sun, the moon, the stars, they all exist at his command. He's created from the very beginning light and darkness.

Now just step back for a minute and imagine Governor Cuomo saying that we cause the sun to rise and to set. Just imagine a minute at a press conference and someone says, Governor Cuomo, did you notice that beautiful sunrise this morning?

[12 : 29] He said, oh yeah, I made that happen. I mean, how ludicrous would that be? We'd all stop. You made the sun rise? But notice what it says next.

He makes well-being and creates calamity. He makes well-being and creates calamity. And that is exactly what Governor Cuomo has attributed to himself, to the people of New York, to mankind, that we are the ones who have, well, he didn't give us credit for creating the calamity, but he definitely gave us credit for bringing well-being about.

But notice God says, I am the Lord who does all these things. He's saying that this is part of what it means to be God, that he's the one who brings well-being and he creates calamity.

Whatever we face in our life, whether things are going well or not, it's at the sovereign hand of God. We're quick to accuse other people at times, to blame them, but the reality is that it's God who ultimately is responsible for these things.

All that is defined by either light or darkness, well-being or calamity is under the control of God. Now you may notice that these are really inclusive statements.

[13 : 45] There's light and there's darkness. There's nothing in between. Either it's light or it's dark. There's well-being or calamity. I think, again, he's trying to say inclusively. There's nothing else besides these things.

And all these things are under the control of God. And this communicates God's absolute sovereignty. I think that's part of the message of this passage. If I were to step back, I read the larger part of the passage. If I were to step back for a minute and just say, what is Isaiah 45 about?

You may have noticed back in verse 44, he says of Cyrus. And again in chapter 45, verse 1, Thus says the Lord to his anointed, which is really the word for the Messiah, or in Greek even what we would translate the Christ, to Cyrus.

Cyrus was a Persian ruler. But he's the one that allowed God's people to go free. And when this is said in Isaiah, Cyrus hasn't been born yet. And God's calling him by name. And saying, I'm raising up a man named Cyrus to conquer nations, to find hidden treasures.

But ultimately for the purpose that he will deliver my people, and my temple will be rebuilt, and my city will be rebuilt. And so even the rule and reign of godless kings, God governs.

[14 : 59] He's sovereign over these things, and that's what Isaiah 45 is communicating to us. And as I said, that's the consistent word of God. God has created everything that exists, and all that is created is sustained by him.

You may remember, as we've studied through Matthew, we've seen in Matthew that God clothes the lilies of the valley, and he feeds the birds of the air. Even the flowers get their beauty from God.

The birds are fed by him. Matthew 10, 29 through 31 says, Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

Fear not, therefore, you are more value than many sparrows. So these small birds, God determines when they fall to the ground. The hairs of your head, which maybe for some of us are falling out too quickly, God determines those.

He counts them. He numbers them. Even that is under his sovereign reign. You ever tried counting your hair? It seems like an impossible task, but God has every hair of every person numbered.

[16 : 07] And we even have a conclusion given here, Therefore, you are more value than many sparrows. And we'll get into that more as we move along. But part of his conclusion is, if God cares for these animals, if he's sovereign over all these things, doesn't he care for you as well?

We were struck by this in our family devotions this week as we were reading through the book of Psalms. We read Psalm 104. In verse 21, we read, The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God.

The lions roar, seeking their food from God. And I thought, maybe some of you have ever seen the Discovery Channel? And when the lions are after their food, you know, the gazelle, it's prancing along, and there's this cute video of the gazelle, and you're watching along, and all of a sudden, they pan over to the lion.

And you know what's going to happen? And maybe you've seen this happen, where the lion pounces on this gazelle. Well, what God's Word tells us is that God's made gazelles, and put them in that place, and made them hopping in that direction, so that he might feed the lions.

He's brought the lion along to where the gazelle's going to be. Also, he can feed them. God takes care of even these animals. Lions, maybe we think, maybe God shouldn't take care of. Maybe they're intimidating, but God cares even to the point of the sovereignty over the food for the animals.

[17 : 29] And I think, probably most importantly, we see that God's sovereignty extends even to the death of his own son. Acts 4, 27 through 28. It says, Truly in this city, there were gathered together against your holy servant, Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of God.

And so we have this picture of Jesus as he's going to the cross and even being put to death, that there's this gathering of men against God, against Christ, Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.

Again, this sounds inclusive, doesn't it? Gentiles and people of Israel, this is everybody. These people are gathered together against Jesus. But the next verse says, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

Even the death of his son was not outside of his control. Satan didn't conquer God. He didn't defeat God. He didn't gain some great victory in the death of Christ. No, that was part of God's plan for our salvation.

I think we also see that man is rebuked in his arrogance. Even some of the arrogance we saw in Governor Cuomo and those who would deny God's hand in this virus, even in the cure as it comes along, as the end to this quarantine.

[18 : 47] James 4, 13-15. Come now, you who say, today or tomorrow, we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit. Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.

What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that. And we see in this, his sovereignty extends to all things.

If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that. So it's sovereign over our life. People are afraid of dying right now from the virus, but we understand that God's word tells us that God's sovereign over the day of our death.

He's determined the number of our days. And so nothing happens outside his control. Now, I'll mention this a little bit more as we go on, but I'm not denying secondary causes.

It doesn't mean we should be foolish, but we have to understand that ultimately, it's God who's sovereign over these things. Whatever happens to us, whatever we face, is anointed by God. I thought the Heidelberg Catechism does a great job in expressing this.

[19 : 51] It says, God's providence is the almighty and ever-present power of God by which God upholds as with his hand heaven and earth and all creatures and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty, all things, in fact, come to us not by chance, but by his fatherly hand.

And so we see in that list some of the things that we're facing today. Food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty, all things, in fact, come to us not by chance, but by his fatherly hand.

And it's a picture not just of this tyrant who dictates all that's going to take place, but it's a father who loves his people and it's under his control and that ought to encourage us.

Now, what about the coronavirus? Well, my next point is to say, if all things are under the sovereignty of God, then the coronavirus is not somehow excluded from that.

This virus, the pandemic that we're facing is under God's rule and authority. In a verse very similar to what we've seen in Isaiah 45 already, Amos 3 sits by, Amos as a prophet by God's word, says rhetorically, does disaster come to a city unless the Lord has done it?

[21 : 23] Does disaster come to a city unless the Lord has done it? So, the question then is, can we imagine that a virus could come upon the whole world? A pandemic? A quarantine?

A quarantine? That is somehow outside of God's control? That some other great power has brought this about and God couldn't stop it? And of course, the answer is, no!

Calamity doesn't come to a city. Calamity doesn't come to the world. Disaster doesn't happen to them unless the Lord does it. But I don't think we have to simply deduce this from the word, or from the argument here.

It's clear in other parts of God's word that God sends plagues. And there's plenty of examples I could go to in the Bible. I think probably one of the most well-known examples would be the plagues in Exodus that God sent upon Egypt.

I think there's a great example we see of God dictating what plague will happen, when it will happen, how long it will last, and then bringing an end to those things. Another powerful example is in 2 Samuel 24.

[22 : 23] I want to read this. It's a little longer, but it's verses 10 through 16. You may remember this. You'll see it in the first verse, but David has taken a census of the people, and he's angered God in so doing.

Verse 10, But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the Lord, I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But when David arose in the morning, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and say to David, Thus says the Lord, Three things I offer you.

Choose one of them, that I may do it to you. So Gad came to David and told him and said to him, Shall three years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you?

Or shall there be three days pestilence in your land? Now consider and decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me. Before we go any further, we can just say, what is God sovereign of in this instance?

Well, we see that in this passage, we see that God's sovereign over famine when it comes upon a land. God's sovereign over our enemies when they pursue us. And God's sovereign over pestilence, which is just another word for a plague or virus.

[23 : 34] God's sovereign over these things. And then verse 14, Then David said to Gad, I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is great, but let me not fall into the hand of man. So the Lord sent a pestilence on Israel.

From the morning until the appointed time, and there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba, 70,000 men. And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, It is enough.

Now stay your hand. Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was striking the people and said, Behold, I have sinned and I have done wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done?

Please let your hand be against me and against my father's house. And so we see God bring a plague upon the people. And it results in the death of 70,000 men.

And I looked last night and in the United States we're at 38,000 people today. And we don't know if 70,000 men is generic for men and women or if it's men only and there's more, women included.

[24 : 44] But you see what a great number died in three days. And God stayed his hand. God stopped the spread of it. He had mercy upon his people.

We see another example in number 16 where Israel grumbles against Moses and Aaron and God sends a plague upon them. And we see in that instance Aaron ran out among the assembly and the plague broke.

Excuse me, the plague broke out among the people. But Aaron put incense. He spread incense. He made atonement for the people. He really stood between the dead and the living and the plague was stopped, we're told.

And so in all three of these, and again there's more that we can find in the Bible of God bringing about plague, but in all three of these we see that God is the one who begins and ends the plague. He's ultimately sovereign over these things.

Now again, that doesn't deny secondary causes. And what I mean by that is that God uses means. And those means oftentimes are human beings. And so in each of these cases I would argue that human sin in some way led to the plague.

[25 : 49] And we could also argue that human intercession was part of its end. We think of the pleads in Egypt and the idea of the Passover and the blood, the intercession that's made there.

Or we see David crying out, let this be upon me, or Aaron interceding for the people and spreading incense and praying to God on their behalf. And so we would acknowledge that the spread of the coronavirus can be mitigated by human wisdom and it can be worsened by human folly.

And ultimately it may be destroyed by men. And I haven't gotten to the idea that what is the secondary cause of the virus being spread in the first place.

I think there's more and more evidence coming out that man may be more involved in that than we've admitted. But irregardless of man's role, ultimately it's God who determines the course of the virus, when it spreads, how it spreads, who dies, who lives.

And if we deny the primary cause and acknowledge only the secondary causes, that's wicked. That's dishonoring to God. It's sin against God.

[26 : 58] And so I think we have to have a firm grasp in our mind when we're faced with times like this that we're in now, that God's sovereign over these things. Now if that's true, what does that mean for us?

How does that apply to us? Well first I want to encourage you to trust in Jesus who entered this fallen and diseased world and subjected himself to death for us, that he might take upon himself our sins and to save us.

In our study of Matthew we've seen Jesus heal all kinds of diseases, disabilities, and infirmities. Matthew 8, 16 through 17 is an example of this. And we also see in that example an explanation of why he did this.

It says that evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with the word and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah.

He took our illnesses and bore our diseases. Now he's quoting there Isaiah, and it's from Isaiah 53, which you may know is the chapter about the suffering servant.

[28 : 02] It's prophetic of Jesus Christ. And the very next verse says, but he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

And so you may remember when we were going through Matthew 8, I said that the reason that Jesus heals physical disease and sickness is to teach us that there's a deeper problem that we have, a spiritual sickness, a spiritual disease, and that God, who through his son is able to heal physical sickness, can heal our spiritual problems.

And so one application of God's sovereignty of our virus is this is a warning to us to go to God for spiritual healing. If God's the one who can heal, if he's the one who brings virus, then we have to understand that we can go to him with our spiritual disease and trust that he and he alone can heal us.

Go back to Isaiah 45, what we saw. I am God. I am the Lord. This is partly what defines him. He is set apart. He alone can bring spiritual healing that we need. So this time should remind us, as Matthew 620 says, to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Our economy may be suffering. The health of many is suffering. But we're reminded that we're not made primarily for this world. We're made to put our hope in the world to come and that's where we should be laying up our treasures.

[29 : 29] Secondly, while we acknowledge God's sovereignty over this virus, we must not accuse God of wrongdoing or in any way sit in judgment on him. You might conclude it's easy to say, well, if God's responsible for the virus, if God's sovereign over the virus and people are dying, then God's somehow guilty of murder or he's done some wrong.

Romans 11, 33, I think, warns us, oh, the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments, how inscrutable his ways. So just to begin with, we realize that his ways are beyond our understanding.

We know God is sinless. He's perfect. Even that he's good. It's his fatherly hand that brings about even viruses. And though we may not see it, we may not understand how this is working out for good.

We can trust in God and we would be wrong to in any way sit in judgment on him. Nebuchadnezzar, you may remember God strikes him down because of something very similar to what Governor Cuomo did.

He stands up, he looks at this empire that he's made and he praises his own hand. Look what I have done. And God strikes him. And he goes insane for a while.

[30 : 42] And when Nebuchadnezzar comes back to his right mind in Daniel 4, this is what he says. Speaking of God, he says, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing. And he does according to his will among the hosts of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay his hand or say to him, what have you done?

God does whatever he pleases. And man has no ability, no right to say to God, whoa, wait a minute, you shouldn't have done that. God is holy.

He's committed no crime against men when he sins, things that even bring about their death. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and the wages of sin is death. We're deservant of that and we have to understand that, but we trust God's wisdom.

Even what we see Nebuchadnezzar saying is also what we see in Isaiah 45 and what I read further on. And it's what's quoted in Romans 9. Basically that God's the potter and we're the clay. And what right does the clay have to say to the potter, why did you make me like this?

[31 : 45] And he goes on to say, what right does the child have to say, why are you making me born? It's not our right. And so we're humbled before God to say that God's sovereign and that we have no right to sit in judgment over God.

Thirdly, and I've touched on this already in this last point, but we must understand that God is working through this virus for the good of his people and for his own glory so that we would be wise to seek for ways in this time that we can find spiritual profit and benefit to us.

So Romans 8.28 tells us, and we know that all things work together for the good of those who love God and who are called according to his purpose. And so we're encouraging that, that even a virus, a pandemic, a quarantine is working together for the good of God's people and in some way that we may not see now, it's bringing God glory.

In Romans 5.3-5, we read, rejoice, excuse me, 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. And so Paul says, we rejoice in sufferings.

[33 : 01] Now that may sound crazy, but you see why. There's a purpose to suffering. God doesn't send suffering upon us for no reason. And in particular, we see for the development of our character, or to take it further, we might say for our sanctification, that we might be made more like Christ.

And so again, we need to be searching our hearts at this time and saying, how is God using this pandemic, this quarantine in my life to teach me that I'm not in control and to sanctify me and grow my character to be more like his son.

Second Corinthians 1.8-9 says, we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction that we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despised of life itself.

Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death, but that was to make us rely not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead. And so we're encouraged in this passage as well. The pandemic has removed so much of what we previously trusted in, what we hoped in, what we relied upon.

But what this passage teaches us is that one thing that God's doing in this is to teach us that those things that we relied on, we can't rely on. Ourselves and our self-sufficiency, we can't rely on that. And to teach us instead to rely upon Jesus Christ.

[34 : 15] And then finally, I want you to see that because God is sovereign, we can know that the purpose of this is not our ruin or separation from the love of God.

I consider doing this as a stand-alone sermon. I think it fits much better as application into the sermon of the sovereignty of God. And so, Lord willing, I'm not planning on doing that than next Sunday.

But Romans 8, 35 through 37 says, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. Knowing all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

And so, Paul's willing to admit, look, we're considered as sheep to be slaughtered. We carry around with us our death. We're being put to death every day. But there's no power in that to separate us from the love of Jesus Christ.

[35 : 15] Nothing shall separate us from the love of Jesus Christ. Not tribulation, or distress, persecution, or famine, nakedness, or danger, or sword. We could say plague, virus, pandemic, quarantine.

None of these things can separate us from the love of Jesus Christ. And that ought to encourage us. To me, this is why the sovereignty of God matters. We're not just left on our own to sort things out.

We're left understanding that God's sovereign over these things. And that though they're happening, they can't separate us from the love of God. And he has good purposes in these things. He's working them together to sanctify us and to grow us, to be more like his son.

And so, we can look at suffering in the strange way that Paul does. We rejoice in our sufferings. I want to close with a hymn that I'm just going to read.

We're not here to sing together. It's not one that we're probably very familiar with. But John Ryland, he was a particular Baptist and one of the particular Baptist pastors who sent William Carey to India.

[36 : 16] He wrote this hymn. Sovereign ruler of the skies, ever gracious, ever wise, all our times are in thy hand, all events at thy command.

He that formed us in the womb, he shall guide us to the tomb. All our ways shall ever be, ordered by his wise decree.

Times of sickness, times of health, blighting want, and cheerful wealth. All our pleasures, all our pains, come and end as God ordains.

May we always own thy hand, still to thee surrendered stand. Know that thou art God alone. Lord, we and ours are all thy own.

Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we want to praise you that you are sovereign over this virus and over this pandemic. And Lord, it came about when you desired and when you willed.

[37 : 19] And it will come to an end when you've appointed. Lord, we pray that that day would be soon. That you would bring an end to this, that you would allow your people to gather back to worship, that those who can't work would be able to again, and that you would restore them financially, that you would take care of them, that you would clothe them even as you do the lilies of the valley.

But Lord, we thank you that we're not left to chance, that we're not left to the rule or power or authority of some governor of a neighboring state, but that we're in your hands, your fatherly hands that care for us, that watch out for us, that love us, and that works even pandemics for our good and your glory.

We praise you in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Lord, to thee, day by moments and by days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.

[38 : 49] Let them flow in ceaseless praise. Take thy hand and let them move that thee is no charge my love.

Take thy feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee, swift and beautiful for thee.

Take thy voice and let me sing always only for thy King.

Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee, filled with messages from thee.

Take my children and my gold, God of my good I will go.

[40 : 08] Take my inter-life and youth, every power and love shall choose.

Every power and love shall choose. Take my will when they give life, it shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart, it is bright, O Lord, it shall be thy royal throne.

It shall be thy royal throne. take my love, my Lord, I pour, at my feet is treasure's gold.

Take myself and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

[41 : 26] Ever, only, all for thee. To be with, only, all for thee, all for thee, and Ty.

Let me give to you, God of the assess, For thee, all for she. For thee still, let me do eternal life. By the darlingELL-en beauty, ■■■■■ Devils, people are golden, desperation being displayed as you shall see