

A Warning to the Ungodly

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[0 : 00] Our scripture lesson this morning is taken from Genesis chapter 19 verses 1 through 29 and you may follow with me as I read.! They said, No, we will spend the night in the town square.

But he pressed them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, and all the people to the last man, surrounded the house.

And they called to Lot, Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them. Lot went out to them at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly.

Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please.

[1 : 28] Only, do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof. But they said, Stand back. And they said, This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge.

Now we will deal worse with you than with them. Then they pressed hard against the man, Lot, and drew near to break the door down. But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door.

And they struck with blindness the men who were at the entrance of the house, both small and great, so that they wore themselves out groping for the door.

Then the men said to Lot, Have you anyone else here, sons-in-laws, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city?

Bring them out to the place, for we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the Lord. And the Lord has said to us to destroy it.

[2 : 33] So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-laws, who were to marry his daughters, Up, get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city.

But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting. As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, Up, take your wife and your daughters, who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.

But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.

As they brought them out, one said, Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away. And the Lord said to them, O no, my lords, behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life.

But I cannot escape to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I die. Behold, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one.

[3 : 49] Let me escape there. Is it not a little one, and my life will be saved? He said to him, Behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken.

Escape there quickly, for I can do nothing till you arrive there. Therefore, the name of the city is called Zoar. The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar.

Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities and all the valley and all the inhabitants of the cities, and wood grew on the ground.

But Lot's wife behind him looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. And Abraham went down in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord.

And he looked down towards Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley. And he looked, and behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.

[4 : 56] So it was that when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out to the midst of the overthrow, where he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.

Here ends the reading. For those of you who were here last week will remember that I raised a question that I said I would answer this morning.

And the question is this. Why did God judge Sodom and Gomorrah? And some say that God judged Sodom and Gomorrah because of homosexual sin that was rampant among them.

But Scripture gives a different answer. Certainly there was homosexuality, and certainly God's judgment came upon them. But Scripture gives another reason why God judged Sodom and Gomorrah.

And this morning we want to consider that. First, let's take a moment to pray. Father, we bow our hearts before you this morning, and we do so, Lord, recognizing what we just sang, that we need you.

[6 : 33] Lord, we need you to hear aright. And then we need you to respond in light of what you would say to our hearts. Lord, you speak to us corporately and individually.

Lord, you know where we are. You know what we need. And God, would you grant us the grace to both hear and to heed your word.

And we pray that you would be glorified through the preaching of your word this morning. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. In this passage that we have come to this morning, as we work our way through the book of Genesis, we again come face to face with an often repeated truth in Scripture.

And the truth is that God executes judgment on those who deserve it, and he extends mercy to some who don't deserve it.

It's repeated truth in Scripture. We come to it again in this passage. We've seen it repeated in Genesis so far. And here again we come to it.

[7 : 49] But this is the undeniable theme in redemption history, that God gives judgment to those who deserve it, and he gives mercy to some who don't deserve it.

And so this morning I've organized the sermon under two simple points for those who may be taking notes. The first one is God's judgment on the undeserving.

And the second point is God's mercy to the undeserving. So first, God's judgment on the deserving. Now you may recall last week as we looked at Genesis 18, we saw Abraham interceding before the Lord for Sodom and Gomorrah.

And the Lord told him that his judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah was going to be based on evidence. Not based on just some flippant decision, but it was going to be based on evidence.

[8 : 58] So look again at verses 20 and 21 of Genesis 18. The Lord said, speaking to Abraham, Because the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see what they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me, and I will know.

And then Genesis 19 opens in verse 1 with these two angels, the two angels who were with the Lord. They have now arrived in Sodom, and it says that very evening.

And so we are alerted right away that something unusual is going on because the distance between where Abraham would have been interceding and where these angels and the Lord would have met him was some distance away, and they could not have made it in that period of time if they were just naturally walking.

So these angels who looked like men were able to be, they were able to move in such rapid, with such rapid speed to appear in Sodom for what is clearly an investigation.

So these angels are what you may call investigative angels, and they meet Lot sitting in the gate of Sodom. And this should be instructive for us to find Lot in this particular position because it's an indication of how Lot had become so assimilated into the society of Sodom.

[10 : 34] He was not just a resident of Sodom, he was one of the leaders of Sodom. He's sitting in the gates. That's where the leaders actually sat at that particular time.

And we're able to see the progression of what happened with Lot. So, for example, in Genesis 13, verse 12, we're told that Lot moved his tent as far as Sodom.

And then in Genesis 14, verse 12, Lot is described as dwelling in Sodom. And now here in Genesis 19, verse 1, Lot is sitting in the gate of Sodom.

He has progressively moved to where he is a part of the society of Sodom. He is assimilated into that society. But what we see is that Lot still retains some aspect of his virtue that he would have had prior to coming into Sodom.

And we see him acting in a way that's very different from everybody else in Sodom. He extends hospitality to these two strangers who have come in town. He says to them, Come and spend the night in my house and be refreshed, and then you may leave in the morning.

[11 : 50] And it's only after he insists, these men were saying, No, we'll stay in the town square. That's where we'll spend the night. But he insists, almost to the point of pressuring them.

And they take up his offer, and they decide that they would stay the night in Lot's house. And obviously in a short while, we'll see why Lot was insisting that they stay in his house, because of the danger that they would face.

And we see this beginning in verses 4 and 5. Look at what it says. Notice that the men who surrounded Lot's house were not just some of the men of Sodom.

The language could not be clearer by repetition to tell us that it was all the men of Sodom, young and old, all the people to the last man.

And they demanded that Lot would bring out these two angels who, again, appeared like men. And this is why the Bible tells us in Hebrews 13 that we are to entertain strangers, because sometimes we may entertain angels and not even know it.

[13 : 24] But they demand that Lot would bring out these men to him so that they might know them.

And this is a euphemism. This is a sanitized word for sexual relations. I've even encountered this word before when we were working our way through. In Genesis chapter 4, for example, verse 1, it says that Adam knew his wife, Eve and she conceived and she bore a son, Cain.

And sex is still referred to in this way in some cases today. So, for example, when a person is charged before the courts with having sex with a minor, they would call it unlawful carnal knowledge of that person.

And so this is a sanitized word. These men were saying, we want to have sex with these men who came into your house. And what we can see from this is this request, or better, this demand of the men of Sodom only help us to see really how pervasively wicked they were and how entrenched their wickedness had become.

they were entrenched in an abnormal and unnatural practice of homosexuality, and they were also violent without restraint.

[15 : 00] And here we see they have even no regard for strangers, which was again contrary to the custom of that day. Now remember, these two angels, they have gone into Sodom to investigate the situation.

They've gone to see what it really is that's going on in Sodom. And no doubt this is the reason they wanted to spend the night in the town square.

And really, they clearly didn't have to go looking for the evidence. The evidence actually came to them in the form of the wickedness of the men of Sodom.

And so how does Lot respond to this? Well, we're told in verses 6 to 8 how Lot responds to it. Look again at his response. We're told Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly.

Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.

[16 : 15] I think the first thing you should notice is how Lot identifies with the men of Sodom. He calls them his brothers. And he pleads with them not to do this wicked act.

But rather than urge the men of Sodom to just go away and to return to their homes, Lot gives them a worse proposal than the demand that they made of him.

Lot proposes to give these men, this mob who had come to his house to rape the strangers in his house, Lot offers them his two virgin daughters, and he tells them, you can do with them whatever you please.

Whatever you please, you can do with them. And this is startling. This is horrific. This is barbaric, what Lot proposes to these men.

He offers his daughters to be sexually abused by this violent homosexual mob who had come to his house. And he was, in essence, really just offering them to certain death.

[17 : 26] It would have been far better for Lot to have said to those strangers, I'm really sorry. The reason I brought you into my house is because I had a concern that you may face this kind of danger, but I've gone as far as I can go.

I cannot help you any further. I'm sorry, but you have to leave. That would have been a better proposal. That would have been a better option for Lot that he would give his daughters to these violent men, these violent and lawless men to be raped as they pleased.

And I think when we read this, when we think about both the depravity of these men who had surrounded Lot's house, when we think of Lot's unthinkable proposal to give his daughters to them to do whatever they want to do with them, it brings us face to face with how deeply affected we have become because of the fall.

The sexual devency of the men of Sodom, Lot's treating his daughters as sexual objects for men to do whatever they want, all of those are expressions of sexual brokenness and the effect of the fall on human sexuality.

And so what we have is really homosexual immorality and the proposal of Lot with his daughters that is heterosexual immorality.

[19 : 15] And all of it is because of the fall. All of it is because of brokenness. Lot seeing his daughters as nothing more than objects to be thrown to men for their pleasure however they choose, it's an expression of sexual brokenness.

God created men and women in his own image and in his own likeness with equal dignity and equal worth. But this is the effect of the fall. And these men whose sexual appetites had turned and inverted on themselves, this also is an expression of sexual brokenness and the fall.

All of it, brothers and sisters, is sexual brokenness and deviance away from what the Lord had in mind. What the Lord had in mind was that sex would be expressed only in the context of a union of a man and a woman in marriage.

But we rebelled against God's way. And that's the result of it. That's the fruit of our rebellion, both homosexual and heterosexual brokenness and immorality.

So in verse 9, we see that the men of Sodom are insulted by Lot's proposal. And they accuse him of being a Johnny-come-lately who has appointed himself as a judge, a self-righteous judge over them.

[20 : 57] And they threaten to attack him and rape him and do worse to him than they had planned to do to these two men. And they try to break his door down to enter the house to make good on their threat.

But the two angels were able to rescue Lot. They pulled him into the house, pushed the men back, and they struck with blindness those who were at the door.

And what is clear now is that the evidence against Sodom is very, very strong.

what is clear is that Sodom had, this was not some fluke that happened that night. This was not something out of the ordinary that happened that night.

Sodom had descended to this place of depravity and a sexual anarchy and violence. This didn't happen overnight.

[22 : 06] Not out of the ordinary. This was life in Sodom. And Lot and all the others who lived in Sodom, even though they may not have been participating in this homosexual conduct, Lot wasn't.

The women widespread in Sodom, the mothers, the daughters, the wives, the sisters, they weren't. But life was going on in Sodom as normal and they were all comfortable in Sodom.

In verses 12 and 13, the two investigative angels come to the verdict based on the evidence against Sodom. And they said to Lot, have you anyone else here?

Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in this city, anyone, go and bring them out. They gave Lot a blank check to say, if anyone fits this category, sons, daughters, sons-in-law, anyone belonging to you in the city, go and get them and bring them out.

For we are about to destroy this place because the outcry against the people has become great before the Lord and the Lord has sent us to destroy it.

[23 : 28] The outcry of the people, not just the men who are practicing on sexuality, but all who had become comfortable in Sodom, all who were able to see what Sodom was about, and they were okay with Sodom.

So that was the verdict. We're going to destroy this entire place and everyone in it because the outcry against its people has become great before the Lord, but he's going to spare you and those

who belong to you.

That's the verdict that was issued to those who deserve to be judged for their sin, but it's also the verdict of mercy to those who didn't deserve to receive mercy.

And this brings me to my second point, God's mercy to the undeserving. You see in verse 14 that Lot goes out and he says to his sons-in-law who were pledged to be married to his daughters that they had to leave Sodom.

Leave Sodom because it's going to be destroyed. He says up, leave. The Lord is going to destroy this place. But to them, Lot seemed to be joking.

[25 : 03] They didn't take him seriously. And what's clear is that Lot's sons-in-laws were part of the mob.

Notice the language. It says that Lot went out. He went out and spoke to them. They were not in his house. they were outside. They were a part of that mob where the Bible says to the last man.

Lot goes out to them and pleads with them to come in and to escape from this destruction that is going to come on Sodom. And they seem to be they seem to Lot to them Lot seemed to be joking. And they were Lot's only natural connection to Sodom. He had no other connection to Sodom. And then we see in verse 15, very early the next morning, the angels urged Lot, they say, make haste up, get out of this place.

Take your wife and your two daughters and leave Sodom, lest you will be swept away with the punishment of the city. And how does Lot respond to this threat of impending doom and destruction on Sodom?

[26 : 31] Now, before we come to the exact answer, think about the situation Lot finds himself in. By now, he knows these two men who have come into his house, and not just ordinary men.

He should know this by now. They rescue him from this violent mob. They smite them with blindness, thereby preventing the wicked act that they were going to commit.

And Lot, by this time, would know these are not ordinary men, and they're telling him, look, this place is going to be destroyed. You and your family, you need to leave. But surprisingly, we're told in verse 16 that in the face of this urgent warning to get out of Sodom, lest you be punished with it, Lot lingered.

Lot lingered. Let's think about that. The violent night before, Lot was so distressed by it all, he was offering his two daughters to this violent mob that had come to his house.

And when told, this place is going to be destroyed, but you can be rescued from it, you and all those connected to you, Lot lingers. How can he possibly linger in a place like that after that experience that he had?

[28 : 05] And the reason Lot lingered is that Sodom was in his heart. Lot was able to linger in Sodom because Sodom was in his heart.

Lot was comfortable living in Sodom. Life for Lot in Sodom was more natural than life outside of Sodom.

Life outside of Sodom was not a wonderful proposal to Lot because of where he had found himself in that place. Let me just pause here to say I'm not trying to be hard on Lot.

I really am not. And we should not think of Lot in such a jaundiced way without remembering that we live in a world that has the evidences of Sodom, a world that is filled with wickedness and sin. and we should consider how comfortable am I in this world. We sang this morning about the Lord one day coming to take us home.

[29 : 18] What kind of invitation is that to our hearts? What does that do to our hearts? Do we want to leave this world to be with the Lord or is our heart still very much connected and joined?

And in a sense we are lingering in this world because we have become so comfortable with it and all that is within it.

And so again I'm not trying to be hard on Lot this morning and none of us should be but this is where Lot found himself and here's the reality about this we'll see this next week. The last word on Lot is in the New Testament and he's shown to be a believer.

It's one of those startling things that you see in Scripture. He's shown to be a believer so Lot is a believer living in Sodom in this way and he's comfortable and don't want to leave it.

And so God shows amazing patience with Lot. We're told that the angels seized Lot and his wife and his daughters by the hand and they leave them outside of the city.

[30 : 39] And why did the angels do that? Why did they do that to lingering Lot? Well we're told in verse 16 the Lord was merciful to him. The Lord was being merciful to Lot.

That's why Lot was spared Sodom's destruction because God was being merciful to Lot. Not because he was righteous but because God was being merciful.

Not because he deserved to be spared. He didn't deserve to be spared. If he deserved to be spared he would not need mercy. But he received mercy because he did not deserve to be spared.

God was merciful to Lot. And by extension to his family by sparing them from the fire in the same way he was merciful to Noah and his family in sparing them from the flood.

God was saved. But here's something we shouldn't miss as we think about God's mercy to Lot and his family. At first the angels told Lot bring out of this place anyone who is connected to you.

[31 : 56] He goes to his sons-in-law and they ignore him because they think they were just why didn't the Lord extend mercy to his sons-in-law?

Why didn't the Lord have the angels to do for the sons-in-law the same thing that he did for Lot and his wife and his two daughters?

Why didn't he show them mercy the same way he showed Lot and his family mercy? For the reason is what the Lord said to Moses in Exodus 33 verse 19.

He said to Moses, I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious. I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. His point is that he will give mercy to whom he chooses to give mercy and he will withhold mercy from whom he chooses to withhold mercy and that is his sovereign right.

Mercy can be demanded. Mercy can be earned. Mercy is not deserved by any one of us. It was in mercy that God brought Lot and his family out of Sodom.

[33 : 25] Notice again the warning that one of the angels gives to Lot and his family in verse 17. He says to them, escape for your life.

Do not look back or stop anywhere. And he went to the valley. Escape to the hills lest you be swept away.

That's the warning that this angel gives. And listen to Lot's response to it. This urgent and solemn and sober warning.

Lot's response is in verses 18 to 20. Look at what he says. Lot said to them, Oh no, my lords.

Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight.

And you have shown me great kindness in saving my life. Lot understands what happened. Lot is in essence admitting and confessing that really I'm being saved because you show me favor, you show me mercy and grace.

[34 : 35] He recognizes that. But then he says, I cannot escape to the hills lest the disaster overtake me and I die. Behold, the city is near enough to flee to and it is a little one.

Let me escape there. Is it not a little one? And my life will be spared. What's the issue? The issue is that Lot doesn't want to leave Sodom completely.

He doesn't want to leave Sodom and put distance between himself and Sodom. This place that Lot is asking to stay in, this city that he wants to resort to rather than going further away in the hills is this little city Zohar and it was designated to also be destroyed.

It was a part of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot wants to come out of the city proper but he wants to be nearby in this little area called Zohar and so he's asking to be there.

And so Lot is not looking back with his eyes but he's certainly looking back with his heart. His heart is still back in Sodom and he doesn't want to leave too far. You would think that Lot would want to leave and go as far away from Sodom as he possibly can bearing in mind the destruction that is going to come upon Sodom.

[35 : 55] He doesn't do that. It's quite amazing how when you think of Lot, Lot is selfish, he's shown to be selfish, we see that in how he treated his uncle when his uncle said you choose land and Lot looked and he chose the best land.

And we see how he looks at his daughters and he sees these men who come into his house for one night to be a greater priority to protect than his own daughters.

And he's really doing it to say face it, these men at my house, I'm going to protect them and he will put at risk his own daughters. And now in the face of a destruction, he's saying, I know you've been kind to me, but don't let me go too far, let me stay in this place.

This is Lot. And we can't help but think about and see God's mercy and patience to Lot in the midst of all of this.

I mean, you know, if we were God, we'd say, you know what, Lot? That's it. And that's why we're not God. God was patient with Lot.

[37 : 04] And we're told that Lot arrived in Zoar at sunrise. And in verse 24, we're told the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven.

This was not some fluke that happened, this was a deliberate judgment of the Lord poured out upon Sodom. The destruction was complete of people and everything in Sodom.

Look at verse 25. The language could not be more comprehensive. And he, meaning the Lord, overthrew those cities and all the valley and all the inhabitants of the cities and what grew on the ground.

We're told in verse 28 that Lot's wife looked back and she became a pillar of salt, meaning she was destroyed with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Why did she look back? Clearly she didn't take the warning seriously, but it also appears that a heart was still in Sodom. Like they say, you can take the man out of the island, but you cannot take the island of the man.

[38 : 20] You can take this citizen of Sodom out of Sodom, but you cannot take Sodom out of her. It appears that she didn't leave Sodom enthusiastically.

It appears she left Sodom begrudgingly. Notice in verse 26, it says that she was walking behind Lot. She was behind Lot, lingering Lot. Lot is reluctant. He doesn't want to leave, and she's even worse than Lot because she's behind Lot, taking a slow time to come out of Sodom in the face of impending destruction upon the land.

She wasn't enthusiastic to leave Sodom. And she looks back and she's judged with the people of Sodom.

This account ends with Abraham coming the next morning and he comes to the very place where he interceded before the Lord.

[39 : 27] He looks towards Sodom and the Bible says that he saw the smoke as coming from a furnace over Sodom and Gomorrah. What do you think was going through Abraham's mind as he came to that place and he just saw smoke?

Remember, he was praying to the Lord and he was saying, Lord, if you find this amount of righteous people, spare the whole place. Abraham's plea to the Lord was not to rescue the righteous out of there.

He said, you spare the whole place. And so the only thing that would have been going through Abraham's mind was Lot, his nephew, and his family, they were all destroyed in Sodom.

But that's not what happened. What happened was Lot was spared.

Lot and his two daughters at this point, they were spared. And look in verse 29 and see the reason they were spared.

[40 : 50] Lot was spared on the account of Abraham. He wasn't spared on the account of his righteousness. He wasn't spared on the account that he was morally better than the men of Sodom.

So God remembered Abraham. And he sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrown. So why did God judge Sodom and Gomorrah?

The apostle Peter tells us in 2 Peter chapter 2 verse 6 and this is what he says. Here's why God judged Sodom and Gomorrah. By turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, he, the Lord, condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly. God's judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah is an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly, not just homosexual men. It's an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly.

Those who engage in homosexual morality, those who engage in heterosexual morality, indeed, all those who are ungodly. It's an example of what will happen to them.

[42 : 15] White-collar sinners, blue-collar sinners. It matters not if you are upright and respectable in society and law-abiding and everything else.

If you're living your life away from the Lord, without his governance, without submission to him, you are ungodly. And final judgment will come, and when final judgment comes, it will come to all the ungodly, and what the Lord did was he, in his sovereignty, chose to use Sodom and Gomorrah as an example of what he would do to the ungodly.

There were other wicked people around at the time. As a matter of fact, later, we'll see this. See, the sin of homosexuality did not die with Sodom and Gomorrah.

It wasn't extinguished with them. You have some time this afternoon or maybe some point during the week. Read Judges chapter 19 and you'll read a horrific account very similar to this one. And you will see that if God was just into judging homosexual conduct, he would have brought another judgment on the man of Benjamin.

[43 : 39] But no, he and his sovereignty chose to use this as an example as to what's going to happen to all the ungodly on that final day of judgment. And brothers and sisters, it is sobering to consider this morning that those who were judged and destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrah, many of them did not practice homosexuality.

Many of them did not practice the violence that was exhibited that night at Lot's house. but they were ungodly and they likewise perished in the outpouring of God's wrath of judgment. But again, not everyone perished in Sodom. Those who perished received justice and those who did not receive mercy.

They were spared because of the mercy of God. they deserved to be judged. They deserved to receive justice like the rest of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

But instead, God gave them mercy. Brothers and sisters, the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah really is a picture of the final judgment.

[45 : 03] God's justice will be poured out on the ungodly, but on that day, countless others who deserve judgment, who deserve justice, will instead receive mercy.

And they will receive mercy because of Christ. They receive mercy because of Christ in the same way that Lot was spared and received mercy because God remembered Abraham.

Lot was spared on the basis of another, and brothers and sisters, in the final judgment, the only way we will be spared, the only way that we will receive mercy is on the basis of another. God will have mercy on all those who put their faith in Jesus Christ because of the Lord Jesus Christ because he is the perfect one.

He is the one who has come and lived the perfect life that none of us could live and who satisfied the righteous requirements of God and then who paid the price of our sins, all of them.

And so God gives us mercy, not in a vacuum, but through Christ. Christ. And brothers and sisters, this is our only hope to stand in the final judgment.

[46 : 36] Think of the Clarence referred to it as he prayed this morning. If God would account iniquity, if God were to mark sin, brothers and sisters, none of us could stand. The hymn writer Augustus Toplady, he says it well in the very last verse of the hymn Rock of Ages Cleft for Me.

Here's what he writes. While I draw this fleeting breath, when my eyes shall close in death, when I saw to worlds unknown, see thee on thy judgment throne, Rock of Ages, clap for me, let me hide myself in thee.

Brothers and sisters, that is the only way that we are spared, when we are hidden in the cleft of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is the only righteousness that a perfect God accepts.

And so, I pray that that would be our living and dying plea, that Jesus Christ is our Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ is the basis and the only reason that we can hope to receive God's mercy.

Let's pray. Father, we are so grateful this morning that you are a merciful God.

[48 : 05] We thank you, Lord, that you have, instead of giving us the justice we deserve, you've given us your mercy.

Lord, thank you for all who are able this morning to rest in that and have assurance in that, that you are a merciful God. But God, I pray for any this morning who doesn't have that confidence, doesn't have that assurance that Christ is their Rock of Ages, that Christ is the one through whom righteousness and mercy can come to them.

I pray, Lord, this morning that you would work in their hearts, that you would grant them repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And I pray, Lord, that as you've done for the rest of us, that you would have mercy on them.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's stand for a closing song.