

The Exile #1

Let us pray:

Father, we want to thank You this morning for being found in Your love. Just as our brother exhorted us to come to the table, we came because You love us, and because You love us, we stand. Here we are before You, the Most Holy God, righteous in every way. Here we are standing in Your presence because of what Christ has done, and we worship Him this morning. Father, we come to Your Word today and ask that You reveal Yourself to us. Lord, it is not that we do not want to see ourselves, but even when we do, we want to see You and Your Word expressed, and only the Holy Spirit can do that. So, we come and ask, Lord, for that help from the Holy Spirit to reveal to us, build us up, and put us on the right ground. Lord, we come to You this morning in the name of Jesus and thank You for Him. Amen.

Introduction

I have been considering for about the last half-year, remembering the conference theme from Nehemiah and Ezra. I have been reflecting on what was highlighted in those books, especially the exile of the Jews to Babylon. The books of Nehemiah and Ezra, along with the prophecies of Zechariah, Haggai, Malachi, and the book of Esther, all address the Jews' exile. To me, considering exile does not sound very uplifting. However, I will say this: in keeping with the theme from this morning, everything God does comes from who He is. The essence of God, of who He is, is love. It is not the love of man because the love of man falls miles short of the love of God. The way God loves and acts out of love is beyond our understanding, and that is why we must take it by faith. God loves me, and not all circumstances align with that. Even when Kenny approaches Romans and discusses Romans 8, which says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Nothing can. Even though the Jews are going into exile, it does not mean they have been cast out of His love. That is very important to remember because we might think that when God is dealing with us, He no longer loves us.

So, with that, I have been considering the exile and pondering about it. We know that there is not a lot written on the exile. I have researched some history books because the Scriptures themselves do not provide much detail about what happened during the exile. We have two books set during the exile—Daniel and Ezekiel. We might say that Esther's story came during the exile, but she was not part of those returning to Jerusalem. During the exile, we primarily had Daniel and Ezekiel. What happened to the Jews?

As I have been contemplating this, three questions have gone through my mind. One: Why were they exiled? There had to be a reason. God had a purpose for doing this; God has a reason for everything. What happened during the time of the exile? What happened to His people? For us, it is silence except for the books of Daniel and Ezekiel. Lastly, what was the outcome? Was there fruit that resulted from this? I am not revealing all of this at once.

God's Purpose in Exile

I want to look this morning at the question: "Why were they exiled?" It has been hard to do because it is not a happy topic, but it has to be dealt with. Sometimes we get centered on thinking

everything is going to be okay, that we are all right. Sometimes we find out who God is as we go through life.

As we find out who God is, He deals with us and shows us who He is. That is why He shows us who He is, because He deals with who we are. He does not just deal with who we are, but as Ed Miller says, everything is redemptive. That is another thing to keep in mind and heart; everything is redemptive. What can separate us from the love of God? Can this, that, and the other thing? It does not say that we escape those things, and that is what we sometimes think, that because we are with the Lord we will escape these things because we are His. Isaiah 43 says that when you go through the fire, you will not be scorched or burned, but you will go through the fire. Or when you go through the flood, you will not be overwhelmed, but you will go through the flood. "And I will be with you because I have redeemed you," and that is the biggest thing that we really need to understand as Christians.

In times of judgment, when we find ourselves going through times of discipline, it is not just as individuals. I do not want us to think that I am just talking about the individual believer. This is the whole nation of Judah. So out of the whole nation, no one escaped. God is who He is, and because He is who He is, He has to deal with us as He shows us who He is.

So, in considering exile, the exile of God's people, we also want to look at whether there is a connection to today. Is God doing something like this today in our very midst, in our very life, in the very time we live in? It is not to point out and say, "Well, this is what is happening." It is to consider, "Lord, what are You doing? Am I watching? Am I looking," and saying, "What are You doing in this time?"

God Judges Because He Loves

Exile is a form of God's judgment, and in looking at this, I asked: "Why did God or why would God judge His people?" He loves us. So, I wanted to talk a little bit about judgment. We often look at judgment as condemnation; God is condemning something. And a lot of times what we do as good Christians is say, "Well, He is condemning us." I am sure you all like to look at Amos, probably your favorite book. But Amos starts out with the first two chapters: "For three transgressions of and for four, you will not escape punishment," and he starts naming places, Damascus, and Gaza which are the Philistines. In all these places: "Yeah, that is right. Get them; stick it to them." Then he goes, "Three times this and then four." Judah says, "Wait a minute, we are Your people; You are not supposed to be doing this." They do not escape because they are dealing with God.

Think about it. We all stand before God, but we stand there in Christ. At times, when we stand before the Lord, He sees us and who we are, and we fall on our faces. And it convicts us of our sins that He is dealing with us of things of that nature. But the whole idea is that He brings us before Himself as who He is. You know, the essence is love, but love is many-faceted. It is just so many facets. In His love, there is judgment; there is wrath. It is not just, "Ah, I want to give you a hug." There are things because He is a holy God, and that love acts according to that holiness. That is what I think we have here. So, we often look at judgment as condemnation, but really it is not that.

Make His People Right in Who They Are

When we look at judgment in a court, and a judge makes a judgment, he has heard all the evidence, and he renders a decision, he renders a judgment. You know what he is doing? He is making right what was wrong. That is what the verdict is. When you go to the court of the Lord, you are going to say, "Lord, make it right. I have been wrong; make it right."

Somebody in my family has been murdered; make it right. Somebody has stolen something. Make it right. Somebody is suing me, and it is wrong; make it right. So, when we think of judgment, we think of it not as being a punishment, but as the Lord making something right, making things right. It is not necessarily circumstances, although He may make certain circumstances right. But it is making us right in who we are, especially in relationship to who He is.

So, in a criminal case, the one who committed the crime, if he is found guilty, is turned over to the department for correction. Brothers and sisters, this is what judgment is; it is coming to the house of correction to the department of correction and the Lord is dealing, correcting us that which is out of joint, out of place, and needs to be righted. If you look at it that way, it takes the whole idea off the idea of condemnation because we know that in Christ, there is no condemnation.

God Deals with His People as Sons and not as Bastard

Hebrews 12:5 "... "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor the discipline of the Lord or the correction of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; (This is key.)"

Hebrews 12:6 "For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." "If you endure chastening," and a better translation might be: "It is for that discipline that you endure." In other words, He brings you to the place to endure it. God deals with you as sons, "for what son is there whom the Father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons." That is not a good translation because today when we think of somebody who is illegitimate, we think of them being born out of wedlock. The actual word here is "bastard." There are two words that might be what my dad said, to put fear in our hearts. Number one, when he said, "Chastise; I am going to chastise you." That struck fear. We crossed the line; this is bad.

The other one was we knew my dad was really mad when he called us bastards because a bastard is someone whom the father does not own. He says, "You are not mine." But He chastens every son He loves. A bastard is unloved by his father, and he will not even give him a name. His father will not provide for him and will just put him off in the distance. He will not go by the house of the mother because he did not want to see the kid. He does not want to provide anything for him. You are bastards and not sons. When the Lord's people were in exile, the Lord sent them to the department of correction. That is a good way to look at it.

This does not lessen the reason He sent them away. Just because He is sending them away, it is because He is disciplining them. It is like, "Well, that means He is not that mad. That means

what we did was not that bad.” So, it does not lessen the reason He sent them away, but it explains why He did it. He did not send them away to punish them; He sent them away to make them right.

The Present Hour

That is the big thing; that is something that every time I think that I do not know, I know. A few years ago I gave some lessons on John the Baptist. I wonder, before the Lord comes, since He sent John the Baptist the first time, if He will send a generation like John the Baptist before He comes. I wonder, in looking at the exile, we can get the real idea of looking for the Messiah. The kings were gone so they began looking at the Messiah. I have talked to some brothers, and I think before the end comes there is going to be a great outpouring of the Spirit in revival.

Before the exile, there were two great revivals. There was one during the time of Hezekiah and another during the time of Josiah, both great revivals. Yet, when those kings died, the revivals also ended because they were only superficial. I wonder if the initial outpouring of the Spirit might first be a purging, a cleansing of His house, a preparation before His return. I do not think the Lord wants to surprise anyone when He comes back or for them to misunderstand who He is. He wants everyone to know He is coming. That is why there are parables in Matthew chapters 24 and 25 about being ready. He wants everyone to be prepared.

I wonder if in the last days, the first movement of the Spirit will be the Lord purging His house, cleansing it. Just like when Jesus came the first time, in John chapter 2, and cleansed His temple. They had turned it into a marketplace, something it was not meant to be. Then, before He died, He cleansed it again. It is interesting that the first cleansing had to be repeated. That is partly because we are forgetful.

I wonder if the Lord began a judgment. We are not talking about the judgment of nations but the discipline of His house, of His own people. I wonder, if during the first wave of Covid, when everything went awry, it was the Lord saying, “I am dealing with you.” We often say, “Lord, deal with our country.” But the Lord says, “Leave your country to me; I am dealing with you.” I think one of the significant aspects in these last days is being sensitive to the Lord as He deals with His house. When I say, “His house,” I do not only mean this assembly; it is His house here in the United States. Looking at Judges and our brothers and sisters in Pakistan, they are not being judged but proven and strengthened, discovering who the Lord is. I wonder if in the United States we are being disciplined, which is very different.

Peter speaks in I Peter, saying that for a short time you may endure various trials to have your faith strengthened and refined like gold. When He judged His people in the 600s and 500s BC, it was as a whole. Even those who were not in the common condition underwent this judgment. Consider that. They were not exempt from the Lord's dealings with His entire house. Daniel, Ezekiel, and Mordechai's family all went into exile. They were part of the house, part of the body, and when the Lord deals with the body, He deals with it collectively.

We might ask, “What happened during this time?” We can observe the outcome for those upright individuals, which is remarkable. But focusing on the judgment, the discipline, He disciplines the entire house.

I hated the bickering in our family. We were six siblings, so you can imagine the chaos. Our bickering drove our dad crazy, and while watching television, he would say, "That's it; turn it off." "But I did not do anything." That was true, but others did. It was too much for my dad; "Turn it off; go to bed;" and that applied to the whole family.

There was a British comedy where death came to a dinner party, and everyone there died. One family member said, "Oh, it is a shame we all have to die. Can you tell me what killed me?" Death pointed at the meatloaf, to which the guy replied, "But I did not eat any." So, the entire party, family, nation, the entire people were dealt with in that way. They were not separate from the body; the whole body was dealt with.

The Heart Condition of God's People Before Exile

Now the question arises: Why the judgment? Why correction? I have three observations. What is the immediate answer? Why did they go into exile?

Idolatry

Idolatry. II Kings chapters 23 to 25 discuss idolatry and its consequences. Consider idolatry; it is not just idol worship but abandoning God for them. This idolatry was more than a physical act; it infected their nature, much like we are infected with self-centeredness. This is one perspective. "I am not infected with idolatry." Yet, we worship ourselves, being infected by it.

There is a verse I cannot recall precisely that says, "Even when you were coming out of Egypt, you left with your star god and idols with you." When they went down to Egypt, those seventy people with Jacob adopted Egyptian idolatry, integrating it into their lives. It surrounded them in Canaan; it was ever-present. This idolatry was not just external but invaded their hearts' inner sanctuary. In Israel and Judah, it even reached the temple. King Amon, for instance, introduced idols into the temple and brought in an altar within the temple. Ezekiel chapter 8 describes an angel showing Ezekiel the priests conducting such activities secretly.

Now let us put this into perspective. When the Lord exiled the people, He did not do it all at once. That is why watching is necessary. The first exile occurred around 606 BC, removing approximately 10,000 people from Jerusalem, along with the temple's gold and silver, including Daniel. He did that.

Then, about ten years later in 597 BC, He addressed King Jehoiachin, taking him and many others, including artisans. Ezekiel was among them. Between 597 BC and the temple's destruction, the Lord showed Ezekiel the depth of Judah's idolatry, instructing him, "Come with me; let us go to the temple." He was reluctant, "No, no, no, we cannot." But then, "Dig a hole through the wall here." He revealed priests secretly engaging in idolatrous rituals. While we can hide outward actions, the Lord sees our inner reality. This idolatry was deeply entrenched. Even the revivals under Josiah and Hezekiah only skimmed the surface; they failed to address the underlying issues. Superficial changes can eradicate external symbols but do not reach the core.

Do you know what it means to be an idolater, to be lost in idolatry as a church? It means that we have lost the center of who we are, and here is what the Lord was saying: "I brought you up

out of Egypt to be Mine. I was the One who redeemed you to be My witness on the earth.” You have lost your center; you have lost sight of that.

God’s Name Was Profaned

That brings me to the second thing. In Exodus 4:22, the Lord is talking to Moses before he goes to Egypt, and He said, “I want you to go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Israel is My son.’” And then there was Hosea, and there is a purpose for me to use this. Hosea was hundreds of years later, and when He was talking about taking the Northern kingdom into captivity by the Assyrians, He said, in His trying to reach out to His people, “You are My Son, from Egypt I called you; I called My son, I called you out of that. I called you out to be My son.”

Now that is important because son signifies something. First, a son has an intimate relationship with his father, and so here is the deal. The Lord’s intention is to have an intimate relationship with His people. No other nation in the history of the world has been called God’s son, not even the United States. Think about that. He does not treat the United States as a son; He treats His church as His son. There is a big difference, brothers and sisters.

Secondly, a son is to carry his father’s name into the world that he lives in, and in carrying that name, he carries it to bring honor to his father. And that is why he carries his name into the workplace. The people see, “Oh, you are Tony’s son; my dad’s name was Tony. You are Tony’s son.” Of course, they looked at that with disdain when they looked at me. The son was to carry out his father’s will, and carry his father’s name to every place he went. So, when people saw me, they knew I was his son: “Oh, that is his son; I understand why he is like that now because that is Tony’s son.”

Thirdly, he was to project that name to future generations. You know, he is to have progeny. And we would look at that as Christians saying, “Okay, we are to share the gospel, you know, to procreate spiritually.”

But they were not good sons. The Lord was taking them to right that. They were not good sons. As a matter of fact, in Ezekiel chapter 36:20, and this is after the temple had been destroyed, and he is getting ready to talk about the new covenant.

Ezekiel 36:20-23: “When they (Judah) came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name—when they said of them, ‘These are the people of the Lord, and yet they have gone out of His land.’ But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went. Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord,” says the Lord God, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.”’”

That is a heavy thing. How does the Lord’s prayer start out? “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.” Let Your name be held in respect; let Your name be held in reverence. And here He is saying, “My people have not held My name in reverence.” In a way, that is the

breaking of the commandment that says, “You shall not use the name of the Lord your God in vain.”

Isaiah talked about, “You caused My name to be blasphemed.” What does that mean? “You caused My name to be injured; You caused My name to be despised. You caused My name to be treated with contempt. You caused My name to be spoken evil of.”

How is it that our nation is called heathen? We have this connotation of something really bad, but it just means that nations are without God. They do not see God nor do they care for God. How do they see any of His people? During the election time, one of the big things people were talking about was, “You got to have the vote of the Christian Nationalists.” I wonder if that is taking His name in vain—Christian Nationalists. What do you do with that kind of name? What are you doing? You are sharing His name with a faction. God is greater than that. He derided Christian Nationalists. They are all bigots. Where is the nature of God in what they see? This is hard stuff because God is saying, “I am coming back, and I want a prepared bride.”

So spoken evil of. And so, he says, “I have to right this.” And notice, at the end of that verse, He said, “And I will show him that My name is sanctified in My people before their eyes.” We are trying to get people to look at God, and people are saying, “Why should I look at Him reverently when you do not? You know that is your testimony to me.”

Corrupted Faith

Third, they did not have faith in God Himself. They had faith. For example, “God will not destroy us, He will not discipline us. We have the temple.” In Nehemiah 7 they are saying, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord; He is not going to destroy us. We have this; we have faith in that.” But the temple was not God. It is the One who dwells in the temple, and you need to have faith in Him.

They trusted in other nations. “Hey, if we know that Nebuchadnezzar is coming, we will go to Egypt. Egypt will help us out. We have faith in Egypt because they have a great king. He will help us out.” One of Sennacherib's men said, “Do not go to Egypt. If you lean on Egypt, it is like a rod; it is going to break, and all of a sudden it will pierce your hand.” They put their faith in the other gods. God is the God of all gods. So, in order for us to actually have a good crop, you have to worship this god because after all, our God is so big among other things. You have to go to this one who has a god bureaucracy. We have to go to the bureaucracy and get this god to do what we want. And another thing, it was a presumptive faith. It was presuming that we are God's people, and He is not going to touch us. We are God's people, after all.

I hated this bumper sticker. You might remember it came out in the nineties. “Christians are not perfect; they are just forgiven.” What kind of message does that send? It is saying, “Hey, I can live like I want because I am forgiven.” And the Lord has to say, “That is not true to Me.” That is Jeremiah 7 where He is talking about how they had made His house a den of thieves. That is what He is saying. “I delivered you so you could do all these things; so you can worship idols? So, you can commit adultery? So, you can steal? So, you can murder? That is why I delivered you? Is that why I delivered you?” No! And so, He had to take them to task. He had to bring them to the department of correction.

Exile: Correction and not Punishment

Department of Correction

So let us look at the department of correction. There is a picture of the department of correction in Babylon. Now if you read Habakkuk, who is there? There are a couple of prophets during the time of exile or just prior to the time of exile. There was Jeremiah, Habakkuk, at the time of Josiah, and beyond. Josiah was the last good king, and after that they had twenty-three years of bad kings. And toward the end of Josiah, there is Habakkuk and Zephaniah. We had an opening on Zephaniah, and the Lord rejoices over His people after He deals with them. If you read the other two chapters, you will find that He is dealing with His people.

Then you have Ezekiel, and Ezekiel is in Babylon. So, you have these four, but Habakkuk had a complaint. His prophecy starts out with a complaint. "I see you are not dealing with Your people, but then I hear, and the Lord says, "Oh, if I told you what I would do, you would not believe it." Then He talks about bringing Babylon, the Chaldeans down. It just blows Habakkuk's mind because he says, "They are so evil." It was the department of correction. Is it done by those who are more righteous than God's people? Think about that: evil people to discipline. He scourges every son. He scourges every son.

Now you might say, "Well, you know, that does not apply to us because we are not going into exile. We are not illegal aliens; they are not going to deport us. What is exile? Think about this. It means that you are uprooted from what is familiar, and you are brought into the unfamiliar. That is what God did to those people. He uprooted them from the familiar. He took away all the trappings they were familiar with, and He took away the temple. What do priests do without a temple? What happened to the ark of testimony? All these things were taken away, and they were brought into a place that was filled with idols. This is the way the Lord dealt with His people. Now again, this is not punishment, it is correction. Get our minds around this. The Lord corrects whom He loves.

Mercy in Judgment

Then there is one thing. Habakkuk ends his prophecy with a prayer. And he says, "Oh, Lord, in judgment remember mercy." Now sometimes we think of mercy as the Lord getting us out. "He is going to let me pass over this; He is getting me out of the jam." But it just means: "What does not kill you is good for you." In other words, He said, "Habakkuk, you are going to go through this." And this is the whole key. When you look at these prophets who are prophesying during this time, for example, this is mercy; this is what mercy and judgment is like.

Jeremiah says to them, first of all, he corrects something because in Jerusalem Ezekiel talked about Babylon, and there were false prophets who were saying, "Okay, the Lord is mad at us, it is going to be short; it is just going to be a couple of years." One of them said, "In two years the yoke will be broken." Jeremiah said, "Amen, let that be happening." And then the Lord spoke to Jeremiah, and Jeremiah wrote a letter to those who were in captivity, and he said, "It is going to be longer than you think. It is going to be seventy years because what is in you is so deep, I have to do a deep cleaning. I am not going to do a vacuum job here. I am doing a shampoo."

In saying this, He said, "Look, I know you think this is really hard, but I know the thoughts I have toward you." We always use that as being a comfort in the sense of, oh, good is going to be in this. But He says in Jeremiah 29:10: "I know the thoughts I have toward you for you to have a future. That future is that you will be My son. I want to get you back to the place where you are supposed to be." And brothers and sisters, we might as well build the house. You might as well pray for the cities that you are in because you are going to be there for a while. "I know what I am planning; it is good, mercy and judgment."

Submit to God's Doing

Habakkuk's only message is that he is talking about these things. "What are we doing during exile?" And Habakkuk in chapter 2:4 says, "For my righteous one will live by faith." Now we talked about this, and you have to have faith in what Jeremiah says, "I planned good for you." When I see all this coming to pass, can I hang on to this word that the Lord is speaking to me? "I know what I planned for you. I know the good that I planned for you in this." So, Jeremiah says, "You need to submit to what the Lord is doing because if you do not, it makes it worse."

I will give you an example of that. My mom was a nurse, and we received all our shots from her. I am not just talking about when we were sick. I remember every two years we got tetanus shots, and this was when you had to sterilize the needles. You would be in the house, see a pot boiling, and you would think that Mom was cooking something. But when you took a look, you saw the needles. Oh man, talk about freaking out. "Mom, what is going to happen? Who is sick?" "Nobody is sick." "Oh Mom, I do not want tetanus." I remember one time on a Saturday I saw those needles, and I just ran down the street. My dad ran after me; he caught me and brought me back. Then he had to hold me on the floor so my mom could give me my shot. Now, my mom was saying, "You need to stop struggling." When you struggle because you do not want that shot, what do you do? You tense up, and what does that do for a needle going in? It makes it hurt. The thing is, if you just submit, you do not have the problems you have by not submitting.

Throughout Ezekiel, it talks about in chapter 10 how the people were stiff-necked. They are already in captivity, and they are stiff-necked. The Lord is saying, "Just submit to what I am doing. Submit to it. I will bring you through because I have good plans for you, but it cannot come through if you struggle against it." Paul kicked against the goads, didn't he?

In Zephaniah 2:3, it says two things: "Seek meekness," and meekness is just the idea of submitting to what the Lord does. The Lord says that this is what He is doing; you submit to it, to Him." The other thing he said is, "Seek righteousness, seek what is right and do what is right." What did Micah say to the people in Jerusalem back in 700 BC in Micah 6? He said, "You know what God wants. He told you, 'Seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.'" Seeking righteousness is seeking to do right. As the Lord shows you what is right, you do it. They were murdering, using false scales, all such things. He said, "No! You need to stop. You need to do right because it is not just a religious thing. Or we will get you fine spiritually. They will have the right documents and everything like that." "No, it is the whole life; seek righteousness, and I will hide you." There is another meaning of His hiding you from going through something, and that is you are hidden and protected by all the idolatry that could have infected you and drawn you away. I will hide you from that.

Daniel and his three friends were hidden from that, were they not? Because they sought to do right by God. Ezekiel came and just said this in chapter 18: “Do not think if you are righteous, you can go on and, at the end of your life, just slip,” and the Lord will say, “I will let it slide?” No! He said, “I will judge you.” Do not think if you are deep in sin and unrighteousness that God will just leave you in that, but He says, “If you turn, you will live.” This is the entire idea in going through something like this: turning to God. Not turning to something else; not turning to Egypt, not turning to religious things like the temple or the ark; it is turning to God Himself. “You are my son; turn to Me.” In Hosea, it says in the end, “Israel will not turn anymore; they will not turn to another.”

Conclusion

So, in closing let me say this. All these things tell us that when God comes and deals with His church, we are not bastards. This is the love of God. It is not tough love. We want to label it something; it is love. It is the flat-out love of God. No mixture in it, no thing to try to explain, “This is what it means.” No! It is His love. His love includes it all. He judges in love; He saves in love. He does it all. It is all His love, and we cannot get away from it. “O love that will not let me go.”

Also, it lets us know if we submit to correction there is good that comes out of it, but you have to submit to it, and there is a waiting, and that is what we hate to do, don’t we? Oh Lord, can you not just microwave us? How about minute rice? I love minute rice, incidentally. You know, we cannot separate God’s love from His holiness. His holiness demands correction, but it is love that carries it out. His holiness demands it. He cannot let His people go on the way they are going because they do not represent His seed. They do not represent that divine life that He has implanted in us. But His love carries it out, “O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in Thee; I give Thee back the life I owe, that in Thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be.”

Heavenly Father, we look to You with thanksgiving because You love us, and Lord, we would rest in Your love. We do not know what lies ahead, but we can be assured of this: You love us, and You will love us through, and You will cleanse us and purify us for Yourself. And Lord, I can say myself, I am afraid of that, so I do have to trust You because You know the plans You have, and they are for good and not for evil. So, Lord, we commit Your church and ourselves to You, the church here in the United States. Lord, have mercy on us, and when judgment comes, and if it has already started, Lord, we need to find mercy and submit to whatever You are doing because we want to be those who love You. We want to be Your sons; we want to be those sons in glory to carry our Father’s name to all places in this land. Thank You for Your grace to us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

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