

God Can - Idols Cannot

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[0 : 00] I want to wish you all a very good evening on behalf of Stormway Free Church, and we pray that the Lord will bless our service to us all. We're going to begin by singing from Psalm number 32, Psalm 32 and sing Psalms.

We're going to sing verses 1 to 5. How blessed the one who has received forgiveness for his sin, whose sins are covered from God's face, whose debt is cancelled in God's grace, there's no deceit in him.

When I kept silent, all my bones with groaning were worn out. Beneath your hand I felt and clapped, both day and night my strength was sapped as in a summer drought.

Then I laid bare my sin to you, the guilt that lay within. I said, O Lord, I have transgressed, and you forgave when I confessed. You pardoned all my sin.

I'm going to sing these verses of Psalm 32, 1 to 5, from Sing Psalms, How blessed the one who has received. Forgiveness for his sin, whose sins are covered from God's face, whose sins are covered from God's whose death is cancelled in God's grace, whose death is cancelled in God's grace, there's no deceit in him.

[1 : 33] When I kept silent, all my bones with groaning were worn out. When I kept silent, all my bones with groaning were worn out.

When I kept silent, all my bones with groaning were worn out.

To be alarmed were worn out. Beneath your hand I felt a trap, O day and night my strength was sapped as in a summer drought.

O day and night my strength was sad, as in a summer ground.

Then I laid bare my sin to you, the guilt that lay within.

[2 : 49] I said, O Lord, I have transgressed, and you forgive when I confess.

You pardon all my sin. Let us now bow in prayer.

O Lord, our gracious God, we bow in your presence, and we give thanks that we are able to meet in this way. It is an essential part of life that we come together to worship the living and through God. You are the creator. You are the one who has breathed the breath of life into us. You are the one who dictates the length of days that we live in this world.

And we pray that we might have our eyes fixed upon you. Because there is so much to distract us, and so much to take our thoughts away from being fixed and focused upon the mighty power of God.

[4 : 00] Lord, help us to see you through your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Your word tells us, as Jesus himself said, he who has seen me has seen the Father.

And I am sure every single one of us want to have a greater vision of our Savior Jesus, and a greater vision of yourself. That you will sharpen the eye of faith that we may be able to see more clearly.

Because we have to confess, O Lord, that the clouds of sin so often dim our view of you. And the desire is there, the longing to see you. But so often, Lord, the weight of sin is such that it is such a distraction, and it is such a hindrance, and it is that which spoils our fellowship and communion with you.

So you are a God who cannot tolerate sin. It is an offence, it is an affront to your nature. And we ask, O Lord, that we might become more and more aware of how offensive it is, and that there will be an ever-growing desire within our heart not to treat sin lightly.

Because far too often, we know what your word says, and yet we're quite happy to push it aside, in order that we will fulfil our own desires.

[5 : 20] Help us, Lord, not to be like that. Help us, Lord, to be single-minded in our pursuit of the truth. Help us, Lord, to walk in your ways. Teach me thy way, O Lord, the psalm said.

And likewise, we ask for the same tonight as well. Lord, show us the way to go. There is a right way, and there is a wrong way as we go through life.

And we pray that we will make your word the only rule to direct us, because we know that's the only way to glorify and enjoy you in this world. Help us, Lord, to see the great purpose that you have for us in being able to enjoy you.

And we can only begin to enjoy you once we have found Jesus as our Saviour. Lord, to see the great purpose of the Lord. And we pray, Lord, to see the great purpose of the Lord. And we pray, Lord, that we are brought into fellowship and access with God.

And we pray, then, that there will be a growing enjoyment, that we will find a joy and satisfaction, as so our souls delight in you. That we might be finding that we drink out of the pleasant streams, and that we're nourished with the good food that your word provides.

[6 : 30] And that you will fill our soul abundantly with the pleasure that you have for your people. We give thanks, O Lord, that you love your people, and that your people are your portion in this world.

And so often your people are despised and they're minimised in the eyes of the world. And yet we realise that as far as heaven is concerned, that your people are the most important portion that belongs to you.

And we give thanks that you are working in your people and you're preparing them for the great glory that one day will be theirs. Pray, Lord, for us all, every single one of us.

We pray for those who mourn and are sad and heavy-hearted. Pray for those who have gone through hard times and difficult times and they feel lonely. They feel that their world has been torn apart and everything that was foundational in their lives apart from you has been taken away. And that is difficult. And so we pray for those who know the silent tears that others don't see and the broken heart that others aren't aware of.

[7 : 39] And so we pray that you will deal graciously and tenderly with them. We pray, Lord, for those who mourn even in our own congregation. Remember the family of the late Mooragh Maclean, whose funeral we have this week.

And we ask, Lord, that you will bless them. We give thanks for her life. We pray, Lord, that you will bless all whose hearts are heavy and sore and that you will bind up the broken hearted, pouring in the oil of joy where there is sorrow and sadness.

And people are so often aware that this is a time they remember the death of loved ones. And we ask, Lord, that you will draw close to them.

Pray for those who are ill. There's so much illness going about. And with the COVID pandemic that has in many ways held our nation in its grip over this last year.

There are so many that have suffered with other illnesses and have not been able to maybe get the treatment that they wanted or needed. And so we pray for all such and all who are waiting and all who are so uncertain about their future.

[8 : 53] We pray for all who are undergoing treatment. We pray that that treatment will be successful. Those who are undergoing surgery. We pray for success in the operations. We pray for our elderly who have struggled in this last year.

Those who have been confined to homes and have not been able to see their loved ones. Oh, Lord, we pray that you will bless them. We ask, Lord, that you will watch over us. Be with us as a nation. Remember our queen who was mooring after losing her husband, Prince Philip, after all these many, many years of marriage.

We give thanks, Lord, for her witness and testimony throughout these years. We pray that you will bless us and bless the royal family. We are indeed commanded to pray for those who are in authority over us.

Likewise, we pray for our prime minister and our first minister. And we pray for the leader of the council here locally. We pray for all who are in authority over us and ask that you will bless them.

[9 : 55] As we come to election time, we pray for wisdom and guidance in that. Bless your people who have influence in governments, whether it's in Westminster or in Holyrood. We pray that you will raise up more and more who will stand on the side of truth so that our nation will be turned back again to your word.

Because we have departed so, so far away from what your word requires and demands of us. We pray, Lord, that you will bless us. Bless all our young people.

As if they go back to school, we pray for teachers. We pray that indeed there will be a sense of joy as they're able to mingle again with our friends.

We pray that you will bless young and old alike. Watch over us all, we pray, and do us good. As we come under your word now, we pray that it will be a blessing to us.

Watch over us and cleanse us, we pray, from our every sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Amen. Amen. Right, I'm just going to say a wee word to the young people.

[11:06] As you know, we live in a world that is always changing. Everything about it is always changing. And I remember, well, years ago when I was a minister in Muirford, my mum and dad came to stay with us.

They used to come out and stay with us for a wee while. And one day we decided to go for a trip up to a wee place called Ardell, which is very close to Kyle, Kyle of La Valsh.

Ardell, probably the greatest landmark that is there, or more or less just a mile from it, is Elandon and Castle. You will often see photos of Elandon and Castle.

And if you haven't, can't think of what Elandon and Castle is, go out sometime and look it up.

Because then you'll say, oh, I've seen photos of that.

It's lovely. It's one of these picture postcard scenes. But we stayed near there. That's where I, my dad was a minister there. And I was born there and spent the first six years or thereabout of my life.

[12:13] So we decided to go and visit Ardell. But everything was so, so different. We actually went up to the house that we used to live in.

It was a big, the man says, a big house. And although some of it was the same, so much of it was different. What struck me probably most of all was there was a huge high hill behind the house.

And I used to think that was the highest hill in the whole wide world. It's not that big after all. And there were trees around it.

And there was one tree that I used to think reached to the sky. It's not that big really. But the garden, there was a big, big garden there. And it's all changed.

In fact, when I was a boy, I thought the Garden of Eden, I thought Adam and Eve had been in that garden. That's where I pictured them. I pictured David killing Goliath in front of the house.

[13:15] There's a stretch of grass there. That's where all these things happened. The one thing that I went to look for, and it's still there, there was a road pipe which passed near the window I used to sleep in.

And when I was a wee boy, I used to think that lions might climb up that road pipe. Of course, I was being very stupid. I didn't. It was just my young mind, my imagination running wild.

Of course, there's no lions here. Lions aren't going to climb up the road pipe. I was going to climb up the road pipe. I checked to see if that road pipe was still there. And it was. But the church which was nearby, that's gone.

A new church has been built. And what really struck me is that all the houses nearby, there was nobody who lived there when we were there, still living there now.

There were new people in every single house. Then we went on to the next village, which was Balmachara. My dad used to take an evening service here, I think every second Sunday, sometimes more often than that.

[14:27] And it would take a hundred people. It's now closed. And in fact, it's just a store full of wood. And then we went on to Kyle. And there used to be a ferry that would take you over to Skye.

And now, of course, there's a bridge. The ferry's gone. You just drive straight over. Everything was changing. And I was thinking, well, that's just so like our life.

Because everything in life is changing all the time. When my dad went to school, it was a slate and a chalk that he used.

Not judder, but a slate and a chalk. When I went to school, obviously, it was judderish that we used. And I know that you still use judderish.

But, you know, if lockdown had happened, when I was in school or your parents were in school, we couldn't have done online teaching. Couldn't have done online school or online Sunday school.

[15:32] Couldn't have done that then. So, you see, the world is changing. Often changing for the better. Not always. But often changing, making great changes. Now, the thing is that you and I change.

We look different as the years go on. We think differently as the years go on. Everything about us changes. And the world all around us changes.

And sometimes we would say, I wish some of the things would just stay the same, some things.

Well, there's one person who stays the same always. And that is the God of heaven and earth.

He's always and ever the same. He says, I am the Lord. I do not change. God never changes in any way.

You and I make plans and we change them. God doesn't. Never changes his plans. You and I make promises. And often we don't keep them.

[16:36] God always keeps his promises. You and I often change the way we think. God doesn't.

Isn't that amazing? You and I get old. God doesn't. He's always and ever the same.

And that means that his love never changes. His purpose for you will never change. His promise to you will never change.

And in this world where everything changes, isn't it wonderful to have the God of heaven and earth, the one who never changes, to be your God.

I can't think of anything that can give us greater peace, a greater sense of belonging, a greater sense of feeling safe, than to know that God is our God.

[17:41] And he is a hold of us all the time. Let's say the Lord's Prayer now. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. Amen. I want us to read God's word now from the prophecy of Isaiah and in chapter 44.

Isaiah chapter 44. But now hear, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen.

Thus says the Lord who made you, who formed you from the womb, and will help you. Fear not, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen, for I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground.

[18:45] I will pour my spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They shall spring up among the grass, like willows by flowing streams.

This one will say, I am the Lord's. Another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, the Lord's, and name himself by the name of Israel.

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts, I am the first, and I am the last. Beside me there is no God.

Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare it, and set it before me. Since I appointed an ancient people, let them declare what it is to come, and what will happen.

Fear not, nor be afraid. Have I not told you from abode, and declared it? And you are my witness. Is there a God beside me? There is no rock.

[19:47] I know not any. All who fashion idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit. Their witness is neither seen or know that they may be put to shame.

Who fashions a God, or casts an idol that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his companions shall be put to shame, and the craftsmen are only human.

Let them all assemble. Let them stand forth. They shall be terrified, and shall be put to shame together. The ironsmith takes a cutting tool, and works it over the coals.

He fashions it with hammers, and works it with a strong arm. He becomes hungry, and his strength fails, so he drinks no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretches a line.

He marks it out with a pencil. He shapes it with planes, and marks it with a compass. He shapes it into the figure of a man, with the beauty of a man to dwell in a house.

[20:50] He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree, or an oak, and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar, and the rain nourishes it.

Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it, and warms himself. He kindles a fire, and bakes bread. Also, he makes a god, and worships it.

He makes it an idol, and falls down before it. Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat. He roasts it, and is satisfied.

Also, he warms himself, and says, Ha, I'm warm. I have seen the fire. And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it, and worships it.

He prays to it, and says, Deliver me, for you are my God. They know not, nor do they discern. For he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand. [21 : 57] No one considers, nor is there knowledge, or discernment to say, Half of it I burned in the fire. I also baked bread on its coals. I roasted meat, and I've eaten.

And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood? He feeds on ashes. A deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself, or say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant. I formed you. You are my servant. O Israel, you shall not be forgotten by me.

I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you. Sing, O heaven, for the Lord has done it.

Shout, O depths of the earth. Break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it. For the Lord has redeemed to Jacob, and will be glorified in Israel.

[23 : 06] Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb. I am the Lord who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, who frustrates the signs of liars, and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back, and makes their knowledge foolish, who confirms the word of his servant, and fulfills the counsel of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem shall be inhabited, and of the cities of Judah they shall be built, and I will raise up the ruins, who says to the deep be dry, I will dry up your river, who says of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose, saying of Jerusalem she shall be built, and of the temple your foundation shall be laid.

Amen. God bless to us this reading of his own holy word. And I want us this evening to consider the verses from verse 18.

They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot understand. No one considers, nor is their knowledge or discernment to say, half of it I burned in the fire, I also baked bread on its coals, I roasted meat and have eaten, and shall I make the rest of it an abomination?

Shall I fall down before a block of wood? He feeds on ashes, a deluded heart has led him a slave, and he cannot deliver himself or say, is there not a lie in my right hand?

Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant. I formed you, you are my servant, O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.

[25 : 05] I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like a mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you. As we know, life is very, very uncertain, and as we were talking to the young folk, as we were highlighting, the world that we live in is always changing.

And when we live in a world that is changing and a world that is uncertain, that often brings with it a sense of an ease, sometimes worry, anxiety, and it's so easy for us to be filled with fear.

And God is always speaking to his people and addressing his people and he so often says to us not to fear. And it's one of the wonderful things of having a Bible because when we go to our Bibles and we read what God is saying to us and when we have the faith to believe what God is saying to us, then that gives us a sense of peace and a sense of security, a sense of assurance, and a sense of hope in this world that is so uncertain and sometimes so frightening.

And we find here in this particular chapter that God is comforting his troubled people. And at the beginning he is telling them not to fear because he has formed them.

and he is really saying you are not here as kind of random people. You are here deliberately because I have formed you. And God is not going to forget and turn us back on those that he has brought to be.

[26 : 56] And of course we know that God formed the nation of Israel way back when he called Abraham. Remember how he told Abraham to leave where he was and everything behind and that God would take him to a place.

He said I am going to take you out and I am going to give you this land. This land is going to be you and your people down throughout the generations. And through you and your people all the nations of this world will be blessed which we know is what happened through the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So God is saying you are at the very heart, at the very centre of my purposes. And all of the promises that God is giving to his people in the Old Testament apply also to his people in the New

Testament as well.

Because we are his people. If we are united to the Lord Jesus Christ then all these promises are ours as well. So every person who is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ is able to rest in his love and to know that you not because of who you are in yourself or I because of who I am in myself but we if we belong to the Lord are his special people.

We are his portion in this world. And then God contrasts the choosing and the forming of the nation of Israel to worship him and to serve him in this world over against the blinded idolatry of the other nations and all the practices that they have.

[28 : 43] And the madness of idolatry is really highlighted in these verses between verses 15 and 20. And basically what it is saying here is that here is this man who will take a piece of wood and from that wood he's going to make an idol and he's going to bow down before that idol but from that piece of wood before he makes the idol he cuts some of it up and he makes a fire and from that fire he warms himself and on that fire he bakes his bread or he makes food.

So here's this piece of wood that is there as a means of heating and as a means of feeding but then the other block of wood that same wood he falls down before it and asks that this block of wood will save him.

And you know when you look at it logically you think you know idolatry is crazy. It is madness to fall down before a lump of wood. But you know idolatry is idolatry whether it is a lump of wood or whether it is anything else.

And idolatry is a number one sin. It is the sin that is above every other sin. What is the first commandment?

The first commandment is that you shall have no other gods before me. Why is that one there? Because all the other commandments are bound into that one.

[30 : 16] and if we are idolatrous within our heart then all the rest of them crumble. The more that we are in the keeping by God's help and strength and grace to have no other God before him you can almost guarantee that the other commandments won't be the same trouble to us.

because there is something if we give our heart to the Lord then that in a sense secures us against other things. It's the number one sin is idolatry.

And it's permy, it's right throughout our lives. And we have to be honest, we have to examine ourselves, anything that we put above God, anything that takes the place of God within our heart is idolatry.

So we've got to examine ourselves and ditch our idols. That's what God is saying to us. You shall have no other God before me. And it's very easy, we can have our work, we can have our leisure, we can have our family, we can have our money, we can have anything that, things that are completely legitimate and right in this life, if they take over and if they become what's the root and the seat of everything, then it becomes idolatry.

And God says no. So we need to examine ourselves. Now we've got to know that the God of this world has blinded the hearts and the minds of those who don't believe.

[31 : 47] And Satan is at work convincing people to believe the lie rather than the truth. And this is brought out very forcibly, we read it in sort of like in verses 18 to 20.

But see what it's saying there. Trusting in anyone else. If we are given to idolatry, this is what it is saying. Trusting or looking to any other but the God of heaven and earth is feeding on ashes, a deluded heart, being led astray, and holding a lie in your hand.

If you saw somebody and their diet, sitting down, there they are with their spoon, their plate, and they're eating ashes, you'd say, oh, come on, what are you doing? God's saying, idolatry is really feeding on ashes.

That is basically what you're doing. And also, you have a deluded heart. Now, we often, I know we're told in the world, trust not, lean not to your own understanding, in all your ways, acknowledge the Lord.

But so often, we let our hearts rule us and guide us, so often in life, we follow our heart and so on. If our heart is deluded, and God says it will be, if we give ourselves over to anything else, then we're going to be making the wrong choices, we're going to be doing the wrong things, a deluded heart's an awful thing.

[33 : 17] Because it tells us we've been led astray. And here are people who maybe think they're getting on really well in the world. God's saying you've been led astray. You're being led in the wrong direction.

Your destiny is wrong. Because your heart is deluded, and you're feeding on ashes. And look what else. You're holding a lie in your right hand. Normally, your right hand is your strong hand. For some people, they're angry dexterous, or some people are left handed. But normally, for most people, your right hand. Your right hand's your strong hand. The right hand, your right with the right hand.

It's always in the right hand. You shake, you welcome people, that right hand is so important in life. So you go through life, if you're following an idol, you're carrying a lie in your right hand.

In other words, everything about your life in its deepest doubt isn't real. And you know, people will discover that at death, that they followed a lie.

[34 : 17] If they turn their back upon the Lord, you know, it's a fearful thing. And that's why we need to come to God's word. Because if we don't have God's word, we don't know this, we don't understand it. And the worst thing that can happen to us nationally is that the book of God is closed.

We need to divide open and we need people to hear what God's word is saying to us. But then the Lord turns from that and he says, but from verse 21, the Lord calls on his people to remember and to be aware of his glorious grace.

He says, I formed you, you're my servant. And what an honor and a privilege it is for us in this world to have God as our God and to be following him and to be serving him.

And God says, you will not be forgotten by me. You know, we forget loads of things in this world.

How often I've gone to bed at night, oh, I forgot to do this or forgot to do that.

Or somebody says to you, you didn't do this, oh, I forgot. And so often in life we say, I forgot, I forgot, I forgot. It's not a word that God ever says with regard to his people.

[35 : 29] I forgot you. I forgot to care for you. I forgot to listen to what you were saying. I forgot to look out for you. No. It's constant. He's always doing so. So he said, he's never forgotten us.

And then the Lord tells us in verse 22, he tells us something really wonderful. And if you and I are ever troubled by your sins, which we should be and which we will be as Christians, this verse is a balm to any troubled soul.

I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist. Return to me for I have redeemed you. Forgiveness is really, as we know, is a truly wonderful thing.

It is something that as Christians we're required to exercise. We are required to forgive one another. And it's not as easy as sometimes people think.

Because if nobody has wronged you and everything in life is decent and going along all right, you can say to yourself, I can forgive anybody.

[36 : 37] But if somebody really wrongs you, then it sometimes can be quite hard to forgive. Because I've heard Christians say, I'll never forgive that person.

I'll never forgive him. I'll never forgive that. That's not what God says. God requires that we exercise forgiveness to one another. Because that is what he is doing for us.

And the Lord repeatedly in the word of God says, how did you or me not forgive somebody else what they've done when you think of what I have forgiven you?

In fact, we're asking in the Lord's Prayer that his pattern of forgiveness would be similar to our pattern of forgiveness. Remember what it says?

Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Do we forgive our debtors? If we don't, we dare not ask the Lord to forgive us our sins.

[37 : 40] We can't be going to the Lord and say, Lord, forgive me my sins, but I'm not going to forgive that person or that person. And our forgiving one another is one of the great ways in which God will build up our Christian character and make us more and more Christ-like.

An unforgiving Christian is not Christ-like. So it's absolutely important and vital that forgiveness be part and partial of our Christian life.

Now, some people think that God's forgiveness is no big deal and they think, oh, forgiveness is not. That's what God does. And you see, part of that, the problem is that people don't realize just what sin is.

And the problem really is that people, you and I, often measure ourselves against other people. And we look at other people's lives and we look at our own lives and we use that as the measuring guide.

And we say, oh, okay, I'm kind of like him, I'm like her. And then you might look at somebody who's done this and say, oh, that's the Pharisee. Remember the Pharisee in the temple?

[38 : 52] He would say, oh, yeah, I'm a pretty good guy. I'm not like that. Is that publican over in the corner there? Oh, not like him. And God was looking down on that man who was justifying himself.

Gosh, you got it all wrong. And he was looking at that poor man who was in the corner and sinning. And that man went home to his house justified because he had a right view of what sin was.

So, so often we have the Pharisee view and we measure ourselves against others and we parade our own virtues because we think in certain things we're better than others.

That is not the measuring rule or guide of what sin is. It's God's word. God's word makes it very, very clear to us of what sin really is.

And we're going to remember that sin is an affront, affront to the holy, righteous, pure God. God cannot bear to look up on sin. And the nature of God is such that he has to deal with sin.

[39 : 59] He has to punish sin. He cannot be God if he just overlooks it or bypasses it or ignores it or pretends it doesn't happen. He can't do that. The nature of God would not allow that to happen.

And that is why we cannot deal with our sin ourselves. You see, I can't take somebody else's sin because my own sin disqualifies me.

I can't stand before God because I'm already disqualified because of my sin. I can't stand in the place of somebody else and say, Lord, I'm going to try and, or somebody can't come in my place and stand in my place and say, Lord, I'm going to stand in his place because of his sin.

I'm a good person. No, it doesn't work like that. There is none righteous. No, not one. Globally, God pronounces that. That is why he sent his son.

That is why Jesus took our nature. He became one with us. He became a human being. So that he could be our representative.

[41 : 06] He could stand in our place. But he was also God. And only one who is God and was God because his divinity was adding merit to all that he was doing.

That's the only one who would stand in our place. And so that's what the Lord Jesus Christ has done. And so God here mentions and he tells us what he has done.

And he talks first of all about our transgression. Our transgression is very simply where we bow against God. Where we deliberately defy God.

Where we set God's standards and his laws underfoot. In other words, we know what God's word says, but we say, I want to do what I want. And you know, whether you're a Christian or not, that is so often what you and I do.

And it's not something we want often to hear or to think about, but we do it. We do it by the way we think. We do it in our attitudes. We do it in our words.

[42 : 11] We do it in our actions all the time. Maybe today you're saying, well, my actions, I try to live every day. Well, that's good. But what about your attitude to people?

Do you allow God's word to shape and to form your thinking about your speaking? Because it covers every area.

We can't pick and choose in the areas that we're going to comply with God's word and then dismiss other areas. It's all. And so we so often treat God's word lightly.

And the Lord looks on us and as he says to his people earlier on and back in one of the chapters, I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me.

That's what God so often says of us. And then he talks of sin. And as we know sin, very simply, is missing the mark. God has set standards and laws for us.

[43 : 11] There they are. And that's where we're to aim. That's a target. But it's coming short. It's coming short. It's coming short. We're missing the mark. We're missing all the time.

We're coming short. And that's why the Bible says all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All have. Globally. Everywhere. But the tragedy is that sin carries with it a penalty.

The wages of sin is death. That's how sin pays out. It pays by death. We have no option. And so we are under the sentence of death. And if it wasn't for God's intervention, we would all be lost.

But here's the wonderful news. For any sin-sick soul, I have blotted out your transgressions. Isn't that wonderful? The story of our life, the story of your life, the story of my life, is written in the book of heaven.

It's all there. You know, some people keep a diary. Not the kind of diary where you jog down, I've got an appointment. Here I have to go to the doctor. There I have to go to the dentist. I have to go to the car.

[44 : 25] And there's the day. There's the time. The appointment. No, no. But this is a kind of diary where people, at the end of the day, they keep a kind of record of what they did.

Of their attitude, of not just who they met and where they were and all these things, but how they felt and what they, how these things worked out in their life.

They're keeping, they're making a kind of story of their life. But the funny thing is that very often when you read these diaries, sometimes diaries are published. Very often, it might be selective. Because often people don't write about all the bad things that they do and the fearful thoughts that they had and the murderous thoughts and the covetous thoughts and the adulterous thoughts and the stealing thoughts and the idolatrous thoughts.

Don't write maybe all about that. So it's not really a true account of a person's life. But there is a true account being written in the books of heaven. And one day, these books are going to be opened.

[45 : 32] We're told that in the book of Revelation. I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God and the books were opened. Isn't that, it's not an incredible statement?

So there are our sins and there's this permanent record. Out of discretion is this permanent record. But God does something wonderful. He blots them out.

In the ancient scrolls with the ink, they would take a sponge and they would wipe out what had been written. Just in the same way as a teacher used to on the board with a chalk or a whiteboard with a pen and get a cloth, get a tester, wipe it all off.

It's gone. There's no sign of it. All that that I wrote, all these sums that I did, all the things that I wrote, well that's really what God is saying. See that, all your transgressions, all that, all that's recorded there.

It's gone. As he says elsewhere, their sins and their iniquities, I will remember no more. Why? Because he's blotted them out. Isn't that wonderful? And you see our sins and our transgressions, they're like the clouds, they're like the mist.

[46 : 46] And what do clouds and the mist do? They hide the sun from us. When the clouds go, it's amazing. Sometimes you can get up and you say to yourself, oh, it's a cloudy day and as the day goes on, the sun gradually breaks through and the clouds go.

And you say, oh, what a lovely day. Who would have imagined that this day would turn out like this after the morning we had? But that's how it is with our sin. But when we confess our sin, when we seek God to forgive us our sin, God says, your sins and your iniquities, I will remember no more. Your transgressions and your sins, I will blot out so that the clouds between you and me are sin. That hinder our fellowship, that hinder our communion, that hinder your enjoyment of me, I'm going to take that away so that we're, so that the smile of my face is upon you, the warmth of my love is enjoyed by you.

Because you see, sin separates. Remember what we're told in Isaiah chapter 59? They're saying, is God's hand shortened that it cannot save? Is his ear deaf that he cannot hear?

But Isaiah says, no, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God. that's a problem. God says, I'm dealing with it. And throughout the Bible it tells us so many things of what God does with our sin.

[48 : 11] For instance, he forgives our sins, he blots out our sins, he pardons our sins, he covers our sins, he removes our sins, he casts our sins into the sea, he casts our sins behind his back, he hides our sins, he forgets.

We said today, earlier on, God can't forget what he forgets, our sin in Christ. It's gone. And we're told here just now, where he has redeemed us.

Now as we know, to redeem us, to buy back. That's what God has done through the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, in the fall we lost everything. We lost our favour with God, we lost our fellowship with God, we stopped walking with God.

But God has come and he's bought us back, and he's paid the price through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So that once again, we enjoy his favour. Once again, we enjoy his fellowship.

We've stopped running away from him and now we're walking with him. That's what has happened because we have redeemed. He's redeemed us. And so he says, return to me. Return.

[49 : 22] If you're a Christian today and your sins are troubling you, and you feel you've lost your way as a Christian, it's time to return. And you do so by bowing down before him and saying, Lord, forgive me.

I've wandered. I've gone astray. I'm most certainly not where I should be. Lord, lead me back. Because that's what he wants you to come back.

And if you've never returned to the God of heaven and earth, that you have all your life you've been wandering away from, today's time to turn back. You're going in the wrong direction. And if you're not walking with the Lord, then remember that that lie is in your heart, in your hand, and your heart is deluded and you're feeding on the bread of ashes.

Feeding on ashes. Turn. Ask them. And if you find it different, you say, I don't know how to turn. Go to the Lord now and say, Lord, please turn me. Turn me back to yourself.

I need you right now. We're going to conclude our singing in Psalm 130. We're going to sing the whole psalm in the Scottish Psalter. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried my voice, Lord, do thou hear and to my supplications voice give an attentive ear.

[50 : 35] Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, but yet with thee forgivenesses that feared thou mayest be. We're going to sing the whole psalm from the Scottish Psalter.

Lord, from the depths to thee I cried. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried my voice for to thou hear. and to my supplications voice give an attentive ear.

Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, but yet with thee forgivenesses that fear that fear thou mayest be.

I wait for God my soul doth wait my hope is in his word more than they that for morning watch my soul waits for the Lord.

[52 : 22] I say more than they lack to watch the morning light to see let his heart is high hope in the Lord for within mercy be.

and plenty of redemption is ever found within and from all his in all in in in in in in in in in in the peace of the Holy Spirit rest and forever amen.

thank you very much for joining in with us again this evening and we pray that God will bless you and all whom you love. you