

The Essential of Obedience

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[0 : 00] Well, let's turn together this evening to the passage in Romans we read, Romans chapter 6, and we're going to consider the words of verses 17 and 18.

But thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and having been set free from sin have become slaves of righteousness.

When Paul here is talking about slaves, he has in mind, of course, the practice that was current in his own day. And we mustn't associate some of the worst aspects of slavery.

The kind of thing that we associate with slavery is usually what happened to black slaves brought from Africa to serve in North America and other places where they were so violently abused.

Many of the slaves that were kept in the days of Paul were not abused. They were, in fact, sometimes, as it was the case with slaves in Israel, they were very glad themselves to be in the employment of good employers who looked after them well.

[1 : 23] But the emphasis that he has in speaking about slaves, and this is really the word he does use, the word *doulos* in Greek, as you know, means slave. And what it really emphasizes is the close bond between that person and the one who is their employer.

It's really emphasizing that that bond is really a bond that is so difficult to break, a bond that really unites them so closely to that person, so that, in fact, they have that tie with them, that relationship with them, where the one is the master, the other is the employee or the slave, as it is.

And really, in the chapter, as you know from reading it just a minute ago, Paul sets out two masters for us, and they are sin on the one hand and righteousness on the other.

And what he's saying to us in this passage is that by the grace of God, we have come to be taken from under the slavery, under the bond that united us to sin, which led to death, and God has taken us out from that.

He's cut that bond, and he's united us to someone else. He's united us to righteousness, united us to Christ especially, and that means united to righteousness in him, and that leads to life.

[2 : 58] These are the two lines, if you like, the apostle is following, beginning with the root that you have in sin, or the root that you have in righteousness, and one leads to death and the other leads to life.

Now, of course, that means that you go back further into chapter 5, and what you find is the fact that our root is not simply in sin and in righteousness, our root is either in Adam or in Christ.

Because being rooted in Adam is where we all are to begin with. What it means is that being children of fallen Adam, we are fallen and sinful and are so united to that fall of Adam and to Adam in his fall, that in fact we are slaves of sin because of that, and the end of that is death, eternal death.

And what God does by his grace is in the power of his grace, in the power that he showed in Christ's death and resurrection particularly, he comes by his Holy Spirit to actually bring his people out from under that death.

He takes them off the root that Adam is, and he attaches them to the root that Christ is. And that means that they have a very different direction and type of life to what they once had.

[4 : 34] And one of the best ways, I think, of illustrating that is an illustration that you can take from horticulture or from your gardening, where you find, we've used this illustration already probably in relation to this part of Romans, but it's an illustration I personally find helpful in understanding or trying to understand what the Apostle is really saying happens when we come to be transferred from the line that leads to death to the one that leads to life.

When you take an engrafting, what happens, for example, take a rose. When you buy a rose in a garden center and you look at the bottom part of it, it's got a gnarled, chunky look to it.

And out from that grows the rose that brings you the lovely flowers. Now the hard, naughty, chunky bit at the bottom is the wild rose.

And what happens is that the rose that comes to grow from that is a splice taken from a rose and spliced onto that wild root.

And as it grows, it receives all the vigor from the wild root, but it grows into the beautiful flower through what has been spliced onto it.

[5 : 59] It's taken as a shoot and it's particularly a slice that's made in the old root. And this new shoot is spliced into that and bound up and then it begins to grow as that heals and it becomes a new plant.

It has all the vigor of the root, but it has all the characteristics of the shoot that was spliced into it. And think of that in terms of what happens spiritually.

There you are, there I am, and we're growing on Adam as a root. We're united to Adam in our fall and that's why we are sinners.

And what God does is take us from that and he brings us onto a new root. He splices us, he engraves us into the root that is Jesus Christ, the second, the last Adam.

That's why the comparison in chapter 5 is between the first Adam, the last Adam. The one whose sin brought death, the one whose obedience brought us life. That feeds into this chapter 6 where it talks about taking us from the one and onto the other.

[7 : 13] And as you are taken off the root that is Adam and spliced into, united to Jesus Christ, what happens is that instead of the deathly sap that you get from Adam as you root, that really leads through your life to death, so you come to have the sap of life from Jesus Christ that flows through your life towards eternal life in heaven.

And basically, that's what the Apostle is dealing with in the transition from the one to the other. But what we're going to look at tonight is one thing that really lies at the very heart of this in terms of our experience of salvation.

We're looking at these essentials, things that we looked at already like being born again, having justification, forgiveness of sin, that sort of thing.

And tonight we're looking at the essential of obedience. Because what really the Apostle is saying is that, look at verse 16, Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves or bond servants, you are the slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin which leads to death or of obedience which leads to righteousness.

In other words, he's saying, obedience is at the heart of our relationship either to Adam and sin or to Jesus Christ and righteousness.

[8 : 52] And becoming a Christian, being saved, coming to be taken by the grace of God from the one to the other is really essentially, from our experience point of view, a matter of changing our obedience, changing our allegiance, altering our obedience from sin to righteousness, from Adam to Christ.

That's the secret. That's the key. That's the very essential that he's talking about here. In verse 17, But thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin, you were once slaves obedient to sin, serving sin, but now you have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you are committed, and have become slaves of righteousness.

So let's look at this in terms of our obedience. First of all, in coming to Christ, obedience or a change in obedience is necessary in our coming to Christ.

We saw last time the essential of coming to Christ. Christ's own words to the Jews, especially in John, where we saw in John there that he said, you're studying the scripture, but you will not come to me that you might have life.

Well, this is a matter of our coming to Christ, and something that lies at the heart of it is our obedience. But that's not where obedience finishes, of course, because secondly, we're going to look at our obedience in following Christ.

[10 : 28] When you come to Christ, you exercise obedience to him in coming to him. But you don't leave your obedience there when you've come to him, because living the Christian life is very much a matter of going onwards, exercising obedience, and showing your obedience, and being obedient as a bond servant or a slave of Christ.

First of all, our obedience in coming to Christ, we're looking at two things. Firstly, it's a gospel obedience. Notice the apostle is saying here that you become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you are committed.

The standard of teaching is really the truth of God as it is set out, especially in the gospel. The truths that are set out in the gospel are truths that we come to accept of, truths that we come to actually obey, because our obedience is in fact a wholehearted embrace of God's own standard.

It uses the word standard here. We'll look at the meaning of that in a minute. But what we can say right now is that this is what Paul actually means. The standard of teaching is in fact the gospel, the truth that's set out in the gospel, the truths of God, the great things that God has said about himself, and is saying about us, and is saying about our condition, and is saying about what we have offered to us and made available to us in Jesus Christ.

all of these great and basic truths that come to us in the gospel, what he's saying is that your obedience is a gospel obedience because it relates to an acceptance.

[12 : 09] It involves an acceptance of all of these truths. But secondly, it's a heart obedience. You notice here he says, you became obedient or gave obedience from the heart to this standard of teaching.

And obedience, that's a willing obedience, because obedience actually is willing, certainly in the case of coming to Christ and to yield obedience to Christ.

You don't do that reluctantly. You're not forced into that. It's not something you do that you don't want to do. When the Lord comes, by his grace to cut your tie with sin, to intervene in your life, to show you your need of Christ, to impress upon you that as a fallen, lost sinner, the answer to your condition is in Jesus Christ and in coming to be obedient to him.

When you bow your knee to Christ, when you yield yourself to him in his presence, you do so willingly, you do so gladly, you do so as you come to him not reluctantly and saying, well, I'd better do it below, I don't really want to.

You're desperate to do it. You really have your heart involved in it. It is a heart obedience that brings us to Christ.

- [13 : 35] It's a willing acceptance of the truth of salvation. Because, you see, faith, and really essentially, obedience is something that's within faith.

Faith is not just believing the truth of something or even trusting in someone. Faith is all of that. But within that as well, there is the actual obedience that's given to God and to the truth of God or to God through his truth.

It's not a mere ascent that says, I accept this as the truth. Intellectually, you say, I take it indeed. I acknowledge it. I confess that I'm willing to have it as truth.

It's much more than that. You bow your soul to it. You give yourself to what it requires of you. Therefore, it is an obedience, a willing obedience in accepting the truth of salvation.

And, of course, that means that we really have in our obedience a surrendering of all our faculties to Jesus Christ.

- [14 : 45] To be ruled by him. By all our faculties, I mean every single part of our being, and particularly those spiritual faculties that you and I possess.

You don't give him your mind, but keep your conscience and your heart from him. You don't give him your understanding and yet keep your will to yourself just to do as you please.

You give him your whole self. Your obedience is an obedience that's willing obedience. You surrender all your faculties to him and you surrender them in a way that wants Jesus to rule in and through all of these faculties.

Your will, your mind, your emotions, every single thing. In some daily readings I'm going through for some time now with a shortened version of Gurnal's great work on the Christian armor from Ephesians.

But this version of it, this is what I read the other day. And he's talking about this matter of what he calls surrendering to Christ, which really is what our obedience and coming to Christ and continuing to be obedient to Christ is about.

- [16 : 03] It's a surrendering to Christ. It's an acknowledgement of his lordship and a capitulation to him. It's a laying down of our arms of rebellion, if you like, which we have as we are rooted in Adam.

And we lay them down and we say, no longer, Lord, am I going to be at enmity with you. I'm no longer going to be resisting your claim on my life. I'm going to lay down my arms of rebellion.

I'm going to surrender myself to you. This is what Gurnal wrote. True faith says, my beloved is mine and I am his.

True faith says, my beloved is mine, there the soul takes Christ. My beloved is mine and I am his.

There the soul surrenders itself to his purposes. Taking but also giving. And then he goes on to say this, have you freely given yourself to him?

- [17 : 09] Everybody professes this, but the presumptuous soul, like Ananias, lies to the Holy Spirit by keeping back the most important part of what he promised to lay at Christ's feet.

The enjoyment of lust is entwined about his heart and he cannot persuade himself to deliver it up to God's justice. His life is bound up with it and if God will have it from him, he must take it by force.

There is no hope of gaining his consent. Is this the picture of your faith? If it is, you have blessed yourself in an idol.

You have mistaken a bold face for a believing heart. But he goes on to finish this way. On the other hand, if you counted a privilege that Christ should have a throne in your heart as you have a room in his mercy, you prove yourself a sound believer.

If you counted a privilege that Christ has a throne in your heart, as you have a room in his mercy, you prove yourself a sound believer.

[18 : 27] In other words, one of the greatest proofs of being a genuine believer, of having true, saving faith in Christ, of being on the way to heaven, is the willing surrender of your heart to him.

of counting it a privilege, as Garnel put it, of having the throne of your heart occupied by Jesus. You have obedience in coming to him.

Now, of course, this is never perfect in this life. None of us here tonight can say that our obedience is always perfect obedience.

I cannot say it even as a preacher of the gospel. It is one of the confessions that we have to make every day, that our obedience is incomplete, that our obedience is sometimes very ragged, and indeed that there are many occasions when we exercise disobedience and not obedience as we should.

But nevertheless, as Garnel reminded us, at the very bottom of the heart, you have only got to go to Peter and what he did.

[19 : 40] He was disobedient, he denied his Lord, he did it three times, he did it even at a time when a young girl challenged him and he gave in, he said, no, I don't know the man.

And then filled with the spirit of repentance, he went out, he wept bitterly, later Jesus met him and interviewed him and restored him by questioning his love.

And Peter was grieved that Jesus asked him three times, do you love me? Probably because three times he had denied him. And so he came in answering the third time, Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you.

God, I love you. In other words, I hold my hands up, Lord, I know what I've done. I know I've been disobedient. I know I shouldn't have done it.

I know that I was wrong in doing it. I know that my obedience was far from being complete to this moment, but Lord, deep down, I have to say, I love you and you know that I do.

[20 : 53] sometimes that's what you bring to the Lord. That's what you confess before him. That's what you deep down draw out of your heart.

When you know that things are not as they should be between yourself and himself, when he's made you conscious of how your obedience is still far from complete and far from perfect, still you say, Lord, in my heart, the main bias, the main leaning of my heart is towards obeying you.

And I do count it a privilege, Lord, that you have the throne of my heart and I want to be more obedient to you than I am. Is that your mind? Then you are a Christian.

You are the Lord's because no heart can say that that has not become obedient and has come to Christ through it.

But as we said that obedience continues into our life as believers, as Christians. So our obedience in coming to Christ is a gospel obedience, it's a heart obedience.

[22 : 05] But what about our obedience in following Christ? Because that's something the apostle is here concerned to emphasize too. But thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin, you see that's in the past, you have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed and being set free from sin, that's to say free from the mastery of sin.

Some people come to this and really feel a bit troubled because they read here that believers have been set free from sin and they still feel and know that there's sin, active sin in their lives.

They think, well, I can't be a Christian. How can I be a Christian if this man says I've been set free from sin? But remember, he's talking about the dominance of sin. He's talking about being a slave to sin.

He's talking about sin being your master. And the Lord for his people has cut off that relationship. And although sin exists in the life of every Christian and has to be acknowledged every day, it's no longer outmastered, it's no longer dominant, it's no longer the thing that's controlling our lives.

Our obedience to Christ has replaced our obedience to sin, as it used to be. You, where he says you've become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you are committed.

[23 : 29] Now, that obedience by which we come to Christ continues, of course, as obedience, but it's what we can call a shaping obedience. And what we mean by that is that through it, and especially as we're brought into the relationship with God's word, the standard of teaching, our life takes on a different shape to the shape that you had when you were a slave to sin.

Let's look at it more closely, because this word standard, in the authorized version, has the word form, the form of teaching. And form, perhaps, captures another dimension to it.

It's not that there isn't a standard involved, as the ESV puts it here, but there's also the idea of it being a form of teaching. It has a certain shape to it. Because when you think about it, the teaching of the scriptures, the teaching of the gospel, has a God shape to it, has a Christ shape to it.

The purpose of God in saving his people is to make them like Christ. And however unlike Christ we feel ourselves to be at the moment, there's no doubt whatsoever about it, that God is actually committed to bringing his people ultimately to be like Christ.

When you go into chapter 8, which carries on this great teaching about being in Christ and then being led by the Spirit and being sanctified and being led so that we resist sin and overcome sin, this, he says, is really the purpose of God.

[25 : 05] In verse 29, those that he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

In other words, when God brings us from the root of Adam and splices us on and unites us to the root that is Christ, his intention and his purpose, which he will achieve, which he will fulfill, is to make us finally and ultimately perfectly like his Son, which is what human beings were in the beginning and will be in their salvation.

And what he's saying here is this standard, this form of teaching. The truths of the gospel have a certain shape to them, if you like. And you notice here he's saying, to which you were committed.

And that's a better translation there than the authorized version has, which was committed to you. But undoubtedly, the meaning of the apostle there and the words that are used means that it's not that the gospel was committed to you, or the standard of teaching, or the form of teaching was committed to you.

There's a truth in that, but it's not the truth in the text. What it's really saying is, you were cut off from sin, from being slaves of sin, you've now been joined to Christ, you've been joined to righteousness, and you've given obedience to this form of teaching, this shape of teaching, to which you were committed.

[26 : 40] In other words, he has brought us to be brought under the impress of the gospel. Let me just try and illustrate that for a moment. You know what it's like when, let's for example take a mold into which molten metal is poured.

It can be plastic or any other such things as well, or children even with plasticine, when they force the plasticine into mold. When you take molten metal in order to make something, and you pour it into a mold, and leave it there to harden, of course, the molten metal takes up the exact shape of the mold into which it's poured.

And when the mold is then broken, or when the hardened metal is taken out of the mold, and you look at it, it's the exact same shape of the mold into which it has been put.

And what the apostle is saying is that it's like that with this form of teaching, with the truths of God to which we have been committed. It's as if God spiritually is taking his gospel, the truths of the gospel, and he's pouring our lives into it.

Just imagine it like a great mold. And it has all of these characteristics to it that really take up the shape or the image of Christ. When God converts a person, what he's doing is he's pouring them into that mold.

[28 : 12] And that mold that has the image of Christ as he or she is poured into it, it takes up that image of the mold, and you are committed into that form of teaching.

It is that shaping obedience. As you obey Christ, as you go on obeying Christ, Christ, so the truth of God's word does it work.

It produces more and more of that shape that is itself, that is the shape of Christ. The shape of righteousness is really what he's saying, isn't it? You've become slaves of righteousness.

You're united now to righteousness, and it's righteousness that God has in mind when he's going to ultimately bring you to be exactly as you should be, and as he wants you to be.

And the shape of likeness to Christ is what God doesn't mind. Now, of course, you often find that when something is tipped out of a mold, it's got the shape of the mold, but then the craftsman has to set about there's some bits of it perhaps that need to be knocked off, or sanded off, or polished up, until it's exactly the way that the craftsman or the tradesman is actually wanting it to be.

[29 : 35] And that's how it is for us as well. We come in our justification as we saw to have the exact righteousness that God requires of us judicially and formally in accordance with his own requirement.

On his records, we appear as righteous. But what about our practical lives? What about our daily living? What about what we are practically in our exercise of faith and all the things that we have to do as Christians?

Well, we're not perfect there yet, are we? We're not fully sanctified. We're not fully rid of sin from our practice. We don't conform yet to the image of Christ in our doings, although we are so in the formal records of God judicially.

God is not sanctified. So just like the tradesman knocks off some of these bits that need to be knocked off or sands them down, that is what God does in our sanctification.

Chapter 8 really takes us into that great subject. And that's why God brings us certain things in our experience that he uses to rub off these rough edges from our lives, things which hurt, things which are painful, which are painful for us to endure, experiences which we would not have chosen, experiences which God has designed specially to bring us more into the final perfect image that we will one day bear in heaven, the image of Christ.

[31 : 18] It's a shaping obedience. In other words, when you give obedience to Christ, you have it in mind that through giving obedience to Christ, not because of it, but through giving it, because of Christ himself, because of his merits, he deserves that we be like him.

But you give your obedience to righteousness, you give your obedience to Christ, and in your obedience, this is what you have in mind, I want to be like you.

I want to be more like you than I am. I want to reflect your image in my holiness of life, just as much as on the formal records of God in heaven.

That's why it's so important, I keep saying this for different reasons, but it's important for this reason as well, so important that we are constantly subjected to the teaching of the word, to the word of God, as the mold that shapes our lives.

you have been delivered unto this standard, this form of teaching, when you become obedient from the heart to it.

[32 : 31] And then it's a righteousness, obedience, that's the shape, as we said, that God has in mind. In verse 18 there, having been freed from sin, you've become slaves to righteousness.

Now it's interesting that Paul has in mind in using this word, slave, the strength of the bond. And when you ask yourself, how tightly are we bonded to sin?

How strong is that bond that we have naturally to sin? How tightly are we bonded to the mastery of sin? Well, you're bonded to it so tightly that it takes the power of God to break it.

our fallenness is a fallenness that has invaded every aspect of our being, including our minds, our understanding and our will.

And you hold on to the mastery of sin in your life until God himself comes to smash that bond and to bring you to be joined instead to Christ.

[33 : 45] But then you see, you ask, which is the stronger bond? is the bond that unites me to Jesus, is it stronger than the bond that united me to sin?

And the answer to that is yes. Because nothing can smash the new bond that Jesus, that God has brought about in uniting you to Jesus.

You know yourselves what it's like when you buy things in the shop, the new improved version, and you go to something like adhesive, and you find that here's a new variety of this adhesive.

It says stronger than ever before. And of course you believe what's on the tin, so you buy it and you try it out, and maybe indeed it is stronger than ever before. And you find all kinds of adverts that actually try and persuade you that this is the best adhesive there's ever been.

It's got such a tight bond. Well, this is the best adhesive that exists. It's not a new improved variety at all. It's a new one altogether.

[34 : 56] It's the bond of grace, the bond that God's spirit has brought about and that God's spirit continues to look after.

That's what you find in chapter 8, isn't it? They who are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. They are led by the spirit of God in what way?

They are led by the spirit of God further into sanctification, further into developing the image of Christ in them. Nothing's going to break that bond.

That's how the chapter ends, isn't it? Because I am persuaded, he said, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else, in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Don't be afraid that somehow that bond will come loose, that cracks will appear in it and it will eventually give way, and you will no longer be attached to Jesus Christ.

[36 : 04] It will not happen. It's not the tightness of your own obedience that makes it such a tight bond.

It's the power of God and God's Spirit. Who's going to actually release the hold that the Spirit of God has upon a person when they are joined by him to Christ?

Christ? That's what we had in the first session of the Discipleship Explorer course last week. And the video, as you remember the DVD showed the big difference between a child walking along holding on to the hand of their parent.

If that's what our security was like, it would very easily be broken. The child can very soon open its hand if it's just taking hold of the parent's hand, the child when they want can just let go.

But if it's the parent that's holding the child, even if the child tries to get free, the strength of the parent is such that that hold is not going to be broken.

[37 : 14] The hand remains tightly and securely in the hand of the parent. That's the transition from slavery to sin, into slavery to Christ, into being bonded to Christ.

Tight though the bond with sin was, the power of grace broken. And the bond that's now created is so secure that nothing, nothing in all existence, not even God, will break it.

Not because in theory he doesn't have the power, power. But because he doesn't have the inclination, Christ is our security.

And as long as God the Father is delighted with Christ, he will keep his hold of our lives. And that means it will never be broken. You have become slaves or bond servants of righteousness.

And that's why you find these imperatives in verses 13 and 14, and other similar passages too in Paul's writings. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies.

[38 : 33] Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness. That means our faculties, bodily faculties as well. But present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.

And your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin shall not have dominion over you, since you are not under the law but under grace.

You see, that's saying to us, our following after holiness is not an attempt on our part to please God so that by it we'll have his approval.

The fact is we already have his approval in Christ. Those who have been brought from death to life, they pattern their holiness on the fact that Christ is their model.

And they actually proceed to give their members, to give their faculties to God in an ongoing way obediently, not trying to gain his approval, but on the basis that they already have it.

[39 : 41] What is your greatest motivation to live a holy life? What is your greatest motivation to live a holy life?

Is it the thought that one day you will be free of sin? No. Is it the desire that one day you will actually be with Christ in glory? No.

All of these come into it, but it's not your primary motivation. Your primary motivation from which you get your spiritual energy is the fact that God has already cut off the supply of sin and filled you with the supply of his spirit.

That he has brought you from the root of Adam and united you to the root of Christ. That's what motivates you, that's what gives you the spiritual energy that wants to be holy, that is concerned to be holy, because you are no longer under sin, but under grace.

And finally, you have the obedience of Christ as our basis and example. Now, just finishing with that point, because it is itself important.

[41 : 04] When we think about our obedience in coming to Christ, our obedience especially in following Christ, where do you find an obedience that is a perfect example for us and a perfect foundation on which our obedience can be placed?

Well, it is the obedience of Christ himself. Philippians 2 and verses 6 to 8 in particular come to mind. He who was in the form of God made himself of no reputation.

And being found in fashion as a man, having taken the likeness of men, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

obedience. There is a perfect obedience, one that was never, ever spoiled, not by the least disobedience, the obedience of the Son of God, who took human nature precisely for that reason, that he could be obedient unto death in it.

That is what he did. And his surrender to God is our great example of what our surrendering should be like.

[42 : 43] If he had kept anything back of himself, we would not be saved. Why should we keep anything back?

When God demands our whole life, that's what he did for us. And that's the least we can do for him. Let's pray.

Lord our God, we thank you for your grace, for the power of your grace, for the operation of your grace in our lives.

We acknowledge it just through the power of your grace that we come to exercise faith, obedience, commitment to you. God, we thank you for your grace.

That it's through your grace and in your mercy that you provide us with the gift of your spirit, that spirit that leads us in the way of sanctification, the spirit that resides in the hearts of all your people, and that spirit that will bring them ultimately to be conformed to the image of your Son.

[43 : 50] Lord, we thank you for the great mystery of your own work of redemption, for much of it lies hidden from our understanding. Lord, how can we possibly understand how the three persons of the Godhead interact the one with the other, and between them come to bring your people finally into conformity with yourself.

But, Lord, we thank you that it is true, that it is the greatest truth in existence, that truth of redemption in Christ Jesus, that truth of God in his purpose savingly, coming to intervene in our sin, and coming to take our sin to himself.

Bless to us, we pray.