

What do you believe ? Why ? So what?

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[0 : 00] Welcome to our service this morning as we come together to worship God. We pray that he would bless our time under the sound of his word.

We're going to begin by singing words from Psalm 116. Psalm 116, singing from the beginning down to verse 8.

I love the Lord because my voice and prayer she did hear. I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me his ear.

Death, the cords, and sorrows did about me compass round. The pains of hell took cold on me. My grief and trouble found. Upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, Deliver thou my soul, O Lord, I do thee humbly pray.

God, merciful and righteous is, yea, gracious is our Lord. God saves the meek. I was brought low, he did me help afford.

[1 : 05] O thou, my soul, do thou return unto thy quiet rest. For largely, lo, the Lord to thee, this bounty hath expressed. For my distressed soul from death delivered was by thee.

Thou didst my mourning eyes from tears. My feet from falling free. And so on. We'll sing verses 1 to 8 of Psalm 116.

I love the Lord because my voice and prayer she did hear. I love the Lord because my voice and prayer she did hear.

I, while I live, will call on him who begs to me his ear.

Of death the curse and sorrows did.

[2 : 21] Above me, God must run. The grace of them took hold on me.

I give thine trouble found. Upon the name of God the Lord, Then did I call and say, Till then thou love my soul, O Lord, I do thee humbly pray.

God merciful and righteous is, Yea, gracious is our Lord.

God save some, he guide was brought low. He did me help afford.

O thou my soul, do thou return, Unto thy quiet rest.

[4 : 16] For large me, O Lord, the Lord to thee, His bounty hath been stressed.

For my distress and soul from death, Dear Lord was by thee, Thou didst my mourning, Thou didst my mourning, I strong tears.

My feet from falling free. Let us join together in prayer.

Eternal and ever blessed God, May they have sprung from our lips as truth that is marked in our own experience.

We can sing these words with knowledge and understanding of what the words mean.

[5 : 55] But experientially it may be quite different to what is true of us.

We can understand what the grace of love involves purely by powers of reason. We can understand what it is for a passion to be beholden to another because of the graces demonstrated towards them in whatever way they are expressed.

But it is another thing entirely for us to be those who are the recipients of that grace and to be responsive to the one who has shown us it, as those who are the beneficiaries of all it entails.

Your people are such. And enable us who are in that privileged position to express our thankfulness and to praise the name of the Lord who has loved us and given himself for us.

We pray that your blessing would be upon our gathering today here in this place of worship. And that it may be that very place where you are pleased to reveal yourself to us as the God who is worthy to receive such worship.

[7 : 35] That it would be that it would be the response of our hearts even now to desire the shoes to be taken from off our feet because of the sense that we have that we are standing upon holy ground.

As we so recently spoke of with regard to the effect of the theophany upon Moses, your servant.

As he deserved the presence of the Lord and heard the voice of the majesty from on high uttering such glorious words that he drew back with fear reigning in his heart.

As we so recently spoke of the Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, help us to understand that there is such a thing as holy fear. And that that is what is honoring to the God who is to be feared.

It is nothing to do with slavish fear. We know something of that in the word. Fear of man bringeth a snare. Fear of man bringeth a snare.

[9 : 10] Fear of man bringeth a snare. And if it is the fear of man, it is clearly something that is opposed to the fear of God. We pray that you would help us today to worship, to see your face clearly, and to draw us ever closer to yourself as we acknowledge the privilege that we enjoy today on mercy's ground.

May the word that is read in our hearing be potent in our experience.

May it be fragrant. May it envelop it as in its perfume, that we may know that we are in the presence of the God who gave it.

May it be a garden of the Lord to us, that all of us who vacate this building at the end of the service will carry with us the fragrance of being in this perfumed parlor of God's visitation.

We pray, Lord, your blessing upon every soul that is met here. Whatever their needs are, we give thanks that you know them better than any one of us know our own needs.

[10 : 41] We acknowledge that because we are sinners in need of salvation, we cannot but have need because we are on a journey to meet with our God.

It is appointed. We are told in your word for man wants to die and then experience the judgment. That is what your word unambiguously sets before us.

And however long lived we are, however long the journey is that we are on, there is no doubt in our mind that one day soon we will arrive at that end.

And what we have done in the flesh that we will answer to God for, whether it be good or evil. Help us to ensure that we avail ourselves of the day of opportunity.

Esteem us precious the time that we have. And we pray that you would sanctify it to us even this morning.

[11 : 54] Remember the homes and families that we represent. Remember the burdens that we carry. Enable us to leave them in your caring hands.

Thankful that you can bear not only the burden but ourselves. We pray for those who are confined to their homes. Some hospitalized, some being cared for in places of permanent residence for the elderly.

We pray that you would remember each one according to need. We commit to your care also those entrusted with such care. Those members of the caring professions.

Whether they be doctors or nurses or carers within the community. We give thanks for all whose heart is one over to that path of duty.

And we give thanks that it is a calling that not many possess. But that you would bless it as the undertaker to fulfill it. Remember those who are sorrowful and grieving amongst us.

[13 : 04] The voice of death can be heard in the middle of time to time. And we are seldom out with the shadow. But it casts over us as communities.

We remember in your presence all who have grief and pain. Whether it is newly kindled within their heart. With memories and with new experience.

We pray for your blessing upon the proclamation of truth to that end. That it may assuage grief. That we may salve the pain and the sorrow. That only God alone can do for them and for us.

We remember in your presence the preaching of the word. To the far corners of the earth. Thankful that whatever we plead for. And we have much to seek at your hands.

To the almighty God who sits upon the throne of the universe. That we cry out to one who is omnipotent. And that the Lord God eternal reigneth.

[14 : 14] That you are the God who is God over all. So as we remember ourselves. We remember others. We think of our nation. Our king, his family.

The governments that rule over us in his name. We pray that you would bless the various parliaments. Those who serve within the offices of power.

May their accountability not just to the electorate. Way upon their hearts and minds. But their accountability to God.

A God that they have so besmirched by their own behaviour. And the laws that they are responsible for enacting. In recent days.

We do not. Have any. Anything other than the certainty. That for all our actions.

[15 : 13] Be they good or evil. That we will answer to God for them. We pray for the nations of the earth. Embroiled in war. And we think of Ukraine.

And the warring factions that are allied against them. We pray for various other nations that have constant civil war ongoing for many decades now.

Those displaced individuals who have been driven from their homes. Some we hear of arriving on our shores.

And some losing their lives in the desire to seek a better life for themselves. We do not. We do not. Except in a.

In a small measure. Appreciate. What they have been driven from. The poverty. And the. The. The devastating influence of.

[16 : 12] Of war upon their lives. Of. On war upon their lives. The oppression that is often prevalent in these nations.

That. Make them want to leave their homes. And seek better elsewhere. We. We need always to remember that.

We too as a nation have known much of. Of circumstances where. In the not too distant past. Those who.

Lived within these. Shores of ours. Were. Driven from their homes. By despots. Who were intent on. Self elevation.

And. Lining their own pockets. Others having to leave their homes. Because the land was insufficient to sustain them. And these truths should not be.

[17 : 11] Ever far from our mind. As we consider the fate of others. We pray Lord for grace. To look to the light of your word.

For. The knowledge that. Would feed into our. Our actions. Remember. The preaching of the word today.

Forever. Opportunity arises. For men to stand up. In purports. Proclaiming Christ. May they be encouraged from on high. May the missionaries of the cross.

Be kept safe. In places where. Their activity. Is often. An activity. Of jeopardy. We.

Ask. That you would bless. The. Congregation. Where. Christ. Is remembered. In his death. Today. Without. Presbytery. May the blessing. Of the most high God.

[18 : 09] Be upon. All that is done. In your name. Hear our prayers. Pardon our sins. In Jesus name. We ask it. Amen. Going to sing again.

To God's praise. This time. From Psalm. 138. We are singing. From verse 1. To 6. Psalm 138.

From verse 1. Thee will I praise. With all my heart. I will sing praise to thee. Before the gods. And worship will be. Toward.

Thy sanctuary. I will praise thy name. Even for thy truth. And kindness. Of thy love. For thou. Thy word. Hast magnified.

All thy great name above. Thou didst me answer. In the day. When I to thee. Did cry. And thou. My fainting soul. With strength.

[19 : 04] Did strengthen inwardly. All kings. Upon the earth. That are. Shall give thee praise. O Lord. When as they. From thy mouth. Shall hear. Thy true and faithful word.

Yea. In the righteous ways. Of God. With gladness. They shall sing. For great's the glory. Of the Lord. Who hath. Who doth. Whatever reign.

Though God be high. Yet he respects. All those. That lowly be. Whereas the proud. And lofty ones. Are far off. Knoweth he.

Verses 1. To 6. Of Psalm 138. He will I praise. With all my heart. He will I praise.

With all my heart. I will sing praise to thee.

[20 : 05] For thy grace.

For Thy truth and kindness of Thy love.

For Thou Thy work lest magnified, O Thy great King above.

Thou didst me answer in the day when I to Thee cry.

And Thou my fifted soul with strength, descendant inwardly.

[21 : 40] All kings upon the earth that I shall give Thee grace, O Lord.

When Thou stay from Thy mouth shall hear Thy true unfaithful word.

Yea, in the righteous ways of God, with gladness they shall sing.

For grace the glory of the Lord, who does forever reign.

Though God be high, yet He respects all those that know Thee.

[23 : 15] Where has the blood and love He wants, our heart of glory.

We're going to hear the word of God as we have it in the New Testament. The first epistle general of Peter, chapter 3.

And we're going to read from verse 8 to the end of the chapter. 1 Peter, chapter 3, from verse 8.

1 Peter, chapter 4, verse 9.

1 Peter, verse 9.

[24 : 59] 1 Peter, verse 9.

1 Peter, verse 10. 1 Peter, verse 10.

1 Peter, verse 10. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

For life figured whereunto even baptism doth also no savers, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of our good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

[27 : 07] Amen, and may the Lord add his blessing to this reading of his word, and to his name be the praise. We're going to continue singing to God's praise this time from Psalm 119.

Psalm 119 and at verse 41. Psalm 119.

Psalm 119.

And so on.

Thy sweet mercy is also come. Listen me, O Lord.

[29 : 11] In thy name, O Lord.

Him, O Lord. And so on. Whose side fully reproacheth me, O Lord. Whose side fully reproacheth me, O Lord.

For in thy word I trust. The word of truth.

My mouth take thou not utterly. My mouth take thou not utterly. For on thy judgments righteous.

For on thy judgments righteous. For on thy judgments righteous. My hope does not rely.

[30 : 34] My hope does not rely. So shall I keep forevermore. So shall I keep forevermore.

Thy Lord. O Lord. O Lord. O Lord. O Lord. O Lord. O Lord.

O Lord. O Lord. O Lord. O Lord. O Lord. O Lord.

O Lord. O Lord. O Lord. O Lord. O Lord. O Lord. O Lord. O Lord. O Lord.

And I wish shame shall not be moved And will delight myself always In light of which I loved To thy openness which I love My hands lift up my will And I will also meditate Upon my status quo

[32 : 31] Can we turn to the New Testament scriptures And the passage from the first epistle general of Peter chapter 3 That we were reading together And just turn to verse 15 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 15 Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts And be ready always to give an answer To every man that asketh you A reason of the hope that is in you With meekness and fear Having a good conscience That whereas they speak evil of you As evil doers They may be ashamed That falsely accuse your good conversation In Christ and so on There is a very real sense

In which the words of our text Challenge us all Whether we are Christians or not We have an immediate context In which the words are found They are words that are quotations From the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah Where they originally belonged The prophet there is dealing with a situation Where there is the temptation To look other than to God Look elsewhere rather than look to God To find security

In the face of enmity In the passage that we are finding The words of our text We apply to a context Where the believer is confronted by enmity Those who are opposed to what The believer believes in And the temptation To deal with that enmity Without looking to God To support and to strengthen The believer In the face of that opposition So the Apostle Peter In this immediate context I would imagine Is saying to the believer The only way you can

Meet such opposition Is having a clear understanding Of what you are as a believer Who you are as a believer What you believe in So on Now if these words are to be Applied to the believer Which I suppose We must insist on To begin with It can only be understood In one way That a believer Needs to Work out in his own mind What they believe in Why they believe it And what they expect By reason of Possessing that belief But if you are not a believer Then I think That the same criteria Applies to you As applies to the believer

You must be in the position Of being able to work out Well I don't believe You must Have some idea Of what you don't believe You must have some idea Of why you don't believe What you say you don't believe And you must have some Concept of what that means To you In the immediate And in the future I don't think that's a wrong A wrong Perspective to have For many people I don't think they have ever Given much thought If any thought To Why They are not Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ Maybe you have

[37 : 40] I don't know Only you can answer that When I was thinking Through this I was saying to myself Well It is Always a danger To think about The way people Are Actually Working things out In their own mind To come with Fixed Peace of Positions On Their Position On their Standing Or their Place Without Fully Understanding Where they've How they've Come to that Place Or even Having any Notion of What the place That they're in Is Actually Perhaps Looking at the Number of you here You may have Travelled Any number of Different roads To get where you are

Today Wherever you are My interest Really is In your Relationship With the Lord Jesus Christ If there is One That's my Interest I'm not really Interested In Although It would be Wrong for me To be Disinterested In everything That there is That makes up Your life That wouldn't Be right But my Main concern As a Minister of The gospel Is To Ascertain Where you Stand With regard To God Where you Stand With regard To the Passion Of the Lord Jesus Christ And To try And Understand For every One of you What you Understand By Where you Are Where you Are at And what Has brought You there And what You expect To achieve By being There And what You expect

To achieve By moving On from There At some Point Let me Refer you To a Book Written By Somebody Who is I think He is Described Anyway As a Former Atheist Ateist And I think That's Probably How he Describes Himself A Former Atheist He's A teacher Of theology A man By the Name Of Alastair McGrath And And And he Has Signed Many Books And Many Of Them Are Dealing With The Idea Of Faith And How One comes to faith. One book in particular is one of several and it has the title Christian Belief for Everyone. Christian Belief for Everyone. Faith in the Cretes. So he's written these books with a view to working his way through doctrine and theology but at a very practical level. And in that book he has, in his introduction, he has three questions and that's what really made me think of this man because of this, what Peter expects us to be engaged in. He has three questions. He asks, what do Christians believe? Why do Christians believe this? And what difference does it make? What do Christians believe? Why do they believe this? And what difference does it make? I think these questions are very important. And they're very important if we direct these questions to ourselves. If I am a Christian, then at some point I need to ask myself the question, well what is it? What do I believe? Why do I believe what I believe? And what do I expect from believing this? Now if you bear these questions in mind, and we're going to frame our thoughts today on these questions. Peter the Apostle means the believer he wants the believer to be he wants the believer to be he wants the believer to be he expects the believer to be challenged. He expects the believer to encounter those who will oppose him and who will be opposed to them because of what they believe.

Now it's important for the person who believes to understand what they believe, to know what they believe, to have a clear persuasion of their understanding of the gospel and the person of whom the gospel speaks pre-eminently.

So if you're a Christian, how would you begin to answer this question? If you're not a Christian, if you're not a Christian, is it necessary for you to believe anything at all?

[43 : 48] I was reading just various words and various comments on Christian belief and very often the Christian deals with atheistic philosophers.

People who have no time for God, no time for faith, no time for faith, no time for any description. And they would insist that, well, belief is not necessary for our existence in this world.

Belief is something that is man-made, it originates with man and it just seeks service to satisfy some inclination that man may have.

But unfortunately for many of these philosophers who are atheistic in their approach to belief, they themselves must at some point establish some kind of belief system that they themselves possess, which they would argue has nothing whatsoever to do with our understanding of what a belief system is.

But let's begin with the simple question of, what does the believer believe? It is important to recognize, and we do have to acknowledge it, that it is relatively easy for us to find that we make assumptions based upon a person's own declaration of where they are with regard to God or to a belief system that involves God.

[45 : 54] So for me to separate you out today and say, we have unbelievers and we have believers in the community of this congregation.

Some of you might dispute that, because you would argue, well, I do believe in God. I would probably suspect that every one of you believe in God, or that you would say that you believe in God.

If we were to carry out a straw poll of any description involving that question, I would probably find that 100% of you would say that you believe in God.

Now what do we understand by that declaration? When we make it, what do we mean by it? I don't want you to be offended, because I'm thinking of a Christian just now, and I've often heard Christians telling their story, telling their story of coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they would say, I've always believed in God.

I've always believed in God. That's what they say. And yet, at some point in their experience, their belief in God experiences a transformation.

[47 : 31] They've changed by their own profession, by their own confession, by their own declaration of an experience that involves them in being changed from what they were to what they now profess to be.

A change has taken place. So the question you would ask is, is the God you believe in now different to the God you believed in then?

Is there a difference to the way that you understand who God is? Is there a difference to the way that you behave towards that God?

Is there a difference in the way that you live your life now, as opposed to the way you lived it then, even though you say you believed in God? What do we actually mean when we say that?

We believe the Bible to be God's word? We believe in heaven and hell? We believe in salvation through our Redeemer? Well, I suppose the more you probe and the more you ask the questions, you'll discover that those who actually said they believed in God, the God they believed in didn't actually exist.

[49 : 00] He didn't exist. Because the Bible tells you there is only one God, the only living and true God.

And that one God, who is the only living and true God, is not a figment of any person's imagination. However much you allow your imagination to feed into who this God is and what this God does, God does not allow it.

God does not permit it. God is a God who is from all eternity God. And we often speak of him as if we know him.

And in reality, we only think we know him. We would like to think of him in a certain way.

We would like to think that this God is not as severe as the Bible says that he is. We would like to think that he is more benign than the Bible insists that he is.

[50 : 12] We would like to think that he is not as severely holy as the Bible says about for us to see him as he is. And what do we do when we do that?

What are we doing? The God of the Bible is the only God that is. And if we don't like the way that God is, if we tame him down, if we make him less than he is, what do we do?

Do we end up with the same God? Clearly not. I was thinking along these lines that the God of the Bible is a God who sits upon the throne of the universe.

He has the right to sit on that throne. It is his. He created this world and all that is in it.

All that is in it is answerable to him. It moves within the sphere of his influence and nothing operates out with it.

[51 : 34] And yet, when we look at the way mankind generally operates, one of the first things mankind has to do is displace this God from his throne and in his place, mankind is set.

Whether that is as mankind, humanity, the race of Adam, or whether it is the egotist, the I am who is putting himself in the place of the I am of God.

And the thing you see when that happens is this. The person who is pleased to take the place of God on the throne, in other words, my way, or the highway, what I do is my business.

You have no right to interfere in what I do, what I think, why I think it. You are intruding into the place that is sacredly mine.

And you find that that person is quite content to occupy that space until things go wrong. And very often, things do go wrong.

[52 : 52] And when they go wrong, then we see the finger of blame pointed, not at their own heart or their own sphere of responsibility, but outside of themselves.

And God sometimes is the one who gets the blame when things go wrong, whether it is at a worldwide level, whether it is the war in Ukraine, whether it is suffering of humanity, whether it is the cancer that afflicts the infant.

You know, man wants it both ways, always. There is a God who is accountable and suitable to him. Or there is a God who is, who everything is answerable to him for.

But what do we believe in? Who do we believe in? Why do we believe in it? The Apostle Peter expects the person answering this question to have clarity.

He expects the believer to have a firm grasp of what they believe. Unfortunately, in this passage, that expects clarity on the part of the believer, there is a lack of clarity in the translation.

[54 : 33] Not so much in the translation, but lettered manuscripts differ in the wording. So that what we have in the ESV, for example, in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy.

As a part posted, sanctify the Lord your God in your hearts. The Lord God, in the AB, is in later versions, it becomes the Lord Christ.

Now that's not a major thing. The New English Translation, set Christ apart as Lord.

It's just simply more recent manuscripts that some of the newer translations go to have put Christ instead of God.

Now that's not difficult as far as the theology is concerned. But, I suppose, if you're interested in clarity, then bear in mind the context in which these words are found.

[55 : 48] The focus of the attention is not so much in belief in God as God the Father, but in belief in Christ Jesus, who is the author and finisher of their faith.

They profess to love the Lord Jesus Christ. They profess to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. They profess to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. And they who do that are expected to know why they do that.

What is it about this Christ that makes them want to do all the things that are expected of them willingly and without question?

Without question. You know, some people have at times expressed, and Christians, I'm talking about Christians, you might find somebody come to you with a dilemma and they'll say, I have a dilemma, I have a difficulty.

I'm not really sure if I should be doing this or not. I'm not really sure if it's right for me to do this thing or not. And very often, although there is a seemingly difficult, difficult decision to be taken on their part, it very rarely is as difficult a decision to make as it appears on the surface.

[57 : 19] And many Christians have discovered when they have taken a decision on the basis of their own conclusions, preferentially, that they found that it was a wrong decision and they have to live with the consequences of it.

But, you know, if we're asking a question here that Peter expects us to ask, what is it that you believe? Why do you believe it?

Is it important for you in your life lived out in this world that you have a clear, rational grasp of what you believe and the person you believe in in order to live out your life not just for your own sake but for his glory, which is what has happened in your life.

Your life has been transformed by this passion and you are to live out your life for his glory not your own. I frequently quote the words of A.W.

Tozer Tozer was a theologian of probably 50 years ago since he passed away. But he was quite an interesting character but he was concerned with something he considered to be a malaise in his own day.

[58 : 56] And, you know, he was a theologian. He was concerned with the way theology worked itself out. And he said, you know, this is, to me, this is problematic.

There is an emphasis in certain teaching where conversion is everything.

Conversion becomes an end in itself. Everybody understands the need for a person to be converted. I hope you do.

You need to be born again. Christ himself said you must be born again. That's what conversion is. You must experience the change brought within you by the Holy Spirit so that your life is changed.

But it doesn't stop there. And that's the problem that Tozer had. That it seems from the emphasis that everything comes to an end at that moment.

[60 : 10] This is what he says. We have been snared on the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we have found him we need no more seeking.

however there are those who will not be content with shallow logic. They want to taste, to touch with their hearts, to see with their inner eyes the wonder that is God.

Now the point that he is making is this, that the person who comes to faith in Jesus Christ, they've come to a place that they must come to otherwise, they are lost.

They remain lost. But having come to that point, they don't set up camp there. They don't fold their arms and say I've arrived.

No, from that point on they are changed. They are newborn creatures. They are ready to set out on a trajectory of faith where they grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ so that they discover the truth concerning Christ.

[61 : 34] They rediscover the truth concerning Christ. They learn what it means to live their life in this world believing in him and following in his footsteps and with his help discovering how much they can stretch themselves into being more than they are when he found them.

Why do we believe in such a God to move on quickly? Because well, you remember the apostle James, he said we are not devils.

He says you believe there is one God, you do while the devils believe and they tremble. That's amazing. James is putting them in their place.

They're placing a lot of onus on the fact that they believe in God, but there's more to it than that. Their belief in God must involve them in the activity that is God-word, in the activity that is Christ glorifying, in the activity that shows that they have a relationship with a living God and a living Saviour who has transformed their lives, translated them from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his marvelous light.

The God you believe in is a God who saves without question. Fellow believer, you believe he who has saved you and you believe that he who has saved you is the only one who could have saved you.

[63 : 29] You have, well, I think this has to be a personal thing. All of this has to be personal. Can you speak about your own experience of coming to faith, if you are a believer, you can?

Can you speak of what he has saved you from? If you are a believer, you can. But your image of it, your experience of it, your knowledge of it may differ from passion to passion.

If a person who is addicted to drink or drugs or whatever it is that is the evil in society that has ensnared any one of us, if that was indeed a snare to us and Christ came into our experience and he took us out of that, we will always remember where we were when he found us and what it took for him to save us out of it.

For that reason, Christ the Lord is precious to us. theology is all important but we need to be able to apply that theology to our situation and to think, well, there is a broad picture, the broad picture the Bible presents to us is our situation as fallen creatures is that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.

That's a general picture of all mankind, every single one of you. This is the picture that you fit into without exception. But individually, what that means for you?

[65 : 23] What does it mean for you, the sinner, that Christ has come into your life? What does it mean for you, the sinner, that Christ has yet to come into your life?

And it has to be a genuine and an honest and an earnest appraisal of where am I today as opposed to where I was when Christ found me?

Where am I today as opposed to the time that I made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ? Have I grown? have I matured?

Have I developed? Have I discovered truth concerning myself that was hidden from you when God revealed himself to me? You know, because you're here, because you're under the gospel, every one of you, I believe, will have some nice language to be able to speak to the minister on the altar.

you'll be able to say something that sounds right. Some words that speak of your understanding of what the Bible is talking about.

[66 : 44] But do you know it at the deep-seated place within your own soul where it needs to be known, where it needs to be understood.

It's one thing to agree with what the Bible is saying. The Bible is saying I'm a sinner and I say yes. but when the sinner is exposed into the light and the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit taking the Word of God, there's a big difference.

I always and I just came to my mind when I was preparing this. I always remember many, many, many years ago, probably very young in the ministry, ministry.

I met a young man and I knew that this young man was a professing Christian. And I met him in the town of Stornoway and we spoke together.

And I can't ever say that that person said anything to me that was wrong. The language was the language of a Christian.

[68 : 03] It wasn't anything to do with what he said. But I had a feeling in my heart at that moment, I can't understand it, I can't explain it, that everything that was said by him was empty.

It was hollow. The words were the words that were the words of a Christian believer, but they were empty. and I didn't think any more of it.

Sometimes I know when we speak to people, sometimes we've got things on our mind and our mind might not be where it should be.

But I remember months afterwards discovering that that person had gone away from the Lord, had gone a completely different direction and he just made a shoopwreck of his faith.

Now whether I can't explain it, I can't understand it, but we have to understand that what Peter is wanting here is not somebody to be able to spout out the words that are theologically sound, to be able to quote chapter and verse of what even the Bible is saying, or what the divines are saying, but what is God doing in my life now?

[69 : 46] What is he doing in the present? What is he going on doing in my life? That makes him all important to me. Why do I believe in this God and not some other God?

Why do I have to believe in this God and not some other God, or do without this God?
How could you, if you're a Christian, go on without this God?

Go on without this Christ? God and God and God and God and God and that's a final question and it's only a question that you can answer.

What difference does Christ make to you? What difference does Christ make to you? Do you have an answer?

Well, what I would say to you, let it be your answer, not somebody else's, let it be your answer. Just being a Christian, just being a Christian, what does that mean?

[71 : 06] Well, being a Christian, I suppose, I hesitated to say anything, because I said to myself, well, what would you say? what does Christ mean to me?

Is it something that I can publicize? Is it something that I can say from my heart, from the pulpit? It would always be my experience.

There was a famous Christmas villain, it's an ancient, you know, I suppose, I think it's called What a Wonderful Life, I wasn't sure at the time when I was looking at this.

But I remember it's been on television so often every Christmas time, and whatever the story is, it describes somebody who's fallen on hard times, and he comes to the end of his tether, and he's about to throw himself into a river, and an angel comes, and he is allowed to, his argument is, what have I ever done that's worth remembering?

nothing, I've done nothing with my life, I've done nothing, and the angel allows him to look back on a world without him in it, and seemingly to demonstrate that a world without him would have been so dark, and so pessimistic, just a film, just a film, but you try doing that with Christ, you try doing that with Christ, what would your life be like without Christ?

[73 : 14] What would your life be like without Christ? You wouldn't be here today anyway, none of you, you might be up at the storm, there, I don't know what the stones are for, some people say they're places of worship, I don't know, but Christ came into this world to seek and to save sinners, and if that hadn't happened, this gathering wouldn't be here, at the most basic fundamental level, this place of worship wouldn't exist, God's people wouldn't exist, experience of the grace of God wouldn't be your experience of the grace of God, because the preeminent exposition of God's grace is the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel, God's love you will be so, but it's more important that you ask, what difference does

Christ make to me, if indeed he makes a difference, if he makes a difference, is that not it?

well, Peter invites the questions, he wants us to be ready to give answers to anybody who asks, but there will be a day, and the question will not be asked by somebody who meets in the street, don't be asked by somebody that you've never met before, it will be asked very definitely, very personally, what difference did Christ make for you?

Will you be silent? Will you be amongst those that Christ is often? There are those who will say, Lord, Lord, and I will say to them, depart, I never knew you, you may say you did, you may have said that you did, but you didn't, oh, this is a question, that should be a burning question, for every one of us, myself included, what do I believe?

What does my belief mean, to me? What does it mean? Well, may God encourage your thoughts on that issue.

[76 : 07] Let us pray. Oh, Lord, oh God, as we come before you, we come without emptiness, thankful that out of your fullness you can impart to us sufficient, to fill us and to fill us again.

may your blessing be of portion as we part one from the other. Don't part from us. Don't allow us to wish or to desire that any such thing would be our desire.

Forgive us in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I'm going to sing from Psalm 77, Psalm 77 and at verse 11.

Yea, I remember will the works performed by the Lord. The wonders done of old by thee I surely will record. I also will of all thy works my meditation make and of thy doings to discourse.

Great pleasure I will take. O God, thy way most holy is within thy sanctuary and what God is so great in power as is our God most high.

[77 : 27] The work the God that wonders dost by thy right hand most strong. Thy mighty power thou hast declared the nations among. Verses 11 to 14.

Yea, I remember will the works performed by the Lord. Yea, I remember will the works performed by the Lord.

The wonders understand of hope by thee I surely will record I also will of thy works my meditation make.

And of thy doings to this source great pleasure I will take.

O God thy way most holy is within thy thy son turn to thee and what God is so great in love as it's our God most high thou art the God that wonders thus by thy right hand most strong thy mighty power thou hast declared the nations of love may grace and mercy and peace from

[80 : 16] God the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit rest in the night which you are never and always Amen