

All in a Sabbath Day's Work

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could this morning with the Lord's help, turn back to that portion of scripture that we read. The gospel according to Mark in chapter 2. Mark chapter 2, and if you read the last two verses of that chapter, chapter 2 at verse 27.

And he said unto them, the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. I'm sure that we would all agree that as human beings we are all creatures of habit.

But we are creatures of habit, and some of us, we like our habits. And we know that not all habits are bad, for there are some who are in the habit of exercising and eating healthily and looking after themselves.

These are good habits. But for some of us, we have the bad habits of biting our nails or eating chocolate constantly on Facebook, smoking or drinking lots of coffee.

[1 : 26] And it's safe to say that I'm sure that we all have our own habits and our own routines, and they're so ingrained in us that we wouldn't even contemplate changing them. And if we were to change these habits, they'd probably be very difficult for us.

For as the old saying goes, old habits die hard. Because as creatures of habit, we find it difficult to kick the habit. We don't like change, and we don't want to move away from our comfort zone.

We don't like to change or upset the routine, because this is what we've always done. This is the way we are. This is the way it has always been for us.

And maybe our habits and our routines are kept even, and they're fixed even to the point of superstition, where we think that if we don't keep the habit, something will happen to us.

And we wouldn't even dare think of changing our habits, especially now that we've had them for so long. And in a sense, you could say that our habits, they put boundaries on us, because we need them.

[2 : 37] We can't live without them. It's not that our habits are addictions, and we are dependent on them. It's that they are so ingrained in us, and they are part of our life and our routine, that we would never even think of changing them.

And you know, that's what we can be like with the gospel and with church. Because we can be in the habit and in the routine of coming to church.

And we come because that's what we've always done. We've done it since we were little. And so you're here. You're here again this morning in church.

And maybe you're here out of habit. Here out of routine. Maybe even out of duty. But you're here. And it's good that you're here.

Because whatever reason has brought you to come, there is no better place for you to come on the Lord's day than the Lord's house. But what I often worry is that your attendance in church is just a habit.

[3 : 47] It's just a routine. It's your Sunday routine. And don't think for one moment that I'm asking you to kick the habit, because I'm not. That's not what I'm saying.

In fact, I wish you'd come more often. I wish you would come to every service. I wish you would even come to the prayer meeting. That's my longing. That's my desire.

That's what I want for you. That's my longing for you. But what I worry is that this habit, this good habit, it will always just remain a habit.

And nothing more. Nothing more than a habit. Because maybe your habit of coming to church has been a habit for years. It's the habit of coming, the habit of sitting, the habit of listening, the habit of leaving.

But maybe what you can't see is your habit has put boundaries on you. Because you're not only in the habit of coming and sitting and listening and leaving, you're also in the habit of not responding to the gospel.

[4 : 57] And my friend, that's one habit which you need to kick. That's one habit in your life which needs to die. Because what Jesus is going to show us in this passage is that habits lead to hardness.

Habits lead to hardness. Because as we've seen over the past couple of weeks, there have been a number of clashes between Jesus and the Pharisees.

But what Mark wants us to understand is that all their habits of correcting Jesus and their habits of religion, they are actually leading to their hardness towards the message of the gospel.

And we can see this hardness in the Pharisees' heart as we witness this clash which took place on one Sabbath day in Capernaum.

And we see the clash first of all in the cornfield and then in the synagogue. And as we look at what took place on this particular Sabbath, I'd like us to see that both parties, both Jesus and the Pharisees, both of them are asking questions.

[6 : 10] Both of them are watching. And both of them are planning. Both are questioning. Both are watching. Both are planning. So we look firstly at questioning.

They're both questioning. We read again at verse 23. It says, And it came to pass that he went as Jesus through the cornfields on the Sabbath day. And his disciples began as they went to pluck the ears of corn.

And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath day do that which is not lawful? And he said unto them, Have you never read what David did, when he had need and when he was hungry and they that were with him?

How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar, the high priest, and had eat the showbread, which it is not lawful to eat, but for the priests. And he gave also to them which were with him.

And so as you know from the study of Mark so far, the questions which the Pharisees challenged Jesus with, when we look at this question, this wasn't the first question.

[7 : 18] The first time that they had ever done it. Because as we've looked over this chapter, chapter 2 of Mark's Gospel, we've seen that the scribes and the Pharisees, they were defiant towards the message of the Gospel.

They were defiant. The scribes were defiant. Because they denied that they had a problem. They denied that they were sinners. The hardness of their heart had led Jesus to diagnose that they didn't need a physician because their self-diagnosis was that all was well.

All was well. But what we're being shown at the beginning of Mark's Gospel is that the defiance of the scribes and the Pharisees in opposing Jesus, it's this recurring contrast that repeatedly appears throughout Mark's Gospel between Jesus on the one hand and the scribes and the Pharisees on the other.

And this contrast and this defiance between them, which started, as we saw, in the surgery of Dr. Jesus at Capernaum, it will ultimately end at Calvary when Jesus is crucified.

Because we can see that throughout chapter 2 and into the beginning of chapter 3 to that opening incident, Mark has presented to us five consecutive occasions where Jesus and the Pharisees go head to head.

[8 : 47] Where at the beginning of chapter 2, Jesus and the Pharisees clashed over the authority of Jesus to forgive sin, where Jesus healed the paralytic. And then we saw last week the dispute which took place in the house of Levi, where the Pharisees asked Jesus why he ate with tax collectors and sinners.

And then we saw Jesus and the Pharisees go head to head over fasting. The disciples were questioning Jesus why his disciples didn't fast, and like they did, and John's disciples.

And then last week we briefly touched on the occasion which took place on the Sabbath day, this occasion where the disciples picked some corn on the Sabbath. And as Mark begins and enters into chapter 3, he tells us also what happened in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

And what Mark wants us to see is that this animosity between Jesus and the Pharisees, it's increasing all the time. But I want us to come back to this incident in the cornfields and look at it a bit more closely.

We skimmed over it last week, but I want us to look at it more closely. And you know, by the time we reach this point in Mark's Gospel, you would have thought that by now the Pharisees would have given up challenging Jesus.

[10:10] But it only made them all the more defiant and all the more determined to challenge Jesus. Because when they saw Jesus and his disciples eating grain on the Sabbath day, they once again put on their religious police uniform and they went straight over to question Jesus.

And they questioned him. The Pharisees, when they questioned him, the Pharisees asked, What are you doing? Why are you doing that which is not lawful on the Sabbath day? Why are you doing what is forbidden?

And instead of answering their question, Jesus questioned them. Where he seems to sarcastically ask the Pharisees, Have you never read what David did when he was hungry and in need?

Of course they had read it. Of course they knew what Jesus was talking about and what Jesus would have been getting at when he said that to them. They were the Pharisees who prided themselves in their knowledge of the scriptures and their religious diligence.

They prided themselves so much in their knowledge of the Bible that they could have probably told Jesus what chapter and verse he was referring to. Which was the occasion in 1 Samuel 21 when David and his men were on the run from King Saul.

[11:34] And in their hunger and desperation, David and his men entered into the tabernacle on the Sabbath day in search of food. And we're told that they ate the showbread, which was the twelve loaves that were placed in the tabernacle each Sabbath day.

And they were placed there for the priests. And Jesus reminded the Pharisees that David not only took the showbread, which was forbidden, but he and his men also ate it.

And by highlighting that occasion to the Pharisees, Jesus wasn't condoning David's sin. And he wasn't saying that it was right for David to eat the showbread in the tabernacle.

But in the case of utter desperation and at the point of starvation, Jesus wanted the Pharisees to see that preserving life was far more important.

And yet for the Pharisees, they had become so hardened and so ingrained in their laws and the habit of their religion that they had no compassion.

[12:44] They had no compassion. Because for them, upholding the law was of the utmost importance. And that's not to say that to everyone else that the law is irrelevant and no longer valid.

Not at all. But what Jesus was getting at is that the Pharisees had all these extra man-made laws which they imposed on everyone else.

And the Sabbath was one law which the Pharisees had gone to town on, you could say. They'd gone to town on it with all their extra laws. And they added all these laws not only because they wanted to define what it meant to keep the Sabbath day holy, but they also viewed all the other laws as well as self-explanatory.

That was in their own eyes. Because the laws about stealing and idol worship and murder and adultery in the eyes of the Pharisees, they kept all these laws.

They're self-explanatory. You don't steal. You don't worship any other god. You don't murder. You don't commit adultery. But as we are learning in the Sermon on the Mount and the prayer meeting, these laws go a lot further than what the Pharisees ever thought or ever wanted.

[14:07] And so in their self-diagnosis, the Pharisees claimed that they weren't idolaters. They weren't murderers or thieves or adulterers. And they thought that they could keep all these laws so easily. And so the result was that they sought to define the law about the Sabbath day and about how to keep the Sabbath day holy.

And they did that by adding to it. And they added to it so much that it became this crippling law in which everything was forbidden.

In fact, Jewish tradition stated that there were 39 acts which were strictly forbidden on the Sabbath day. For we know that the commandment remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

It decreed that no work should be done and that we shouldn't make other people work. Everyone has to have a complete day off.

That's what the command means. And it's explained in the command. But these 39 acts, they divided the fourth commandment into categories in which details were given in order to uphold the commandment.

[15 : 16] And the details were given to the nth degree to the point that you couldn't even walk further than 800 metres on the Sabbath day before you broke it.

And so the Pharisees, when the Pharisees catch Jesus and his disciples eating and picking corn from the fields, all they can see is that they're breaking the fourth commandment and they're breaking it in their mind on three accounts.

Because the Pharisees, they classed picking corn as reaping. So they classed it as reaping which was work and work was forbidden. Then when the Pharisees would have rolled the corn to loosen it, when they would have rolled it in their fingers in order to eat it, the Pharisees would have classed that as threshing the corn which is also work and forbidden.

And then when the disciples eventually ate the corn, that was classed by the Pharisees as eating food which had been prepared on the Sabbath day which was also forbidden.

And what I hope you're beginning to see is that is the extremity of the Pharisees' religion where they had made the Sabbath intolerable. This intolerable burden upon people by adding law upon law upon law to the point that the fourth commandment was no longer about God.

[16 : 47] It was about them. It was about keeping and upholding their laws and their habit of correcting everyone else. And before the Pharisees could even answer the question which Jesus asked them, Jesus reminded the Pharisees that the Sabbath was not about them, it was about God.

Because Jesus says the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.

And the point which Jesus wants to drive home to the Pharisees is that the Sabbath doesn't belong to them. And the Sabbath isn't defined by their rules and their regulations.

No, the Sabbath belongs to Jesus. He is the Lord of the Sabbath and he is the Lord of the Sabbath because he instituted the Sabbath. And he not only instituted what you could say the Jewish Sabbath at creation, but he also affirmed the Christian Sabbath when he rose from the grave on the first day of the week which is today the Lord's day.

And you know what's interesting is that there are only two things in the Bible which the Lord claims as his own. only two things in the Bible which belong to him and to him alone.

[18 : 15] They are the Lord's supper and the Lord's day. The Lord's supper and the Lord's day. They belong to him and to him alone.

And so when Jesus says the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath he's emphasizing that the Sabbath it's a gift. It's a gift which has been given to us by God.

And what Jesus is saying is that we shouldn't view the Sabbath day as a dread but a day which has been gifted to us to enjoy. And we should see the Sabbath as a gift not a grudge.

We should view the Sabbath as a blessing not a curse. And what Jesus is emphasizing is that the Sabbath is not about what we can't do. It's about what we don't need to do.

and it's about what is of little benefit to us because the true purpose of God's law and the Ten Commandments it wasn't to bring condemnation upon us.

[19 : 20] That's such a wrong view of God's law. A stereotypical view of God's law. The law was never given in order to condemn us. And friend the intention of God's law has always been and always will be by the purpose it will always be to show us how to love God.

It will show us how to love God because by nature we don't love God. And the point of God's law is to show us that the God who cares about us and the God who made us he has given us instructions on how to live just like it is with anything we buy.

If we follow the instructions we'll know how to get the best out of the product. We'll know how to work it correctly and work it in the way in which the manufacturer originally intended it to work.

And you know the same is true about the commandments the Ten Commandments. God manufactured us. He created us with instructions in order for us to work correctly to make us live in the way in which we were created to live.

And the way in which we were created to live is that we were created as I'm sure you've all learned in the shorter catechism we were created to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

[20 : 53] That is our chief end. That's our chief purpose. That's why we were created. And so when it comes to the Sabbath I'm not going to list to you a whole pile of do's and don'ts about the Sabbath.

I'm not going to say to you don't spend all your Lord's day watching telly or flying away on the planes or going on the ferries on the Lord's day. You don't need to do that.

I'm not going to tell you not to do it because I don't see the point in doing it at all. But what I do want to ask you is that you ask yourself this one question.

If the Sabbath day is to be kept holy and sacred and set apart from every other day in our week, then before we do whatever we're going to do, we need to ask ourselves, does this glorify God? Does this glorify God? Am I doing what I was created to do? Does this show God that I love him? [22 : 10] And that can be applied to everything we do in our lives. Is that not what Jesus said to us? if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And so the question, my friend, is not about how well or how much we keep the commandments. The question is, do you love the Lord? Do you love the Lord?

Questioning, that's the first thing we see that took place on the Sabbath day. But secondly, we see watching. Watching. If we go into chapter 3 and verse 1, he says, And when he entered again into the synagogue, and there was a man there which had a withered hand, and they watched him, whether he would heal on the Sabbath day, that they might accuse him.

And he said to them, which said to the man which had the withered hand, stand up. And he said unto them, that's the congregation, is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath day, or to do evil, to save life, or to kill?

But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, stretch forth thine hand, and he stretched it out, and his hand was restored, whole as the other.

[23 : 30] And so after encountering the Pharisees in the cornfields, Jesus and his disciples, they proceeded to go to church. They went to the local synagogue in Capernaum, and they entered the synagogue for the same reason that every other Jew came to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, which was to worship God.

But as Jesus and the disciples, as they entered into the synagogue, Mark tells us that sitting somewhere in the synagogue, in the congregation, was this disabled man with a withered hand. And he had, this man, he had lost the functional use of his hand. And this man's disability inevitably prevented him from earning a living.

But it seems that this man with the withered hand, who's now sitting somewhere in the synagogue, he's there for a particular reason. Because Mark wants to point out to us that the Pharisees, when they came in, they started watching Jesus closely, to see if he would heal this man on the Sabbath day.

And what seems to be happening is that the Pharisees had planted this man in the synagogue. They had put him there in order to make Jesus heal him on the Sabbath day.

[24 : 56] And when we look at it, it seems that the whole thing, the whole things are set up in order to catch Jesus out. Because the scribes and the Pharisees, they're watching Jesus. They're watching Jesus closely.

They're spying on him and paying close attention to him. All their eyes are on him. They're all on him just so that they could accuse him.

Just so that they could accuse him. They're all watching, all waiting, waiting to see if Jesus would heal this man. Because the rules which the Pharisees had implemented were clear.

You could only work on the Sabbath day, if it was an extreme emergency. You could only work if there was an immediate risk to life. And in the eyes of the Pharisees, with this man, Jesus could have waited until the following day to help this man.

But the Pharisees, they want to lure Jesus into their trap with the bait of this man with the withered hand. Because the Pharisees, they didn't care about this man.

[26 : 02] They didn't care about him at all. He wasn't an issue to them. They just wanted to get at Jesus. And you know, there are many people who are like the Pharisees, who make it their business to try and get at the followers of Jesus.

Where they make it their prerogative to watch other Christians, in order to highlight their failures and their flaws, and even their sins. And to watch and to wait for them just to fall.

And some people, they take great delight in watching Christians closely and pointing the finger at them just so that they can accuse them and gossip about them and tell everyone else and highlight their failures and all their mistakes.

and they take great delight in it and I've heard it so often because they say, I don't profess to be something I'm not. I don't say that I'm a Christian and go and live my life contrary to my profession.

I don't think that I'm trying to make excuses for any Christian. I'm not. Because a Christian ought to live in a manner which seeks to, as we said with the children, imitate Christ. But what I do want to point out is that the profession of a Christian is not a profession that they are perfect.

[27 : 37] The profession of a Christian is not a profession that they are sinless. No, the profession of a Christian is that they are a sinner which has found a saviour.

They are someone who was found in a ruin but they have found the remedy. The profession of a Christian is that they seek to follow Jesus.

The profession of a Christian is that they know that none of their righteous acts will ever merit their salvation. And what Jesus is seeking to show the Pharisees in their worship service in the synagogue and what Jesus is trying to show all of us in our worship service here in Barvis is that the church isn't a museum for good people.

It's a hospital for the broken. The church isn't a museum for good people. It's a hospital for the broken.

The church isn't a religious institution. It's for those who need salvation. the church doesn't exist to point at everyone else and highlight all their flaws.

[28 : 56] The church is for those who have come to point at themselves and say and admit I need help. I need to be saved.

I need Jesus. I need Jesus. Jesus. Is that you my friend? Because you need Jesus.

You need Jesus. Have you come to see yourself in this hospital for the broken and see that you need Jesus?

But as these Pharisees watched Jesus they watched him so that they could accuse him. And they begin to think that Jesus has fallen for the trap.

When Jesus asks the man with the withered hand, Jesus goes over to him and says, stand up. And at that point Jesus takes the opportunity to turn to the congregation and ask a question.

[30 : 05] Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good or to do evil? To save life or to kill? But the reason Jesus asked the question is so that the Pharisees who are watching that they will answer the question but they don't respond.

And that tells us that the entire synagogue was in silence because there was this mounting tension that was growing all the time between Jesus and the Pharisees.

But the reason that Jesus asked the question is because Jesus wanted to point out to the Pharisees that they viewed their laws and all their religion as far more important than life itself.

And because they were so entrenched in their religion and all their laws were so ingrained in them, as we said before, they had no compassion. They had no compassion where they'd become so caught up in their man-made laws and all their traditions that they'd lost sight of what was good and right.

Their pride and their self-righteousness had made them earnest in their religion because they thought that if they kept their set of rules which God had given to them, that they would please God and God would love them.

[31 : 26] But what was so sad is that their religion had blinded them into thinking that they were pleasing God. And yet it was this question of Jesus which revealed that the religion of the Pharisees was a false religion.

Because instead of seeing a desperate need, all the Pharisees saw was an opportunity to condemn. Their false religion was so binding on them and so oppressive that they would rather uphold man-made laws than care for another human being.

And what Jesus is revealing, not only to the Pharisees but to everyone who was present in the synagogue that day, Jesus is revealing that he came to abolish religion.

He came to abolish religion because the gospel is not about religion. How often do you hear them mixed together but the gospel is not religion?

religion. And as Jesus and the Pharisees repeatedly clash with one another and are being made to see, we're being made to see that the gospel and religion are two ends of the spectrum.

[32 : 48] Two ends of the spectrum. Where the gospel is the work of God but religion is a man-made invention. The gospel is the cure.

Religion is the infection. And the contrast which Jesus is presenting to us is that religion it says do. Jesus says done.

Religion says slave. Jesus says son. Religion puts you in bondage. Jesus sets you free.

Religion makes you blind. Jesus makes you see. And that's why Jesus and the Pharisees could never agree.

Because their religion was man searching for God. But Jesus was saying to them that the glorious gospel is God searching for man.

[33 : 53] And my friend, that's why the offer of salvation is a free offer. And it's not based upon our works or our merits but upon the obedience of Jesus alone.

And as the Pharisees watched Jesus, Mark tells us that Jesus watched the Pharisees. Because in the silence of the synagogue, Jesus looked around and he saw the Pharisees in a rage.

They were enraged at Jesus but Jesus was enraged at them. And he had this righteous anger towards them. And Jesus was angry with these religious men not only because of their defiance against Jesus and their denial of their sin but because of their determination, their determination to ignore what Jesus was saying.

Jesus had told them again and again and again but they wouldn't listen. They wouldn't respond. This was the fifth time that Jesus had told them.

But the problem which the Pharisees had was that they were in the habit of refusing to respond and listen to the message of Jesus. Their habit had led to hardness.

[35 : 10] Their habit had led to hardness where all their habits of correcting Jesus and their habits of religion had led to a hardness towards the gospel. And do you know how Jesus felt when he looked and saw the hardness of their hearts?

Do you know how it affected him when they refused to respond to the gospel? My friend, do you know what impact it had upon Jesus to know that their hearts were so hard and so indifferent to the message of salvation?

Mark tells us in verse 5 that Jesus was grieved. Jesus was grieved. It broke him. It upset him to think that people could be so hardened to the gospel that when they're presented with the wonder of salvation, they are in the habit of ignoring the message and not responding.

And even when they were asked why they continued in their defiance, the Pharisees remained silent. They remained silent. And oh, how there are many in here who are like them.

Where your habit of not responding to the gospel, it's leading to hardening. And it doesn't matter what is said to you.

[36 : 40] You seem to remain silent and continue in the way that you have always gone. the way to hell. The way to hell.

Questioning, watching, and lastly, planning. Lastly and briefly, planning. Verse 5. When he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved with the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, stretch forth thine hand.

And he stretched it out. And as his hand was restored, whole as the other. And the Pharisees went forth and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

The healing of the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath day was the last straw for the Pharisees. It was the last straw because as we followed Jesus through chapter 2 and into chapter 3, we've witnessed the animosity towards Jesus is increasing all the time.

where Jesus and the Pharisees, they've gone head to head and clashed over so many different issues. And now it's reached boiling point. Because in their minds they now have enough evidence against Jesus to have him tried and condemned to death.

[38 : 03] For the Pharisees, they've gathered their evidence and the evidence where Jesus claimed to forgive the sins of the paralytic and the evidence of where he sat with tax collectors and sinners and the evidence of his failure to fast according to rabbinic regulations and the evidence of his violations against the Sabbath.

And it seems that for the Pharisees it's all come to a head where they left the synagogue in this rage and now they're plotting how to kill Jesus.

But it's at this point that Mark tells us that the Pharisees allied themselves with the Herodians. Because the Herodians, they were sympathizers and supporters of King Herod.

And they would be willing, the Herodians would be willing to eradicate anyone who said that they were a king above Herod. Namely, Jesus. But not only that, the Herodians had this influence and they had the influence in the politics of the Roman Empire and therefore they had the means to destroy anyone who stood in their way.

And when we look at this little but informative verse in the Gospel of Mark, in verse 6, Mark is not only giving to us a glimpse of what lies ahead in the Gospel, but he's also showing to us the extremity and the severity of the Pharisees' hatred towards Jesus.

[39 : 36] And you can see it increasing all the time because even later on in the same chapter, verse 22, the Pharisees, they tell everyone, they tell everyone that Jesus is not the Son of God, but in fact the devil himself.

Where they call Jesus Beelzebub, they refer to him as the devil, the prince of darkness, and yet all the time it was their defiance that was revealing the darkness in their own heart.

Where the Pharisees began to plot and plan and scheme of how to put Jesus to death, how to get rid of this man who is contradicting and challenging their religion.

And so what we can see is that at this early stage in Mark's Gospel, the road to Calvary, is being prepared. Where Jesus will be crucified for the sins of his people.

But you know, my friend, the wonder of all the questioning and all the watching and all the planning which the Pharisees made against Jesus is that Mark has shown us that Jesus was also one who was questioning and watching and planning.

[40 : 57] Because the road to Calvary, the road to Calvary, it wasn't the plan of the Pharisees. No, no. The road to Calvary was God's great plan of redemption.

The road to Calvary was God's, the culmination of God's glorious plan of salvation. The road to Calvary was the way in which Jesus would take so that he would give his life as a ransom for many. And you know, I love that quote from Octavius Winslow where he asks the question, who put Jesus to death? And he says, was it the Jews for envy or Pilate for fear or the Romans for the hardness of their heart?

No, he says. No, he says it was God out of love. God planned this great act of redemption to bring lost sinners from darkness into his most marvelous light.

This is God's great plan for sinners like you and me. And my friend, as we continue to look at this wonderful gospel, I hope and pray that you'll be able to see this, that this Jesus, he came not to call the righteous, not the Pharisees, but sinners.

[42 : 31] And he came to call them to repentance. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, give to us a hearing ear and an understanding heart, that our heart would not be hardened to the gospel, but that it might be softened under thy truth, that if it please thee, Lord, that thou wouldst remind us even again today that there is a heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned.

Remind us, Lord, we plead, all that we are to take this gospel in our heart, to that it may find root in our soul and bear fruit that we might be thine own disciples.

O Lord, we plead that those who are out of Christ would not be in the habit of leaving without him, but that they might make a new habit of taking Jesus everywhere they go and walking as he walked, living as he lived, praising him all the days of their life.

Bless us, Lord, we plead, and do us good for Jesus' sake. Amen. We shall conclude by singing in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119, verse 57. It's page 404. Psalm 119, verse 57.

[44 : 12] Thou, my sure portion, art alone, which I did choose, O Lord. I have resolved and said that I would keep thy holy word. With my whole heart I did entreat thy face and favour free, according to thy gracious word.

Be merciful to me. Down to the verse marked 60 of Psalm 119. Thou, my sure portion, art alone, which I did choose, O Lord.

To God's praise. Thou, my sure portion, art alone, which I did choose, O Lord.

I have resolved and said that I will keep thy holy word.

With my whole heart I give and free, thy grace and favour free.

[45 : 34] according to thy gracious word. Be merciful to me.

I thought upon my former ways, and did my life well try, unto thy testimony pure.

My faith then turned it high. I did not save, nor did her love, as those that spoke full are.

But hastily thy laws took me, myself I did prepare.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.