

Hezekiahs Reforms

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Preacher: Rev Iver Martin

[0 : 00] And then for a few moments this evening to that chapter we read 2 Chronicles chapter 30. And we're going to focus our attention on the whole chapter, but on verse 17.

We'll use that as a base. 2 Chronicles chapter 30 and verse 17. For there were many in the assembly who had not consecrated themselves.

Therefore the Levites had to slaughter the Passover lamb for everyone who was not clean. To consecrate it to the Lord. For a majority of the people, many of them from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves.

Yet they ate the Passover, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, May the good Lord pardon everyone.

Who sets his heart to seek God, the Lord, the God of his fathers. Even though not according to the sanctuary's rules of cleanliness.

[1 : 06] And the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people. We have a certain practice in the Free Church of focusing on the Lord's Supper.

Every church, of course, every true church of Christ celebrates the Lord's death in this particular unique way. By sitting at the Lord's table and remembering His death in that particular way that He commanded His disciples.

By eating bread and drinking wine. To commemorate and to reflect the broken body and the shed blood of the Lord. But in our church we tend, and I think quite rightly so, to spend some time focusing on it.

In order to get our minds prepared as best we can. In order so that we don't come cold to the Lord's Supper. And I think that's a good practice.

A practice perhaps that we should observe every Lord's Day. Perhaps it's true to say that no one should ever come into a church completely cold. But should seek, if possible, to try to at least spend some time in prayer beforehand.

[2 : 22] Asking that the Lord will prepare us for hearing His word. And asking that God will speak to us and open up our hearts. How many do we have that as a habit?

I wonder how many of us even here tonight. I hope we do. That we spend a few moments, just a few moments even, asking that God will speak to our hearts.

But next Lord's Day, as you know, is the Lord's Supper. Communion. And I want us to use this passage to see in this passage, I hope, a passage that will prepare us in some way for...

It's a passage perhaps that might not be recognizable as something connected with the Lord's Supper. Until you come to the Passover. And of course, right away, you see, we can recognize, those of you who know your Bibles will recognize, that there is a link between the Lord's Supper and the Passover.

Because it was in order to keep the Passover that the Lord met with His disciples on the night that He was betrayed. And He instigated, He inaugurated what we know now as the Lord's Supper.

[3 : 30] But it was to remember the way that the Israelites were brought out of Egypt. That's what the Passover was all about. But here we have it, celebrated by a man called Hezekiah, who was a king of Judah.

And he was one of the good kings of Judah. There were many kings who did not obey God and who ruled unwisely and indeed sinfully in the Old Testament.

But here is Hezekiah and he's a man who really puts God first. In fact, in the Old Testament, apart from David, there was no...

This is what God says about him. Trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him.

For he held fast to the Lord. A good king in the eyes of God is one not just who's got military skills or who's got just the kind of human wisdom or leadership that we recognize as requisite for a king, but who trusts and holds fast to the Lord.

[4 : 39] Now, the amazing thing here is that if you compare the kind of man he was to the way in which he was brought up himself, his father before him was the exact opposite.

His father before him was a wicked king, a person who did not hold fast to the Lord. In fact, we even read that he sacrificed his own son to one of the gods.

And perhaps, who knows, it was perhaps that Hezekiah got wind of this or he heard about it, or he even witnessed it himself. But when he did, perhaps this was the very occasion when his heart turned to the Lord.

We must never give up. You know, even when we see darkness and confusion around us, and the apparent rain of evil and sinfulness in our world, and how desperately we need the light of God to shine in our country and in our land and in our world, we must never give up.

We must never become despairing. God still has his finger on somebody. He's got his hand on someone. Who knows, even here tonight is someone who will be a great man or a great woman for the Lord in our country.

[5 : 51] We have, the Old Testament bears witness time after time to the power of God and to God's ability to raise up people who will serve him. And that's exactly what Hezekiah did.

The first thing we read is that he opened the doors of the temple. He had to start at home. And quite rightly so. There was no way he could rule over Israel before he put right the things which had gone wrong in the temple.

We spent some time when we looked at the life of Solomon, describing and remembering how important the temple was in the Old Testament. How it was first and foremost a place where God dwelt among the people of Israel.

But it was a place where Israel, through the high priest, was reconciled to God and came to meet with God through the person of the high priest who was allowed to go in to the presence of God, but not before he had made the sacrifice on the altar.

So, the temple consisted of the holy place where God dwelt, where the presence of God was, but it also had the altar, the altar of burnt offering, which housed the sacrifice, which bore the sacrifice.

[7 : 04] And it was on the basis of that sacrifice. You see, that's the message of the Bible. That's the simple message of the Bible, that God is inviting people, sinful people, dirty people like ourselves, to be reconciled to him on the basis of the sacrifice.

And whether it's the Old Testament or the New Testament, one looks forward to the other. The Old Testament looked forward to the coming of Jesus, who gave himself as the sacrifice.

But in the Old Testament, of course, before Jesus was revealed as that sacrifice, then the Old Testament people had to keep regularly those rituals in which animals had to be put to death and in which by the blood of the animal and by their faith in what God had provided for them, they knew that they were reconciled to him and that their sins were forgiven.

Now, the problem was that Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, had completely desecrated the temple. This was a disaster.

I'll tell you how he did it. I think I've said this before, but it's interesting. I'll say it again. Ahaz was a bit of a diplomat. He was a bit of a tactician. He fancied himself as an international politician as well as a king.

[8 : 25] And he decided that instead of warring with Damascus, the neighboring country or the neighboring city, that he would build bridges and that he would try and be as diplomatically pleasing and friendly to the king of Damascus as he possibly could.

So he went, as any statesman would do, on a royal visit. And the Bible tells us that during that royal visit, he went to the religious center of Damascus.

The king took him there as part of the royal visit. And during his visit there, he saw the altar which the king of Damascus had built for his god.

And when he saw that altar, he automatically made a comparison in his mind between this beautiful, ornate, spectacular altar in Damascus and the ordinary bronze altar that there was in Jerusalem.

And he immediately said, I want that one. And I want you to right away make a drawing of it and send it all the way back to Jerusalem post-haste.

[9 : 30] Make sure it gets built by the time I get home. I want an exact replica of that one. Why should we make do with the ordinary, ugly altar that's in Jerusalem?

You know why? Because God had said it. God had given specific instructions. As to how the altar was to be constructed. And it wasn't to be an ornate piece. It was to be an ugly piece. You know why? Because sacrifice was ugly.

It was an ugly place. The whole point of sacrifice was ugliness. The whole point of the death of an animal was ugly. Why was that? Because sin is ugly. It's awful.

It's horrible. It's miserable. And it condemns us before God. And the message of God in telling his people to build an ugly altar was to remind them of how ugly their sin was.

But you see, he wanted to spruce up the altar so that he could hide from his sin. And he wanted to have something ornate so that he could be pleased when he came in and so that he wouldn't have to face himself in what he saw in the temple.

[10 : 27] So he wanted to instead, instead of having to face up to himself. You see, God's word always confronts us with what we really are.

If you want to discover who you really are, then come to God's word. Come to the gospel. That's the first thing God has to tell us. It is that we are lost.

We're dead in trespasses and sins. There's no other way of putting it. In order for God to save us, we have to first discover what we really are. There's no point talking about salvation until we discover what we need to be saved from.

And if you don't think you need to be saved from anything, then you won't need to be saved. It's as simple as that. And in order for God to do that, he has to confront us with the ugliness of what sin is. That was what the altar was. But Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, didn't want to listen to God. That's the problem. When we don't listen to God, we just make up our own rules and make up our own religion.

[11 : 27] And just have things as nice as we possibly can because we want to hide the reality of what we really are. Well, there's no getting away from it. Maybe that's what you're doing tonight.

Hiding from what you really are. You can't do it. Sooner or later, God is going to catch up with you. And in order for you to discover what God can do for you and the total transformation that God can bring about in your life, you have to come clean and you have to admit and confess that you are nothing but a lost sinner.

That's what I had to do. That's what every person here who knows the Lord had to do. Come to God and confess. And it's then and only then that we discover the change that God can bring about in our lives.

But that's what Ahaz did. Instead of doing that, he decided he was going to change. He decided he was going to change the appearance of the temple. So when he came back from his state visit, there it was, the beautiful altar.

And he had put the ugly one to one side, the one that God had prescribed for his worship. That's what happens. You know this? There's nothing as disastrous as when we put God's word to one side.

[12 : 41] Do you know what I mean? There is nothing as disastrous. Whatever you do, don't put God's word to one side because it's the lifeline that we have.

It's the only lifeline that we have. And you get rid of it, it's like taking the battery out of a smoke detector. It's the only lifeline that you have. Without it, we're lost.

We have no light. We have no hope. We have no purpose in the world if you take what God has to say to us away. And it's the easiest thing in the world. That's exactly what Ahaz decided to do.

Now, the amazing thing is that when Hezekiah came to the throne, he put the whole thing into reverse. And he cleared out everything his father had brought in. He scrapped the whole thing.

And he restored the temple to what it should have been and to what it was originally. A place where God could meet with his people, where the doors were opened.

[13 : 38] You see, the problem is that the end result of Ahaz's policy of replacing what God had prescribed with his own inventions was that eventually the door was closed.

And God's people were denied the way that God had created for them in order for them to be reconciled to him. That's what happens when we begin to tinker with God's way of salvation.

When we begin to change it and we begin to twist it and distort it. Well, there's nothing left. And there was nothing left. When Ahaz, by the time that Ahaz died, the temple had been closed.

It was a ruin. It was just derelict. So when Hezekiah, rather, came to the throne, the first thing he did was to open the doors of the temple and restore everything to its former greatness.

And the greatness of the temple was found in the God of the temple. The living and the true God who reached out to his people in love and in kindness and drew them to himself.

[14 : 45] But only on his terms. You can only come to God on his terms. Don't make up the rules. You can't do it. We can only do. You can only come to him and discover him by listening to what he has to say to us.

So the first thing he did was to open the doors of the temple. He restored the worship of the temple. But then he restored the Passover. And that's what this passage is all about. It had not been remembered for many, many years since the days of Solomon.

And this was the first time that he had remembered the Passover, that there had been the celebration of the Passover.

And this was a spectacular occasion. It was full of significance. It's the kind of event that everyone, once they got wind of what Hezekiah planned to do, there would have been a tremendous sense of anticipation because they all knew their history.

And they all knew how significant the event was. They all knew that God had ordered his people way back hundreds of years when he first took them out of Egypt, that they must keep the Passover once a year.

[15 : 55] And everyone knew that they had neglected to do that. And yet it seemed that perhaps nobody thought about it. Perhaps it was they had got out of the way of doing it.

You know this? Whether it's going to church or reading your Bible or sitting at the Lord's table or whatever we do as the Lord's people, once you get out of the habit of doing that, then it's all the more difficult to get back into the habit.

And I believe that's what Israel were experiencing here. That for hundreds of years, you know, it's the kind of thing, maybe everybody was thinking about it, but nobody did it until Hezekiah came. What a man Hezekiah was. And he says, look, let's do it. Let's celebrate the Passover. Remember there's somebody here tonight, and you need to say the same thing. Right. Whatever has happened in the past, I'm going to return to the Lord.

I'm going to sit at the Lord's table. I'm going to come back to the Lord. You need to do what Hezekiah did and say, well, it's in my mind. It's in my will. It's in my heart.

[17 : 01] I know I need to do it. Right. Let's come back. And, you know, as soon as you begin to think that way, the first thing that happens, there's a voice in your head that says, ah, what a cheek you have coming back.

Maybe there was a voice in Hezekiah's head that said, who do you think you are? God has given up on his people long ago. Look at your father. Look at all the things your father did. Look at the history of your people.

Who do you think you are that you're just going to be able to waltz up to God the same way and expect his grace and his kindness? Well, Hezekiah wasn't going to do any waltzing.

He was going to come humbly and contritely and repentantly to the Lord because he knew that God never changes and his love never changes and his kindness never changes and his grace never changes.

You see, his grace is greater than our backsliding and our failures and our laziness and our lack of prayerfulness and all of these things that we're all guilty of from time to time, even if it's been happening for many years.

[18 : 05] God's grace doesn't give up on us. And that's why this chapter is so important because here's a man and he's coming back to the Lord.

He's coming back to the Lord. How many people this evening tonight need to come back? We're just talking a few moments of some of you who have not yet sat at the Lord's table for the first time, but there are others.

There are others who perhaps things have happened in your life and you've drifted away. We saw that in Solomon. Believe me, I know what that's like. And I'm asking tonight that can we see what Hezekiah's doing?

Hezekiah's recognizing by faith how much he needs to come back to the Lord because it's the right thing. It's the right thing to do. Whatever you do tonight, if you're faced with the choice of doing the right thing for the Lord and not doing, make sure you do the right thing for the Lord because of his

love for you as a sinner and because of his grace towards you as a sinner.

The Bible is the same. Jesus Christ is the same tonight, yesterday and today and forever. Now, here are the three things that I'm going to talk about this evening about Hezekiah's Passover and how Hezekiah led the people of God to celebrate the Passover once again after hundreds of years. [19 : 22] Three things. First of all, the Passover, in this chapter, the Passover took place at the wrong time yet at the right time. That's the first thing we notice in this passage. The Passover took place at the wrong time yet at the same time it took place at the right time.

I'll explain that in a few moments. The second thing we're going to see tonight is this. Hezekiah sent an invitation out through all Judah, his kingdom, but also throughout all Israel, crossing the border into the territory of those who had separated themselves from their brothers and sisters in Judah. He sent an invitation to them and this invitation, this is the second thing, this invitation was successful and yet unsuccessful. That's the second thing.

And then the third thing is this, that when the people celebrated the Passover, the people were prepared and yet not prepared. Three things. First of all, the Passover took place at the wrong time yet at the right time.

Now the whole idea of the Passover, I'm sure I'm talking to people who know this and you've heard it since knee high, but it doesn't matter. We come back to it because it's the basis of the Lord's Supper. Why is it the basis?

[20 : 35] Because every time the people of Israel remember the Passover, they remember the day when under the leadership of Moses, God had delivered his people, God had rescued his people from the slavery and the misery of the Egyptians.

You remember how that happened? God said, tonight my angel is going to go through Egypt and put to death the firstborn male of every family. The only way even my people can escape that punishment is by taking a lamb.

Without blemish, a year old, you're to kill it on the night that I tell you, you're to roast it, you're to take its blood. Do you remember what they had to do? And they had to put the blood on the doorposts and the lintels.

Some on the doorposts and some on the lintels. And God said to them, tonight when I see the blood and only when I see the blood, I will pass over that house and your firstborn will be saved. Now that's not only the basis of this feast, it's the basis, listen, the basis of the gospel. That's what the gospel is all about. And every time in the Old Testament, God's people look back to that day because God's command to his people was that they must remember this occasion every single year on the 14th day of the first month.

[21 : 51] And that's what they did. Initially, at least, that's what they did. And they look back to the day when God brought his people out of Egypt. But here's the point. As well as looking back to that day, it also looked forward to the day when the Lamb of God would come into the world and be the sacrifice for our sin.

You see, the Passover Lamb, God was teaching his people that in order to be redeemed and rescued and saved from their own sin, there had to be the blood of the Lamb. The sacrifice had to die and the blood had to be shed and it had to be shown.

It had to be presented to God. Now, as well as looking back on that day, the people of Israel would look forward to the day, even though there was no details given, not very many details at that time, they would look forward to the day when the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, would come into the world and give himself as the sacrifice for sin.

And that's where the connection is between this passage and what we're going to do next Lord's Day when we are going to remember the death of Jesus as the Lamb of God who shed his blood by his death so that our sin could be forgiven by his death instead of our punishment.

That's what the sacrifice was all about. But, you'll notice from this chapter that God had commanded originally that the Passover had to be kept on the 14th day of the first month.

[23 : 26] This was the second month because the priests had not consecrated themselves as they were required to.

So that was a huge problem. The priests weren't ready. What were they going to do? What was Hezekiah going to do? After all that preparation, after all that anticipation, after all the notices that went round everywhere all over the kingdom through the couriers and all the rest of it, what was Hezekiah going to do?

He went for it. He was not prepared to wait until next year. He'd made a decision to keep the Passover.

Who knows what would happen next year? Who knows maybe he wouldn't even be alive next year to lead the people in this important celebration which God revealed himself and in which they were being reconciled to God.

He absolutely, he didn't know if he'd been at war. He didn't know who would, he had no idea what was going to happen and he knew he had to do it. Furthermore, once he had made up his, he'd actually discovered that the Lord in His grace and His provision had actually made allowance.

[24 : 45] If you read the book of Numbers chapter 9, God spoke to Moses saying, speak to the people of Israel saying, in the second month, in the 14th day, lo and behold, God had made provision for any eventualities or shortfalls or mistakes or any accidents or reasons why they couldn't keep the Passover.

God is a gracious God. God understands our circumstances tonight. There is no circumstance that you're going through tonight that God doesn't know about and understand.

But He commands His people even with that mustard seed of faith, do this in remembrance of me. God's made provision for that.

He's made provision for every eventuality. We have to make use of that. We have to come to Him in obedience to His word. So the Passover took place at the wrong time, yet it was the right time.

And for you today, if you love the Lord, even if your love is wounded and battered and broken, and yet if you're put on the spot tonight and if you have to answer this question, do you trust in Jesus as your Savior?

[26 : 17] Yes or no? Then you come. You come. because that's the place for you. Now the second thing is this.

The people know, the second thing was this. That the invitations that Hezekiah sent out, they were successful and unsuccessful.

The passage begins with an invitation because Hezekiah, if he was going to do it, he was a man of faith. He saw this not just as some kind of national festival that takes place, some kind of cultural festival like they have in Edinburgh every year or whatever.

This was something which was tied up with their relationship to God. And as such, it was an act of communion that had to draw God's people from not just His own borders, but beyond His borders, the borders of Israel.

Now remember the years ago when Rehoboam reigned, Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, reigned, there was a rebellion and there was a division between the north country and the south country and ever after that, the north country which was Israel and the south country, they became separate with two separate kings and there was no love lost between those two areas.

[27 : 39] And yet the tragedy was that both countries, both nations, belonged by covenant to God. But Hezekiah saw this, that if the Passover is not an occasion on which these borders have to disappear, then what is?

The same thing is true for communion. That's why we call it communion because it doesn't just take place amongst those who happen to agree on every point of theology with each other, on those who we happen to like.

Hezekiah could easily have done that. He could have easily said, no, I'm just going to confine my invitation to those people I like and those people who happen to support me and those who are loyal to my kingdom.

No, he was a man of faith and faith means that you recognize God's kingdom beyond your borders. and you do whatever is possible to encourage and foster fellowship and communion between one Christian and another.

And that's why some people think actually that, some people are quite surprised when they discover this, that the free church communion is an open communion. They think that free church is so, it must be so incredibly strict about so many things.

[29 : 01] I hope that we're only strict according to the Bible. Anything we're strict about is because God is strict about it. I hope that that's the case. But, but, some people think that, well, I could never sit at the table because it's a free church communion.

It's not a free church communion. It's the Lord's table. And that's why we make a point every time we have the Lord's Supper that it belongs to God's people.

And if a person is in communion with another church, from London or Australia or America or wherever they come from and they love the Lord and their communion already and they happen to be visiting with us, then you come and you sit with us at the Lord's table.

By all means, make yourself known to one of the elders. We do that out of good order and I think it's quite right that we do that. But, just, but the table is open. You see, Hezekiah saw this as an act of communion that extended to all those who love the Lord and some people laughed at him.

We read this in the chapter. Some scorned. Some men of Asher, no, Ephraim and Manasseh, they laughed them to scorn and mock them. However, some from Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.

[30 : 14] You know, isn't it true that sometimes when you do something for the sake of the Lord, it's successful in a measure and unsuccessful in another measure? don't you worry about the effect.

Whenever we do something for the Lord, we have to do it in trust and in faith that God will do His work and God will bless that work and God blessed that work, that act of faith in giving the invitation.

But it extends even further than that because communion is not just about inviting people from other communions and other fellowships. Communion is about making sure that there is nothing that stands between you and another brother or a sister in Christ in our own fellowship.

So the Lord said, make sure, make sure if you are bringing your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, you leave your gift there and you go and be reconciled to your brother.

At least make as much effort as you possibly can. God doesn't ask us to do the impossible. We can't do the impossible, but make as much effort as you possibly can.

[31 : 24] Don't be ever content when there is an obstacle that is spoiling our fellowship or when there's anything coming between us. Make sure we do everything we possibly can. Do you know this?

That God blesses the fellowship of His people, but don't ever pretend that there's fellowship when you know in your heart that there are some people who you don't have fellowship with because of some issue in the past or because of something that has arisen.

I don't know, and I'm certainly not speaking to anybody in particular, but if there is, make sure that communion is real communion, not just a pretense because it's an affront to God when we pretend to have communion and when we actually, in our heart, harbor bitterness between ourselves and someone else.

I could say so much more on this. There's so much in this chapter, but I would just want to end with this third point. The people were prepared and yet unprepared.

Verse 18 and verse 19. This is such a marvelous, marvelous verse that displays to us the grace of God that covers our sinfulness.

[32 : 32] Verse 18. The majority of the people, many of them from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed.

For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, May the good Lord pardon everyone who sets his heart to seek God.

You know, there's something in me that tells me that this verse has been put there, that this situation was deliberately in the providence of God ordered by God Himself in order to show the people of God His grace.

You see, in the Bible, in the Old Testament, everything had to be done according to the right procedure. That's the way the Old Testament is characterized. And yet, every so often, God breaks through that procedure in order to reveal Himself through that procedure.

How is He doing that there? Well, the people, there was a certain procedure that people had to go through before the Passover in order to prepare themselves. And because of their circumstances, they weren't prepared.

[33 : 45] They weren't in the condition according to God's law that they ought to have been. They hadn't gone through the motions and the procedures that they had to go through.

And yet, even though they weren't prepared, they ate the Passover. And you know, when it comes to the Lord's table, when we sit at the Lord's table, you know, there's a sense in which every one of us knows exactly what these people were feeling.

Is there ever a person that is completely prepared to sit at the Lord's table? There's a sense in which none of us are ready to eat the Lord's Supper.

None of us are. If you're going to come to the Bible and measure our lives according to what the Bible requires, every one of us have to write guilty, failure, not good enough.

You see this word, yet? Yet. they ate the Passover. And that's God's provision. In this verse, God makes, there are two foundations, let me just mention them very briefly, the time has gone, two foundations that drew God's people to eat the Passover instead of staying away.

[35 : 06] You see, because that's the only option that they had. In recognizing that they weren't prepared, they had the option, of course, of staying behind or taking God at His grace and His promise.

And that's what they did. Thank God they did. And I hope you'll do the same if you love Him, if you follow Him, if you've come to trust in Him. Two foundations. First of all, there was the sacrifice of the Lamb.

Yet, they ate the Passover. Why is that so important? Because that's the whole point of the Passover. is the means by which God was to cleanse us from our sin.

It is when we recognize that we're sinners that we begin to run to Jesus, is it not? Staying away, if you recognize you're a sinner, if you recognize that only Christ can help you and Christ can save you and change your life, if you know that He's the only answer, He's the only way, if you know how much you need Him today, then why stay away?

Why not take hold of God's sacrifice, the sacrifice in which Christ made Himself sin for us? He was made, that's what the Bible says, He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us so that we could be made the righteousness of God in Him.

[36 : 41] The sacrifice of the Lamb was the first foundation. But then, look at this, in verse 19, just one more thing, the prayer of the king.

Verse 19, who sets his heart, and the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people at the same time as they were coming to the Passover, Hezekiah, aware that things weren't right before God, he prayed for the people.

Now, that prayer was significant because as king, he was the covenant king, he was the mediator between God and His people, and he prayed on behalf of the people of God, and God heard His prayer.

Two foundations, the sacrifice of the Lamb and the prayer of the covenant king. those two foundations were the basis for the people of God coming to take the Passover and to remember the Lord and what He had done for them and what He was going to do for them.

Now, let me tell you this. Those two foundations are as true and as relevant and as real and as living today as they ever were in the day of Hezekiah.

[37 : 56] We have the Passover Lamb who has been slain for us, but we also have a covenant king who makes intercession for us as He sits at the Father's right hand, glorified, risen, triumphant over the grave.

And you know what? the covenant king is the Passover Lamb. So we have those two things and yet they come together in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have an advocate, John says, with the Father. These things I write to you so that we do not sin, but if any man does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

He is the atonement for our sin and not only for ours but the sins of the whole world. Let us then come with confidence.

Let us anticipate as God's people, let us put aside whatever circumstance keeps us or would tempt us to stay away from the Lord.

[39 : 13] Our backslidenness, our laziness, our drifting away, let's come back and take hold of the God who never changes. Let's come to him and rediscover his grace towards us.

A grace that is as new today as it has ever been. The grace of God and the Lord Jesus Christ in his death and his resurrection.

That, after all, is what is everything to us as we sit and remember it. Remember his love, his dying love for us at Calvary. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we pray then to take refuge in your word this evening.

We all admit and confess that we are like the people in Hezekiah's time. We are unprepared, we are unworthy, we are sinners, we have so much to confess.

There is the filthiness in our hearts. We have not been the people that you have required us to be. And we have perhaps sinned in ways that we would never want anyone else to discover.

[40 : 26] And yet we know all the time that God has a window into our hearts and there is nothing we can do unless the... But what you see from day to day, even our thoughts are known to you.

But we pray, Lord, that today we will take hold of your great love and your great kindness in Jesus Christ and that we will discover the life-transforming power.

And if there's anyone here tonight who has not yet discovered the power of God in the gospel, we pray that you will bring them to that place of commitment and surrender, of repentance and faith. In Jesus' name. Amen.