

1Peter 11-04-15b

Let's resume our study now in the book of 1 Peter, chapter 3, and we are looking specifically now at verse 14. Even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed, and do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. This is a reference back to Isaiah, chapter 8, and verse 12, and the quotation of the Old Testament in the New, when you have a Jewish audience especially, is always an invitation to go look at the context, because it's just a suggestion.

If I say, four score and seven years ago, you can fill in the rest. If I say, ask not, you can fill in the rest, if you were around in the early 60s especially. So, we want to turn back to Isaiah, chapter 8, verse 12, and see what is the passage that Peter is alluding to here.

Isaiah, chapter 8, verse 12. In this section, and happily we have covered this portion of Isaiah in previous studies, but if you look just in your New King James, you probably have a subtitle under chapter 8 that says, Assyria will invade the land. Now, if you're living in Isaiah's day, and you live in Israel, the Assyrians coming is not a happy anticipation.

They've wiped out the northern kingdom, and they're coming down to the south. The Lord said to me, take a large scroll, write on it, as with a man's pen, concerning Maher Shalal Hashbaz, hasten the booty, hurry the spoil, or words to that effect. I will take for myself faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jebarekiah.

So, I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son, and the Lord said to me, call his name, Maher Shalal Hashbaz. Now, I will note just in passing, if you've been around for our previous few Sunday's study, and we're looking at Genesis, and how long might God have taken to accomplish the work of creation, how long a span of time might there have been between the creation of life and man, and then the creation of man to the flood, and that some of our traditional understandings might be misapprehensions, we might have sort of underestimated that a little bit. Here's an example of biblical compression of time.

Isaiah is telling this story, the Lord said to me, take a scroll, write on it, concerning Maher Shalal Hashbaz, I will take for myself faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jebarekiah. So, now look at verse 3. So Isaiah says, I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. I mean, it sounds like it was in an afternoon.

I went to the prophetess, she conceived and bore a son, and the Lord said to me, call his name Maher Shalal Hashbaz. Well, we have, in the space of a verse, covered most of a year. And Isaiah tosses it off, you know, without a second thought.

So, I just remind you that our Western expectations, people in our modern day would never write a story like this. If we were reviewing our past life, it would all be of a piece. It wouldn't zoom in and zoom out, and talk about several minutes in which God is speaking to me, and then jump a year, and then go back to a minute.

We're just not used to that. But this is the ancient Near Eastern mindset, and they were accustomed to things like this. So, we would do ourselves a favor to kind of loosen up, be willing to entertain the idea, that maybe we have some presuppositions that affect the way we understand scripture, and if we kind of flex a little bit, we might actually get a better understanding of what's being said.

Be that as it may, before the child shall have knowledge to cry my father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria. How long does it take for the average little tyke, from the time they're born, to get to the point where they can say mommy and daddy, basically? I'm asking, how long does that take? About a year? A year, 18 months, somewhere in that time frame, usually, give or take. But let's just say, maybe they were slow learners in the ancient world, maybe it's a year and a half.

Let's just say a year and a half, because that's easier for me. The riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria. Well, the reason I say that is, from the time God says, take a large scroll and write on it, and I'm going to have two witnesses, Uriah and Zechariah, well, then you've got this nine months until the child is born, and sometime later, God says, okay, here's his name, hurry the booty, hasten the spoil, and God says, now, before the child shall have knowledge to cry my father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria.

Remember, that was the whole smoking flax and burning wick and the pika and resin conspiracy, and everybody's all worried about these guys in the north that come down, and God says, you know, you're worried about the little fish that's going to try to eat you as a minnow, and you don't see the shark coming that's going to eat the big fish and you, Assyria. The Lord spoke to me again, saying, inasmuch as these people refuse the water of Shalohah that flows softly, and rejoice in resin and in Remeliah's son, because people are all caught up in this will be the solution to our immediate problems. You think about the entire Old Testament is there for Peter to choose a passage from.

He could go to Genesis, he could go to Exodus, he could go to Samuel, he could go to Daniel, he could go to any of the 39 books of the Old Testament. He didn't have that many, you know, they're doubled. Samuel is one book, Kings is one book, Chronicles is one book, etc.

But for our purposes, Peter could go to any one of the 39 books of the Old Testament, and pick a passage to quote. Why does he quote this one? It's in Isaiah chapter 8. Why would you pick this? If I said, everybody close your books, put your Bibles away, I'm going to get out a piece of paper, I want you to write a thing talking about being hopeful, and I want you to reference an Old Testament passage when you do it. Nobody, I promise you, nobody, I can survey the world, nobody would pick Isaiah chapter 8 and quote it in a passage about hope.

I promise you nobody would. You'd have to have the Holy Spirit come and smack you with a

skillet to use this passage. So why does Peter pick this passage? Well, look at it.

Inasmuch as this people refused, this people refused the waters of Shalohah, the waters of peace, the waters of provision. Remember Salome? Remember Hezekiah? Here's the spring Gihon. By the way, what's the name of the river in Eden? Gihon.

Spring Gihon, providing water because Hezekiah made that tunnel to the pool. This people refuses the provision and the peace of God. These people think they've got a better way to have a peaceful, productive life.

They're going to invest in their solution, and they're not going to adopt and pursue and live by God's word. They've rejected God's way. I don't like that way.

I don't want that way. I've got a better way. Because these people refuse.

I think this is why Peter chose this verse. Because there is a choice. Everything we outlined in the first lesson tonight, God's plan, God's purpose, God's provision, and God's power.

You'd think I was a seminary graduate with all that great alliteration. But that's what is covered in the first two chapters. Plan, provision, purpose, power.

It's all there. Why would you not do that? Why would the people of Israel ever turn away from their covenant blessings and the covenant promises of God? The God who manifestly delivered them out of Egypt, manifestly brought them into the land of promise, blessed them, multiplied them, gave them victory, gave them a place. Why would they ever turn away from it? There is a biblical principle that we are inherently stupid.

This is why. The Bible teaches that man is inherently stupid. And we just do stupid things.

These people refuse the water of Shiloh that flow softly, and rejoice in resin. They rejoice in resin and in Remeliah's son. Now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up over them the waters of the river, strong and mighty.

God sends a brook of peaceful spring water to cool and to provide. We don't want that. We're going to go dig a well somewhere.

God says, alright, if you don't like the creek, I'll send you a tsunami. I'll send you an overwhelming flood tide. The water of the river, strong and mighty, the king of Assyria and all his glory.

He will go up over all his channels and go over all his banks. He will pass through Judah. He will overflow in Passover.

He will reach up to the neck, and the stretching out of his wings will fill the breadth of your land. Oh, Emmanuel. Be shattered, O you peoples, and be broken in pieces.

Give ear, all you from far countries. Give yourselves, gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces. Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces.

This people refused, so they are going to be overwhelmed, and they're going to be broken. Take counsel together. It will come to nothing.

All of your cooperative, all of your mentoring of one another, all of your support groups are going to come to nothing. Speak the word. It will not stand.

For God is with us. For Emmanuel. And he repeats what he says up in verse 8. The Lord spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people.

These people are coming under judgment. These people are going to lose their inheritance. These people are going to be shattered and broken and wiped out by a flood.

God promised after Noah's flood, what we've been talking about on Sunday mornings, I will never again destroy the earth by a flood. But there is a spiritual sense in which he will destroy us with a flood when we refuse his way. We refuse his provision.

We refuse his plan. We refuse his purpose. And we refuse his power.

Then he will show us his power in another way. The Lord said, do not walk in the way of this people. Do not say it's a conspiracy concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.

And when this comes over into Greek and Peter quotes as he says, do not be afraid with their fear. Don't be impressed with what they're trying to impress you with. Oh, if we don't get rid of the hairspray and the coolant in your car, the ozone will go away and we're all going to die.

Don't be afraid of their fear. Don't partake in their nonsense. This whole situation, when Peter was casting about for an example and an Old Testament allusion that would illustrate and would put substance in his appeal to these scattered Jewish Christians, this is what he chose.

Why? Think about the historic situation. There were people who were in a bad way. The Assyrians were coming.

And because of that threat, and because of those foreigners, there was a choice to be made. You can drink God's waters of Shiloh. You can have the peace that passes understanding, or you can decide that you're going to take up arms.

You're going to, you know, what is it in the Hamlet soliloquy? You know, whether it is nobler in the mind to simply suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune or to arm yourself against a sea of troubles and by opposing and them well in the spiritual realm, arming yourself and taking up the battle against a sea of troubles in your own strength and with your own plan is going to end

us. We're not going to end them. They are going to end us.

God's waters will overflow because that's not the way. That's not why we're here. It is completely counter and contrary.

Look at what happened to the people that disregarded these warnings. They were destroyed. Look at what happened to the Northern kingdom.

They were wiped out. Never to be seen again in the old Testament age. So do not say it's all about the people and their conspiracy and don't buy into that human solution mode.

You think about today, you think about the crisis with the budget and the crisis overseas. We're fighting wars. We're running out of money.

They're trying to take what little money we can make for ourselves. The country is heading in a bad direction and there's socialists running amuck in one thing and another. And it's easy to get really kind of caught up in the conflict and say, well, shouldn't we stand up? Do we need to have a tea party? Do we need to take up arms? And I was making this point earlier in a discussion.

It doesn't matter who's in the government. It doesn't matter what votes are taken. It doesn't matter what Congress decides.

It doesn't matter how much they cut in the deficit or the budget. It doesn't matter what happens in Afghanistan. It doesn't matter what happens in Iraq.

It doesn't matter what happens in Israel. Because everything rests on the moral fabric and the spiritual fiber of the American people. Everything does.

The best government in the world cannot save a rotten people. And the worst government in the world cannot suppress a spiritually vibrant and energetic people. It doesn't matter what kind of government you've got.

If you've got great Americans, they will rise and surpass and overcome and fix bad government. But when you've got spiritually enervated and anemic and pathetically ignorant and disinterested Christians, reincarnate the greatest statesmen that have ever lived and populate the government with them, and the thing is still going to sink. It does not matter.

So don't say it's all a conspiracy. Don't say it's people. We've got to get up there and break this apart.

We've got to get this power thing out of the way. Boy, you listen to talk radio. I can't listen to talk radio anymore.

Because it's all about personalities. Well, Hannity's got his Stop the Pelosi train or something, and then this Levin guy comes on, and that guy needs to take a pill. That Mark Levin, he needs to

calm down.

But all of these people are just, and of course they're entertainers and they're for ratings, and I haven't heard Rush in a long time, I don't know what he's saying, but it doesn't matter. It's not the people. Don't be subjective.

It's not who's in charge. It's not let's change out the government. Listen, the Republicans had full control, and they made such a hash out of it, I'm scared to vote them back in.

I'm about ready to vote for Donald Trump. I mean, at least he knows all about bankruptcy. If anybody knows how to survive bankruptcy and come out of it, it's him, so let him take a crack at it.

I don't care. But listen, what Peter is saying, the reason Peter reached back, and of all of the possible Old Testament passages, he picked this one, because this was a case, strong, salient in the Old Testament, where people were thinking, you know what? Our problem is these people and the leadership and these armies. That's the problem.

And the Jews of the dispersion were thinking, you know, it's these communities we've moved to. It's these Romans. It's this culture, and they're anti-Jewish or they're anti-Christian or both, and I'm both, and look at me.

How am I going to survive? And God put me out here. I can't go to the temple. I don't have any apostles.

What are we going to do out here? It's people, it's circumstances. I'm all caught up in it. Peter says, look, forget that stuff.

Do not fear with their fear. Don't sink to that level. Don't be mundane.

Don't be earthly minded. Don't buy into that, if we could only manipulate. I saw something.

I'm going to unsubscribe. Some kind of way, World Net Daily sends me. It's like World Net Multi-Daily, because I get like six emails a day from those people, and I got an email, and they're resurrecting this whole Bilderbergs and the, I don't know, Fifth Columnists and the Rockefellers and the triangle on the pyramid and the eye, and it's a big conspiracy.

They're all up there. They're manipulating the banks, and maybe they are. But listen, there is so much inertia in this.

Listen, even if the president is a blindingly obvious and committed and wrote his name and blood on the Socialist Manifesto, listen, the inertia of this country is so nobody could move it. Marx himself couldn't come in here and make us communist or make us anything else. And Theodore Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, George Washington, you could roll all the greatest presidents into

one, and they couldn't move this inertia because we are made of people, and the average spiritual energy in our population is lower than it has ever been.

That's why we're going broke. That's why we're going over the falls. That's why we can't swim against this ever-increasing tide.

And it's not the government. It's not a conspiracy. It's not these physical pieces.

And the same is true in our daily lives. We think our problems are made of people. We think it's made of circumstances.

We think it's made of stuff in the material world. And Peter says, look, do not be afraid of their threats and do not fear their fear. How is anybody going to distinguish us from any other angry conservative if that's all we are? How is anybody going to distinguish us from any godless but savvy American? If we're just concerned, if we're out there with a – and I say this because I know nobody's been out there with a Tea Party sign.

Nobody's been actively – I'm using this as an example. But activism is not the answer. And buying into the attempts to sway public opinion, be afraid of the president, be afraid of the Congress, be afraid of the war, be afraid of Islam, be afraid of the terrorists.

We need to be afraid of having no sacrifice to bring God. We need to be afraid of showing up at the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus Christ and being naked. We need to be afraid of the Lord Jesus returning and having the instinct to run away instead of run toward him.

That's what we need to be afraid of. Do not consider human threats. Don't consider these earthly situations.

Peter is pleading with these Jews. Let me ask you something. Of all of the apostles that you know of, all 13 of them, Judas is an apostle, by the way, a dead one, an early retirement, but he was an apostle.

He was called by the Lord Jesus. But of all the 13 apostles, which one do you think knew the most about fear? That's the guy writing to us here about fear. The expert on fear, the guy that has gone through the valley of death in fear and has come up and been restored by the Lord Jesus Christ on the other side is the man writing these words.

And what does he say? Let me take you back to one of the darkest periods of our national history, you fellow Jewish Christians, and let me remind you of another time that we thought it was all about the circumstances and all about the people and all about the bad leadership. And what did God say the problem was? Look at verse 13 of Isaiah chapter 8. The Lord of hosts, him you shall hallow. Let him be your fear and let him be your dread.

Peter doesn't even quote this part. He says, you know what? I'm going to let the sharp ones who

are paying attention and who want to know what I'm saying remember this or go back and read it in the Isaiah scroll. Go down to synagogue and ask the scribe, Hey, would you read the 8th chapter of Isaiah for us this morning? I just got a letter from the apostle Peter and I can't quite remember how that goes.

So the scribe gets it out. Do not say a conspiracy concerning all that this people call a conspiracy. Don't be afraid of their threats.

Don't be troubled. The Lord of hosts, him you shall hallow. Let him be your fear.

Let him be your dread. He will be as a sanctuary, but he will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and many among them shall stumble. They shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken.

Bind up that testimony. Seal the law among my disciples and I will wait on the Lord. This isn't going to catch on.

We're not going to see a big revival. America is not going to go back to God and Bible churches are not going to proliferate and people are not going to dispense with their refrigerator magnet Christianity. We as individuals have the opportunity to get back to the Bible and back to the plan, back to the purpose, back to the power, back to the provision that God has given us.

And we will do it as individuals. We will do it as small groups. Don't wait for a revival.

We do it individually. And it is going to show. We will stick out.

We are going to be unusual Christians because we're not just sitting around praying the prayer of Jabez. We're not around trying to figure out our spiritual temperament. We're not trying to find the purpose-driven anything.

Our individual life, our witness without a word that he illustrated with that wife that is amazing, that is unusual, that is remarkable in the original sense of the word, that's going to raise eyebrows. That's going to raise curiosity. If there is ever going to be a proliferation of godliness and holiness and phobos in the good sense of the word, it is going to be by example.

This is why Peter gives examples. Over and over again, he says, look at the Lord Jesus Christ. That's your example.

Paul says, look at me. I'm your example. But for crying out loud, somebody set an example of faith and obedience and living life to please God because that's what it takes.

That's what connects. That's what creates the kinetic energy where God the Holy Spirit edifies beyond the individual. That's spiritual gifts in a small group.

So, back to 1 Peter. Even if you suffer for righteousness' sake, let's think of a time when it

happened. Okay, southern kingdom, northern kingdom, Assyrian crisis.

Even if you suffer for righteousness' sake, you are still blessed because the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him. He's not surprised.

He's not unprepared. He's not unstable. He doesn't have to fall back and regroup.

He's known all of this from the beginning. So, do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. But, and then here's the punchline in verse 15, sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.

Now, isn't this unusual? I thought it was God that sanctifies us in the same way that I thought it was God that blessed us. And yet we say, bless the Lord, oh my soul. Is there any way that my soul can actually endow God with a blessing? What does it mean when it says, bless the Lord, oh my soul? It means treat Him with the respect and the honor and the reverence that He is due.

Appreciate Him. Blessings that come to us from God are an appreciation for the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. An appreciation of His righteousness.

You know, Bob Thieme used to talk about the grace pipe that starts up in heaven with God. What's the other end of that blessing conduit, that grace channel? Where does it find its earthly anchor? It's in God's righteousness. Blessing can flow to us.

God blesses us because He sees the righteousness of Christ in us. We appropriate that righteousness by faith. And now there's an aiming point.

There's a target for God's grace and God's blessing. And so when God blesses us, He is appreciating what we have of Christ. It's an appreciation.

So when I say, bless the Lord, oh my soul, it's an appreciation. It's a recognition and an understanding of the value of the thing. When God blesses us, it is not because of us.

It is only because of God's appreciation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Well, the same thing when it comes to sanctify. What does sanctify mean? Hallow, set apart, treat as special.

If God sanctifies us, He sets us apart. We enter into a whole new realm. There is that plan and purpose that we've been talking about.

That's not His plan and purpose for Joe the ragman over here and all these unbelievers and apathetic and indifferent believers. There's no plan and purpose for them. They're just, it's slings and arrows.

It's whatever, it's happenstance. It's up to you. You float your own boat and it will always sink.

God sets apart His own for a special purpose. We're like a tool with a sharp edge that He can use to accomplish His work. When you reach for a tool, you want a flat blade screwdriver? You don't

want that one that you find doing electric work and it's got a big divot out of it.

You don't want the one that you got too close to the grinding wheel and it won't operate a screw anymore. If you need a Phillips, you don't want a flat blade. You want something that is fitted to the use.

If you're trying to carve, you want just the right shape and just the right size of tool to do the work that you want to do. That's why Dremel makes all of those fittings. Well, you know, you want just the right little thing to put in the Dremel.

It's got a grinder or it's got a cutter or it's got a chopper or it's got a routing thing, whatever it may be. You go and you find just the right one. Well, we are those people.

We want to be those people that God picks out and says, for this job, this is the one I want to use right here. Your circumstances are the job and you are the tool. We are sanctified in the same way when it says, but you sanctify the Lord God.

By the way, the best Greek text here is not Lord God. This has been corrected by scribes toward Isaiah. It's been corrected toward the original.

I think the New King James might have a text note here. It does. It says, Christ as Lord.

And that's the best reading. Sanctify Christ as Lord. And why is that important? And why did Satan try to rub his thumb in this particular passage, I think? Sanctify Christ as Lord.

Why? What's our preceding context here? What did he talk about with the slaves? What did he talk about with the wives? What did he talk about with the... Even when the husbands are treating their wives like fine china, why are they doing it? Because they are submissive to God. Right? It's submission. Submission.

We spent from chapter 12, verse 13, through chapter 3, verse 12, all of it on submission. Why? Because when you are given the imperative to sanctify Christ as Lord, what is Lord? This is my authority. This is the ultimate cathexis that God has created in the human scenario.

This is our authority. I have a boss. You might be a wife with a husband.

You might be a child with a parent. You might have some form of authority, some way, shape, or form. But everybody, all believers, have Christ as Lord.

Set Him apart. It's not like any other authority. It supersedes.

It overcomes. It trumps any other authority. Even if you're suffering for righteousness sake, which is the hardest test, when you are wrongfully punished, wrongfully abused, that's the hardest test.

It just squashes our ego so bad and we want to do something about it. But set apart Christ as

Lord. Everything in this last chapter and a half comes to bear.

It all applies. How do you sanctify Christ as Lord? He has told us. He's been telling us.

Sanctify Christ as authority. Sanctify Christ as the one to be respectfully obeyed. Peter has been building to this for this whole letter.

And I think Satan went in there and just tried to rub it when he says the Lord God. It spoils it because the Lord Jesus Christ... Peter is the one to tell us about fear, right? The Lord Jesus is the one who is a great leader because He has been under authority. He has learned obedience through what He suffered.

And He knows what it's like to suffer for your obedience, right? If Peter says, don't be afraid of their fears, He knows what He's talking about. When the Lord Jesus says, you keep on in that situation, even though you're suffering for righteousness' sake, who better to sanctify as Lord in that situation than the Lord Jesus Christ? Who better to look at as a reminder? Who better to gain objectivity from and say, well, I may be suffering a little bit here, but not like the Lord. And He's the one asking me to carry on and maintain and be faithful and keep on keeping on.

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. And it doesn't even say be ready. It says, and ready ones.

And you are ready ones. It's almost a result of this. If you sanctify Christ as Lord, you are ready ones.

But it's an imperative. But it's an interesting construction because it's hetoimoi. It's a nounified verb.

And the idea here is it's a condition. It's an ongoing, you're always ready. You might never get asked, but you're always ready.

This is kind of like evangelism. You may never actually share the gospel with someone, but if you're ready, that's what counts. You know exactly what you would say if somebody did ask.

Your life is an evangelism tract. Your hope is a witness to Christ. And when's the last time you led someone to the Lord? It's nonsense.

You are prepared. Every Marine is a rifleman. Most Marines have never fired a shot in anger.

But every Marine is ready. Every Marine knows his weapon inside out, upside down, in the dark, in a bag, blindfolded, field strip the thing, take it apart, put it together, load it, and fire it in an expert manner. Every Marine can do it.

He might be a cook. He might be a lawyer. He might be a radio guy.

He might be an aircraft mechanic. It doesn't matter. If somebody says, run up there and establish

an interlocking field of fire, every single Marine is ready.

Ready. Every single believer should be ready. Ready for the return of the Lord Jesus.

Ready to give an answer. If anybody says, what's your faith all about here? How can you be ready if you don't know that God has a plan, and a purpose, and provision, and power, and exactly how those things work? Peter has just written a manual, a short, quick reference on what those things are. Anybody that has gotten this far in 1 Peter should be ready.

Not only to give an answer, but to live out the answer of hope. And it's a wonderful thing that God has given us this truth. Don't you think? It's a wonderful thing that he's made it so clear.

It isn't some high aspiration, be noble. Go be noble. Go be great.

Well, okay. How? What exactly shall I do to be noble? What exactly shall I do to be great? There's none of that in this letter. Peter is a practical guy.

You want to get a fish? Peter will tell you how to get a fish. You want to gain righteousness by faith? You want to fulfill the purpose of God? Peter has given us everything we need to know right here. Well, this is a good place for us to stop and close for this evening.

In verse 16 next week, we're going to find out what it is to have a good conscience. And I'm also going to flesh out, which I decided I didn't have time to do tonight, what exactly is this hope? Everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, what exactly is that hope? If I'm going to explain it, I ought to pretty much know what it is. So we'll review that hope and then move into good conscience next time.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the clear and lively expression of it in this letter from the Apostle Peter.

Thank you for not leaving us orphans, but leaving us your spirit to encourage us, to guide us, to remind us that we are your children and that as your children, we have been well taken care of and well looked after. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will continue to impress these truths on our hearts in the hours and days ahead to remind us of our opportunity, to enable us to fulfill it and to give us the perspective and the vision to see the eternal future that stretches out before us. We pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.