Isaiah 9:8-10:34

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Preacher: Steve Palframan

[0:00] Morning. I'm going to be reading from Isaiah 9 verse 8 to a long way down into chapter 10 and then Steve will take over because it was a little reading.

! The Lord has sent a message against Jacob. It will fall on Israel. All the people will know it. Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria who say with pride and arrogance of heart.
The bricks have fallen down but we will rebuild with dressed stone. The fig trees have been felled but we will replace them with cedars. But the Lord has strengthened Rezin's foes against them and has spurred their enemies on. Arameans from the east and Philistines from the west have devoured Israel with open mouth.
Yet for all this his anger has not turned away. His hand is still appraised. But the people have not returned to him who struck them nor have they sought the Lord Almighty.
So the Lord will cut them off from Israel both head and tail. Both palm branch and reed in a single day. The elders and dignitaries are the head. The prophets who teach lies are the tail.
[1:09] Those who guide this people mislead them and those who are guided are led astray. Therefore the Lord will take no pleasure in the young men nor will he pity the fatherless and widows.

For everyone is ungodly and wicked. Every mouth speaks folly. Yet for all this his anger is not turned away. His hand is still appraised. Surely wickedness burns like a fire. It consumes briars and thorns.
It sets the forest thickets ablaze so that it rolls upwards in a column of smoke. By the wrath of the Lord Almighty the land will be scorched and the people will be fuel for the fire.
They will not spare one another. On the right they will devour but still be hungry. On the left they will eat but not be satisfied. Each will feed on the flesh of their own offspring.
Manasseh will feed on Ephraim and Ephraim on Manasseh. Together they will turn against Judah. Yet for all of this his anger is not turned away.
[2:11] His hand is still appraised. Woe to those who make unjust laws. To those who issue oppressive decrees. To deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people.

Making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. What will you do on the day of reckoning when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches? Nothing will remain but to cringe among the captives or fall among the slain. Yet for all this his anger is not turned away. His hand is still appraised. Woe to the Assyrian, the rod of my anger.
In whose hand is the club of my wrath. I send him against a godless nation. I dispatch him against a people who anger me. To seize and loot and snatch and plunder. And to trample them down like mud in the streets.
But this is not what he intends. This is not what he has in mind. His purpose is to destroy. To put an end to many nations. Are not my commanders all kings, he says?
[3:12] Has not Calno fared like Karmesh? Has not Hameth like Arped and Samaria like Damascus? Has my hand seized the kingdoms of the idols? Kingdoms whose images excel those of Jerusalem and Samaria.

Shall I not deal with Jerusalem and her images as I dealt with Samaria and her idols? When the Lord has finished all his work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, he will say, I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eye.
For he says, By the strength of my hand I have done this. And by my wisdom, because I have understanding, I removed the boundaries of nations. I plundered their treasures like a mighty one.

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I subdued their kings. As one reaches into a nest, so my hand reached for the wealth of the nations. As people gather abandoned eggs. So I gathered all the countries.
Does the axe raise itself above the person who swings it? Or the saw boast against the one who uses it?
[4:12] As if a rod were to wield the person who lifts it up. Or a club brandish the one who is not wood. Therefore the Lord, the Almighty, will send a wasting disease upon his sturdy warriors.

Under his pomp a fire will be kindled like a blazing fire. The light of Israel will become a fire, their holy one a flame. In a single day it will burn and consume his thorns and bryants.
The splendor of his forests and fertile fields it will completely destroy. As when one who is ill wastes away. And the remaining trees of his forest will be so few that a child could write them down.
In that day, the remnant of Israel, the survivors of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down. But will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel.
A remnant will return. A remnant of Jacob will return to the mighty God. Though your people be like the sand by the sea, Israel, only a remnant will return. Destruction has been decreed, overwhelming and righteous.
[5:15] The Lord, the Lord Almighty, will carry out the destruction decreed upon the whole land. Therefore this is what the Lord, the Lord Almighty says. My people who live in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrians who beat you with a rod.

And lift a club against you as Egypt did. Very soon my anger against you will end and my wrath will be directed to their destruction. The Lord Almighty will lash them with a whip.
As when he struck down Midian at the rock of Oreb, he will raise his staff over the waters as he did in Egypt. In that day, their burden will be lifted from your shoulders, their yoke from your neck.
The yoke will be broken because you have grown so fat. They entered Aeth. They pass through Migron. They store supplies at Mishmash. They go over the pass and say, we will camp overnight at Geber.
Rama trembles. Gibeah of Saul flees. Cry out, daughter of Gelim. Listen, Leish. Poor Anoth. Menadmon is in flight. The people of Gebin take cover.
[6:17] This is the day they will halt at Nob. They will shout their fist at the mount of daughter of Zion. At the hill of Jerusalem. See, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, will lop off the boughs with great power.

The lofty trees will be felled. The tall ones will be brought low. He will cut down the forest thickets with an axe. Lebanon will fall before the mighty one. Amen.
Let's pray as we come to God's word. Let's pray together. Amen. Let's pray.
Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Asking, Lord, for your help and your mercy. We recognize, Lord, that we are weak and sinful.
Our minds wander. And we have before us a very long passage. Please, we pray. Be at work and help us, we ask. But more than just help us to understand the information, speak to us by your spirit to our hearts.
[7:23] We long to love you and know you and follow you. So please be at work for your glory now, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Now, with such a large passage in front of us this morning, it is useful for us to notice that Isaiah summarizes his main point for us in just one verse.

And essentially, that verse is going to be our text this morning. And so we're going to spend more time in there than we are going to spend in the rest of the chapters. And that is going to help us explain what's going on.
So, chapter 10, verse 20 is our text for this morning. Let me read it to you. In that day, the remnant of Israel, the survivors of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down, but will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel.
Now, let's just see some of the details. Have a look down at your Bibles. Notice the repeated word in the verse. In that day, the remnant of Israel, the survivors of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down, but will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel.
Literally, the word there is to support or hold up or to depend on. And the idea is that something or someone is carrying you, defending you, keeping you upright.
[8:43] It means, doesn't it, that the unspoken assumption behind our text this morning and behind our passage is that life is very uncertain. It's wobbly and difficult.

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The verse doesn't distinguish, does it, between those who don't seek support and those who do, as if you could live life without some kind of support.
Rather, it is about the shift of support, isn't it? Our text is about them swapping from relying on one thing to relying on something else. Now, you may remember that Isaiah is writing at a time of national and international political upheaval.
At the time he's writing, the world is in transition as superpowers trade blows with one another, and the smaller nations are kind of scrambling together to form alliances to try and defend themselves. And the text really is about, listen, Israel, who will you trust in this time of national and international crisis? Where are you going to turn when the enemy is on your doorstep and kind of ratting on your door?
[9:51] Now, I hope you understand that means, doesn't it, that we're going to have to work hard to understand Isaiah, right? Because there's a lot here for us to get our minds around.

But we're not going to have to work hard to make it relevant. These are our times, aren't they? Did you read this week that the government has told us to stockpile fresh water and tinned food?
We live in our own times of upheaval, don't we? Life has been and always will be for every generation wobbly, uncertain. No one has ever been sheltered from this.
All you have to do really is live long enough and you will experience the wobbliness of this life. And it might not be politics that particularly scares you. It might be something more personal. Maybe the death of a close friend or sudden shock diagnosis or redundancy or a depression and anxiety that seem to come from nowhere and you can't shake.
And the question for us, really Isaiah's question for us this morning from this text and for all of us this morning to engage with is, who are you going to trust? Where are you going to place your reliance in a wobbly world?
[11:03] If you're honest though, our text is doing more than just ask the question, isn't it? It tells us, doesn't it, that not all supports are equal. Some supports will let you down. Let me read it to you again.

Have a look down at the verse. In that day, the remnant of Israel, the survivors of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down, but will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel.
Notice here that the remnant, that is, those who are saved from God's people, the survivors, as they're called in a verse, are those who have shifted their reliance from him who struck them down. In other words, they've discovered, haven't they, at great personal cost, that the place their reliance was, their trust was, is no good. It didn't just give way, did it? It came back and bit them.
It turned on them. They're beaten with the stick they were leaning on. And they have shifted their reliance to the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. In the context, it's a reference to the strong nation of Assyria.
[12:09] That nation they had tried to make an alliance with, and that nation had turned on them and nearly totally destroyed Jerusalem and Judah. Again, I don't think this is that hard to apply.

Perhaps you know what this is like. Maybe you rested in something or someone for your hope, and they let you down in a difficult time. Maybe it was a friend. You trusted them.
You looked to them for support, but they turned on you. Or maybe you made big sacrifices to get that qualification, to get that university degree. You thought it would help you get ahead, but it just saddled you with debt.
You can't find a job. Or maybe you moved to London thinking, moving to London will make me happy. Maybe I'll get a job. It will fulfill my dreams and my aspirations. And it turned out to be lonely.
False supports have a habit of doing that to you, says Isaiah. You lean on the wrong thing, and it will come back and bite you. And that, then, I think brings us to the big argument of this little text, which is what we must do in our wobbly world, is shift our reliance from whatever else it is relying on to the Holy One of Israel.
[13:17] The Holy One of Israel. In fact, in this text, right, the definition of salvation, the survivors are those who rely on the Lord.

The crushed and defeated, in our text, are those who did not rely on the Lord. And the survivors are those who did. And again, you can say more than just that, can't you? Because if you notice the adverb in the sentence, the descriptor that goes along with the verb to rely, what is it?
The survivors of Jacob will no longer rely on him who struck them down, but will truly rely on the Lord. Notice that Isaiah, in our passage this morning, wants us to distinguish between a kind of

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false relying and a true relying.
There is a kind of fake reliance on God, says Isaiah. There's a kind of reliance that says, oh yes, I do trust God. In Isaiah's day, all of Israel and all of Judah would say, oh yeah, yeah, we trust the Lord.
It goes with the territory. We live in God's place. Look at the clothes that we're wearing. Look at the food that we're eating. We've been circumcised. We worship at the temple. But that's not enough, says Isaiah.
[14:26] True reliance is something more than just saying so. Something more than just praying when you're in a panic and things are difficult. And what is true reliance? True reliance, our text tells us, doesn't it?

True reliance on God is abandoning all other supports. That's what it is. To truly rely on God is to rely on God alone, says Isaiah.
And so that's us this morning. As we come to our passage, Isaiah is not going to let us get away with saying the right thing. He's not so much interested in what we call ourselves or what posts that we like and share or even what we do on a Sunday.
No, he's not just interested in what you say or how you describe yourself. He's interested in your hearts. He's interested in the exclusivity of your trust in the Lord in your hearts.
Because he says salvation in a wobbly world is found by relying on the Lord alone. Alone. If it is not exclusive trust, says Isaiah, it is no trust at all.
[15:35] Now, in a way, that is the whole message of these verses. If you get that, you have understood this section of Isaiah chapter 9 and Isaiah 10. Isaiah, the great preacher, tells us to trust exclusively in the Lord in order to be saved.

But because he's such a great preacher, he doesn't just make his point and then just kind of leave it there. He actually wants to teach us it. And he's going to teach it to us in stories about what's going on at the time.
And he's going to expose for us in those stories particular ways that we might misplace our trust. And he's going to draw our attention to self-reliance and human power.
And he's going to expose those to us and say, listen, you might be tempted to trust in this and not exclusively in the Lord. So let me expose it to you. So let's have a look at those two things together.
Firstly, notice the sin of self-reliance. The sin of self-reliance. Come back to chapter 9, verse 8, through to chapter 10, verse 4. Now, this section really is one long poem, which Martina read for us.
[16:41] It has a sort of repeated line at the end of each verse. It comes in verse 12, 17, 21, and 24. It's the line, yet for all this, his anger is not turned away.

His hand is still raised. And the poem is written to the northern kingdom of Israel. So if you look at the beginning of it, in verse 8 of chapter 9, we read, There he's given you four different ways of addressing the same group of people.
Jacob, Israel, Ephraim, the inhabitants of Samaria, are all the northern kingdoms of Israel. And at the time, the northern kingdom of Israel was being threatened by and would eventually be destroyed by the Assyrian army.
And God told them, Listen, the Assyrian army is coming because I am angry with you and your sin, and I am judging you for it. So the foreign superpower swoops in, and it totally defeats the nation.
And the point here is that the judgment itself exposes for them a deep self-reliance in God's people. So notice what happens as their buildings and farms are destroyed by the invading armies.
[17:54] What do they say? Look down at verse 10. They say with pride and arrogance of heart, The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with dressed stone. The fig trees have been felled, but we will replace them with cedars, they say.

Do you see this? Even as the invaders are pulling down their barns and burning their fig trees, the people of Israel are blasting Chumba Wumba on the radio, right?
I get knocked down, but I get up again. You ain't never gonna keep me down. I get knocked down, but I get up again. The younger kids are playing Kelly Clarkson, aren't they?
Think you left me broken down? Think I'll come running back? Baby, you don't know me, because you're dead wrong. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.
Thanks, Florence. Makes you stronger. Stand a little taller. That's what they're singing, isn't it? But it is a self-reliant delusion, says Isaiah.

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[18:58] And it runs all the way through the people. Verses 14 to 17 tell you it's from the elders of the nation right down to the fatherless and the widows. Everybody thinks like this, he says. It's burning like a fire in God's people in verse 18.

But this is what we particularly need to notice is there is a dark side to this self-reliance. In verse 19, this self-reliance as it encounters the judgment of God in the shape of the Assyrian army, it doesn't recognize its weakness and turn to God.
Instead, it doubles down. Verse 19, look down at it. By the wrath of the Lord Almighty, the land will be scorched, the people will be fueled for the fire, they will not spare one another.
Literally, the word there is they will not spare their brothers. On the right they will devour, but still be hungry. On the left they will eat, but not be satisfied.
Each will feed on the flesh of their own offspring. This is the darkness of self-reliance. The darkness of self-reliance is that it will even eat its own children, its brothers, just to stay alive.
[20:03] Of course this is how self-reliance has to work, doesn't it? If I'm depending on my own strength to keep me, if I'm leaning on me, of course I don't care about you, I cannot care about you because I'm trying really hard to keep myself going.

I'm focused on the impossible task of keeping myself afloat. And chapter 10 verse 2 carries on with the theme of what self-reliant Israel are up to. Chapter 10 verse 2, they deprive the poor of their rights, they withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, they make the widows their prey and lob the fatherless.
This is what it's like in self-reliant Israel. The poor and the widows are made to pay. The poorest in their society are pushed down as everybody is trying to push themselves up, looking out for only themselves.
There's a 2006 Kevin Costner movie where he is a Coast Guard rescue swimmer. I'm not really very good at remembering films and maybe you've never seen this film.
There's no reason why you should have done. But this one really stuck with me for some reason. And the opening scene of the movie, Costner is in the sea, he's rescuing a couple who have fallen overboard from their yacht, I imagine, and they're there caught in a storm.
[21:16] And the basket is lowered from the helicopter in front of the three of them, as Costner has kind of helped them out. And the husband proceeds to push his wife out of the way and trying to get into the basket himself and is drowning his wife and he doesn't seem to care.

And I think this is perhaps the way it stuck with me. Kevin Costner just punches him in the face and breaks his nose. What a brilliant opening scene to a movie, right? This is Isaiah's picture of the horror of self-reliance.
It turns you into a person who is unable to care for those around you. That's the horror of it. It will push its own wife under the sea just to make sure it survives.
And so the Israelites eat their own children, burn their own brothers, deprive the poor, oppress the needy just to stay afloat. You see, we laugh about it, don't we? But Chumbawamba and Kelly Clarkson don't tell you the dark side.
But let me tell you, if their songs or songs like them are the anthem of your life, it will turn you into a monster to those around you. Self-reliance is a myth.
[22:26] And in the words of our passage, it will eventually strike you down. I wonder if we could just for a moment of honesty just pause and wonder whether we're experiencing some of that this morning.

Is it possible that our desire, my desire, your desire to be self-sufficient is actually harming us and those around us? Perhaps what we thought was strength is actually destroying us.
This is the story, isn't it, of the self-made man or woman who die alone in their flat with no friends and no one to care. They've relied on themselves for their whole life and at the end there's nobody there.
It's the child who in their insecurity turns on their siblings only to find that when they need them they're not interested. Self-reliance striking us down.
That's the sin of self-reliance. The second thing here then is the delusion of power or strength. The delusion of power or strength. Come to chapter 10, verse 5 through to verse 19.
[23:27] In chapter 10, verse 5, our attention is turned from the northern kingdoms of Israel to the nation of Assyria. Now, remember, the Assyrians are the superpower who are on the rise.

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They have swept through the region and they have mopped up Israel and they've got their sights on Judah. And we find that God is behind the conquest. He has been using Assyria as his tool to punish his people for their sin.
So look at verse 5 and 6. Woe to the Assyrian, the rod of my anger, in whose hand is the club of my wrath. I send him against a godless nation, that is, Israel.
I dispatch him against the people who anger me to seize loot and snatch plunder and to trample them down like mud in the streets. Here God pictures Assyria as a stick or a club in his hand.
They are doing his will. They are accomplishing God's purposes in judgment. God has dispatched them. He's given them instructions to seize the loot to snatch the plunder. But while that's God's plan, Assyria has a very different attitude to the same thing.
[24:33] Look at verse 7. But this is not what he intends. This is not what he has in mind. His purpose is to destroy, to put an end to many nations. This is incredible.

This is God's sovereignty and human responsibility right alongside each other here in the passage, isn't it? God is using Assyria as his means to punish and judge the nations whilst at the same time Assyria has its eyes on its own greed and is pursuing his own greed.
And they imagine, therefore, that they're doing it in their own strength. Verse 13, as we're looking at with the kids, By the strength of my hand I've done this. By my wisdom, because I have understanding.
I've removed the boundaries of nations. I've plundered their treasures. Like a mighty one, I subdued their kings. It's not hard to imagine, is it? This is the, you know, the superpower parading their army and their weaponry through the square of the main city.
Here come the tanks and the missiles followed by the lines and lines and lines of soldiers. Overhead are flying the new fighter jets. The Apache attack helicopters are just parked in the park for everybody to see.
[25:43] Look at this. Look at how powerful we are. We can do anything that we want. We can go anywhere that we please. Look at it. Look at our might. Not a thought.

For a moment for the God who rules. Not an idea that God might be at work in the world for his own glory. Not a passing inclination that what appeared to be good fortune was actually the purposes of a sovereign God who reigns.
And so it's a dreadful mistake. Verse 15 spells out their folly. Does the axe raise itself above the person who swings it? Is this really logical, Assyria? Is this how it's going to work?
Does the saw boast against the one who uses it as if a rod were to wield the person who lifts it up? Or a club brandish the one who is not wood? Therefore, the Lord, the God Almighty, the Lord Almighty, sorry, will send a wasting disease among his sturdy warriors.
Under his pomp, a fire will be kindled like a blazing fire. The axe has got ideas above itself, hasn't it? The club has forgotten in whose hand it is. And as we saw before, the problem with self-reliance, the dark side of self-reliance is that it makes you eat your children.
[26:49] Here, notice that the problem is slightly different. You know, if you think you are strong, if you think your power is the answer, or maybe not your power, but human power, power that you try and get alongside yourself, power that you are trying to get onto your side, if you think human power is the answer, you've forgotten God's strength, says Isaiah.

You see, you cannot at the same time believe that it is human power that will keep you afloat, and also trust in the sovereign power of God. You cannot, says Isaiah, truly rely on the Lord, and also imagine that what you really need is human strength and human power.
You cannot at the same time say, this is my life, I will do what I want, and also this is God's life, he has given it to me, I'm going to use it to please him. Let me just ask you to think about this for a moment, right?
This is why our world is full of idols. Our world is full of idols, isn't it? Have you thought about this? Why is it, if there is really only one God, as the Bible claims, if the God of the Bible is the creator God, the God to whom we all belong, the one who made us, if that is true, why then are there so many other religions in the world?
Why? Why are there so many other gods? Why does almost everyone that you meet have a different idea about God? Even your friends who might not even claim to be particularly religious, you'd say to them, you know, what do you think about God?
[28:25] And they say, when I think about God, I think about him or her or it like this, and they'll describe something that they believe. Why is that? Well, let me tell you two reasons. One, for a

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start, it proves to you, doesn't it, that God is real.

Everybody instinctively knows that. But the second thing is that we all want a God we can control. That's what we want. That's what idols are. We cannot deny that there is a God, but we want to be able to control that God, so we make an idol.
We make gods that don't compete with us. We make gods who bend to our own will. This is what the Assyrians thought. Look down at verse 10 of chapter 10. As my hand sees the kingdoms of the idols, kingdoms whose images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria, shall I not deal with Jerusalem and her images as I dealt with Samaria and her idols?
Here, Sir says, listen, I have plundered the nations. I've gone everywhere. Every idol I've just scooped up and kind of put on my side. I'm going to do the same with the God of Jerusalem and Samaria.
Gods are trophies to be collected. They swoop in and scoop up. And so they thought it would be with the God of Jerusalem. But it didn't work. Verse 17, look down at it. The light of Israel will become a fire.
[29:44] The Holy One a flame. In a single day it will burn and consume his thorns and his briars. The light, right, the revelation of who God really is will be a consuming fire to the delusion of human strength.

Assyria, you might think that you have just scooped all these idols up onto your side, that these gods are under your control, that they do what you want. But listen, you are about to bump into reality.
This is Yahweh, the Lord, the Lord Almighty. And the light of the revelation of him will be a fire that will burn your strength to the ground.
You will waste away, he says. Do you see the subtlety of this, right? it is possible for us to both at the same time be very religious and not rely on God at all.
Because true reliance is exclusive reliance. And fake reliance makes gods who will follow our own will and do what we want. If essentially your prayers are something like, my will be done, my kingdom come, you know, don't you, it is not the God of the Bible you're worshipping.
[31:06] It's human strength. Now all of that brings us back to our text this morning, to chapter 10, verse 20. In that day, the remnant of Israel, the survivors of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down, but will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel.

So just think as we finish about this safety of trusting God. Now these verses that follow from chapter 10, verse 20, down to the end of the chapter, are full of fours and therefores.
The NIV translators don't always include them because it makes it read funny in the English, but they do put the big one in in verse 24, so look down at that. Therefore, this is what the Lord, the Lord Almighty says, my people who live in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrians who beat you with a rod and lift up a club against you as Egypt did.
Very soon my anger against you will end and my wrath will be directed to their destruction. Now just zoom in on here, right? This is why relying on God, this is why truly relying on God is the safe place in our world, it's the only safe place in our world.
Notice why it is. Two reasons from the passage here. One is you don't need to be afraid of the forces out there, right? You don't need to be afraid of the Assyrians.
[32:33] Don't be afraid of them, God says. He goes on to promise a rescue that will be like Gideon's rescue or it will be like the rescue of Moses from the Exodus. This is going to be like that.

Another great rescue of the rescues in the Bible. God will come again and save his people. Don't be afraid, he says to his people, I've got this, you can trust me, you will not be destroyed, my kingdom will not be defeated.
But secondly, notice that you don't need to fear God's judgment either. If you can remember back to the beginning of the sermon, that repeated line in the poem at the beginning of the sermon, yet for all this his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.
Yeah? Compare that to verse 25 here and notice, here, turning to God, truly relying on him means that his anger has come to an end and will defeat their enemies instead of them.
Listen, this is the twin hope of God's people who truly rely on God. Number one, God is with us. We don't need to be afraid. And the second is, God is for us.
[33:42] We will not be condemned. That's the hope. Now, Isaiah's going to have more to say to us about those things, but you and I know, don't we, that that's Jesus. Yeah? We know that the

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Gideon-like character who Isaiah promises, the second Moses who will lead a new exodus, not from slavery in Egypt, but from slavery to sin and death.

You know that's Jesus, don't you? Jesus bursts free from the grave, bringing a resurrection kingdom that can never be defeated. And you know that as he does that, as he dies on the cross, he is bearing the condemnation that our sin and guilt deserved so that God's wrath might come to an end for us, that we would not be condemned.
And so for you and me this morning, the question is this, do we truly rely on God? Do you truly rely on God?
Do you truly rely on God? I mean, the question really is this, isn't it, is do you exclusively trust Jesus in life and death?
And really, for us, even if you would call yourself a Christian this morning, the process of growing as a Christian is very similar to the process of becoming a Christian, isn't it? To become a Christian is for the very first time is to step and say, I rely exclusively on Jesus Christ.
[35:06] To live the Christian life is to keep doing that. Lord Jesus, I rely on you. I trust in you. Because this is what the survivors do, yeah? This is what the saved do.

This is the only place of safety and security in our world. And so for you this week, if you're not a Christian, maybe for the very first time, you will say, I'm going to rely exclusively on Jesus Christ to forgive my sin and to keep me safe in life and death.
And maybe as a Christian this morning, you're going to pray at your desk before you head into that difficult meeting and trusting yourself to God, not your own skill or wit.
Perhaps this morning, if you sit there knowing that things that you would have relied on have been taken from you, maybe health or money or relationships, perhaps instead of saying in your heart, I get knocked down but I get up again, you will say something like, my health might be gone but my support remains true.
My money may be gone but my God has not. And perhaps this morning you're tempted to worry, to kind of spin in a frenzy, to kind of plan your way out of trouble.
[36:19] Perhaps you will say, not my will be done but your will be done. Your kingdom come. Let me pray and then we'll sing together.

Heavenly Father, we want to pray and say that we are truly sorry for every shred of self-reliance in our hearts. Forgive us that we have thought that our own wisdom and wit would be enough to keep us in this life.
And forgive us for where we have made an idol out of human strength, our own or someone else's, thinking that they would keep us safe and not you. And so we say together, your will be done and your kingdom come.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

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