

Devoted to the Lord

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[0 : 00] Good evening and a warm welcome to the service this evening. The intimations you've seen on the screen and you have also on the white sheets. So I'll leave them with you and not take time to go through them just now.

If you could turn with me please now to Joshua chapter 22. Somebody said to me this afternoon, are we still in Joshua? We're almost finished but we're still in Joshua tonight.

Joshua chapter 22 and we read from verse 1. Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh and said to them, You have done all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded.

For a long time now to this very day you have not deserted your brothers but have carried out the mission the Lord your God gave you. Now that the Lord your God has given your brothers rest as he promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan.

But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you. To love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands and to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul.

[1 : 23] Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away and they went to their homes. To the half-tribe of Manasseh, Moses had given the land in Bashan. And to the other half of the tribe, Joshua gave the land on the west side of the Jordan with their brothers.

When Joshua sent them home, he blessed them saying, So the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land, which they had acquired in accordance with the command of the Lord through Moses.

When they came to Geloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan. And when the Israelites heard that they had built an altar on the border of Canaan at Gilead near the Jordan on the Israelite side, the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them.

So the Israelites sent Phinehas, son of Eleazar, the priest, to the land of Gilead, to Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. With him they sent ten of the chief men, one for each of the tribes of Israel, each on each the head of a family division among the Israelite clans.

When they went to Gilead, to Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, they said to them, The whole assembly of the Lord says, How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this?

[3 : 05] How could you turn away from the Lord and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against him now? Was not the sin of poor enough for us? Up to this very day we have not cleansed ourselves from that sin, even though a plague fell on the community of the Lord.

And now you are turning away from the Lord? If you rebel against the Lord today, tomorrow he will be angry with the whole community of Israel. If the land he possesses defiled, come over to the Lord's land, where the Lord's tabernacle stands, and share the land with us.

But do not rebel against the Lord, or against us by building an altar for yourselves, other than an altar of the Lord our God. When Achan, son of Zerah, acted unfaithfully regarding the devoted things, did not wrath come upon the whole community of Israel?

He was not the only one who died for his sin. Then Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh replied to the heads of the clans of Israel, The mighty one, God the Lord, the mighty one, God the Lord, he knows.

And let Israel know, if this has been in rebellion or disobedience to the Lord, do not spare us this day. If we have built our own altar to turn away from the Lord, and to offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, or to sacrifice fellowship offerings on it, may the Lord himself call us to account.

[4 : 32] No, we did it for fear that someday your descendants might say to ours, What do you have to do with the Lord, the God of Israel? The Lord has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you, you Reubenites and Gadites.

You have no share in the Lord, so your descendants might cause ours to stop fearing the Lord. That is why we said, Let us get ready and build an altar, but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices. On the contrary, it is to be a witness between us and you, and the generations that follow, that we will worship the Lord at his sanctuary, with our burnt offerings, sacrifices, and fellowship offerings. Then in the future, your descendants will not be able to say to ours, You have no share in the Lord. And we said, If we ever say this to us, if they ever say this to us, or our descendants, we will answer, Look at the replica of the Lord's altar, which our fathers built, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices, but as a witness between us and you.

Far be it from us, for us, to rebel against the Lord, and to turn away from him today, by building an altar for burnt offerings, grain offerings and sacrifices, other than the altar of the Lord, our God, that stands before his tabernacle.

[5 : 52] When Phinehas the priest, and the leaders of the community, the heads of the clans of the Israelites, heard what Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh had to say, they were pleased.

And Phinehas, son of Elias, the priest, said to Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, Today we know that the Lord is with us, because you have not acted unfaithfully towards the Lord in this matter. Now you have rescued the Israelites from the Lord's hand. Then Phinehas, son of Elias, the priest, and the leaders returned to Canaan from their meeting with the Reubenites and Gadites and Gilead, and reported to the Israelites.

They were glad to hear the report and praised God, and they talked no more about going to war against them to devastate the country where the Reubenites and the Gadites live.

And the Reubenites and the Gadites gave the altar, this name, a witness between us, that the Lord is God. Amen.

[6 : 55] And may God give us understanding of his word. Let's pray for a moment as we turn back to God's word. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word which we have read.

We thank you that this is the word of God, that we don't have to, we don't have to think up our own thoughts, we don't have to go digging for new ideas, but we have been given your word, which is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Generations will stand and fall. Empires will rise up and will crumble, but your word stands firm. So we thank you that it's dependable. We thank you that it's true.

And Lord, we ask for your help. We have sung, and what we have sung, Lord, we would echo in prayer. We are people who are in great need. We need you every hour, every time we come to the word of God.

We need help to be able to understand it. We need help to know what you are saying to us in our own lives. And so we ask, Lord, for that help, confessing our need and praying that you will meet us in our minds and in our hearts at the point of that need.

[8 : 02] We confess, Lord, that we need you for salvation. We are those who are sinners, and if it was not for Jesus, we would have no hope. We are much in need of a Savior, but we thank you that we have that Savior in Christ.

We pray that we would look to him and trust him. We confess, Lord, that we need you not only for salvation, but we need you once we have come to you for our salvation, to be able to keep on going each day.

And Lord, we thank you that you've promised that you will never leave us, that you will never forsake us. And we ask, Lord, that you would help us as we go from day to day to look to you for that health and for that strength.

We pray for any who may be thinking things through in advance of the table. The table next weekend. Some who you may be working in the heart and the life of, showing their sin to us, showing their need of Christ.

We pray for some who may have come to Jesus in faith, but never yet come to the table for fear that they will not be able to keep on going. Lord, we thank you that just as we have sung, we need you every day, and you have promised that your grace is not only saving grace, but it's sustaining grace.

[9 : 11] So encourage us, Lord, we pray to come each day for that grace that's sufficient for every day and every need that we have. We ask now, Lord, that you would continue with us, that you would help us.

We pray for those who are not with us tonight. Some who are struggling with their health, some who struggle with the responsibilities of life and the many different commitments, some who are struggling in their hearts because there is no desire to come.

We ask, Lord, that you would reach out to each one, those who have that soul thirst for you, but are unable to be here. We ask, Lord, that you would, that you would draw near to them and that you would minister to them where they are.

And others, you have opportunity, but no soul thirst, no desire to come to the place of Christ. We ask, Lord, that you would awaken a soul thirst in them.

You are the God who is able to begin a work in our lives. And we pray for those who have not yet come to that place where they see the need of Jesus. And we ask that you would draw near to them, Lord, and that you would help them to see their need.

[10 : 16] Hear our prayers. Take away all of our sin, we ask, and help us as we turn now once more to your word. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. It's good to see the boys and girls tonight.

Quite a lot of you tonight. So, I've got a watch right in front of me here. So, I'm keeping an eye on time. But keep on listening, because even though you might not understand everything, there's little bits and pieces in the messages that always God uses to speak to us.

Have you ever wondered, this is not just for the boys and girls, this is for everyone, but maybe especially for the boys and girls, because they might come as news to you. Have you ever wondered, when you watch the television, and you see the people on the news, and you see the people who are presenting programs that we watch, have you ever noticed how they never seem to get spots?

You know, we get spots, we're in the mirror in the morning, and we're trying to kind of fix the different marks that are on our face. We might wash your face three times before we go to bed, so we don't get spots.

We might put face masks and things on, just to decrease the likelihood of us getting spots. But we still get spots. Always, usually at the time that we're going to get our picture taken. But people on TV, who are there every day, they never seem to have spots.

[11 : 29] They never have funny marks on their faces. Do they? Do they? They do. You just can't see them. They cover them up with makeup. So all we ever get to see, of the people who are on television, is the best picture of themselves.

They cover up the spots. God's Word, the Bible, doesn't ever cover up the spots. It doesn't cover up the blemishes, that are in the history of God's people.

When you think about the disciples, the disciples are not perfect. They make lots of mistakes. They quarrel with each other. They do the wrong thing.

They say the wrong thing. They think the wrong thing. But we have a very clear picture of them in the Bible. God doesn't cover up spots. And Joshua chapter 22, it's a passage which, in some ways, we'd rather it's not there.

We would like to hear about God's people entering the promised land that he said he would take them into. And we would like to hear that the second they entered the promised land, they all lived together happily ever after.

[12 : 48] But that's not what happened. And we have a picture of that in Joshua chapter 22. We get the good and the bad and the ugly in Joshua chapter 22.

So we'll start with the good. And as we look at the eastern tribes, we've got eastern tribes and we've got western tribes here. Just like in Tarbert, we have the west siders and we have the east siders. There's the eastern tribes, there's the western tribes. And we look first at the eastern tribes. And we hear in Joshua 22 at the beginning that they were faithful as fighting men.

I don't know if I've got the points up on the screen, but the first point, for those who like to take notes, is that they were faithful as fighting men. And if you want to see this very clearly, go back to Joshua chapter 20, Joshua chapter 1, sorry, the very beginning.

Because in Joshua chapter 1, we have these fighting men and they're given their orders, they're given their mission. And we have the mission there at verse 12, Joshua chapter 1, verse 12.

[13:59] But to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-trib of Manasseh, Joshua said, Remember the command that Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you. The Lord, your God, has given you rest and has granted you this land, your wives, your children, and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you, east of the Jordan.

But all your fighting men, fully armed, must cross over ahead of your brothers. You are to help your brothers until the Lord gives them rest, as he has done for you. And until they too have taken possession of the land that the Lord, your God, has given them.

After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you, east of the Jordan, toward the sunrise. Then the answer is, Joshua, Whatever you have commanded us, we will do.

And wherever you send us, we will go. That's their mission. What happened next? Well, where these men were commanded to go, they went.

And what these fighting men were commanded to do, they did. They were obedient. They did exactly what they were commanded to do.

[15:11] And here in Joshua's closing speech, the end of this book, he commends them. Verse 1, Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-trib of Manasseh.

And he said to them, You have done all that Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded. For a long time now, to this very day, you have not deserted your brothers, but have carried out the mission the Lord, your God, gave you.

Now that the Lord, your God, has given your brothers rest as he promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you on the other side of the Jordan.

It's to the very letter of the Lord. You hold Joshua 1 and Joshua 22 side by side and you look at the orders and then what they did, they marry up perfectly.

They were faithful as fighters. They weren't perfect. There had been some mistakes made and we've seen them as we've gone through the book.

[16:14] There had been some blunders. There had been some errors. They drifted off course a little at times, but they had kept on keeping on to the end and now they receive that commendation.

Commendation, boys and girls, is simply when your parents say to you, I asked you to do that job, you did a good job. Joshua is saying to them, you've done a good job.

Reminds me here of the Apostle Paul. He's coming to the very end of his life and he's looking forward to heaven. He knows he's going to be with Jesus soon and he says in 2 Timothy 4 and at verse 6, the time of my departure is near.

I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award me on that day.

He was faithful. He wasn't perfect, but he was faithful. He kept on keeping on. These men, not perfect, but they were faithful.

[17:25] They kept on keeping on. And that should be our desire, to keep the faith, to be faithful if we're Christians.

not in order that we'll save ourselves. We don't have to save ourselves. We can't save ourselves. Jesus is the one who saved us. We're saved by grace.

We're saved by everything that Jesus did on the cross. It's the Lord that gives us rest. And that was underlined even in the verses that we read there.

It's the Lord that gave rest to his people. Now that the Lord, verse 4, has given rest. Rest. But because the Lord has given us rest if we are Christians, because we can go to our beds tonight and say, well, if I die before the morning, I know I'm going to rest.

I know I'm going to heaven. I know I'm safe. If we can say that, if we know that, because of everything that Jesus has done, everything that we've believed, if we know that is true, then surely we want to serve the Lord who saved us.

[18:31] Surely we want to do good things for him. Surely we want to keep on keeping on until that day when he takes us from time into eternity and says to us, well done, good and faithful servant.

That's what we want to hear, isn't it? Well done. Not perfect, but good and faithful servant. Until then, let's remember what we said, onward, onward, onward, Christian soldiers.

Yes, we're in a battle. First point, faithful is fighting men. Second point, devoted as disciples. And that's what Joshua calls them to be.

He calls them to be disciples of God. He calls them to love God. Look at verse 5. Joshua says, but be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you.

To love the Lord, your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul.

[19 : 46] Some of us might kind of groan at the prospect of another chapter in Joshua. Joshua. Some of us might long for the day that we get out of Joshua and into some more devotional book.

Well, what more devotional verses can you thirst for than these? You want an illustration or a definition of what it means to be a disciple, what it looks like to follow the Lord?

We have it here. Sometimes you see these books, The Beginner's Guide to Knitting, for example. I can't knit. But I hear clicking on the house just now.

If I was to want to knit, I'd have to go and buy a book, one of these books, The Beginner's Guide to Knitting. You see these kind of books on the shelves in different bookshops or, you know, basic computing.

In these kind of books, you're given a very concise, short summary of what to do to begin and to make progress in these disciplines. Well, Joshua teaches the people here, if you want to go on and progress as disciples of God, then here's what you need to do.

[20 : 54] Keep his commandments. Love him. Love him. Walk in all of his ways. Not just some of his ways, the ones that look like they're nice paths, but walk in all of his ways.

Obey his commandments. It's the people again. Hold fast to him. serve him. And do all this, says Joshua, not with a kind of small sliver of your heart, the wee bit of your heart that's left over for Sundays, but he says, put everything into this.

Put your whole heart, put your whole soul, put all your strength into following the Lord. Be devoted as disciples, says Joshua.

Don't be half-hearted. Be devoted. Don't be lukewarm. Don't be apathetic. Have some zeal. Now, some of us might say, you know, as we read this with New Testament spectacles on, isn't this legalism?

Haven't I been saved by grace? Why always talk about the commandments? The answer to that question is yes, if you and I are Christians, then we have been saved by grace.

[22 : 10] We have been saved from sin. But we have been saved into a relationship with God. And for that relationship to deepen, we need to try to live in a way that pleases the Lord.

That's not legalism. That's devotion. If we love the Lord, we want to please him in the way that we live. Not grieve him.

If we love and trust the Lord, we want to be devoted, not disgruntled disciples. Don't we? Faithful as fighting men, devoted as disciples.

Third point. They were blessed in their building. Verse 6. Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away and they went to their homes, to the half tribe of Manasseh.

Moses had given land in Bashan and to the other half of the tribe Joshua gave land on the west side of the Jordan with their brothers. When Joshua sent them home, he blessed them, saying, return to your homes with your great wealth, with your large herds of livestock, with silver, gold, bronze, and iron, and a great quantity of clothing, and divide with your brothers to plunder from your enemies.

[23 : 37] So the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land, which they had acquired in accordance with the command of the Lord through Moses.

So you have the picture there, don't you? These soldiers shattered, having been through the horrors of war for a long time, and they've been commended, they've been discharged now, they're told you can go back to be with your families, you can go back to your homes, and so off they said. When they came, verse 10, to Gilead near the Jordan, in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan.

They stop and they decide that they are going to start building. Before they get home, before they cross the Jordan, they stop and they determine that they are going to do some building.

I'm not that great with dates and noting dates, but I was told in the course of this week, it's actually one year ago this weekend since we moved into this church building.

[24 : 54] It's a great blessing to be in here. We should never take it for granted. But as we think back and remember the months when we were up to our knees in mud, hands bleeding from these blocks that some of us soft-handed people were lifting, I think we can recall that these days were days of blessing as well.

It wasn't drudgery. it was hard work, but it was full of joy, it was full of laughter, it was full of fellowship, because what we were doing, even in the building, even in the shifting muck and picking up wood and taking stuff to the dump, what we were doing, it was an act of worship.

It was with a desire for God's glory. And here, as God's people, as they're sent away with God's blessing on them, verse 3, they go away, they approach the Jordan, verse 10, they remember God's faithfulness to them, that river that was such a reminder of how God had delivered them miraculously, and they stop, and they say, let's build an altar, let's build an altar where we can be inspired every time we see it to worship God.

Let's build an altar, let's let's continue to seek his glory and his blessing. And we can imagine them, or I certainly can imagine them on that site, working with purpose and working with diligence and cheerfulness as they built this structure to glorify God.

We can imagine how there must have been blessing amongst them in the building. Meanwhile, over the river, as the western tribes got the binoculars out and heard news reports circulating across land, there was trouble brewing.

[27 : 04] And as we look at the second half of this chapter, there's various lessons that we can very quickly learn from this situation that was escalating.

And the first lesson that we learn as we look at this, the fourth point is ask, don't assume. Very practical, very common sense lesson.

It's one we keep having to learn. We must ask, not assume. A very clear biblical pattern is that blessing will almost always be followed by trouble.

We need to be alert to that. Blessing will almost always be followed by trouble. And we see that here. You know, it's almost unbelievable what we're reading.

That as soon as the western tribes heard of this altar and saw this emerging altar, they instantly assumed the worst about these eastern tribes.

[28 : 06] And they decide forthwith to declare war against them. Verse 11, And when the Israelites heard that they had built an altar on the border of Canaan at Geliath near the Jordan on the Israelite side, the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them.

To go to war against them. So they make their plans and they rally the troops. They prepare speeches. to scold the eastern tribes with.

And it all looks very, very bad. What's escalating here? And the thing is, it's all based on assumptions. It's actually all based on false information.

And it's a warning to us. Sometimes we see someone do something from a distance. we think, why are they doing that?

Sometimes we overhear half a sentence that may concern us or maybe about us and we don't like what we think we heard. So we get instantly defensive and we start to feel hostile towards that person.

[29 : 22] And there's a growing outrage in us as we start to mull over. over. And the more we look then at this person that has in some measure annoyed us by what we think we might have heard or what they may have done, the more we look at the person, the more we listen to the person, what they say and what they don't say, the more we assume the worst of them, don't we?

And in that kind of mind and heart, the devil can run riot. And one of the learning points in this chapter is we should never assume anything about anyone.

But if we have sufficient concern about something that a brother or a sister in Christ has said or done, what should we do?

Go to the person. not to make war, but for the sake of peace and unity, we go to the person.

We ask them, what's the truth? I'm making no assumptions. What's the truth here? There's a lady in Loch Caron, Elsie Gilmer was her name.

[30 : 38] And whenever there was any kind of scandal or rumour that was building, gathering momentum in Loch Caron, if I had any concern for her, she would always say, I always go to the source.

She wouldn't listen to anybody. She wouldn't be drawn in by all the chatter. She would go to the source and say, I've heard something.

It bothers me. Tell me what's going on here. What's going on here? Ask, don't assume. Fifth point, almost done.

What we see here in terms of a reaction to this is humility, not heat. Now just try and put yourself into the boots of these people. The Western tribes arrive, and I know there's complex historical arguments and all this and I'm not going to get into this.

I'm just reading this on the face of it. I'm trying to think myself into this situation. The Western tribes arrive and they're looking stern. they have the artillery with them.

[31 : 54] They have the look of war about them. They're pointing their fingers in accusation at you. They're pointing their weapons in your general direction and you look up and you see your brothers.

You see the people that you love. You see the people that you were in the trenches with. and you ask what are you doing? And then they let you have it.

And in verses 13 to verse 20 they let fly with a barrage of accusations against the Eastern tribes. They accuse them, verse 16, of breaking faith with God, of turning away from God, of building an altar in rebellion and they accuse them of persevering willfully in sin, verse 17.

They accuse them of turning away from the Lord and provoking his anger, verse 18. They accuse them of rebelling against the Lord, verse 19, and being unfaithful like Achan.

[33 : 01] So here are these men in their boiler suits, building this altar because they want to worship God, they want to praise the Lord, and this is what hits them.

And you can only imagine the initial shock and dismay and then the hurt as they see their brothers and then the temptation to react very, very, very badly.

You can only imagine what would go through your mind in response to that. as you start to process all these accusations, the temptation would be to respond something along these lines.

You seriously think that about us? After all we've been through, after all the battles, after all the things that we've been through over the years, after the fellowship that we've had, after all that we've shared, and you've come here with your false accusations and you're calling us liars and idolaters and heretics, well if that's what you think, if you've come here looking for a fight, then let's have it.

That would be the temptation, I think. That would be the temptation, I think, that would go through my mind and to react like that would be predictable and yet that's not what they do.

[34 : 39] Humility, not heat. Verses 21 to 29, they keep calm. They remember that God is the one who knows.

God is the one who knows their hearts. So even though fingers are pointing in their directions, accusing them of all kinds of things, they're remembering the Lord has seen their hearts.

peace. And that brings a measure of peace. And then they take the time to explain carefully what they're doing and why they're doing it.

this altar is not an altar in rebellion, they're saying. This is an altar of worship. Our desire is not to sin against God, they're saying, but rather serve him.

And there's just such deep humility here, such a desire to glorify God. They don't fight fire with fire, as we might.

[35 : 49] They take the heat out of the situation, they diffuse it with words of grace, gentle, measured tones.

They make a confession of faith in God. The God unites them. and who doesn't send them to war with each other.

And it's just a great example, I think, of how we're to act and react in lots of different situations. Always humility over heat.

I remember when leaving the Church of Scotland, various people rushed at me in a warlike rage. Sometimes face-to-face, sometimes with messages and letters and emails accusing us of going against God's way and rebelling against God's will and leading his people in the wrong direction.

[37 : 06] And I know others have endured the same kind of thing. When the whole reason for feeling a need to leave was out of a desire to obey God and to honour him and go the way of his word.

So when somebody flies at you with all kinds of false applications, it's so tempting still to react in anger and to let an emotional heat boil over.

But we are taught here, in that situation, and in every situation like it, to let humility overcome heat. if we let our emotions reign in our lives, we will go from one crash to another, one battle, one war to another.

We're called to let humility overcome heat, and that's what happens here, and that's why there's a happy conclusion to this episode. there's witness over warfare.

[38 : 27] That altar that was being built very nearly became a symbol of war. It very nearly became a symbol of sin and the shame of God's people when they turn on each other, but instead we see in verses 30 to 33, there's no time to go there, it becomes a symbol of grace.

Verse 34, and the Reubenites and the Gadites gave the altar this name, a witness between us that the Lord is God.

God. So here we have the east and we have the west and this chapter concludes, not with them staring down the barrel of a gun at each other, but both looking across at each other, seeing this altar that had been the point of dispute and being reminded constantly of the fact that the Lord was their God.

both sides of the Jordan, the Lord was their God. Witness over warfare.

That was their priority. Witness over warfare. And that was the outcome. This was an altar of witness rather than a war memorial.

[40 : 01] as we finish, where do we look? Where can we go and bear witness to the fact that the Lord Jesus is our God?

We don't go to an altar. We go to a table. We don't look to a monument. we look to a cross.

So the question to finish with is, have you been to this cross yet? Have you made your peace with God?

Is the Lord your God? And will you go to that table to bear witness to that? As he calls you and I to. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we pray that you would help us as we go from this place, as we go with this chapter in our minds.

[41 : 15] Help us, we pray, to continue to hear and to remember the lessons that you press upon us through your word. God, we are those who fall and who fail.

We are those who so often constantly need your help. So we pray, Lord, that you would help us day by day to seek to bear witness to the fact that you are our God.

Enable us, if we are your people, to go to that table to bear witness to that fact and enable us not only on that occasion to go to the table, but enable us as we prepare to go there and as we rise from there in due course to continue to bear witness to the fact that the Lord is our God.

Help us, we pray, if we are your people, to show that in the way that we live, in the way that we act and react to each other, in the way that we love each other.

Help us, we pray, in all of that to show that we are your disciples. And we ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all, both now and forever more.

[42 : 46] Amen.