

The Blood of Martyrs

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if I could, this morning, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, the book of Acts, Acts chapter 8, page 1104 in the Pew Bible, Acts chapter 8, and we'll just read again the first three verses. And Saul approved of Stephen's execution, and there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him, but Saul was ravaging the church and entering house after house. He dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

There's nothing new under the sun. There's nothing new under the sun. For many of us, we often quote King Solomon without realizing it, because when we look at the day and age that we're living in, this 21st century, we often say with Solomon that there's nothing new under the sun.

Because when we look back to maybe what took place in the past, and when we look at history, we often see that history, it just repeats itself in different forms and in different ways. Nothing is new. Nothing is different. Because you could say that the struggles, the stresses, the strains, the sorrows, and even the sins, they're all the same. There's nothing new under the sun.

But I say this in relation to our day and generation, where we're living in an increasingly secular society. And we also have our national government emphasizing tolerance at any cost. And we also have the national media. They're pushing their atheistic agenda almost every day. And it's all with the intention so that religion is removed. It's all with the intention that Christianity is marginalized.

It's all with the intention that the church plummets into decline and even into self-destruction. You know, my friend, when we consider the trajectory of our, what was once a Christian nation, the church of Jesus Christ in Great Britain, it's going headlong towards persecution.

[2 : 4 4] And you might be thinking to yourself, well, it's a way off yet. I won't see it. That might be true. But our children might see it. And our grandchildren might see it. They might even experience it.

And you know, that's why the Christian Institute, they're such a brilliant organization. Because they make a public stand for Jesus Christ on a whole range of issues, such as the named Persian scheme. We saw that thrown out of government in this past week. Even the Asher's Bakery, that case that was going on for a couple of years, they made a stand for those Christians who were involved. The Christian Institute, they seek to have a Christian influence in a secular society.

But as I said, there's nothing new under the sun. Because the early church father, Tertullian, he lived during the second century, 1800 years ago. And like the Christian Institute, Tertullian stood to defend Christianity against a powerful yet pagan Roman empire. And Tertullian, he actually wrote a defense of Christianity against persecution and against the martyrdom of Christians. And his defense that he wrote and presented to the Roman empire, it was a defense called apologeticus, which means a defense. And Tertullian, he presented it to the Roman empire.

And in it, he criticized the Roman empire for the way that they persecuted Christians during the first two centuries of the early church. The way they persecuted Christians, as we're looking at it this morning in Acts chapter 8. And Tertullian, he pleaded that the Roman empire would tolerate Christianity. He pleaded that they would treat Christians fairly. He pleaded that they would treat Christians just like other members of society. But you know, Tertullian, he wrote this speech, and it had over 50 chapters in it. But he concluded his defense of Christianity by memorably saying that Christians, it's in your intimations this morning, Christians take no pleasure in being persecuted and enduring trials. But as soldiers of Christ, they too must fight for the truth and for the glory of God.

Moreover, Tertullian said, crucify us, torture us, condemn us, destroy us. Your injustice is the proof of our innocence. When we're condemned by you, we're acquitted by God. And with that, Tertullian, he brought his defense to its conclusion, warning the Roman empire that if they continue persecuting Christians and seeking to eradicate Christianity, he told them, your empire will one day collapse.

[5 : 34] And with that, Tertullian said to them, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. And Tertullian, he based it all upon the promise of Jesus. That Jesus said, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. And as we know from history, Tertullian was right. Because as the Roman empire continued to persecute Christians by crucifying them, burning them, by boiling them, scourging them, it was through their persecution that Jesus would be faithful to his promise because the Roman empire, it collapsed. It collapsed.

And the gospel had continued to spread. And you know, that's what we see in the opening verses of Acts chapter 8. There was this fierce persecution against the church, but through it all, the gospel continued to spread.

And as the gospel spreads, we see in these opening verses, these three verses, we see three things. We see scattered believers, we see Stephen buried, and Saul breathing. That's the three things I want us to look at this morning.

Scattered believers, Stephen buried, and Saul breathing. So first of all, scattered believers, scattered believers. Look at verse 1.

[7 : 03] We're told that Saul approved of Stephen's execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem. And they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

So as Acts chapter 7 concluded with Stephen being stoned to death by the Jewish council, Stephen, as we mentioned earlier, he had been falsely accused of blaspheming against God.

And even though he gave this powerful and even compelling speech to all the Jewish leaders, they still put Stephen to death. Because according to Jewish law, they thought, well, blasphemy, it's a stoning offense.

And that's what they thought Stephen was doing. But now as we come into Acts chapter 8, we're told that this young man named Saul, he approved of Stephen's execution. And we'll consider Stephen and Saul in detail in a moment.

But what we're told in the rest of verse 1 is that the church was scattered throughout Judea and into Samaria. Now up until this point, the persecution of Christians, it was kept secret.

[8 : 14] It was kept to a minimum. And it was all kept secret because, just in case there would be a revolt in the city of Jerusalem. But after hearing Stephen's speech, in which Stephen, he rightly accused the Jewish council of ignoring all the promises that were given in the Old Testament, and even denying the Mosaic law, and even betraying and murdering the Messiah, Jesus Christ, after hearing all of Stephen's accusations against them, the Jewish council in Jerusalem, it descends into chaos.

Because on that day, the day that Stephen was stoned to death, we're told that there arose on that day a great persecution against the church.

After hearing Stephen speak so directly, and even so personally, with such truth and integrity, the Jewish council, they retaliated with persecution.

They were no longer keeping persecution quiet, and keeping it to a minimum. There was this great outbreak of persecution in Jerusalem. In fact, when we're told in verse 1 that it was a great persecution, it's literally translated as a mega persecution.

Because at that point, the Christian church in Jerusalem, it had about 25,000 members. And so to persecute that many Christians in Jerusalem, which was a relatively small city, it was going to be like a war zone.

[9 : 49] There was absolute mayhem. People were fleeing their homes. They were running for their lives. They were being driven out and scattered, even killed. All because they were followers of Jesus.

It was all because they were followers of Jesus. And you know, looking at what the first century church faced, it should make us question what we are like as the 21st century church.

Because the reality is, they were willing to make a stand for Christ. And they were willing to leave everything they had and flee their homes and families because they loved Jesus.

Now, we're not being persecuted today. It may come, but we're not being persecuted. But the interesting thing is, they were all willing to make a stand for Christ. They were willing to make a stand for the name of Jesus and stand up and be counted as a committed Christian.

Their Christianity was a committed Christianity. But you know, far too often in the 21st century church, it's not taking its lead from the 1st century church.

[11 : 02] Because what we often see in our day and generation is that instead of committed Christianity, we have this comfortable Christianity. We have this comfortable Christianity where as long as no one asks me to say anything or to do anything or to get involved in anything, I'll be happy.

Just let me come to church. Let me sit in the pew. Let me leave and go home at the end of the day. And I'll be happy. It's a comfortable Christianity. For others, it's a consumerist Christianity where they only come to church to get, but never to give.

They're consuming all the time. Consumerist Christianity. For others, it's a cafeteria Christianity where they just pick and choose the bits they like and leave the rest. It's like you're just going along the aisle with your tray, picking out the bits you want and leaving the rest on the shelf.

But you know, my friend, I need not remind you that comfortable Christianity or consumerist Christianity or even cafeteria Christianity, that's not committed Christianity.

It's not a committed Christianity that's God-honoring and Christ-exalting. Because the reality is, a comfortable Christianity is selfish. A consumerist Christianity is self-centered.

[12 : 20] And even a cafeteria Christianity is just self-obsessed. In fact, I'd go as far as to say there is no Christianity at all. It's not Christianity at all because the Christianity we need to imitate and emulate from the first century church is a committed and Christ-centered Christianity.

There's no room for movement there.

It's a committed Christianity. And that's what these people had. They had a committed Christianity. And that's why Tertullian could say about them that the blood of the martyrs would be the seed of the church.

And you know, that was certainly true. Because when the church experienced that great persecution in Jerusalem and these believers, they began to be scattered throughout the regions of Judea and then out further into Samaria, the gospel was moving.

The gospel was beginning to spread. And this scattering of believers, it's often been called the diaspora or the dispersion, where Christians, they were dispersed and displaced outside Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the Roman Empire.

[13 : 49] And that's why all the New Testament letters, you read through what Paul wrote and even what Peter and John wrote, they're all writing to places outside Jerusalem. Places where these Christians were scattered.

And they were scattered there because of the dispersion, the diaspora. But what's remarkable is that the scattering of these believers into these regions, it was just a fulfillment of the promise of Jesus to the early church.

You remember back in chapter 1 when Jesus first spoke to the 11 apostles. He said, when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, to Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth.

And that's what's happening here. As the believers were being scattered because of persecution, they were being scattered out of Jerusalem and into Samaria and into Judea and they were bringing the gospel with them.

They were committed Christians who were going to be witnesses for Christ in all these distant places. And what we need to understand, it's a brilliant point, what we need to understand is that Jerusalem was no longer going to be this center for worship and witness.

[15 : 08] That's what the Jews had thought for many centuries. Because now that the Holy Spirit has come, the gospel is on the move. The gospel is on the move and it's now spreading from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth.

And that's what we'll see as we consider the rest of chapter 8 and on through the book of Acts. We'll see that even though believers were scattered because of persecution, they were always bringing the gospel with them.

And they were going to be witnesses for Christ in these distant places. Because, as we said, Jerusalem was no longer the center for worship and witness.

The local church was going to be the center for worship and witness. Despite the persecution, that was the Lord's plan. These scattered believers were going to be used to spread the gospel through their local church.

And you know, my friend, we look at it in the 21st century. That's what we're to do. That's the Lord's plan and purpose in our life too. We're to spread the gospel through the local church.

[16 : 19] Because the wonder of the Lord's providence is you are where he has placed you. You're living in this community. And whether you're working or you're a parent at home or you're retired, this is where the Lord has you.

This is where the Lord has you. And he's called you, just like he called the first century church, he's called you to be a committed Christian. And he's called you to be a witness for Jesus Christ in this community.

You're to spread the gospel through the local church. And it's all so that his kingdom will expand and the gospel will advance through the local church. That's what Jesus was saying.

That's what he promised the apostles right at the beginning. You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, to the uttermost parts. And my friend, we are the uttermost parts.

We are as far removed from Jerusalem today as geographically possible. And yet, we're part of this promise that the Lord is going to spread the gospel through his local church.

[17 : 28] But we have to be faithful, committed Christians, bringing our witness into our community. My friend, we're to be witnesses to a committed Christianity.

And so as the gospel spread in the first century, we see these scattered believers. But then secondly, we see Stephen buried. We see Stephen buried.

We'll read verse one again. Saul approved of Stephen's execution. And there arose in that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem. And they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. So while Jerusalem was this war zone of persecution against the Christian church, with many families scattering from the city and fleeing and running for their lives, Stephen still hadn't been buried.

That's how quickly the persecution arose in Jerusalem. It was on the same day that Stephen was stoned to death. You could say Stephen had just died and persecution broke out.

[18 : 39] And Stephen's body was still lying there, unburied. And in the first century, if a body wasn't buried on the same day the person died, it was a sign of humiliation.

It was a sign of disrespect. It was a sign that the person had been abandoned. And you know, it makes you realise how much the persecutors hated these Christians.

Because they didn't even give the Christians an opportunity to bury one of their own. But what's remarkable is that we're told in verse 2, we're told, devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him.

Now the phrase devout men, it's literally God-fearing men. They were Christians. Maybe they were even Stephen's fellow deacons who had been ordained the same day as him. We don't know.

But you know, the love and the care and the compassion that they had towards Stephen, it was despite the threat of persecution around them, they were prepared to take Stephen's body and bury it.

[19 : 45] These God-fearing men weren't going to allow their persecutors to hinder them or have the martyred body of Stephen defiled. As we're told in chapter 6, Stephen, they knew Stephen.

They knew that he was a man full of faith. He was full of the Holy Spirit. He was full of grace, full of power. Stephen was a Christ-like man. He was full of Christ, which is why he gave this compelling speech to the Jewish council.

But you know, while I was studying this passage, I couldn't understand why this verse was here. It almost seems out of place. Verse 2 seems out of place in the flow of this passage.

It would probably have been made more sense if it was before verse 1 or even part of chapter 7. Because all it says in the flow of the passage, devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him.

But you know, as I was thinking about this verse and the persecution that the first century Christians were facing, I looked up a book called Fox's Book of Martyrs. And Fox's Book of Martyrs was a book that was written in the 16th century by this minister and historian called John Fox.

[21 : 03] And it's a brilliant book because in it John Fox gives an account of Christians who were persecuted and martyred from the time of the early church right up until the Reformation.

And notably, John Fox, he writes about Stephen saying that he was the second martyr in the Christian church after John the Baptist. Now, John Fox, he didn't view the crucifixion of Jesus as martyrdom because Jesus willingly laid down his life for sinners.

But Stephen, says John Fox, his death was occasioned by the faithful manner in which he preached the gospel to the betrayers and murderers of Christ. To such a degree of madness, they cast him out of the city and stoned him to death.

But this is the interesting part. John Fox says that the time when Stephen suffered is generally supposed to have been at the time of the Passover.

Which means that Stephen was stoned to death exactly one year after Jesus was crucified. Stephen was stoned to death and a great persecution arose in Jerusalem on the first birthday of the church.

[22 : 20] The first birthday of the church was a day that Stephen was stoned to death and persecution broke out. I believe that this short verse, although it seems to be out of place, it's put here to remind us Stephen was a man who was so Christ-like in his character.

Stephen was a man who was Christ-like in his character, conduct, and even his conversation. He was a Christ-like man. You'll remember that when Jesus was put to death, all the disciples fled and were scattered.

Jesus said, smite the shepherd and the sheep will scatter. And that's what we see here with Stephen. He's so Christ-like that Stephen is smitten and the sheep, where are they going?

They're fleeing Jerusalem. They're being scattered from Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria. But more than that, Stephen was Christ-like even in the way he died. Because when Stephen died, he died praying.

We read that at the end of chapter 7. We're told in verse 59 of chapter 7. As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And falling to his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not hold this sin against them.

[23 : 36] And when he had said this, he fell asleep. Stephen died praying. That's how Jesus died on the cross. Jesus died praying, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

Jesus died praying, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. This verse is put here to remind us that Stephen was so Christ-like in his character, conduct, and conversation.

But more than that, Stephen sought to live for Jesus and die like Jesus all because he loved Jesus. Stephen sought to live for Jesus and die like Jesus all because he loved Jesus.

And you know, my friend, we'll do well to follow Stephen's example because that's the example these devout and God-fearing men had to follow. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him.

But you know, there's something else about Stephen's funeral or his burial that was so Christ-like. You know, there was no one at the funeral of Jesus except for two devout men.

[24 : 54] Two devout, God-fearing men. You remember who was at the funeral of Jesus? Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the man who came to Jesus by night. And they went to Pilate, they asked for the body of Jesus, he gave it to them and they prepared the body of Jesus and they buried his body in Joseph's tomb.

And you know, here we see only two, maybe three devout, God-fearing men taking the body of Stephen, preparing it and burying it. And you know, for us, we often gauge the popularity of a person by the number of people who attend their funeral.

But there were only two people at the funeral of Jesus. There were two, maybe three, at the funeral of Stephen. But you know, my friend, it doesn't matter how many people will be at your funeral.

You won't be there to see it. But what Stephen's burial should remind us is that Stephen followed Jesus in life and Stephen belonged to Jesus in death.

Stephen followed Jesus in life and he belonged to Jesus in death. That was the reason these God-fearing men cared about the body of Jesus, the body of Stephen, because Stephen's body belonged to Jesus.

[26 : 22] They cared about his body because they knew that his body belonged to Jesus. Is that what our catechism reminds us? The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and they do immediately pass into glory.

But their bodies, their body, it's still united to Jesus Christ. It still belongs to Jesus and their bodies do rest in their graves until the resurrection.

And you know, my friend, this verse, although it may seem out of place, Stephen's burial should make you question, does my grave belong to Jesus?

Does my grave belong to Jesus? Am I following Jesus in life? And will I belong to Jesus in death?

Am I following Jesus in life and will I belong to Jesus in death? And if not, well, why not? why are you not following Jesus today?

[27 : 31] Why will you not belong to Jesus when you die? You know, it's the greatest comfort for the Christian to be able to say, I follow Jesus in life and I belong to Jesus in death.

The Christian can say, my grave belongs to Jesus. But does your grave, does your grave belong to Jesus?

So as the gospel spread in the first century, we see scattered believers, Stephen buried and lastly, Saul breathing. Saul breathing.

We'll read these verses again. Saul approved of Stephen's execution. There arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles.

Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church and entering house after house. He was dragging off men and women and committing them into prison.

[28 : 39] The opening verse of chapter 9 which we'll come to in a few weeks time, it describes this young man named Saul as one who was breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.

And that word breathing, as it says in chapter 9 and verse 1, it suggests that persecuting Christians was the life ambition of Saul. Saul found meaning and fulfilment in life by breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.

Of course, we know that Saul was later converted or even converted in chapter 9 to become the Apostle Paul and he would be an influential figure in the early church. But that wasn't without first causing chaos because we're told that Saul was ravaging the church.

Saul was wreaking havoc in the church. He was trying to destroy the church by breaking down doors and entering every Christian home just dragging out men and women and throwing them into prison.

And you know, what I find so solemn about this is that the word used to describe Saul committing them into prison it literally means betraying them.

[29 : 56] And the only other time that that word is used is in reference to Judas. Judas who betrayed Jesus. You know, my friend, Saul had the same evil heart as Judas because he was doing the work of Satan.

That's what he was doing. Saul was ravaging the church entering house after house. He dragged off men and women and committed them into prison. You know, we mentioned earlier John Fox and his book Fox's Book of Martyrs.

And now John Fox he gives an account of all these Christians these well-known Christians who were persecuted and martyred from the time of the early church right up until the Reformation. and I encourage you to read it or just to look at it now and again.

It's a brilliant book and it's fascinating to read because John Fox says that on the day that Stephen was stoned to death and this great persecution arose in Jerusalem he says about 2,000 Christians.

There was 25,000 in the church. 2,000 Christians one of whom was Nicanor one of the seven deacons who were ordained. They suffered martyrdom and persecution.

[31 : 09] But you know even though we're told in verse 1 that all these believers scattered except the apostles the apostles weren't immune to persecution. They weren't free from it because we're told in Fox's book of martyrs they were all eventually martyred apart from the apostle John and it's all recorded for us.

John Fox writes that it was 10 years after the death of Stephen that the apostle James was beheaded. Philip Philip you'll remember he was later scourged thrown into prison and then eventually crucified.

Matthew who wrote Matthew's gospel he was killed with an axe. Andrew who was the brother of Peter they were two fishermen he was crucified on a cross the cross shaped like the Scotland flag hence why we call it the St.

Andrew's cross. Peter was crucified upside down. Bartholomew was beaten and crucified. Thomas was thrust through with a spear.

Simon the zealot was also crucified. Matthias who was the new addition to the apostles he was stoned to death and then beheaded. Mark who wrote Mark's gospel he was tied to a horse and dragged through the city until there was nothing left of him.

[32 : 30] Luke who wrote Luke's gospel and the book of Acts he was hanged. James the less who was the brother of Jesus but also the one who wrote the letter of James he was stoned and beaten to death.

And you know in response to the martyrdom of Christians John Fox he wrote the history of the church may almost be said to be a history of the trials and sufferings of all its members.

You know my friend to be a Christian in the first century meant that you were signing your death warrant. And for us living in the 21st century we might look at persecution and even martyrdom we might see it as a setback to the church.

But the truth is the more the world persecutes the church the more the Lord preserves and protects the gospel. The more the world persecutes the church the more the Lord preserves and protects the gospel.

The Lord will fulfil his promise that the church of Jesus Christ will be built. The gates of hell will not prevail against it. And you know we'll hear about that even this evening when Adam comes and shares about the work that he's involved in.

[33 : 48] And he's involved in a work that speaks in which he speaks to those who are persecuted. But you know the reality is persecution is not confined to the first century.

It's estimated that there's more Christians dying today for their faith than there was in the early church. It's estimated today that 1 in 12 Christians in the world have been persecuted for their faith which would work out as about 215 million Christians.

215 million Christians this morning are gathering together in fear of persecution. They've been persecuted for their faith and the most dangerous place in all the world to be a Christian is North Korea.

And there's many other places. But you know this is the wonder of the church of Jesus that we may think that persecution is an obstacle to the gospel but the Lord is using persecution as an opportunity for advancing his kingdom in this world.

Do you know I remember when I was in HTC in Dingwall that would do my first degree and there was a class that was just before us and there was a man there who was from a persecuted country.

[35 : 03] He was from Nigeria and he was asked to open the class and lead in prayer. He stood up and all he said was Lord I pray that persecution will come to the west.

Amen. And he sat down. He was from Nigeria and he had seen the church grow in Nigeria. He had seen it grow through persecution and he could see the church in the west is dying and what it needs to grow is persecution.

It's a frightening prayer to hear, frightening prayer to pray. But that's what we're being taught here. The gospel spread. It continued to spread. Christ will have his witnesses.

His kingdom will extend to the uttermost parts of the earth. But persecution will not be an obstacle. Persecution will be used by the Lord as an opportunity for the furtherance of the gospel.

You know my friend Tertullian was right when he said the blood of the martyrs it is the seed of the church and the church is growing because Jesus promised I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it but for you my unconverted friend here this morning far better for you far better for you to be on the side of Christ and make your stand with Jesus and come out and be part of his church and be part of the societies and agencies and governments and even kingdoms of this world God because they're all going to collapse Christ is building his church you need to get on board and be part of it because the promise is the gates of hell will not prevail against it hell will prevail against everything else but not the church and you know

[37 : 03] J.C. Ryle my favourite minister he said long ago one single soul saved will outlive and outweigh all the kingdoms of this world one single soul saved will outlive and outweigh all the kingdoms of this world so far better for you to enter the kingdom of God and be found as a Christian and stand on the side of Christ because if it comes if persecution comes my friend Tertullian's words will remain the blood of martyrs will continue to be the seed of the church may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray O Lord our gracious God may give thanks to thee for thy word and Lord when we look at history and even the history of thy church and thy people who have been persecuted for righteousness sake and yet

Jesus could stand on the sermon on the mountain and say blessed are they blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven Lord remember thy church this morning remember those Lord who are persecuted those who live in fear those Lord who are making their stand for Christ remember them we pray and remember those Lord who encourage them remember the work of steadfast global and Lord remember the work of open doors and all these opportunities Lord even the organization voice of the martyrs Lord bless them as they seek to encourage thy people and Lord we ask that more and more would be added as this gospel is spreading from Jerusalem unto Judea to Samaria to the uttermost parts of the earth Lord bless thy church we pray keep our we ask that one day she will be presented faultless before thy glory with exceeding joy hear us then we ask go before us for we ask it in

Jesus name and for his sake Amen we're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 119 Psalm 119 this time in the Sing Psalms version and it's on page 167 Psalm 119 page 167 we're singing at verse 161 down to the verse mark 168 and as we said earlier Psalm 119 it's a psalm that focuses upon God's word and the psalmist is making his stand for God's word he's making his stand for Jesus even in the face of persecution Psalm 119 verse 161 though rulers hound me without cause my heart fears nothing but your word for in your promise I rejoice like one who finds great spoil

O Lord all falsehood I abhor and hate with all my heart I love your law I praise you seven times a day for your commands I hold in all so these verses Psalm 119 verses 161 to 168 we'll stand to sing and be able to God's praise the ruler found me without cause my heart fears nothing but your word for in your promise I rejoice like one who finds great spoil O Lord all falsehood

I have all and hate with all my heart I love I love your law I praise you seven times a day for your commands I hold in all in all great people who love you love your law they will not stumble in the way I wait for your salvation salvation

[42 : 31] Lord and your commands I will obey I will observe your statutes Lord my love for them is great and true your laws and precepts I obey for all my ways are known to you 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 forever more Amen