

# How Long Oh Lord?

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Date: 16 June 2019

Preacher: Kevin Murphy

[ 0 : 00 ] In 1966, this lady called Elizabeth Elliot wrote a book called No Graven Image. And Elizabeth Elliot herself was a missionary to tribesmen in South American Amazon Forest.

Her husband had been killed a few years before by the very people that they were trying to reach. Anyway, she then writes this novel, and it's about a young lady that is a missionary to tribesmen in the Amazon.

And so it's quite autobiographical. And in this book, there's this missionary called Margaret. And her job is she does Bible translation for tribes that have no language.

And so she first goes and learns the language, documents it. They have no written language. She documents it and then translates the Bible into their language so that they can have the gospel. And she's working with this tribe in the Ecuadorian mountains.

And key to her translation is a man called Pedro. He's the only man in the world, as far as she knows, who speaks both the language of this tribe as well as Spanish.

[ 1 : 08 ] And so he's the connection between her and this tribe that she's trying to reach with the gospel. Anyway, one morning, she's been working for years with Pedro. And she's almost at the place where she can document the language, write it down, and then start her translation work.

And so one morning, she's on her way to work, and she's praying this heartfelt prayer. God, thank you so much for the privilege of being able to do what I do. Thank you that you've called me to translate the Bible and to help this tribe to know the gospel.

Thank you for Pedro and just for all your blessings in my life. And she's going to work, and she gets to Pedro's house. And as she gets there, they say, oh, Pedro's sick. He's got a cut in his leg, and it's infected.

And she says, no problem. I'm a trained nurse. And so she goes to her bag, and she gets some penicillin. And she gives him an injection to deal with the infection. And says, you'll be right as rain after a few days.

And after a few minutes, Pedro starts to convulse and shake, and he experiences anaphylaxis. His throat swells, and he has an allergic reaction to the penicillin.

[ 2 : 20 ] And he starts to die right there in front of her. And as he's dying in front of her, Margaret, this lady, cries out, Lord, you answered my prayers.

You gave me Pedro. God, he's the only one. Remember that. He is the only one. And Pedro dies in front of her.

And as he dies, all of her life's work, the last five, ten years, everything she's given her life to is wiped away in an instant, and it completely vanishes.

And towards the end of the book, she stands at Pedro's grave, and she says this. She says, and God, what of him? He allowed Pedro to die, or perhaps he caused me to kill him.

Does he now, I ask there at the graveside, does he expect me to worship him? If you have ever, like Elizabeth Elliot, asked the question, God, how on earth could you let something like this happen?

[ 3 : 26 ] God, where are you? God, don't you care anymore? You're not alone. Chances are you're not the only one in this room that's asked that question. And this morning, we look at a passage of Scripture.

We're going to start this three-week series in this book called Habakkuk, or Habakkuk. And one of the biblical authors, Habakkuk, is this prophet. And he, too, wrestled with this question.

God, how can you let this happen? God, where are you? Why have you abandoned me? Now, in the Old Testament, the prophet was meant to be God's ambassador.

He speaks for God, on behalf of God, to God's people. But Habakkuk is one of the unusual prophets, because nowhere in his entire book does he speak to God's people.

The entire book of Habakkuk is not about him speaking for God to God's people. It's about him wrestling with God around this question. Now, I want you to know that we actually planned this preaching series three months ago.

[ 4 : 27 ] And yet, what's interesting is the entire book of Habakkuk revolves around political tension and uncertainty. And about how Habakkuk is wrestling with this question, how another nation, which is far more strong and more powerful than him, that he considers to be unjust, and he considers to have no regard for the law of the land, is about to invade his nation and take over.

And so he's wrestling with this question, saying, God, where are you in the midst of it? Now, I'm not making a political statement at all, but it's no coincidence that in the week that we as a city have wrestled with this exact question, Habakkuk two and a half thousand years ago wrestles with the same question.

And I think God has divinely coincident brought these things together. Now, in our section that we're going to look at today, there are four parts to this passage. Firstly, Habakkuk complains to God. Where are you, God? God then responds. Habakkuk then complains again, and God responds a second time. And so it's quite technical, and there's a lot of Hebrew poetry.

And so you're going to need your Bible in front of you or the bulletin in front of you. We're going to look at a lot of Scripture. I'm going to ask you to really follow the flow of the argument as we go. So you're going to need your Bible in front of you.

[ 5 : 51 ] And so let's dive into the first section, which is Habakkuk's first complaint. And it starts off in verse 2 of chapter 1. He cries out. He is unhappy with what's happening in the nation of Israel.

And he says, Oh Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear me? I'll cry out to you violence, and you will not save. So Habakkuk is an unhappy man.

And he's unhappy because the nation of Israel, which is his nation, things are not going well there. There's violence. There's animosity. There is division. There is lawlessness and hopelessness.

And so look what he says in verse 3. He says, Destruction and violence are before me. Strife and contention arise. Everywhere I look, I see violence. I see injustice.

I see divisions in families. I see divisions in churches. I see divisions in society. Everybody is looking out for themselves. Nobody cares about anybody else. Peace and hope and rest are a distant memory, he says.

[ 6 : 53 ] And he says, Your law, in other words, your word, your scripture, is paralyzed. Where once upon a time, your word was sharp. It would cut to the heart. It was penetrating.

People would listen to your word and be arrested. Now, he says, your word is disregarded. It's like somebody's thrown it in the corner and it's gathering dust. Your law, O God, is paralyzed.

And he says in verse 4, The wicked surround the righteous. In other words, those that are wanting to do the right thing are now in the minority. Because the majority of people have no regard for God, disregard his word.

They're in the majority and they are threatening those that want to honor you. They are surrounded the righteous. And it seems like Habakkuk has been praying this for a long time.

And so now he's beginning to wonder. He says, How long shall I keep on crying out to you, God, and you do nothing? How long shall my prayers, O God, fall on deaf ears? It's like he's saying, God, are you not able to answer prayer anymore?

[ 7 : 59 ] Is prayer just ineffective? Or maybe, he thinks, Maybe the problem is not that God is not able to answer prayer. Maybe the problem is not that God doesn't hear our prayers.

He hears it, but God is incapable of answering it. His hands are tied. And so look at what he says. He says, Why do you idly look at wrong and do nothing about it?

Have you too, God, been left paralyzed? Well, God responds to Habakkuk's complaint. And look at how God responds in verse 5.

He answers him and he says, No, Habakkuk, your prayers have not fallen on deaf ears. And no, I'm not incapable of doing something about it. Look at verse 6. He says, Now that sounds pretty good. Habakkuk, funny you ask. I am not deaf to your prayers. I am actually doing something about it. And God says, I'm doing something in your day. In other words, it's not like Habakkuk prayed to God and aroused God from his sleep.

[ 9 : 10 ] But God now is woken from his slumber and he's kind of scratching his eyes and saying, Okay, let me get to it. Okay. He says, No, in your day, while you are praying and crying out to me, Look, be astounded.

I'm doing something. Look at what I'm doing amongst the nations. Finally, Habakkuk thinks we're getting somewhere. God seems to be paying attention. Except, look at the work that God says he's doing.

Friends, if you and I prayed for God to do something, heal your mother or your father, lead your brother to Christ, restore some justice in the city, and we pray and God says, Look, I'm doing something in your day.

I'm doing something so amazing that if I told you about it, you wouldn't even believe me. I'd be pretty pleased, right? But look at what God says here. Except in Habakkuk's case, the astounding thing that God is about to do is not good news, it's bad news.

When God says, I'm about to do something so astounding, you won't believe me if I told you, it's not because it's awesome, as Tobin would say. It's because it's awful.

[10:22] God says to Habakkuk, things are about to get worse before they get better. Look at what he says. Look amongst the nations, see, wonder, and be astounded. I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe, even if I told you.

Behold, I'm raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation. Now, the Chaldeans were part of the Babylonians, and the Chaldeans were actually a province at the south of Babylon, and they were the most military, ruthless of all the provinces.

And so what happened was, the Chaldeans had got this fire in their belly, and they had revitalized the Babylonian army. And the Babylonians are now on the rise. They are militarily and politically on the rise.

They are about to, after this, smash the world's superpower, the Assyrian army. After that, they're going to smash the Egyptian army. And then after that, they're going to make their way through Israel and wipe out Israel and overtake Israel.

And so what happens is, God is saying to Habakkuk that he, God, is busy raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, as his instrument to punish the nation of Israel for their rampant idolatry and their injustice and their wickedness.

[11:43] God is going to give Israel into the hands of the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, and the Babylonians will be God's instrument to deal with the wickedness in Israel.

And so look at what he says. Behold, I'm raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth to seize dwellings not their own. They are dreaded and fearsome.

Their justice and their dignity go forth from themselves. In other words, they are a law unto themselves. They are a respecter of no law or moral code.

Verse eight, their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves. Their horsemen come from afar, they fly in like an eagle, swift to devour. And the imagery here is of a leopard that is waiting to pounce on its prey and devour it.

Or like that comes like a lightning, like an eagle that flies in. And before you even know what's happening, it's sunk its teeth into you and your life is etching away.

[12:47] That's what he says these Babylonians are like. Verse nine, they come for violence. They gather captives like sand in their hands. And notice their arrogance and their self-confidence.

He says, Now, if the book of Habakkuk starts off with a complaint because Habakkuk looks around him and things aren't going well and he's got this burden on his heart.

God, where are you in the midst of this? Habakkuk's burden is about to get a whole lot heavier because God says to him, My answer to the injustice in Israel is even more injustice.

My answer to the wickedness in Israel is even more wickedness. And Habakkuk is thinking, What on earth is going on? And this is confusing, right?

And part of what's confusing is that what is about to happen in Israel is not just a fact of history. It's the hand of God that is causing it. Look at what God says.

[14:00] He says, Look, See, One didn't be astounded. I am doing a work in your days. I, God, am raising up the Chaldeans. Now, we need to be clear here.

God is not saying that He is causing the Chaldeans to be wicked and ruthless. It's not like God took this peaceful, gentle, selfless, other-seeking people and put in them this wicked spirit, cause them to be evil and then unleash them on Israel.

God is taking a nation that is already wicked and God dishonoring and ruthless. And He says, You will be my instruments in my hand to deal with the wickedness of my people.

God is going to give Israel into their hands. Now, this raises all sorts of questions and problems. What are we meant to make of this? What are we meant to make of God's assertion that He, the sovereign God, is going to use the wickedness of one people to deal with the wickedness of another?

How is this justice? Well, part of the book of Habakkuk is that it doesn't give us any superficial answers. It doesn't give us any simplistic answers.

[15:11] And when we get to the end of the book of Habakkuk, Habakkuk is not going to tell us how it all resolves nicely and just ties up at the end with a neat bow on top. Like a Christmas present.

But what Habakkuk is going to teach us is how to live in the midst of the challenges of life and still know how to trust God. So I want us to think about this idea of God's sovereignty for a bit.

Scripture affirms that though God sometimes seems absent from human affairs, God rules over everything, everywhere.

everywhere. And this is challenging not only because we seldom see God's hand involved. So sometimes we look at the affairs of life and we think, where is God involved in that?

His hand seems absent and yet it is. It's like a silent hand that is guiding and controlling things. But also it's challenging because it challenges our self-importance, our self-sovereignty.

[16:08] And yet the scripture tells us that whether we understand it or not, irrespective of how we feel about it, the God who made the world and everything in it absolutely rules over all of it.

There is not a single raindrop that falls, not a single blade of grass that spouts, not a single law is passed or cancer cell multiplies without the sovereign God knowing about it, allowing it to happen and sometimes even causing it to happen in the first place.

So let me read three scriptures to us that affirm this. Proverbs chapter 19 says, many are the plans in the mind of a man or a woman, but it's the purposes of the Lord that will stand.

Proverbs 16, the dice is cast into the lap. So in the olden days you wanted to make a decision, you couldn't Google it, you throw a dice and whichever way the dice lands instructs you which way to make a decision.

The dice is cast into the lap, but it's every decision comes from the Lord. Proverbs 21, a king's heart is a stream of water in the hands of the Lord.

[17:16] It is God who is turning it wherever he wills. Now, John Piper summarizes God's teaching, the Bible's teaching God's sovereignty like this.

Let me step aside and you can read it for us. Sorry, Melinda keep on bashing this microphone.

Piper says this, when the book of Ephesians says that God works all things according to the counsel of his will, this all things includes the fall of sparrows and animals, the rolling of the dice, the death of his people, the decisions of kings, the failing of sight, the sickness of children, the loss of money, the suffering of God's saints, the completion of travel plans, the persecution of Christians, the repentance of souls, the gift of faith.

In other words, coming to faith in Christ is a gift from God. The pursuit of holiness, the growth of believers, the giving of life and the taking in death, and even the crucifixion of his son.

Now, just by the way, all the slides are going to be on the app this afternoon so you can get those scriptures there. What do we make of this? Now, I wonder if you've ever had an instance in life when something happened that seemed like a setback and you thought, that's not according to my plans.

God, why did you allow this to happen? Only for later on to look back upon that instance and to realize God's hand was guiding each and every instance. So, for instance, a trivial example, maybe you are at university, you fall sick, and you have to miss a whole semester of university.

[18:58] And you think, that's going to be bad news because now I'm going to graduate six months after my class, the job market is going to be flooded by all my classmates, I'm going to be behind the curve and it's going to be difficult for me to find work.

Only for you to then come across a professor that you never would have had if you had graduated earlier, a professor who shapes your thinking and shapes your vocation and changes the whole course of your career.

Or maybe another instance, maybe you lose your job and you think, this is disastrous. I've got student debts to pay off, I've got student loans to pay off, some other debt. How are things going to work out?

Only to later on find that actually God was leading and guiding you because He opened another door or He taught you something or you grew in a way that you would never have grown if things had worked out according to your plans.

And at the time it seems like, God, where are you in all of this? How can you let it happen? And yet God is guiding you all along the way. And so sometimes our lives feel like a tapestry, right?

[ 20 : 02 ] You know, a tapestry, a picture that a weaver picks with, makes, creates with thread. And sometimes God grabs the black piece of thread and is sewing a tapestry in our lives and we think, God, why the black thread?

And you look at your friends and God's picked the red thread or the golden thread or some beautiful color and your life is just the black thread. And you think, where are you, God? Just by the way, social media, you only ever see the red threads, right?

And the golden threads. You never see the black and the gray and the other threads. But friends, who knows whether God right now is leading and shaping events either in your life or globally that seem disastrous and yet 20, 60, or 100 years from now we will look back upon and things which seem to us as if God had completely abandoned us were actually strategic moments of his leading and his guiding.

And so the wise man and woman looks at events and says, God, where is your hand in this? What are you doing? How are you shaping events for your glory and our good?

And so that leads us to Habakkuk's second complaint. Now as we look at this, I want to ask us a question. If you're a Christian this morning, have you ever got to the place in your walk with God where what you believed about God theologically or intellectually or from the scriptures seems incompatible with the reality of life played out before you?

[ 21 : 33 ] So you see some instance and you think, that doesn't make sense. That seems to contradict your scriptures. Has that ever happened to you? Maybe for instance, you read the Bible and you see Jesus just seems to heal people everywhere he went.

Everyone he encountered, he just heals them. And then you are suffering some disease or you've got a child that's sick and they just don't seem to get better. Or maybe you read in your Bible how God has made you a new person in Christ.

The old is gone and you're a new creation. And yet there's sin in your life that you just can't seem to beat. It seems to have paralyzed you and you're enslaved to it. What do we do?

What do we do when our view of who God is and how his world operates seems incompatible with the reality of life on the ground? Well, that's the dilemma that Habakkuk is facing.

And so look at what he says in verse 12. He says, he now quotes back to God what he knows about God. He says, God, are you not from everlasting?

[ 22 : 33 ] Oh Lord my God, my Holy One, we shall not die. So he's saying, God, you are the Lord, you are the Holy One. How is your holiness compatible with the injustice and the violence of the Babylonians that you are going to bring to Israel?

Those two things don't compute. They don't make sense. You are holy. They are as far from holy as you can get and yet you're saying that you're going to bring them to Israel.

And he says, God, you are from everlasting. We shall not die. Surely not. He's trying to convince either himself or God one way or the other.

He's reciting back to God what he knows about him. But still, this doesn't sit well with him because granted, Israel was bad but Babylon is even worse. How is it possible that God is going to use unjust Babylon to teach justice to Israel?

So look at what he says in verse 13. He says, God, why do you idly look at traitors? Why do you remain silent when the wicked man swallows up someone else more righteous than himself?

[ 23 : 42 ] And besides, he says, all that's going to happen is that Babylon is just going to conquer people and they're not going to give you any credit. He says, God, Israel are like fish in the sea that have lost their way.

And now, the Babylonians are like going to get their net, they're going to capture the fish, throw them on board the ship, chop them up and destroy them. How does that teach your people justice? All he's going to do is worship his own strength and his military power. And so Habakkuk is confused and so he ends off his speech, he comes to the end himself, he's nothing more to say and so look at what he says in chapter 2, verse 1.

He says, I will take my stand at the watch post, I will station myself on the tower, I will look out and see what God has to say to me. Now in the Old Testament, the role of a prophet was a very important one and it was often described as like a watchman.

And so what happened was the prophet would hear from God and then he would station himself at the city gates or maybe on the city walls and he would watch out over God's people and check that they were doing what God had told them to do.

[ 24 : 52 ] And if they weren't doing what God had told them to, they would call out and say, be careful, I'm warning you, things are not looking good. And so they would stand on the watchtower calling out to God's people.

And Habakkuk says, I will go to the watchtower and I will take my stand. Except this time, he's not talking to God's people, he's turned his back towards God's people and he's facing God and he says, God, what are you going to say?

I'm all ears. What do you have to say to my complaints? Now friends, this begs a very important question. How do you respond when you've been brought to the end of yourself and you don't know where to turn?

When God's not answering your prayers, when God's ways don't make sense, when your very idea of who God is and how he's meant to act in the world is lying like tatters on the floor, how do you respond?

Where do you turn when you've come to the end of yourself? Because, let me think about how to say this.

[ 25 : 56 ] In other words, let me ask you this. Friends, have you, like Habakkuk and countless others, been brought to the end of yourself? Because if you haven't, it may just be that the God that you think you're serving and the God that you think you're worshipping is actually a made up God of your imagination and not the real God who is Lord of all.

Because throughout Scripture, again and again and again, anyone who comes to know God deeply is first confronted by the awesome reality that God doesn't fit neatly into our constructed paradigms of who he is and how he ought to behave.

Remember Elizabeth Elliott's book? The book is called No Graven Image and the idea is this. When you've got an image of who God is and how he's meant to act in the world, God is going to shatter that image.

And so at the end of the book, this missionary is standing by the grave side and remember what she says? She says, and God, he had allowed Pedro to die or perhaps he had caused me to kill him.

And does this God now expect me to worship him? On the very final page of the book, she says the most profound thing. She says, God, if he was merely my accomplice, if God was merely my helper to help make my life comfortable and convenient, if God was merely there to somebody to help me get on in life, God had betrayed me because he had stuffed it all up.

[ 27 : 27 ] If God is merely my helper, my accomplice to make my life comfortable and convenient, he had betrayed me. He was a pathetic accomplice. But if on the other hand, he was God, if on the other hand, he was the sovereign God of all, he had freed me.

Why? Because he had freed me from the image I had in my head of who God was meant to be and how he's meant to behave and how he's meant to act. And we see how God in his kindness brings Habakkuk to one of the most frightening places he's ever been.

And yet it is a precious place because God shows him that he's not the picture book version of God that Habakkuk has in his mind. God says, I'm not the God of your imagination.

I'm fearsome, I am awesome, I am sovereign and my ways are higher than your ways. And friends, it is a precious place to be. It is a frightening place to be. But it's a holy ground because in that place you discover things about God and you discover things about yourself that you'll never discover as you're sailing on still and quiet waters.

When life is just rosy and everything is going the way that you wish it to, you'll never discover things about God or yourself like you will on the storms of life. And so the question is this, when God in his kindness brings us to that place, when God in his kindness shatters the picture perfect image we have on him in our minds by not allowing things to go the way that we hope to, how do we respond?

[ 28 : 58 ] How do we respond? Now some of us will respond like victims. We think it's not fair. I don't deserve it. After all I've done for you God, after the way I've behaved and treated and my morality, I don't deserve this God.

It's not fair that I'm like this. Some of us, when tragedy comes our way, we'll feel sorry for ourselves. Some of us maybe will be more pragmatic.

We will think, I've got to fix it. We will call a meeting, get a committee together, organize a protest, organize some petition. We will double down and work twice as hard to make sure that we put things right again.

Let's see if there's another way. Look at how God responds. This brings us to the fourth and the final section, God's second response to Habakkuk. What God does next is he comes to Habakkuk in that place and he says, with all that's going on, with all the turmoil and the confusion, I know things might not make sense to you right now.

I know that things are not how you think that they ought to be. In all your anger and your disappointment and your confusion, Habakkuk, will you trust me? Will you trust me?

[ 30 : 15 ] And so look what he says in chapter 2, verse 4. He says, Behold, his soul is puffed up. It is not right within him. And he's talking about the Babylonians. He's talking about those that don't know God.

He says, they are puffed up. In other words, they look menacing, they look fierce, they look violent, they're projecting an image, but there's no substance behind it. It's just hot air.

It's just a balloon. And one pinprick is going to bring that entire image to its knees. Behold, it is puffed up. It is not right within him. But the righteous will live by faith.

And friends, that is probably the most succinct summary of the Christian life in all the Bible. That the righteous will live by faith. And so friends, in the challenges and the turmoils of life, the righteous will live by faith.

And when your employer is treating you badly or your colleagues are letting you down or you get fired unjustly from your work, how do you respond? The righteous will live by faith.

[ 31 : 21 ] And friends, when you're persecuted for your faith or one day you're put in prison or you're separated from your children or you lose your job because of your faith, the righteous will live by faith.

And friends, as you grapple with same-sex attraction and the world is telling you, be who you want to be. Act how you want to act. Your version of truth is your own truth. Do what you want.

Be who you want. How do you respond? The righteous will live by faith. And friends, when you get a massive bonus or you get paid some insane amount of money and your financial security is sorted for the rest of your life and you never need to work another day and all your fears are laid aside because you've got all the money that you could ever want to do anything with, the righteous will live by faith.

And friends, when you and your spouse are trying to fall pregnant and have a kid and you've prayed for hours and you've cried a river of tears and nothing is happening, the righteous will live by faith.

And when your kids make choices that seem to contradict everything you would want them to do and when your kids week after week seem to make choices that choose death, not life, that choose destruction, not joy, and you have no other way to turn, the righteous will live by faith.

[ 32 : 47 ] And friends, when you're diagnosed with a rare terminal disease and the doctors have no more solution and your life has suddenly been given an expiry date far sooner than you expected, the righteous will live by faith.

Now friends, what does that actually mean? What does it look like? It means when we're confronted with the brokenness of this world, when our city is in uproar, when there's division at home and there's office politics and families are divided, for the person who's trying to follow Christ, our hope and our peace are not found in any particular solution, they are discovered in the midst of difficulty by a deep, heartfelt trust in the goodness and the grace and the sovereignty of God.

It means, friends, when we are confronted by wickedness and violence in the world and we see injustice and we think, God, this is insane, where are you? How is it possible that this can even be allowed to happen?

We know in those instances that hope and peace are not found in escaping to utopia and finding some other place, but they're found by knowing that the one who holds true peace will one day put the world right again.

And the peace that he offers eternally and in this lifetime can never be taken from you by no government law, by no protesters on the street, by no family shouting at you, by no loss of job, by no financial reward, nothing in the entire world can take it away from you.

[ 34 : 27 ] Friends, it means when we're confronted by the brokenness of our own lives and the sin of our own hearts. And friends, that's the hardest thing to be confronted by, the rubbish in our own lives. To live by faith means that trusting that Christ has dealt with it and that he loves us and he accepts us despite all of it.

As we come to close, in the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul writes this. He says, I've been crucified with Christ and the life I now live is not about what I want to do or don't want to do. It's not about what I do or don't do. The life I live in the flesh, I now live by faith in the Son of God who gave himself up for me and loved me.

600 years after Habakkuk cries out to God, there were a bunch of men and women that were faced with an equally unjust situation.

The night before, they've had a meal with Jesus and during the night, Jesus goes to pray to his father and he's arrested. Throughout the night, he's beaten, he's flogged, he's mocked, he's kicked, he's spat on and then he's put through an unjust trial and during his trial, false witnesses are brought in, they lie, they tell all sorts of false stories to falsely implicate him and the governor knows that Jesus is innocent and yet, in order to advance his own political career, he signs off his death certificate, his death warrant and he signs off his crucifixion and the disciples are thinking, this is insane.

[ 36 : 04 ] Jesus is the only innocent man in the whole world. He's the only one that's never done anything wrong. He's the one who loved the poor and healed the sick and taught righteousness and justice.

He's the one Israel's been waiting for. How on earth can God allow this to happen? And yet, a few hours later, there is Jesus, bloody and beaten, carrying his cross up Mount Calvary where he's going to be crucified.

And the soldiers lay him down on the cross and they nail his hands on the cross, they hoist the cross up and there on the cross, Jesus cries out and he says, Father, why have you forsaken me? But he knows the answer. The father's turned his back on Jesus because it was a decision that Jesus and the father came to together before the world was made. That Jesus would take the sins of those that trust on him, trust in him on his shoulders so that we wouldn't need to.

And there on the cross, the soldiers are mocking him and they're saying, you said you came to save others, why don't you save yourself? But Jesus hasn't come to save himself and so he dies.

[ 37 : 13 ] And the disciples are watching this and it's the most unjust thing in the whole world. It's the most nonsensical thing at all. God, where are you? God, how can you allow this to happen?

God, why haven't you heard our cries they ask themselves? Where are you God and why are you silent in all of this? It doesn't make sense. And yet, it was the will of the Lord to crush him.

It was the sovereign will of the sovereign God that Jesus would lay down his life and be nailed to the cross because in that moment, Jesus was smashing the final nail into the coffin of Satan, sin, sickness, and death.

In that moment, Jesus was making an end to all the tragedy in the world and while our world still deals with it, we're on the final death throes of sin kicking about its legs as it comes to an end and there is coming in a day where none of that will ever exist anymore.

Jesus dying on the cross. It was the most unjust, outrageous thing and yet it was God doing it, carrying his story along all along. Tim Keller says this, if you go into the furnace of life without the gospel, without knowing that Jesus loves you and gave himself up for you, it will not be possible to find God in that place.

[ 38 : 35 ] You'll go through the furnace of life, you'll come out the other side and you'll be angry. You'll be sure that either God has done something wrong to you or you've done something wrong and you'll feel alone and isolated.

Going into the fire without the gospel is the most dangerous thing you can do. You'll be mad at God, mad at yourself, or mad at both. Friends, Paul writes this, I've been crucified with Christ and the life I live is not about what I want to do or don't want to do.

The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me on the cross. Friends, there is another way.

When the heat of the furnace gets turned up, when life doesn't make sense to you, when God himself doesn't even make sense to you, cast yourself on the gospel truth that the Son of God loves you and he gave himself for you.

Live on that truth, bank your life for the righteous will live by faith.