

MARK & FRIENDS PROGRAM RESOURCES

Afflicted, But Not Destroyed

Psalm 129, Forgiveness, Spiritual Opposition, and the
Freedom to Keep Moving Forward

Pastor Jason Epperson

Monday, August 17, 2026

Program Summary

In this Monday edition of Mark & Friends, Pastor Jason Epperson opens Psalm 129 and speaks candidly about hardship, oppression, spiritual opposition, and the kind of resilient faith that refuses to be destroyed. The psalm remembers deep wounds while declaring that the enemy has not prevailed. Pastor Jason explains that followers of Jesus should not be surprised when life is difficult, but should expect Jesus to walk with them through it. He connects Psalm 129 with 2 Corinthians 4, where believers are afflicted but not crushed, persecuted but not forsaken, and struck down but not destroyed. The message also presses toward forgiveness: true freedom is not merely escaping what hurt me, but refusing to remain chained to bitterness. Through a moving story of a church planter in India who forgave those responsible for his wife's death, Pastor Jason shows what it can look like to cut the cords of hatred and keep proclaiming Jesus.

Key Takeaways

- Psalm 129 acknowledges real oppression and suffering without allowing pain to have the final word.
- Followers of Jesus should not expect a life of constant ease; spiritual opposition and hardship are part of living in a fallen world.
- The central hope is not that I will never be hurt, but that in Jesus I will not be destroyed.
- Like the burning bush, God's people may experience the heat of affliction without being consumed.
- 2 Corinthians 4 reminds me that the treasure is God's power within fragile jars of clay, not human strength.
- Freedom includes more than escape from external oppression; bitterness and unforgiveness can keep internal chains in place.
- Forgiveness does not deny the reality of evil or erase grief; it releases my right to remain bound to the person who harmed me.
- Praying for persecutors means asking God to bring conviction, repentance, and redemption rather than simply retaliation.
- God can use suffering and displacement in ways I cannot immediately see, even to spread the Gospel and strengthen His church.
- The fruit produced by selfishness is temporary, but the fruit of a life surrendered to God carries eternal value.

Scripture References

- Psalm 129:1-8
- Romans 12:1-2
- Matthew 16:18
- 2 Corinthians 4:7-12
- Matthew 5:44
- Ephesians 4:26-27, 31-32
- Matthew 6:14-15
- Romans 8:35-39
- Matthew 5:45
- Matthew 6:19-21

Quote of the Day

“This world is hard, and sometimes there are marks on us. But the hope is not that we're not in danger; it's that we will not be destroyed.”

Broadcast Notes

Pastor Jason begins by placing Psalm 129 among songs born from oppression and hardship. He compares these biblical songs with spirituals sung by enslaved people, noting how songs could strengthen hope while also pointing toward freedom. He then gives a rapid overview of Israel's history of oppression and emphasizes that behind human opposition lies a deeper spiritual enemy who seeks to oppose the purposes of God. Psalm 129's opening declaration - 'Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed against me' - becomes the controlling idea of the message. Jason uses athletic training and football to show how expectations shape endurance: if I expect life to be easy, hardship can disorient me; if I expect difficulty, I can face it without assuming God has abandoned me. The psalm's picture of furrows cut across a back leads to the truth that wounds may be real and lasting while destruction is not inevitable. Jason then turns to the phrase 'He has cut the cords of the wicked' and applies it to forgiveness. A deeply moving story follows about a Christian church planter in India whose wife was killed by extremists. After recovering from his own injuries, he returned to the same area and preached the Gospel. The message then connects Psalm 129 with 2 Corinthians 4, calls believers to pray for those who hurt them, and ends by contrasting temporary worldly fruit with the lasting fruit of a life surrendered to Jesus.

Practical Applications

- Name one hardship I have been interpreting as evidence that God has abandoned me, and replace that assumption with the truth that Jesus is with me in it.
- Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 slowly and underline every phrase describing what suffering cannot ultimately do to someone held by God.
- Identify one wound that still feels like a 'furrow' across my life and bring it honestly to Jesus rather than pretending it never happened.
- Ask whether I am physically free from a past situation but still spiritually chained to it through bitterness or resentment.
- Pray by name for someone who has hurt me, asking God to bring conviction, repentance, and redemption into that person's life.
- Refuse to confuse forgiveness with pretending evil was acceptable; release vengeance while still naming wrong as wrong.
- When hard things happen, remind myself that difficulty does not automatically mean I am outside God's will.
- Look for one way my present hardship could become a place where the life of Jesus is made visible through me.
- Examine the fruit I am producing: is it rooted in selfishness and temporary success, or in surrender, love, forgiveness, and eternal priorities?
- Encourage someone walking through grief, diagnosis, loss, or rejection with the promise: afflicted does not mean abandoned, and struck down does not mean destroyed.

Today's Challenge

This week, identify one cord that still needs to be cut - bitterness, resentment, fear, anger, or a desire for revenge. Write the person's name or situation privately, then pray: 'Jesus, I cannot undo what happened, but I do not want this pain to keep owning me. Help me forgive as You lead me, release what I cannot control, and walk forward in freedom.' Return to that prayer each day this week, especially when the wound resurfaces.

Closing Prayer

Father, when hardship leaves marks on me, remind me that pain does not have the final word. Thank You that I may be afflicted but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken, and struck down but not destroyed. Help me expect that life in a fallen world can be hard without assuming You have left me. When I am wounded, keep bitterness from becoming another chain. Give me grace to forgive those who have hurt me, wisdom to name evil truthfully, and freedom to release vengeance to You. Let conviction lead me back toward Jesus whenever I am wrong, and bring conviction and redemption to those who oppose or injure others. Crack open this fragile jar of clay so the life of Jesus can be seen in me. Help me store up treasure that lasts, bear fruit that honors You, and keep trusting when the heat rises. You are my protector, my freedom, and my hope. In Jesus' name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Pastor Jason Epperson

Pastor at CU Church

Pastor Jason Epperson serves at CU Church and regularly teaches God's Word with a conversational style, memorable illustrations, and direct practical application. In CU Church's summer journey through the Psalms, he has helped listeners see how ancient songs speak into everyday faith, suffering, family, work, worship, and spiritual growth. In this message from Psalm 129, Pastor Jason addresses oppression, perseverance, forgiveness, and the confidence that followers of Jesus may be wounded and struck down, but they are not abandoned or ultimately destroyed.

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Mark & Friends Welcome Song

We're glad you're here, we're glad you're here,
Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near.
It's so good to see you, we hope that it's clear,
Everyone loves you, we're glad you're here.

We're glad you're here. We're glad you're here. Fellowship sweeter.

Knowing you're here. It's so good to see you. We hope that it's clear.

Everyone loves you. We're glad you're here. Reading the beginning of Psalm 129, They have greatly oppressed me from my youth.

That's the opening words of Psalm 129. O magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt His name together. It is Monday, August 17th, 2026.

Hard things happen, but for those followers of Jesus, hardship never has the final word. Today on Mark & Friends, Pastor Jason Epperson of CU Church takes us into Psalm 129 and reminds us that we may be afflicted, wounded, and knocked down, but with Jesus, we will not be destroyed. Here's Pastor Jason Epperson.

This psalm might have been one of the first psalms, but it's not one of the last songs that deal with oppression. But here's the crazy thing about Jewish people in this passage, and here's the crazy thing about Christians, how we should be, and this is how we should be, is if our expectation is that there is an enemy out there, and our expectation is that life won't always be easy, it allows us to live in a world that sometimes is hard with the right attitude. But if our expectation is everything's going to be sunshine and rainbows, and we're going to be like Mary Poppins floating with umbrellas all the time, then life gets really hard, really fast, and we don't know how to handle it.

And I think that in this passage today, you're going to see a Jewish writer, when they write this, basically talk about their hardships, and then you're going to watch them pray over their hardships into deliverance. But as we do that, I just need to mention that in our song services, we sing a song, it's Christ is my firm foundation. Christ is my firm foundation, the rock on which I stand.

Like that song is a song that no matter what's going on around me, I can hold on to Jesus. It's a song that when you've had a hard week, you connect to that song a little bit more than when you've had a Mary Poppins week. But when I think about these songs this week as I was praying over them, I actually thought about spirituals that slaves would have sung during this time in history.

The song Swing Low, swing low sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home. Swing low sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home. Can you imagine being oppressed, being beaten, being whipped, walking in chains? And most of these spirituals not only had uplifting songs that they would sing to connect them to a father who could save them, but it also had codes to let other people know how to find freedom.

Wade in the water, wade in the water, children, wade in the water. God's going to trouble the waters. What's Trouble the Waters? It's in John 5 when the waters start to shake and people find healing.

It's a group of slaves that found themselves in slavery and they're encamped and they know that the Underground Railroad's coming through. As the Underground Railroad's coming through, when they're singing wade in the water, they're saying, hey, take the water, don't come through the field, they're looking for you in the field. Wade in the water, wade in the water, children, wade in the water.

God's going to trouble the water. This song that you're hearing today was that type of song. It was a song sang by an oppressed group of people, people that were experiencing hardship.

But why does the Jewish people consistently experience hardship? Let's talk about it. I need a history lesson. Give me five minutes to give you a lot of history really quick.

Can we do that? And then we'll get into the song. But here's the history of it. When God creates the heavens and the earth and He creates the heavens and the earth and it's perfect, it tells us that He creates us in His image.

So literally what it means is you were imprinted by God. Does that make sense? God put His hand on you, maybe is the way to say it, in that imprint of God. When sin came into the picture and we screwed it all up, God's hand came off us and then we became addicts and we became worshippers of something.

When we worship and are addicted to God, life is actually better. When we're addicted and worshipping ourselves or other things, what happens in life? Just nod your heads. But then God made a decision.

He's like, I'm going to fix this problem of sin. Because I created you to be in my image. Like literally this is, you were created for the love of God to be poured out on you.

Oh my gosh, that's cool. And your purpose on this earth is to pour that love back to God. It's not that complicated.

Literally you were created for a father to say, I love you, sweet girl. I love you, bro. And you were created to give it back.

And so then God has to fix it and the way God fixed it was this. He chose a man, I talk this every week, He chose his name was Abraham. Abraham had a family, that family became a nation.

And the purpose of that nation was to pour their love out on God and God would then pour his love on them. And when they listened, when they worshipped God, when they were addicted to the thoughts of God, guess what? Life went pretty well. But when they didn't, life got pretty hard.

But in the process of that, don't forget the one thing, the opposition. What's the opposition? Well, the opposition is Satan. The opposition is evil.

The opposition wanted to destroy them in the garden and he won in a moment and sin came into the picture. And when God chose a nation, that nation was Israel. And the reason God chose the nation was so that he could bring Jesus.

And now we are a part of this kingdom of God. Does that make sense? Just nod your heads. It's all right.

But here's the deal is there is an oppressor that wanted to destroy a Jewish nation. I'm just going to read you a list. This is just a list that I thought of just literally this week, very casually.

I didn't Google anything, no chat GPT. Here it is, is Egypt. They were birthed in bondage.

A nation was born out of slavery. Satan somehow deceived a group of people that actually the one who saved them, Joseph, his family was enslaved. The enemy wasn't Egypt.

The enemy was Satan who deceived them into persecuting a Jewish nation. Don't miss that. After Egypt, it's the Canaanites.

It's the Philistines. It's the Assyrians. It's the Babylonians.

It's the Romans. It's kings and crusades. It's Muslims.

It's czars. It's Nazis. It's dictators today.

Like y'all, there's a list of people that are like, why? Why? Well, because anyone that can be deceived, when you are deceived, you want to oppress the things of

God. Like when you like, that's just what it is. So in this, like the expectation of a Jewish person, when you're born into slavery, you get out of slavery.

And when bad things happen, the expectation is there's an opposition. Does that make sense? You know, God actually, which is super cool. When God gave them their chosen land, I don't have a map to put on the screen today because I forgot to send it to Rick.

It's on me. But all of you know what a map looks like. And if you look at a map of Israel, and you see a map of Israel, it is literally in the middle.

If you go north, you have Europe, you have Asia. You go east, you have Asia. Like literally it is, to the right of it is a desert you can't cross.

To the left, to the west of it is water. You just water. It is literally like a land bridge of where you can get water.

The other thing about Israel that's crazy cool is the only way until recently, like recently, recently, like within the last hundred years, is they had no irrigation systems because the water system, like literally if they didn't get rain from God, they were hosed. And every single nation, whether coming from the north, the east, or the south, they had to cross Israel. That's why they were constantly oppressed.

They were constantly beaten. Why? Because God created you to trust Him. And God created you to pour His love out on you.

And if your life is just sunshine and rainbows, you don't think about God all the time, you'll never learn to trust Him. Nation of Israel. And why am I talking about the history of this? Because the history matters today.

Because right now, I'm telling you right now, is in hell there's a wanted poster, and it's got my picture on it, y'all. And it's got yours on it too. When you become the people of God, the enemy will do everything they can to deceive your friends, deceive people into oppressing you.

I just want to remind everyone that the purpose of your life is for the image of God to be restored. And the purpose of my life is to show the image of the one who created me. The passage starts this way.

Okay, we're in the passage now. It says this, greatly have they afflicted me from my youth. So this is the writer saying, from the very beginning of who we were, it's talking about the nation of Israel.

We literally became a nation when we were slaves. Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth. Let Israel now say, greatly have they afflicted me from my youth, yet yet they have not prevailed against me.

So what they're saying is, they have beaten me down. When I think about the people of God, us in this room, this is how I would describe us. I didn't read this somewhere.

This is just how God put it on my heart this week. We are like a burning bush. We are on fire at times, but the reality is Satan can never consume us.

That makes me happy. No matter how hard it gets or whatever, he can't consume me. But that don't mean sometimes it don't get hot now.

And that's like the nation of Israel. I'm going to tell you that what it talks about here is the fact they've been enslaved, they've been broken, they've been beaten. But there's one word I wrote in my Bible that I want to clearly say to you is, What is your expectation? In Romans chapter 12 it says, To offer your bodies a living sacrifice to God, that's your spiritual act of worship.

So in my sacrifice, in my sacrifice, the image of God comes out more. But then it says these words, Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Hey girls, the first day of volleyball practice, if you showed up and thought you wouldn't have to work at all, All we're going to do is throw the ball around a little bit and we're going to spike it.

No one's looking at you, just me. And the reality is, that's all it is. We just get to put cool uniforms on, people are going to cheer for us.

We never have to run a line drill, we never have to do jump, we never have to lift. We just do this, and then you show up and coach. That's not how coach rolls now, I know coach.

And you start doing those workouts and you start grinding like that. This ain't fair, this ain't right. Because if your expectation is, this is just going to be sunshine and rainbows, And you show up to practice, it ain't sunshine and rainbows.

The first time a kid plays football, they grow up watching it on TV. And the first time they play like real football and they get hit, They're like, oh that hurts. And then there's a choice that a boy makes that eventually will be a man.

Do I want to play a game that hurts my body every single play? Every play. Like my son Bo, he's a junior now, and he realized that at a young age. I remember him saying to me, dad this hurts.

Boy, you're playing a game where their job is to hurt you. And you watch games and you see kids come out all the time, But the older kids get, what do you not see? When guys go down, they go down because they're what? They're injured. Because their bodies hurt every play, Because there's another human being literally beating them to death.

But the expectation is when that's the expectation, You're not mad at that person. You expect your competitor to try to defeat you. Is this making sense? Like as Christians, why are we so shocked that a world doesn't understand us? As Christians, why are we so shocked that people don't believe our intentions are pure? Or why are we so shocked that we, I'm just like guys, Why are we so shocked when hard things happen? Hear me say this.

Hard things happen. Hard things happen to those who aren't Christians too. The joy for us is we have Jesus, like he's walking through us with it.

In Matthew 16, Jesus says it this way. He says the gates of hell will never prevail against it. You know what that means is? We win.

I need to hear that sometimes. Are you with me? Like when it gets hard, it's like okay, in the end, we win. In the end right now, I feel like my life is on fire.

But guess what? I will not be consumed. Then he goes on and says this. The plowers plowed upon my back.

They made long their furrows. What it's saying is I was, it doesn't mean that they literally took a combine and ran over the top of them. It means that the marks on their back look like someone was planting a crop because they were whipped, because they were whipped.

They were beaten. They were flogged. Greatly have they afflicted me for my youth.

The plowers plowed upon my back. They made long their furrows. Hear me say this.

I'm telling you in this world, there is danger in this world, and at times we are hurt, but we will not be destroyed. See the difference? You know, lots of us come in here today and like I see your faces. You've experienced really hard things recently.

Sick kids, the loss of a child, the loss of a brother, the loss of a boyfriend. You've experienced you're losing jobs. You've experienced diagnosis.

Hear me say this. This world is hard, and sometimes there's marks on us. But the hope is not that we're not in danger.

It's that we will not be what? Destroyed. Then it says this. The Lord is righteous.

He has cut the cords of the wicked. What that means is eventually we are set free. When you are set free from the wicked, the cords have been cut.

But the cords that are being cut is not just that you're out of slavery by being oppressed by people. The cords that are being cut is your willingness to forgive the people for doing it. Because if you are set free and yet you still hold bitterness towards the people who've hurt you, you're not free y'all.

Well, how can we forgive? This is how we can forgive. The recognition is that this person was deceived by an enemy and my expectation should be that I'm going to get hurt. Like forgiveness is hard.

What happens when you forgive is literally like heaven is, like think about this. What is heaven? It's forgiveness. It literally is grace with the Lord.

And when we are willing to forgive and we are willing to love, what happens? Heaven comes to where? To earth. And when we are unwilling to forgive, it gives the enemy a foothold in your life and in mine. I keep the chains on.

You tracking? It goes on and says these words. The plowers plowed upon my back. They made long their furrows.

The Lord is righteous. He has cut the cords of the wicked. I want to show you a picture on a screen.

I don't want anybody taking pictures of. We're going to blur it out in the video, but I'll show you a picture. This is me, a younger version, younger, healthier, blonder, no white beard, no Santa Claus looking.

Jason. That's me. He has an Iowa hat on because I was a sinner then.

I actually liked Iowa. It's true. I know.

It's actually crazy to think of. I'm glad he has the hat and not me. How about that? This dude right here, his name, I'm not going to tell you, but we'll just call him Billy.

That's not Billy, by the way. But I met him when I was in India. When I met him in India, he was with me for an entire like 20 days.

The dude did not leave my side. He was with me the whole time. His expectation was his job was to make sure I was safe, and his job was to make sure I was okay, and his job was to make sure I was comfortable.

Literally, we were together all the time. I've told you guys this story before, but I remember walking with him as we were on like a prayer walk, and everyone's around. He kept trying to grab my hand.

I was like, bro, that's not like how I roll personally. And he's like trying to grab it, and I was thinking, okay, and he's like, and then the translator's like, culturally, like Indian men hold hands. I was like, okay, well, I'm an American, but I'll hold his hand, so I manhand him.

I grab him like this, and then the next thing I know, he like interlocks my fingers, and I was like, I literally said to him, I was like, Billy, his name's not Billy. I was like, bro, like I'll hold your hand, but no, no, no, and then he started laughing. I started laughing, but we just became really good friends, you know, and he told me constantly about his fiance, and he was so excited to get married.

He was going to get married. He was going to go plant churches, and we talked about planting churches, and I remember when I left, I got to meet her, and after I met her then, you know, I jump on an airplane, and I fly home, and he stays in that place in the world, and I get an email like two or three months later after the wedding, after he goes off to plant this church, and hey, pray for brother Billy. He was attacked, and he's recovering in a hospital, and then they began to tell the

story of what happened as he was planting churches, and some radical Hindu extremists in this town as he was planting churches got mad at him, chased him down.

He was on a scooter, and his wife was on the back of the scooter, and they got chased down. They got pulled off the scooter, and he was being beaten, and he told his wife, just stay on the scooter, stay on the scooter, stay on the scooter. Well, she didn't stay on the scooter.

Eventually, what do you do? You go help the person you love, and she got up to try to help him, and then they grabbed a rock, and they hit her in the head, and she was killed instantly. So he wakes up in the hospital, and the first question that he asks is, where is my wife? And they had to tell my friend what happened to his wife. After his recovery, after a couple weeks after, he jumped back on his scooter.

He rode himself back to the area in northeast India where he was at. He walked into that community, and he preached the gospel. He cut a cord, and he was willing to forgive.

It still hurt. He was still bitter. He was still angry.

But because of his willingness to love people who harmed him, now there's churches all over that part of the world, because he was willing to die to himself so that others could find life. How? This is how. When he got on a scooter the first time to go there, he knew he'd face opposition.

He knew there was a chance he would die, and he knew that there was a chance he'd be beaten. He expected in life, when you are in this, at times it's going to be what? Hard. You know, sometimes for us in our culture, when things get hard, we think, well, this must be not what God wants.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 4, it says it this way. Let's put that on the screen quick. 2 Corinthians chapter 4, I'm going to read this to you, and I'm going to break it down a little bit, because I just think this passage, in some ways, the last couple weeks we've been preaching and talking, this hits all of us.

In 2 Corinthians 4, it says this, but we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that surpassing power belongs to God and not us. The treasure in your jars of clay, we are the jars of clay. The treasure inside of you is what? God.

The Holy Spirit, Jesus, lives inside of us. That's what's so cool. Last week we talked about Jerusalem.

The Holy Spirit came down to Jerusalem. Like, you and I in this room, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. When you say yes, when you say, Jesus, make your dwelling here, he's like, I'm in.

So the Holy Spirit is the treasure. We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken. Paul is writing this while he's in prison.

Struck down but not destroyed, always carrying in the body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. If you and I in this world can die to our selfishness, I talk about this all the time. When I wake up in the morning, what do I try to do? I go on a death walk sometimes.

It's like, how do I kill the old man so that Jesus can live in me? How can I die to my selfish desires and pleasures? So literally, how do I crack open this jar so God can come out? And Jason's like, no. Man, I want the Holy Spirit to do that in our lives so it doesn't take a physical hardship to get us to the place to say, Lord, it's yours. The passage then goes on and says this.

For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh so that death is at work in us but life in you. If I can consistently remember, if we can become who we're created to be, really, the more I move my hand out of the way, the more God's hand does what? It's awesome. Do you know the only thing that fills an imprint is the thing that made it? And we've been trying to like shove everything else and God's like, no, I created you for me to be there.

It goes on and says this. May all who hate Zion be put to shame and turned backward. This is like the prayer of this person writing this song.

Let all who hate Zion, who hate Israel, who hate God's people, let's say, who hate God's people, be put to shame and turned backward. So his prayer is what?

His prayer is not, Lord, pull these people in half and boil them in oil. His prayer is let them feel conviction.

Let them feel guilt. Let them recognize what they're doing is wrong, because this is what it means. If I'm living my life doing what I want to do all the time, and I'm being selfish, and the Lord's over there.

Remember the cross is over there? That's why I'm facing over here. It's not because I don't like you. But if I find conviction, I find guilt, I find this moment in my life, it's like, the way I'm going is not right.

That's a beautiful thing. It's God loving me enough to convict me. And then if I turn around and I go back towards Jesus, that's the prayer of this person who's persecuting them.

Let the people who persecute us. What happened to Rome, y'all? Rome literally in 70 AD surrounded themselves around Jerusalem. Jesus told them it was going to happen.

He predicted it in the book of Matthew. So all the Jewish Christian people, they fled. They knew it was coming.

They tried to tell everyone else, God's not going to protect you inside the temple. The temple's now right here inside of us. So all the Jewish Christians leave.

Every other Jew was annihilated. The place was completely destroyed. And then Rome went around and picked up all the people they could, the Jewish Christians, and took them and sold them into slavery.

So almost all of your... That's time in history, that's 70 AD, that time. They got shipped all over the world. Well, man, why would God allow his kids to get shipped all over the world? They got shipped all over the Roman Empire.

So there's Jewish Christians all over the Roman Empire. Well, then 200 years later, what happens in Rome? Revival! An emperor's like, Whoa, there's more Christians here than anything else. Like, this Jesus thing's for real.

Why are we following these Roman gods? Why? Because these persecuted people, because slaves in biblical times, and oppressed people in these times now, if we will pray for our oppressors, if we will pray for those people who hurt

us, that they will find the Lord. Guess what they'll find? The Lord. God doesn't want anyone to be enslaved.

He doesn't want anyone to be hurt. He created it perfect. We've screwed it up.

But he's in the business of redemption, y'all. In my life, it's sometimes hard for me to pray for people that really hurt me or hurt my family, especially hurt my family. But really what I got to pray is, Lord, allow them to realize the things they're doing that aren't right.

Allow me to realize the things I'm not doing that are right, and allow us to both turn back to you so we can be brothers and sisters again. Let them be like the grass on the housetops, which withers before it grows up. Let this thing they're doing just die out, with which the reaper does not fill his hand, nor the binder of sheaves his arms.

This is what it's saying is, in your life, when I live a selfish life, like you can look around, why is this person so successful, this person so successful? You see successful people that don't love God, right? All the time, right? Just jump online. They're there. And that's because the truth is in this world, God sends rain on the just and the unjust.

Praise God. He loves all of his kids the same, even if they don't love him back. But guess what? The fruit of their lives is a fruit of selfishness, and in the end, there's no fruit.

That's what it's saying. They might have grass that looks really good, but eventually the sun comes out, it burns it up. If the fruit of your life is God's fruit, it's fruit that lasts forever.

We don't store up ourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy. We store up ourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, where thieves do not break in and steal. You know, I think about that a lot, when God gave the Jewish people not a place that was surrounded in a way that was totally protected, did he? He gave them a place that was very vulnerable.

Why? Because he wants them to know he's their protector. See, God's way sets you free, y'all. And when we don't live according to God's plan, then we just walk in the oppression.

He still loves you, but that's why it's even harder. And then it says these words, the blessing of the Lord be upon you. We bless you in the name of the Lord.

It's saying they don't say to their oppressor, bless you in the name of the Lord. They say to each other, bless you in the name of the Lord. What's that mean? That means this, I'm not praying a spiritual blessing on someone that doesn't believe in God.

I'm praying that they find God. And then when they find God, I'll pray a spiritual blessing on them. Does that make sense? Can you imagine praising God as you're chained to a barn? Praising God when you don't know which plantation your kid, your wife, your family's been taken to.

All we can do in our successes, all we can do in our failures, is praise Him, tell everyone else where safety is found, and pray that God troubles the water so that we find healing. You have been listening to the Monday edition of Mark & Friends with a reminder today that hardship may leave its mark, but it does not have to leave us defeated or bitter. With Jesus, we can forgive, keep trusting, and keep moving forward.

Thanks to Pastor Jason Epperson of CU Church, and thanks to you for joining us today during Mark & Friends. If you missed a portion of the broadcast, want to hear it again, or utilize the transcript and other ministry resources about this program, stop by greatnewsradio.org or wluj.org and click on the Mark & Friends tab. Thanks for listening.

Thanks for being a part of our radio listening family. This is Mark Burns with the Ministry of Great News Media. God bless you, and have a great day and night.

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