

## Concerning The Future

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**Bible Text:** Revelation 10:1-11  
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I invite you to turn in your Bibles this morning to the last book of the Bibles as we're continuing, again, in the book of Revelation, working through this book, and we come to chapter 10 this morning. Revelation chapter 10, we'll read the 11 verses of this chapter. This is the word of the Lord.

1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. 2 He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, 3 and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. 4 And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down." 5 And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven 6 and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, 7 but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets. 8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." 9 So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." 10 And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. 11 And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

And there will end the reading of God's word.

Well, Revelation has been helpful in providing us a perspective of what is happening in the world, hasn't it? Hopefully it's been clarifying for you and helpful in that way, and particularly the struggle of God's people and how the Lord is responding in the midst of

this struggle, how he's helping them in the midst of this struggle, his struggling little flock in the earth, his sheep. And we've been given these past weeks a perspective of how God is dealing with the world particularly, isn't he? That's why I titled the message last time, Jesus puts the world on notice. That was chapter 9. He had some serious woes that were announced to the world; two of them that we looked at last time. Three woes, particularly two last time in chapter 9 that addressed, were announced by this strong angel in heaven against those who dwell on the earth. Those are particularly the people on earth who stand in rebellion against the Lord and against his anointed, against the Lord and who have taken a kind of collective stand as we see, we see that uniting presence of people and a uniting presence of hatred of the Lord and what is good and what is right.

And that was chapter 9, those two woes were explained to us. The locusts coming out of the earth, and the sixth, you'll notice there, was the sixth woe too. And the encouragement was in the midst of this that it is God who is upholding everything. I mean, you know that if he weren't, this whole thing, we would destroy ourselves. It's his providence that's keeping things. It's his working that is sustaining the earth. And anything good that we enjoy in this life that we see in common life, in civil life, in just general equity among neighbors, we tend to say, "Wow, there's some goodness in people." No, that's from the Lord. It's the Lord's goodness that's being maintained in the earth. But there was a warning in chapter 9, and the warning was when he lifts his hand of restraint on this, all hell breaks loose. That's why we said when something bad happens, the world cries out as a way to attack God, "Where was God in all of this?" And we say God's been holding this back the whole time. He lets you taste the misery that you're choosing. That's what's happened. And so chapter 9 helped us with that, that the world in chapter 9 is experiencing the full weight of the darkness that it has chosen and loves. It's experiencing it. It's tasting how awful it can be. And the things that they accept as good and advancement and tolerant, all those things that we see unfold in the world, is their own undoing and we know that. It breaks our hearts to see it, even to the point last time where they desired death; that's how miserable it can get in this world when God lifts his hand of restraint.

Well, so far then, Revelation has helped us understand what's happening in the world and how judgment is happening in the world in the present, how things are moving, how nothing is static, how it is moving to a final end, but now we're given a section in chapter 10 that captures the struggle of the church in the world. It's meant to encourage and provide a section of encouragement to really say to God's people, "Don't lose heart in the midst of all this. Continue in faithfulness as my people. Continue to fulfill the calling which I've given you." And the encouragement in this section is to answer a question that we all struggle with living in the world and struggle with, a particular question that we have is if things are getting worse, if things are happening, if there is evil working its way out in the world in cycles, how is God going to keep his flock? How is he going to keep you? We're in the midst of all this. Here we sit. Here we are. Can God do that? Does God have the power to keep? Will God keep? Locusts are coming up out of the earth. Satan's demonic activity is everywhere. Can God keep his people through all of this?

We talked about God's care in Revelation. We've seen perspectives of power and of sovereignty and of reign and of king and kingdom, we've had all of that, but can God keep his people in the midst of this chaos is the question of chapter 10. Can God help his people in the darkness, in a cruel world, in a world where there's so much going on and so much hatred, so much violence, a murderous world in which we live? And Revelation 10 is meant to do one particular thing this morning, and it's saying this, "Let me show you what you need to know to get through it." If that's the claim of Revelation 10, and that's the purpose, this may be one of the most important chapters in the book, because it's giving you an answer of how to go forward. It's giving you an answer of how to deal with all this, how to process all of this. "Let me show you what you need to know to not lose heart," that's chapter 10.

So I was thinking how we could capture what you need to know to make it through hard times, dangerous times, perilous seasons, as Paul calls them, with so much spiritual conflict going on. What do I need to know? Knowledge is everything. And there's three things that chapter 10 is really saying to us. First, it will seem evident as we go through, you need to know there are things you'll never understand. That's the first thing it's saying. You need to know there are things in this life you will not understand. That may not seem important up front, but you'll see how important it is to what he's doing here. You need to keep your eyes on what God has told you is certain, and in light of that, of what is certain, that needs to drive your behavior in the present. We'll sort of work through those thoughts here for a minute, but that's where we're going with this, and this first point being that you need to know there are things you're not going to understand.

The structure helps us a little bit as we open up chapter 10. We're in the third cycle of Revelation. The second one we looked at in the seven seals, remember, and I want you to remember that between the sixth seal and the seventh seal, Revelation paused and gave us a sort of interlude, a chapter of encouragement in chapter 7, where basically that chapter said, "You're marked by God," remember the mark on the foreheads. "You're all going to be there." All of God's people will be there. John saw the vision of the future. Well, now it's the same sort of structure in this third cycle, that notice here between the sixth and the seventh, you'll notice here trumpet, we have another sort of interlude and moment of pause to encourage the church. That's chapter 10. So the structure, if you follow that, helps a little bit and that's where we pick up.

In verse 1 we read, "Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring." What powerful imagery, isn't it? Powerful opening to chapter 10, this beautiful imagery given of this strong angel. He's awesome. We use that word too loosely, but he really is awesome. He's wrapped in a cloud. He's on fire. Notice the emphasis on legs here that not only are they on fire, but one is represented as stepping on the sea and the other on the land. You just imagine this giant angel, so powerful, so big, so vast, being able to do that, roaring out a message with a lion's roar.

Where does this come from? Remember, Revelation's borrowing from places to describe realities and I was thinking this week about particularly one event that happened in the Old Testament that should help you to understand this. Remember when Israel was backed up against the Red Sea and they panicked? Here they were coming out of the world. They were almost set free. And they cried out when they turned around and there the Egyptians were coming and they cried out in fear and panic and Moses, Moses said, "Stop it. The Lord will fight for you today, and you're going to see them no more." Remember what happened? Listen to the language of Exodus 13. Then the angel of God, who was going before the host of Israel, moved and went behind and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel and there was the cloud and the darkness and it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night. God said to them, "Don't be afraid."

So if you understand the imagery, he put his foot on the land and a foot in the sea and walked them through the sea. That was the imagery of this deliverance of this powerful angel in Exodus 13 and the imagery here was clearly meant to encourage the church, "I'm with you." God himself is with us. "I'm fighting for you." Revelation is showing us a spiritual conflict. It's the cosmic battle between, you'll notice here, that we're in between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. And in the imagery beginning this particular section of chapter 10 is an imagery of powerful defense of God's people. He can keep them just as he did Israel.

Well, what happened? It all unfolds and shows that he's keeping through instruction and you'll notice here, then, that when he called out, seven thunders sounded and John says, "I heard these seven thunders, and I figured that it was time to write. That's what I've been doing in Revelation. Revelation was meant to reveal the things that will shortly come to pass." John says, "So when I heard these seven thunders," almost like another cycle that has come, John says everything that God was doing, he's beginning to record. So John is looking at another revelation here of certain things, certain things that are planned, certain things that God's decreed, certain things that are happening. Seven thunders. These are thunderous revelations from God. Everything that was in the scroll and these thunderous revelations here, and particularly the revelation, God had already decreed and was already being implemented.

Well, John is about ready to write. He grabs the pen. And all of a sudden, something happens. "As I started to write, he stopped me." "No. I don't want you writing these. Do not write them down." So John lifts the pen. That's a strange interjection, isn't it, in the book of Revelation, I mean if the book is meant to reveal, and all of a sudden the angel is saying, "No, these I don't want written down"? Why even tell us about that? It could have been another cycle in Revelation, but this one's withheld. What is this? Well, I think it's one of the most important messages of the book. When you start to think about what has been done to the book of Revelation and what's been done by Christians and people living in anticipation of the Lord's return, it's been a mess, hasn't it? It's been an absolute mess. So much so that Reformed folk have wanted to have actually, and I think mistakenly, stayed away from it to some degree because of all the sheer abuse out there. We have made it a playground of... and it's happened in the Reformed world. We know

what happened with Camping, a playground of predicting and playing with things we should never play with. Look at all the deception around this subject. Look at all the millions of dollars you could make by writing a book and saying stupid things.

Well, John just receives a vision, seven thunderous revelations of the future, and John is told, "Don't record it." I find the message in that really important for us. God doesn't want us absorbed with worry and speculation about why things are happening the way that they are. He doesn't want us to live by events like this. You won't know the reason oftentimes as things happen in the course of your lives, in the world. Some things are going to happen in the world and it looks like it's spinning out of control and God's not on the throne at all. Some things will happen are so perplexing to you and so disillusioning and at times confusing and derailing, that if you start to meditate on it and you start to watch the news about these things, and the news's job is always to interpret, interpret, interpret, if you start to mess with the things that we call providence that God's not told us about, you will most certainly be led down a path of despair. And if you try to figure this stuff out and base all of this, the course of the future, focusing on these things, it will have not only a derailing effect on the Christian's walk, but it will have a derailing effect on the very mission and purpose of God's people in the earth.

Remember what Jesus said at the beginning of Acts? The disciples were really curious about things God had not revealed and Jesus said very clearly to them right at the beginning of Acts as the mission started, "It is not for you to know times and seasons which the Father has put into his own authority. It's not yours. You've got to stay focused on the right thing here." In fact, you all know, had God been very overly specific about times and seasons, can you imagine what that would do to us? You'd have Christians retreating. You'd have Christians running up to the mountains. You'd have all sorts of weird approaches, and our light would be gone. All political commentary seeks for answers to interpret things, events, current events. We love current events. We love the pastor who will stay on all the current events. If people live by this stuff and all the things that happen in the earth, when they do end up living by this stuff, and base their faith on the ability to understand these things, it's going to cause a great fall and people become disillusioned all the time. I'll never forget Harold Camping's nephew in Linden who posted signs up all over the city. "Here's the date. Here's the date." And I called him. I said, "Listen, what happens when you're wrong?" And he got a little angry at me. But he sold his business. This was all over Linden.

Well, if you think about what the Lord is saying here, it's very freeing, isn't it? Very freeing. "I don't want you there. I don't want you there. I don't want you worried." What's the message here? Patience. Patience. A big theme in Revelation is the patience of the saints. You're going to see things that happen you don't understand. It's okay. And here's where chapter 10 begins with, God, that the message here is really clear, God has determined the future. There are things playing out, there are things happening, there are forces of darkness at work, you're gonna see crazy things, events unfolding, that he's not told you about, but then in the next breath, the angel does something to tell you what you should focus on, what you should be thinking about. This is, talk about practical living, by the way. You want to live the Christian life, here you go. What is it? All of a sudden,

he goes into oath stance. This is all very covenantal. He goes into oath stance, raises the right hand, and remember, the Lord sent him to do this, so this is an oath coming from heaven and whatever he is about to say, whatever it means, it is really clear that the Lord is telling us something about where we are to be, where our focus is to be.

What does he do? "And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets." He said, "Here's what I want you to communicate, John." This angel took an oath. This was the Lord's oath. What is it? "I've been saying in my word, through the prophets, all these years many things, many promises, but it all culminates in some way, doesn't it? With one great hope. I promised Abraham a city. I promised Abraham a city whose foundations and builder and maker is God. I promised him that. He believed that. I promise heaven to all my saints. I promise a place of permanence for you. I promise," and this is a big theme in the book of Revelation, this is where we're going to end up at the end of it, "I promise all of my people will dwell forever with me in the new heavens and the new earth where righteousness will dwell. No more suffering, no more hardship in a new Jerusalem, and the Lamb will be their light forever. Promise that. I gave my Son for this. I'm not slack in giving you that promise." Remember, Peter? "I've made a plan of salvation. I've made a plan of salvation of good news that I have made known from the beginning of mankind. Right at the Fall, I began to publish the gospel. I spoke of my Savior. He would accomplish righteousness for all of you and secure a glory for you that no man can take, reserved in heaven for you. Here's what I want you thinking about: there is a time appointed when there will be no more delay and then you're going to be there." There is a time appointed for that. New Testament writers, if you read them correctly, they're always pushing us to the future for here we have no lasting city. We seek the city, says Hebrews, that is to come.

Listen to how Peter instructed Christians in 1 Peter 1. Just listen to this one verse, verse 13, "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded," how do you do that? "Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus." That's how you live, set your hope fully on the grace that's coming. Colossians 1, there is a hope laid up for you in heaven. Hebrews 6, by two immutable things, which is impossible for God to lie, we have fled for refuge, might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope that's set before us. Hope's not wishful thinking in the Bible. Hope's certainty.

What is the Lord doing? "Not on this stuff. You stay here." He's motivating you to live in this hope, the certainty of the outcome. Did you hear me? The certainty of the outcome. You have the certainty of the outcome, a sure and firm, steadfast anchor for the soul, hope. Hope. It's hope that gets us through. It's hope by which you're going to make it through all this. You have to live believing, he says, it's reserved for you and you live in light of that. This inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, that does not fade away, reserved,

1 Peter 1, in heaven for you, they're all speaking like this. Salvation ready to be revealed. That's how you live.

So in just one roar, he told you about all the things you need to know. God has not made certain things known to you, but living in the hope of what you do know, it's appointed that very day, it's coming and you're going to be there for all who believe. That's what the first part of this encouragement is meant to do. I loved chapter 7 when John was given the same interlude, which parallels this and the message in chapter 7 said, God went through the whole city, borrowed from Ezekiel, and he marked on the foreheads all of his people. They're all marked. They're all his. Not one of them was lost. So then John looks and he says, "I saw a multitude no man can number around the throne with palm branches." He's looking into the future and he sees the completed project. He saw you. Who are they? "You know, John. They came out of the tribulation like you did." What an encouragement.

Maybe this will help a little to try to bring it home, I don't know, but since so many of you have asked about my father, I'll just give an update here and use it because I was thinking about it this past week of how it in some way applies to the message that's here. Everything that could go wrong in that surgery did. It's been quite an ordeal for our family, overwhelming trial for my parents, and as of recently, we thought he had given up hope of living. It was stressing all of us out. I made numerous trips back and forth. Well, last week, he went to the doctor, top-notch surgeon, one of the best. Whenever you get a surgeon, you always think it's the best one you have but he was good. And this top-notch surgeon said to my parents, he looked at my father and my mom, and they're just distressed and he says, "I am so happy with your progress." What? "Oh yeah, you're just where you need to be." You've got to be kidding me. Just where I need to be? "You're right along the way. You're heading there. Yeah, as a matter of fact, two weeks all the tubes come out. I'm very pleased. I'm very pleased with your..." Do you know what we've been through? It was like he came out of his shell, like I got dad back, you know. See what a good report does? You feel the effect of a good report? What did it just do? This is earthly. It gave him hope. It doesn't mean that it might not be a continued struggle. It doesn't mean it's not going to be hard going forward. And we know a doctor could be wrong. He can't provide absolute certainty, can he? God can. Absolute certainty he just gave you. Hope. Good report for you. "Here's the end. Here's what it looks like." Did that lift you up? It's grounded the report in his hope. An angel swore an oath then.

You see, when the report is grounded in hope, it has the effect of motivating the present. The degree to which we have a certain hope and believe that hope and rest in that hope, all the more then grounds and motivates what you're going to do and what you're going to be right now. He was given a little hope from an earthly doctor. God just said, "I've given you the greatest reason to hope. There's a glory certain for the believer." And that's what's being used right now in Revelation 10 to get you through. Romans 12 says, rejoice in hope, and in the next breath it says, be patient in tribulation. Those two things are juxtapositioned next to each other in Scripture for a reason. Having declared what we need to know, he moves here to help us understand the present struggle then because now we can deal with it, right? Now we can deal with it. Now we know how to deal with it.

It's only short-lived, all this. Only for a moment, your light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working in you a far and exceeding weight of eternal glory.

And that's where the vision turns, "Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, 'Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.' So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, 'Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.' And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. And I was told, 'You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.'" What you essentially have here is the angel now explaining the source of your hardship right now. Yeah, there's three sworn enemies, the world, the devil, and our flesh, and that all is encompassed in this, but there's a source that's causing the present conflict with you and the world. There's a source.

This section focuses on a scroll that the angel was holding and John was told not to record the thunders, but now he turns to the scroll itself. There's a distinction. John asks for the scroll and the angel gives a specific command. "John, eat it." This language is taken directly from, again, you understand Revelation from the Old Testament, this language is taken directly from Ezekiel chapter 3, "And he said to me, 'Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.' So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. And he said to me, 'Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.' Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. And he said to me, 'Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them.'" Here's what we have here, we have the mission of the church in this struggle, God's people in this struggle, and the explanation of where the source of hardship's all coming. Where the hardship, the struggle you all know, the persecution, the hardship, all the things that encompass this struggle in this life has to do with the scroll. John was told eat it and digest it and there's going to be a two-fold effect. It's going to be sweet to your mouth. It's going to be bitter to your stomach.

What is it? What is this? Well, let me just give a little interjection here of why we don't read the Bible literally, Revelation literally, this book. As people say, "I just read Revelation literally." I asked my children at the table the other day, I said, "What do you think this is, something that would be sweet to your mouth and bitter to your stomach?" And they paused and my daughter said, "Dad, I know, it's a burrito." It's true. It's definitely true. I have experienced that. We don't take the book of Revelation literally that way, do we? What are we talking about here? Eat it. It's sweet. We love it. But it's bitter in digestion. You know what this is, it's the word of God. It's the word of God. The word of God is his answer to us. You all carry around a little scroll from God. That's a marvel. You can eat it. You can put it into your body and your mind. It promises sweet things, doesn't it? It promises so many good things to us. It promises everything that we just talked about, a certain hope, a Savior. Its purpose is to announce to the inhabitants of the world an answer to this misery. And you know it's a misery we're living in. God handed you his scroll. Inspired it.



What happens? What happened to Israel? That's what Ezekiel was talking about. "But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me: because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart." Big problem. Think we deal with that? Think pastors deal with this? Think you deal with it in your own homes? Think you deal with it? Stubborn heart? Hard forehead? This is the struggle we're in right now. We proclaim the scroll, the word of God. We make it known it's God's answer. It's salvation. It's peace. For the believer, the gospel's the sweetest thing we've ever tasted in life. As the pearl, we found it. It's God's answer. That's why you love to be here, by the way. Evidence of your love to be in church is that this scroll is sweet to you. It's evidence. But a sick feeling often comes into our stomachs because all that's being offered, Christ, mercy, forgiveness, heavenly glory, many people don't believe and many people don't take it seriously. And this happens in the church. It's happening right here, right now.

What a struggle over this. What a struggle. Yet in spite of this word, said Deuteronomy 1 to Israel, "In spite of this word, you did not believe the Lord your God." Bitter. Jesus, John 8, "You cannot bear to hear my word." You know this struggle. You're in this struggle. The word is a two-edged sword when it goes out. You know what's happening in hearts and minds right this minute? It is a living, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, discerning the intents and thoughts of the heart. It's discerning your thoughts right now and God's reading them. We are the aroma of Christ to those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To one, it's the fragrance of death to death. To the others, the fragrance of life to life. Two effects. That is, in times, intensely painful, bitter, when you have loved ones who want nothing to do with it, maybe children. So sweet and so bitter.

John is banished to the island of Patmos because of it. That's where he is because he said from the beginning, John banished to the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. And I believe through this, in light of the hope, the angel is saying to John, "Accept this struggle," because it's the last thing we want to accept and we fight against it in every possible way. The typical response to the bitterness then is to try to take away the offense of the word. Make it all happy. When we do that, you then remove the sweetness of the word. You can't have the sweetness without the bitterness and that's why it's not making a lot of effect in people today. In other words, the passage is encouraging us to hold fast to the word in the midst of this struggle. It's the source that brings the heat down on us. But it's our very purpose in being here. Our Great Commission has to do with the Holy Spirit's work in the earth intention to teach the word to all the nations and to baptize, that salvation would come.

Isn't it worth the struggle then? Hope's already certain. That's why John told us, and to remember, "The delay is no more. You must go and preach it again and prophesy to many peoples and nations and languages and kings." He's saying, "This is what you're about until that delay has ended." This is the patience. This is the forbearance of God and it's your patience of the saints on the earth. If we abandon this struggle, listen, this is so important, if we abandon this struggle, we abandon the word. If we abandon this struggle, which the church has tried to do, we abandon the word of God. God wants us committed

to the word. This word above all earthly powers we sing about defines our tasks, gives us purpose, gives us victory, and offers to everyone the answer to sorrow. Whether they hear or receive it is God's business.

But God desires to save through this gospel, the sweetness and that's the message today for a church in struggle. You will not understand all the things that unfold before you. We'll close with this thought, you're not going to understand, just to recap, all the things that are going to unfold before you. That's okay. God's not told you. But he's given you everything you need and a lot of hope to get through this life and presently for a life of godliness, and he's told you to keep your eyes on the hope that's before you, letting that then drive your present, your present struggle since you are tasked with taking the word of God to the nations. So don't lose heart. Don't lose heart as a church. Don't lose heart as a people. Don't lose heart individually in your struggle with your families, with your children. Don't give up. You see, don't give up. It's worth the fight, isn't it? The Holy Spirit's on your side. "I'll fight for you," says the Lord. But if you throw the word to the side, we're no better than the heathen. "Don't lose heart. My word will accomplish the purpose," said Isaiah, "for which I have sent it, and it will never, ever, ever, ever return void." What a reason then to continue and to not lose heart in this struggle for not one good thing that God has promised in his word, he will fail to do.

Let's pray.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for your living and abiding word. We need this encouragement. We need your help. We have to say all our priorities at times have been wrong, we're focused on the wrong things, and that worry has taken us away from our purpose in the world as a church and as a people and as individuals. And yet you've set before us a living hope, a certainty. Heaven is reserved for us, you've told us. What an encouragement. But that also gives us perspective in the struggle. We're not home yet. And your word causes major divisions in this life, in families, in people. But we also know it is the power of God, this gospel of salvation, the sweetness of it to all who believe. And so we pray, then, that we would be faithful in our callings to hold fast to your word to the end, to digest it, which means we have to read it. If there are here people who never open your word in the course of a week, convict them greatly that they're not digesting the word and the fruits will be, it will be neither sweet nor bitter. Let us all digest it and then let us be faithful in the task you've given as we speak it, as a church the Great Commission you've given, and as individuals, as witnesses of this very truth in our own lives. Thank you for this wonderful word this morning by which you've given us perspective and help. We praise you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*