

# Rebuilding Faith

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Date: 03 October 2021

Preacher: Andrew Wingfield

[0:00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[2:24] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Amen. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. That's great. Thank you.

Thank you. I will praise the Lord. So praise the Lord, you and his servants. Praise the name of the Lord. Let the name of the Lord be praised, both now and forevermore, from the rising of the sun to the place where it says, the name of the Lord is to be praised.

[3:31] The Lord is exalted over all the nations. His glory above the heavens. Who is like the Lord our God, the one who sits enthroned on fire, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the air.

He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap. He seats them with the princes, with the princes of his people. He settles the childless woman in her home as a happy mother of children.

Praise the Lord. And I've crossed that song just recently, and many of the songs that we sing these days are really the wordy songs, so that the Bible has taken and then put it into a song.

And many of the songs were basically the salt in a way of coming up to praise the Lord. Some in sorrow, some in lament, some in great praise and worship. And the first song we want us to sing this evening is, Breaths the Lord, O my soul, 10,000 reasons.

Some we sing quite often, but there's some beautiful words in it. The song comes up, it's a new day, it's time to sing your song again. And Trish and I have to be down in Cornwall the last few days, and the light down there is remarkable.

[4:41] I hope the light here was very good this afternoon. But sometimes being up early and looking at the sky as the sun comes up, and as it was dropping down in the evening, and the sun chimes through the trees, and the sun has gardeners.

It's just lovely, really, and just reminding you of the God's goodness. And I just encourage you to come and sing together as we sing this song. Bless the Lord, O my soul, who stand with me. Be great. Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul, Worship this holy name.

Sing like never before, O my soul, I'll worship your holy name.

The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning, it's time to sing your song again.

Whatever may pass, And whatever lies before me. Let me be singing when the evening comes.

[6:10] Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul, Worship this holy name.

Sing like never before, O my soul, I'll worship your holy name.

You're rich in love, and you're slow to anger. Your name is great, and your heart is kind.

For all your goodness, I will keep on singing. Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul, Worship his holy name.

[7:14] Sing like never before, O my soul, I'll worship your holy name.

And on that day, When my strength is failing, The end draws near, And my time has come.

Still my soul, Still my soul, I'll sing your praise, Unending, Ten thousand years, And then forevermore.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul, Worship his holy name.

Sing like never before, Sing like never before, O my soul, I'll worship your holy name.

[8:18] I'll worship your holy name. Yes, I'll worship your holy name.

Lord, we do want to worship you this evening.

We want to lift you high, Lift your name high. We thank you so much for your amazing love, And we pray that you'd bless us now As we continue in our service together, And we thank you that you listen to our prayers, You understand where we're coming from, And we just pray that you'd be with us Through the rest of this time, As we seek you, To seek to worship you, To know you better, To serve you better in these days.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I'm going to ask Chris if she'd come up And just lead us in a time of prayer. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the privilege this evening Of coming into your presence. Coming into your presence because of what Your son Jesus has done for us.

And because of that, We thank you, Lord, That we can come this evening as we are. Whether we're feeling full of energy or tired, Whether we're struggling with life or in a season where we're not struggling, We thank you, Lord, That because of your blood we can come to you.

[10:03] And Father, we're just very conscious that we look out into our world And sometimes feel overwhelmed by all that is going on.

And yet, Lord, You are Lord. And you created this world, And you are ruler.

You have dominion over all. And we pray that each day that we would hold fast to that promise of yours. And that you are in control, No matter what things seem like.

And Father, we come this evening knowing that, Yeah, we just want to pray that your will would be done in the forthcoming Climate Change Conference, Lord, that will be held in Glasgow.

We particularly pray for Chris Mancdolo, That he might be your salt and light at that conference.

Father, we pray for the inequalities of the vaccine program and across the world.

[11:20] And Father, we pray that the rich nations would be generous, That would reach out to the nations who have so little, Lord.

Again, we pray that your will would be done. And we particularly want to lift this week to you, Lord, Within our church family, Lord.

We pray for the time of celebration on Tuesday for what was open door And for all that you did there in so many years. We pray for the CAP project as that, There will be a time of prayer this week, Lord.

And again, we pray that you would use your people here to reach out to those in great need. We pray for the Women's Day on Saturday.

Again, Lord, may we hear you speak into our lives. And Father, we pray for our children and young people.

[12:34] We thank you that you know them by name. And Father, with all that is going on in the world, Father, may they know that you died for them.

And Father, that your blood is sufficient for them, Sufficient for all that they will need. So, Father, we pray for the rest of this service, That we would have open hearts and minds, That because of your word, our lives would be changed in you, Lord.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.

So, we're going to have a little group of songs together now. So, I encourage you to stand with me.

If at any stage you feel you just need to sit down, Or just to find it a struggle to be standing for a little while, That's not a problem.

There may also be a chance just to pray openly as well, As we come in worship and praise to our Lord. So, feel free to do that. But if you do pray, try and pray out loud so we can hear.

[13:53] That would be great. But you can equally pray silently in your heart, Whatever you feel. But it would just be a lovely time just to come and praise and worship our Lord and our Saviour.

I've chosen three songs together. The first one we sang this morning, interestingly. Speak, O Lord, as we come to you. Often we'd sing this just before we hear the sermon. But I think as we come in

worship, Again, the Lord can speak to us through the worship, through his word.  
And I just encourage you to look at the words, To focus on them, And focus on our Lord as we sing  
in worship to him. And pray. This is really a prayer. Speak, O Lord, as we come to you.  
So, I encourage you to stand with me. Speak, O Lord, as we come to you, To receive the food of  
your holy word.

Take your truth, plant it deep in us, Shape and fashion us in your likeness, That the light of Christ  
might be seen today, In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.

[15:26] Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us all your purposes for your glory.

Teach us, O Lord, full obedience, Holy reverence, true humility.

Test our thoughts and our attitudes In the radiance of your purity.

Cause our faith to rise, Close our eyes to see Your majestic love and authority.

Words of God that can never fail, Let the truth revel over unbelief.

[16:31] Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds, Help us grasp the heights of  
your plans for us.

Truths unchanged from the dawn of time, That will echo down through eternity.

And by grace we'll stand on your promises, And by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.

Speak, O Lord, till your church is built, And the earth is filled with your glory.

Lord, we thank you for the blessing of these songs that we can sing.

[17:39] The Getty family and Stuart Townend, Lord, Sovereign Grace, E-Mu  
Music, Many of these songwriters sing and write their words that are just  
taken from your word, Lord, And to put to wonderful tunes and music that  
we can lead us into worship.

And we just thank you for this opportunity this evening to put you in the rightful place, Lord, The  
place that we can honour you and sing your praises, Lord.

We thank you for these songs and we pray you'd help us just to rest in you at this time, lean into  
you. So we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So the next song we're going to sing is, O Lord, my rock  
and my redeemer.

And this is written by the group Sovereign Grace, And they're based in, I think, Kentucky in the  
States, And some lovely songs on YouTube if you want to catch them.

And I think this is a song that many of us have turned to during the lockdown and the pandemic.

And it starts, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer, Greatest treasure of my longing soul. And in verse  
2, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer, Strong defender of my weary heart, My sword to fight the  
cruel deceiver, And my shield against his hateful darts, My song when enemies surround me, My  
hope when tides of sorrow rise, My joy when trials are abounding, Your faithfulness, My refuge in  
the night.

[19:01] And again, as we sing, Just let this minister to you and worship  
our Lord. O Lord, my rock and my redeemer, Greatest treasure of my  
longing soul.

My God, like you there is no other, True delight is found in you alone.

Your grace, a world too deep to fathom, Your love exceeds the heavens reach, Your truth, a fount  
of perfect wisdom, My highest good and my unending need.

O Lord, my rock and my redeemer, Strong defender of my weary heart, My sword to fight the cruel  
deceiver, And my shield against his hateful darts, My song when enemies surround me, My hope  
when tides of sorrow rise, My joy when trials are abounding, Your faithfulness, My refuge in the  
night.

O Lord, my rock and my redeemer, Gracious saviour of my ruined life, My guilt and cross laid on  
your shoulders, In my place you suffered, bled and died, You rose, the grave and death are  
conquered, You broke my bonds of sin and shame, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer,

[22:28] May all my days bring glory to your name, May all my days bring  
glory to your name, Amen.

Yeah, Lord, we thank you that we can know your redeeming love, the rock that we can lead into and  
rest upon.

And these days, in recent weeks and months and even years, Lord, when we've perhaps struggled,  
we just thank you that you're there and we can turn to you. You never leave us or forsake us.

And we thank you for that. We thank you that you're there to be our help, our defender, our redeemer. Lord, we just want to come in prayer to you now, just as you feel led, just offer up your prayers to our Lord and Saviour.

Amen. Amen. Lord, Amen.

[23:58] Amen. Amen. Amen. Lord, the world teaches us to make a name for ourselves. But we want to make a name for you, Lord.

May our minds shine for you, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen. We do delight in you, Lord Jesus. We delight in all that you've done, all that you've achieved. We delight in you now, reigning on your turn. We worship you. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Lord, we thank you that we can sing. Great is your love. Let the whole earth sing. You reached for us from heaven's throne when we had no hope.

You are the way. There is no other. You rose from death to victory. You reign in life. Oh, majesty. Your name be high and lifted up. Jesus. Jesus alive in us.

[25:27] Let's sing this together. Great is your love.

Let the whole earth sing. Let the whole earth sing. Let the whole earth sing. You reached for us from on heaven's throne when we had no hope.

You are the way. There is no other. You are the way. There is no other. You rose from death to victory.

You reign in life. Oh, majesty. Your name be high and lifted up. Jesus. Jesus alive in us.

You are glorious.

[26:40] You are glorious. Lord over all. You have made us new. We owe it all to you.

In everything. Be exalted in everything. Be exalted. You rose from death to victory.

You reign in life. Oh, majesty. Your name be high and lifted up. Jesus. Jesus alive in us.

The enemy is under your feet.

We are free. We are free. Death has been defeated by love. You overcome. You overcome.

[27:40] You overcome. You overcome. The enemy is under your feet. We are free. We are free. Death has been defeated by love.

You overcome. You overcome. You rose from death to victory. You reign in life.

Oh, majesty. Oh, majesty. Your name be high and lifted up. Jesus. Jesus alive in us.

You rose from death to victory. You reign in life. Oh, majesty. Oh, majesty. Your name be high and lifted up.

Jesus. Jesus alive in us. Jesus. Jesus alive in us. Jesus.

[28:41] Yeah, thank you, Lord, that for those of us who know you as our Lord and Savior, we can sing that and sing that, Jesus, you are alive in us. And we thank you so much that you have paid the price for us to know forgiveness, that healing, that cleansing.

And we can meet with you in eternal life, Lord. We thank you so much for that promise. And we just pray that you bless us now as we continue to read your word and to listen to what you're telling us in these days.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. Thank you for standing with us. I'm going to invite Drush to come and read quite a long reading for us. So bless you.

Thank you for stepping up to do this. And we're going to be looking at Nehemiah 9, 1 to 38. And then as it says on the program there, Romans 7.

And so if you've got a Bible, you might want to put your finger in both of those. But here we go. I'll let Drush take over. Okay.

[29:42] The first reading is Nehemiah 9, 1 to 38, where the Israelites confessed their sins. On the 24th day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and putting dust on their heads.

Those of the Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the sins of their ancestors. They stood where they were and read from the book of the law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day and spent another quarter in confession and worshipping the Lord their God.

Standing on the stairs of the Levites were Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shabaniah, Bani, Sherebiah, Bani, and Kaniah.

They cried out with loud voices to the Lord their God. And the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabaniah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shabaniah, and Pathaniah, said, Stand up and praise the Lord your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting.

Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. You alone are Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them.

[31:16] You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you. You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham.

You found his heart faithful to you, and you made your covenant with him to give his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Gereshites.

You have kept your promise because you are righteous. You saw the suffering of our ancestors in Egypt. You heard their cry at the Red Sea. You sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them.

You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day. You divided the sea before them, so they passed through it on dry ground, but you hurled their pursuers into the depth like a stone into mighty waters.

By day you led them with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire to give them light on the way they were to take.

[32:33] You came down on Mount Sinai. You spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good.

You made known to them your holy Sabbath and gave them commands, decrees, and laws through your servant Moses. In their hunger, you gave them bread from heaven, and in their thirst, you brought them water from the rock.

You told them to go in and take possession of the land you had sworn with uplifted hand to give them. But they, our ancestors, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and they did not obey your commands.

They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. Now, therefore, our God, the great God, mighty and awesome, who keeps his covenant of love, do not let all this hardship seem trifling in your eyes, the hardship that has come on you, on our kings and leaders, on our priests and prophets, on our ancestors and all your people, from the days of the kings of Assyria until today.

In all that has happened to us, you have remained righteous, and you have acted faithfully while we acted wickedly. Our kings, our leaders, our priests, and our ancestors did not follow your law.

[34:00] They did not pay attention to your commands or the statutes you warned them to keep. Even while they were in their kingdom, enjoying your great goodness to them, in the spacious and fertile land you gave them, they did not serve you or turn from their evil ways.

But see, we are slaves today, slaves in the land you gave our ancestors, so they could eat its fruit and the other good things it produces. Because of our sins, its abundant harvest goes to the kings you have placed over us.

They rule over our bodies and our cattle as they please. We are in great distress, the agreement of the people. In the view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites, and our priests are affixing their seals to it.

And now the reading from Romans, written by Paul. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Did that which is good then become death to me? By no means. Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment, sin might become utterly sinful.

[35:28] We know that the law is spiritual, but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do, for what I want to do, I do not do.

But what I hate, I do. And if I do not do what I want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but is sin living in me.

For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

For I do not do the good I want to do, for the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing. Now, if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So, I find this law at work. Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being, I delight in God's law.

[36:34] But I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am!

Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Thanks, Rish, that's great. I'm going to ask Joel to come up now, and I'm going to pray for you as you come. He preached to us, so, yeah, Joel, come.

Yeah, Father, we thank you so much for Joel. We thank you for his gifting and his love for you.

Lord, we pray that you'd be with him now as he brings your word to us. Give him freedom to share what you've laid on his heart, Lord, to just express what it is that you want us to hear this evening, Lord.

We pray that we'll be sensitive to your Holy Spirit's moving amongst us. We thank you for your word. We thank you for that amazing reading, Lord, just spelling out some of the history of the Jewish nation, Lord, and how you rescued them from slavery.

[37:54] You brought them through into the promised land, and, Lord, often they turned away from you. But, Lord, we thank you that when they come back to you, there you are, and you're willing to start again and to renew.

We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you've made that possible for us, that we don't need to keep on bringing sacrifice to our Lord, but you've done that once and for all. And we just pray you'd bless us now as we listen, we understand, and for Joel, that you'd just equip him now.

We thank you for him. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you, Andrew.

Good evening, all. Lovely to see you. Anthony, sorry. Good start. Yeah. If you spend enough time around a story, whether that be in a film, a TV series, or a book, you might notice that there's a cycle that tends to repeat itself within a series.

There's a new James Bond film out in cinemas at the moment, and you might notice if you watch a James Bond film, there's a pattern. You know, James will get his mission, he'll go and investigate this villain, and he'll find out some nefarious plan, and somehow in the process he might get caught, and the villain will make this speech about, you know, how his plan is unstoppable, and James Bond's, there's nothing he can do, he's just going to die, and then somehow, miraculously, Bond will escape, and he'll launch this all-out attempt to stop the plan, and eventually he will.

[39:24] And somewhere along the way, I'm sure he'll find time for a steamy romance and a thrilling car chase. James Bond might not be your style, but maybe reading the famous five books, you might notice that there's a pattern once you've read the 20-something book.

There's quite a repeating story. Or maybe going back to when you were, or your children or grandchildren, watching TV, watching Scooby-Doo, as Andrew pointed out to me, quite often the same story, just with a different man to unmask each time.

The villain might be different, the characters might be different, in James Bond, even the lead actor might be different. But that cycle, that pattern, still remains. Stories often repeat themselves.

Tonight, in our passage, we're going to be looking at a cycle that kind of appears in the Bible a lot, and is really clearly shown in this passage, but you see it elsewhere. And that is, yeah, we're going to be looking at a cycle, a cycle of sin, and we're going to be looking at how that can help us be rebuilding with Jesus.

So first of all, we're going to be looking at the cycle in Israel. So we join the Israelites towards the end of their rebuilding project. They started with worship in rebuilding the temple, then they moved on to rebuilding the fellowship in repentance and obedience.

[40:46] And we've recently seen how they rebuilt the walls and dedicated them to God. And as we read this morning, the Israelites then gathered as one people to read the law.

They rejoiced and they made a covenant before God's to be obedient to his law. But between the two chapters that Andrew took us through this morning, chapter eight and chapter 10, we have a second gathering.

And that's what we're looking at in chapter nine in tonight's passage. So the remnant are gathered again in Jerusalem to hear from God's word and to respond to it. The people had already made large sacrifices to get to this point in committing themselves, standing out, standing up for God. They'd cast away those from within them that had been taking them away from God. They had been trying to commit to be faithful to God. And yet they felt the process still wasn't finished. There's still something they wanted to do. They wanted to press on until the rebuilding was complete. So they came together and they had another six hour service.

[41:48] This is in addition to the six hour service we looked at this morning. These people were committed to gathering together. I was struck on a visit to Poland in my teens by the church that we'd gone out to visit.

Me, my pastor and my mum had gone out there to support this church and we came together on a Saturday and they had two two hour services on the Saturday back to back where they came and heard my pastor speak.

And not only that church, but a sister church that was two hours away had made the journey to come and hear my pastor speak as well. And then they met again as normal on Sunday for more worship.

A passion for God will often lead to a greater desire to come and meet together as God's people, to sing his praises and as we're going to be doing tonight, to take communion together.

And it's encouragement to see you here this evening because that desire is working within you too. So as we come back to the passage, the Levites come, they address the crowd as part of this service and they recount the history of God and his chosen people, starting in creation.

[42:59] And we're going to see the first part of this cycle that we're looking at tonight and that is that God is good. It'll be useful to have your Bibles out at this point.

If you don't already, we're going to be jumping through the passage a bit. So starting verse six of chapter nine, you alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens and all their starry hosts, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them.

You give life to everything and the multitudes of heaven worship you. Here we see the goodness of God in creation and it continues if we jump forward to verse eight in reference to God's dealings of Abraham.

You have kept your promise because you are righteous. And then again, jumping ahead to verse 15, it's talking about God's goodness to his people in the wilderness.

In their hunger, you gave them bread from heaven and in their thirst, you brought them water from the rock. You told them to go in and take possession of the land you had sworn with uplifted hand to give them.

[44:04] And through all these passages up to verse 15, all these verses, we see how God is good to his people. And yet in return for this goodness, the Israelites give evil.

They give rebellion. So that's the second part of our cycle, Israel rebels, looking at verses 16 and 17. But they, our ancestors, became arrogant and stiff-necked. They did not obey your commands. They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you had performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery.

And what happened next? Well, we don't get it exactly in this passage, but we see in Exodus 32 where this story comes from that God punished the Israelites for their wickedness. And again, later in Numbers 13 on a similar rebellion, when God commands his people to go into the promised land and they refuse, how again they were punished for refusing to go into the promised land.

And in their distress, the people cry out to God. They repent. And in verses 17 and 19, we read that you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.

[45:21] Because of your great compassion, you did not abandon them in the wilderness. So you see how we've kind of come full circle here. We started off with God being good. Then Israel rebelled.

They were punished for that rebellion. They cried out and God was good. He forgave them and blessed them once again. Here we have our first cycle, as it were. But then we arrive at verse 26 and we see the cycle starts to repeat itself again.

But they were disobedient to you and rebelled against you. They turned their backs on your law. They killed your prophets who had warned them in order to turn them back to you.

They committed awful blasphemies. So here we see again, Israel is rebelling. Israel rebels. But it continues. So you delivered them into the hands of their enemies who oppressed them.

Israel is punished. The cycle continues. But when they were oppressed, they cried out to you. Israel cries out. And then finally, from heaven you heard them and in your great compassion, you gave them deliverers who rescued them from the hands of their enemies.

[46:33] Again, we see that cycle going. And this time, we don't even need to jump in the passage. We can go straight into verse 28 and we see the cycle repeat again. But as soon as they were at rest, they did again what was evil in your sight.

Then you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies so that they ruled over them. And when they cried out to you, again, you heard them from heaven.

And in your compassion, you delivered them time after time. You see, Israel are going round and round this cycle of having a good God, but they're rebelling against him.

They're punished and they cry out. So where are they now? Well, they've just had the biggest punishment of all. After rebelling against God and refusing to listen to his prophets, God sends a punishment in the form of the Babylonians.

They're taken into exile. But they had cried out and God had heard them in their exile. And because God is good, he has restored a remnant into Judah, into Israel.

[47:38] He has rebuilt the temple. He has rebuilt the walls. He has rebuilt the people. And so the people have come together now for this service to remind themselves of this history.

They're reminding themselves of the cycle that they've been through. and they've come to commit themselves to be faithful to God and his law once again, to keep his commands, to be faithful.

How successful do we think they're going to be? Now, this is by no means an endorsement of the show, but it's a useful illustration. A few years ago, there's a popular TV series called Game of Thrones where rival political leaders fought to rule the seven kingdoms.

And one such leader was a woman named Daenerys Targaryen. And she gave a speech about the wheel of power. Family after family had been on top in the seven kingdoms for hundreds of years. And Daenerys said that she didn't simply want to be another spoke on this wheel of power that kept on turning. She didn't want to simply be a spoke. She wanted to break the wheel. She wanted to topple it.

[48:45] She wanted to put herself on top and for that to be that. But by the end of the show, yes, she had her time on top, but then someone else took her place.

She hadn't managed to break the wheel. She had failed. She couldn't defeat the cycle of history.

Now, the Israelites are in this similar kind of position. they'd recounted, they'd recognised this cycle and they'd committed themselves to break it, but ultimately they couldn't.

And we'll see next week just how quickly the cycle seems to start again. I wonder if we've, as we've been looking through this passage, you've seen that maybe you're trapped in a similar cycle in some ways in your life.

You've found yourself in a cycle of sin and you've recognised the sin and you've said, Lord, I'm sorry for this. You've repented. You've cried out to God and you felt his forgiveness.

You said, Lord, I won't do this sin again. But then within a matter of months, weeks, days, or maybe even hours, you found yourself in that sin yet again.

[49:59] The sin you vowed not to do, you've done. You wonder if you'll ever be able to escape the cycle or if you're stuck in it like the Israelites. I know I've been there many times in my Christian walk, many

more than I'd like to admit.

So here we move on to the cycle as Christians. We've looked at the cycle in Israel, but is there any difference for us as Christians today? Now at first we might not think there's any difference.

You know, we recognise this pattern of sin in our lives and we feel just as hopeless, just as powerless to be able to spot it, to be able to stop it, sorry. Now Paul spends a lot of time talking about this pattern in his own life in the passage we had read to us from Romans.

In verses 18 and 19 we read, For I have a desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do.

This I keep on doing. Paul drills down into the weakness of the human condition. Our flesh is weak and even though we know God, even though we know his goodness to us, and even though we know what he doesn't want us to do, also often we allow ourselves to do that thing, to do the bad and avoid the good.

[51:23] What a depressing state it can be to find ourselves there. Paul continues, What a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

Now it can feel like we're in a bit of a depressing state in the passage here, but thankfully there is good news to counter the bad news. For Paul continues in verse 25, Thanks be to God who delivers me through Jesus Christ.

Our Lord. You see, the counter to the bad news of our sin is the good news of Jesus Christ. The good news that he came and died for our sins, taking on himself the punishment that we deserved. The wages of sin that we deserved to death were placed on him. And in his resurrection we can have eternal life. And so we don't have the old cycle anymore, but we have this new cycle.

Yes, we may still rebel against God. But you see, the second half of the cycle has changed. We start with God being good and then we, instead of Israel, are the ones rebelling.

[52:30] But the punishment is already taken on the cross in Christ. Our sins are already forgiven. We can have confidence in our salvation not because it's anything that we've done, because we can't do anything to bring our own salvation.

The only thing we can contribute towards it is the sin that makes it necessary. But no, God himself has brought about our salvation and therefore, instead of standing on shaky ground, it stands on solid ground.

Any solution we might try to build ourselves will crumble and fall, but the work of the Lord stands firm forever. That which is built by God can never spoil, perish, or fade.

Yes, we will aim to live a life free from sin and that's good. We should aim to live a pure and holy life. But when we fail, we can remember this, that although we have rebelled, the punishment is already taken.

Forgiveness is already given. The price has already been paid. Therefore, if you are a Christian here today, you can rejoice.

[53:38] Instead of being stuck in this cycle of sadness in the face of our own sin, we can rejoice, we can know that we are redeemed, we are free from guilt and shame.

And if you're here today and you're not a Christian, that sacrifice can be for you too. No matter how deep and dark you may feel your sins are, no matter how many times you feel you've been through this cycle, Christ can set you free.

The blood of Jesus can cover all of your sin. Jesus made this sacrifice knowing that we would continue to mess up and continue to fail and I believe that's part of the reason why he told us to do what we're doing this evening in regularly coming to the table to drink the wine and eat the bread. As we do these things, we are reminded again and again of our Saviour's work done for us on the cross. We are reminded in the midst of our failures that the work is done and finished.

We are forgiven. Christ has set us free. So as we come to sing a song before having communion, as we come to prepare ourselves, let's rejoice in all that Christ has done for us.

[54:55] Let's pray. Lord, we see this cycle reflected in our own lives, this cycle of you being good but us returning that with evil.

But Lord, we thank you that through your sacrifice on the cross for us, we can be free of that cycle of punishment. Lord, we thank you that you took the punishment on yourself, that we may be free,

that we may be forgiven.

Help us to live in that truth, knowing that we are free of guilt and shame and help that to bring joy in our lives and help it to give us strength when we are weak.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you, Joel, so much. And we're going to respond to that by singing again a lovely song. All my days I will sing this song of gladness. Give my praise to the fountain of delights, that in my helplessness you heard my cry and waves of mercy poured down on my life.

[56:11] And as we sing this song, beautiful Savior, wonderful Counselor, that's going to lead us into our time of communion. So let's stand and sing together and then we'll come to communion together.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. ■ozende my life. I will trust in the cross of my Redeemer.

I will sing of the blood that never fails. I've sins forgiven of conscience cleansed, of death defeated and life without end.

[57:36] Beautiful Saviour, wonderful Counselor, clothed in majesty, Lord of history, you're the way, the truth, the life, star of the morning.

Glory is in holiness, you're the risen one, heaven's champion and you reign, you reign over all.

I long to be where the praise is never ending, year to dwell where the glory never fades, where countless worshipers will share one song and cries of worthy will honour the love.

Beautiful Saviour, wonderful Counselor, clothed in majesty, Lord of history, you're the way, the truth, the life, star of the morning, glorious in holiness, you're the risen one, heaven's champion and you reign, you reign over all.

That's great. Lovely. Do be seated.

[59:25] So we're going to come to our time of communion now. And if you're not familiar with this, I'm going to read a few words that may help to lead us into this. But yeah, and hopefully you've got your little pot, little cup.

If you haven't, there's a few down here on the table and some at the front. But anyway, let's start.

So we come to the part of our service we call communion.

It's often called an act of remembrance, which is a place where here and now we can actively remember what God has done for us through his son, Jesus Christ. This is a place where we take the ordinary, that is the bread and this non-alcoholic wine, and we remember the extraordinary.

The extraordinary sacrifice of God in sending his own son, Jesus Christ, to die for us. The extraordinary promise that should we choose to follow Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, that we all, as ordinary men and women, can extraordinarily be called sons and daughters of God.

So this ordinary bread is a picture of Jesus' body that was broken for each and all of us. And this ordinary cup, this wine, is a reminder of the new covenant or promise that God made with us, that through the shedding of his son's blood, his death, we can be his people.

[60:47] So let's take a moment to quietly examine ourselves, to pray silently. Are we serious about being in this new covenant relationship with God? This is the moment to be real and honest with God and ask for his forgiveness.

You may feel far from God right now, and your prayer may be to ask God to show himself to you.

You might ask God to show you the things that are blocking you from God.

Let's just pray silently for a moment. Father's world.

26. It says, For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you. The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after supper, he took the cup, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me.

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

So we come to this table not because we must, but because we may. Not because we're strong, but

because we are weak. Come not because of any goodness of our own gives us the right, but because we need mercy and help. We come because we love the Lord a little and would like to love him more. We come because he loved us and gave himself for us. Come and meet the risen Lord, because we are his body, his people. What we do in a moment is to open up the small cup that you picked up as you came in. Gently tear the outer wrapper. I'll just demonstrate this so the top layer comes off, little plastic layer, and it should reveal a little paper wafer underneath, represented in the bread. There we go. And then underneath that is a more substantial foil covering. Be careful how you open that, but as you pull that back, it should reveal the juice or the non-alcoholic wine beneath. So I hope he managed to do that.

[63:27] So as we eat the bread, we remind ourselves that Jesus died for each one of us individually. He wants a personal relationship with each one of us. And we'll drink together as a symbol of us all being members of one family in Christ. So sharing this holy community is something that we take part in as individuals who've decided to follow Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. It is between us and God. And if that's something that you're not sure about or not ready for yet, then just feel free just to watch and pray. Let's give thanks for this special meal that we're about to share. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you so much for your sacrifice for us. The price is paid. Lord Jesus, you did that once and for all. The lamb that was slain. Lord, we thank you that we can come to remember your supreme sacrifice for us. The body of yours broken like the bread that is torn and broken, Lord. We thank you too for the wine that represents your blood shed for us to cleanse us and make us free from the sin and disobedience that stops us having that relationship with you,

Lord. So we thank you so much. In your name we pray. Amen. So we have a little symbol of bread, which is actually a biscuit. It would have been more like the bread that Jesus had. It would have been unleavened bread. So Jesus took the bread or the biscuit, he said, Jesus said, this is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

This is Christ's body broken for you. So let's eat together. So if you take a little wafer, So let's eat together and be thankful. Then Jesus took the cup and said, This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood.

Whenever you drink it, do this in memory of me. So again, if we take the little cup here. So let's drink together as we remember Christ's sacrifice for us.

Let's drink together. A prayer.

[66:09] Father of all, we give you thanks and praise that when we were still far away from you, you met us in your son and brought us home.

Dying and living, he declared his love, gave us grace and opened the gates of glory. May we who share Christ's body live his risen life.

We who drink his cup bring life to others. We whom the spirit lights give light to the world. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us so that we and all your children shall be free and the whole earth live to praise your name.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen. So we're going to conclude our time together. We're going to sing a final song. What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Again, this is a song that Joel asked that we would sing at the end of our time together. Really just recognizing that, yeah, in our own strength we can do little to get into that right relationship with God.

[67:18] We can't. We've got that big divide between us, but Jesus has made that possible through his blood. So let's stand together and sing. What can wash away my sin? What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. O precious is the flow that makes me white as snow.

No other fount I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. For my blood of Jesus.

O precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. For my blood of Jesus. For my blood of Jesus. For my blood of Jesus. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

[68:32] For my cleansing this my plea. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh precious is the blood of Jesus.

Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. No other fount I know.  
No other fount I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh  
precious is the blood of Jesus. Precious is the blood of Jesus.  
[69:34] Precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. No other fount  
I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
This is all my hope and peace. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh precious is the flow that makes  
me white as snow.  
No other fount I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
Let's pray together as we finish. Lord we thank you so much for this service. We thank you that  
you're speaking to us through your word. That you've spoken to us through the songs that we've  
sung.  
[70:46] Your word that we've read. Lord we thank you that we can know  
that cleansing. That renewal to be cleansed and like white as snow. Lord  
that lovely picture of when the snow has fallen.  
Covered the ground and everything just sparkles with cleansing and wholeness and newness. Lord  
we thank you that more than that Lord.  
We can know this cleansing renewal and new life Lord that comes through you. We can know  
eternal life because of your sacrifice for us Lord Jesus. Help us to live in that truth today, tomorrow  
and into the future Lord as we trust you.  
Help us to serve you in these days in the way that you wish us to. Lord we thank you that you are  
speaking to us in these days. Help us to be obedient to what you're teaching us. As we pray all  
these things in Jesus name.  
Amen. I would say if you've been spoken to tonight and you feel that you'd like someone to pray  
with you. There are one or two of us with praying hands bandages on. Malcolm and Andrew are  
both here.  
[71:47] I'm sure they'll love to pray with you. Don't go from this place.  
If you really felt the Lord is speaking to you or there's something on  
your heart you just want to share. Take the time tonight. Thank you.