

AM Exodus 30:11-16 & John 2:1-22 Jesus cleanses the temple

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[0 : 00] Verses 11 to 16. Now this is a wee bit strange passage to read perhaps, you might think, but we're going to make some reference to it briefly in our sermon.

And it fits in with our New Testament reading, which we'll have in a moment. So Exodus chapter 30, verses 11 to 16. The Lord said to Moses, Everyone who is numbered in the census from twenty years old and upwards shall give the Lord's offering.

The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than the half shekel when you give the Lord's offering to make atonement for your lives.

You shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the Lord, so as to make atonement for your lives.

May God bless to us this reading. New Testament reading is from John's Gospel chapter 2. And we're going to read from the beginning of the chapter.

[1 : 39] In fact, we're going to read most of the chapter down to verse 22. John's Gospel chapter 2. There are two incidents here.

The first of all, the wedding at Cana, and then Jesus cleanses the temple. On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, They have no wine.

And Jesus said to her, Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, Do whatever he tells you.

Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, Fill the jars with water.

[2 : 45] And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, Now draw some out, and take it to the master of the feast. So they took it.

When the master of the feast tasted the water, now become wine, and did not know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew, the master of the feast called the bridegroom, and said to him, Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine.

But you have kept the good wine until now. This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

After this, he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days. The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

In the temple he found those who were selling oxen, and sheep, and pigeons, and the money changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen.

[4 : 07] And he poured out the coins of the money changers, and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, Take these things away.

Do not make my father's house a house of trade. His disciples remembered that it was written, Zeal for your house will consume me.

So the Jews said to him, What sign do you show us for doing these things? Jesus answered them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

The Jews then said, It has taken 46 years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days? But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture, and the word that Jesus had spoken.

[5 : 08] Just to there, may God bless to us this reading. Now we'll again look at John's Gospel, chapter 2, and we'll look at verses 13 to 17, the story of Jesus cleansing the temple.

I'm not going to read this passage again, but we'll go through it bit by bit. Jesus cleanses the temple, John chapter 2, from verse 13.

Now you may have noticed that the closing, the previous incident closes with the idea that what Jesus had done there displayed his glory, and the disciples believed in him.

And this is very much the theme of the opening stories in John's Gospel. The picture of Jesus is slowly being opened up.

Different aspects of who he is, of the work that he came to do, are being brought to their attention, and the result is that people believe in him. And as so, with this incident as well, we've got it in the last verse that we read, in verse 22.

[6 : 22] His disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture, and the word that Jesus had spoken. So this too is another incident that is displaying Jesus, so that people might believe in him.

The people are just learning who he is, and as they learn, they put their trust in him increasingly. And as we look at this story today, then that's what we should be looking for.

We should be asking, who is Jesus? How does he show himself in this incident? And what difference should that make to our faith?

And we hope that that will be the result of what we're doing today in looking at this passage. Now it falls into two, this incident of Jesus cleansing the temple.

We've got what he actually did in verses 13 to 17, and then we've got the discussion that follows from that in verses 18 to 22. So this morning we're going to deal with the incident itself, and this evening, all being well, we'll deal with the discussion that follows.

[7 : 31] So it's verses 13 to 17, the cleansing of the temple. Now this isn't just an action that he performed. It's got a meaning.

It's part of an agenda. And there are different things that it displays about Jesus here. Different levels of interpretation we can give to it therefore.

And I want to try and briefly sum these up in four points that we've got here. Here is Jesus protesting against the commercialization of the temple.

Here he is preserving the temple for people to meet with God. Here he is proclaiming his ownership of the temple.

And here we have a prophecy of his impending death. So these four things we'll go through. The first one mainly, and that rest more briefly this morning.

[8 : 28] Here we have a protest against the commercialization of the temple. I think this is the obvious feature. Here's a place that was dedicated to God and they're using it as a marketplace.

They're using it as a place to trade in. Now we need to have a bit of knowledge of the background here to understand how this happened and what's going on here.

First of all, don't think of the temple as a big church building where you've got a pulpit and you've got pews or seats at an auditorium in which services are conducted and sermons are delivered.

That wasn't the sort of temple that they had in those days. And it's not the sort of structure that we have to think of here. The temple at Jerusalem was really a series of courtyards, of open courtyards.

There was a big main courtyard into which anybody could go and then there was a courtyard for the Jewish men and a courtyard for the Jewish women and a courtyard for the priests and in the centre of the whole temple was the holiest place where only the high priesthood go once a year.

[9 : 50] But mainly it consisted of the series of courtyards and that explains how it can be used as a marketplace. You can't think of a church building as being used as a marketplace with animals and birds for sale.

It just doesn't fit. But if you think of a big courtyard, a big open courtyard, you can see how they could take the cattle in there and so on. And that's the part of the temple that is being used as a marketplace.

Now, again, by way of sketching in the background, we have to ask why were they doing this buying and selling in the temple precincts?

And the answer is, you see, that the worship of the temple at that time had an awful lot to do with sacrifice, with animal sacrifices.

This, of course, was just a picture of things in New Testament times, but that's the way they did it in Old Testament times. Every morning, every evening, the priests would sacrifice an animal.

[10:56] Worshippers would come with their own animals to express their gratitude for something or to express their sinfulness and their need of cleansing. And when a new baby was born, they would come to the temple to be purified and would offer animals, birds, a sacrifice then.

So, what's happening in the temple precincts is that they're buying and selling animals that will then be used in their worship, that will be used for these sacrifices.

Another thing was the payment of the temple tax. Now, we read about this in the Old Testament.

That's why we read it. Every year, everybody had to pay a certain amount as atonement money.

And it was paid, apparently, at Passover time, when the Jewish people all came together to remember their deliverance in the past when they were slaves in Egypt.

And that was the time of the year when they had got to pay this temple tax. Now, it had to be paid in a certain currency. So, the Roman currency, the local currency, that people usually used, was no good.

[12:12] And they had first to change their money into the appropriate coinage and then pay their temple tax with that. And that explains why the money changers are there in the temple.

So, this was all something set up in order to facilitate worship. So, they thought. But Jesus sees it in a different way. It might have been very useful for the people to buy animals in the temple and then they could just go to the next court and get the priest to sacrifice them then.

Very convenient. But this had become a commercial enterprise in effect. And Jesus can't stand the thought that this temple of God is being used as a place of worship.

As a place of trade. It's a place of worship, not a place of trade. It's Jesus' point of view. And to make matters worse, I do think we've got to say there was a fair bit of financial trickery we might see going on here.

The animals in the temple for sale had all been approved as appropriate. If an animal wasn't perfect it couldn't be used in sacrifice.

[13:30] But the animals sold in the temple it is said had all been already approved. So, you can maybe bring one of your own animals to the temple but then it might be turned down.

Or you could buy one in the city and again it might be turned down by the temple authorities. But these ones are certified. So, they've got a kind of monopoly here. And you can charge what you like when there's a monopoly.

I used to think it was like buying a cup of coffee in an airport. You could charge what they wanted because there was nowhere else to go. And that's the way it was here. They could charge what they wanted because it was the best place to go.

They had them in their grip and the temple authorities took a share of the profits. It was a racket. It was a racket. That's what's going on here. And that's why Jesus does what he does.

Now, he does something unusual. Namely, that he uses violence to do this or at least a display of violence to do this. Now, that's not characteristic of the Christian faith we've been told quite plainly that we're not to use the weapons of this world.

[14:41] But in these special circumstances where Jesus is doing something, then this is what he does. He takes a whip and it doesn't say that he struck anybody, but he certainly wields this and people flee before him and the animals are chased out and he cleanses the temple in that way.

And I think you can quite plainly see that we're quite right in saying that this is a protest against the commercialisation of religion where money, money, money takes the place of spiritual things.

And that's what's the interest of these people is to make money when it should be a place of prayer and of sacrifice. The commercialisation of religion, that's the problem here.

Now, I do want to apply this in a meaningful way, at the same time I want to be very careful to do it in a fair way.

And I do want to apply it, however, in three areas. In our own setting, in the circumstances of our time, and in regard to our salvation.

[15 : 54] Commercial interests, financial considerations, can come into these areas and can distort our outlook and be something that Jesus himself would regard with utter hatred as being contrary to God's way of looking at things.

Now, in our set-up, it's only quite right and fitting that people should say we must run the church in a business-like way. There shouldn't be unnecessary waste.

We should be efficient in our use of funds. And I don't think anybody's good to contradict that in principle. The trouble is that when people at the centre make policies that are business-like as they see it, it's not always seen as that way on the receiving end of these policies.

People may say in authority, this is the way we've got to use our funds. business. It's the business-like way to do things. But when it's applied to a congregation not being allowed to get a minister because they can't pay their own way, it does seem as if what matters is that we're financially viable.

And if we're not financially viable, we can't get a ministry. That's the way it seems. And it seems as if business interests have taken over. Well, just like a shop or a bank, if you wrote enough business through the doors, you're chopped.

[17 : 29] And that sort of attitude can easily appear to be the situation, the commercialisation of religion. Or if there's a small congregation who gets a minister and then he's told you're not paying up enough money, you've got to go on part-time, you've got to be paid half your salary, he's being paid by results or the lack of them.

And that's a business technique rather than a spiritual thing. It's very difficult to get this right, but I just want to think that we should be alert about this, that any church who says we're going to do things in a business like manner has got to be very, very careful that it's not just market forces that are operative within the church, because that would be doing the same thing as these traders in the marketplace, in the temple we're doing in Jesus' day.

Okay, now getting on to things a wee bit easier. We can apply this to our society as a whole. I think of Christmas, so-called, a time of the year when there's an awful lot of money being spent and people go to enormous lengths to have a good party or to have good presents that they give to others and there's no harm in giving presents to others if you can afford it in principle.

But what happens is there's pressures on everybody to spend more, to spend more, to spend more. And poor people go into debt in order to be able to buy gifts that are equivalent to what the richer people around them are giving.

The pressure is on and all that it is in the name of religion. This is meant to be a celebration of the birth of Jesus. And what's happening?

[19 : 21] It's just a commercial enterprise. And the more un-Christian our nation becomes, the more emphasis seems to be given to have more importance given to the commercial aspect of Christmas.

And it just isn't on. If Jesus were to come at Christmas time amongst us and see what goes on at an office party with eating and drinking and probably drinking to excess and all sorts of jollifications and he was told that's in your name.

It's because we're celebrating your birth. I reckon he would take a whip and he would chase folks out of that situation because there we've got the commercialisation of religion too.

So beware of it. The third area is in regard to salvation and this is of course the most important area of all. People think that by paying money they can get saved from their sin.

By paying things they can redeem themselves from death or destruction. At the time of the reformation in the 16th century this was something that came to the fore.

[20 : 42] The Pope in Rome needed money to build St Peter's Church which we see from time to time on the telly. He needed money to build that magnificent building and he gave what was called an indulgence.

He promised forgiveness to anyone who paid a certain sum of money for the work and this applied to dead people as well as to living people and he sent a man around the countries of Europe to sell his indulgence to raise money for his building and Tetzel was the name of this man and Tetzel used to say this.

As soon as the money clinks into the money chest the soul flies out of purgatory and what is that but the commercialisation of religion on a grand scale.

Pay for your soul's redemption. If you pay enough money to my building project your relatives who have died will get out of the punishment that's due for their sin. salvation. And that's a terrible thing that's happening there. The commercialisation of religion at its most important point. The commercialisation of salvation itself.

[21 : 54] But quite apart from that particular example at that time this was the way people normally looked at things. You have to earn your salvation.

You have to pay for your salvation. You have to merit your salvation. You have to do something to get it. Buying things. Buying your salvation. That's what mattered.

Martin Luther who was one of the leaders of the reformation that were mentioned. He thought like this as well. He was a German but he went to visit Rome and he thought that there he would come closer to God because at that time it was the centre of the Christianity.

And there was a series of steps called the Sala Sancta. 28 steps and the idea was that if you knelt on each step and went up these steps on your knees and prayed the Lord's prayer at each step then you'd get salvation.

So he tried it because he didn't have peace of mind and he went up these steps on his knees and prayed his prayers and at the end he didn't get it. But you see he was looking for it in the wrong way.

[23 : 03] You don't get it by paying for it. You can't get it by buying it by your money or by your good deeds or by your religious works. That's not the way it works.

And in our own day and age we've still got that idea. I applied this four centuries ago but nonetheless it still happens today that people think that they can buy their salvation.

If I go to church often enough, if I do enough good deeds I'll be able to pay for my salvation. If my good deeds outweigh my bad ones, I'll have earned it, paid for it by my own good works.

And so they go to church and they discipline their lives and they try and be nice to other people sometimes at least and they think that in this way they've earned their way into God's favour. And Jesus is saying that's a piece of nonsense.

It doesn't work like that. You cannot pay anything for the redemption of your soul. That's where the psalm that we were singing fits in here. You can't buy salvation.

[24 : 06] So let's acknowledge this as the most important application of what Jesus is doing here. Market forces are inappropriate when it comes to religion.

Either in church setup, either in community as a whole and in particular in regard to salvation. It isn't a matter of trading, it isn't a matter of money, it isn't a matter of paying.

It doesn't work that way. It's grace, grace, nothing more than that. Mercy undeserved, that's the way it comes to us and that's the lesson we've got to learn. So don't be thinking that by your own good works or by doing this or that in a religious context, you're going to win the favour of God.

All that we win is this disapproval because of the sinfulness of our hearts and all that we can do is depend upon his mercy and rest upon the salvation that he has provided for us freely by his grace, not through works lest anyone should boast, not a matter of paying for it, lest anybody should be proud of their own efforts.

So that's the first point that we've got here, it's the main point and we'll do the rest briefly. So here is a protest against the commercialisation of the temple. But it also is the preservation of the temple for people to meet with God.

[25 : 27] Now you see, that's the negative side of things. He wanted the traders removed, why? So that the temple could be all that it was designed to be. And that was so that people could meet with God in the temple.

There were two particular things that were done in the temple in those days. There's the sacrifices that were mentioned and there is also prayer. And the sacrifices, of course, were important for people approaching God.

This was the idea. you can't approach God lightly. You're guilty before him and unless you shed the blood of sacrifice there is no atonement for you.

That was the big principle that underlay the Old Testament teaching. So somebody with a guilty conscience would bring an animal to the temple and he would give it to the priest to kill on his behalf and he would do so with this idea in his mind.

I'm guilty. I deserve to die but you take this animal and kill it as a representative of me so that I might find atonement for sin.

[26 : 35] Now as I say that's just a picture but nonetheless that was the principle behind it. There is no atonement without the shedding of the blood of sacrifice. There is no peace with God except by that means and that was something that was clearly taught in the temple and connected with that there was the matter of prayer.

People who come to the temple and pray they didn't only come to the temple and pray people could pray anywhere but they did come to the temple as a place where prayer was offered and it's here you see where this business matter of the outer court impinges upon their prayer life.

The sacrificial system went on whatever even though there was a market there but prayer couldn't go on to the same degree in the court of the Jewish people.

The Jewish men might be there praying but they would be hearing this noise and bustle from the marketplace and they'd be hearing traders calling out and shouting and treating it as a place of business, a marketplace just and that would impinge upon their prayers and the Gentile people had nowhere to pray if the outer court was used as a marketplace.

That was the only place they could go to. They couldn't go into the court of the Israelites they had to stay in the outer court. But it was all taken up by traders. There was no peace there was no quiet it was just a marketplace and how can you pray with sensitivity in a marketplace in those days.

[28 : 11] So Jesus you see is preserving the sanctity of the temple as it was in those days. He's saying this is what's important about the temple that people should pray to me on the basis of sacrifice offered.

And that's the principle that he's seeking to bring to attention here. Away with these traders in order that people may make their sacrifices and find atonement and be able to come before God in prayer.

That's the preservation of the temple as a proper place of worship. And it shows the principles you see on which Jesus is moving. It shows the way that he's working. This is what's important to him.

That if a person is a sinner they should have access to sacrifice and through that sacrifice they should be able to make their prayers to God. That's the thing that matters to Jesus.

And of course he develops this as we know very well if we know our New Testaments at all. He's the great sacrifice and through him we can go to God. But that's the principle that we've got here. What matters is not this trading away with it in it stands out clearly.

[29 : 20] Sacrifice for sin that gives access to God through prayer. He's preserving the temple for that activity. The third thing that he's doing is he's making a proclamation of ownership of the temple.

Now supposing a stranger came into your house and began to rearrange everything. That ornament shouldn't go there it should go there. That picture is no good throw it out. that TV is not up to standard away with it. And in general they created havoc in your front room. What would you say?

What would you do? At the very least you would say to them what right have you to come in here and do that? Who do you think you are? And I think you see that that's something that people would be saying.

And quite rightly who do you think you are that you can take these things and do what you're doing with them? And Jesus tells them he doesn't tell them explicitly but he gives them to understand why he can do this.

[30 : 28] Because what he says to them is this take these things away do not make my father's house a house of trade. My father's house he says.

And that's him telling us who he is. This is in effect saying this is why I've got a right to do this. Because I'm not a stranger here.

This belongs to me. It's my father's house. And he's claiming authority here to do whatever he wants in the temple. Because it's his father's temple.

It's his temple through his father. He belongs there and has a right to do what he's doing. It's a very big claim that. The temple structure was laid down in the Old Testament.

There were laws about it basically given originally to Moses developed in Solomon's time and so on. But laws from the Old Testament. And there were the temple authorities that had their own say in how the thing should be managed.

[31 : 31] And here is Jesus saying I have a right to do in this building what I want to do because it's my father's house. So he's making himself bigger than Moses. And he's making himself bigger than

Solomon.

And he's certainly making himself bigger than the temple authorities. And says this really belongs to me because of who I am. Because he's the son of God.

He can do this. And he claims this to be his father's house. And that of course is not something new if you know your gospels. You know that this happened earlier on in his life according to Luke's gospel as a boy of twelve.

Well actually twelve was the age at which he became a man in Jewish religion. So he no longer technically was a boy. But as a twelve year old he's there in the temple and he stays behind when his parents go home and they've got to come back and they've been worried about him.

And he says to them sitting there in the temple discussing things. Did you not know that I must be about my father's business? Or as some translations say did you not know that I must be in my father's house?

[32 : 44] Whichever way you look at it you see the same claim. Jesus looks like a human being. He is a human being. But he's more than a human being. He's got all the authority of the Son of God behind him.

All the authority of the Father behind him. And that's what he's claiming here. And that's something that is of great significance. He's saying look remember what I'm doing because I've every right to do it.

Listen to what I'm saying because I've every right to speak. I know because of who I am. A big claim to our obedience to our submission to our allegiance.

The fourth thing that we've got here is that this is a prophecy of his impending death. Now this tells us in verse 17 that his disciples remembered.

It doesn't tell us when they remembered but there are other phrases of this nature that do usually say that when Jesus had risen from the dead they remembered.

[33 : 52] And that's the way that I'm taking it here. They remembered later on looking back. This is not what they saw at the moment but realising what had happened that he died and rose again.

They realised there was more significance than this than they had first thought on. And what they remembered particularly is a verse from the Old Testament Psalm 69 Zeal for your house will consume me.

Psalm 69 verse 9 actually says for zeal for your house has consumed me and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen in me. Now I've always had difficulty with this and I can just say what I think about it.

And maybe you don't have my difficulties or maybe you agree with me or maybe you have another idea. But I can't see how this fits very well unless we recognise that this idea of consuming has got two slightly different meanings.

And when it's applied in this situation here of Jesus cleansing the temple it means one thing and looking back it means something else.

[35 : 13] And I don't find that altogether satisfactory but that's the best I can do for the situation. We might for example to bring out the two meanings of this word consume.

We might say a person was consumed with grief and it doesn't mean to say they were destroyed by grief or ceased to exist because of grief. It just means that the feeling of grief dominated their lives that the sense of grief coloured their outlook and determined their activities.

And that's what's happening here in Jesus cleansing the temple. He's consumed by zeal for God's house. He gets such an intense desire for it that it overwhelms his natural reluctance to use violence that it becomes what dominates his activities and causes him to do this remarkable thing of throwing out these traders.

He's taken up with zeal for God's house. That's what that can mean. Consumed with zeal in the sense of it becomes his dominating motive for what he was doing.

But if you say the fire consumed the dry leaves you mean that the fire destroyed the dry leaves. Left nothing there.

[36 : 38] And that isn't the same as saying a person is consumed with grief. It goes much further and suggests something destructive. and that's the way looking back they see things.

They saw this as an indication of how zeal would consume him in the sense that he gave himself to the purpose of God in such a way that his enemies acted against him and he was consumed by that zeal.

Now that's the way the thing is in the Old Testament. Zeal for your house has consumed me and the reproaches of those who reproached you have fallen in me.

So you see it's in the context of opposition, the context of enmity and hatred because of his zeal.

And that's what fitted the life of Jesus as he went on in his ministry.

As he came towards the end of it, people hated him because of what he was doing. The leaders of the Jewish people couldn't stand him because of the teaching that he gave. And so they came against him and arrested him and brought him to trial and had him put to death on the cross.

[37 : 55] And he was consumed. Consumed because of his zeal for the house of God. Because of his zeal for the things of God. The zeal that he had had so stirred up enmity that they took his life from him and they put him on the cross.

That's what these disciples are remembering here. They saw this as an example of his zeal. And they saw also that on the cross he was consumed with zeal.

And he was destroyed in a certain sense. His life was taken from him. And he was consumed for zeal for God's house.

That's the way they saw things. And so they go from this incident here and they take in the death of Jesus. And they see it on the same terms. zeal. And that's what their minds move towards as they see what Jesus is doing here.

The outcome of this zeal which is shown in this action here is that he died upon the cross. And his life was taken from him by his enemies. And that's what they're remembering as they think about this.

[39 : 00] So this you see has something that brings in the death of Jesus. death of Jesus for the Christian person is a death a sacrifice for sin.

Just as the animal sacrifices were made so Jesus makes himself an offering for sin. And he therefore deals with the problem of sin and guilt on behalf of his people.

And this you see if we bring in the death of Christ here it gives a certain perspective outlook to the whole situation here. Because what was said at the moment is you come to God through sacrifice and you can pray to him on the basis of the sacrifice offered.

But if you add in this element that they're thinking here about is death. We realise that that fits into this picture. Because this is the ultimate sacrifice. This is the sacrifice.

The only one that matters. The Old Testament sacrifice is pointed forward to this. And now that this has happened these are invalid and no use whatever.

[40 : 11] And that's what these disciples are remembering here when they reflect on this event. So that to grasp what's going on here we do have to have that in mind as well.

That when we're talking about access to God through the sacrifice offered for sin and through prayer we remember that this was ultimately fulfilled. fulfilled in his death which is brought into the picture at the end of this passage here.

And that's a way we have to see the whole thing. This is what Jesus is saying listen to me because I've a right to be heard. I've authority in this matter because of who I am.

Listen to me it's not buying and selling that will get you right with God. It's not market forces that rule in spiritual matters. It's not that at all.

It's sacrifice offered that gives you access to God through prayer. And the sacrifice offered is myself on the cross. That's what he's saying to us.

[41 : 16] And so that's the message of this passage. What are we going to do with it? Well look at his authority. This is my father's house. I can do what I want here because it's mine.

What should we do with a person that speaks like that? Well we can reject it and say no way. But if we have any respect for the Christian faith at all we must listen.

We must listen in submission. He's got authority. He's a right to speak. A right to command. Look at his priorities. Not these commercial interests.

But sacrifice offered for sin. that gives access to God. Is that our priority when we come to church? Is this the thing that matters most in our religious outlook, in our daily outlook?

That I have approached to God through a sacrifice made for sin. If we're still in our sins, living our lives in our natural condition, then that's not the way we look at things.

[42 : 21] We think, well I don't need forgiveness forgiveness because I'm not that bad a sinner. Or we say, well I have sinned but I've done an awful lot more good than I've done evil. And we think we can bargain with God.

But this is entirely different. You rest upon the sacrifice offered and come to God on that basis. That gives you access to God in prayer. Nothing else does.
And the sacrifice offered is Jesus. Come to him if you haven't done so. Come to him with your sins and rest upon him. Thank him for dying upon the cross.
Commit your sins to him to take away. Ask for forgiveness. And then if you do that, you can always come to God freely on the basis of that sacrifice made.
May God bless to us his word.