

Hard words

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[0:00] I'm sorry I put the wrong number on the screen earlier. This last bit, we're going to go into John chapter 7 next week, God willing.! Once again, I'm working between two different versions.

Sorry about that. Verses 60 to 71. That's right, that's as Ruth read.

And I wonder what your impressions or expectations of the Christian life are. If you're on the outside of Christian things, there's all sorts of things that you might think the Christian life is.

Perhaps you ought to leave that for another time. But looking at it from the inside, people who have come to call themselves Christians, what sort of expectations have you been given?

Are you under the impression that God's love, God is a God of love, that the implication of that, that now I'm a Christian, my whole life will be agreeable, easy, no issues or problems?

[1:18] Is it given the impression that when you become a Christian, that God will give you whatever you demand of him or expect of him or feel that you're entitled to?

And that's the way it is you ask and he just gives it to you and no problems, difficulties? Or let's put it rather coarsely that God's job is to fit his will around my ease and comfort.

But I'm putting it in a rather crude way, but I think you know what I mean. That's almost like the genie, isn't it, in Aladdin, who gives me three wishes.

And, you know, let's be aware that it isn't actually like that. That's the genie of the story. The real God of the Bible is not like that.

He's a loving Heavenly Father, but he's not our genie. And that's not the real Christian life, because the real Christian life has hard things in it, which we're going to look at.

[2:31] If you think that God will not impose on me anything that I am not personally happy with, then I'm afraid you're mistaken. If you think that God will not dare tell me things about the world and my place in it that I am not happy with, you're mistaken.

If you think that God will not interfere with the principles of my life and your life, and particularly in our current day and age in relationships and sexual life, if you think God won't interfere, you're wrong, because God will.

And if you think that God will not ask you to stand up for ideals that will provoke ridicule and mockery of people around, I'm afraid you're mistaken, because the Christian life does involve standing up for Jesus under circumstances that may be difficult.

The real Jesus actually says hard words. And we have got to come to terms with that. That's what this passage is about. And in this passage, there are people for whom up with this they will not put. There are people in this passage who say, if that's what it is to be a Christian, I'm not up for it. And they walk away. Verse 66, After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

[3:56] And we have to accept that that is the real Jesus. He says some hard things, and they are sufficiently hard that some people say, well, in that case, I'm not going to be a Christian. And they turn away and walk away.

And that's what we're going to look at this morning. He says things people say, no, not up for that. And they walk away. This is a hard saying. Verse 60, A hard word.

Many no longer walked with him. Verse 66, And Jesus, rather poignant, questioned his disciples. Are you going to go away too? It's quite a question, isn't it?

Is this you? Have you found it too difficult? Will you walk away? So that's what we're going to look at.

And let's just stand back from the thought for a moment. Here's a thought that might come to your mind. If Jesus is so good, and the evidence is so strong, the scripture, we have the signs that he did in John's gospel, we have the words that he said, how could anybody actually turn away?

[5:08] And this is a thing, isn't it? We have the Jews who met Jesus, heard him, saw him, and they still turned away.

And you think of all people, that they, surely they couldn't possibly do that. They did not believe.

Verse 36 says, that they saw the feeding of the 5,000, but they didn't believe.

I said to you, you've seen me, and you don't believe. And in, this is a thing. The Apostle Paul gives, however many chapters, three chapters to this, in Romans.

How come, en masse, the Jewish nation, in the time of Jesus, rejected him? How come they weren't all converted? And it's a deep thing, and we're going to touch on it here, but it's certainly a thing.

unbelief. How does it even happen? Israel, with all her privileges, failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened.

[6:21] That's what Paul says in Romans. That's a subject we're touching on, so let's delve into it. Oh dear, what's happening now? I want to look at it in three ways.

First of all, the reality of turning away. Secondly, the reason for turning away. And fourthly, the remedy for turning away. I felt a little smug about having come up with three R's, but hopefully, we'll at least be able to remember them.

The reality of turning away, the reason for turning away, and the remedy for turning away. I'll put a picture of somebody turning away.

Right. First of all, the reality of turning away. I want to say, there is a sad reality that people turn away. And let's look at the way they turn away.

In verse 61, it says, Jesus was aware that his disciples were grumbling about this.

[7:28] And here is a strand of this turning away, a bit of a thread. The grumbling bit. Grumbling is quite a significant word in the Bible. Israel did this in the desert.

They grumbled. And they grumbled about Moses. They grumbled about the way the Lord had led them. They grumbled about the provision that the Lord had made. And they were in a spiritually dangerous situation, grumbling.

And turning away, in a sense, can begin with grumbling. So it's just a word, isn't it? Beware about grumbling. Beware about being a grumbling Christian because it might be on the beginning of the road.

The end of the road leads to a very dangerous place. So just be careful about that. It can be the beginning of something much more serious.

So grumbling and stumbling. So Jesus, in verse 61, aware that his disciples were grumbling, Jesus says, does this offend you?

[8:41] Does this offend you? Do you take offense at this? And underneath that word offend is the idea of stumbling. Does it make you stumble?

Does it stumble you? It's actually the word from which we get the English word scandal. Does this scandalize you? Is this too much for you to cope with?

Does it cause you to stumble? I'll put a picture there of somebody stumbling. Something in the path, it's meant to help you get over.

You're meant to perhaps either avoid it or stand on it. But instead it trips you over. A stumbling thing. And stumbling is something in the Christian life to avoid.

It's when something happens, something gets inside you, something happens to you, by which you say, oh dear, I wasn't expecting that.

[9:41] If this is the Christian life, I'm just not up for this. And, you know, beware of stumbling blocks. There are things that cause people to stumble.

And Jesus says to his disciples, are you stumbling? Does this make you stumble? It's always been an issue. Back in Isaiah chapter 8 verse 14, the Lord himself is a stumbling block.

He is, in 814, a sanctuary, a holy place, a place to take shelter, a good place, but he's also a stone of a fence and a rock of stumbling, and many shall stumble.

That's the nature of God, isn't it? He's not quite like the way we think he ought to be. And when we meet the real God, we're perhaps surprised. And we have to deal with that.

And Scripture is saying that sometimes people can't deal with that. And they stumble. And they, well hopefully they get up, but some of them don't. The reality of turning away, sometimes people stumble.

[10:48] You know, maybe a stumbling block might be, you know, I was told that God answered every single one of my prayers. Here's a prayer that hasn't been answered. If God isn't answering my prayers, I'm not up for this.

That would be a sort of stumbling block. You'd be very unwise to tell people or to expect that God always answers our prayers in the way that we expect at any rate.

Sometimes he says no. That's an answer. Sometimes he says wait. Sometimes he says yes. But he doesn't always just do it the way we want. You know, here's another stumbling block.

Jesus wants me to put him first above everything else in my life. And that's what he said, isn't it? He wants me to put him first above everything else in my life.

And you can see that with bad things, can't you? There have been bad things in my life and Jesus says, those have got to go. I've got to come first.

[11:51] And he also says it about good things. He says even good things, they're not to be more important than me. And he says it in phrases like love and hate, doesn't he?

If you don't hate your own mother and father, he says, it's an extreme way of putting it, but what he's saying is, even family, I've got to come above family.

I've got to come above your work. I've got to come above your reputation. I've got to come above your career. I've got to come above everything. And, you know, for sure there are people who say, I'm sorry, I'm not up for that.

Now I realize what it costs. I'm not up for it. And they stumble. And incidentally, Jesus gives a very warning to us to not to be a cause of other people stumbling.

I mean, that would be horrible, wouldn't it? Just awful to think that at the end of the day, I've been the reason why somebody else turned away from being a Christian.

[13:01] It would be just dreadful. So, grumbling and stumbling. There are trip hazards in the Christian life. Beware of them.

Watch where you're walking. And then, in this turning away, there is actually the expression turning back. Verse 66.

After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him and no longer followed him. no one who puts his hand to the plough and then turns back is fit for the kingdom.

Jesus can be quite harsh, can't he? At least, quite categorical, quite definite. I think we should admire him for that. And he says, look, this Christian life is a serious thing.

You know, don't start it unless you mean to finish it. And when you've started it, don't turn back. don't turn back.

[14:11] But these disciples started and then they turned back. Will you also go away, says Jesus to the twelve.

You don't want to leave to, do you? There is a real question for those disciples. You know, what sort of disciple are you? Are you a turning back disciple?

And even in the extreme, one of them was actually going to betray him, wasn't he? This turning back, remember Lot's wife.

What did she do? She looked back, didn't she? She was on the way out of out of Sodom, wasn't it? And the disaster was about to strike and instead of just being clear in her mind, that's the way I'm going, she looked back and got turned into a pillar of salt.

It was Jesus who said, remember Lot's wife. The Israelites, having been taken out of Egypt, being redeemed, Moses goes up to, I think, probably get the Ten Commandments, is it?

[15:20] And when he comes down, they've already started worshipping a golden calf. and Deuteronomy 9, 12, they quickly turned away.

You know, the capacity of human nature to be so fickle, they quickly turned away. In Galatians, Paul writes to the Galatian church, I'm astonished, he says, that you are so quickly deserting. This is a warning to us, isn't it? This is a serious warning. Let nobody think, oh, I'm so secure, I'm so steady that I won't turn away. It is in human nature to quickly, surprisingly, astonishingly turn away. Beware. In the parable of the sower, Jesus talks about the different seed that gets sown on different grounds, and one of those is a turning away place, isn't it?

on the shallow ground where the roots don't really go down. And when persecution or trouble arises, times get hard, they turn away.

[16:32] They turn away. Let me just say a word to people who are younger who have been brought up in the church, and perhaps when you're at home, mum and dad, familiar church friends, there's a nice, sort of benign environment to be a Christian, but when you leave home and go somewhere else, be careful, because it's easy to get pressured by different surroundings, a different social group, perhaps not linking up with a Christian fellowship quickly.

And turning away, beware. Get the roots down now. And of course, Peter would be sitting in the congregation listening to this and thinking, well, I'm an exception to this, because that's what he said to Jesus, isn't he?

Even if everybody else turns away, I will never turn away, is what Peter said. And I hope you're not thinking that, but maybe you're thinking, oh well, he's preaching this to somebody else this morning, this doesn't really apply to me, because I'm like Peter, even if everybody else turns away, I will never turn away.

How wrong Peter was. Let him who stands take heed, let he fall. The best place to be spiritually is constantly asking for help, because you know without it, you'll soon fall.

That's the best place to be spiritually. Take warning from the reality of turning away. it's a real thing, avoid it. So beware. You know, there are things that are there to support and help the Christian life.

[18:19] Beware if you systematically stop doing them. So if you have stopped reading your Bible, we had somebody in the church a while ago who thought, for an experiment, I'll see what happens to me if I don't read the Bible anymore.

It's a very dangerous experiment, isn't it? to see if I stop praying, if I don't take part in prayer times, if I absent myself from the fellowship of God's people and try and do it all on my own, if I don't come to the Lord's Supper.

I mean, let's try and put in a plug for coming to the Lord's Supper, because we're not very good at it, actually, and I want to encourage people to be at the Lord's Supper. There are what's called means of grace, things that will help us live the Christian life, because we need the help, and if we're thinking, oh, I'll never turn away, you be careful.

That's a warning. So, number one, the reality of turning away, there were some people who turned away. Make sure you're not one of them. Okay, second thing, the reasons for turning away.

There are reasons, and I would like to say surface reasons and under the surface reasons. So surface reasons are the ones that the preachers have been dealing with over these past weeks, and just to recap them, in chapter 6, verse 26, you, truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the fill of the loaves.

[19:48] you didn't see the signs properly, you latched onto the fact that the feeding of the 5,000 gave people bread, and you didn't get what it was really about.

They didn't get the point, and I'll just say, please don't be a church attender who never actually quite gets the point.

Please don't just sit, don't let yourself sit week by week by week and say, well, this is very nice, they're very friendly people, but I don't think I've quite got the point of this.

You know, don't be consistently not getting the point. Sort it out with the Lord as soon as possible.

Another thing that's a surface reason, it's said explicitly, isn't it?

And Aaron very helpfully pointed this out, verse 41, the Jews began to grumble because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know, how can he say I came down from heaven?

[20:57] It's to do with the identity of Jesus, isn't it? His divinity that he's come from heaven. And, you know, to be honest, if you're sitting listening to the Bible talk, you'd be a fool to think that Jesus was less than divine.

I know the Jehovah's Witnesses manage it, and I know the Muslims don't believe in the divinity of Jesus, although they claim that the Christian scriptures are for them as well.

But, it's, I mean, I'm just stating the obvious. Please, we wouldn't go out of this room, surely, having any lower view of Jesus than he is to be worshipped and honoured as the second person of the Trinity, the eternal word of God, the son through whom all the worlds were made, the one who is at the beginning of everything, and the one who is at the end of everything.

I mean, that's who Jesus is. They didn't get it, but I sincerely hope that everybody here gets that. And the third, the surface reason that they turned away was this matter of the blood and the flesh, wasn't it?

We looked at it last week. How can this man give us his flesh to eat? They get stuck on that, and Jesus says, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

[22:25] Unless you're up for a saviour who died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, his body broken for us, his blood shed for us, unless you're up for that, you're not a Christian.

And they weren't up for that. And I think I probably told you the story of my colleague when I just remember this. My colleague, at first teaching post I had, and he said, oh, communion, we are not even worthy to gather up the crumbs beneath thy table.

Which is what the Anglican Communion Service says. So I think it's a very good expression of our humble dependence upon the Lord. And he just said, well, I'm not up for that. Nonsense. A little bit like Peter.

When the Lord says, I'll wash your feet. And Peter says, I don't need you to wash my feet. And Jesus says to him, unless I wash your feet, you've got nothing to do with me.

We have to take that position, the humiliating position, of letting the Lord save us at the cost of his precious blood. Otherwise, we're not Christians. So these are the surface reasons.

[23:36] There's sort of human pride things here. Human stupidity, human blindness, human pride. And before I leave this, let's say that the chapters we've looked at sort of argue with these, argue these things out, reason them out, try and persuade people.

Jesus is very patient putting these things forward with people. There's no shortage of Jesus sort of explaining to them and reasoning with them and try and persuade them.

There's no shortage of that. But there are under the surface reasons as well. And that's what we particularly have in this passage. And we have it in verse 65.

Jesus says, that is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him. Or perhaps to translate it another way. No one can come to me unless the Father gives it to them. Yeah, let me just think.

[24:46] Yeah, has given it to them. So, perhaps a different translation, but the idea of something the Father does as a free gift.

No one can come unless it's given to them by the Father. And then another under the surface reason in verse 70. Jesus replied, have I not chosen you, the twelve?

And here's the thing, who chose who? Jesus says, some people don't believe that you, the twelve, I chose you.

And in verse 64, there's something under the surface here where it says, Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.

John is at pains to point this out. He wasn't taken by surprise. Gift, choice, foreknowledge.

[26:03] These reasons are deep within the mysterious purposes of the sovereign God.

They don't remove responsibility from the hearers, but when Jesus sees unbelief, he locates the ultimate answer within the purposes of God, deep within the purposes of God.

I suppose he could do a free will answer and then say, well, God's got nothing to do with this. Some people choose, some people don't. It's free will. He doesn't do that, does he? He says there's unbelief.

Well, you see, no one can come unless the Father gives it to them to come, which puts the answers on a whole different level, isn't it?

Let's just go into this a little bit further. Foreknowledge, gift, and choice. And Jesus is bold. I think Jesus is bold to say these things.

[27:09] Humanly speaking, one would hardly dare to say that, would one? Why do we find when we give out a thousand invitations to carols by candlelight, four people turn up?

Well, we just say, I don't know, but we'll try again next year. Jesus is bolder than we are on that, and he says, well, there's something about God's sovereignty here.

Foreknowledge. Jesus says, I know how it's going to turn out. This is particularly with Judas Iscariot. I know. I know the heart.

I know my purposes. I know the way this particular choice is going to end up. I know. And certainly God has, this is divine foreknowledge.

If we were to go into Romans 8 29, then I think foreknowledge goes a little bit further than just seeing what's going to happen. But I'll leave you to think about that one.

[28:24] Maybe we could come back to that this evening. But this one, I think we could only press it as far as saying, Jesus can see how it's going to end up. But he doesn't only say, I know how it's going to end up.

He says, I chose. not just that he saw the outcome, but he caused the outcome.

So we have, for example, the way Paul puts the same thought in Ephesians 1, where he says about himself and by extension us, for he chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

I think my words are insufficient for this, aren't they? This is a deep thing, isn't it? He chose us before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

How come I'm a Christian? I don't know whether you've ever asked yourself that, maybe you haven't paused to think about it, but there is an answer and the answer is because God chose me.

[29:55] This is very helpful actually because when you look within yourself and you try and find an answer in terms of one's own spirituality or cleverness or holiness constancy you're permanently disappointed but we're not supposed to look there, we're supposed to look back before the creation of the world.

Why am I a Christian? Because God in his great mercy said I want that person to be a Christian. I want that person to be with me in glory.

I know they're rubbish but I can do stuff with rubbish. I can pick rubbish out of the gutter. I can forgive people like that. I can change them. I can bless them because I've decided to do it and nobody's going to get in my way.

I'm going to bless them. He chose to do it. Personally, I think is rather amazing. He chose me.

Foreknowledge, choice, and gift. So I will, if I may be forgiven for doing so, press that translation of giving in verse 65.

[31:18] No one can come to me unless the Father gives it to them to be a Christian, gives it to them to follow. let's not think that being a Christian is a cheap and easy thing.

Let's not think it's a relatively trivial thing to have become a Christian. Christian, let's realize that we were privileged to receive a gift from the heavenly Father.

how did I become a Christian? Because the Father gave it to me. It was a gift, a free gift, which is a pretty amazing thing, isn't it?

A free gift. I'm reminded of Abraham, who God came to Abraham and said, I've decided that I will bless you, I will make you a blessing, I'll take your offspring, and through you, all the families of the earth will be blessed.

And Abraham might say, I've won a competition that I never entered for. It's a bit like that with being a Christian, isn't it?

[32:50] We've won a competition we never entered for. God just gave it to us. And I'm also reminded of the, I'm just reading it this morning, of the 72 disciples that went out ministering.

And when they came back, they said, our ministry has been fantastically successful. Even the demons are subject to us, and Jesus said, oh, that's good, but don't rejoice in that. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

That's a good thing to think of, isn't it? You know, whatever ministry we've had, I think there are not many of us here who are multi-millionaire tele-evangelists with a private jet parked on the level, not many of us.

Anyway, even if you had, don't rejoice in that. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Yeah. Yeah. I think this ought to put us in a position of wonder and amazement.

That's what I think anyway. So, there is responsibility to answer the hard questions for sure.

[34:04] You know, so, there are hard sayings by all means. Don't imagine they don't exist. Don't be overcome by them. Get to grips with the hard part.

Learn to trust the Lord where you can't understand things. But don't turn away. And there is sovereignty. Believing does not come naturally. That's the thing, isn't it?

Believing does not come naturally. There are men and women, boys and girls, are fallen in sin. They can't see. They can't believe.

Faith is a super natural gift. A precious gift from heaven.

And those not believing is their natural state of sinful fallen human beings. And if people do believe, it is because God has kindly and generously given it to them to believe.

[35:10] People by nature are in unbelief because that's where they're at. And until God gives them to come, that's where they'll stay. Turn away. So let's come, we looked at the reality of turning away, we looked at the reasons for turning away, particularly thought of the under the surface reasons.

Let's look now at the remedy for turning away. It's a real thing we should be aware of, but it's not as though there's no way of avoiding turning away, it's not as though there's no remedy.

A bit like the, do you remember this when we did Hebrews? This is a picture of people at Berlin Gap, right on the edge, you know, oh really, so stupid, there's a path, why do you have to go right to the edge?

It's really dangerous right at the edge. Christians, you don't have to walk right at the dangerous edge of the Christian life, you can walk in the path in the middle. Let's see where that path is.

There's a healthy path, walk on it, let's look at the remedy. So, number one, be humble enough to realize that you totally need, oh there's two needs there, well that's alright, isn't it?

[36:23] You need, totally need spiritual help and Jesus says this, the grumbling disciples in verse 61, does this offend you, verse 61, verse 63, the spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing, the words I have spoken to you are spirit, they are life, the spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing.

Please be aware of this. There's the flesh, it just goes round and round in circles and gets you nowhere and flesh can include all sorts of things, I think it's human capacities without God.

God. So, in walking with the Lord, my learning is useful but by itself it's just flesh, my background might be useful but on its own it's just flesh, the fact that I might feel myself a victim of things which people tend to do these days, that's just flesh, the strength that I might have, I don't know, perhaps you're an athlete or a bodybuilder, that's just flesh, the way I'm proud and independent and I will get through my life all by myself, that's flesh, it gets you nowhere.

The flesh counts for nothing, the spirit gives life. I use that diagram from where in John 3 where Jesus says you have to be born from above.

Flesh give birth to flesh, spirit gives birth to spirit. The spirit gives life, the spirit from above gives life. And so keeping to the path, don't trust in your own strength.

[38:07] Would you do that? Ask for help from above. The flesh counts for nothing, the spirit gives life. Lord, send your spirit, help me today.

Yes? Without your spirit I can do nothing. You know, folks, we're not a charismatic church. But God help us if we don't trust in the need for the Holy Spirit.

Can we do anything without the Holy Spirit? Absolutely not. The spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing. Number two, Jesus' words, staying in or coming back to the words of Jesus.

That's what he says, isn't it? Verse 63, he's saying to these grumbling disciples, the spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing.

The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. The words of Jesus, he says, you're grumbling, let me just tell you, the words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

[39:13] I spoke, there's a speech bubble, and my words are spirit. You know, I'm stating the obvious, we should not make a separation between the ministry of Jesus word and the ministry of the spirit.

They go together, like words and breath go together. If you separate them, then you're on a very sticky path. The way to have the spirit of Jesus is to listen to the words of Jesus.

My words, he says, are spirit and they are life. The power of Jesus' words, I was struck by this.

Every Sunday we seek to communicate and meditate on the words, effectively the words of Jesus, the words of scripture.

These words are powerful to give life. His word expelled the demons, his word calmed the sea, his word raised the dead, and we're not going to say surely, oh well, Jesus' word doesn't work for me, are we?

No. We're to abide in the words of Jesus, keep us safe, stop us turning away. My words are spirit and they are life.

[40:43] And my, our friend who said he was going to experiment with not reading the Bible, or memorizing it or having it listened to on tape or whatever, but he's going to cut himself off from the Bible.

It's a very dangerous thing to do, isn't it? Pastors are always on about this, aren't they? But let's take the opportunity. Please have a way of getting the Bible into you regularly.

I don't mind whether you read the Bible in the morning or read the Bible in the evening or whether you memorize it or think about it or listen to it on tape or whatever, but don't cut yourself off from the words that give life.

Yes? Yeah. And thirdly, Jesus' deeds. And I'm fascinated by verse 62 where to the grumbling disciples he says, is this going to trip you over?

Is this going to scandalize you? Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before?

[41:58] Now, is this a positive or a negative? To me, it reads a little bit like a negative, and it says, if you're upset by what you've seen so far, you'll be very upset by seeing me ascend to where I was before.

But I was reading about it, and it was said, well, it might not be negative, it might be positive, you're upset by this, but maybe this will help you if you see the Son of Man ascend where he was before.

And I'm going to latch on to that positive, because I think it works. It could be negative or positive, but Jesus says, what about my lifting up, my ascension when I go up?

And if you think about it, Jesus lifting up, does that ring any bells? What was it in John chapter 3? Like the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

So there's a lifting up of Jesus. He was lifted up on the cross, wasn't he? What do you see the Son of Man lifted up on the cross? And he was lifted up from the grave.

[43:05] He arose from the grave. And he ascended to the Father. That's what he says to Mary, I think, in the last few chapters. I'm ascending to your Father and my Father and your Father.

So he ascends on the cross, from the grave, to the Father. This lifting up of Jesus. And I'm just going to put it positively and say, if you were scandalized by the things that he said, maybe this will help you.

Take a look at the lifting up of Jesus. Take a look at the cross. Take a look at the empty tomb. Take a look at his enthronement.

Maybe that will help you. And even if it isn't what Jesus meant, I don't know, perhaps we could discuss this this evening, but it's still good advice, isn't it?

Don't take your eyes off the cross, the empty tomb, and the enthronement on high of our King Jesus. And if we were looking at that, perhaps the hard things wouldn't disturb us so much and knock us off course.

[44:16] Focus there. The remedy for turning away. And one more remedy, which is what Peter says, verse 66, from that time, many of his disciples

did turn back, and many did no longer follow him.

And Jesus says to the twelve, you're going to go away as well. You know, it's a real question. You don't want to leave two, do you? Says Jesus to the twelve.

And Simon Peter answered him, Lord, where else would we go? To whom else, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

We believe and know that you are the holy one of God. And that's the question, where else would you go? If you're going to turn away, where else would you go, honestly? There's no one like Jesus, is there?

There's no other saviour like him. There's no other close rival, is there? He's incomparable. There's no one.

[45:23] No one else has shed his blood for you. No one else rose from the dead. No one else came down from heaven. I mean, to whom else would you go? I know some of you have tried this.

You've tried isms, Buddhism, Hinduism, psychology, ism, that's not even a word, politics, ism, that's definitely not a word. But whatever it is, none of them is a touch on Jesus.

None of them is anywhere near him as a saviour. So, fourth thing, there's no real alternative, is there? To whom would you go?

There's no real alternative to Jesus. And to leave him is not to go to a reasonable alternative. We couldn't book you into this Airbnb, but we could book you into this one. That's just as good. There's no just as good saviour, is there? There's only one. And if you don't have him, you're helpless and hopeless and lost, cut off from the source of life.

[46:38] You don't want to turn away, do you? So, let's keep coming to him. There is no spiritual plan B. Those people said no and turned.

Here's somebody turning away. There is a reality of turning. It's a real danger. Only a stupid Christian would deny that. We're not stupid Christians, are we? The reasons for turning away, some of them are on the surface, but some of them are quite deep, really, and humbling.

They're hard words, but there is a sovereign God, a sovereign merciful God, God. And there is a remedy for turning away. Be humble.

Call upon the Lord. The flesh profits nothing. It's the Spirit that gives life. Stay in Jesus' words. Stay close to Jesus' deeds. And remember, he's the only one.

There is no other way. And when Jesus says to you and to me, will you turn away? By his grace, may the answer be no.

[47:42] No. We're going to sing above the clash of creeds, the many voices. There is no other way by which we must be saved.