

The Key to a Blessed Household

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Date: 24 September 2023

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 0 0] We're going to begin our worship now. We're singing firstly today in Psalm 138, 138, and that's on page 179. We're using these blue psalm books. It's on page 179. The tune is Weigham, 138, verses 1 to 5.

I'll praise you, Lord, with all my heart. Before the gods, I'll sing your praise. I'll bow towards your holy place and bless your holy name always. I'll praise you for your faithfulness and for your covenant love, O Lord. For over all things, you have raised your holy name and faithful word.

Psalm 138, we stand. If you're able to stand for singing, please stand while we sing these verses. I'll bless you, Lord, with all my heart. Before the gods, I'll sing your praise. I'll bow to part your holy place.

And bless your holy name always. I'll praise you, Lord, your faithfulness and for your God.

I'll praise you, Lord, your holy name and faithful word. Mother. And for over all things, you have raised your holy day. You have Every day I call to you, you give an answer to my plea.

[2 : 2 6] You made me whole within myself, with fury strong, you strength and need.

O Lord, let all last kings get raised, when from your mouth they hear your word.

Let them let strong, thou ways of God, for grace the glory of the Lord.

Now we're going to engage in prayer, let's call upon the Lord in prayer. There'll be no children's address now, the children have gone through for the moment, so we'll engage in prayer. Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks that these words we have been singing have reminded us not only of your greatness, but of your faithfulness to your covenant, the covenant that you have made with your people, in which you have set so many promises for us to gather and to enjoy and to anticipate.

We thank you, Lord, that your promises come to us through your word, and we thank you for your word that brings to us today that great message of redemption, of salvation, of forgiveness of sins, of adoption, to be your own children.

[4 : 1 4] And we thank you, Lord, today as we come to worship you, that you have reminded us once again of the importance of worshiping the Lord God and giving us, O Lord, so many reasons to worship you, in which we give you thanks, in which we call upon your name as we do now, and in which we enjoy being together with others who are like-minded.

We give thanks, O Lord, today for this service of worship, for all that is attached to it, for the many promises you give us in relation to our gathering together, in relation to our calling upon your name, that you promise to hear us when we pray.

Lord, we come to you today conscious that as we pray, we do come with confession of our sins, as well as thankfulness for all your gifts to us. We bless you that in the promise of forgiveness, you extend to us in the gospel that great message of redemption in Christ, in which you have placed our forgiveness and our washing and cleansing from sin.

And we thank you today, Lord, that the baptism we will shortly be witnesses to, that that is an ordinance that you have given to your church so that it would be a demonstration outwardly in a symbolic fashion, a way by which the assurance of forgiveness is given to those who trust in you, and by which we come to see that which is also in the message of the gospel as it is proclaimed, that there is indeed preached forgiveness of sins in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we give thanks for the privilege, O Lord, we have today of knowing these great truths for ourselves. And we pray today that we may reflect upon our relationship to you.

[6 : 05] For it is not simply, Lord, a matter today of those who are coming with their children to be baptized, you have given us in this a time of reflection and consideration of our own relationship with you, and of those of us who have been baptized already, of how we are living out that baptism, and how much it is evident in our lives, Lord, outwardly, as we seek to live in a life dedicated to you.

We thank you today, O Lord, for your church and for all the privileges we have as we belong to your church on earth. We thank you for the way in which you have blessed the gospel down through the years in this congregation itself, as well as in the many other gatherings of your people today, even throughout the world.

And we give thanks, Lord, today that your promise still is attached to your gospel, to your message that you have given us to proclaim, that your word will not return to you empty, that it will indeed accomplish that for which you sent it out.

We pray that that accomplishment today would be, in our own experience, a drawing of us nearer to God, and a drawing of us in such a way as will instill in our hearts that fear of God, which is respect for your name and love for your name, and a zeal for your service.

We pray, O Lord, that that will increasingly be our portion today. We pray your blessing to be upon us as a congregation of your people. We thank you for all that takes place in the congregation from day to day and week to week.

[7 : 40] We pray, along with the services of worship and the preaching of the gospel and the administration of sacraments, that you'd be blessed and be pleased to bless, Lord, the gatherings of our children in Crescens, Sunday school, in tweenies, in Bible class.

Bless to them the message they receive about Jesus, about God, about themselves, about the world in which we live. We pray that they will themselves, Lord, take these things up as they grow and as they advance in years, that they will come to be dedicated to you and will come willingly to serve you in this world and to be lights in this world in the midst of the moral and spiritual darkness that we are so very much aware of.

And, Lord, we ask that your blessing will continue to own and acknowledge us as a congregation of your people, so that we may go from week to week and from moment to moment, conscious, Lord, that we need you and are dependent upon you, and yet conscious that you have promised to bless your people.

So help us, Lord, to take that encouragement from your word, which the psalmist himself set out when he said that the Lord would surely bless them and their children.

We ask your blessing today to be with those who are in need, those whom we know ourselves, those, Lord, who are laid aside in illness at home or in hospital or in care homes or in the hospice.

[9 : 06] We thank you for the care they receive, and we give thanks for all the ways in which we are cared for in our times of need in this life. We pray for them, Lord, and for their homes and families.

We ask that you would be pleased to bless them today. And I bless also those, Lord, whose hearts are grieved over the loss of loved ones who have bereavement in their families, either in these recent days or in the past.

Oh, Lord, we give thanks that you are the great healer, that you are the one who brings your own balm to be applied to the wounds that are opened in the course of life.

And we pray that today we may be drawn to you, that we may receive that comfort, that we may receive especially those whom we commit to you, Lord. We ask that you would tenderly upbind them in their wounds and graciously draw them to yourself.

We ask your blessing now to be with us while we remain here at the service of worship and throughout this day. We give thanks for this day and for the way that you have appointed it as a day of rest, a day when we can come such as we do now to focus on those things which are to do with your glory and your praise and worship.

[10:18] Hear us, we pray, forgiving our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to praise God again this time. We're singing from Psalm 51. Psalm 51, that's on the Scottish Psalter version this time, page 281.

And we'll sing verses 6 to 10. The tune is St. Kilda. Behold thou in the inward parts with truth, delighted art, and wisdom thou shalt make me know within the hidden part.

Do thou with hyssop, sprinkle me, I shall be cleansed so. Yea, wash thou me, and then I shall be whiter than the snow. David's prayer and prayer of repentance indeed, that the Lord would forgive the sin that he is confessing in this psalm and that he would come to once again restore him inwardly and that he would come to wash him from his sins and create a clean heart in him.

And that's our concern as we come to God and as we witness for ourselves the sacrament of baptism, it brings us to consider the wonder of God's forgiveness and cleansing of us from our sins.

So, these verses 6 to 10 to the tune St. Kilda, Behold thou in the inward parts. Behold thou in the inward parts, when to delighted hearts, and with some blood shall be healed, and with some blood shall be healed, and with some blood shall be healed, within the inward parts.

[12:10] a weapon of a lingering heart, and with some blood of northbound ß. In Jesus' name and Amor, then He would come to love and let the forth enth organisation, in Jesus' name in his signing, CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS Create and give our glory You, how I set me with Him Let's now turn to read God's Word.

We're going to read today from the book of Joshua. In the Old Testament, the book of Joshua, chapter 24, verses 1 to 18. Book of Joshua, it's around page 238 if you're using the church Bibles.

So it's the book of Joshua and chapter 24. 24 from the beginning of the chapter. Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

And Joshua said to all the people, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Long ago your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Tera, the father of Abraham and of Nahor, and they served other gods.

[15:06] Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the river and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac, and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess.

But Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. And I sent Moses and Daron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it. And afterwards I brought you out.

Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea. And the Egyptians pursued your fathers with horses and chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea.

And when they cried to the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians and made the sea come upon them and cover them. And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt, and you lived in the wilderness a long time.

Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan. They fought with you, and I gave them into your hand. And you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you.

[16 : 14] And Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel. He sent and invited Balaam the son of Baor to curse you. But I would not listen to Balaam.

Indeed, he blessed you. So I delivered you out of his hand. And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the leaders of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Gergesites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

And I gave them into your hand. And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, the two kings of the Amorites. It was not by your sword or by your bow.

I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities that you had not built. And you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards, and olive orchards that you did not plant.

Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and faithfulness. Put away the gods that your father served beyond the river, and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.

[17 : 20] And if it is evil in your sight to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your father served in the region beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Then the people answered, Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods. For it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed.

And the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.

Amen. May God follow with his blessing, reading that portion of his word. Well, we turn to look at some aspects of that passage. Let's sing again.

And we're singing this time in Psalm 34. That's on page 40 of the Psalm book. Psalm 34, and verses 8 to 12. Sorry, 8 to 14.

[18 : 37] Come, taste and see, the Lord is good. Who trusts in him is blessed. O fear the Lord, you saints.

With need you will not be oppressed. Young lions may grow weak and faint, and hunger for their food, but those who wait upon the Lord will not lack any good.

Psalm 34, and singing verses 8 to 14. The tune this time is since Stephen, to God's praise. O fear the Lord, you saints with me, you will not be oppressed.

You will not be oppressed. Young lions may grow weak and faint, and hunger for their good, but those who wait upon the Lord will not have any good.

Come here, my children, and listen to my word. And I will help you understand how you may hear the Lord.

[20 : 32] And I will help you understand how you may hear the Lord.

Does anyone delight in life, and long to see your days, and hear the Lord.

And hear the Lord. Lord, and hear the Lord. And hear the Lord. the Lord.

And hear the Lord. the Lord. The Lord. the Lord.

The Lord. The Lord. The Lord. The Lord. The Lord. It's time to know the way of peace.

[21 : 48] As to it with your might. Now please turn with me to Joshua chapter 24.

Joshua chapter 24. And we're going to look briefly at verse 15 especially. The words around that we'll look at as well. But Joshua 24 and verse 15.

We can read from verse 14. Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and faithfulness. Put away the gods that your father served beyond the river and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.

And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve. Whether the gods your father served in the region beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

[22 : 55] As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Well this great confession and statement that Joshua made, was made with him conscious that he was coming to the end of his life in this world.

And we find in this, in the previous chapter, reference to the death of Joshua and his impending death, at least in the previous chapter, and in this chapter itself. Towards the end of the chapter, verse 29, we read that he died being 110 years old.

And because he was conscious that he was nearing the end of his life, he took the people of Israel as they gathered there before him at Shechem, he took them through a brief history of their experiences, from having been in Egypt, and indeed before that with Abraham, their father Abraham, all the way through to where they are now in the promised land, in the land of Canaan.

And as Joshua set these parts of their history before them, it's just a very brief summary really, isn't it? But still, it's a very important summary, because in the light of that summary, in the light of that history, and in the light especially of Joshua's own impending death, he calls for them to take note of what he's saying, and to rededicate themselves again to the service of God.

Any time we come to a deathbed statement, it's always a very solemn moment when you come to listen to somebody who's speaking to you from what they know is their deathbed, who gives out advice or counsel, and who wants to give you some direction in a way that you should lead your life, especially those people who have saved the Lord for years, and give advice to their descendants, and now call upon them to follow in the ways of the Lord.

[24 : 42] These are very special moments. These are moments that really require our utmost attention and seriousness, because they're solemn moments. And that's how it was for the people with Joshua here coming to the end of his life.

Here he is, and he's going over what their experiences were as a people, and he's calling upon them to re-engage and rededicate themselves to the service of God.

And in doing that, he first of all tells them that there's a choice to be made. It's a choice to be made again, even though that choice may have been made previously. He's calling upon them again to make that choice here and now as he speaks to them, a choice between what he says, are the gods that your father served beyond the river in Egypt, or in fact, the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.

He's telling them that's a choice they have to make, but for him and for his house, they are going to serve the Lord. So, he's not saying to them, it's okay for you if you want to go and serve these other gods.

He's not saying, that's fine, that's okay, that's your choice. He is saying it's their choice, but he's calling them so that they will follow his leadership into serving the Lord by putting away these gods, by turning from that lifestyle and rededicating themselves again as he is and his house to the Lord.

[26 : 05] And I'm sure you can see how relevant that is for our service today. It's relevant at all times, but it's relevant especially when we come to a baptism where we find that ordinance that God has given to his church as itself a demonstration outwardly of what happens when sin is forgiven, when we're washed from our sins, and how that takes along with it a dedication of ourselves and of our children to the Lord and to the ways of the Lord.

And so, that's really why we're looking at this text today because it does fit with our circumstances today here as we come shortly to see children coming to be baptized and their parents taking pledges in regard to them and their service for the Lord.

So, here's the choice to be made. Now, you notice first of all where this is. Beginning of the chapter, we're told that Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem.

Why does it say that? Why is that important? Because when you look back over the history, Shechem was a particularly important place in the experience, in the history of these people.

This is the place that Abraham came to when he left Ur of the Chaldees, when he left his idolatrous background behind, when he responded to God's call for him to leave that country and leave that way of life and to come into fellowship with himself.

[27 : 29] He came to Shechem. And that Shechem, he actually came to a particular tree in Shechem, which is significant again as you read of the history of the people.

But Shechem was the place that Abraham came to. And as you read that in Genesis, in chapter 12, remember that's the chapter where the call of Abraham is set out for us.

And when you come to verse 6 there, Abraham passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak or the terebinth of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land, and the Lord appeared to Abraham and said, To your offspring I will give this land.

So he built there an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him. Now that's a significant moment. Abraham is building an altar to the God who has called him out from his native place, from his paganism, from his paganistic background, into fellowship with himself, into the promises that God gives to those who trust in him.

And there is Abraham, and what is he doing? He's erecting an altar to the Lord. He is really dedicating that place to the service of God. You might say he is setting a stamp on that place, on that plot of land, and saying, This is now the Lord's, and this is where the Lord is going to be worshipped.

[28 : 51] And instead of paganism, it's going to be the worship of the true and living God. Then you find afterwards that one of Abraham's descendants, Jacob, in Genesis chapter 35, he was on his way on a journey, and he came to this very same place.

And in Genesis 35, this is what we read, from verses 2 to 4. Sorry, I'm next to the set. Genesis 35, and at verse 2.

God said to Jacob, God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau. So Jacob said to his household and all who were with him, Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments.

Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, that I may make there an altar to the Lord who answers me in the day of my distress, and has been with me wherever I have gone. So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods they had.

These would have been little idols that they had in their possession, part of their paganistic ways. So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods they had, and the rings that were in their ears, and Jacob hid them, or buried them, under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem.

[30 : 15] You see, there is the same spot, or all likelihood the same spot, that Abraham erected his altar at first. So Shechem is hugely important in the experience of these people.

It is an important place in terms of their spiritual journey of their relationship with God. And here is Joshua. They are now in the Promised Land. They have entered the Promised Land. God has been faithful.

He has taken them through to the Promised Land, and He gathered them all at Shechem. That is why it is such a significant moment at this significant place that Joshua calls upon them again to re-dedicate themselves to the Lord.

He is really more or less saying to them, think about what this Shechem is. Think about what this place means. Think about its significance. Think about everything that is attached to it. And now, I call upon you to re-dedicate yourselves again to the God who called Abraham and brought him to Shechem, and called Jacob and brought him to Shechem.

And now you are at Shechem. You are walking in these same footsteps as these early fathers in your faith. And really, that is what the Gospel is saying to us as well, isn't it?

[31 : 24] When you go to Paul's writings, the likes of Colossians, for example, chapter 3, verses 1-5, other similar passages, what he is saying is, you have come to know the Lord. You have come to be redeemed.

You are now in Christ. So, what do you do? Well, put away from you all the things that really belong to your sinful lifestyle. Put away the sins that you were once walking in and dedicate yourselves to the Lord.

You see, that is the life of a Christian. That is the life of a Christian person. That is the life of a Christian congregation. We constantly come to the Gospel and say, look, you are in Christ, and if you are in Christ, this is your privilege, and this is your responsibility, to put away everything that is an alternative to God and come and follow Him, and in following Him come to know His wonderful grace.

So, there is the place, but there is also here the pledge that Joshua set, or the people set before Joshua after he had called upon them to choose that day whom they will serve.

Now, as I said, Joshua recounted their history really down through these verses. We have read through the verses. As you see the verses there, the one thing that really strikes you above all things is how Joshua emphasizes how good God has been to them.

[32 : 46] He did all of these things for you, he is saying, and the goodness of God to you was seen in everything that He did for you there. That is what he is reminding them of especially, that God in His goodness had given them this land.

They had cities that they now did not build themselves, but they dwelt on them. They benefit from the produce of the land. They had not planted these, but this is God's gift to them. That is why he says then in verse 14, Now, therefore, because of that, in the light of that, serve the Lord in sincerity and in faithfulness.

Under obligation to the Lord, Joshua calls them to serve the Lord once again in sincerity and in faithfulness.

This is why he calls them here to choose who they are going to serve. Verse 15, Put away the gods your father served. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve.

They have a choice to make for themselves. And the choice is there clearly between serving the Lord and serving these other gods they once had in their ancestry.

[34 : 04] And which, sadly, they still retained in part of their practices, and thus they went on. So, they imported even more of that paganism back into their way of life.

But here is Joshua saying, you have to put that away. That doesn't belong to your service of God. Your service of God is in place of those things. And it's the same in many ways with regard to our baptism.

Our larger confession, a larger catechism rather, says, in line with our confession, in question 165, this is just the way that question answer ends, whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church.

In other words, baptism doesn't confer salvation. You're not able to say for sure about a child that's been baptized any more than an adult that's been baptized. That person is 100% certain that they're saved.

They're being brought by the ritual of baptism, the ordinance of baptism, as it says, into the visible church. That visible body of people that worship God, that acknowledge Him as their God.

[35 : 16] That's where we are today. And baptism admits formally children into the visible church. They already belong to the covenant by virtue of their parents' profession, by virtue of their parents' relationship with the Lord.

And on the basis of that, they are pledging themselves, the parents are to, the children pledged to the Lord. So this is what it says, the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church and enter into an open and professed engagement to be holy and only the Lord's.

Now you might say, how can a child enter into an open and professed engagement to be the Lord's? Well, the open and professed engagement begins with their baptism, with the fact their parents bring them to be baptized, thereby being brought visibly into the visible church with all the privileges and the benefits that that gives us under the gospel.

So anyone who objects to say, well, surely a child is not able to willingly and acknowledging follow the Lord at that age. Of course they're not. But is it a bad thing to bring them into the ways of the Lord?

To bring them to have that mark upon them of baptism by which they belong to that covenant community where the gospel is preached, where the people of God regularly worship Him.

[36 : 38] They're brought into that number visibly so that they now gain the advantages as they grow up. And they can choose to not, if they want, they can choose themselves not to actually go that way as some sadly do.

But it's to that great advantage that they're brought, that they're baptized, that they bear that mark of baptism, of membership of the visible church as baptized members.

And that means they have, by virtue of their parents giving of them to belong to the church visibly, they are brought to bear the advantages of such a position.

Of course, there are responsibilities as well. And so here is what Joshua is saying to them, choose today whom you will serve.

And you notice he's saying, this is the choice you've got. Either the gods beyond the river in Egypt, or the gods of the Amorites here, or my God and my house, the God who brought you out of Egypt.

[37 : 44] The God who brought you through the wilderness and brought you here. Now, you go through, we haven't got time really to go into the thing in detail, but you'll notice in verse 15 there, this is what he's really saying.

If it's not going to be God, then this is the alternative. Because it's not neutrality. None of us lives in a blank neutrality between one thing or another.

We either serve God or we serve some other gods of our own making. And that's still true of us in this particular day and age we belong to. And that's why God today is setting this before us as the choice we have to make.

And if we had time, we could go into verses 16 to 24. They're interesting because the people three times pledged themselves to serve the Lord. You see what they're saying there?

Far be it from us, verse 16, that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods. He brought us up and our fathers from the land of Egypt, from slavery, and he preserved us, and he drove out these people before us.

[38 : 51] Therefore, we also will serve the Lord. Then what does Joshua say? You cannot serve the Lord. He's saying if you cling on to your sins, if you actually have these other gods along with your professed attachment to God.

Joshua said you're not able to serve the Lord, for he's a holy God, if you forsake the Lord and serve other gods. That's not a service of God. You've got to put them away from you.

But when they hear that, they say, no, no. We will serve the Lord. And so Joshua said you are a witness against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord.

And they said we are witnesses. Then put away the foreign gods, and they said, the Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey. Now these three verses there are important because three times Joshua actually challenged them to make the choice.

He brought out reasons that they needed to consider. And so as they make that choice, this is what they come up with. We will serve the Lord. And then what happens?

[39 : 59] Well, you find Joshua then taking a stone, probably a stone in the shape of a pillar. He took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth or the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

And Joshua said to the people, behold, this stone shall be a witness against us. For it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us. Therefore, it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God.

So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance. In other words, every time they would come and see the stone and look at the stone, it would be a reminder for them of the pledge they made to be the people of God.

To live for God. To serve him, as he said, with sincerity and faithfulness all the days of their life. A permanent marker, a permanent reminder to them that they belonged to the Lord and that the Lord was their God.

And in many ways, our baptism serves exactly the same purpose. Because it's there as a permanent marker that we were given to the Lord and dedicated to the Lord by our parents.

[41 : 07] If we were baptized as infants or if we were baptized as adults, it comes to the same thing. You still look at your baptism as an ordinance that God has given to teach us certain things of importance about our relationship to him.

About the forgiveness of sins, our washing and walking in the ways of the Lord. Here's our opportunity today because in many ways, we're like Israel in the days of Joshua. Looking at this pillar, this stone that was put up.

Every time they looked at that, they said, we have to remember what we pledged. We have to remember that we belong to the Lord. We have to remember that he has made us a blessed people.

That we are the happiest of all people on the face of the earth. Because we have this God as our Lord. Look at your baptism today. Here's the challenge to me and the challenge to you.

Whether we are baptized as infants or as adults. It comes to the same thing as far as this is concerned. Look at your baptism today. What does it signify?

[42 : 13] It signifies forgiveness of sins. Being joined to Christ. Washing away of our sins by the grace of God. By God in his grace. It signifies to us that we are dedicated to the Lord.

That we are the Lord's people. That we serve him in sincerity and faithfulness. So for me and for you today. All of us here who are witnesses to the baptism of these children today.

This is what it's saying to us. Where am I in relation to that? Am I serving the Lord? Have I followed him sincerely and faithfully since I was baptized? Am I looking at my own baptism as something that today challenges me to walk in the ways of the Lord?

Do I need to rededicate myself to the Lord today? Am I here witnessing a baptism like these people were witnessing that column, that pillar of stone? Do I have to say to myself, here is the Lord in his goodness giving you another opportunity to see a baptism.

What is it saying to you? It's saying to you, am I walking in the ways of the Lord? A huge challenge, isn't it? But it's a necessary one. Because we can so easily lose our focus on the fact that we are by baptism a people dedicated to the Lord.

[43 : 32] And that we have taken him and said, like these people of Joshua's day, no, but the Lord, he is our God. We will worship him.

We will serve him. We will be his people. There's the choice to be made. And secondly, briefly, this is the key to a blessed household.

Joshua is saying, well, here's the choice for you. Whichever way you go, he says, and he is throwing them to serve the Lord, obviously. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

What is for himself as an individual, as the head of that house, it's going to be that for his house as well. He is concerned and determined that his family, his household, will be like himself, followers of the Lord.

That's what he's committed to. And our questions at times of baptism include that question. Do you promise to bring up your children in the training and discipline of the Lord, or in the nurture and discipline of the Lord?

[44 : 39] And the answer to that being yes, and the children then being baptized, then this is what it is. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

We will be true to our pledge. We will carry through what we have promised before God. And we will see that our children, as they grow up, are made familiar with what it is to follow the Lord.

You see, that's essentially what parents are saying regarding the baptism of their children. They are not guided by the thinking and the reactions and the opinions of society that might think of these things as very outmoded, very old-fashioned, no longer relevant in this world.

What on earth are people doing baptizing children in a world in which we've become so secular-minded that religion really is no longer a relevance for most people? And we're not leaving our children to decide for themselves.

We're not saying, let them come to adulthood and then let them come if they want to be baptized. We're saying, we're dedicating them to the Lord. They come to bear the mark of the covenant that God has made with His people.

[45 : 47] And that brings to them a permanent reminder as they grow up and as parents can point to that baptism and say, look, when you actually were baptized, we were doing such a good thing for you. We were bringing you to be brought into the privileges of God's covenant so that you would enjoy for yourselves the salvation that God has promised to those who trust in Him.

How can that be bad? It's all the benefits of God's covenant promises. And we bear the mark of that in our baptism, whether we choose to accept what all that sets out or not.

That's our choice. But God is being very serious and honest and true to us and saying, this is a reminder to you of the privilege I'm giving you of being my covenant people.

And that's why they say, we will serve the Lord, me and my house. We will serve the Lord is what he's saying. Now you notice he's bringing two things together there in verse 14, where he's actually saying, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and faithfulness.

We ask you the question, what is the fear of God? Well, it's really answered there, isn't it, in the other part of it. The fear of God, which involves loving Him and being obedient to Him, is serving Him in sincerity and faithfulness.

[47 : 11] That's the fear of the Lord. It's not cringing as if you want to just be away from God or put God at a distance from you. It's serving the Lord in sincerity and faithfulness.

In other words, we show our children what that means by our teaching them, by our example to them, of what it means to live a baptized life, what it means to be a member of the visible church of God, a member of that covenant community to which God has given so many promises.

Remember Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 4, where the apostle there is writing to various groups, including children themselves as well, but he's saying here to parents and certainly to fathers, don't provoke your children to wrath or to anger, but bring them up in the training and discipline of the Lord.

That's for fathers, heads of households, or mothers as well, doesn't matter, parents. Bring them up in the nurture and in the training of the Lord.

In other words, how do we counter the influences, the many influences of that world out there? Well, we have our lives and our children's lives shaped by God's truth.

[48 : 37] Because that world, if you leave them to the world, it will shape them in a very different way. And to counteract that and to actually have a countering influence, you teach them the ways of God.

You teach them by the truth of God. In other words, we teach our children, why do we worship God as we do? Why do we come together with other people to worship God? Why is worship important?

Why is worship important for themselves as individuals? Why do we make this Lord's day a special day? Why is it different? What are the advantages of it? Why did God institute, why did God set it as a day different to other days?

We teach our children that they need Jesus Christ. Why do they need Jesus Christ? Because we're all fallen, lost sinners. We need Christ. We need to trust in Jesus.

We teach our children that that is absolutely necessary in order to live a life that pleases God and looks forward to eternity in heaven. We teach them how to pray.

[49 : 38] We teach them what holiness is. We show them what holiness is. All of these things are great, great challenges. And we teach them these things, but for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Well, that's a great motto, isn't it? To erect over any household. And it's really the key to a blessed household. When you receive the keys to a house, you assume that everything in it is ready to go, that it's occupiable, that everything in it is functioning, that it's been properly built.

And so, when everything's gone through, legally and so on, here are the keys to your new house. And here is God saying to us, well, here are keys to a blessed household.

And God is saying, everything you need for a blessed household has already been done for you in Jesus. But as I hand you the keys, here are the keys to it.

Worship the Lord. Fear the Lord. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. That's the key to living a blessed life and a blessed household.

[50 : 48] It's not going to be a means by which every problem is solved, by which our children will never do anything wrong, by which they will never again need correction. None of that.

It's all, like every other household, in need of all of these things to take place. But it is a key to a blessedness nevertheless.

So, we pray that God will bless to us these thoughts on His Word. We're going to sing some verses now. And we're going to sing this from Psalm 128. And while we're singing these verses, the children will come in and take their place on the far side there.

This is on page 172. And we'll probably have to wait a few minutes after we've sung these verses before the children are seated.

How blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk the way that He has shown. Success and blessing will be yours. You'll eat the fruit that you have grown.

[51 : 58] Your wife will be a fruitful vine. And round your table will be placed your children like young olive shoots. Thus he who fears the Lord is blessed. May you behold Jerusalem's good.

From Zion may God's blessing flow. Your children's children. May you see. May God on Israel peace bestow. These three verses.

And I think what we'll do is we'll sing them twice. The presenter can just go back to sing them twice. And that will give those who are coming in plenty of time to take their place. So, Psalm 128. We'll sing it twice. How blessed are all who fear the Lord.

Who walked the way that He has shown.

Success and blessing will be yours. To lead the fruit that you have grown.

[53 : 14] Your wife will be a fruitful vine. A crowd, your table will be placed.

Your children find the golden shoes. The seed who fears the Lord is blessed.

May you be behold Jerusalem's good. From Zion may God's blessing flow.

Your children's children may you see. May all your ears have finished his soul.

May you Add Sub Vo by Deja May we pray Christ They do not receive Jesus Ambel sproutisser The blessing will be yours to lead the good that you have grown.

[55 : 04] Your mind will be a fruitful vine, and round your table will be placed.

Your children like the apparel and shoes, thus ye who hear the Lord is blessed.

May you be old, Jesus' land's good, from Zion, may God bless you all.

Your children, children, may you see, may God bless you all.

We should see it. Thank you.

[56 : 51] It's just so that the camera can get you, you can just go sideways. You can move in a wee bit, Ian. That's fine. Excellent. That's fine. That's fine. Let's go that way. That's good. Okay.

It's okay. Don't worry. Before we come to the baptism, there'll be some prayer. I'll have questions to put to the parents as well. And then we can stand for prayer and the baptism, and then a prayer immediately after that as well.

So, first of all, I have to ask the fathers, particularly, do you believe in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as the only true God and your God?

Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and men? Do you now promise to bring up these children in the training and discipline of the Lord?

Do you please stand for prayer and remain standing for the baptism? Gracious and eternal God, we thank you for the significance of this moment.

[57 : 59] We thank you for the way that you have appointed it, not only as a point in our experience, but also as an ordinance that you have given to your church.

We thank you, Lord, as we come to this time of baptism, that you are the great forgiver of our sins. And that our baptism, as it sets out, our enjoining with Christ and the forgiveness and washing and cleansing that comes from Him.

We ask, Lord, that we may contemplate these things prayerfully and seriously and faithfully as we've been thinking in your Word. We ask your blessing for these parents, for the children.

We pray that they may know your blessing day by day. And we ask, O Lord, that as the days go by, the children themselves will come to acknowledge you and to walk in your ways.

And we'll come to serve you faithfully and sincerely in the course of their own life too. Bless all others who are here today related to them. Thank you for their presence. And we pray that you'd bless this time to them and make them, Lord, we pray.

[59 : 04] Know of your own provision for them in peace and in mercy at this time. And we do confess our sin, asking, Lord, that as we're reminded of cleansing, that we will come to you for that cleansing.

For it's not that washing outwardly that cleanses us from sin, but the wonderful work of your Holy Spirit. So receive our thanks, we pray now, and pardon us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

I'm going to have to remind myself of your names. Take Eliana, first of all, please. Just use that towel afterwards. Eliana, Esther, Mackenzie, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, one God.

May God bless you and keep you. Make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May He lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen. Let's again engage in prayer briefly.

Almighty and merciful God, we have done in your name what your own Word calls us to do in regard to the baptism of our children.

[60 : 41] And we give thanks, O Lord, for all that this means to the parents here. And we do pray today that you'd bless the children themselves, especially as they have received baptism. Be with Eliana, be with Ian as well, and grant to them, Lord, as they grow up, that they may grow up in the nurture and discipline of the Lord.

Be with the parents. We pray for them, Lord, and ask that you'd be gracious to them, to Ian and Emma, to Finley and Ruth. We commit them to you. We thank you for belonging to this congregation, for the encouragement it gives us today to find them here, bringing their children to be baptized.

And we pray you'd bless them in their homes and their family circles, and especially bless this ordinance to them now. Hear us, we pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Please be seated.

We're going to sing now in conclusion verses from Psalm 90.

Psalm number 90, that's in the Scottish Psalter. And the last four verses of Psalm 90. You'll find that on page 350. Psalm 90 from verse 14, the tune is Kilmarnock.

[62 : 05] O with thy tender mercies, Lord, as early satisfy, so we rejoice shall all our days, and still be glad in thee. You can remain seated.

The rest can stand for singing, please. O with thy tender mercies, Lord. Let's stand. O with thy tender mercies, Lord, as early satisfy, so we rejoice shall all our days, and still be glad in thee.

O with thy tender mercies, Lord, as early as we shall be, when we be upon.

Reading of Christ. Lear Me O with thy tender mercies, Lord, as early as we shall Be glad in thee. O with thy tender mercies, Lord, as early as we shall be upon. You can bear with them all our days, but we Harold, as early as we ■■■. Where will thy mercies be done, and still be glad in me, and still be glad in thee. O when we shall be glad in thee.

O let thy work and power appear, thy servant, manufactured and free, äthing o'er. O Mel, as early as I Quinn says, old as I To their children dear, Thy glory evermore.

[64 : 02] And let the beauty of the Lord, our God be as upon.

Our heavenly works, each salvation, each salvation be shown.

I'll go to the door over the far side there after the benediction just now. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore. Amen.