

# The Living Word

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[ 0 : 00 ] When Jesus is preparing to take leave of his disciples, when he speaks to them in John 14 and 15 and 16 and so on, he tells them that contrary to what they were feeling, it was actually good for them if he went away, at least in a fleshly sense, so that the Spirit of Christ could come and dwell and abide with them always.

His flesh wouldn't be with them always, just as any of us, our flesh isn't with anyone always. We have a limited span of time on earth and then we die in physical terms.

And it's reasonable to suppose that our Lord would have fulfilled a certain number of years upon earth if he'd lived to a great old age. And then, like Enoch, he might have been just taken away. Or like Elijah, taken up to heaven in a whirlwind and a fiery chariot, whatever.

But it's unlikely he would have tasted of death unless it was for the particular purpose for which he was offered up. But, at any rate, his flesh could not abide with them forever.

But he gave them of his Spirit so that his Spirit could come and dwell and abide with them always.

Now, naturally, they didn't understand how they could actually benefit from Jesus being taken away from them.

[ 1 : 23 ] And, to be honest, perhaps we probably also struggle too with the idea. We like to think, well, of course they would want Jesus with them. Why would anybody feel better off if Jesus is taken away from them?

Perhaps, if we think of it not so much as Jesus being taken away from them, but rather of his body, his flesh being taken away.

But of Jesus himself still being with them by his Spirit. Then it's a little easier to grasp. And that's, after all, what he does say. Jesus himself says in John 16, at verse 7, Nevertheless, I tell you the truth.

It is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

Now, the Helper, the Holy Spirit, is not somebody different from Jesus in that sense. Jesus himself says to the Apostles when he takes his leave of them, Matthew 28, verse 20, Behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

[ 2 : 29 ] It's not, I'm sending somebody else. You know, this Holy Spirit, somebody completely different from me. He will be with you, but I won't be. No, I will be with you always to the end of the age. In other words, he's telling them, you'll still have me.

I'll still be there. It'll just be different. You'll still have me. You'll have everything you need. And I'll be right there with you.

It's my spirit you'll have day by day. I will still be there. Now, to some extent, it's a wee bit like that when we come to the end of a communion season.

Particularly if we have felt blessed by it. It's hard to come down the mountain and to go back to what might be mistaken for ordinary day-by-day Christianity.

Well, maybe it's not a mistake. It is day-by-day. It is to an extent ordinary, and we do have to live out our Christian lives. But away from the spiritual boost and the gathering of Christian friends from elsewhere for the holy occasion of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

[ 3 : 33 ] And of course, yes, we do have to come down the mountain and practice our faith. And it does indeed involve a certain day-by-day routine.

We have to go through our ordinary routines, our ordinary tasks and duties and employments of life. But the key thing is that when we come back down the mountain, the Lord comes back down with us.

Just like he did with the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. Remember when there was Moses and Elijah and a shining bright light, and then a cloud covered it all, remember? And then when the disciples lifted up their eyes, they saw no man save Jesus only. And then the next thing you read is they're going down the mountain together. Jesus is still with him. He doesn't stay up there on the mountain and say, you go back down, and you get on with all the ordinary business of telling people about me or healing people or whatever. No, I'm staying up here with Moses and Elijah. No, he comes back down the mountain with them. And in a spiritual sense, that's what he does with us too. He comes back down the mountain with us.

[ 4 : 35 ] And when we return to our daily tasks and duties, after all the high of a sacramental occasion, as Christians in the world, we still have to function.

We still have to be salt and light where we're called to be. We still have to work in our daily tasks and duties. We still have to be in the midst of our families and colleagues and so on. We still have to be Christians where we are. And when we do that, the Lord stays with us and goes with us into all those things, day by day, these routines, challenges, and duties, which may be far less spectacular than the Lord's Supper or a communion season or all the special occasions, but which are nevertheless the reality of our Christian life and witness. And being with us in it all, he gives us and leaves with us everything we need from day to day. Both of his Spirit, yes, but also crucially of his Word, which is also his in the same way as the Spirit is his. And it's also him speaking to us in the same way as it's him working in his Spirit and in the lives of his followers. It's a different way.

[ 6 : 00 ] It's a different kind of his being with them, just as it was a different kind of his being with them in his Spirit as opposed to in his flesh. And likewise, it's different again with him being with us in his Word and in his Spirit.

But he is here for us. And he is with his people. Remember that it says in God's Word, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. In other words, the living Word is Christ. And we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. So Christ is present with his people, not only by his Spirit now, but also in his Word. So what we find in this Nehemiah chapter 8, yes, it's Old Testament again, my apologies, but I didn't realize at the time of choosing out this and preparing it that everybody else was going to do Old Testament from start to finish, right through the communion season. I've never actually experienced one in my entire ministerial life where it's been the Old Testament from start to finish with everybody, all the visiting ministers. So there you are. It's Old Testament again.

[ 7 : 12 ] Nevertheless, it's all the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation. It is all the testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Remember what Hebrews tells us. Where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

And it's all about the death and life of Christ from Genesis to Revelation. And a testament, although it can be prepared, it must be prepared beforehand. It only comes into force with the death of the testator.

I mean, I've got a testament. I've got a will made up with a lawyer. My wife and I made up a will many years ago now. It's hopelessly out of date. It's all about who's made to look after our little talky children and everything.

If anything happens to us, and oh, grown up and mostly left home and so on now. So we'll have to revise it. It's there. It's legitimate. It's legal. It doesn't come into force though, thank goodness. Because where a testament is, it's not going to kick in unless there's the death of one of the testators. So likewise, where we have the testaments of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whether it is the old or whether it is the new, they are all about Him.

[ 8 : 21 ] So what we have here in this book in Nehemiah chapter 8 is the Lord's people turning to Him in His word. That's what this chapter is about.

The Lord's people coming to seek Him, turning to Him in His word. That's what they're seeking to do together. And in that doing of that, we find it's also clear in the fact that the explanation and instruction that we read is given to them, that they're not really doing it as one big body collectively, but it's also personally and individually as well that God was revealing Himself and moving amongst

the people through His written word, received and understood by them collectively, but also individually.

Now, why are the Levites explaining and giving the sense of each bit? It's not so that the whole big body group can say, yes, we understand it, but so individuals can say, oh, right, that's what it means. That's the sense of it.

They're having to unlock it, as it were, and expound it and unpack it for the people. And that's what's going on here in this chapter 8. But in order to get the benefit of God's written word, not everybody, not nowadays we've all got our own copy on the shelf or in a home, or most Christians will have umpteen Bibles in their homes.

In those days, of course, people did not just have scrolls of the Old Testament just laid up in their tent or on a shelf in their house or whatever. It was a rare thing. And whilst perhaps quite a number of people would be taught to read through the synagogue, they wouldn't necessarily have access to the word day by day unless they went to the synagogue and read it or had it read to them.

[10:07] So the point that's happening here is that whether or not they have had it read to them before, whether or not it is something that was familiar from their childhood or something that they attended to on a regular basis, the people here clearly are coming to the word as fresh.

That's something you can get the sense of here in this chapter. They are coming to it as though it was fresh to them. You might think, okay, that's probably because they haven't heard it before, but come on. We all know ourselves, even those who have been Christians perhaps 50, 60, 70 years, you can read the Bible again and again, you can come to a familiar passage and still something will speak to you, something will jump out from the page at you in a way that it never has before.

You can continue to receive new feeding and fresh insight from God's word decade after decade.

So we should never think, oh yeah, I've read it once, you know, when I was 15 or whatever, so I don't need to read it again.

No, you read God's word and you read it every day. None of us would say in terms of our bodies, oh yeah, I had dinner, you know, three years ago when I was whatever age it was.

I don't need to eat now because I ate once many years ago. Your body needs food every day and your soul needs the food of God's word every day. And we all know ourselves that if you come to a meal gluttony and already having pigged out throughout the day, you're not going to get the best of it.

[11:36] But if you come to it hungry, having really worked up an appetite, every mouthful is going to taste fantastic. And the people here are coming, as it were, hungering for God's word.

It's maybe or maybe not. They have been neglectful of it in the past. Maybe. Certainly, they have been engaged in demanding physical service of the Lord in the building of the wall.

They've been fearful for their lives, surrounded by enemies. And now, having had this physical security, which is only given to them because of the spiritual blessing of the Lord, they come now to gather, to seek God's word together, and they're coming to it as fresh.

But it doesn't just sort of happen by magic. They don't all sort of wake up and say, oh, what will we do today? I don't know. I'm really bored. Let's mosey in the square and see if anybody's busy reading the scriptures today. Oh, yeah, that's interesting.

Let's do that. No, they didn't just happen by magic. It didn't happen by coincidence. They set themselves to do it. There was a determination, jointly and severally, as the old bank accounts used to see, or the statements, J and S, jointly and severally, both individually and collectively, they determined to come together.

[12:53] They set themselves to seek the Lord in his word. Those of you who are believers, those of you who may be experienced and of longstanding, you will know, perhaps also if you are fresh and new in the faith, you will know.

Devotion and time with the Lord and quiet time and worship does not happen by feelings or by magic. You have to set yourself to do it.

And when you set yourself to do it, everything will come against that kind. A doorbell will ring or the phone will go or something will happen to you. Get distracted. The devil will try everything to stop you coming to God in his word and having time with him.

You have to be determined. You have to set yourself to do it. But just like going to the gym for physical exercise, if you set yourself to do it, you will gain the benefit.

If you say, oh, it's raining a bit today, I think I'll just turn on the TV and slide on the sofa today. You may do that once or twice or whatever, but if you keep doing it, then the physical effects will soon

be seen.

[14:01] Whereas the physical effects of being diligent about your exercise routine or regime or whatever, likewise will soon be felt. You have to set yourself to it.

And this is what the Israelites are doing here. They set themselves to do it. All the people gathered as one man into the square before the water gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel.

So Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard on the first day of the seventh month. And he read it, read from it, facing the square before the water gate from early morning until midday in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand.

And the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. This was a prearrangement. They set themselves to do it. And as they come to it, they come to it as fresh.

They are attentive. They are listening. They are lapping it up as though for the first time they are coming to it as fresh. Now, we should of course be coming to the worship of God whether it's our personal private devotion, whether it's family worship, or whether it's time in church.

[15:15] We should be coming with a sense of expectation. We should expect to receive something from the Lord. And it's no use to say, oh, who's preached today? Oh, so and so. I never get much out of him.

It's not out of him you won't get anything. And it's not out of the individual or the preacher or the person who's leading. It's from the Lord that we receive or get something from his word, some nugget, some precious thing, this little gift.

Come with a sense of expectation from the Lord as fresh, as though you expect to receive something from God that you didn't receive before.

They came to it having set themselves to it and they came to receive it as fresh. We read there, verse 3, that they attended upon it. He read from it in the presence of the men and women who could understand and the people were attentive to the book of the law.

They listened carefully, attending upon the words as though read, as though being heard again as for the first time, as fresh, coming to it as fresh.

[16:21] I know it's difficult when, if we've read the Bible many times perhaps, coming to it as though we hadn't read it before. It's difficult because we like the things that we're familiar.

We like coming to a story or a narrative that we're familiar with or a passage that has spoken to us in the past. But sometimes if we try coming to it as though we hadn't read that before, as though it was fresh and new, the people are coming to it as fresh.

Now, of course, we can read the Bible whenever we like. They didn't have that opportunity. We've got the books in our shelves. We've got multiple Bibles everywhere we look. And perhaps that may be one reason why we don't value it as we should.

Because it's not something rare and miraculous. It's something that is there for us all the time. It used to be a well-recognized fact and irony when I was at university.

People would say, you know, if you've got an essay to do and, of course, everybody's scrabbling for the same books out of the library, if you get a book out of the library, then you know there's half a dozen other people wanting to have it breathing down your necks.

[17:32] You make sure you read it and you take your notes through it and you use it and you put it back on the shelf. You do it because you have to because you've only got a short time. You actually go to the bookshop and buy that book then you think, oh, well, it's mine now.

I can read it whenever I like. So the fact that you can read it whenever you like means you don't actually do it because you can do it whenever you like. I've climbed a question once in my life many years ago, way back in the 90s.

And I did it by arrangement with a colleague that I'd been at university with who was also a serving minister not too far away. But in order to do it, we had to plan with our diaries three months in advance in order to make sure that we were able to meet up together and climb it on the same day with another colleague.

It was a horrible, wet, misty day. We wouldn't have chosen that day. We got to the top, couldn't see a thing, but the fact is we did it. But we did it by arrangement. Now, I live on the Harris side of the Crescim.

It's there in the same virtually, apart from Scalpy Island, when I live. And I can climb it any time I want to. But because I can climb it any time I want to, I don't.

[18:40] Because I can do it whenever I want, which means I don't tend to do it at all because I didn't make the arrangement to do it. Because it's so easy to do, we think, I can do that any time.

And because the gospel is free, sometimes we think, oh, well, I can come to it any time. I can read the Bible whenever I like. No, you've got to set yourself to do it and come to it as fresh.

And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattathiah, Shema, and I, and so on. I won't read through all the names again. Yeah, I could do it, but I won't do it again.

But suffice to say that obviously, I'm sure most of you will have noticed that there are six on one side of him on his right-hand side and seven on his left. Thirteen Levites or priests altogether there. And there they are standing with him and as he reads, and no doubt perhaps, taking it all in, perhaps making sure everybody's paying attention. I don't know, but there's seven on one side, six on the other side, thirteen altogether.

[19:42] And we see again the reverence with which the people receive it. Verse six, Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

What does Amen mean? Amen is the giving of our assent, if you like. It is us assenting to that which has been said or that which has been read.

If we give our Amen to something, we give our affirmation, we give our assent, we acknowledge it to be the truth as far as we are concerned. It's not just, I agree with it, because I might agree with something that actually isn't correct, but this is an acknowledgement that this is the truth.

In Isaiah 65, read it, verse 16, You shall leave your name to my chosen for a curse. I beg your pardon, that's verse 15, I'll leave my glasses.

So he who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of truth, and he who takes an oath in the land shall swear by the God of truth, because the former troubles are forgotten and hidden from my eyes.

[20:53] Now, what we have translated in almost all Bibles in English is bless himself in the God of truth. What it literally says in the Hebrew is the God of Amen. In other words, the truth, the affirmation, the God of Amen.

That's what it is there. And like when Jesus says in the Old Bible, it's verily, verily, I say unto you, it's what he's saying really is Amen, Amen, I say unto you.

The veracity, the truthfulness, the Amen of what is spoken isn't just an assent, although we are giving it out of assent when we say Amen at the end of a prayer or whatever, but it's also an acknowledgement of truth, because God is the God of Amen.

He is the God of truth. Jesus says to us, Amen, Amen, I say unto you. So when the people say Amen to what is read, they are acknowledging the truth of what has been said.

Now God has already given his word. This word has already been written down hundreds of years before they actually get it read in their presence. God has already given it, it's already been recorded, he's already revealed his will, so his will has already been made known.

[22:05] His will has already been recorded. Now they are giving their will, bringing their will voluntarily into line with his. And this is what we likewise are called upon to do.

God does not enter into a negotiation with us about what we will decide to do in our lives and how we will decide to chart our journey into heaven if we decide to negotiate the conditions of what our eternity will be like.

No, God reveals his will and says this is how it's going to be. And either we bring our will into line and into conformity with his or we don't. There is no middle ground.

There is no other way. There is only the Lord or the total absence of the Lord. So what the Israelites are doing is healing, saying amen, amen.

They are bringing their will into line with his, acknowledging the truth of what he has revealed and recorded. And as we go on then to verse 7, we see then that the list and Jeshua, Bani, Sherebi, Jammu, and so on, the Levites help the people to understand the law while the people remain in their places.

[23:14] Now I've got a confession to make. I have read this chapter many times as I've read through the Bible and so on. When I've read Nehemiah, I've come to it and I've read it and all the

times until preparing for this particular service.

I had just read through the list of names, I might even have counted them and found that there was 13 there and just automatically assumed it's the same 13 Levites as on the previous few verses and I'm sure as all of you will have noticed it's not.

There is only one name that is the same in the first 13, 6 and 7 group of Levites compared to the second 13. Now, and I think you might say, oh look, one of them's the same person.

No, I don't think it's the same person. Names in Hebrew culture would have been quite commonly used across families and different parts of the nation.

To say, oh look, there's two Donald McLeod's in Lewis, you know, shock horror and people will say to you when you're in the mainland, oh I know someone from Lewis, do you know him? Oh yes, their name's McLeod, yes, what's his first name?

[ 24 : 22 ] Donald, you must know him. And the same way we were on the mainland just recently and people said, oh you're in Scalpy, oh I know someone from Scalpy's, name's McSween and that's, you probably know three quarters of the island are called McSween.

Oh what's his first name? Oh Donald John and that's the other half of the island again. So I mean, just as in our culture names are commonly used, so likewise amongst the Hebrews, what amazes me is that in 26 Levites that are listed here, there's only two of them that have the same name. So I think we can take it given the context of their listings, it's two different people who happen to have the same name. But every other name is completely different. These are not the same Levites.

So in other words, whatever the first six and seven are doing, this second group of thirteen are completely different people. What is their task? Well we read what their task is. They read from the book, from the law of God clearly and they gave the sense so that the people understood the reading.

You read the passage and you think it's just Ezra standing up at the front in his pulpit of wood and he is reading the law and everybody is listening to it. But what we've got here is a sense of all these other thirteen Levites, whether they each had their own copy of the scrolls or whether they've kind of broken up into groups, smaller groups, and they're explaining and expounding to people because we read they read from the book.

[ 25 : 45 ] Now the one doesn't exclude the other obviously, so Ezra's up at the front or maybe he reads to begin with and then they divide up into groups and then the Levites are explaining it, but the one doesn't exclude the other but they are clearly explaining and unpacking that which Ezra has read and they are themselves also reading it to the people.

So this is what we've got here, we've got this explanation going on and this group work you might say going on and it's a totally different group of Levites from the ones at the beginning.

They read and they expound and they explain. to the people because it's needful that the people understand they come to it as something they need to feed upon.

Now, we talk about feeding, we talk about food. If you were going to prepare a dinner or something and you want everybody that comes to eat your let's say your beef and potatoes and turnips and carrots or whatever it may be, you don't just stick out there, there's your lump of beef that is bleeding on the table, and there's your raw potatoes and raw cats and there's a raw turnip, just help yourselves, everybody come and eat what you can.

You're not going to have people picking up a great big raw turnip and trying to crunch into it. They're not going to pick up this bleeding lump of beef and sort of break off a beef. No, you cook it first. You cook it, you cook the potatoes, you cook the meat, you slice it up carefully, you mash the turnips maybe or whatever and you cook it, you break it down and you serve it up in manageable portions.

[ 27 : 20 ] And that's what the Levites are doing here. They are unpacking the word of God, they're breaking it down into small amounts, perhaps mashing it up small like you do for little children sometimes with food and so making it accessible to them.

It is the same content, it is the same food of God's word but it's been cooked, prepared, however you like to do it and made accessible to them, made digestible for them.

That's what the Levites are doing here. But they are coming to it hungry, the people they are coming to it as fresh. And as they reaped, they realized that this word convicts them.

If God's word is truth, if he is the God of our men, the God is truth, they rightly as all of us if we are truthful look at our own lives and see there is plenty in our life that isn't true.

We look at ourselves and we are not clean and we are not as we should be and we don't shine very brightly and we thought we were doing okay until we see and compare ourselves with what God reveals.

[ 28 : 26 ] And we find just how dirty and just how sinful and just how wrong we are. Nehemiah who is the governor and Ezra the priest and scribe and the Levites who taught the people said to them, this day is holy to the Lord your God, do not mourn or weep because they were weeping.

Weeping. They are weeping and they are mourning the fact that they are convicted by God's word. But that just means God's word is doing its job.

If a surgeon says to you, look the problem is you got something wrong with you, I'm going to have to operate. And you can either weep and lament that, oh no, there's something wrong with me, he's going to have to do an operation.

Or you say, okay, right, what do you need to do? Can you get it out? Yes, I can tackle it. If I get the operation quickly, that should be it sorted and no more problems after that. So we should be thankful that the surgeon is able to do that and we are able to be cured.

And the problem is not simply, oh look, we're convicted by God's word, but rather there is also a remedy. And the remedy that the Lord himself has provided, don't mourn and say, this day is holy to the Lord.

[ 29 : 31 ] Go your way, eat the fat, drink sweet wine, send portions to anyone who is nothing. And do not be grieved for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

The joy of the Lord, not your own goodness, not your own ability, not how well you can manage, but the joy of the Lord is your strength. Now, if it is the Lord who is our strength, we're reminded of course of another incident with a book that was a mystery and broken up.

I won't read through the verses just now because I realize our time is pushing on. Remember in Revelation chapter 5, you know, we've got the scroll or the book that is sealed. And we read of how John when it is revealed to him that he weeps much because nobody could open the seals.

And then an angel says to him, don't weep, it's okay. The lion of the tribe of Judah has come. He's able to open the seals. And he looked and beheld a lamb as it had been slain.

He's able to unlock. The lamb was worthy to open and to interpret the sealed book and not simply to open it. But if you remember in Revelation what happens as the seals are opened, great vast enactments of what is happening in the spheres of heaven and earth and fires and thunders and angelic wars in heaven and plagues and goodness knows all, but the whole thing comes to life.

[ 30 : 55 ] The whole thing comes to life as the seals are opened. In other words, as the lamb opens up the book, the book comes to life.

And that is what happens as we read God's word, not simply as words and print on a page, but we read it as I think it was Mark who was saying the other day, through the lens of the lamb of God, through the lens of Christ, because the lamb brings the sealed book alive.

He brings it to life as the seals are opened and it is only through him that it must rightly be understood and interpreted in the light of what the lamb has done.

He's the author of the book. He's the interpreter of the book. He's described of course in Hebrews as the author and finisher of our faith, but he's also the author and perfecter of his own word.

He wrote it. He produced it. He is the lens through which it must be viewed. The one in whom and through whom it all makes sense.

[ 32 : 02 ] It all fits together. It becomes complete in him. You see, you can read the Bible and read just words, literature, print on a page.

Some very learned professors do that and they know all about the Hebrew syntax and all the Greek grammar and so on and they can unpack it, all the language of it, but they have never got into it.

They have never read it through the lens of the lamb. It remains to them in that sense a book that is sealed because it hasn't come alive. It hasn't come to life.

And that is how we must read it through the lamb who opens the seal. So come to it as fresh and see the lamb through it all.

Ivor of course, when you see I made reference to how one of his favorite verses in scripture is certainly in Psalm 37. Delight thyself in God. He'll give thine heart's desire to thee.

[ 33 : 00 ] Thy way to God commit him trust. It bring to pass shall he. But the first thing he says, he said he emphasizes to delight thyself in God. Delight yourself in the lamb and come to his word as fresh.

Come to it with a little bit of hunger, a little bite of appetite there and set yourself to do it. And as we come to God's word, it's not just that we feed and benefit from it, but we find our lives brought or required to be brought more and more into line with what he reveals.

The last few verses, 13 to 16 there, you've got the account of how they made booths. And this was to commemorate the children of Israel's tabernacling in the wilderness when they dwelt in tents.

And so they were all to get branches and leaves and so on and make booths all over Israel and Jerusalem itself and so on. You might think, well, okay, it's remembering the tents.

Why don't they just set up a tent? Why do they make these bivouacs, these booths with branches and leaves and so on? It seems a bit strange to us. Why on earth? How is this honoring to God?

[ 34 : 11 ] It is honoring to God simply because God says this is what you should do. God says it, and therefore they know that now they're required to do it. They've read in it that this is what they should do, so they do it.

And when they do it, they feel good about it. They rejoice in the fact that they have brought their lives into line with what God has revealed. There is a feel-good factor about when a hand fits into a glove, when clothes you put on fit just right and you know that they really, really make you look your best in them.

We are at our best when we are conformed most to the Word of God and what He reveals. And it's not always fun. And it's not always easy to do because sometimes we'd rather do something different.

I may have mentioned in the past that when I was a youngster, I was desperate to get a tattoo.

Really, really wanted a tattoo. I'd seen people, you know, anchors and lion rampants and so on.

That's what I wanted. Nice big red lion rampant on my shoulder. That's what I wanted. But you had to be 18 to get a tattoo. So I thought, soon as I'm 18, that's what I'm doing. And I was reading through the Bible at the time.

[ 35 : 19 ] A course came across that verse in Leviticus, which as I'm sure you all know, chapter 19, verse 28 says, you're not meant to print any marks upon you or make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead.

And it says in the ESV, it actually mentions the word tattoo. So then you've got a problem. You say, well, I'll just pretend I didn't read it. Or, well, actually, truth to tell, I have to confess, I grind my teeth and wished I hadn't read it or wished I hadn't read it till after I'd got my tattoo and it would be too late.

I couldn't do anything about it anyway. So tough. But I had read it and I knew about it. So what do I do? I either say, okay, right. And what did I do?

God's word says something different. So tough. And I'm grumbling about it but don't do it because now I know what God's word says. I've got the choice. I either go ahead and do what I want to do anyway or I forgo what I want to do because God's word says something different.

Now that's just a comparatively small matter. And it's from many years ago. But still there will be in our lives time after time after time things about which the old self or the flesh may want to go one way but God's word quite clearly says to go another way.

[ 36 : 36 ] And we will make all kinds of excuses and rationalize and say but so and so does this and somebody else does that. Why shouldn't I do it too? You're not going to be judged at the end of the day by how well your life conforms to X or Y of this person you knew or that person you knew or what somebody else in the church did.

We'll be judged on our works. We'll be justified by our faith. And we will be saved or not dependent on our relationship with Christ. But ultimately our obedience to the Lord is exactly that.

It is to the Lord. Not to what your friends are doing. Not to what your colleagues or somebody else in the church may say. It's what does God reveal in His word. And God you will find the more you read His word the more you come to it the more you seek Him in it.

You will find that God has something to say about almost every aspect of your life. You wouldn't believe how much of your life is actually covered by something in God's word.

Everything you might think is so very ordinary. You know it's even something and I don't want to be indelicate about it but you know as far as the camp of Israel is concerned God's word even has regulations about the right way to go to the toilet.

[ 37 : 52 ] I'm not being rude and angry it does it's there in God's word. So it's everything is covered in God's word. You know the details of life and business and finance and the relationships the sanctity of marriage the sanctity of singleness of life which we tend to forget and you know just

ignore nowadays.

But all the sanctity that God requires and desires in our lives it's all there. And the people read it and they drink it in and they feast upon God's word and we read they kept the feast seven days. Day by day verse 18 from the first day to the last day he read from the book of the law of God. They kept the feast seven days and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly according to the law. They kept the feast because ultimately they fed upon the word. They fed upon the Lord because he's there in his word just like he's there by his spirit.

You see he hasn't left you. He hasn't gone away when we come down the mountain of our spiritual enjoyment or experience of the communion season. The Lord doesn't stay behind.

[ 39 : 09 ] He didn't for his disciples and he doesn't for us. He hasn't left you. He hasn't gone away. He's here and he's with you and you come seeking him in his word and he will be found of you because he is ready to be found of those who seek them.

But you've got to set yourself to do it. You've got to make sure you do it just as they did and you will find that it is fresh to you. That it is nourishing to you.

That it covers every aspect of your life and the more and more you go deeper in with the Lord in his word and through his word the more you will delight in your life being brought into line with his will with his word.

Draw strength from him every day and come as it were fresh to him. Come to his word to be fresh with him and in him day by day.

That's how often you need his word. Day by day every day of your life until the very last one or until he comes again. Let us pray.