

The Blessedness of Perseverance

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Preacher: Riaan Boer

[0 : 0 0] Job chapter 1. Job chapter 1 and we'll read from verse 13 as we continue our look and our study of the first two chapters of the book of Job.

We won't be able to work our way through the book of Job. There's 40 odd chapters, but we will be able to at least hopefully get through two. I think we're going to have to go over to this mic. We'll read together from verse 13.

Hear the word of the Lord. One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the older brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby.

And the Sabians attacked and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword and I'm the only one who has escaped to tell you. While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, The fire of God fell from the heavens and burnt up the sheep and the servants and I'm the only one who has escaped to tell you.

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword and I'm the only one who has escaped to tell you.

[1 : 2 1] While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the older brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house.

It collapsed on them and they are dead and I'm the only one who has escaped to tell you. At this Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head.

Then he fell to the ground and worshipped and said, Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised.

In all this Job did not sin by charging God with any wrongdoing. This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray and ask God's blessing as we spend a few minutes in the scriptures.

Oh Father, we thank you for your word open before us. And we do pray now Lord that you'd open our eyes as we pray along with the psalmist that we would see wonderful things in your word.

[2 : 2 1] Father, we ask oh Lord that you would help us as we study the scriptures, to be encouraged and to hear oh Lord what the spirit has to say to us.

And so God bless us now as we spend these few moments in the scriptures. We ask you these mercies in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. You know I'm standing here and we've worked through such a lot already in the service.

I'm wondering to myself did I forget anything? And I'm thinking like did we cover everything? I'm like going back over my notes and because everything seemed to have gone so quickly. Not sure about smoothly but so quickly.

I'm wondering did we forget something? Is there something that I forgot to do or missed? If there is we'll catch up with that. But for now we find ourselves in the scriptures. We started looking at the book of Job last week and we did an introduction to the man, the man Job.

And this morning we've just read of the affliction that fell upon Job. We read of the tragedy that has just struck this man.

[3 : 24] We do understand as we've mentioned last week that this has all been an outworking of what had happened in the heavenly council.

Right? When Satan appeared before God and God said had you considered my servant Job? Which Satan said that nothing will happen to him because you've got him all preserved and protected.

And yet God permitted Satan to strike Job to see if Job will trust God. If he will continue to fear God and honor God.

And so we find ourselves really in Job's tragedy this morning. We find ourselves in Job's affliction this morning. And perhaps it's a situation not too dissimilar to yours this morning.

Perhaps you find yourself in a difficult place, in a hard place. Perhaps there's affliction that has come upon you. Or affliction that you are anticipating. Or maybe have gone through.

[4 : 23] Well I hope in these words that we will give ourselves to this morning, you may find encouragement. The account is related to us in the online magazine World.

About the tragedy that fell upon author and author of the beloved hymn, It Is Well With My Soul. Horatio Spafford, the author of that particular hymn.

And the account is recorded for us as follows. The luxury liner was steaming through a calm and star-studded night. When it happened, fast asleep after days of rough weather and torbid fog, passengers were thrown from their beds by a violent shuddering and noise-like explosion.

The prow of an iron-hulled sailing vessel had rammed them amidst ship and split the hull. Passengers who were not killed in the crash crowded the deck and swarmed the lifeboats.

Many were crushed under the collapsing mainmast. A young mother from Chicago clutched her two-year-old daughter and tried to keep her other three girls close.

[5 : 30] Don't be afraid, little Annie told her. The sea is his. And he made it. Within minutes the ship rolled over, spilling the family into the sea.

The mother clutched frantically as her baby was torn out of her arms. A few days later, she telegraphed her husband from Wales.

Saved alone, what shall I do? Upon receiving the news, Horatio Spafford, successful lawyer, Presbyterian elder, and confidant of the evangelist Dwight Moody, paced the floor all night in agonizing grief.

Just before dawn, he finally spoke. I'm glad to trust the Lord when it will cost me something. A week later, he was crossing the Atlantic to rejoin his wife, Anna, when the captain called his attention to the very spot where the wreck occurred.

That night, in his cabin, Spafford wrote the poem beginning, When peace like a river attendeth my way. Spafford's message reminds me of the charge laid against Job.

[6 : 44] Does Job fear God for nothing? In other words, you've given him so much and blessed him so richly. Of course he fears you. Of course he trusts you.

But what if it would cost him something? What if our faith in God requires of us something? This is the drama unfolding in the life of Job.

And this morning, I want us to consider this theme of the afflicted believer under these three headings. I want you to notice the nature of affliction, the causes of affliction, and then finally the response to affliction.

Firstly, the nature of Job's affliction. Where we read in the frantic, hurried report brought to Job that he had suffered tremendous loss.

He had suffered the loss of his camels, his oxen. He had suffered the loss of his servants. He had suffered the loss of his donkeys.

[7 : 50] He had suffered the loss of so much of his material wealth. And finally, he suffered the loss of his children. Now with our media age and video camera age, we've all been able to see reports after a disaster.

Whether it is the 9-11 that we reflect back and we see ground zero and the news try and capture it for us. Whether it is the aftermath of a hurricane or a tornado and we see things flatten and ruined.

Wreckage, ruin, everything after certain disasters. Well, we are coming onto the scene of Job's suffering and it is quite literally as if a hurricane ripped through his life.

Through his oxen and donkeys, sheep and servant. It's like a hurricane had come and ripped through his sons and his daughters. Similar to the telegraph sent by Anna to her husband, Horatio, every servant that came to report to Job what had happened had these words, I alone survived.

Saved alone. Everything else was lost. What do we learn about affliction from this account? What do we learn about affliction from the life of Job?

[9 : 07] Well, firstly, we learn that affliction came upon him suddenly and it came upon him rapidly. Suddenly and rapidly. Remember, Job was not privy to what the heavenly council had decided early on in chapter 1.

He wasn't a fly on the wall when he was being weighed by God. He was a God-fearing man going about his business, going about his life, and then he was struck with trial.

He didn't expect it. He wasn't given time to prepare for it. And that is often how the worst of trials come. Unexpectedly and while we are unprepared.

What starts out as a normal day for Job soon becomes the worst day. The truth is that all trials, all affliction, every trial we experience has an advantage on us.

It has an advantage on us. We do not know when it comes. We are really prepared for it and we are often caught off guard. Trials are like those unseen potholes in life.

[10 : 18] You are busy moving around, going about your life, and then you hear a sound, you feel a bump, and you experience a disturbance that shakes you to your very core. It is comforting, though, that the Bible is not naive or unaware of the gravest of sufferings we endure.

The Bible is not shying away from describing horrendous losses and tragedies. The reasons for this is the Bible is an honest reflection of life in a fallen world.

It gives us an honest account of what it looks like to live in a broken, sinful world. But also, the Bible gives us a glorious witness.

A witness to the God who saves, delivers, restores, and comforts. A witness to the reality that there is no situation so grave, so serious, so harsh, and so difficult that God is not able to help, to aid, to draw near.

That His arm, as the Bible constantly reminds us, is not short that He is unable to help. We also read that Job's affliction rapidly unfolds.

[11 : 33] Four different incidences happening on the same day, probably at the same time. He's just receiving the news in this different set of occasions.

Four different incidences happening on the same day, and as He gets the word of the one, it is followed up by another, and another, and another. Each one worse than before.

The first affliction was the loss of His donkeys, oxen, and servants, and the last one was the loss of His very sons and daughters.

These were blows to His soul. Job was in the ring of suffering, and that's often how it appears. We're in the ring of suffering when we experience these afflictions.

Job was in the ring of suffering with Satan directing punches, and each punch worse than the previous one. Blow after blow, rapid, fast, fiery coming at Him.

[12 : 34] We also learn that afflictions are made up of all sorts of calamities. There's not just one kind of affliction. Affliction finds various forms.

And often we look at our lives, and we are maybe afraid to call something an affliction. We are afraid to call something suffering, because we don't think that it reaches that bar, or that measuring stick of what qualifies for an affliction, what qualifies for suffering.

But the truth that the Bible conveys to us is that afflictions and suffering and trials take on various kinds. Job suffered an attack on his estate, theft, robbery, loss of assets, and the death of his children.

When we read of Job's affliction here, we get a sense that everything that could go wrong for him, went wrong for him. Job would have gone to bed at night, and he would have thought of his life, and how the Lord has blessed him, and he would have thought of the worst thing that could possibly happen, and he would have prayed against this, and trusted the Lord to preserve him from this.

But here, Job's worst nightmare has come true. He's lost everything. The book of James teaches us on trials, and it says, Count it all joy when you face trials of various kinds.

[14 : 01] Various kinds. Trials vary in how they come to us. It's pointless to compare our trials with other people's trials. Well, they did not experience, or my trial is not raised to that level of trial, so it can't really be a trial.

Trials come in various kinds to us. Manifold kinds. Diverse kinds. We experience them. But we also learn that afflictions, especially as we receive them from the good hand of God, we understand that afflictions are not punitive.

Afflictions are not God getting back at us. When we experience trials, when we experience sufferings, when we go through hardships, we must not perceive this as God somehow being displeased with us, and now getting back at us.

One thing we learn from Job is that he lived a faithful life. He was upright, the Bible tells us. In fact, God points to him and tells Satan, Have you considered my servant Job?

He's upright. The witness and the testimony of Job is that he's living his life in honor of God. The affliction that came upon him was not a response to a particular sin.

[15 : 13] It was not because he was in a wrong in any particular sense. Affliction God permits is not God getting even, getting back, or being vindictive.

The Bible is clear. Romans chapter 8 verse 1. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. There's no condemnation for those who are in Christ. The cross was God's justice enacted.

The cross was where we as Christians have already been judged. And not in ourselves, but in Christ. God exhausted his judgments against us in Jesus at the cross.

The cup has been drunk empty. There's nothing left. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. So what happens to us in our Christian life can never be interpreted as a form of punishment, judgment, or God getting back at us.

That was Jesus' place. That was Jesus' role. He was the one who died on the cross, took upon himself our suffering. The hymn writer spoke the truth when he said, Jesus paid it all.

- [16 : 25] So affliction is not to be regarded as God being displeased with us. Often this view of affliction impedes us to turn to the Lord for help because we see it as coming from Him, and He's displeased with us, so we can't go to Him.

Therefore it's important we don't interpret our suffering as God being displeased with us. It also robs us of perceiving God as our heavenly Father. The book of Hebrews reminds us that God disciplines those whom He loves.

He disciplines those whom He loves. And again, discipline is also a word that we need to redeem from its completely negative connotation. We often think of discipline only as corrective, something that has happened or done to us after we've done something wrong.

But discipline is also formative, or discipline can also be preventative. I discipline my children by insisting they get into bed early on a school night.

They didn't do anything wrong. They didn't upset me in any particular way. They've not been fighting with each other. They've been at peace. They've been doing their homework, and then I insist upon them that they go to bed at night at an early time.

- [17 : 37] That's a form of discipline. That's a form of discipline. And so two trials come and are permitted by God because He loves us. We want more freedoms, more leisure, more pleasure, more scope, more leeway, but God says no and permits things to come into our lives to borrow an expression that curbs our enthusiasm.

He does it because He loves us. And so we see the nature of affliction. It comes in various ways. It comes unexpectedly. It comes rapidly. It comes at us, but we must not interpret it as punitive, as judgments from God, but it is God's fatherly way of growing in us faith, character, and furthermore hope in Him.

The second point I want you to notice is the causes of Job's affliction. Now when we consider the causes of our affliction, it is helpful to think of it in a complete and in a holistic sense.

Often we only have one filter through which we see our affliction. Either it's just God and He's unhappy with me and that's it, or we blame the devil after every corner. You know, it's just the devil.

He's after me and I'm just out of my luck. Or we cast all the blame on a singular person and we're like, that is the cause of my affliction. But it is helpful to know that although affliction comes in various ways, there are also various causes for even the same affliction.

- [19 : 07] Various causes for the same affliction. And in Job we learn that there are often a variety of ingredients in this plate of suffering we often serve.

Notice the permissive cause. The permissive cause. Or we can even say the ultimate cause. That's God, right? It's clear God permits Job's suffering.

And without that, Satan can do nothing. Without God granting it, he is powerless. And when we hear that, we sometimes accuse God and wonder how can God permit such a thing?

So we become accusatory. When in fact stepping back for a minute, trying to step back for a minute from the suffering we experience, it's important to realize that in our affliction, in our trials, and in our trouble, if God is permitting it, if he is the ultimate cause in this, it is actually a good thing because we know he's a good God.

We are in God's hands. God is sovereign and he rules over our grief. He rules over our pain. We see the benefits of God's rule over Job's affliction in the limits that God sets to it.

[20 : 21] God's care is expressed by setting these limits when he tells Satan, you can go this far and no further. We do not know, we're not privy, we've not seen or be exposed to that heavenly counsel where we know the kinds of limits God has already set by the afflictions we are called to endure.

You may think it is worse, you may think it is bad, you may think it is unbearable, but because of the good providence of God, he has already set limits when it comes to your afflictions.

And so it's not as bad as it could have been. It's always not as bad as it could have been. And so we step back and we see the good hand of God.

He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear. There are great benefits in meditating on the truth that God rules over our brokenness, over our suffering.

These things are ultimately serving his plans and his purposes. And in the words of Charles Spurgeon, that great Baptist preacher, when we can't trace his hands, we have to trust his heart.

[21 : 27] That he intends good, that he is love, that he is truth, and with him is mercy. Also notice, not only the permissive cause, but also notice the efficient cause, or even the secondary cause.

The efficient cause speaks to the agent accomplishing this, and that is Satan. He is the one that seeks our ruin. He is the agent behind the evil against us.

We live in a post-modern, technologically savvy, AI explosion world, and often forget that life is more than the tech, the screens, and that which is physical, and that which is material.

There are spiritual forces seeking our ruin. The Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis is a satirical novel presented as a series of letters written by Screwtape, A Senior Demon.

It's a fictional, right, account, and C.S. Lewis writes this. Screwtape, A Senior Devil writes to his nephew, Wormwood, a junior tempter. The letter offers advice on how to tempt a young man, referred to as the patient, and to lead him away from faith, virtue, towards sin, and damnation.

[22 : 46] And in the seventh letter, the issue is addressed of whether it is essential to keep the patient, the young believer, ignorant of the devil's existence.

And so Screwtape writes to young Wormwood whether it is to their benefit that their existence be kept a secret or be made as a myth. And so Wormwood, the senior demon, or rather, Wormwood writes, we are really faced with a cruel dilemma.

When the humans disbelieve in our existence, we lose all the pleasing results of direct terrorism. On the other hand, when they believe in us, we cannot make them materialists and skeptics.

When they believe in us, we cannot make them materialists and skeptics. And herein, C.S. Lewis captures part of the danger of being blind to the devil's workings in this world. It can further lead us to become sheer materialists and skeptics, even doubting God, even doubting that He has greater, higher, better providential plans.

And so we see the second instrument of affliction. Not only God's permissive, whoa, God permissively causing it, but also the agent working to bring it about in Satan.

[24 : 07] But then also, we see the instrumental causes. We turn to the actual, direct causes or instruments causing the affliction. And again, I submit to you, it's helpful to think of our affliction in this reality that there are multiple causes to it.

And it's not just one way of perceiving it. Often we only look at to the instruments of our affliction. We suffer under the tyranny of the instrument and feel helpless.

And we build great bitterness, especially if those instruments are people. Especially if we perceive it's people bringing it upon us. And so we direct all our reaction on them, toward them, and against them.

But if we recognize that there is more going on than literally meets the eye, it gives us a healthier perspective. And so the instruments here of Job's affliction can be placed in two categories.

Firstly, unfriendly foes, the Sabians and the Chaldeans. They've conspired against Job to rob him, to steal from him, to plunder his goods.

[25 : 13] And so they come and bring severe, devastating affliction upon Job. But also we see another category of affliction and we can call this the forces of nature.

The forces of nature. Fire from God came. I think that's just the archaic way of speaking about lightning came. Lightning came. And also a great wing came that was the death, the cause of his children's death.

These natural disasters. They are these unfriendly foes and then they are just things that are naturally set about that we have no control over.

Paul says, for instance, our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the principalities and authorities and the powers of the air. Often we see people who are greatly hurt by somebody else and we see them forgive a great and horrendous offense and we wonder how is that possible?

How did they do that? Well, I think one of the reasons can be because there is an appreciation that instruments are often only being used by a more sinister agent.

[26 : 29] By a more sinister agent. So, there are these different causes to Job's affliction that we note. But then also, thirdly, our final point, the response to affliction.

What was Job's response? Remember, all of this was to determine what Job would say in the face of suffering. Would he curse God? Would he blame God?

Would he turn his back on God? Is he only loyal to God when God blesses him? Does he only fear God when his life is free from trials? Does he serve God in the convenience of comfort?

And is his joy in God only in this convenience of comfort? Satan's goal here was to bring upon Job as much suffering as he was permitted to cause.

What was Job's response? Well, we read in verse 20 at this in light of the suffering, in light of the losses.

[27 : 34] Verse 20, at this Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said, naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart.

The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised. In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. And then we see Job's response to the affliction, to the suffering, to the tragedy that has struck his life.

We learn from Job's response firstly that he mourned. That he mourned. Notice, the Bible says that he got up, tore his robe, shaved his head.

That is actions of one who is in mourning, one who is grieving. Friends, we are not too spiritual to recognize affliction and to respond to it accordingly.

God has made us in such a way where he has given us various faculties, faculty of the mind, faculty of the world, and faculty of the affections, and to bypass any of this would be to bypass an essential part of who we are.

[28 : 46] And so God is not expecting us in the face of suffering and severe affliction to just numb our affections and just to praise him. Yes, Job will praise God, but before he praises God, he responds appropriately to the affliction by being quiet and by grieving and by mourning.

And often, the best response to severe tragedy is to be in mourning. We learn from the life of the Lord Jesus Christ when his good friend Lazarus dies and Jesus knows he's going to raise Lazarus from the dead.

But despite this, death still presents itself with these mourning responses that are appropriate. And so we read in the shortest verse in the Bible, Jesus wept.

Jesus wept. Our Lord exercised his faculty of affection because he was a true human being. And so we are not too spiritual to mourn, to grieve, to respond appropriately to the suffering and the affliction that has invaded, interrupted our lives.

And this is what Job does. He got up, he tore his robe, and he shaved his head. But not only did he mourn.

[30 : 09] See the problem with only responding with our affections in that manner is we must not only remain there. Not only did he mourn, but he worshipped.

Then, notice after this, then he fell to the ground in worship. He worshipped. We are not too consumed by affliction that we cannot worship God.

What did Job lose? Everything. And yet, he was able to worship God. Again, I'm reminded of a wonderful quote that is always revived in my heart when I experience some difficulty, when I experience some trials and affliction.

And there's a quote by, I know I'm a Presbyterian minister, but I'm going to quote Charles Spurgeon again, that great Baptist preacher. And he writes in one of his books and he says, I shake, I shake, but my rock moves not.

I shake, but my rock moves not. And this is why Job could worship. Because though hell has entered his life, God still rules, God still reigns, God still unmoved on his throne, and he's still the same yesterday, today, and forever.

[31 : 22] I shake, but my rock moves not. And so Job mourned, Job worshipped, but also, Job praised. He praised.

He said, naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised. May the name of the Lord be praised.

It is when we have this perception of truth embedded in our hearts that from him, to him, and through him are all things.

It opens up this possibility of praising God. And then also, well, we see in Job's praise that he called on the name of the Lord, that he praised the name of the Lord.

I need this part especially to be recorded because I'm going to quote Tim Keller now, just for reference. I had to put in a Tim Keller quote there just so that it can be a Union Chapel sermon.

[32 : 31] But Keller says something very true on this point. He says, real joy is not the absence of trouble, it's the presence of God. Real joy is not the absence of trouble, it's the presence of God.

And so Job mourned, he worshipped, he praised, and then he also, he feared God. He did not sin. Suffering is not a license to sin. Suffering is not our pass to clench our fists and to hurl all sorts of accusations against God, turn our back on him and justify any life of faithlessness and disobedience.

Suffering is not that pass. Suffering is not license to sin. Verse 22, in all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

As we conclude, I was flying into Cape Town on Thursday night, having spent three days in Johannesburg at a theological education conference.

And as I was flying in, I enjoyed the skyline above the clouds. You know, it was that, what time, between five and six. It was clear, beautiful.

[33 : 46] Stars in the distance already starting to appear. So a red line as the sun sets, expansive. The expansiveness of the heavens, you know, just the width, looking at it through the window.

Then again, just realizing, you know, that between the clouds and whatever's up there, the distance is, you know, vast. You know, sometimes when we live here and we look at the clouds, we're like, oh, if we just pierce the clouds, we're like, through into space.

Well, not quite. There's still a bit to go. Quite a lot to go. But I was enjoying, you know, just the vastness and the beauty, the various lights and the glowingness, glitchiness of the stars.

But as I was enjoying this reality, I noticed the clouds beneath the plain. I realized that beneath the clouds, it is raining in Cape Town, coming into rain. We had nice weather up in Joburg.

Coming into rain, pouring, cold, miserable. My wife sent me a picture of the fireplace on already and I was like, oh, why do we need that? It's nice weather up here in Joburg, at least when you're outside.

[34 : 44] But I realized in about 20 minutes I'll be experiencing the reality beneath the cloud. The rain, the cold, the gloomy, dark and cloudy reality.

And as I thought on this, I realized that this is not the only reality. And it actually made me to smile when I realized that above the clouds, the sky is clear.

There's some truth in that when it comes to life, when it comes to affliction, when it comes to experiencing the gloomy, cold, dark clouds of suffering. It helps to know that above these clouds, the sky is clear.

There the Lord reigns, ruling in love, grace, mercy and truth. This is why Job could look at the reality of affliction and respond with the disposition of praise because he lived aware not just of the one reality, but of the two realities.

Not just of life under the cloud, not just of life under the clouds of affliction, under the clouds of trial, under the clouds of suffering, but he realized that there's life above the clouds of God's clear and beautiful mercy.

[36 : 02] this is our only hope in this fallen world that above the clouds, the sky is truly, really and gloriously clear.

One day God will bring an end to affliction, sin, suffering. He will wipe away every tear the Bible teaches us and he will remove the clouds of affliction for good.

Going back to Horatio Spafford, upon suffering the great loss and immense tragedy of his children's death, he writes this hymn, when peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul.

The stable grace that keeps him in that passage, in that verse. Though Satan should buffer, he writes, though trials should come, let this blessed assurance control that Christ has regarded my helpless estate and has shed his own blood for my soul.

Christ had suffered an affliction far greater than I will ever endure to deliver me, bless me, keep me. My sin, oh the bliss, of this glorious thought, my sin not in part but the whole is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more.

[37 : 26] Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh my soul. What has happened to me is nothing compared to what Christ has done for me. But then listen to this, listen to this, above the clouds, the sky is always clear, listen to these words, the final stanza in Spafford's beloved hymn, O Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight, when the clouds be rolled back as a scroll, the trump shall resound, the Lord shall descend, even so, it is well with my soul.

Above the clouds of affliction, the sky is clear, and one day the clouds will be rolled away, the trump will sound, and the Lord will descend, and even so, it is well with our souls.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your blessed word that speaks to our hearts, to our hurts, to our pain, to our lives, Lord, and that gives us hope beyond this world, that gives us hope beyond the clouds, eternal hope, Lord, precious hope, Lord.

So we thank you for these lessons that you teach your children. Help us, oh God, to continue to trust you, knowing that you intend only good what others may intend and work for evil, you rule above and intend for good.

So bless your people, oh God, as we set our hearts on Christ our Lord. We pray and ask you these mercies in his name. Amen. Amen.