

# An Ordinary Man Used By God

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Date: 30 July 2023

[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to begin our worship by singing to God's praise. We're singing in Psalm 34 in the Scottish Psalter, page 246 of the Psalm book.

Psalm 34, the beginning of the Psalm. We're going to sing down to verse 8. It's a psalm that reminds us of coming to worship God and knowing the blessing of that.

God, will I bless all times. His praise my mouth shall still express. My soul shall boast in God. The meek shall hear with joyfulness.

We'll sing from verse 1 down to verse 8 to God's praise. God, will I bless all times.

His praise my mouth shall still express. My soul shall boast in God.

[ 1 : 03 ] The meek shall hear with joyfulness. Exol the Lord with me.

Let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord.

He heard and did me from all fears deliver.

They looked to him and lightened were. Not shame it were their faces.

This poor man cry. God heard and saved him from all his distresses.

[ 2 : 17 ] The angel of the Lord. The angel of the Lord encamps. And run encampasses.

All those of the Lord. All those of the Lord. God, will I bless you. God, will I bless you.

God, will I bless you. God, will I bless you. God, will I bless you.

Fear God, his saints, none that impere shall be with one oppressed.

We unite our hearts together now in prayer. Let us pray. Amen.

[ 4 : 01 ] We thank you for your day in the week, the Lord's Day. We thank you for the day of rest, a day to worship you, a day to spend in this way.

And we pray that in everything that we do today, that you would refresh us in it. We thank you for the young ones here today with us. We thank you for all who help over the summer holidays just now with Twinnies and Cresce.

And we do pray, Lord, that as they go through to the hall in a few moments, that you'll be with them there, that they will enjoy learning from your word together. And help us to be prayerful for one another, remembering to the holiday club as it comes up this week.

Thank you for all the children who have signed up for it. Lord, we look forward to it. We pray that you will bless it each and every day, that you will bless all that we do, take care of us.

Lord, even as we travel to and from the holiday club and all that we do in the club, Lord, we pray for you to be with us, that you will speak to us, that you will help us to rejoice in your goodness to us.

[ 5 : 16 ] So, Lord, continue to watch over us and all our loved ones, families and friends, neighbours, all our communities, day after day. We will know your goodness and mercy following us all the days of our life.

So we ask all these things, looking to you, asking in Jesus' name, the forgiveness of our sins.

Amen. It's good to see you today. Was anybody through in the hall already?

Hands up if you were through in the hall already. A few of you have already been in the hall. Some others will go through in a moment. Now, those who are in the hall, just don't say anything for a minute, because I'm going to ask those who haven't been in the hall, when you were coming up to the church today, did you notice anything that was different?

Possibly not. Maybe as you were walking up through the gates, coming towards the church, everything just looked the same. Maybe the fact that the sun shining is maybe a difference that we don't see so often.

But everything kind of looks the same. You see the church, or maybe you see the hall. Perhaps you didn't notice anything that was different. But if you've been into the hall, well, then you'll see that things are different.

[ 6 : 29 ] Because when you go into the hall, as soon as you open the door, things are very different. You're entering into what looks like a jungle. There's banners hanging, and there's things up on the

wall.

It's very different to what it normally is. There's all kinds of things that unless you go into the hall, you won't see them. So today, I hope that many of you will come into the hall after the service, when there's tea and coffee served.

Go and see for yourselves how the hall has been transformed. It's been transformed for the holiday club that's taking place this coming week. So inside is very different to what it normally is.

But outside, it all looks the same. But it reminded me of how that is the way we are as Christians too. How can you look at someone today and say that they're a Christian?

If you look around the church, who is a Christian here? Can you tell just by looking on the outside, a person's a Christian? No. Not really. Sometimes you can think, well, they look very happy, but all kinds of different people can look happy.

[ 7 : 36 ] Sometimes you think, well, they look very sad. They can't be Christians, but sometimes Christians can be sad as well. Maybe on the outside, nothing changes. But inside, things change.

The Bible tells us again and again that the Lord doesn't look on the things on the outside, but he looks on what's on the inside, in the heart, which is the very being of the person. And that's what he changes.

Because inside, he changes us to know that whatever is going on outside of us, things can look the same. We go through times of joy and sadness. But what we know is that he is with us and that we are trusting him.

We have faith in him. He changes us inside to be maybe people who aren't trusting, who are not looking to God, instead to look to him and to trust in him.

People have worked very hard to change the inside of the hall. And God has done so much to change us inside as well, so that we can come and trust in him.

[ 8 : 34 ] We look the same on the outside, but inside we are trusting him. So if you can, all children and adults, come through to the hall after the service and see the hall for yourselves.

We're going to say the Lord's Prayer together. Let's say the Lord's Prayer. 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. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen. Well, we'll again sing to God's praise. This time we're singing in Psalm 63 in the Sing Psalms.

It's on page 80 of the psalm books. Psalm 63. We're going to sing from verse 1 to verse 8. O God, you are my God alone.

[ 9 : 38 ] I seek your face with eagerness. My soul and body thirst for you in this dry weary wilderness. We'll sing from verse 1 to verse 8 to God's praise.

O God, you are my God alone.

I seek your face with eagerness. My soul and body thirst for you in this dry weary wilderness.

I've seen you in your holy place.

Your pardon and glory held my gaze. For better is your love than life.

[ 10 : 58 ] And so my lips will sing your praise. I'll bless you, Lord, throughout my life.

And raise my hands to you in prayer. My joyful lips will sing your praise.

My soul is fed with riches fair. Upon my bed I lie awake.

And in my thoughts remember you. I meditate throughout the night.

And keep your constant love in you. Because you are my help alone.

[ 12 : 33 ] In shadow of your wings I'll sing. You hold me up with your right hand.

And to you, O God, my soul will cling. Amen.

We turn to read in God's word together now in the Old Testament. Reading in the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Reading in chapter 26.

Genesis chapter 26. We're going to read from the beginning of the chapter down to verse 25.

Here we see a little insight into the life of Isaac. So Genesis chapter 26 at verse 1. Now there was a famine in the land besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham.

[ 13 : 47 ] And Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech, king of the Philistines. And the Lord appeared to him and said, Do not go down to Egypt. Dwell in the land which I shall tell you.

Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands.

And I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands.

And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. Because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge and commandments, my statutes and my laws.

So Isaac settled in Gerar. When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said, She is my sister.

[ 14 : 48 ] For he feared to say, My wife. Thinking lest the men of the place should kill me because of Rebecca, because she was attractive in appearance.

When he had been there a long time, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out of a window and saw Isaac laughing with Rebecca, his wife. So Abimelech called Isaac and said, Behold, she is your wife.

How then could you say she is my sister? Isaac said to him, Because I thought lest I die because of her. Abimelech said, What is this you have done to us?

One of the people might easily have lain with your wife and you would have brought guilt upon us. So Abimelech warned all the people saying, Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The Lord blessed him. And the man became rich and gained more and more until he became very wealthy.

[ 15 : 53 ] He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants. So the Philistines envied him. Now the Philistines had stopped and filled with earth all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Abram, his father.

And Abimelech said to Isaac, Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we. So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the valley of Gerar and settled there.

And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abram, his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abram.

And he gave them the names that his father had given them. But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, The water is ours.

So he called the name of the well Essek because they contended with him. Then they dug another well and they quarreled over that also. So he called its name Sitna.

[ 17 : 02 ] And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, saying, For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

From there he went up to Beersheba. And the Lord appeared to him that same night and said, I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake.

So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.

And so on. May God bless that reading from his word. Let's again just unite our hearts in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. O Lord, our gracious God, we continue in worship of you, thankful for the privilege of prayer, thankful for the privilege of hearing your word, thankful for the privilege of being able to sing praise to you.

For these are many things that we could so easily take for granted. They are freedoms that we have enjoyed many, probably all the days of our lives. But they are freedoms that in so many other parts of the world, that people, your people, they do not have.

[ 18 : 32 ] And yet we thank you that throughout the world, that your people praise you. For you are the God who has spoken down through all the generations. You are the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, as your word tells us so often.

You are the God of promise, of covenant. And you have promised to your people that you will be their God and they will be your people. And so we thank you that you have your people here.

You have your people throughout our islands, throughout our nation, and throughout the world. And that even when we feel few in number, your word reminds us, even as we have read with the promise to Abraham and to Isaac, that your people will be a great multitude.

So many that, even like the stars, they cannot be numbered, or the grains of sand, they cannot be numbered by us. But they are known unto you, each one. And so we thank you that you are a God who knows his people, a God who cares for his people, a God who sees us in all our different needs, that you saw Isaac in all his need, and you met him in it, in every way you provided for him, in every way you told him to not be afraid, but to trust in you.

And so we pray for ourselves as a people today, that in all our fears, in all our anxieties, in all that goes on in our own personal lives, in our family lives, in our community life, in our nation, in the world, when there are so many things that cause us fear, that cause us worry and anxiety, that we would hear your word to us, not to be afraid, but to trust in you.

[ 20 : 20 ] Help us, Lord, if that is our situation today, when we have much to maybe tremble about, that we'll be able to find you as the one who is near, the one who we can call upon, the one who is there for us in all our different needs.

We do thank you, Lord, that you remember us in every way, that you are the one who is able to do so much more than we ask or imagine. And yet, so often we neglect you.

We feel that we can do things in our own strength and in our own ways. But, Lord, you remind us, too, again, so often, that we're apart from you, that we can do nothing.

And so, Lord, help us. Help us in our faith. That we come today maybe with little faith. We come maybe some with maybe no faith. That we come maybe some who have had faith for a very long time, but a faith that is now being tested.

And we thank you, Lord, that it is not about the size of our faith, but the one in whom our faith is placed. We put our faith in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

[ 21 : 33 ] We thank you for all that you have done for us in and through him. And so we pray in his name today that you will draw us close to yourself.

That you will draw us even under the shadow of your wings, as the psalmist so often describes. We pray that we will know your peace, a peace that passes all understanding.

We pray that we will know your blessing on us, so that in all that we do, it will give glory to your name. And we think of all that goes on even this coming week.

And again, we think of the holiday club as it begins tomorrow. And we do seek your blessing on it. We thank you for all the work that has gone into preparing for it.

We thank you for all that has been done, both in terms of practical ways, but also in terms of preparing prayerfully and according to your word, as well as we seek to bring the message of the gospel, the good news of Jesus to all who will come in through the doors.

[ 22 : 37 ] We pray for your help and your blessing in that. We pray for all the children who will come, and parents and families associated with them. We thank you for these opportunities to give the gospel to them, to send it home with them, to invite them along, not just to the holiday club, but to the services of the church as well.

And we pray for your hand to be upon us for good in all of these things. We pray to, Lord, your blessing on your people near and far.

We thank you for the means of communication that exists in our day. Communication means that are so often abused in many ways, but yet that allow us to keep in touch with your people near and far.

And we thank you for opportunities to meet with them. And we pray for the Zoom meeting on Tuesday with Muriel. We thank you again for her heart, for serving you over these last many years. And we pray that you will continue to bless her, to watch over her, to encourage her, that our prayers for her will be heard by you. And we thank you for many more, Lord, who go out in that way as well, throughout all ends of the earth, that you send your people far and wide, some into very difficult places, some into places where their names cannot even be mentioned for fear for their lives.

[ 24 : 02 ] And so we thank you that your gospel is one that goes out with power. Behind it is your spirit. And we thank you for the power that is in that, in your spirit, in your word, that your truth will reach out to all ends of the earth, to change our world, to transform us away from the paths that we are going, paths that lead us away from you and your truth, to once again turn us towards you, to recognize, oh Lord, that you are not one to be, not one to be put away, not one to be mocked, not one to be made into some kind of joke, or fairy tale, as so many people would call it, but one who we are to fear in the right sense, to know that we can bow before you as Lord and God, to know forgiveness, to know your blessing on us.

We pray that, Lord, throughout the ends of the earth, that you will shine your light upon us, that you will turn us again towards you, that you will make us to walk in your ways.

So Lord, humble us before you even anew today, in our prayers, in our praise, in all that we do, may it be for your glory, may we offer it all up, as a sacrifice to you, that we would pour ourselves out before you, in body, soul, mind, and heart.

Lord, hear our prayers, and continue with us throughout this day. Bless your word to us as we turn to it. Give us ears to hear what you are saying to us.

And all we ask, we ask the forgiveness of all our sins, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We'll again sing to God's praise in Psalm 60, in the Scottish Psalter.

[ 25 : 52 ] Psalm 60, page 292. We're going to sing from verse 1 to verse 5. Psalm 60, on page 292.

The psalmist speaks here about a people, his people being, God's people being rejected, and scattered, and scattered abroad, because the Lord has been displeased with them.

But there is also the plea, from the psalmist to God, that God would return, return to his people. And in verse 4, in the midst of all the difficulties that have come upon the people of God, there is these words, And yet a banner thou hast given to them who thee do fear, that it by them, because of truth displayed, may appear, that thy beloved people may, delivered be from thrall, save with the power of thy right hand, and hear me when I call.

That we would know his banner over us, as his people. We'll sing from verse 1 to verse 5, to God's praise. Amen. O Lord, thou hast rejected us, and scattered us abroad, thou justly hast displeased, be returned to us, O God.

The earth to tremble, thou hast made, where in this preaches make, do thou thereof the breaches heal, because the land doth shake.

[ 28 : 20 ] And to thy people thou heartthinks hast showed, and all them said, and thou hast caused us to drink wine, O astondish men.

and yet a banner thou hast given, to them who thee do fear, that it by them he calls, for fruitless may he appear, that thy beloved people may deliver me from thrall, save with the power of thy fright, and hear me when I call.

Amen. Now we can turn back to our reading in the book of Genesis, chapter 26.

I'm going to look at the beginning of this chapter, from verse 1 down to verse 7 in particular. But in this chapter we have much told to us of Isaac, and the different things that he went through in life. When you pick up your Bible to read it, what do you think it is about? I'm sure there's many things that maybe come to mind as you lift your Bible and think, well, what is this Bible all about?

[ 30 : 49 ] It's about theology. It's about God. It's about worship. It's about Jesus. It's about salvation. All of these things maybe come to mind when we think, what is the Bible all about?

These things are important things. But there's one thing that we can often miss when we pick up our Bibles to read them, and it's something we mustn't forget that the Bible is about too, and that is that it is about people.

It is written to people, and it's written for people. And it's written not just to the people of that age when it was written, it's written to people and for people down through every generation, so that we learn all about theology, we learn all about God, we learn all about worship, we learn all about Jesus, we learn all about salvation, but we learn it in a way that we recognize it's not just something away or apart from us, but it's something that is to us.

It's speaking to us as a people. God has spoken to his people down through every generation. And so we thank God that he has given his word to us in this way, so that as a people, we come to hear a message that is personal.

It's to all of us here today, to all who hear God's word today, it's a personal message to us as individuals. And as you read through your Bible, there is a phrase that we're seeing or looking into today, in part at least, that appears in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

[ 32 : 37 ] And it's a phrase that speaks of people, three people in particular. In the Bible, you read the phrase, I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.

It's something that you hear very often throughout both the Old and the New Testament. It's got a common occurrence. And at the heart of that phrase, as God is saying it, I am the God of Abraham, I am the God of Isaac, I am the God of Jacob.

At the heart of that is covenant, God's promise to his people. He made a covenant with Abraham, he shared it with Isaac, and he shared it with Jacob, and it was a covenant, a promise for all of

God's people.

A God who will bless, and a God who will provide. So as we hear these three names, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, we maybe often think of them on a pedestal.

They weren't ordinary people. They were people who God blessed in a special way, and yes, God did. But on the same way, they were ordinary people that God was speaking to in an extraordinary way.

[ 33 : 55 ] In the same way as we are ordinary people who God is speaking to in an extraordinary way through his word, the word of God that speaks to us of salvation.

But when you look at these three, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as you find them in God's word, what you find is that Abraham, we learn a lot about him.

A lot has gone into, into the life of Abraham. And maybe the same is true with Jacob. Jacob is spoken about throughout Scripture.

We learn a lot about Jacob. But what of Isaac? What do you know of Isaac? Well, if you've heard of Isaac before, I'm sure you've heard a little about his childhood, perhaps in particular.

He was the son of Abraham. And he was a child of promise. Abraham and Sarah, his wife, were in old age, and they felt that they couldn't bear a son.

[ 35 : 01 ] But God blessed them with a son, Isaac. And then Isaac was taken by Abraham and was on the point of being sacrificed, put to death until the Lord stopped him.

So yes, there is this account of Isaac in that way. The focus is maybe more so on Abraham there, though. But when you look at Isaac into his adulthood, there's not much said.

In fact, pretty much all that's said of Isaac we have here in chapter 26 of Genesis. And yet he's used in that phrase the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.

But I want us to look at Isaac in this chapter and what we see about him. Commentators have written about him and too have described Isaac in this way.

Isaac was an ordinary son of a famous father and an ordinary father of a famous son. Emphasizing the much being said about Abraham and Jacob but little about Isaac.

[ 36 : 17 ] Another one said Isaac was a man who lived in the shadows. He lived his life first under the shadow of his great father Abraham and then he lived his life in the shadow of his great son Jacob.

But would that be fair to say well in terms of content and quantity of content maybe yes but not maybe in the life lived because Isaac was a child of promise and he was a man who grew to know the promises of God in a special way.

But as we see with all three in their lives they were ordinary men. And like any ordinary man or woman they had their failings.

They had their weaknesses. They had things in their lives that maybe if we keep them on a pedestal you wouldn't expect these things to happen to them but they did. God allowed things in their life that were difficult.

And so much of what we learn in their lives is about that. Just the ordinary things in their lives too but the extraordinary power of God.

[ 37 : 30 ] So we're going to look at Isaac just now and we're going to think about him in this way an ordinary man but an ordinary man who was used by God.

And that's what we see here for ourselves. We too are ordinary men and women ordinary boys and girls but ones who God can use as we put our trust in him.

The first thing we see about Isaac as an ordinary man is that he had his trials. Isaac had trials like ordinary people do.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. we hear that we hear that phrase but it doesn't mean that they never went through trials themselves.

And the very outset of this chapter we are told of one of the first trials that Isaac has here. It says now there was a famine in the land.

[ 38 : 38 ] Isaac was living in this place in this land of promise the place where God had placed him and yet in the midst of this the land that he was in a famine came in the land.

Which land was it? Well it was the land of promise. The place that God had promised to Abraham to his descendants a place later on described as a place flowing with milk and honey.

And yet at this time there is famine in this land and you notice too that it's something that Abraham experienced himself as well. Besides the former famine it says that was in the days of Abraham.

Abraham had suffered this too. Ordinary people go through trials as well. God could easily have supplied the needs of Isaac here.

He could have protected him in the midst of the famine and given to him the needs that he needed for getting through this famine and yet he didn't. God's chosen man he had to suffer alongside the others in this land as well.

[ 39 : 55 ] Many others in this land were pagans who had turned against God but Isaac was trusting God along with others of God's people and yet they suffered in this famine.

Trials are the ordinary lot of God's people. They always have been and they always will be until the Lord returns.

We are reminded of that so often throughout the scriptures. God's people going through difficult times. And yet here was Isaac.

He was in the place that God wanted him to be and yet there was trouble. That's a reminder to ourselves.

We seek God's will. We do things prayerfully. We can pray for God to guide us into the place that we should work.

[ 40 : 53 ] We can pray for God to guide us into the place that we should live. We can pray for God to lead us to the place that we should worship. All of these things we can pray about and God can show us the way and open all the doors for us and yet there can still be troubles.

There can still be problems. And sometimes it can even feel like it's just one problem after another. Because somehow we've picked up this notion, this idea that because God has called us to a particular place or to a particular work or to a particular ministry, that everything is going to go smoothly, that everything is going to go right for us, that we won't encounter any problems at all, that everything is going to be just milk and honey all the time.

So when the way gets hard we think, well maybe I'm not in God's will, maybe I'm not where God wants me to be. And we can be serving God in a position that we felt led by him to.

It could be a minister, an elder or a deacon, it could be a missionary, it could be serving in the Sunday school, as a teacher, it can be serving God in any end of means, in our community, in our workplace, in all of these things.

And we think, yes, this is where God wants me to be to serve him, and yet it's still just one problem after another. And the danger there is that we start to think, I'll just take things into my own hands.

[ 42 : 38 ] Isaac, like every ordinary person, he had ordinary trials. Here was a famine. Abraham had suffered famine, and you see it throughout the scriptures, again and again, God's people going through trials, but it's not the time to take things into our own hands.

Isaac wanted to do that. He went to Abimelech, and he was going to go down to Egypt, we are told, here, and yet God stopped him.

If you are in a trial, if you feel that you are in the place that God wants you to be, and yet you're still feeling that it's just one problem after another, maybe God is saying, stay.

Stay. I have a purpose. I have a plan. You have to trust me in this. You need faith.

We are not immune to trials. Isaac, this one who was so close to God, the God of Isaac, yet he was someone who knew his trials, and so will we.

[ 44 : 02 ] The second thing here is that Isaac had fears, like every ordinary person has fears. What do ordinary people do when trials hit?

Very often we panic. We go into a fear mode, and that's exactly what Isaac did as well when this famine hit.

There was a famine in the land, and you would love to read here, there was a famine in the land, and Isaac sought the Lord. But it's not what we read.

There was a famine in the land, it says in verse 1, and Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech, king of the Philistines. He went to completely the wrong place.

He wasn't planning to stop there either, because the plan was that he would go all the way down to Egypt, as verse 2 makes clear for us. He was heading towards Egypt until the Lord intervened.

[ 45 : 12 ] The Lord stopped him. Isaac was afraid. It's a natural reaction in this situation. A famine has come.

He's afraid. And you see it again in verse 6 and 7 as well, where there's a fear about his wife, Rebekah.

He says she is my sister. In verse 6, for he feared to say my wife, thinking lest the men of the place should kill me because of Rebekah.

He was afraid. And that's our own natural reaction too in so many situations we find ourselves. This reaction of fear, there are so many things that make us afraid. But what does the Lord do here in the midst of Isaac's fear?

[ 46 : 13 ] He intervenes. It says there that the Lord appeared to him in verse 2 and said, do not go down to Egypt.

Dwell in the land for which I will tell you. God intervenes. God speaks. God says, do not fear unless a person is afraid.

And yet when you go through the scriptures, you see him saying it to so many people, to Joshua, to David. You can carry on and go through the scriptures and find so many people who are afraid, and yet the Lord says, do not be afraid, afraid.

Because he knows the fear that his people have. And so we too, we will have fears. And how do we react in fear?

We take things into our own hands, just like Isaac. We seek to do things our own way. We sometimes maybe even tell lies, like Isaac did about his wife Rebecca.

[ 47 : 24 ] We react in all these different kinds of ways in the midst of our fear, instead of turning to God. We ought to take our fears to the Lord, take it to him in prayer.

Isaac didn't do it because he was an ordinary person like you and I. He reacted in the same way we do so often. Instead of turning to God, we'll sort it out ourselves.

But he says, do not be afraid. We looked at the passage John 14 a few weeks ago. A passage that speaks to Jesus speaking to his disciples about their fears.

He's saying, let not your hearts be troubled. He tells them, do not be afraid because they are. They're afraid of what the future holds.

They're afraid of everything that's happening in their lives at that point. But Jesus says, do not be afraid. We have to turn to God and his promises.

[ 48 : 32 ] So often he says, do not be afraid for I am with you. The comforter comes alongside. We have our fears but how do we respond in them?

Take them to God. That is what we're learning here from Isaac. Our first port of call, even before God has to stop us in our tracks should be to take everything to the Lord in prayer.

Third thing we see here about Isaac is, Isaac had sinned like ordinary people. When you hear the phrase of God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you almost think, well they must have been a class above everybody else.

They must have been without sin. But no one is without sin. They are sinners like you and I. We are all sinners before God.

And you see the sin of Isaac here, the sin of disobedience, the sin of doing things in his own way, the sin of telling lies to those around him.

[ 49 : 44 ] You see it here again and again. And sometimes the enemy gets us thinking that God cannot use us if this is the way we are.

My life just seems to be full of sin. Just one sin after another. And yet here and so often through scripture you see God using people, ordinary people, whose lives have so many sins and yet God can use them.

One minute you can be sitting in church, you're listening to God's word and you're singing God's praise. And the next minute some kind of horrible thought comes into your mind.

And you're thinking to yourself, I can't be holy. There's just so much sin in my life, in my heart. God can't use me to do anything for him.

I have to purify myself, I have to be perfect before God before I can possibly be used by him.

Perfect just like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were.

[ 50 : 57 ] But they weren't. And neither will you or I be perfect, but it doesn't mean God can't use us. It doesn't mean God can't bless us.

Isaac was an ordinary man who had sin in his life. You and I are ordinary people who have sin in our lives too. God is perfect.

And you look through Scripture and that's what you see again and again. Remember the Bible is about people. It's showing us people in all the realities of life, in all the different experiences of life.

There is no one perfect because Christ alone is perfect. perfect. And we all need Christ for our sin.

And that's what we are learning. Isaac had to depend on God. In the midst of his disobedience, in the midst of his sin, he is called back to God.

[ 52 : 08 ] The Lord appeared to him and says in verse 2, Do not go down to Egypt. Dwell in the land which I shall tell you. Listen to the Lord, he is saying. And that's what God says to us as well.

Let us listen to what God is saying. Let us stop what we are doing and trying to do things ourselves to sort our own sin out because we cannot.

Instead, we have to listen to God. we all have sin in our lives. That leads us to the fourth thing and the final thing here.

Everyone can have hope. Isaac had hope like ordinary people too. And that's the wonder of God's word.

It reminds us of the fact that we're sinners, the fact that we will have trials, the fact that we are disobedient. It reminds us of all of these things.

[ 53 : 15 ] But it speaks to us as an ordinary people who need an extraordinary God. We need him in our lives. Claire Booth, an author in America, she once said, there are no hopeless situations.

There are only people who have grown hopeless about them. But we can say to ourselves, but how can anybody say that there is no hopeless situation?

Because so many of our situations in life, they seem hopeless. They seem like nothing is going to change our situation.

but no situation is hopeless with God. Because as we look to God's word, to the gospel, it gives us hope.

And it's not just a hope for now. Because we need a greater perspective of who God is and what the plans are for his people. We need to look at things in an eternal perspective.

[ 54 : 28 ] that all of God's people have hope. Our situation today may not change. It may not go the way that we want it to go.

And the greatest fear we have in life, the greatest pain that we have in life, is a fear and the pain of death. But God's people have hope in that.

And that is what we have to look to. hope in God. We have ordinary fears in life.

We have ordinary sins in our life. All ordinary people have all of these things. But as we look to God's word, we have hope.

And that is what God offered to Isaac. And it's what God offers to all of his people. hope. Because he says that he will give him a land to dwell in.

[ 55 : 31 ] He says he will give him a place of promise. He will promise him that he will be with him in all of these things. But above all, he promises him this, life eternal.

will be a gospel. It's a word of hope. A word that we find so often throughout the scriptures. Psalm 130 verse 5 says, I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word, I hope that all his word will be fulfilled.

Jeremiah 29 verse 11, I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Paul, in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, speaks about the hope that we look to.

He says, but as it is written, what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him. What we have to hope for in eternity.

Titus 1 verse 2, in hope of eternal life, which God who never lies, promised before the ages began. There is hope found in the gospel.

[ 56 : 54 ] Hope not just for today, but for all eternity. Isaac was stopped by God. He remained in Gerard. He was faithful to God, even in his ongoing faults.

But this ordinary man knew the blessings of an extraordinary God. And when you read of him in the New Testament, when you read that phrase in the New Testament, the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, listen to this as it says in Luke 20 verse 37, where it is speaking about the resurrection.

but that the dead are raised, even Moses showed in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

Now he is not the God of the dead, but of the living, and for all to live to him. Isaac had died, and yet he is described there as the son of the living God, but also alive in him.

And that is the hope that the Christian has. Hope not just for now, when everything seems hopeless in our eyes, but hope for all eternity.

[ 58 : 25 ] In God's wisdom, sometimes he doesn't change the situation that we're in, but he gives us a different perspective. And that's what we find as we look to God's word, as we look to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, as we look to Isaac here in this passage, one who had his faults, who had his fears, who had his sins, and yet had hope.

Isaac Watts says in the hymn, O God, our help of ages past. He says, O God, our help of ages past, our hope for years to come.

Be thou our guide while life shall last and our eternal home. The hope of the Christian that despite our fears, despite our sins, that in Christ we are one who has promised eternal life, who gives us hope, but we have to heed his word.

God's word is before us today. It's a book of theology. It's a book all about God, all about Jesus, all about salvation, about all of these things.

But it's a book about ordinary people. It's a book for ordinary people, like you and me, to hear what God is saying to us, that we have all of these ordinary things in our experience.

[ 60 : 00 ] Ordinary trials, ordinary fears, sins of ordinary people. But it reminds us that as ordinary people, we have hope, and that that hope is in God and in Christ Jesus.

May we know that hope ourselves, and come, and in all our circumstances, lean on God's word for us. He knows every one of us.

He speaks to us individually about a Saviour for us all. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we bless you for your word.

It speaks to us, and we pray today, Lord, that we will hear what you say to us, that we will experience the goodness of God, that we will experience that blessing of knowing Christ Jesus as our Lord, that you will still our fears and help us to bring them to you, and that we would know your peace upon us, as we ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. We'll conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 10, in the Sing Psalms version. Psalm 10, on page 12 of the Psalm books.

[ 61 : 22 ] We're going to sing from verse 16 down to the end of the Psalm. Psalm 10 at verse 16, The Lord will ever reign as king, his throne will always stand, for he, the nations of the world, will perish from his hand.

O Lord, the needy ones desire, you answer from on high, you give encouragement to them and listen to their cry. We'll sing from verse 16 to the end of the psalm, to God's praise.

The Lord will ever reign as king, his throne will always stand, the he, the nations of the world, will perish from his land.

O Lord, the needy ones desire, you answer from on high, you give encouragement to them and listen to their cry.

For you defend the fatherless and those who are oppressed, so that from fear of mortal man help and sing the rest.

[ 63 : 34 ] After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my left. We'll close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.