

# God's amazing salvation

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Preacher: Chris Fry

[ 0 : 00 ] A warm welcome to any and all who are joining us to listen to this Sunday morning broadcast. My name is Chris Fry. I'm one of three elders of Calvary Evangelical Church in the heart of Brighton.

Like thousands of other churches all over the world and on the strong advice of government, we have suspended all church meetings and are practicing social distancing and in some cases self-isolation.

But whether we're meeting together or not, we're still the church of Jesus Christ. And we want to do our best to sustain the sense of Christian community strengthened, guided and nourished by the word of God and prayer.

This is the first of what may turn out to be a large number of Sunday broadcasts pre-recorded and available on the Calvary Church website [www.calvary-brighton.org.uk](http://www.calvary-brighton.org.uk).

We're on a learning curve as to the best way of doing this. Audio certainly, but possibly in time visual as well, perhaps even this morning.

[ 1 : 12 ] And this morning there are also presentation slides which will be available on the website. What we're doing is no straight substitute for our normal church gathering, but God will help us, perhaps in surprising ways, as we look to him and remember one another.

The most important thing to remember and experience is that wherever you are, that God is with you. We're suggesting that we might get into the habit of tuning in on Sundays at our normal meeting times of 11 o'clock and 6.30.

We would really welcome feedback, perhaps via the church's website. So I repeat my welcome to all members of the church, regular attenders and friends scattered throughout the United Kingdom and abroad, by yourself or a couple or a family group.

Today we especially remember and honour our mothers. May you have a blessed day, even if you're unable to meet with children or grandchildren in the usual way. Now some brief notices.

One, please do listen in at 6.30pm tonight to a message by Steve Ellicott, one of the church's deacons, as we continue our studies in the Gospel of Matthew.

[ 2 : 31 ] Two, we're proposing that we specifically pray in our homes on Wednesday nights from 7.45pm, which is the usual prayer meeting start time, say for 30 minutes to an hour.

Material for prayer will be emailed to people in advance. If you have any specific prayer requests, please let us know in advance. Three, one specific prayer request is for the family of our friend Annika, whose family has been personally affected by the coronavirus.

On the screen and in your slides, you can see what we're proposing to do today. I'm going to pray. We're going to sing a couple of songs.

There'll be something for the children. There'll be a Bible reading and the message from that Bible reading, and we'll end in prayer. Let's start with prayer now. Let's pray.

Our Heavenly Father, please be with us all as we meet together in this way. Come near to each one. Forgive our sins. Help us to know your presence and fill us with your Holy Spirit that we may love, honour and worship you today.

[ 3 : 47 ] In the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen. Now our first song is number 23C in the Praise Hymn Book.

The King of Love, My Shepherd Is. The words will be on the slides. Number 23C.

I'm going to sing because I want to sing. And if you find the voice a bit in the way, you can just turn the music down, or rather turn my voice down. The King of Love, My Shepherd Is, whose goodness fails me never.

I nothing lack if I am His, and He is mine forever.

Where streams of living waters flow, a ransomed soul He leads me, and where the riches pastures grow, with food from heaven feeds me.

[ 5 : 12 ] Perverse and foolish I have strayed, but in His love He sought me, and on His shoulder gently laid, and home rejoicing brought me.

In death's dark veil I fear no ill, with you, dear Lord, beside me, your rod and staff my comfort still, your cross before to guide me.

You spread a banquet in my sight of grace beyond all knowing, and oh, the wonder and delight from your pure chalice flowing.

And so through all the length of days, your goodness fails me never.

Good Shepherd, may I sing your praise within your house forever.

[ 6 : 54 ] Now my wife Katie is going to give something for the children.

Good morning, children. Hello there. It's lovely to picture you at home with your mums and dads, and hope you're all well. And if not, stay snuggled up anyway.

Okay, so today, as you know, is Mother's Day, so I know you're always kind to your mums, and I hope your dads as well, but just be extra kind to them, and be extra thoughtful, won't you, to your mummies and daddies, and mums and dads.

And yeah, so just think of what you can do to help in any way, and just be extra thankful as well, because it means so much to them, as it means to God.

And do you know what this weekend is as well? Saturday, yesterday, was the first day of spring. So isn't God good to us?

[ 8 : 00 ] We're not going into winter with this virus, but we're going into spring, and he sends the sunshine, and the spring rains, and everything else. So here we are with our flowers.

Can you see those? Let's hope you can. And I know they're pretend ones, but not to worry. So what I'd like you to do, in the next days, I'd like you to go on a nature trail, with your mummies and daddies, mums and dads, or brother or sister, or whoever is safe to go with, and see all the things that you can find, that God has caused to grow, as spring is coming.

And in Hope Park, as I'm sure in lots of other parks as well, the blossom has come out, and in the garden. So you'll see all sorts of things. And see how many different colours, you can count, of the different blossoms, and the different flowers as well.

And if I may share, a bit of extra good news. Guess what? My twin sister has come, halfway around the world, and got to us safely, flapping her wings all the way, all the way from Australia.

She arrived on Thursday afternoon. So dear Michi is safely with us, which is so lovely. It's very exciting. And so she'd sent her greetings as well.

[ 9 : 30 ] So well done for listening, and happy trail hunting. I was about to say treasure hunting, but nature hunting. And see how many different colours, you can count, and how many different flowers, you can count.

And then, in your thank you prayer tonight, to God, you can think of all the things, to thank him for. Because there's always so many things, to thank God for, isn't there? And he delights to hear our prayers, so thank you.

Okay. Thank you for listening. Bye for now. Thank you so much, Katie.

This morning, we're going to be looking into the book of Ezekiel, in the Old Testament. And I wanted to say a few words, about this book, before we actually look to the particular passage.

And the book of Ezekiel is massive. It's 48 chapters. And it's rather daunting. It's also full of words of judgment and lament.

[ 10 : 35 ] But like a storm, with the darkest of skies, the book is lit up from time to time, by flashes of lightning, revealing better and more hopeful things.

So in God's providence, we're looking at this book, and this chapter this morning, in the first of our separated Sunday gatherings, entering the dark storm of coronavirus.

And when the preaching schedule was drawn up, none of us had a thought, that we might not be meeting together, on Sunday, the 22nd of March. But here we are, and very suddenly. I wonder if, and when we emerge from this period, we will be able to look back, and on these times of recorded messages, and note God's strong voice to us.

In fact, we would be disappointed, if we didn't find God speaking clearly to us, in these crisis days. The word of God, always has a present tense about it.

Although the passages may have historic, and future to mentioning, and it needs to be our prayer, that God will speak to us in these days. The world, our own country, our neighborhoods, are currently all in the dark.

[ 11 : 53 ] I do not mean by that, that intelligent people, aren't doing their very best, to address the multitude of challenges, with honest intent, and sacrificial attitude.

But like the poor Israelites in Egypt, they're really trying to make bricks without straw. They're ignorant of their essential need, to cry out to God in this situation.

And so they're trying to do everything, in their own way, and in their own wisdom. But we were never intended, to live life in that fashion, least of all in a time of disaster.

But are we, the people of God, any better? Are we crying out to God? And if so, what are we saying to God? And what is God saying to us?

Well, perhaps this season, will take us into passages, of God's word, that we have never seriously considered. And be taught by these passages, so that by the power of God's spirit, we may pray prayers, that we've never prayed before.

[ 12 : 57 ] And live life with different, or refreshed priorities. and understandings, based on a spirit-given understanding, of God's word. Let me lead you in prayer.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you, that we can come to you, in all our weakness and ignorance, because of the Lord Jesus Christ. we thank you for sending your Son into this world, to identify with us, and stand in our place, and instead of us, by his perfect life, and sin-atonement death.

We thank you for the proof of his finished work, by his resurrection from the dead, and the reality of his intercession, on our behalf, at your side, constantly pleading, the merit of his righteousness, and shed blood, so that we are always welcome, into your near presence, and our prayers are heard.

We pray, that we will not neglect, coming to you, especially when we are anxious, troubled, overwrought, and vexed. Also, when we may suffer ill health.

We thank you for all that you are for us, as you have said, our Father, protector, guide, stronghold, rock, and hiding place.

[ 14 : 30 ] We know that you hold us, keep us, direct us, and provide for us. Thank you. We thank you for the reality, of the forgiveness of our sins, that we can come again, in repentance, and you will freely forgive.

So please cleanse, our hearts, and prepare us, in childlike faith, to receive your word. Help me to speak, and all of us to listen, so that your word, is clearly heard, and obeyed, and you be honoured, and praised.

We ask this, in Jesus name. Amen. Please turn in your Bibles, to Ezekiel chapter 16, and we're going to read, verses 1 to 30, and verses 59 to 63.

Ezekiel chapter 16. The word of the Lord came to me.

Son of man, confront Jerusalem, with her detestable practices, and say, this is what the sovereign Lord says to Jerusalem. Your ancestry and birth, were in the land of the Canaanites.

[ 16 : 00 ] Your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite. On the day you were born, your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water, to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt, or wrapped in cloths.

No one looked on you with pity, or had compassion enough, to do any of these things for you.

Rather, you were thrown out, into the open field, for on the day you were born, you were despised.

Then I passed by, and saw you kicking about, in your blood, and as you lay there, in your blood, I said to you, live. I made you grow, like a plant of the field.

You grew up, and developed, and became the most beautiful of jewels. Your breasts were formed, and your hair grew, you who were naked and bare. Later I passed by, and when I looked at you, and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you, and covered your nakedness.

I gave you my solemn oath, and entered into a covenant with you, declares the sovereign Lord, and you became mine. I bathed you with water, and washed the blood from you, and put ointments on you.

[ 17 : 20 ] I clothed you with an embroidered dress, and put leather sandals on you. I dressed you in fine linen, and covered you with costly garments. I adorned you with jewellery.

I put bracelets on your arms, and a necklace round your neck. And I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head.

So you were adorned with gold and silver. Your clothes were of fine linen, and costly fabric, and embroidered cloth. Your food was fine flour, honey, and olive oil. You became very beautiful, and rose to be a queen. And your fame spread among the nations, on account of your beauty, because the splendor I had given you, made your beauty perfect, declares the sovereign Lord.

But you trusted in your beauty, and used your fame to become a prostitute. You lavished your favors on anyone who passed by, and your beauty became his.

[18:23] You took some of your garments, to make gaudy high places, where you carried on your prostitution. Such things should not happen, nor should they ever occur.

You also took the fine jewellery I gave you, the jewellery made of my gold and silver, and you made for yourself male idols, and engaged in prostitution with them.

And you took your embroidered clothes, to put on them, and you offered my oil and incense before them. Also the food I provided for you, the fine flour, olive oil, and honey I gave you to eat, you offered as fragrant incense before them.

This is what happened, declares the sovereign Lord. And you took your sons and daughters, whom you bore to me, and sacrificed them as food to the idols.

Was your prostitution not enough? You slaughtered my children, and sacrificed them to the idols. In all your detestable practices, and your prostitution, you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked, and bare, kicking about in your blood.

[19:37] Woe, woe, woe to you, declares the sovereign Lord. In addition to all other wickedness, you built a mound for yourself, and made a lofty shrine in every public square.

At the head of every street, you built your lofty shrines, and degraded your beauty, offering your body with increasing promiscuity, to anyone who passed by.

You engaged in prostitution with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and provoked me to anger with your increasing promiscuity. So I stretched out my hand against you, and reduced your territory.

I gave you over to the greed of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were shocked by your lewd conduct. You engaged in prostitution with the Assyrians, too, because you were insatiable, and even after that, you still were not satisfied.

Then you increased your promiscuity, to include Babylonia, a land of merchants, but even with this, you were not satisfied. How weak-willed you are, declares the sovereign Lord, when you do all these things, acting like a brazen prostitute.

[20:54] Now, verse 59. This is what the sovereign Lord says. I will deal with you as you deserve, because you have despised my oath by breaking the covenant.

Yet I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, both those who are older than you and those who are younger.

I will give them to you as daughters, but not on the basis of my covenant with you. So I will establish my covenant with you, and you will know that I am the Lord.

Then when I make atonement for you, for all you have done, you will remember and be ashamed and never again open your mouth because of your humiliation, declares the sovereign Lord.

Please keep your Bible open at Ezekiel 16. The book of Ezekiel is set in years following the exile of 10,000 inhabitants of Jerusalem and the surrounding areas by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar.

[22:18] This was in 597 BC. Ezekiel is one of those taken into exile. He's a prophet, but he's also of the priestly line.

And so his book is full of those two themes, themes of prophecy and themes of priestly work in the temple. Jerusalem is still functioning, but with a puppet king and a shadow of its former self.

And 11 years later, all of this comes crashing to the ground as the Babylonians, fed up with the continued rebelliousness of the Jerusalem king, puts an end to everything by tearing down the walls and burning the temple.

Absolute disaster. The book of Ezekiel is full of references that enable us to date rather precisely when Ezekiel said what he said. So this chapter, Ezekiel 16, is set about 592 BC.

That's five years after the exile of the 10,000, but still six years before the total destruction of the city. And it's interesting to think about this time period.

[ 23 : 39 ] Ezekiel actually ministered for about 27 years. And that was a long passage of time. And during that passage of time, God's people in Babylon and in a sense in Jerusalem itself were given opportunity to reflect painfully on all that they had been through, all that they had suffered.

They were in denial, but the Lord wanted to make very plain to them the reason why judgment had fallen upon them. And that was because of their rebelliousness, their sinfulness.

Now Ezekiel 16 is an allegory or a parable of Jerusalem, and in particular, unfaithful and failed Jerusalem. Look with me at verses 1 to 3.

The word of the Lord came to me. Son of man, confront Jerusalem with her detestable practices and say, this is what the sovereign Lord says to Jerusalem.

These opening three verses helpfully set the scene for the rest of the chapter. One, God had spoken to his spokesperson, Ezekiel, and Ezekiel was faithfully passing on the message.

[ 25 : 00 ] The word of the Lord came to me. Son of man, confront Jerusalem with her detestable practices. It was a hard message, but so was almost everything that Ezekiel had to say in the course of his long ministry.

Here he is told to confront Jerusalem. He has something to say from God that people, even God's people, won't like to hear. It will be confrontational.

Most of us don't like to say something confrontational, but sometimes that's necessary.

Unsurprisingly, if people are living in ignorance or opposition to God, what God has to say won't be naturally attractive.

Now, we may be called to enter this territory more and more as the current crisis unfolds. We want to be saying generous and kind and compassionate things to people, but at the same time, there is definitely in the midst of this crisis something from God, something from the word of God that will prove to be confrontational and difficult for us to say, difficult for people to listen to.

Ezekiel was faithful in that calling. He was faithful in that calling for 27 years and may God find us equally faithful.

[ 26 : 29 ] Thirdly, from this section, God is deeply aware of Jerusalem's detestable practices. That's his word. That's the way he looks at it. The people of Jerusalem always argued this point.

They couldn't see it. And anyhow, hadn't God promised to love and look after them whatever the situation? They had this kind of lazy arrogance that because they were the people of God that somehow they were in a privileged position and God wouldn't look upon their sin and judge it, that he would overlook it and just be like an indulgent, careless parent.

But God isn't like that. He's a holy God. And he'd come into that relationship with them by covenant so that he was requiring them to live in a certain kind of way, live in a holy way.

Well, like Jerusalem then, how easy it can be to be cavalier and lazy about things that God sees as detestable practices. Even though the whole world follows that route, God says that's detestable. The reality of God's grace never diminishes the awfulness of sin whoever commits it. And fourthly, this is God's word for Jerusalem.

[ 27 : 49 ] It's not the bricks and mortar of the city, of course, but all that Jerusalem symbolized. It was a people chosen by God and brought into covenant, promise-based relationship with him.

How has that worked out? Ezekiel 16 provides an answer by offering a history lesson ranging from the beginnings of the nation to a time of comprehensive judgment, but with the hope of better things to come.

Notice that this is God's word for Jerusalem. It's not Ezekiel's. This is what the sovereign Lord says to Jerusalem. That's the word. Every preacher, indeed every Christian, needs to have that sense that if we have something to say as Christ's ambassadors, it is based on God's authority.

We won't, unlike the Bible, speak infallibly without any error, but we can speak with confidence and with God's authority. Now, how easy it is to get this the wrong way around and offer our ideas instead of carefully listening to and receiving God's words and with his emphases and priorities.

We need the Bible to correct and direct us so that we can understand what God is saying to us. I want to spend some time looking at a particular phrase in verse 2.

[ 29 : 18 ] This is what the sovereign Lord says to Jerusalem. And this phrase that I'm wanting us to look at is sovereign Lord, sovereign Lord. God.

This phrase crops up in Ezekiel again and again. In fact, in this chapter alone, there are 11 times when this phrase is used. It's deliberate.

It's not a throwaway title, but carefully provided to tell us something that underpins everything that this book is about. God is sovereign.

He is in charge. He is in control. Everything is in his hands. The timing of events, the behaviours of individuals and of entire nations.

The whole of human history. He is a sovereign God in the very bleakest times as well as in days of content and ease.

[ 30 : 20 ] There is not an inch or a centimetre of his creation that has somehow slipped out of his control. There is not any period of time, past, present and future, which has managed to somehow get out of his control and of which he is so tired that he's given up, gone away and come up with plan B.

This is an astonishing thought to the person who's not a Christian, although on the basis of Psalm 19 and Romans 1, it shouldn't be. It's just that such knowledge of God is suppressed by sinful hard hearts.

How much we, all of us, need to know this truth in these days and to have a robust theology that allows God to be God even in the darkest times and accepts God to be active in initiation and control of all that happens in his world.

Even if we cannot understand why and how he can be present and active in the deepest awfulness of human sin and misery, particularly when disasters happen where it appears that people are innocent victims of natural circumstances.

We've seen plenty of that all around the world in recent years and the present crisis is no exception. Now, whether coronavirus should be regarded as a warning or a judgment or an opportunity, and it may well be, surely is, a combination of all three, the one thing we must believe is that God is in full control of this situation, doing everything according to his good pleasure, whilst mankind always remains fully responsible.

[ 32 : 08 ] We must not give credit to the devil or to mankind for such control. We are or should be happily secure in the knowledge that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is exactly the same God who is ruling this world in accordance to his precise purposes, fashion before time began, and unfolding exactly in accordance with that plan.

How amazing it will be for us to have the privilege in the coming age to explore God's handiwork in human history. Now the second part of this phrase is Lord.

This is what the sovereign Lord says. God is the Lord. The phrase in Ezekiel is very seldom split. The sovereign God is always the Lord God.

Please notice that the word Lord is presented in capital letters reminding us that in the original language we are encountering the unspeakable name Yahweh, the God who is in a covenant relationship with his people.

There are promises that God has made to the whole world. Never again after the flood comes to mind, but the grandest, most astonishing and most intimate and beautiful promises belong to the relationship that God has sovereignly determined to have with the people that he has chosen for himself.

[ 33 : 43 ] If we are Christians, this is our stunning privilege. So here we are given this connection and constantly reminded of it here and throughout the whole book. God is sovereign and God is the covenant Lord.

We must never separate these two truths. God has deliberately joined them together. Why? Because God's sovereign purposes in his world are never separated from his covenant purposes for the people of God.

We might say that God's sovereign purposes are never selfish or introspective or lonely. Of course, fundamentally, that could never be the case because God is Trinity in relationship with the Father, loving the Son, the Son loving the Father, the Spirit loving the Son, and so on.

But God in his love goes further, bringing a people into this communion of love in the most awesome and extravagant manner, so that all God's purposes have the thought of his people in mind.

There's a verse in Ephesians chapter 1 that expresses this beautifully. It's verse 22 and I'd encourage you to look at that up now. Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 22.

[ 35 : 03 ] Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 22. Ephesians and verse 22. Ephesians chapter 1 Ephesians Apostle Paul has been offering thanksgiving and prayer, thinking about the wonderful ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he says in conclusion in verse 22, and God placed all things under his, that Christ's feet, and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Just read that again. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. This is an extraordinarily rich couple of verses. Notice the comprehensiveness of the wording. All things, everything, fills everything in every way.

This is the present reign and rule of Jesus Christ. But, please note, it's in a context. It's in a context. Look carefully at verse 22. And appointed him to be the head over everything, but it doesn't stop there.

[ 36 : 28 ] There's not a full stop at that point. He is the head over everything, but it's for the church. church. It's for and on behalf of the church.

That's what God, Father, Son, and Spirit is constantly thinking about and acting upon. The fulfillment of all God's purposes will be a wedding celebration of Christ and his bride, the church, his people.

And everything that ever happens in this world will be linked with that immense end result. What is happening now is a preparation for that everlasting again point.

Think of the magnitude, the immensity, the detail of God's sovereign rule since time began, and see this as the massive ingredient into that great wedding celebration.

What a privilege belongs to the people of God. What a privilege is ours as Christians. to be so intimately involved with God's sovereign purposes, the purposes that he deliberated on, determined before time began, and which will be concluded in the age to come, and which by grace we'll be privileged to be a part of.

[ 37 : 52 ] This is the sovereign Lord. That's why the title of this message this morning is behold your God, behold your God. What a great God we worship.

Even in the darkest times, this is not a God who is absent, but a God who is present and at work, and a God who loves us so deeply as to bring us into this intimate relationship with himself forever. Let's look at four sections of chapter 16, which in a very visual and a resting way illustrate that thought of the sovereign Lord. First section is verses 4 to 6, so we need to go to Ezekiel 16, please, and read verses 4 to 6.

On the day you were born, your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. No one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you, rather you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised.

Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, live. It's a picture of abandonment, neglect and indifference, and not as an innocent victim, but as one with a record and a bad background.

[ 39 : 24 ] Please remember that Abraham was a worshipper of other gods. The patriarchs lived as aliens and often rivals with other peoples in Canaan.

The emerging people were slaves in Egypt and despised. They were rejected people. And it's this picture of rejection which is bundled up in this extraordinary idea, this very visual and visceral idea of this abandoned baby, cast out.

Not even the basics of post-birth hygiene and decency have been followed. This would have been particularly abhorrent to the Jewish people. Nobody wants this baby, and it's in its death throes, and as I've said, not only helpless, but despised.

And it's at this point that the sovereign Lord steps in, sees the full picture, and with a commanding shout, says, live. That's his sovereign command.

It has echoes of Jesus Christ at the tomb of Lazarus, calling to the dead corpse, Lazarus, come out. Or the vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37.

[ 40 : 44 ] Can these dry bones live? Humanly speaking, absolutely not. But on the command of God, they did. It is the commanding voice of the sovereign Lord that makes any dead sinner live.

Paul, writing to the Ephesian church, spells this out, so you might want to turn again to the New Testament and look at Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 1. Ephesians 2 and verse 1.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.

And please look at Ephesians 2 verse 4. But because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

It is by grace you have been saved. Please notice that not only did God find us dead, dead, spiritually lifeless, but we were dead in transgressions.

[ 41 : 54 ] It is because of transgression and sin going beyond God's boundaries, breaking his laws, that we are spiritually dead. Spiritual death is the result of the judgment of sin and that's exactly how God found us, dead in transgressions.

And this is the magnitude of God's love for us. He's rich in mercy and he's made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

That's in the book of Romans that we're reminded that Christ died for the ungodly. He died for sinners. He did not die for righteous people or people who were trying to do their best.

he died for sinners and he remembered us as sinners upon the cross by bearing our sin in his body.

So my simple question arising out of these initial verses in Ezekiel 16 is this, do we realise and thank God for this amazing truth that seeing us in our utter helplessness and sinfulness that God has set his love upon us.

Knowing the very worst about us, he has decided that our destiny should not be judgement but salvation. And this is totally down to him.

[ 43 : 23 ] It's totally down to his grace and mercy. Let's look again at Ezekiel 16 and the second passages verses 7 to 14.

where God is speaking, the sovereign Lord is speaking, I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew up and developed and became the most beautiful jewels.

Your breasts were formed and your hair grew, you who were naked and bare. Later I passed by and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness.

I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the sovereign Lord and you became mine. I bathed you with water and washed the blood from you and put ointments on you.

I clothed you with an embroidered dress and put leather sandals on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments. I adorned you with jewellery.

[ 44 : 30 ] I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace round your neck. I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. So you were adorned with gold and silver.

Your clothes were a fine linen and costly fabric and embroidered cloth. Your food was fine flour, honey and olive oil. You became very beautiful and rose to be a queen.

Your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty because the splendour I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the sovereign Lord.

It's a beautiful passage, isn't it? It's very intimate. Look how carefully God deals with his people.

How lovingly, how generously, how gently, how appropriately, and all with a grand purpose in mind.

[ 45 : 35 ] God was patiently at work in his people then so that it should be clear to the surrounding nations that they belonged to the sovereign Lord and were very precious in his eyes. Day by day and year by year he lavished good and beautiful things upon them.

And so it is with us. Chosen by the king, he is at work in each of us so that together we may demonstrate that we are fit to be called the bride of Jesus Christ.

Because the likeness of Jesus Christ is being developed in us more and more day by day. So I ask this question.

Do we realise and thank God for his patience, his intimate and lavish kindness to us, leading to that day when it will be clear that we are being made holy, cleansed and presented to Christ.

As Ephesians 5.27 puts it, as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

[ 46 : 47 ] This is the work of the sovereign Lord. world. Our third passage is verses 15 to 22.

Disaster if left to ourselves. but you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute you lavished your favours on anyone who passed by and your beauty became his you took some of your garments to make gaudy high places where you carried on your prostitution such things should not happen nor should they ever occur you also took the fine jewellery I gave you the jewellery made of my gold and silver and you made for yourself male idols and engaged in

prostitution with them and you took your embroidered clothes to put on them and you offered my oil and incense before them also the food I provided for you the fine flour, olive oil and honey I gave you to eat you offered as a fragrant incense before them this is what happened declares the sovereign lord and you took your sons and daughters whom you bought to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols was your prostitution not enough you slaughtered my children and sacrificed them to the idols in all your detestable practices and your prostitution you did not remember the days of your youth when you were naked and bare kicking about in your blood oh what a stunning passage that is as it reminds us that in response to all the intimate kindness that the sovereign lord had shown they kind of threw it in his face and instead of being faithful to him they prostituted themselves with anything and anyone else doing unspeakably awful things everything that should have been dedicated to the sovereign lord was instead carelessly given over to others the fine jewellery the embroidered clothes the food everything was given to others the sheer idolatry from beginning to end and even their sons and daughters were sacrificed sacrificed as food to the idols and this happened in all your detestable practices in your prostitution you didn't remember the days of your youth when you were naked and bare kicking about in your blood this is a bleak but truthful description of what happened to god's people when they followed their own ways and devices when they forgot who they belonged to and what he'd done for them when they perversely chose the ways of the nations rather than the ways of god tells us in very stark language how vulnerable we are to spiritual disaster if we drift or run away from god the old covenant that god had given to the people had this weakness and fragility built into it and this was demonstrated again and again by the inability of the people to keep their promise to love and be faithful to god how often he called them back how often they said they would mend their ways and how often they broke their promise the next day and under the terms of the covenant that they had made with god or rather god had made with them well they were ripe for judgment so i asked this question do we realize our weakness and tendency to become hard-hearted spiritually lazy lapsing into the well-trodden paths of temptation i was reading the book of judges this morning the discouraging story of how god's people disobeyed him so regularly the commentator on that passage said we cannot subdue sin by ourselves

it always makes slaves of us we so need the gracious power of the sovereign lord to keep us our final passages verses 59 to 63 verse 59 this is what the sovereign lord says i will deal with you as you deserve because you have despised my oath by breaking the covenant yet i will remember the covenant i made with you in the days of your youth and i will establish an everlasting covenant with you then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters both those who are older than you and those who are younger i will give them to you as daughters but not on the basis of my covenant with you so i will establish my covenant with you and you will know that i am the lord then when i make atonement for you for all you have done you will remember and be ashamed and never again open your mouth because of your humiliation declares the sovereign lord look carefully at verses 59 and 60 judgment is deserved because the people have despised the covenant but god remembers the intentions of those early days and promises them another covenant built on firmer foundations under this new covenant hard-hearted people will remember how they have behaved and be ashamed and humbled they will know deep in their hearts what god is really like for they will see him at work in their lives god not any of their sinful priests will make an atonement for them by the substitutionary death of his son jesus this will be an atonement that will really deal with the matters of sin and judgment because all will be laid upon and paid for by jesus christ on his cross the promises of this new covenant will also spill out beyond the borders of israel to what is put in his allegory his sisters even peoples who lived in the lands of samaria sodom think of that sodom and samaria those despised those pagan peoples those people who didn't have the law of god who didn't know anything about the god of israel well they too are going to enjoy the blessings that are going to come to the people of god so i ask this question do we realise and thank god for this grand truth that the sovereign lord is surely working out his purposes to bring each one of his children from every kingdom tongue and tribe safely home in spite of the overwhelming problem of sin and judgment god has found a way through the death of our lord jesus christ and by his resurrection from the dead and by his intercession as our high priest at god's right hand he's found a way that we should be safely delivered from all that we properly deserve and brought safely home to himself if this is something that you realise that you need in your life why not call out to god now in your helplessness and need and ask him to do his work in your life i didn't show the slides before but i should do so now because they're just brief reminders of what we've looked at god has

spoken to his spokesperson it's a hard message god is deeply aware of jerusalem's detestable practices and this passage is god's word for jerusalem god is sovereign but god is the lord and these two truths go together hand in hand and should be inseparable the people were rejected but they were actually chosen there was one who chose them all else had rejected them but the sovereign lord had chosen them they were people who had been growing growing in beauty growing ready for their courtship and their marriage to the king but we see the disaster that happened to them if they were left to themselves and indeed the disaster that happens to us if we're left to ourselves and we need this new covenant this new arrangement that in no way depends upon our ability but all of grace is given to us in the lord jesus christ so we're going to sing together in the book praise number 672 the lion of judah is jesus the lamb so we're brought into heavenly places as we sing this song and verse 2 starts with with harps and with vials they join the great throng it's a bit of an old word vials but it means bowls and it reminds us of a verse in the book of revelation it's chapter 5 verse 8 where it talks about harps for worship and bowls for incense being the prayers of the saints and this is all a picture of of heaven the glory that awaits those who belong to jesus the lion of jesus is jesus the lamb and the offspring of david the lord the i am so in heaven the elders and creatures all sing and forever give glory to jesus our king with harps and with vials they join the great throng of the angels with jesus and sing this new song you are worthy you are worthy for once you were slain to redeem all your people forever amen and those who were sinners defiled in his sight are arrayed in new garments in praise to unite sing to him who has loved us and cleansed us from sin to the risen lord jesus be glory amen his love makes the rebel a priest and a king he has bought us and taught us this new song to sing you are worthy you are worthy for once you were slain every nation shall praise you forever amen how helpless and hopeless we sinners had been if he never had loved us

till freed from our sin sing to jesus who loved us and cleansed us from sin and to him be the glory forever amen come bow down to jesus repent of all wrong and believing join with us to sing this new song you are worthy you are worthy for once you were slain and you triumph forever and ever amen i'm going to lead you in a closing prayer and i suggest that wherever you're listening to this that you actually carry on in prayer after i've said my amen as we bring glory and praise to our wonderful savior jesus christ our heavenly father we thank you for this time we thank you for giving us your word we thank you for being able to receive your word we thank you for your holy spirit that makes your word live in our hearts we thank you for the magnificent sacrificial life and death and the glory of the resurrection of our savior jesus christ we thank you that you have made a sure covenant with us we thank you you are the sovereign lord in control of all things and the one that we can trust in these dark and difficult days we pray father for those who are in great distress great anxiety great despondency and discouragement in their spirits and we know that these days call out to each one of us that we should call out to you and we pray that you would grant grace to each one we pray for those who are suffering for those who have lost loved ones for those who are in places of risk and difficulty as they care for those with this virus and we ask that you would look after them we pray for our government that you would grant grace and wisdom to them that even though at this time they are not calling out to you we pray that the day will dawn when they do call out to you when someone will actually say we need the living God and we pray father you'd be at work in our government and in places of authority to realise their helplessness and their need to call out to you and we pray father for ourselves as your people that we may live faithfully in these days that we may hear your voice and obey what you're saying to us and what you would have us say to others and we ask father that we may be your ambassadors showing the glorious brightness and the joyfulness and the peace that belongs to those who belong to you now please hear our prayers and help us as we continue in our praying in Jesus name

[ 62 : 25 ] Amen