

An Appeal for a Mediator

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Date: 07 April 2024

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 0 0] So we're beginning our worship this evening singing in Psalm 65. Psalm number 65, that's in the St. Psalms version on page 82, singing to the tune St. David, verses 1 to 7.

In Zion, praise awaits you, Lord. To you our vows will pay. To you all people will come near. You hear us when we pray. When we were overwhelmed by sins and guilt upon us lay, you pardoned all our trespasses and washed our guilt away.

How blessed are those you choose and bring within your courts of grace. We're filled with blessings in your house, in your most holy place. Psalm 65, singing on to the end of verse 7.

In Zion, praise awaits you, Lord. In Zion, praise awaits you, Lord.

To you our vows will pay. To you all people will come near.

[1:15] You hear us when we pray. When we were overwhelmed by sins and guilt upon us lay,
You pardoned all our trespasses and washed our guilt away.

How blessed are those you choose and bring within your courts of grace.

We're filled with blessings in your house, in your most holy place.

With awesome deeds of righteousness, you answer us, O God.

ZARROW stillseses, O God. Our Savior, O God, O God. Our Savior, O God, O God, O
God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O dobry. hope over
the seas and all the earth above.

[2 : 51] By strength and power you are the hills, you have the ocean voice.

You come, let you know of the wind and still the hills' voice.

We're going to call upon the Lord now in prayer. Let's join together in prayer. Our gracious and eternal God, we draw near to you this evening conscious of the truth of these words we have been singing, that you are the God who hears and answers the prayers of your people, that you are the one to whom we draw near now with our petitions and our thanksgivings.

And we give thanks, Lord, that you have opened this way for us, that we can so freely use through our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you tonight, O Lord, for this privilege we have.

We thank you that we can follow these words of the psalmist so readily for ourselves, that even though he spoke of your house as the temple in those days long ago, we give thanks that we draw near to you to the courts of heaven.

[4 : 18] We give thanks that we are able to do so through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has ascended on high and has led captivity captive and has set down at the right hand of the throne of the majesty on high.

We thank you for the guarantee you give your people, that they are acceptable and accepted by you through him who loved them and gave himself for them. Help us then, we pray, to draw near to you tonight in faith.

O Lord, we have so many things within ourselves and around us in the world in which we live that could cause us to hesitate. That would be sources of doubt for us were we to allow them to place doubts in our mind as to what we do when we come near to God.

Or even hesitancy in drawing near to you. Though we know our unworthiness, Lord, feels like we are indeed meant to be hesitant before you. Yet you make it clear in your word that it is not so.

That we should come before you, Lord, with believing hearts, with minds ready to be filled by the teaching of your Spirit. And we ask tonight that you would help us to have our minds engaged with your truth and to depend upon your Holy Spirit as we come.

[5 : 38] We give thanks, O Lord, for the advantage you give us as we find ourselves under the Gospel and as we find ourselves educated by this Gospel through the application of it to our hearts and minds by your Spirit.

We pray, O Lord, that tonight you would add to our understanding, to our commitment to you. That you would enable us to take from this evening's worship a greater desire and a further resolve to live as your people in the world.

We give thanks, Lord, that we belong to a believing people. We're not confined to our own locality or to our own nation. That we belong to a people spread throughout the world whose trust is in the Lord and who form his own living church on earth.

We pray, Lord, as we acknowledge these great things that you would help us to be thankful for the heritage that you have given us to be part of as we find ourselves even this evening to benefit from those who have gone before us, from their faithfulness to your truth and from the teaching that they gave us in regard to the things of God.

We pray that our concern to pass these on to our own children and grandchildren may be amply fulfilled through your blessing. And we pray tonight, gracious one, for all the gatherings of your people.

[7 : 04] We ask that where your beloved people are gathered that they may too know your blessing as we seek for ourselves. That they may come under the guidance of your Holy Spirit and your truth.

And that you would prepare us and prepare them to live in this world that is so opposed to you in so many ways. Help us, we pray, in our own locality, in our own nation, as we face so many challenges to the gospel, challenges to our own upholding of it.

Lord, help us to trust in you and help us to be truly mindful of your word as being fully sufficient to meet with the needs of our age. We give thanks that it reveals to us even the things that we ought to expect on to the end of the world and the way in which people are foretold in your word as would be opposed to your truth, would seek out for themselves alternatives to God, alternatives to trusting in you.

We pray that you would maintain us faithful, maintain us active for you, Lord, privately and publicly, so that we may have that desire in our heart fulfilled to bring glory and honor to your name.

We thank you as your servant, Jude, in his epistle reminds us that we are given that charge of looking after your truth even as the faith wants delivered to the saints.

[8 : 36] And, Lord, our concern is that you would help us to do so meaningfully and engagingly with the world in which we live and that we may therefore not hide our light under a bushel.

So remember us here as a congregation also in all our concerns, in all our activities. We pray that you would continue, Lord, to provide for us as you have down through the years.

You know our concerns, Lord, to have the gospel supported by the means that you give us. We pray that whether we think of that support being financial or material or even the way of our own commitment personally to give of our time and of our gift to it, we pray, Lord, that you would enable us to do it with thankfulness.

And we ask that you would bless our community and bless the gospel among us, we pray. Enlarge the place of our borders, as your word tells us, help us, help us, oh Lord, to further depend upon the grace of your spirit to bless your word.

Remember those around us, Lord, who care not for these things, those who are affected by the rampant secularism of our age, to turn away from the things of God and to give attention instead to those ideologies and those teachings which cannot satisfy our human souls and which have such a destructive effect, not only, Lord, personally on lives, but also collectively, as we see throughout our land.

[10 : 13] we ask again that you would bless every effort made to bring the gospel before the world of our day, not only by the services of your church and by specific evangelistic endeavors, but also through the ongoing witness of your people, engaging individually with others in their own neighborhoods and localities, places of work.

remember that witness, Lord, we pray, and bless it, and bless it even beyond what we are able ourselves to imagine or to think. We pray that you bless tonight those who belong to us and are unable to be present.

Remember those prevented by the severity of the weather. Bless them, we pray. Bless those who are engaged online with our service this evening. We thank you, Lord, for that facility and pray that it may be blessed to those who partake of it, not only here locally, but throughout our land, even throughout the world, as we hear from time to time of those who are thankful and give information to us about the benefits they receive from it.

And we thank you for every other congregation that disseminates the gospel through these means. And we ask that these may be used to the furtherance of your kingdom on earth and the praise and the glory of your name.

Grant, O Lord, that we may nevertheless be thankful that we are able collectively to join together physically, to join together as we do tonight. Lord, we ask that your blessing will follow all that we seek to do in your name.

[11 : 53] Remember those tonight who are ill. Be with them, we pray, as they are known to ourselves, those of our congregation, those families, those individuals who have, at this time, experienced trial of that kind.

Remember them, we pray, those who have undergone treatment, those who have undergone surgery, those who are looking forward to such, those who have difficulties of mental health and issues with that.

Lord, remember them, we pray. Remember our young people. Bless them, we pray, as they become familiar with your truth. Help them to understand it. Help us to pass it on to them meaningfully.

And in a way that will truly engage with the situation that they face in their young days. Grant your blessing, we pray, to our children, to our grandchildren, to those who face an uncertain future, except for the fact that all things are certain with yourself.

And we ask that you would continue to bless all that we seek to do in your name as a congregation, as we reach out with the gospel in different forms. Bless us then now, we pray.

[12 : 58] Continue to watch over us during such weather as we experience and keep us safe, pardoning all our sins and receiving our thanks. For Jesus' sake.

Amen. Let's sing again to God's praise in Psalm 119. Psalm 119 from St. Sam's, page 157, singing to the tune, Rockingham, and singing verses 9 to 16.

How can the young keep their life pure by doing what your word demands? I seek you with my heart and soul.

Let me not stray from your commands. Your word I've hidden in my heart to keep me from offending you. Praise be to you, O Lord my God. Teach me your statutes, firm and true.

We'll sing the whole of that section, these four stanzas. How can the young keep their life pure? How can the young keep their life pure? How can the young keep their life pure?

[14 : 10] By doing all your word demands? I seek you with my heart and soul.

Let me not stray from your commands. Your word I've hidden in my heart to keep me from offending you.

Praise be to you, O Lord my God. Each junior statutes, firm and true.

Each law proceeding from your heart, I gladly with my lips and hope.

I love to follow your commands, as other child to count their own.

[15 : 47] I meditated upon your ways, and long your precepts I replay.

I take delight in your degrees.

Your word I never will be great. Amen.

Let's turn now to read God's word. We're reading tonight in the book of Exodus. The book of Exodus and chapter 20. And we can read through the whole chapter from the beginning.

Exodus chapter 20. And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

[16 : 57] You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers and the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male servant or your female servant or your livestock or the sojourner who is within your gates.

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God has given you.

[18 : 16] You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that is your neighbor's. Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled.

And they stood far off and said to Moses, You speak to us and we will listen, but do not let God speak to us lest we die. Moses said to the people, Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.

The people stood afar off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. And the Lord said to Moses, Thus you shall say to the people of Israel, You have seen for yourselves that I have talked with you from heaven.

You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold. An altar of earth you shall make for me, and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen.

[19 : 39] In every place where I cause my name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you. If you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you profane it.

And you shall not go up by steps to my altar, that your nakedness be not exposed on it. Amen. May God bless to us these words, and to his name be the praise.

We're going to sing further from Psalm 119, but this time in the Scottish Psalter version. That's on page 402, singing from verse 33 to the end of that section at verse 40.

Tune this time as St. Columba. Teach me, O Lord, the perfect way of thy precepts divine, and to observe it to the end I shall my heart incline.

Give understanding unto me, so keep thy law shall I. Yea, even with my whole heart, I shall observe it carefully. In thy law's path make me to know, for I delight therein, my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to greed incline.

[20 : 54] This whole psalm, of course, is mainly focused on the Word of God, and different words are used to describe that Word of God, precepts, law, testimonies, and so on.

And all the way through, the psalmist is giving us the benefits that he has received from the Word of God as he has sought to keep it for himself. And so we follow that as we turn this evening to Exodus chapter 20, where the emphasis is on the law of God especially.

But of course, the Word of God, as it includes the law of God, includes other besides the gospel, as well as the law. So the whole Word of God, you could say, is encapsulated, even as we sing about God's law and testimonies from Psalm 119.

So from verse 33 to the tunes in Columba, Teach me, O Lord, the perfect way. Teach me, O Lord, the perfect way of thy presence divine, and to observe it to the end, I shall my heart deny.

Give understanding unto thee, So deep thy love shall I, Ye, in with my whole heart I shall, O servant carefully.

[22 : 56] O servant carefully. In thy love's path make me to go, For I delight in him, My heart unto thy testimonies, And ought to thee in life.

Turn thou away my sight and eyes, From you in gravity, And in thy good and holy way, Be pleased to quake in me.

Confirm to thee thy grace, Vance carefully.

You will, The gracious word, Which I think I'll be here, In celle you will shoutmys, The King that's 2nd of blastery of death, This I carefree. The King that's makes me to go, For I delight in you, He hath to give unto thee, Even of hy vself-nayers.

Once Stadt activ■ it is making me, Turn thou away, For missionary it is available, For in my home, And have your peace in life away, May my dear people Or do thy judgment be Though for thy peace There's high among In my truth be in thee Please turn with me now to Exodus 20, a passage we read a few moments ago.

[25 : 15] And tonight we're going to focus on verses 18 to 21, set in the context, of course, of the chapter as an account of giving the law to the people of Israel.

Well, Deuteronomy is a book that contains the sayings of Moses and reminders to the people of what the Lord had delivered them from.

They're actually now ready to enter the promised land as you come to Deuteronomy. But here in Exodus, of course, it's the giving of the law. And in the giving of the law, the Lord is setting out these things for them in a way that really shows his own awesomeness and his greatness.

We'll quote from Deuteronomy later on as words that are related to this. But here, in terms of the giving of the law, is the effect that the whole incident had on the people.

This was a really awesome occasion. I go back to verse chapter 19 and verses 16 to 20. There you can see the description. In the morning of the third day, there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.

[26 : 28] And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. And they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire.

The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. What an awesome occasion! And what a description that is of that occasion.

That whole mountain that the people were standing on, standing near, trembled in the presence of the Lord. It was an indication to them that the Lord himself actually was there.

They couldn't, of course, see God. But they were sensible to his presence as they saw the effect that his descent, or the presence of God, had on the creation itself.

As the mountain was on fire and smoked and trembled under their feet. And it's little wonder that they were actually terrified. As you read here in chapter 20, when they saw, verse 18, they saw the thunder, the flashes of lightning, the sound of the trumpet, the mountain smoking.

[27 : 37] The people were afraid and trembled. And that fear that being afraid is not a small, slight thing.

They were really terrified. And no wonder, because they were participants in this incredible occasion and event where the Lord had descended on Mount Sinai.

In fact, when you go to chapter 12 of the epistle to the Hebrews, it adds significantly there that even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and tremble.

Now, that's not told us in the Exodus account of the event, but the fact that it's still within the Word of God means it's true. Even Moses, this man who was so familiar with God, this man who knew what it was to be in the presence of this holy God.

And yet here is an occasion where even he trembled. And if Moses trembled with the knowledge and the closeness and the way in which you are so familiar with being close to God, if he trembled, then that itself tells you this must have been a completely awesome occasion.

[28 : 44] We just can't, we can only just barely imagine what it must have been like. I mean, we know in recent days and other times the devastating effects of an earthquake.

And you'll see nowadays video of people taking a video of an earthquake as it's taking place within buildings and outside buildings. And you can see the cameras are just all over the place.

They're just being rattled as the earth moves, as the earth shakes beneath them. And people, of course, are terrified. Well, that's exactly what was happening in Mount Sinai.

It wasn't necessarily an earthquake, but the mountain itself trembled just like as an earthquake. You see it still to this day. But with fire and lightnings and thunders, all of that just added to the overwhelming experience of being in the presence of God.

God having descended in his presence to the earth. And so the people came to Moses with this request. They came as they trembled and stood afar off.

[29 : 51] They would not come near to this immediate area. They said, you speak to us and we will listen. But don't let God speak to us lest we die.

You see, they were aware of being in the presence of God, aware of their own sinfulness, of what they were as created human beings and sinful human beings at that.

And here they are in the presence of this God who has descended on this mountain and caused this mountain to tremble and to smoke and so on. And they say, you speak to us. Don't let God speak to us in case we die.

Don't let God speak to us in case we die.

How Moses in the Old Testament is one of the primary examples of mediatorship in the Old Testament. And here they are effectively asking Moses to mediate for them.

[31 : 12] You speak to us. You convey God's word to us. You stand between us and God. Don't let God come near to us. Don't let God speak to us. But you do it. And if you do it, then we'll be safe.

But if God comes to speak to us, it's likely that we will die. So there's the first of all, the people's fear. And then we'll look at the purpose of God, where Moses said to them, don't fear, do not fear, for God has come to test you that the fear of him may be before you and that you may not sin.

And thirdly, at the end of the final point, a third point will be the person of Moses in this context, very briefly. People's fear, the purpose of God, and the person of Moses.

Well, here's the people's fear. They're aware of God's presence, as we said. They heard the voice of God, and they trembled before them. And they were afraid that they were just very near death.

That's really the experience they had. They had come to realize that they were in the presence of this holy God, the God who was now showing himself to them with such a tremendous power and effect.

[32 : 22] And here they are, afraid they're going to die. So they stood afar off. They did not dare to draw near in that context.

Now, that's something, of course, that you find elsewhere in the Bible. For example, in Isaiah chapter 6, we have an account of Isaiah's call to be a prophet, and how part of that was how he saw the Lord high and lifted up, sitting on a throne, and how his robe, the train of his robe, filled the temple, and so on.

And he saw the seraphim, and they were calling out to one another, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. And in a similar way to Sinai, the foundations of the threshold shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

You see the similarity there, because it's to do with the presence of this awesome, holy God. And God reiterating, as it were, his holiness through the words of the seraphim.

And I said, Isaiah goes on to say, I said, Woe is me, for I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

[33 : 39] For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. What is Isaiah aware of more than anything else? Yes, he's aware of the presence of God, but for himself, as respects himself.

What is he aware of? He's aware of his own utter sinfulness. And because he's aware of his sinfulness in the presence of this holy God, he's actually convinced that he's about to die.

I am undone. The words really mean, I am going to die. I can't stand in the presence of this God as I am, so the only likely outcome of this is death for me.

See, when God does come near to us, even through the gospel, through his word, through his law, and impresses upon us his own awesome holiness, if ever you've come to know that in your experience, even to a small degree, what you're really aware of is your own sinfulness in the presence of that, and even that you're worthy of nothing else but that you would die in the presence of this holy God.

You become aware of your sinfulness. You become aware of death as the inevitable consequence of sin. Or as the Bible puts it elsewhere, the wages of sin is death.

[35 : 02] And as you're aware of that, and as that impresses itself upon you, in most cases people are aware of their need of a mediator, someone to come and stand between them and this God, someone to actually act for them and on their behalf, someone to actually cause that they will not die, though that as they see it is the likely outcome of God's holy presence coming into their experience.

And that, of course, is an aspect of the law of God itself. This is a context, a chapter dealing with the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, and all of these accompanying elements are really an indicator of how important an event this was in the experience of Israel.

God giving his law, and God saying through these tremendous manifestations of himself through the creation trembling, how important, how awesome this is, how important this law is going to be for the people, and how they must regard it as a revelation of God's own nature, effectively, and what he's like, and who they need to be, and what they need to be in his presence.

It brings to you the knowledge of sin, this law of God, when it says, this is the summary, of course, of the law in the Ten Commandments, where it talks about, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not be a false witness, you shall have no other gods before me, and so on.

There is the whole law of God, the requirement of God morally, summed up in these Ten Commandments. And as they're summed up in these Ten Commandments, it brings to us the knowledge of sin, the knowledge of our own demerit, the knowledge of what we're liable to as a consequence of our sin, that we are liable to death, liable to God's condemnation, liable justly to all of these things.

[37 : 09] And that's why, in some ways, in many ways, indeed, our society is the way it is. The absence of this law in the minds of people and the consideration of people leads to the kind of thing that you find in our own society, in the Western world, especially today.

The law of God being largely absent from people's thoughts, from people's considerations, from people's practices, you're inevitably left with something like secularism as its foundation, or other ideologies, and what you're left with then is really just people's own ideas of what morality should be like, or what way of life should be lived, a life that's pleasing just to ourselves.

But the Bible tells us that we need more than that. We need a foundation. We need this God and this law of God to be foundational for us.

When you put God's law and God's word aside, you inevitably end up with the chaos and the moral chaos and the immorality that sadly characterizes us as a people so much.

Well, there's the people's fear then. And secondly, that leads us to think of the purpose of God. In verse 20, Moses said to the people, Do not fear, for God has come to test you that the fear of him may be before you.

[38 : 38] And it's interesting that he says that, that God has come to test them. And if you compare that with Deuteronomy, as we said earlier, Deuteronomy is a word that's given to them before they enter the promised land, but a reminder and a reiteration of things like the giving of the law.

And if you go to Deuteronomy chapter 8, for example, you'll find from verse, the beginning of the chapter, really the whole commandment. God says that, I command you today, you shall be careful to do that you may go and you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land the Lord gave.

And you shall remember the way, the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.

And he goes through there talking about the things they experienced in the wilderness and it's all a period of testing for them. Are they going to be obedient to God or not? Are they going to set the Lord before them as their God or are they going to turn to other gods?

What are they going to do when they enter into the promised land that's now before them? Are they still going to be true to God? Are they going to just abandon the ways of God? You see, that's why God was reminding them at that stage of what he had given them on Mount Sinai and why he had tested them on Mount Sinai by this tremendous manifestation.

[40 : 03] It wasn't to kill them. It wasn't to actually annihilate them. It wasn't to bring them death. It was to test them. To test them whether they would be obedient and faithful to this God or not.

And you know, God, whenever he tests us in his providence, they may not be anything like the tremendous event of Sinai, but every time the Lord is testing us in whatever way and to whatever degree, that testing of God is actually a positive, advantageous thing if we take it in the right spirit.

And whatever testing you're going through tonight as a Christian, don't look at it as a negative in God's providence. Don't think it's something that just somehow or other sits outside of God's purpose for you.

Don't go along with the idea that God doesn't really intend or want you to have any suffering at all in your life and that therefore you have to appeal to him to take the suffering away. That you can live a far better life without suffering at all.

That your faith will be much stronger if you didn't have any such suffering in your life. That way of thinking is not respectful of the teaching of the word of God. God does test us.

[41 : 21] God tests us in his providence. God tests us by various events in our lives. God tests us by illness. God tests us by bereavement. God tests us in many ways in his providence.

All of these things are under his complete control. And tonight when God is bringing you something testing in your life, remember he's not giving you that so that you will think badly of him.

So that you will think he's not dealing with you really in a way that's advantageous or positive for you. Every testing has its own benefit. But we need to receive it faithfully, trustingly, lovingly.

Now that's easy to say in words. That's easy to say standing in a pulpit. Much more difficult to know it, to accept it and to receive it when you're actually in that testing.

But as the epistle to the Hebrews puts it in terms of chastisement or chastening, it's not pleasant for the time that it's being experienced.

[42 : 30] Neither is any type of suffering in the providence of God. But afterward, how does it put it? It yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to all those not only who have been tested but who have actually carried the test positively.

Who have been exercised thereby. God is testing us so that we will come to himself and be exercised all the more in our relationship with him.

And that's why he goes on to say it's so that the fear of him might be before you and that you may not sin. There's a number of things there. He's not come he says to you to kill you don't fear he has come to test you so that the fear of him may be before you.

Now we often come across as we've done a number of times on other occasions the fear of God and the meaning of the fear of God and what does the Bible mean by the fear of God and what is it to be a God fearer words which are not all that current in our present usage of them but used to be very common and sadly have fallen out of use in many ways the fear of God of being a God fearer is something that really is so significant to understand what that means.

Well the fear of God as in many places in the Bible includes such things as being in awe of God. See God is teaching the people here Moses is saying he has drawn near to you he's come to test you that the fear of him may be before you that you will come to be in awe of him as the great God who is your deliverer who is your God your creator your savior and living in awe of God is not the same as living in a way that's afraid of him in fact the fear of God is in many ways the opposite of being afraid of God the people here were afraid but Moses is assuring them no he says don't be afraid he has not come down so that you will be afraid of him he's come down so that the fear of him may go before you that you'll have love and respect and awe of him and of his ways and of his word and of his commandments because you see the fear of God at the very heart of the fear of God is love for God and love for God means respect for God that's really the fear of God in action if you like and Israel is not to keep the law of God because they're afraid of God but out of love and respect for him out of the fear of him that's what leads us to be careful with regard to the word of God and how we apply it to our lives and see that combination is important as well that combination of love and of law it's important that we keep them together because love needs the law and law needs love these are not opposites these are not contradictory that's not necessarily what our society thinks of it because when you think of presenting the law of God the ten commandments the teaching of the Bible even generally to the world of our days you'll very soon find out they don't want to know that they don't want to be under law but their own law the law that people have for themselves their own ideas of what's right and wrong their own ideology but love without law you could compare it

[46 : 10] I think to I'm sure you've all seen and especially if you've kept chickens you know that sometimes an egg is laid without a shell and it's rather difficult to pick up that egg without your finger piercing it it's a perfectly good enough egg to eat the inside is perfectly okay you have the yolk and you have the white but you don't have the shell it's a very it's a very malleable movable thing all too easily broken something you've got to be very careful how you handle and in some ways if you think of love without the law of God underneath it or along with it it's a bit like that malleable movable thing that the egg without the shell is or think of something mallowy something without any structure love needs the law of God to give it that shape that firmness to give it that foundational if you like it's not necessarily foundational to love but love requires the law of God to give it the structure that's required love can't exist without structure that's why it's so meaningless to hear this often repeated mantra today with regard to lifestyles that are contrary to the word of God love is love what does that mean love is love love is what I make it that's what it means love is how I define it love is how it best fits with my ideology love is how it how it how it fits with how I see the world how I see my place in it how I see my lifestyle love is love so different to the definition and the teaching of the Bible as to what love is love for God primarily and first of all but love as it extends to loving your fellow

Christians and loving the world indeed it has to have a firmness to it what does provide how does that firmness provide it well the word of God the law of God if you go to the opposite and the law of God without love what do you have well that's something if you like to have another illustration it's rather like a grindstone which just goes on grinding and goes on grinding the more you try to keep it as Paul found out the more it grinds you and the more it grinds you the more it hurts it just wears you down you try and keep the law of God without love for God without respect and awe in loving God and you'll find that's its effect when Paul and Saul of Tarsus thought he was really managing the situation so well his own life those things he now says having come to know Christ what gain did I have

I count them now as just rubbish something to be thrown away his own righteousness that is he means he wasn't actually rubbishing the law of God but he was rubbishing his own attitude to it his own attempt to keep it by his own strength and so love and law actually go together and you see it's saying here that the love that the fear of God which we're saying contains the love of God may be before you in other words it's not to be an occasional thing for you God is saying to Israel that it may be before you that it may be part of your path onwards that you may always place it before you that it may always direct your life as you see from Psalm 119 so often the word of God the precepts of God they're not laborious when you love the Lord they're not burdensome when you love the Lord they're actually a guide to life they keep your life in check they guide you on the way so he says that the fear of him may be before you not occasional but as part of your path

Psalm 1 that man has perfect blessedness who walks not astray in counsel of ungodly men or stands in sinners way whose loves the Lord who meditates on the law of God night and day we need the law of God before us always that's again so contrary to the way our society sadly see things law and love as we said kept or regarded as opposites and especially the law of God itself and friends you're all too conscious I'm sure of how lawlessness or the degree of lawlessness that has crept into our society into the behavior of people when you find violence all too soon accompanying different types of demonstrations on our streets what's behind that why is that the way it is why can't people demonstrate peaceably although some of course do well it's largely because there's no concept of the law of God no concept of being answerable to a higher authority than themselves and certainly not answerable to God because they don't believe in him well here is

Moses saying this is why this event has happened this is why God has come down don't be afraid but it's so that you may have the fear of him before you that you may not sin because you see the outcome of the fear of God as something that regulates your heart your thoughts your way of life the outcome of that the inevitable consequence of having the fear of God as the guide of your life is holiness of life is so that you may not sin that's why God has come that the fear of him may be before you and that you may not sin in relation to that it's not our own efforts to keep the law of God that ensure that we do not sin it's actually our love for God and respect for his law that has the effect of not wanting to sin in the presence of God holiness in other words likeness to God himself and you may be saying tonight well

[52 : 49] I'm just left out of the picture altogether then what hope is there for me when I know that I'm a sinner when I know that even as a Christian I do sin from day to day I'm conscious of my sin and here's a passage saying that the fear of God may be before you so that you may not sin where does that leave me well if you're conscious of your sin tonight what do you do with it you go to Jesus with it you confess it to Jesus whether you're a Christian converted or otherwise but you go to God with it you express it to him whenever you are a Christian as many of you are tonight and you're conscious of still sinning against the Lord and so difficult to actually control some of the urges in your own heart some of the constant motions of sin in your mind and in your heart what do you do well where is the answer the answer is in first John chapter two verses one to two my beloved children I write these things to you he says so that you may not sin but if anyone does sin we have an advocate with the father

Jesus Christ the righteous one and he is the propitiation for our sin he is God's answer to his own anger against us for our sins go to Jesus he's already paid the price of sin he continues to be the mediator between us and God when we come and have our trust in him and he continues to make intercession for his people from his throne in heaven he presents the perfection of his own atonement the death he died at Calvary the life of obedience he lived he continually presents that to God even by his person being there we have an advocate with the father and he is the propitiation for our sins so don't despair tonight don't treat your sin lightly don't think of it in such a way as says well I can go to

Jesus with it any time that's not what he's saying yes you can do that but you need to constantly have in your mind and I must too when I'm conscious of my sin I look to God I look to his provision I look to the Savior I look to Jesus I look to him as the mediator I look to his intercession I look to him as the one God has provided for me so that I will not die for my sins who's looking after your own life tonight who's looking after your eternity who's looking after what happened what happens to you during the course of life who's looking after what will be the case when you die or after you die who's looking after your present who's looking after your future in what or in whom is your trust well if it's in

Jesus it is well it is well with your soul and if it's not you don't have a mediator if you haven't come to accept him to trust in him you're facing God in your own ability in your own strength and where's that going to get us because the wages of sin is death so there's the people's fear the purpose of God and very very briefly the person of Moses we said the people's request or plea here when they're afraid to draw near is saying to Moses you speak to us don't let God speak to us in case we die in the Old Testament we have a number of people that represent Jesus and you could say are foreshadowing of Jesus we use the word type a type of Christ means somebody who's symbolic in a sense of Christ in the prophecies or in the teachings of the Old

Testament leading up to the time of Jesus himself and if you ask who is the main type of a mediator in the Old Testament to teach us about Jesus and the way Jesus was going to come to be the mediator well in many ways it's Moses because Moses here is asked by the people to come and stand between them and God or at least speak to them that's the same thing as a mediator speaking for God to the people rather than God himself coming destructively to them for their sin and Moses as a mediator you see that wonderful chapter in chapter 32 where the people had so grievously sinned against the Lord in fashioning creating this golden calf and beginning to worship it while Moses was up in the mountain God revealed to him that the people had corrupted themselves made a calf and the

[58 : 12] Lord said I have seen this people behold it is a stiff neck people now therefore leave me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them that I may consume them in order that I may make a great nation of you what a great test for Moses God is saying to him don't appeal to me don't don't don't actually as he puts it there leave me alone let me alone stop praying for this people I'm going to destroy them Moses said he implored the Lord instead of that Moses acted as the mediator oh Lord why does your wrath burn hot against your people why should the Egyptians say with evil intent he brought them out to kill them turn from your burning anger and relent remember Abraham Isaac and Israel your servants and so the Lord turned from the anger that he had threatened to break out on the people and then later on in the chapter you have this marvelous emphasis on

Moses saying Moses said to the people you have sinned a great sin what's what's Moses Moses saying he's pleading with God not to destroy the people that there be not death from God for these people but he's saying Lord instead of that if there has to be a death effectively he's saying let that be mine let that be upon me let me bear the penalty let me take the guilt for their grievous sin no that's mediatorship that is a type a foreshadowing of the mediatorship of Jesus because that's effectively what

Jesus did for his people he took their sin to himself let me die their death let me die the death they deserve that's effectively what's at the heart of the mediatorship of Jesus standing between God and his people God and sinners and you see here in Exodus chapter 20 these verses in verse 21 that section finishes people stood afar off while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was what is Calvary Calvary is the mediator is the mediator and entering into the thick darkness where God and his wrath is and taking to himself that penalty that they deserved here is

Moses on behalf of the people foreshadowing that entrance of Jesus into the darkness and Calvary's darkness is recorded for us in the New Testament that darkness in the creation that symbolized the darkness in the soul of Jesus as he became the curse for his people are you tonight under his intercession who is remembering you in the presence of God remember it's not the same thing to have people praying for you as to be within the intercession of Jesus himself through faith in Christ through trusting in him through handing your life over to him whatever way you describe it you come under this magnificent indescribable wonderful privilege of having the king of heaven interceding for you constantly remembering you in the presence of the father who would want to live without that let's pray oh lord our god we give thanks for the provision that you have made for us so that as sinners we would not be consumed by the wrath that we so much deserve we thank you tonight for Jesus for the mediatorship that he exercises and for the way that he came into this world and entered into that thick darkness that no one can describe the darkness of bearing the wrath of god we thank you lord that he endured and came through and came from the dead itself to finally be ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of god oh help us we pray to have our trust in you to have our confidence in that lord and turn us we pray from our own ways from our own thoughts so that we might think our thoughts after you as we find these in your word bless us then we pray for jesus sake amen now we're going to sing finally in conclusion tonight from psalm 119 again psalm 119 again is the scottish psalter version page 415 and we sing from verse 172 the final four stanzas of psalm 119 my tongue of thy most blessed word shall speak and it confess because all thy commandments are perfect righteousness let thy strong hand make help to me thy precepts are my choice i longed for thy salvation lord and in thy law rejoice these words in conclusion my tongue of thy most blessed word shall be shall speak shall speak and it fully

Let thy strong hand be held to me.

[65 : 26] Thy pleases are my choice. I long for thy salvation, Lord.

And in thy glory rejoice. O let thy soul in hand be sharp.

Give praises come to thee. And let thy judgment wish us.

Be helpful unto thee. I lie in the lost sheep wanes astray.

I serve as secret and high. For thy promise I suffer not.

[66 : 48] To save as of my mind. Amen. Now, we're not using the main door this evening for exiting the building because of the strength of the weather.

I'm not sure if Rory's opening this one. This one is and this one as well. So just come forward to the side doors, please, to vacate the building this evening. I'll go to the door to my right. Those upstairs can just choose which one of the front doors they come to, side doors they come to.

Now, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore. Amen. Amen.