

Go Through the City

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[0 : 0 0] Now let us worship God, let us sing to his praise from Psalm 91. Psalm 91, verses 5 to 11. Though you shall not need to be afraid for terror of the night, and for the arrow that doth fly by day while it is light, or for the pestilence that walks in darkness secretly, or for destruction that of waste at noonday openly, a thousand at thy side shall fall, on thy right hand shall lie ten thousand dead, yet unto thee it shall not once come nigh, only thou with thine eyes shalt look and a beholder be, and thou therein the just reward of wicked men shalt see, because the Lord who constantly my refuge is alone, even the Most High is made by thee thy habitation, no plague shall near thy dwelling come, no ill shall thee befall, for thee to keep in all thy ways, his angels charge, he shall.

Psalm 91, verses 5 to 11. The God's praise. Thou shalt not need to be afraid. Thou shalt not need to be afraid, nor for the arrow that doth fly, I did my light, I did my light as light, nor for the pestilence, and the rest of thy walls, and our deathly, nor for the destruction that of waste, nor for the destruction that of waste, at dunn,

At nun, at nun, at nun, at nun, at nun, at nun, A thousand yards thy sight shall fall, on thy brightness shall lie.

Ten thousand dead, yet unto thee, it shall not once come nigh.

Only thou with thine eyes shall click, and thou behold thee.

[3 : 3 4] And there therein, the just reward of wicked men shall see.

Because the Lord who constantly my refuge is, my Lord.

In the most high is made by thee, thy habitation.

No place shall be a cry, where they come.

No place shall be, they fall for thee to keep.

[4 : 5 6] In all of thy ways, this angel's charge be shown.

Let us pray. Lord our God, we thank you for the wonderful privilege it is to be able to gather in this way, in the house of God, on the Lord's holy day.

And we thank you for the health and strength that enables us to be here. And we thank you for the desire of our hearts to come to the house of God to worship.

And hear what God the Lord does speak. We ask that you would open our ears. That we may hear your voice.

Open our hearts. That we may receive and embrace. Jesus Christ, who is freely offered in the gospel.

[6 : 1 6] Grant us this morning anew to be aware of our need of salvation. Of the impurity and heinousness of the sin that lies so deeply in our hearts and lives.

We know that you see many things that we do not see. Because your eye is all seeing.

And you are all knowing. But we thank you that you send forth your spirit into the experience of your chosen people.

And you awaken them to a sense of their need. And you enable them to embrace Jesus Christ. As saviour and Lord.

And we thank you that he continues to be their protector and keeper. Every step of the way in life. And even at the point of death he does not leave them.

[7 : 30] And he promises never to leave nor forsake them. Protect them every step of the way. And at last receive them into glory.

We praise you this morning for the glorious gospel. Which we have heard from our youth. We thank you for ministers who have gone before us.

And for your godly people who have prayed. On our behalf and for us. Long before we realised we needed to pray for ourselves.

And we pray that you would bless us this morning. And be pleased to draw near us in this congregation of your people. We thank you for them.

And we thank you for them. And we thank you that you are able to visit us. As you have visited the congregations of people down through the years. Not for any merit of their own did you visit them.

[8 : 32] Not for any goodness of their own did you visit them in grace. But because you loved them. And you sent forth your spirit to draw them to yourself.

And we pray that that may be true this morning. That as we continue before you in this act of worship. That each one of us might be keenly aware.

Of the heavenly visitor. The Holy Spirit. Dealing with us in our hearts. And giving us to seek first the kingdom of God.

And his righteousness. Knowing that all other things will be added unto us. We thank you for this congregation. And we pray for every individual present here this morning.

And we thank you for them. From the youngest to the oldest. And we pray for your blessing to be upon each one according to their needs. We praise you that you know the needs of each one of us.

[9 : 36] There is nothing hidden from the all-seeing eye of our Lord. And the promise for your people is. That you are able to supply all their needs. According to your riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Whether we are feeling your weakness. You are able to make us strong. If we are in darkness. You are able to send forth your light.

To scatter our darkness. And give us to see the face of Jesus Christ. As our Lord and Savior. Those of us who feel weak.

And finding the road long and the hill steep. We thank you that those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles.

They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. Remember those who are questioning. The world is full of questions. The world is full of influences.

[10 : 38] Turning people away from the Bible and from the Gospel. Where the answers to questions always lies. We pray Lord that you would make the Bible precious to us all.

That it would be the first point of reference. That we would have. In seeking answers to life. And its many problems and questions. We pray oh Lord that you would bless.

Those who aren't able to be here this morning. Those who are laid aside in sickness. Whose bodily ailments. Prevent them from being here. We pray that you would bless them richly where they are.

And reach them with a word in season. You know the season. When to speak. And you know how to apply. The balm of Gilead.

To the broken hearts. And the bruised souls. We pray for your blessing to be upon. The minister of the congregation today where he is. And all like him who are declaring the unsearchable bridges of Christ.

[11 : 44] In our communities and throughout our land. And throughout the world. We thank you Lord that you have sent forth your men. To declare a glorious gospel.

And you promise never to leave them nor forsake them. Saying that I am with you always. Even unto the end of the world. We pray for your blessing upon our communities.

Our nation during these difficult and dark days. When so many people have turned their back upon God. Upon the word of God.

Upon the things that really should be central. To our thinking. Give us Lord. Men and women in our parliaments. Who will fear you. And who will be bold.

With heavenly boldness. To bring the word of God into their debates. And have it as the touchstone. By which they make their decisions. We pray Lord that you would remember our nations.

[12 : 44] In the United Kingdom. And that you would pour your spirit out upon us. We ask. In a day of revival. In a day of good gospel blessing. As was through down through the years.

When great things were done. In the name of your holy child Jesus. We pray for your blessing upon the sick and suffering. Those who have broken hearts this day.

Mourning the passing of loved ones. We ask Lord that you would give them strength to go on. And lean upon Jesus. As the church of old coming up from the wilderness.

Was identified in this way. Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness. Leaning upon our beloved. And such is. The posture of the church in all times.

When she is. In a healthy condition. Who will lean upon our beloved. Because he will never leave her. Not forsake her. And supply all of her needs. We pray now that you would bless us.

[13 : 42] As we continue. Before you in this service. Lead us and guide us in every detail of it. And forgive us all of our sins. In Jesus name. And for his sake. Amen.

Let us read God's word. From the Old Testament scriptures. And the prophecy of Ezekiel. And reading at chapter 8. Ezekiel and chapter 8.

Reading at the beginning. And it came to pass in the sixth year. In the sixth month. In the fifth day of the month. As I sat in my house.

And the elders of Judah sat before me. That the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me. Then I beheld. And lo, a likeness. As the appearance of fire.

[14 : 47] From the appearance of his loins. Even downward. Fire. Fire. And from his loins. Even upward. As the appearance of brightness. As the color of amber.

And he put forth the form of a hand. And took me by a lock of mine head. And the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven.

And brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem. To the door of the inner gate. That looketh toward the north. Where was the great. Where was the seat of the image of jealousy.

Which provoketh to jealousy. And behold the glory of the God of Israel was there. According to the vision that I saw in the plain. Then said he unto me.

Son of man. Lift up thine eyes now. Away toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes. Away toward the north. And behold.

[15 : 46] Northward at the gate of the altar. This image of jealousy. In the entry. He said furthermore unto me. Son of man. Seest thou what they do.

Even the great abominations. That the house of Israel committeth here. That I should go far off. From my sanctuary. But turn thee yet again. And thou shalt see greater abominations.

And he brought me to the door of the court. And when I looked. Behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me. Son of man. Dig now in the wall.

And when I had digged in the wall. Behold a door. And he said unto me. Go in. And behold the wicked abominations. That they do here. So I went in and saw.

And behold. Every form of creeping things. And abominations. And abominable beasts. And all the idols of the house of Israel. Portrayed upon the wall round about.

[16 : 45] And there stood before them. Seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel. And in the midst of them stood Jeazaniah. The son of Shaphan. With every man his censer in his hand.

And a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me. Son of man. Hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark?

Every man in the chambers of his imagery. For they say. The Lord seeth us not. The Lord hath forsaken the earth. He said also unto me.

Turn ye yet again. And thou shalt see greater abominations. That they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate. Of the house of the Lord. Which was toward the north.

And behold. There sat women. Weeping for Tammuz. Then said he unto me. Hast thou seen this? O son of man. Turn thee yet again.

[17 : 43] And thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me. Into the inner court of the Lord's house. And behold. At the door of the temple of the Lord.

Between the porch and the altar. Were about five and twenty men. With their backs. Toward the temple of the Lord. And their faces toward the east. And they worshipped this son.

Toward the east. Then he said unto me. Hast thou seen this? O son of man. Is it a like thing to the house of Judah. That they commit the abominations.

Which they commit here. For they have filled the land with violence. And have returned to provoke me to anger. And lo. They put the branch to their nose.

Therefore. Will I also deal in fury. Mine eye shall not spare. Neither will I have pity. And though they cry in my ears. With a loud voice.

[18 : 43] Yet. Will I not. Hear them. Amen. And may God bless to us. This reading from his holy word. And to his name.

Be all the praise. Now I am following the pattern of service. That the minister. Outlined to me. So now I am going to say a few words.

To the children. And I am so glad to see. A number of children present. Now many of you are going to school. Put your hand up. If you go to school. Well there are quite a few of you go to school.

So I think maybe you know something. About what I am going to talk about. For a few minutes just now. When you are in school. Probably in primary one.

You will be learning. The ABC. Don't you? ABC. All the way through the alphabet. Beginning with A. I remember. First day I went to school.

[19 : 43] The teacher had a chart up on the board. And there was A there at the top. And an apple beside A. And then B below it. And a ball beside B.

And C below that. There was a cat. Beside C. And so on. All the way through. And I thought to myself. Well. I had seen that before.

And I thought. This is going to be really easy. But as I went on. I didn't find it that easy at all. Anyway. I have got a little book at home. And it is called.

Stories for Young People. And I came across this. Little thing in it yesterday. And I am going to tell you about it. It is called. The ABC.

Of the Gospel. I wonder if you know what that means. The ABC. Of the Gospel. Well. This man is saying.

[20 : 40] Under A. We put this verse. Starting with the word. All. All. A. All have sinned.

And come short. Of the glory. Of God. That is the first thing. In the alphabet of the Gospel. Realizing that we are sinners.

Before God. All of us. Not just. The people who are lying in the gutter. Drunk. Or the people who have. Drugs in their veins. Or who live.

An immoral life. Every one of us. Because sin. Is something that we are born with. Being the sons and daughters of Adam.

Because in Adam. We all sinned. And fell. That is the first thing. In the alphabet of the Gospel. A. All have sinned.

[21 : 37] And come short. Of the glory of God. That is bad news. Isn't it? But the B of the Gospel. It is beginning to give us.

A little bit of encouragement. If A is bad. B says. Behold. The Lamb of God. Who takes away.

The sin. Of the world. Isn't that a wonderful text? John the Baptist. When he was preaching. In the wilderness of Judea.

He was preaching. From that text. And if you read. In John's Gospel. Chapter 1. You find that he preached on it. One day. And then. The next day. After he preached on it.

The same day. On the same text. Behold. The Lamb of God. And what is so marvelous. About that text. Because it says.

[22 : 31] The Lamb of God. Takes away. The sin. Of the world. He takes away. Or he is able to take away. The sin of my life.

With everything. Attached to that sin. So. A. Is all have sinned. B. Behold the Lamb of God. Look to the Lamb of God.

And C. We find Jesus himself speaking. I wonder if you know. What that. Verse is. That I'm going to quote to you. If A.

Is. All have sinned. And B. Is behold the Lamb of God. What do you think C might be? Beginning with the word come. Jesus says.

Come unto me. All you who labor. Are not heavy laden. And I. Will give you rest. Isn't that an amazing thing?

[23 : 26] The Bible identifies our problem. It tells us that there is. A solution to the problem of our sin. And it actually invites us.

To come. To Jesus Christ. All we who labor. With a sense of sin. And our lost condition. Our inability to save ourselves.

We are asked to come to him. Just as we are. And he is able to deal. With all of our sin. Take them away. And give us a new life.

And a new beginning. In life. So when you're young. And even when you're not so young. If you have still to learn. The ABC of the gospel.

Remember. It's bad news for us all. But then there is a pointer. To Jesus Christ. The Lamb of God. Who is able to deal with our sin.

[24 : 25] And he himself says. Come to me. And I will give you rest. Remember that. The ABC of the gospel. May the Lord bless. These thoughts to us.

Then we'll sing again. This time from Psalm 94. Psalm 94 and verses 1 to 8. O Lord God.

Unto whom alone all vengeance doth belong. O mighty God. Whose vengeance ownst. Shine forth thine vengeance wrong. Lift up thyself.

Thou of the earth. The sovereign judge that art. And unto those that are so proud. A due reward impart. How long O mighty God. Shall they who rude and wicked be.

How long shall they who wicked are. Thus triumph haughtily. How long shall things most hard by them. Be uttered and told. And all that work in equity.

[25 : 28] To boast themselves. Be bold. Thy folk. They break in pieces Lord. Thy heritage oppress. The widow. They and strangers slay.

And kill the fatherless. Yet say they. God it shall not see. Nor God of Jacob know. Ye brutish people. Understand.

Fools. When wise. Will ye groan. These stanzas. Verses 1 to 8. Of Psalm 94. To God's praise. O Lord God.

Unto whom alone. All vengeance. O Lord God.

O mighty God, who engines own, Shine forth the raging roar, Lifteth thyself the glory of the earth, The solid judge that died, And then to those that are so proud, A jury reward in heart, How long, O mighty God,

[27 : 28] Lord shall live, Who lived and wicked be, How long shall they, Who lived and were the giant potty, How long shall this most heart I am, Be at the red and strong, And all that were iniquity, Who caused themselves before,

Thy fault we bring, In pieces, Lord, Thy name is your breast, The wickedly and strangers flee, And kill the fatherless, Yet save the God, His child of thee, Your God, O Jacob, O her mission, And heaven we ride,

The wickedly and Be, Let us turn back to the prophecy of Ezekiel.

I would like to continue to read the next chapter up to the end of verse 7. Because there is a connection, a real connection between what we have in chapter 8, which we have read, and chapter 9.

He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.

[30 : 39] And behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer of ink horn by his side.

And they went in and stood beside the brazen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house.

And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the right of ink horn by his side. And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry, for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

And to the other she said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city and smite. Let not your eyes spare, neither have ye pity. Slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children and women.

But come not near any man upon whom is the mark, and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men, which were before the house.

[32 : 03] And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. Go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.

And I'd like to focus in particular on verse 4 of chapter 9.

And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry, for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

Ezekiel was among those who were first taken away from the city of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar in the year 597 BC.

The ministry of Jeremiah had forewarned the people that they ought to turn from their sins. Otherwise, the Lord was going to send enemies to destroy the city.

[33 : 23] And that happened, first and foremost, in the first stage of it in 597. And among those taken into captivity in Babylon was this man, Ezekiel.

And Ezekiel, if you read from the beginning of the book, he was a man set apart, set aside by the Lord, to declare the Lord's mind.

And to show people the outcome of the sins of which they had been guilty. In this particular chapter, chapter 8, we see the Lord dealing with him in an amazing way.

We find him there at the, among the captives in Babylon and he saw in verse 2, a likeness as the appearance of fire, from the appearance of his loin even upward, a downward fire, and his loins even upward as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber.

And he put forth the form of a hand and took me by a lock of my head. And the Spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north.

[34 : 55] And so on. Ezekiel is actually physically, so far as we understand, in Babylon among the captives, among the first lot of captives who were taken there in 597.

but the Lord came and enabled him to see what was happening in Jerusalem, the city that they had left.

And the Lord showed him terrible things that were happening. And I want to highlight some of the things that the Lord showed him as we see them in chapter 8.

And secondly, I'd like to highlight God's displeasure at the sin of these people. The beginning of chapter 9, we see there six men came by the way of the higher gate, every man with a slaughter weapon in his hand.

The Lord eventually was going to deal with these unbelieving, sinful, idolatrous people in Jerusalem. And he gave foresight of that terrible destruction to Ezekiel in this vision in chapter 8.

[36 : 23] And thirdly, among those who were still in Jerusalem surrounded by that sin and that misery and that godlessness, there were those in verse 4 who were sighing and crying for all the abominations that were done in the midst of it.

These people were saved in the middle of the great destruction that came upon Jerusalem because they were marked by the Lord. They were the Lord's people and the way he describes them was that they were sighing and crying for all the abominations that were done in the midst of it.

I'd like to say a word on two of each of these headings. First of all, the gross immorality and iniquity that Ezekiel was confronted with when the Lord showed him what Jerusalem was like.

The people in Jerusalem disregarded the word of God, disregarded the warnings of God through his prophets. They went on in their sin and despite about 18,000 including Ezekiel, having been taken away in that first consignment from Jerusalem to Babylon in 597, these people still in Jerusalem remained steadfast in their opposition to God and entrenched in the ways of sin.

And firstly, Ezekiel is granted an insight into the kind of life they were living. and first of all in chapter 8 at verse 5, he said unto me, Son of man, lift up your eyes now the way toward the north.

[38 : 33] So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry. they had erected an image of their own idol, their own gods in blatant contravention of the word of God.

The Lord says, thou shalt have no other gods before me. And whatever image this was that they had set before the north gate, it was as if it was defying God and rising up as it were in the face of God and God's word.

The image it says of jealousy. What does that mean? It means that God is a jealous God. He is jealous for his own glory, jealous for his own name, jealous for his own identity with these people.

And these people were as it were spitting in his face and defying God's authority and God's rule over them. And the Bible reminds us elsewhere in the epistle to the Galatians, be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.

If a man sows to his flesh, he will reap of fresh corruption, but if we sow unto the spirit, we will reap life everlasting. These people, as it were, they were prime targets for God's jealous anger, having erected an image that provoked God to anger, right to the middle of where God ought to be honoured.

[40 : 32] And secondly, we see at verse 9, he brought me, well at verse 7, he brought me to the door of the court, when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall, and he said unto me, son of man, dig now in the wall, when I had digged in the wall, behold, a door, and he said unto me, go in, and behold, the wicked abominations that they do here, I went in and saw, and behold, every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, all the idols of the house of Israel portrayed upon the wall, round about.

They were worshipping animals, reptiles of various kinds. We find this also in the epistle to the Romans. They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, and birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

And they thought they were doing this without God's knowledge, because it says, there, they were inside, as it were, behind closed doors.

But the Lord saw behind their closed doors, and he sees behind our closed doors, into the closed doors, as it were, of our thoughts and our hearts, and he knows what's going on there, as he knew what was going on there.

And then in verse 11 it says, there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel. In the midst of them stood Jehazaniah, the son of Shaphan, with every man who sensed in his hand, and a thick cloud of incense went up.

[42 : 22] the whole, as it were, of the head people of Israel, every one of them there, burning incense to the figures of these animals and reptiles portrayed upon the wall.

And then he goes on and he shows them still further. He brought me to the Torah, the gate of the Lord's house that was toward the north.

Behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Evidently Tammuz was a male deity that they looked to to supply rain, and sunshine and favourable weather at the time of the sowing of the seed.

But when the rain and favourable weather wasn't there, they weeped or they were weeping for Tammuz, longing for his influence to come back again.

Forgetting that our times are in the hands of the Lord, and he is the author of our providence. Do you remember the marvelous catechism we have? God's works of providence are his most holy, wise and powerful, preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions.

[43 : 55] And these people should have known that, having been taught right through the Old Testament scriptures, and now they had turned to Tammuz, a figment of their imagination, thinking that Tammuz was able to influence how successful their growth and their harvest would be.

And then, before I go on, he brought me to the inner court of the Lord's house, verse 16, and behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men.

It's the whole of the priesthood with the high priest. There were twenty-four coaches in the priesthood, and now there were twenty-five men. And what were they doing?

Were their backs toward the temple of the Lord? What an awful thing to do. People turning their back upon the house of God and the services of God.

That's what these people had done. Their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they worshipped the sun toward the east. These people had turned their back upon God, the God of the promises, the God of the covenant.

[45 : 20] They had forgotten what God had done with their forebears, having taken them out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and outstretched arm, having given them to be led in the wilderness forty years, given them manna from heaven and water from the rock, conquered the land of Canaan for them.

All of these different things, these people had turned their back upon the memory of these things, and were embracing sun worship with their backs to the house of God.

I say again what Galatians 6 says, Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

if we reap to the flesh, doing our own thing, we will reap corruption. But if we sow unto the Spirit, living a life of faith by the Spirit of God, we will reap life everlasting.

And then coming to chapter 9 in particular, God's response to this sinful behaviour among the people of Jerusalem.

[46 : 40] I mean, it wasn't just people who had never heard the word of God. They were a people who had been saturated in the word of God, and had the marvellous ministries of various prophets, and godly kings.

Nevertheless, they had turned their back upon that. And the Lord is not any more going to hold his long-suffering wrath from them.

And he commands these six men to come from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north. Every man a slaughter weapon in his hand.

the Lord's anger is about to break out upon these people. What about ourselves?

Before I go on to that second point of the Lord's anger, what about ourselves in our own lives? I mean, we have, as a community, as a generation, had so many gospel privileges.

[48 : 05] I mean, we have had godly parents, some of us. And even if our parents were not godly, there were godly people around us. And believe me, godly people around you would have prayed for you, because the Lord gives them a spirit of prayer, not just for themselves and for their nearer family, but for the community in which they are settled.

you had god's people praying for you. And now, these people, in Ezekiel's day, they had turned their back upon all of that, erected their own images, and manufactured and worshipped their own gods, and turned their back upon the house of God, and worshipped the sun, looking away from God and all that they had heard and known.

God certainly is long suffering, but he's not all suffering. And then, coming to this second point, God's anger is going to be shown against sin.

Isn't it amazing what we have here? six men appear, each with a slaughter weapon in his hand, and they are given a command, go ye and smite, let not your eyes spare, neither have pity.

But it's as if he says, wait a moment, not everyone in the city is like the people who are into idolatry.

[49 : 53] There are some, and the Lord has taken note of them. And what marks them away from everybody else?

Well, it says here that they sigh and that they cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of the city.

people who love the Lord and who find it as it were, like a personal attack upon themselves, that the Lord's name is trampled under foot, that the Lord's day is trampled under foot, that the Lord's word is left outside of the discussions in Parliament and in many places.

It doesn't appear in schools. People of God, they mourn because of that, that the Lord isn't given his place in society, the place that he ought to have.

I mean, he made us, he made us for himself, he made us with many opportunities and privileges, given us the gospel, given us the Savior, the Savior himself, has come to me and I will give you rest.

[51 : 16] Nevertheless, these people in Jerusalem, they were hard-hearted and stiff-necked and refused to bow to God's word and God's servants who proclaimed God's word.

When we look at our own nation today, we cannot but see ourselves among those who sigh and who cry.

And coming to our own personal situation, I mean, when the Lord brought Ezekiel to ask him to dig into the wall and open the door and behind the closed doors, there was all this going on by way of idolatry, we also are charged to look into our own hearts and our own lives and see the terrible sin that goes on in there.

I mean, the prophet says elsewhere, a heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? Who can know it? sin. The sin is so deep and of such a heinous nature that we don't really understand it in all its potential.

[53 : 03] One sin, unrepented of and unforgiven, can bring a person down to the depths of a lost eternity. One sin.

Have you ever thought of your own heart from this point of view?

That Jesus says in Mark chapter 7 and he says it elsewhere in the scripture as well, from within, from within our heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, theft, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, and even I, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.

These are the things the Lord says that defile a man. And it's all here. It's all in here. And we deserve to be destroyed like the people in Jerusalem were to be destroyed apart from the Lord setting a mark of grace.

upon us. Remember what the Apostle Paul says and he's a Christian man experiencing an inward battle and he says the good that I would, I do not do.

[54 : 31] But the evil that I would not do, that's what I'm doing. I'm finding another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and taking me into subjection to the law of sin which is in my members.

And then he says, oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this day. And then he says, praise the Lord through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is his hope for eternity as a man who is burdened and is sighing over his own sin and is crying in the presence of God to be released from the power of his sin.

And these people here, they were like that. May the Lord give us grace to know our sinful nature.

And may we come in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, that we might have the blood of atonement sprinkled upon us, that our sins may be forgiven and our iniquities cleansed.

[55 : 51] But then we see what it says here. Among these, and along with these six men who have slaughter weapons in their hand, who are ready to slaughter everyone in Jerusalem, the Lord says, don't do anything until a mark is set upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry.

And who is saying that? Well, we see earlier on in verse three, the glory of the Lord of Israel was gone up from the cherub and he was the threshold of the house, and he called to the man clothed with linen who had the right of ink corn by his side.

There was one who was different from the others. They had slaughter weapons, but there was one who was clothed with linen and who had the right of ink corn by his side.

what does that mean? Well, some are of the view that it's a picture of Jesus Christ himself. It's difficult for us to know exactly, but I think, according to some of the puritans, it's safe for us to see that it's a picture of the Lord himself, that he's clothed in linen, it says, different from the others who had slaughtered weapons, and Jesus Christ as the great high priest of the church, that's an indication of his priesthood, that he was clothed in linen and he has made atonement for his people.

He's going to set a mark on those who sigh and cry over their sins, their lost condition, their impurity, their hard-heartedness.

[57 : 45] And what mark is he going to set upon them? Well, it doesn't say much in the original except that it's the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

That's the mark that is mentioned here. But I came across one of the puritans yesterday and he suggests this, that the mark that he's putting on these people who are sighing and crying because of the gross immorality and godlessness of the people around them.

They are those upon whom the Lord has set his own mark, his blood. Like he set a mark upon the doors of the children of Israel in Egypt.

Israel in the Lord. And you remember the Passover lamb had been slain and the Lord commanded Moses to put the Passover lamb's blood upon the lintels and the doorposts.

And the Lord said, when I see the blood, I will pass over you. And so it is here. These people have been blessed by the Lord. They have the mark of eternal life, the blood of Jesus.

[59 : 00] They have the Holy Spirit within their hearts and lives. That's what gives them to have a different attitude to the sin around them. They hate sin because they have a principle of holiness within their minds and their hearts and their lives.

sin. The Lord Jesus Christ, he comes and he marks these people and he has a right of ink by his side.

What does that mean? Well, one of the commentators suggests that we can tie that picture with what we have in Malachi 3.16.

The day was quite similar in Malachi's day to this day of Ezekiel in Jerusalem. In that people had turned their back really upon real worship and they thought they were doing well enough without God.

But it says 3.16 in Malachi then, that is at that time, when things were so low generally, spiritually speaking, those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another and a book of remembrance was written before him.

[60 : 32] The Lord knows who are his. He has known them from all eternity. He knows them in the middle of a decrepit and broken down Jerusalem.

He knows them here in our day when they are sighing and crying because he is all seeing and his mark is upon them.

He has given them the Holy Spirit. And that's why they love holiness rather than sin. That's why they love God rather than sin. That's why they love the word of God rather than the words of men that are so often misplaced and misspoken.

That's why they sigh because life around them is so different to the life that they have within them. When the apostle speaks to the Ephesian church, he talks to them first of all about their having been foreknown and foreordained to eternal salvation.

And then it says when they believed they were given the Holy Spirit as an earnest. The Holy Spirit came to dwell and the Holy Spirit began to influence their lives in such an amazing way that they no longer loved sin and loved the world and loved even the best things that the world can offer them.

[62 : 12] They started looking beyond this world, beyond the greatest things this world can offer them, and to a better world.

Isn't it amazing when the apostle Paul, writing 2 Timothy chapter 4, and there he is in the prison awaiting execution in Rome, and he says, looking back, he says, I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, and he's looking forward and he says, as he looks through the prison barge, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory, which his righteous judge will give me at that day, and not to me only, but also unto all them who love his appearing.

He was able to see beyond the prison barge, to the glory that's beyond, because the Holy Spirit is teaching him. That's the same man who was saying, I am finding another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, bringing me into subjection to the law of sin, oh wretched man that I am.

That's him sighing and crying. But looking forward, he sees a better future than this world can offer him. What about yourself today?

What causes you to sigh and cry? Well, some people sigh and cry because they've got no money, and there are some valid reasons for that.

[63 : 58] they have no food, and there may be valid reasons for that. That they have no friends, and there may be reasons for that.

But the Christian, in the midst of all of these things that this world can throw at us, there is a greater reason to sigh and to cry.

And that's what was through of these people. they were there as God's shining lights in a dark generation. They were there, as it were, of a different nature and different outlook and different longing and different principle in their lives because the Lord had come into their experience.

And now they hated sin with a perfect hatred and they loved holiness above all things. And the Lord said to the men with the slaughter weapons in their hands, don't do anything until I mark them.

I know them. In the midst of what life can throw at them, they are mine. They are mine. Even when you think of the covenanters and the sufferings that many of them had.

[65 : 25] Nevertheless, they were in God's keeping. They were in God's hand. Jesus says in John chapter 10, My Father has given them to me, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand.

I and my Father are one. Whatever comes away, the Lord will surely keep his people. they have cost him dear. He has laid down his life for them.

What about yourself? Is sin a problem to you? Is your sinful inclination a problem to you?

Well, Jesus says, come unto me, and I will give you rest. These people, they have plenty warnings through the prophets who had spoken into that situation repeatedly down through the years.

And they had run out of time. And the Lord's long suffering wasn't going to be long suffering anymore. He's a jealous God.

[66 : 38] He was going to destroy them. And that's what happened. Eleven years after the first dispatching of captives from Jerusalem to Babylon, the city of Jerusalem fell in 586 BC.

The walls were broken down. The temple was destroyed. All that these people seemed to identify with fell down.

and so it will be with all of us who lean upon this world and who do our own thing rather than what God calls us to do.

May God grant us grace to believe in him, to love him, to serve him all the days of our life. One of our professors in the college, Professor Boyd, of fond memory, used to teach us to read.

And I always used to enjoy his opening prayer at the lecture. And one of the days he was speaking, he said, we must remember that we are serving the best of all masters.

[68 : 00] And that is true. The Lord Jesus Christ is the best of all master. His eye is upon you every step of the way.

He knows your moans, he knows your sighs, he knows your cries, he knows your need, he remembers them, and he remembers you in the hour of triumph, and he will protect you every step of the way, until at last we are made perfect in holiness, and to immediately pass into glory.

Isn't that an amazing catechism, that the souls of believers at their death are made perfect in holiness, and to immediately pass into glory, and their bodies being still united to Christ, to rest in their graves until the resurrection.

And at the resurrection, believers shall be raised in glory, openly acknowledged and acquitted at the day of judgment, and shall be made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

The sins of the people of Jerusalem, the wrath of God against their sins, and finally, the Lord marking his people who sigh and cry to be safe in the midst of that awful dilemma.

[69 : 42] May the Lord enable us to look to himself, and to give us the spirit of grace and supplications to call upon him while he is calling to us, even while he is near to us in the preaching of the gospel.

Amen. May God bless to us these thoughts. Let us pray. Lord, oh God, help us to be always aware of a need of your grace.

Give us not to seek after the things of this world that are so sinful, but rather the things that will honour you and magnify your name.

We pray for your blessing to be upon this congregation. We thank you for them, and we pray that you would continue to uphold them. Bless the minister where he is, and as he continues to preach your word here.

Bless him richly, we pray. May he be a mighty channel of blessing to those who await upon his ministry.

[71 : 08] Go before us, we pray, and forgive our sins in Jesus' name. Amen. we'll sing to God's praise in conclusion in Psalm 119, and verse 132.

Psalm 119, verse 132. Look on me, Lord, and merciful do thou unto me prove, as thou art wont to do to those thy name who truly love.

O let my footsteps in thy word, a right still ordered be, let no iniquity obtain dominion over me. From man's oppression save thou me, so keep thy laws I will.

Thy face make on thy servant shine, teach me thy statutes still. Rulers of waters from mine eyes did run down when I saw how wicked men run on in sin, and do not keep thy law.

These verses of Psalm 119, verse 132, to the end of that section of Psalm 136. Look on me, Lord, and merciful, do thou unto me prove.

[72 : 30] Look on me, Lord, and merciful, do thou and to me prove, as thou art wont to do be.

God shall Lord, Lord, be with no iniquity obtain dominion over me.

From man's oppression save thou me. So keep thy lost thy will.

Thy face make on thy servant shine. Teach me I guard you still.

Rivers of waters from mine eyes did run good when I saw her wicked hand run all in sin and do not keep thy law.

[74 : 50] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest upon and abide with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.