

INTRO: Thursday night Pierce Morgan was interviewing Morgan Freeman, the actor who played the role of God in the 2003 movie *Bruce Almighty*. Pierce asked him if he was a God-fearing man. Without hesitation, Morgan Freeman replied, “No, I don’t fear anything. I am god. How do you have the temerity [to play the role of God] if you don’t believe in yourself? What I mean is, if God exists, it can only exist in you, not outside you, right? **PM:** Absolutely. **MF:** Do I believe in life after death? My real belief is that life and death are a continuum. One needs the other. **PM:** Where do you physically continue? **MF:** When you die, you feed something that lives. **PM:** Right. **MF:** *Gloria Patri:* As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. That doesn’t mean that you as a human being will be here forever. Life will be here forever. As long as there is a planet there will be life on it. I don’t think we are any more important to the planet than dinosaurs....” That exchange perfectly sums up the spirit of our times. God cannot be outside us, and certainly not over us. He has to be inside us. So he (or it) is not to be feared, and the one left in control is me. I am god. The dead feed the living. Death is not an enemy; in fact, life needs death; death feeds life; so the occult probably has a better bead on the truth than the Bible. And with a brilliant twist on the *Gloria Patri*, the physical world becomes the only constant – no apocalypse, no final judgment or accountability. To all of which, Pierce Morgan speaks for the mainstream when he says, “Absolutely.”

...Well. How enlightening; how liberating: to realize that there is no God out there. There is only god in here. But is it, really? No wise and gentle God to lead us in a better way than our own; no sovereign God to punish evil or reward good; no holy God to fear because our sin has drawn down his anger; no faithful God to hope in for salvation from the curse of death; no passionate God whose commitment to His own purposes and for the good of his creatures drives him to make the world right again. Whew. No god out there; only god in here. Right? And the world says, Absolutely! No absolute god; only absolute man. It all seems very modern and sophisticated; but this is how humanity has always thought, left to its own devices. Please turn with me to Isa 8:1-9:7, where God corrects OT Freemanism. Our text this morning speaks of a God outside us, over us, and at some points even against us. But the point of the text is that **God with us is enough for us**. And this is true in 4 ways. In 8:1-8, God’s gentleness should drive our joy. In 8:9-15, God’s holiness should drive our fear. In 8:16-22 God’s faithfulness should drive our hope. And in 9:1-7 God’s zeal should drive our perseverance.

1. GOD’S GENTLENESS SHOULD DRIVE OUR JOY (ISA 8:1-8)

A Child (8:1-4). In vv.1-4, God commands Isaiah to engrave the name Maher-shalal-hash-baz on a plaque. That name means “the spoil speeds, the prey hastens.” It corresponds to people in **Isa 5:19** who were taunting God “*Let him be quick, let him speed his work that we may see it.*” The wheels are already in motion, God says. War is heading to Israel like a freight train, and to the victor goes the spoil. The predator is already in full stride. This prophecy clarifies the one in 7:7-9. Syria and Samaria/Ephraim/Israel/the northern kingdom are in league to protect themselves against Assyrian expansion, and they’re trying to coerce Judah into that same protective alliance by force. God says it will come to nothing, because before little Maher can say Mommy, Assyria will be walking away with all of Samaria’s stuff (attested by Uriah 2Kgs 16:10f).

A River (8:5-8). The imagery goes hydraulic in v.5, where we see two rivers contrasted. One is the river of Shiloah, a gently flowing stream that represents God. The other is probably the Euphrates, the mighty river, which represents Assyria. “This people” is not Judah, but the northern kingdom – Samaria. Judah was terrified by Pekah and Rezin. Samaria was the one rejoicing over Rezin and Pekah. The Samaritan people are elated with Pekah’s diplomacy with Syria. They love Pekah. He leads like they think a king should lead. It’s not just Pekah who’s implicated here as king. It’s the people who are implicated for following him. But why not follow Pekah? He’s well-intentioned, right? He’s trying to protecting God’s people.... Yes, but he’s doing it in the wrong way.

2Kings 15:28 says that Pekah “*did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. He did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin.*” So, to understand Pekah’s sin, you have to understand Jeroboam’s sin. Jeroboam was the first king of the northern kingdom, and in **1Kings 12:26-33** he made 2 golden calves as images of Yahweh for Israel to worship. He did that out of fear of losing the people’s

loyalty. “*Jeroboam said in his heart, ‘Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.’*” That’s the kind of sin that Pekah had not departed from in 2Kings 15. And it’s the kind of leadership that Israel still wanted in Isa 8. The symptom was idolatry, but the cause was fear of man: courting the constituency to protect his position. Jeroboam’s solution was a political maneuver. He was a pragmatist. He did whatever he thought would keep the people’s loyalty. Pekah did the same kind of thing. He feared losing the throne, so he resorts to a political maneuver – and Israel loves him for it. Israel is proud of Pekah for making an alliance with Syria. Brilliant! If your objective is resisting Assyria, the only safety is in numbers...right? So who needs God when you’ve got the strategy of Pekah and the strength of Rezin? That’s the logic that landed Israel in exile.

God leads his people like a gently flowing river. If Israel was a raft, God was a river that moved along at just the right pace. But Israel wanted a faster river, one that felt more powerful; and that’s what they would get, but not how they thought. Notice the structure of vv.6-7. V.6 begins with “because,” and v.7 continues with “therefore.” *Because this people refused..., therefore, the Lord is bringing....*” God has good reason for what he does. The people refuse God’s gentle stream, and so they would feel the full force of the King of Assyria – a white-water that will overflow all its banks and flood the whole land; and in v.7, it will come because God Himself brings it. God is the threat behind the threat (Jdgs 2:14; 3:8, 12, 4:2; 6:1; 10:7; 1Kgs 11:14,23). In v.8, the flood will sweep all the way through Judah, who had rejecting the alliance with Israel and Syria only to ride the Assyrian rapids. But the current would be too fast. In Isa 7:18-19 the image of the Assyrian army was an **infestation** of insects. Here it is **inundation** with water, a flood with an irresistible current.

If the world is what you want, God will give it to you with a vengeance. He will give it to you so that it rises to your neck and you struggle to touch bottom (cf. Num 11:19-20). This is the reason we should not flirt with worldliness: because you cannot confine it to any boundary, natural or man-made. Worldliness will overflow every bank and every sand bag that you pile against it. We are tempted to worldliness because it seems like a more exciting river than godliness. That river feels like it’s going at a better pace. But worldliness is a river that only speeds up. The world doesn’t just want to float you along for a while and then land you gently into a placid lake for a relaxing swim. It wants to drown you under the force of Niagara Falls. And the application is mainly corporate. The church often wants a faster river that will give us more immediate results. We don’t want the gently flowing river. We want a river that will move us downstream more efficiently. So we look to the world to speed up the church. What we don’t realize is that the world is a whitewater rapid. It’s merciless, unpredictable, and it will lead the church over the falls. If the church wants to move at break-neck speed, sooner or later, it can expect a broken neck. **God with us was not enough for Israel. That was the problem.** She put her joy in the speed of worldly ways, rather than God’s gentle providence. The church is still tempted by that same sin, the sin of pragmatism – wanting a faster river.

But the Assyrian army is only a foretaste of something even more powerful. The inundation imagery reminds you of the flood from Genesis 6-9. These are judgment waters, and they point to a more powerful judgment to come. Our sandbags will be no match for God’s final judgment. There will be no stopping it. This current will sweep you away like a twig, and it drown you under the force of its current. And the truth is that if you are not trusting in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you are already in that river. You need to get out, and get into the gentle river of God’s goodness and salvation. The problem is, you can’t get out of the world’s river on your own, because the current is too strong. You need to be rescued by someone outside this river. Someone from outside the river, someone with solid footing, someone who can withstand the force of the current, has to come into those judgment waters and pull you out. Only Jesus can pull you out, because Jesus has been inundated by God’s judgment already, and God has raised Him up from the dead to save all those who are drowning. But there’s a catch. You have to want to get out. You have to forsake the rush of the fast river. You have to quit trying to ride the rapids. That’s repentance. Stop loving the speed of the world’s river, and trust that

the gentle pace of God's quiet stream is better.

2. GOD'S HOLINESS SHOULD DRIVE OUR FEAR (8:9-15 esp. v.13)

In vv.9-10, Isaiah turns his attention from warning God's people to warning the nations, "you peoples...all you far countries." Assyria threatens to break Israel, but God threatens to break Assyria, and he uses the language of intimidation. "Strap on your armor and be shattered; strap on your armor and be shattered. Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak a word, but it will not stand." Judah fears Assyria; but Assyria should fear God; which means Judah should fear God more than they fear Assyria. Jesus affirms the same thing in **Luke 12:4-5** "Do not fear those who kill the body and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: Fear him who after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell...."

Whether it's Assyria or Israel or Syria, the world's **strength** (9b) and their **strategy** (10a; cf. 7:7) will come to nothing when God confronts them. They suit up only to be shattered, and they strategize only to fail (cf. 10:15). But when we get to the end of v.10, we notice that Isaiah speaks these things not in God's voice, but from the perspective of God's people. "God is with us" (10b). This is not God being confident. It is God's people being confident, not in their own strength and strategy, but in God's presence and power, "God is with us." Judah was small among the nations (Dt 7). But their God was big. And our God is big. The world can plan whatever it wants against the church, but God is sovereign even over that very opposition. It's God's word that will stand. And His word is that Jesus will build His church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.

Verse 11 starts with the word "For the Lord spoke thus to me." The reason God spoke vv.9-10 is so that Isaiah would not fear what Israel and Judah fear. The real conspiracy (CSB translates 'conspiracy' as 'alliance') is not Israel and Syria plotting to force Judah into a 3-way protective alliance against Assyria. The real conspiracy isn't even Assyria sweeping through Judah. The real conspiracy is that God will become a sanctuary for some Israelites and a stumbling block to others. The scandal is not in the world; it's in the church.

The world forms a massive conglomerate that threatens to undo the church, and the church is tempted to fear the world's collusion against us. Science, cut loose from the doctrine of creation and denying the Creator/creature distinction, teams up with pluralism, relativism, eastern mysticism, and the intolerant brand of tolerance *en vogue* today. These five kings threaten to destroy or at least marginalize the church. That scares the church. And when the church fears for her life, or even just for her influence, she has always been tempted toward a particular way of dealing with the world. We try to fight fire with fire, to use the world to our advantage. We think we can get on the world's good side, so that the world will save the church. That's what Ahaz did in chapter 7. But that's the wrong way for the church to try to sustain itself when it feels like she's on life support. Assyria is not oxygen. Assyria is carbon dioxide. God is oxygen.

Verse 13 is the point of the paragraph. "Do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Fearing, dreading, and honoring- as-holy all define each other here. Remember Isaiah's response to seeing God's **holiness** in ch 6? Woe is me. I should be pitied and condemned. To honor God as holy is to let him be your fear and your dread (29:23). And this fear should not be reduced or softened to awe or wonder. There is a genuine terror to fearing the Lord, terror at the prospect of God going to war against you. You cannot watch God at war and not be genuinely afraid of him.¹ God's **holiness** does not just inspire wonder. It inspires dread. His sovereignty, His strength, and His strategy at war is absolutely sobering. His sense of poetic justice is chilling, and His power to execute it really is terrifying, and should be to sinners. All this is a function of His **holiness**. He goes to war because His **holiness** has been offended. Ironically, it is only by letting God be our fear and our dread that He will become our sanctuary. The key to being safe in God is to realize first of all that His **holiness** is not safe for sinners. You cannot be safe from this **holy** God. You can only be safe in Him. The alliance God's people need is not a marriage of convenience with the world; it's an alliance of faith and repentance with the **Holy** One of Israel.

¹ Fear in v.13 (מורא) is used in Gen 9:2 and Dt 11:25; Dt 4:34 "great deeds of terror;" 26:8; 34:12; Jer 32:21 re: plagues; Mal 1:6; 2:5 re: God as Master. Dread in v.13 is ירע, be terrified, be in dread of.... Cf. Dt 1:29; 7:21; 20:3; 31:6; Josh 1:9; Ps 10:18; Isa 2:19,21 "when [the Lord] arises to terrify the earth."

Otherwise, He will become...a stone offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Notice, it’s not just to the world that He becomes a snare. It’s to those who assume they’re already in good stead with God, maybe because of their family pedigree, maybe because of a resume of good works. That’s how Paul interprets this verse when he quotes it in **Rom 9:33** “*Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.*” God becomes a stumbling stone in the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He becomes a stumbling stone at the first Christmas. The people who trip over Jesus are the self-righteous people, the people confident that their own morality will stand them up before God.

Jesus’ birth testifies that God is with us, either for salvation or for judgment. Jesus’ life testifies that God requires a better righteousness than we can give. Jesus’ death testifies that God does not forgive sinners without requiring payment. Jesus’ resurrection testifies that God approves of Jesus as the only mediator between God and man. A self-righteous person stumbles at every point. He stumbles when he questions Jesus’ divinity – “is God really with us in Jesus, or was Jesus just another moral teacher?” He stumbles when he doubts the perfection of Jesus’ obedience as the duty we should have rendered to God – “surely I don’t need Jesus’ righteousness when my own will do?” He stumbles when he doubts that Jesus’ death was the sufficient payment for the penalty of man’s sin – “surely God wouldn’t kill sinners as a penalty for their sin! And how could God execute his own son as a sinner if He never sinned Himself?” He stumbles when he doubts Jesus’ resurrection – “It’s contrary to the laws of nature that Jesus would rise from the dead.” And most of all, he stumbles when he doubts that God’s power was made perfect in the weakness of Jesus on the cross. “Surely I don’t have to follow a crucified savior.” People can walk and talk about God at the same time. It’s Jesus that makes them stumble.

Jesus divides all of humanity into two groups – those who walk with him, and those who stumble over him. The Apostle Peter says in 1Pet 2 that believers come to Jesus as a living stone rejected by men but chosen by God. And as we come to him, we’re being built up into living stones ourselves, built into a holy temple to offer God worship. Peter says that’s an honor for us. But for those who don’t believe, Jesus is a stone of stumbling. He’s offensive. One writer said that “Christ is laid across the path of humanity on its course into the future...One cannot simply step over Jesus to go on about the daily routine and pass him by to build a future” (Goppelt, in Carson, CNTUOT, 1029). Jesus is a rock – either a rock of refuge, or a stone of stumbling. Who is He to you?

3. GOD’S FAITHFULNESS SHOULD DRIVE OUR HOPE (8:16-22 “I will hope in him”)

Scholars are divided on what it means to bind up the testimony, but the most straightforward way to take it is in terms of restricted access for those who refuse to believe. This makes sense especially in light of the fact that God is hiding his face from Israel in v.17. Isaiah will also say later in **29:11** “*The vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, ‘Read this,’ He says, ‘I cannot, for it is sealed.’ And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, ‘Read this,’ he says, ‘I cannot read.’*” (Cf. also Dan 8:26; 12:4, 9; Rev 5:1; 22:10). This restricted access to God’s word is another case of punishment fitting the crime. Isaiah said in **5:24** *they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.*” They despised God’s word, so God will deny them access to it. Suppress God’s truth, and he will seal from you. It will be to you like a locked vault. And you will keep on hearing, but never understanding; seeing, but never perceiving. Don’t let that be you.

But Isaiah is part of the counter-culture – *contra-mundum*. Against the world, against all the rejection of God’s word even within the church, Isaiah waits. “*I will wait for the Lord who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob. I will hope in Him.*” Isaiah feared God’s holiness. He has already said “Woe is me!” That’s why he is now free to hope in God’s faithfulness. That’s an important progression. You have to fear God’s holiness before you are allowed to hope in his faithfulness. Whose side are you taking in relation to your sin? Are you taking God’s side against your sin, or your own side defending your sin? Fear of God is prerequisite to hope in God.

One of you (DG 12/13) asked me in an e-mail a few weeks ago what it means to wait on God. There's a **passivity** to waiting, so the Psalmist says in **Ps 37:7** *be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.*" In this passive sense, waiting on God means not forcing the action, not trying to vindicate self or accomplish God's purposes using methods that God forbids, or embracing priorities that God condemns, only to speed up the timeline or get our own way. Yet there's an **activity** to waiting as well, **Ps 37:34** *"Wait for the Lord and keep His way."* So waiting also involves active obedience to God's revealed will, even while waiting on Him to work out His secret will. And there's a **confidence** to this waiting. Isaiah associates waiting with hoping in God, especially when God is hiding His face for a time. *"I will wait for the Lord...I will hope in Him."* Waiting resists despairing; it stays **hopeful** and even eager. **Ps 130:5** *I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning.*" Night watchmen are not worried that morning will never come. They're expecting it, looking forward to it (cf. Ps 27:13-14; 39:7). Waiting on God neither lags behind His leadership, nor does it run ahead. It's **resting content** with the revelation He has given thus far, **obeying** it, and **expecting** God to do something good in His time.

Isaiah says in 8:18 *"I and the children whom the lord has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of Hosts...."* We, ourselves, Isaiah says, are signs. It's not Isaiah's preaching, or the good works of his disciples. It's their very identity as those who wait on God and hope in Him. Their hope in a hiding God is a sign for the rest of Israel. It's their faithful presence among unbelieving people that's the sign. And Isaiah's waiting is set in contrast to the impatience of the rest of God's people in v.19, who resort to the occult rather than being content with God's word. Inquiring of mediums is the **opposite of waiting on God and hoping in his faithfulness. The issue is pursuing hope through knowledge apart from God.** This is what Adam did by eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And we've been doing it ever since. Humanity still wants autonomous knowledge that will lead us to the hope of being like God. But knowledge cut loose from God's authority, from the interpretative context of the Creator, is not true knowledge, and cannot provide the hope or the god-likeness that we're looking for.

Yet there's even more to it than that. Isaiah spoke better than he knew, because he's actually a type of Christ here. **Heb 2:13** quotes Isa 8:18 to document the incarnation. *"For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, 'I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.' And again, 'I will put my trust in him.' And again, 'Behold, I and the children God has given me. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery."* "The incarnation was meant to accomplish something relationally between God and his people" (G. Guthrie, CNTUOT, 951). Jesus was eternally generated by the Father, and He was conceived as a man in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. God's people are **regenerated** by the same will of God the Father and the same power of the same Holy Spirit. That's how we have the same source; and God intended the incarnation to produce solidarity between Jesus and the people he came to save. He became our brother in a sense, by taking on a life of flesh and blood so that he could sacrifice that life for us in death. And we became His children in another sense, by following him in the train of His resurrection life. "I and the children God has given me" – Jesus and His people. And we are now the signs and portents to an unbelieving culture that Jesus is who He said He was, and that He's coming again.

After rebuking the people for seeking knowledge apart from God, Isaiah says in v.20 *"To the teaching and to the testimony!"* God's word is our standard, and *"If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn."* If your teaching doesn't line up with the Law and the Prophets of the OT, it's because there is no end to the night for you. There is no dawn. God's light has never shined into their hearts. There is no dawn to wait for, only more gloom and darkness. If you profess to be a Christian, then you speak God's words after him.

You think God's thoughts after him. The philosophy of Morgan Freeman won't save you. God is not inside you. God is outside you and over you. His law criticizes and accuses you. And the supposedly enlightened thinking that calls this kind of preaching foolishness is the very thinking that speaks contempt against God and lands you into distress, anguish, and thick darkness. Notice there in v.22, "*They will be thrust into thick darkness.*" That's a passive verb. Those who keep relying on self and on getting knowledge apart from God will not thrust themselves into darkness; they will be thrust, forcibly, by a greater power, by the God who is outside and above humanity. And once again, the punishment fits the crime. Instead of the enlightenment that they think they've chosen voluntarily, they are now thrust into darkness by the very God they have ignored. No more dawn. God's faithfulness should drive our hope, not the empty promises of knowledge cut loose from the Creator.

4. GOD'S ZEAL SHOULD DRIVE OUR PERSEVERANCE (9:1-7)

9:1 "*But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations/Gentiles.*" Judah's judgment will be temporary. The former time is for contempt; but glory will come again in the latter time, which is fulfilled in Jesus' earthly ministry. **Matt 4:15-16** "*Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled...* (Cf. Luke 1:79).

In vv.2-7 we learn that a king is coming, a king better than Ahaz, better than Pekah. In v.3, this king will multiply the nation. That's Adam language – be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:22, 28; 9:1, 7; 17:2; 22:17; 26:4, 24; 28:3; Ex 1:7, 10). This is what Ahaz and Pekah were failing to do, multiply the nation in a context of safety and righteousness. This coming king will do the multiplying that no king of Israel ever did. He will also increase the people's joy. This is what Israel and Judah were looking for in 8:5, they "*rejoiced over Rezin and the son of Remaliah.*" Here, "*they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.*" God's people are now rejoicing in the right person, not in Rezin or in Pekah, but in God with us, in Immanuel. And they are rejoicing at both a harvest and a military victory. **Verse 4** "*For the yoke of his burden, the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.*" Midian was the nation that Gideon defeated in Judges 7-8, when God used Gideon's little band of 300 men to rout the Midianites who oppressed Israel, even though Gideon himself was the weakest in Manasseh and least in his father's house. It all happened because God himself "*set every [Midianite's] sword against his comrade and against all the army*" (Jdgs 7:20). God gave Gideon the victory. And He would give Israel victory again over all their enemies.

But when you trace that warfare language into the NT, it gets transformed, transposed into a higher key. Our battle is not with flesh and blood. The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised up against the knowledge of God. We destroy Morgan Freemanism, "I-am-god-ism." But the one who has won the decisive battle is Immanuel, God with us, Jesus. Death itself is the last enemy to be defeated, and Jesus' resurrection from the dead has taken the sting out of death. And when Jesus comes again, *death will be swallowed up in victory. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ* (1Cor 15:54-57). The child born to us, the son given to us, will break the rod of our oppressor. And that's worked out in **Heb 2:14-15** "*Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, [Jesus] himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.*" Jesus' resurrection vindicates his perfect righteousness. The curse of death had no claim on Him, and so the government of the world rightly rests on His shoulders. *Of the increase of His government there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forever more. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will do this.* The zeal of the Lord of Hosts has brought all this to pass, and he will be faithful to complete

what remains to be done. And that zeal is what should drive our perseverance through the present age. The light has already dawned. Jesus has already come. He is already reigning, already on the throne of David, Jesus will provide the peace that has eluded Israel and Judah and all the nations. He provides the power to deal with all of our enemies – temptation, sin, worldliness, death, hell, and even Satan. And the zeal of God to bring all our victory to completion should drive us to keep persevering in obedience, to keep persevering in service and hardship, to keep persevering under persecution. Stay in the gentle river. Keep fearing God more than you fear man. Keep waiting for God and hoping in His faithfulness. And keep believing that the zeal of the Lord of Hosts, displayed in Jesus, will bring His work in you to completion. *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure*” (Phi. 2:13).

CONCLUSION

God with is enough for us. Jesus is our Immanuel. He alone is the way in which God is not just outside us or over us, but God with us and even for us. His gentleness should drive our joy. His holiness should drive our fear. His faithfulness should drive our hope. And his zeal should drive our perseverance. So, if all this is true, then **what’s been driving you?**