

The Wilderness Test

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[0 : 0 0] The young mother, whom I know had a miscarriage, and angry with God, no longer comes to church, has turned away from God. A father who lost his job and was for quite some time unemployed, complaining at how God has let him down, gradually cold and bitter towards God.

A family who lost a son in a car crash, angry at God depriving them of their young boy. An older person, after over 60 years of marriage, grumbling and embittered in grief that God had taken away his wife.

A student fails to get into a university course, and angry at God, gradually drifted and turned away.

Those stories can be repeated dozens of times. You probably know several people who for some crisis or other in their life have turned away from God.

Sometimes angry, embittered, cold to God, annoyed at the things that had gone on. How could God do this? How could there be such a loving God?

[1 : 3 9] And they closed their hearts and minds to him. Sadly, too often, trials or tribulations, times of deprivation, times of crisis, lead Christians away from God.

They begin to close down and shut out the aspects of God and faith. It isn't fair. Why is God putting me through this? Why bother with God if this is the end result?

On the other hand, for some, struggles and trials, deprivations, whatever, actually lead them to stronger faith.

I remember an old couple who really were just Christmas church attenders. And several years ago, they turned up at church on a Sunday here.

And I remember just a brief conversation with them. Thankfully, I remembered who they were and their names even. And I picked up that something was wrong. And I followed that through. Thankfully, God prompted me, I think, in that.

[2 : 4 2] I couldn't get them off my mind that they'd been in church, not at Christmas. And discovered that she had cancer, from which, I guess it's three or so years later, she died.

But she died full of faith. And her husband, who's now in a nursing home, grew also in Christian faith. And you probably know people who've suffered severe illness, maybe even terminal illness.

And it's actually strengthened their faith and trust in God. They've come to God and grown in their faith. I think of somebody who I won't name, but from what I gather, with a diagnosis of young Parkinson's disease, has come to strong Christian faith through that sort of crisis.

But what happens when things turn out well? Not the crisis situations, for which some drift into grumbling, and some grow stronger in their faith.

But what about when things turn out well? When there are answers to prayers, or prosperity happens, or there's real joy and happiness, and so on?

[3 : 55] Well, in Jesus' experience, if you remember, 90% of people don't even bother to come back and say, thank you. You remember those whom he healed. See, often, when things go well, when things are restored to normal, then that's when people drift away.

And I can think of people over the years in ministry who you see in church and you know there's something going wrong in their life, and for a period of time they might be there. But when things get better, you stop seeing them.

There are several people I know in that category who, if I see them in church, I know that there's something that they're praying about, some crisis. When that's resolved, I won't see them until the next crisis, usually.

You see, good times can be just as perilous for our faith as bad times. Indeed, it would be fair to say that the Bible actually warns us more often about times of prosperity and ease and comfort than it does about the times of crisis and deprivation, though both are testing times.

Both are trials, both are perilous and dangerous times, both are times of temptation that might lead us away from Christ. Remember that great wisdom of the book of Proverbs.

[5 : 14] Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food that I need, or I shall be full and deny you, or I shall be poor and steal.

Deuteronomy 8 is, I think, a profound and rich chapter in the Bible. It contrasts the deprivation and testing time of the wilderness experience of ancient Israel with the overflowing abundance and prosperity that is promised in the land which Israel is about to conquer and inhabit.

And often people see this too simplistically as a contrast between a time of trial and then the reward of the land. But the relationship between the trial of the wilderness and the promise of the land, the prosperity of the land, is not a sort of test and reward relationship.

There's a strong contrast, but there is actually a very significant similarity. That is, both are times of testing. Both are times of temptation.

The context is vastly dissimilar, but actually there is a significant similarity in the situations.

[6 : 40] Poverty and wealth are both times of temptation and testing. Remember, at the point of Deuteronomy, as Moses preaches to Israel, they have ended their, roughly speaking, 40 years in the wilderness since leaving Egypt in the time of the Exodus and the great miracles then.

In part, the 40 years has been punishment from God for their sins. Their sins of the golden calf, but not least their sins of refusing to enter the land about 38 years or so before Moses preached these words of Deuteronomy.

We saw that back in chapter 1 a few Sundays ago. But their time in the wilderness is not simply punishment. As so often is the case in the Scriptures and in the way God acts in our lives, punishment is disciplinary.

Punishment is to train us in right ways. It is not simply there for us to endure and suffer. It is there to correct us and train us.

So, at the beginning of this chapter, in verse 2, we read, Remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness, in order, not here to punish you, but to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his, God's, commandments.

[8 : 11] The purpose of the wilderness test, or is that it's a test, to humble Israel, bring down Israel from its pride, and for its own good, to cause it to depend upon God, in effect.

Indeed, later on in this passage, at the end of verse 16, this humbling and testing is in the end to do you good. That is, it is for Israel's benefit that they spend this time in the wilderness, so that God works on them for their good, to humble them, so that they rely upon God more fully.

Behind all of this is that God sometimes brings crises into our lives, not as punishment, although sometimes that is the case, but as discipline for us.

Times of difficulty or deprivation, times of poverty or some sort of lack or crisis, in order that we may trust him more, in order that we may be humbled and rely upon him and grow in mature Christian faith, reliance upon God, dependence upon God.

It's a bit like parents giving us Brussels sprouts, which I actually like, but in my case, raw beans, which I don't particularly like. Why should we eat all this?

[9 : 32] It's for your good, is how parents would speak. Or at least in my situation they did. You see, this discipline from God is part of his fatherly discipline. Verse 5 makes that explicit.

Know then in your heart that as a parent disciplines a child, so the Lord your God disciplines you. Not harshly or severely, certainly not without love, as Deuteronomy is so consistently telling us about God's love.

But as an act of love, God disciplines us for our good, that we may rely upon him in all things. Now an example of this discipline and testing in the wilderness was what is called manna.

In verse 3, at the beginning of verse 3 we read, He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted with.

Notice there the humbling is in two stages. He humbled you by letting you hunger. That is the actual hunger of Israel was a humbling experience.

[10 : 42] But notice too that the humbling is also the provision of food to match the hunger. The provision of manna. Now, why is that a humbling experience?

Manna literally means, what is it? It's food that they didn't know. It's a bit like going to a foreign country and you dare at a Chinese banquet sometimes say, what is it?

It's best to just eat. It usually tastes great, but it's sometimes better that you don't actually know what it is, in my experience. It's a bit like that.

This manna was provided in Exodus chapter 16, in the wilderness in the desert, six mornings a week. There it was on the ground. There it was on the ground. And some say that it's a bit like dew, although it's got more substance than just dew.

Some say that it's the sap out of a tamarisk tree. Some say that it's perhaps even some sort of insect. We don't actually know what it is.

[11 : 44] But oddly, it was provided six days a week. And Israel has commanded that if you were to store it up for the future, so that you have a lot, it would rot overnight.

Other than one night a week. The night before the Sabbath. There is no natural explanation for what this food was. I doubt that it's the sap of a tamarisk tree.

I doubt that it's some form of insect. I doubt in fact that it's anything that anybody actually knows. Simply because, it would rot overnight six nights, but not the seventh. That is, the only explanation of manna is, this is God's miraculous and direct provision of food for Israel.

The humbling is because it's so obviously from God. They couldn't store it up and become wealthy from it. They couldn't stop their tent ladders or whatever in the wilderness, so that just in case in a few days time we run out we've got a supply.

They were absolutely and clearly dependent upon God. That is humbling. They were not self-sufficient. They couldn't be independent. They had to be reliant upon God's provision.

[12 : 54] That's why not only the hunger is humbling, but so too the provision of the manna, God's special food. And that's the purpose as stated at the end of verse 3.

3. God fed you with manna, which you didn't know about in the past, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

Literally everything that comes from the mouth of the Lord. That is, it's a test of reliance. It's not teaching us that spiritual provision from God is greater than physical. That's not the point of the exercise.

The point of the exercise is that you live from God's provision to you. You don't live from your own strength or ingenuity, your own power or your own strength or anything else like that.

In the wilderness, God in a sense had stripped away Israel's natural provisions. He'd taken away their homes, they lived in tents.

[13 : 56] He'd taken away their jobs, because they're all now in the desert. He'd taken away their sense of security, we see that in the way Israel grumbles and complains. He takes away their, in a sense, their safety of life in a wilderness.

They grumbled, saying we're going to die in the wilderness, there's no food or water. He took away their natural water supply indeed, so that in several occasions there was some miraculous provision of water.

And of course he took away their natural food supply. All of it to humble them, to test him. In fact, verse 4 shows another way. The clothes on your back did not wear out, and your feet did not swell these 40 years.

It's a very odd thing. But again it's showing the miraculous provision of God. How for 40 years in times of deprivation, God is the one who clearly, unequivocally, has provided for the people of Israel, for his people.

What security blankers, now or in the past, has God taken from you? And for what purpose? And how did you respond?

[15 : 05] Have there been times when God's taken your health? Your spouse? Your child? Your parents? Your job? Your money? Social security? How do we respond? How did Israel respond to the test?

It failed it. You read the book of Exodus through to Deuteronomy, and they consistently failed it. Indeed from day one to day end they grumbled and complained.

They were stubborn and hard-hearted against God. They murmured and grumbled periodically, but several times in the wilderness, even though they ought to have learned from provision to the wilderness.

and from previous provisions in the wilderness. They didn't. They failed the test. How have the crises in your life led you in faith or not?

Part of the test is that God will know, verse 2 says, what is in your heart. Well, God knows what's in our heart anyway. But in a sense, the deprivation in the wilderness is so that what's in their heart comes to the fore.

[16 : 18] That's what the purpose of the test is, so that it's obvious where your heart lies. How about for you, in times of your own deprivation? This is not an easy lesson to learn, I think.

Israel surely failed the test abysmally and persistently. Sadly, there are some, like my opening illustrations, who in our own day and age, through the midst of some trial or crisis or deprivation, turn away from God, grumbling, complaining and faithless.

One reason why this is perhaps one of my favourite passages in my favourite book in the Bible is because this chapter spoke so clearly to me for a period of time when I did my PhD on this book and including on this chapter.

My PhD was done in England, which is a very foreign country, as you might understand, if you're an Australian. And I realised after a few months of being there that there was an element of some, I guess, sort of mild depression in a way.

I realised that I was far from my family and though my family's small, there's an element in which being distant from people who know you well and love you, whatever, was actually not easy.

[17 : 40] I realised that I was very distant from friends. I arrived in England really knowing nobody and speaking a foreign accent. And though I made some very good friends, eventually, in the first few months, that doesn't happen.

It doesn't happen overnight. I was a long way from close friends. More than that, writing a PhD is an especially lonely thing to do. As some of you here know, especially in the sort of arts area, there would be days when I would sit in my office, being the only person in the building in which my office was located, and not speak to another person for the whole day.

Just reading books about Deuteronomy, some of which are significantly unedified, although Deuteronomy itself is not. It is edified. But there's a sense in which that loneliness, you think, why am I doing this?

What's the point of it? That is, the whole sense of self-worth is challenged. You think, at the end of this, maybe only two or three people, my examiners and supervisor, will read the PhD.

Well, it's been published, but it still only means two or three people have probably read it anyway. And when you do a job, in a sense, yes, you get paid, but actually, when you're involved in ministry, as I had been, you realize that the feedback you get from people actually encourages you and helps you realize the value of your ministry.

[19 : 07] And so, there was an extent to which I realized that my reliance on family, on friends, on a sense of belonging, because I was very much a foreigner, my sense of worth about what I was doing, and my lack of sort of response in work, were all things that I had relied upon.

They were all actually good things, but they were all gone. And the passage that helped me most significantly was this one, that I realized that my reliance was to be more directly upon God and God alone.

not on even good things, but on God and God alone. At the end of three years, I was still a believer, trusting in God.

Did I pass the test? Well, at one level, one might say, yes, you're still a believer when you come back to Australia. But actually, the point of the test is not so much do I survive that three years, but does it change me when those things are returned?

Eleven years ago nearly, I came back to Australia. I came back to this job, or I came to this job, here at Holy Trinity. I came back to family and friends, and made many new ones as well.

[20 : 23] I came back to a job where you do receive feedback, you see the value and worth in people becoming Christians and growing as Christians, and so on. The point is, has my reliance upon God remained strong, or have I shifted back into reliance upon other things?

At some level, I think there's actually probably a bit of both, and I must confess. In a sense, what I'm saying is, the time of deprivation is like stage one of the test, but stage two is when the things that you're deprived of come back, or are put in place.

How then do you rely upon God? And that's the structure of Deuteronomy chapter 8. It's not simply saying, here was the wilderness test, but now you've got through that, thankfully, you can breathe a sigh of relief, all will be hunky-dory because the land and all its blessings are there.

No. The way this chapter flows is that the land of plenty you're about to inherit is itself a test. To see whether you've learnt the test of the wilderness, to rely upon God, and know that you will only live through what proceeds from the mouth of God.

Or not. That's what's going on in this chapter. So see verses 6-10. Having reminded Israel of the past deprivation and the fact that it was a test to humble them, now comes the command in verse 6, therefore, keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him.

[21 : 58] That's the whole purpose of this chapter, actually. Keep the commandments. For, verse 7 says, the reason is not now looking back but forward.

That is, in a sense, the past test of deprivation is to lead you to obedience, therefore obey, and now the reason is looking forward. For, the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, unlike the wilderness, with springs and underground waters, welling up in the valleys and hills, unlike the wilderness, a land of wheat and barley, unlike the wilderness, a land of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, unlike the wilderness, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, unlike the wilderness banner, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper.

You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you. Now if we stop there, if this chapter ended there, it would simply be implying that this land of blessing is now your reward for surviving 40 years in the wilderness.

You've got everything on tap and you'll bless the Lord is how verse 10 ends. A land full of blessing and praise. But how we react to times of plenty is just as significant as how we act to times of deprivation.

And that's why this chapter doesn't end at verse 10. It continues on very clearly. Verse 11. Indeed, the way the Hebrew is written, you don't even get a paragraph break here.

[23 : 39] Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God. We're back to the emphasis of the chapter. Keep God's commandments. Take care because as we've seen in recent weeks on Wednesdays and Sundays, naturally, we will not do this.

We have to take care to ensure that we do keep God's commandments. So take care that you do not forget the Lord your God by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances and his statutes which I'm commanding you today.

Take care in the time of plenty that is coming. And what follows is another description of the land, again in mouth-watering terms.

When you've eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks have multiplied and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then the danger comes.

Now this is not simply repeating verses 7 to 10. There's a sense in which initially you'll come into a land of all these glorious blessings and you'll praise God for it. But take care because with the passing of time, which is the way verses 12 and 13 seem and feel, gradually that rich blessing to start with will increase even more so that all that you have is multiplied.

[25 : 05] You get richer and even more prosperous. Then, the warning, verse 14, taking care, do not exalt yourself forgetting the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of slavery, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness and arid wasteland with its poisonous snakes and scorpions.

He made water flow for you from flint rock. He fed you in the wilderness with manner that your ancestors did not know to humble you and to test you and in the end to do you good. That is a reminder, don't forget what God has done in the past.

Don't forget the wilderness. Don't forget the test in the wilderness. Don't forget what God was disciplining you in the wilderness for to rely upon him. That living comes from everything from his mouth alone.

Don't forget that. Verse 14 says, lest you exalt yourself. And verse 17 continues that theme. Do not say to yourself, literally in your heart, my power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.

That's what exalting yourself means. I've done it. I've got this wealth. It's a move from praise to pride.

[26 : 28] It doesn't necessarily happen with the click of a finger. You don't necessarily walk into the land and say, I've gotten all this wealth. It's a gradual drift as Israel settles and becomes prosperous in the land, as their gold and silver, as their crops and animals and trees all begin to multiply.

And gradually the heart begins to lift itself up. You begin to exalt yourself and say in your heart, my power, my strength has gotten me this wealth.

You look back at your hard work of looking after the animals and the crops of building your houses and bigger systems and all that and say, I've done this. I've achieved all this. That's the danger.

The danger of prosperity. The danger of wealth. The danger of that comfortable, complacent, Sunday nap-type feeling that we saw last week in Deuteronomy 6.

It's intriguing that in Australia there is more overt faith, it seems, in rural areas than there is in urban areas. In rural areas, I guess, there's much more obvious dependence upon the elements, upon the rain and the sun for crops.

[27 : 41] And so apparently there is a stronger religious feeling more strongly in the rural areas of Australia than there are in the urban areas. After all, in our urban areas we can go 24 hours a day down to Coles and pick up anything we want, basically, except that I just close my Coles up in a shopping town for a year so I can't eat for a year.

But other than that, you can go 24 hours a day seven days a week and buy whatever you like, in season or out of season. It's all there for the taking. It doesn't actually really matter too much about the rain and the sun because, by and large, it'll all be there in Coles or Safeway if you want to accuse me of biases.

Now, we know that, yes, bananas were a bit scarce for a while last year and they're still a little bit pricey, but you know what I mean. It's all there. We don't have to think much about God's provision.

More obviously in the rural areas you do. It's interesting that in the severity of the drought that we're facing in Australia, this shows how secular and pagan our country is. There is such little turning to God.

Rather, what's happening? We blame the government for not enough dams, too little water restrictions, but we're not prepared to do anybody in if they break the water restrictions. How secular we've become.

[28 : 55] What Moses is teaching here is that God is the God of the farm and the supermarket. He is the God of the drought and the God of the abundance.

The God of poverty and the God of wealth. Equally, God of both situations. That is, it's not a reliance upon God when things are tough, but an equal reliance upon God when things are plentiful as well.

The threat of pride, so obvious here, is the same in our society. Human beings are a little different, if any, different. Pride is so rampant in our society because the God of our society for so many is self-sufficiency and independence.

We don't want to be in debt to anyone. Well, credit cards aside. We want to be independent. We want to be self-sufficient. We want to be able to say this is my doing. I've done this.

My strength and my power have gotten me this wealth. And that goal, of course, spills over so clearly into our spirituality.

[30 : 02] I don't want to rely on anyone. I mean, Christians, they just use God because they need a crutch. I don't. Deuteronomy 8 is teaching us that whether in the desert or in the prosperous land, we need God always equal.

And there are dangers in both and the dangers are significant. Back in verse 2, the test in the wilderness was that God would know what was in your heart.

We know what's in Israel's heart. If we've read the earlier chapters of Deuteronomy, it's become very clear. Now, the threat of pride in verse 17 is, you will say in your heart, my power has gotten me.

That is, what's the state of the heart? That's the whole issue actually in the whole book of Deuteronomy. The issue of the heart. And Moses knows that Israel's hearts are fickle and faithless by and large.

They are hearts that fear the enemies back in chapter 1 verse 28 because they lack faith in God. They are hearts that boast in victory. We'll see that in chapter 9 on Wednesday night. And in chapter 10, which we'll also see on Wednesday night, they are hearts that need wholesale change.

[31 : 14] circumcision is the metaphor that's used in chapter 10. Beware, be clear, there is nothing wrong with the promised land. It is full of God's good gifts.

But God's good gifts are the greatest threat to our devotion to God. How do we avoid this danger of pride?

The command in this chapter, five times actually in this chapter, is remember. Well, twice it's remember. In verse 2, remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you.

That is, remember the wilderness. In verse 11, the command is the same although it's expressed in the negative. So in verse 11 is, do not forget the Lord your God. Verse 14, similarly, is also about don't forget what God has done, forgetting the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

verse 18, we go back to the positive. Remember the Lord your God for it's he who gives you power to get wealth so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors as he's doing today.

[32 : 21] And in the very next verse 19, if you do forget the Lord your God and follow other gods, I warn you that you will perish. Five times, you see, the emphasis is on remember and do not forget.

How do we avoid pride? Remember and do not forget. How do we remember? How do we not forget? Scriptures.

That's what it's there for. So that we remember and do not forget. The things that Moses urges Israel to remember are things that are already there in the early part of the Bible and as the latter chapters of Deuteronomy make clear, Moses writes down Deuteronomy 1 to 30 at least so that Israel will remember and will not forget.

that they'll keep reading God's word and hearing it and remembering and not forgetting. And as we saw I think last Sunday night in chapter 6, this remembering and not forgetting is not just something cognitive.

It's not because we're going to face an exam at the end of our life and sit there without any Bible in front of us saying, what do you remember? Remembering is obedient faith. Forgetting is disobedient faithlessness.

[33 : 33] The parallel of those two is very explicit in verse 11. You forget, disobey. Same things in effect. So how do we remember that will lead us to obedient faith?

Make sure the scriptures are forming us. The powerful word of God which thankfully now in the time after Christ we're recipients of his spirit which is writing that word on our hearts which need, like ancient Israel's, wholesale change.

More of which we'll see in weeks to come in Deuteronomy. For us of course we look back and remember not primarily the events of the wilderness and the exodus though we can look back with profit to those events.

We look back of course to a greater event, a greater redemption to the cross as the pinpoint, the heart, the kernel of what we remember and don't forget that will lead us to obedient faith.

That will be the correction to pride. Forgetfulness leads to pride. If we forget the cross, our redemption in Christ then we become proud and self-sufficient.

[34 : 40] But as we keep remembering the cross and the redemption there won for us we can have no pride for we contribute nothing to it. With empty hands alone we receive our salvation at the foot of the cross.

Forgetfulness leads to pride which is always associated with idolatry in the Old Testament. That's why the chapter ends as it does. If you do forget the Lord your God that is in the pride of verse 17 and 18 and follow other gods to serve and worship them I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.

Idolatry is actually an act of pride. It's an act of choosing a God which you form or you adopt. You're in control. It's pride. It's pride. Forgetfulness leads inevitably to idolatry.

Not necessarily the Canaanite Baal type idolatry of putting little statues and totem poles in our garden or on our mantelpiece but the idolatry of all sorts of other things. You see even good things even God's good gifts in the wrong place become idols.

Think of the things that are idols in our society. Family is number one I think. It's one of God's greatest gifts to us but even God's good gifts like the good gift of the land to Israel could become the trap of idolatry for them.

[36 : 04] So God's good gifts to us are the same whether it's family or a job or a house or wealth or our gardens or our holiday houses or our sport.

All good things in themselves are placed on the mantelpiece altar or in our hearts becoming idols because we've forgotten what God has done for us in Christ.

If we place the good gifts of God as things we rely upon then we're committing idolatry. If we accept the good things from God but rely upon God they're in the right place.

If we lose the good things from God and become embittered about their loss then they are idols and we become angry at God and faithless to God and turn away from Him.

John Piper an American theologian and writer who actually preached here about 10 years ago says that what dulls our love of God is not poison but apple pie.

[37 : 19] Now he's not saying don't eat apple pie change it to a meat pie or something he's not saying that. That is what dulls our love of God are good things are bad.

Our reliance upon good things rather than our accepting them as gifts of God's mercy and love and relying upon love in association with that. If we rely upon the good things we end up actually in pride and idolatry and turning away from God.

That's the lesson of Deuteronomy chapter 8 actually. Have you learnt from the wilderness lesson in times of deprivation? How will you apply that in the land of plenty?

Have you learnt that whether in crisis or in abundance one as verse 3 makes clear one does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord?

For ancient Israel the expectation is they haven't learnt the lesson. The expectation is they'll end up in pride and they'll end up in idolatry and they'll end up perishing from the land as of course they did.

[38 : 42] We might think does God really test us like this? Does God really take away good things? It doesn't quite seem a loving thing to do. He does.

He did here for their own good. He did of course for his own son who endured his own wilderness temptation as we read in Matthew 4 and Luke 4 where indeed he quoted from this very chapter as he unlike ancient Israel trusted God.

He didn't grumble or complain but trusted God and passed the test a true faithful son. But having passed that test of his wilderness time God in a sense led him to the cross to die an ignominious death.

But he did that also for our good. So that we may have all our needs entirely and eternally met.

So that when we're hungry we turn to him for the bread of life. When we're thirsty we go to him for the living water. When we're weary we take his easy yoke.

[40 : 07] that when we're guilty we go to him for forgiveness and mercy. That when we die we go to him for the resurrection and the life.

And when we're lost we go to him for the way. God does treat us like that. Sometimes depriving us.

Sometimes overpowering us with blessing. good things bad things we might say. Both of them times of testing.

Both of them times of spiritual danger. Which is why the wise writer to the proverb says give me not poverty or riches but feed me what I need so that when I'm full I won't drift away from faith.

And if I'm poor I won't commit sin by stealing. Let's pray. God our Father as we live this life with its mixture of crises and great wealth and abundance help us to know that we live entirely and only from what proceeds from your mouth.

[41 : 28] Protect us from complaint. Protect us from pride. Protect us from reliance upon your good gifts or reliance upon ourselves.

That we may depend upon you alone and only you. For the sake of our spiritual health Lord God give us neither poverty nor riches but strengthen us in the temptations that we face.

That whatever circumstances may confront us for good or ill we may learn from them under your loving and disciplining hand for our own good for our own eternal good.

That we may one day arrive in your heavenly kingdom there always to praise you in Christ. Amen.