

The Moorings of the Christian Life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 November 2017

Preacher: Edward Lobb

[0 : 00] among us. Well, we're going to turn now to our Bible readings, and we're in the book of Numbers. Edward is going to be continuing his study in this book this morning. And if you turn to Numbers chapter 9, which you'll find, I think, on the Church Bible at page 117. And we're going to read this chapter together.

Numbers chapter 9 at verse 1. And the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Let the people of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time. On the fourteenth day of this month at twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time. According to all its statutes and all its rules, you shall keep it. So Moses told the people of Israel that they should keep the Passover. And they kept the Passover in the first month on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight in the wilderness of Sinai, according to all that the Lord commanded Moses. So the people of Israel did.

And there were certain men who were unclean through touching a dead body so that they could not keep the Passover on that day. And they came before Moses and Aaron on that day. And those men said to him, We are unclean through touching a dead body. Why are we kept from bringing the Lord's offering at its appointed time among the people of Israel? And Moses said to them, Wait, that I may hear what the Lord will command concerning you. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If one of you or your descendants is unclean through touching a dead body or is on a long journey, he shall still keep the Passover to the Lord. In the second month on the fourteenth day at twilight, they shall keep it.

They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it until the morning nor break any of its bones. According to all the statute of the Passover, they shall keep it.

But if anyone who is clean and is not on a journey fails to keep the Passover, that person shall be cut off from his people because he did not bring the Lord's offering at its appointed time. That man shall bear his sin. And if a stranger sojourns among you and would keep the Passover to the Lord, according to the statute of the Passover and according to its rule, so shall he do. You shall have one statute, both for the sojourner and for the native. On the day that the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony.

[2 : 58] And at evening it was over the tabernacle, like the appearance of fire until morning. So it was always. The cloud covered it by day and the appearance of fire by night.

Wherever the cloud lifted from over the tent, after the people of Israel set out, and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the people of Israel camped. At the command of the Lord, the people of Israel set out, and at the command of the Lord, they camped. As long as the cloud rested over the tabernacle, they remained in the camp. Even when the cloud continued over the tabernacle many days, the people of Israel kept the charge of the Lord and did not set out. Sometimes the cloud was a few days over the tabernacle, and according to the command of the Lord, they remained in the camp.

And according to the command of the Lord, they set out. Sometimes the cloud remained from evening, till morning. And when the cloud lifted in the morning, they set out. Or if it continued for a day and a night, when the cloud lifted, they set out. Whether it was two days, or a month, or a longer time that the cloud continued over the tabernacle, abiding there, the people of Israel remained in the camp and did not set out. But when it lifted, they set out. At the command of the Lord, they camped.

And at the command of the Lord, they set out. They kept the charge of the Lord at the command of the Lord by Moses. Amen. May God bless to us his word.

Let's turn to Numbers chapter 9, Numbers chapter 9, which you'll find on page 117 in our big Bibles.

[4 : 57] And my title for this morning is The Moorings of the Christian Life. And what I mean by the moorings of the Christian life is I'm picturing our life as being rather like a small boat, which is threatened by stormy blasts and needs to be securely moored or anchored if it's not to be blown away. What is it that holds a Christian's life firm?

What brings us stability in the midst of the instability of the life of the world? Living in the world is rather like living in a small boat on a rough sea.

So what is going to hold us fast and keep us from capsizing and going to Davy Jones's locker? There is something in the heart of all people, Christian people and non-Christian people, that seeks security and firm moorings.

Our hearts say, I want to know who I am. I want to know where I've come from and where I belong. And this surely explains why there's such an interest these days in tracing family trees.

We live in an age of unprecedented levels of migration, where people are constantly moving around the world. And when that happens, moving for jobs or for other reasons, inevitably more and more people are marrying folk from other countries and other cultures, and that's fine.

[6 : 18] But it means that we can have less of a sense of place and permanence. And we like to connect with our roots. We want to know where we've come from. I was visited last week by an American friend from Texas called Bill Lovell.

One or two of you might have met Bill. He's a big Texan. And he came to England many years ago looking for his English roots. Now, his name is Lovell, as I say.

So he visited a little village in Oxfordshire called Minster Lovell. It's a very small place, but he thought he might make some connections there. So he went to the parish church in this little village.

And as he was looking around the church, he noticed in one corner a fine tombstone made of marble or some such thing. One of those tombstones that has carved on it a knight with his hands folded in prayer like this and I think a sword by his side.

So Bill went up to this tombstone and looked at the inscription which said, Here lie the mortal remains of William Lovell. Well, that's one way to reconnect with your roots, isn't it?

[7 : 26] So we look for our moorings, a sense of connection. We look for it in places and locations, in family trees, perhaps in trades and professions. If your name is butcher or baker or tailor, you may have a bit of an interest in butchering or bakery or tailoring.

We like to make connections because it's to do with our identity. Now, here in Numbers chapter 9, the Lord God is helping the people of Israel with their moorings.

This was a time of very great change for them. Think of it. They'd been in Egypt now for 400 years. And the latter end of that were years of great suffering and slavery.

And now suddenly they were liberated from their slavery. And then they were out in the desert near the mountain of Sinai, bracing themselves for the long march to the promised land.

Change, of course, brings uncertainty. And chapter 9 is a chapter full of grace and tenderness from the Lord, in which he teaches them some very important lessons about their moorings, about who they are and how they should think about themselves.

[8 : 34] And it's all for their own comfort and their stability. He shows them, first, how their identity is anchored in the past, and secondly, how they can trust him to guide them both in the present and for the future.

So we'll look at the chapter under those two headings, anchored in the past and guided in the present for the future. First, then, the Israelites are anchored in the past.

This is their mooring. It's their source of stability. So the Lord God speaks to Moses in verse 1. In the first month of the second year, notice the date there, the first month of the second year after they've come out of the land of Egypt.

In other words, this was exactly one year after the original Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea. And his command to Moses is, let the people of Israel keep the Passover, which means make sure they do keep the Passover at its appointed time.

And you'll see that the timing and the date are very exact. At twilight on the 14th day of this month. It's very precise.

[9 : 44] In fact, there's an insistence right through this chapter that whatever the Lord commanded, that is what the people of Israel must do. Obedience is very important. So the timing is precise.

It's no good for the Israelites to say, well, perhaps at some point in the springtime of the year, when I've got the energy, when I feel like it. That sort of casualness would lead to a casual attitude in the people.

And the Lord simply won't allow that. In fact, he goes on in verse 3, according to all its statutes and all its rules, you shall keep it.

And those statutes and rules are clearly laid out in the book of Exodus. Now, why is this so important to the Lord that he insists upon it in such strong language?

It's because he wants the Israelites to be firmly moored to him, so that they know who he is and what he has done for them.

[10 : 41] That first Passover, which had happened 12 months previously, was an occasion of extraordinary drama. And I'm sure you know the story. The Egyptians, and especially their stubborn king, the Pharaoh, did not want to let the Israelites go off on a journey into the wilderness, which is what they were asking for.

Well, the Israelites were the labor force of the Egyptians. They were cheap labor. They were slave labor. The sort of labor which enabled the Egyptians to relax and enjoy the good things of life.

But God pressed the Egyptians. God squeezed the Egyptians. He sent them a whole series of plagues, gnats and frogs and flies, and the river turned to blood and darkness and other things which were almost unbearable.

These were episodes of national disaster. And through Moses, God was saying to Pharaoh again and again, let my people go. And Pharaoh was saying, I will not let them go.

But the last disaster that God sent was the most dreadful of all, and it proved decisive. God sent his angel to kill every firstborn Egyptian one night at midnight, and all the firstborn of their farm animals as well.

[11 : 59] And there wasn't a single house in the land where there was not somebody dead. Well, it was that that broke Pharaoh's resistance. And he finally said, go now.

In fact, in the end, he virtually begged Moses and Aaron to leave with the people. But not a single Israelite was killed that night because God had commanded that each Israelite family should sacrifice a lamb at twilight, the Passover lamb, and then take the blood of the lamb and daub it on the posts and the door frames of their houses, so that when the destroying angel came over at midnight, he would see the blood, and he would know that that family were trusting and obeying the Lord's instructions.

The lamb died as a substitute for the firstborn of every Israelite family. And then as soon as that Passover night was over, the Israelites took off into the desert rapidly.

But at that point, Pharaoh saw what was happening, and he changed his mind. And as soon as he saw that the Israelites were leaving, he mobilized his army, and he sent them after them to stop them.

And it was then that God rescued them at the Red Sea by a glorious and mighty miracle. He opened up the waters of the sea, making those waters stand up as a wall to right and left.

[13 : 19] And he allowed his people to walk through on the dry seabed. And when the Egyptians, in their military chariots, charged in after them, the Lord then caused the seawater to return to its usual place, and the Egyptian army were drowned.

And this cluster of events, the Passover night, the great escape, and the miracle at the Red Sea, these became the focus forever afterwards of Israel's joy and gratitude to God.

They're often mentioned in the Psalms, which were written centuries later. And they're sung about in the Psalms with joy, that God should have been so merciful as to rescue his people from a slavery which they could no longer bear.

The Passover and the Exodus became the defining events of the life of Israel. But they defined not only the experience of Israel, they also spoke eloquently of the character of Israel's God.

And in Numbers chapter 9, God is saying to Israel, Remember what I have done for you. Never forget it. It's your mooring. It's your national identity.

[14 : 32] It tells you who you are. And more importantly, it tells you who I am. I am the God who is committed to you. My relationship to you is one of covenant and promise.

I am yours and you are mine. It's the prototype marriage, isn't it? Will you be mine? Yes. Will I be yours? Yes, yes. And so determined is God that the Israelites should keep the Passover every year, that he makes provision even for people who find themselves in awkward circumstances.

And this is what verses 6 to 14 are about. Is there somebody ceremonially unclean because they've touched a dead body?

Well, that's going to happen in every family. Mother dies or father dies and you have to prepare the body for burial. Well, a person who is unclean like that must still go through the appointed cleansing ceremonies.

And they may take a week or two. But he must still celebrate the Passover. And if that's his position, the provision is it must be done a month later. As verse 11 puts it, in the second month of the year, but still on the 14th day at twilight.

[15 : 43] And what if somebody in years to come, after the people have settled in Canaan, should be away from home on a long journey at Passover time? Maybe a trader or a merchant.

Well, he too must keep the Passover in the second month. The point is, it is so important that every Israelite must keep the Passover. And non-Israelites too.

Look at verse 14. Non-Israelites who have decided to live with Israel and become, in effect, Israelites. They too must keep the Passover. That's a little hint and reminder that throughout the Old Testament, the promise made to Abraham that the Gentile nations would be blessed through the people of Israel, that promise is potent and is being worked out.

How then, how then is this annual Passover keeping, helping the Lord's people to be tied to their moorings? Well, it is a matter of remembering.

Remembering with actions strengthens gratitude. You see, the actions are important. The Israelites are not just being told to remember in their heads, as if five minutes backward-looking meditation once a year might be sufficient.

[17 : 02] No, there's a lot of action involved. There's activity. A lamb has to be selected and then slaughtered. Now, that's bound to make a family thoughtful.

A young boy might say to his father, Dad, why have you penned up that lamb by itself? I rather like that lamb. It's my favorite. I call it mint sauce. Now, listen to me, Yehudi, says the father kindly.

I know that you're fond of that animal, but there's something more important than having a pet lamb. That lamb is to be slaughtered and eaten by all of us on Passover night so that we will never forget how the Lord God rescued us from Egypt.

Without that wonderful rescue, we would still be slaves. The most important thing for us to do as a family is that we should know and love the Lord and thank him for saving us.

Now, think of the activity of that family on the Passover night itself as they look back to the first Passover. Think of that family as twilight approaches.

[18 : 08] Well, the lamb is slaughtered. It's then roasted. But it's no ordinary meal. There's nothing relaxed about this meal. The meal has to be eaten in haste as Exodus 12 commands.

Those who eat it must eat as people who are tense and keyed up and ready to leave the house at a moment's notice with their sandals on their feet, not slippers, with belt fastened, with staff in hand.

The food has got to be bolted down. This is no Christmas dinner with everybody relaxed and making merry and waiting for the queen to come on the radio at 3 o'clock.

This is a meal marked by tension and anxiety. Everybody is ready to run. So for the Israelite people, this was remembering with powerful visual aids.

It was reenacting the drama. And the purpose was to make the Israelites say, thank you, thank you, Lord, for rescuing us from an intolerable and hopeless situation.

[19 : 14] Remembering with activity cements and warms and deepens relationship. Well, this is true in our life. If you're a married man, you probably remember your wedding anniversary with actions.

You buy a nice bouquet of flowers. Maybe a box. Very small one, of course, of chocolates. Well, think of what we're doing here today, Remembrance Sunday.

Every year, we think back with real gratitude to the millions of servicemen and women who died so as to secure our freedom from tyranny. But there are actions involved which help us to remember.

We go to a stall and buy poppies. We stand silently for two minutes. Many people today are going to war memorials up and down the country to lay wreaths.

Buglers stand and sound the last post. We remember with real gratitude and a gratitude that grows deeper if we study the events of the 20th century and come to realize just how great a price was paid by our forebears.

[20 : 19] Remembrance Sunday, however, is for remembering a this-worldly rescue, a rescue within human history.

But Christians look back to an even greater rescue, a rescue of eternal proportions with eternal consequences. The Old Testament Passover is replicated and surpassed by the coming of Jesus as the Passover lamb.

When John the Baptist, at the beginning of John's Gospel, when John the Baptist saw Jesus walking along, he cried out, Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The blood of the original Passover lambs protected the Israelites from the judgment of God. And the blood of Jesus, the Passover lamb for all eternity, protects those who trust him from the judgment that we all deserve.

In Moses' day, the lamb stood between the Israelites and death. And in our day, in fact, in every day, until the day of judgment, Jesus, the final Passover lamb, stands between his people and the wrath of God.

[21 : 34] And every time we remember him, the gratitude and the joy and the sense of unworthiness fills our hearts. And just as God commanded the Old Testament Israelites to keep the Passover every year, Jesus has commanded us to celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly.

Do this, he says, in remembrance of me. Take this bread, chew it thoughtfully, and think of my broken body. And then drink the wine and let it represent to your hearts and to your imagination my blood as it ran down the cross draining from my body.

But let's not just remember the blood of Jesus once or twice a month at our communion services. No, his death on the cross secures our eternal moorings.

Let's remember it frequently, daily, even hourly. The way to stay moored is to think often of the cross. It's the sure and certain demonstration of the love of God towards us.

A love which is concerned, not just to make us feel good, but to secure us for heaven. The cross of Jesus, that is an objective reality.

[22 : 50] It happened in history. It is the greatest event in all history. Nothing more real has ever taken place on the earth. And as we trust the cross and trust the figure hanging upon it and the blood draining down from it, we can be sure that we have been rescued.

Jesus himself said, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in him, whoever, shall have eternal life.

But there's more to the Passover lamb. It's not just a matter of remembering our rescue in the past. It's also a matter of being nourished and sustained in the present.

Those Passover lambs were not simply to be slaughtered. They were to be eaten. And Jesus, in talking about his own death in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, insists that we feed on him.

He says, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. Now, he's not talking there about our physical hunger and thirst, which needs to be satisfied three times a day.

[24 : 07] He's talking about an inner sustaining that enables Christians to live life joyfully and purposefully. Jesus puts it more strongly and provocatively when he goes on to say, whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.

Now, this is not some weird form of cannibalism. What he means is, draw the vital nourishment that your soul needs from my death on the cross.

as you think deeply about what my death means, your soul will rejoice and be strengthened. You'll cry three cheers in your hearts. You will say, this Friday is good Friday, not bad Friday, because my sins have been forgiven.

Forgiven. Now, we might say, forgiven, Lord, all of them? His reply is, yes, all of them. And we might say, do you mean, I mean, I have such a long list.

Do you mean even those years of hatred? The envy that I nursed? The bad temper that I stoked up? What about the abortion that I organized? What about the family feud that I fueled and kept for so many years?

[25 : 22] What about the drugs that I bought and used? The drinking bouts? The time off work that I stole from my employers when I wasn't ill? Could any sacrifice cover such a litany of guilt?

Yes, he replies, my sacrifice covers it all. My blood washes your conscience clean. Your guilt is taken away. You and I have exchanged places.

I've borne your sin. I've become your sin in God's sight so that you might become my righteousness in God's sight. You are now as clean as a stream that runs off the highland hills.

Believe it, man. Believe it, woman. That's why I came to seek you out and to rescue you. Now, it's as we learn to think these kind of thoughts about the cross of Jesus daily that our souls are nourished and we become shot through with a sense of gladness which nothing can take from us in the end.

Jesus, then, is the final Passover lamb. As we think of him, we remember our rescue in the past, we're nourished in the present and there's something else too.

[26 : 38] He goes on to say in John chapter 6, whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.

So he and we are friends. We're more than friends. We inhabit each other. He takes up residence in our hearts and we take up residence in his heart and therefore we become more like him.

We learn his ways. We learn to take up our cross as he has taken up his. We learn to lay down our lives for others as he has laid down his life for us.

So this Passover feast of Numbers chapter 9 leads us in our thinking to the Passover lamb who is God's greatest sacrificial offering. He is the mooring of our life, the central mooring by him we are rescued, by him we are nourished and in him we abide.

He is the source of our life and our joy and our gladness and he promised that whoever trusts him will live with him forever. We're now back to the wilderness and the Israelites in Numbers chapter 9.

[27 : 50] In the second half of the chapter, that's the passage that runs from verse 15 to verse 23, we learn about the guidance that the Lord gives his people in the hostile and difficult place that they find themselves in.

Now this paragraph, as you can see, is all about the cloud. In the old Welsh hymn that we often sing, let the fiery, cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through.

And throughout the Bible, this cloud represents the very presence of God with his people. It's as though God himself is in the cloud and he wraps it around himself so that he cannot be seen.

But he wants his people to know that he is there, that he's present. Remember, when Jesus was transfigured up on the mountain and his friends Peter, James, and John were with him, a cloud overshadowed them and a voice, the voice of God the Father came from the cloud and said to the three disciples, this is my beloved son, listen to him.

Now look with me at verse 15 in our chapter. On the day that the tabernacle was set up, the very day that the whole thing started, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony, and at evening it was over the tabernacle like the appearance of fire until morning.

- [29 : 13] So it was always. The cloud covered it by day and the appearance of fire by night. Now the tabernacle has just been constructed so this would have been a most wonderful moment for Moses and the people because it assured them that God had accepted their work in building the tabernacle.

They had not built it in vain. God was owning it. He was acknowledging it. You've done well, he's saying. I am here. I am with you. And in coming to them in the form of a cloud, God is making another vital point to his people.

He's saying to them, I don't only reveal myself to you in my written words. You don't only know me from my words. You know me also because of my presence with you.

I'm not an absent God who only makes contact with you through my words as though I were a million miles away. No, I'm a present God who delights to dwell with you.

James Philip puts it beautifully like this in his commentary on numbers. The Christian life is not the acceptance of a system but the entrance into a fellowship, into a relationship of companionship with Christ.

- [30 : 32] Think of how Jesus puts it in John chapter 14. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.

he also says about the Holy Spirit, I will give you another comforter, the Spirit of truth. You know him for he dwells with you and will be in you.

So yes, the Christian life is fed and taught and directed by the written words of the Bible, but to be a Christian is to enjoy the companionship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit, says Jesus, will be in you. And of the Father and Son, he says, we will make our home with the one who loves me. That's a great truth, friends.

Think of it like this. Next time you're sitting at home by yourself, tempted to feel sad and lonely, tempted perhaps to say to yourself, it's very quiet here.

- [31 : 36] All I can hear is the clink of my teacup on the saucer. All I can see is the November rain streaming down the windows. At moments like that, remember that if you're a Christian, you're not alone.

Jesus has said, my Father and I will come to the one who loves me and we will make our home with him. But the cloud of Numbers chapter 9, this cloud is not always stationary.

It moves in order to show the Israelites when they should move and where they should move to. Sometimes the cloud stays still. As verse 22 puts it, sometimes it might stay still for two days or for a whole month or even for a longer period.

And that meant that God was guiding them to stay where they were. But when the cloud lifted from the tabernacle and began to move forward, that was the Lord's signal to the people to rise and follow.

Israel. Now the people of Israel at this stage were in a trackless and very difficult wilderness. And our lives can feel like that.

- [32 : 51] Remember Bunyan's words, as I walked through the wilderness of this world. All of us have moments in our lives, perhaps periods in our lives, when we just don't know which way to go.

How do we learn the way? How can we be kept from making serious mistakes? Do we perhaps follow the blindfold dabster method of guidance?

Do you know that? You blindfold yourself, or at least you perhaps shut your eyes, and then you open your Bible with eyes shut, you raise a finger, and then you allow the finger to descend on the Bible, as if that's the way you're going to be guided.

And you look and see what the verse says, and the verse says something like this, go ye therefore to Edinburgh, and there marry the beautiful Eustacia Maconachy, and open a second-hand bookshop.

Is that the way God guides us? Well, of course not. He has given us brains. Between your left ear and your right ear, you have a magnificent organ. We are therefore to use the brain to read the Bible thoughtfully, and allow it to build up wisdom and good judgment so that we can make good decisions.

[34 : 09] Don't be a blindfold dabster. And let's not be coincidentalists either. Have you met a Christian who's a coincidentalist? Somebody who says something like this, as I stepped onto the bus this morning, I noticed a black and white dog.

Well, it was a white dog, but it had a black patch over its left eye. And at that precise moment, as I saw the dog, I was thinking, perhaps I should go to Edinburgh and open a second-hand bookshop.

I went into town, did my errands, then I took the bus back to Pollock Shores, and as I stepped off the bus, there was another dog, and it was a white dog.

And do you know which eye it had a black patch on? It was the left eye. So I said to myself, that confirms it. Now I know. Have you heard Christians talk like that?

I have. It's balmy, isn't it? It's silly. Now, friends, we don't have a cloud to guide us through the trackless wilderness of our lives.

[35 : 13] So what do we have? Well, let me mention three things. First, we have a heavenly Father who knows and loves each one of his people.

He knows us better than we know ourselves. We often can't see the way forward through the trackless wilderness, but he knows it and he has our best interests at heart.

Sometimes, of course, he disciplines us and prunes us with the heavenly secateurs, but he's determined to increase our likeness to Jesus. That can be painful, but our heavenly Father loves us.

And secondly, we have the Bible, which teaches us to make wise decisions. And that's why it's so important for us, each of us, to get to know our Bibles well, both as individuals and as a church family, because the Bible teaches us the will of God.

A Christian who never seriously embarks on Bible study will remain immature and ill-fitted to make good decisions. But when we get to know the Bible better and better, we get to know the mind of God and we'll be kept from making rash and foolish decisions.

[36 : 25] The Bible won't tell us whether to stay in Glasgow or to move to Timbuktu, and it won't tell us whether to start courting Eustacia or Anna Maria, but it will help us to know how to think through such questions in a godly way.

The Bible is our source of guidance. It teaches us how to be chaste, how to be hard-working, how to be truthful and honest, how to be contented, how to be kind and merciful and patient and self-disciplined.

The Israelites back then, needed a cloud because of their particular historical circumstances. They needed physical, geographical guidance. Our need is not geographical, it's moral.

It's to do with decision-making, and the Bible is the compass and guide and map which the Lord has given to us. And then third, we have the church.

We have the Lord's people. The Lord has given us each other. Just look at the folk here. He's given us each other. Each of us, therefore, has access to the experience and wisdom of older and wiser Christians.

[37 : 36] This means that a young Christian can come to an older Christian and can ask for help. It often happens in the church. Can I speak to you about something? Says the younger one.

And the older one says, well, of course you can. What's it about? And the younger one says, well, Eustacia is simply driving me mad. I think I shall die if I don't marry her. And Timbuktu, it seems such a very long way away.

And my mother is driving me up the wall. Well, son, says the older Christian, let's have a coffee together. Let's sit down and we'll see how the Bible can shed light on these tricky questions.

We don't have a cloud, either as a church or as individuals, but we have a heavenly father, we have a priceless Bible, and we have a loving fellowship.

We're in safe hands. The Israelites back then were able to trust God. They looked back to the decisive rescue that the Lord had brought to them and liberated them with.

[38 : 39] They looked upwards and forwards to the kind God who guided them. Those were their moorings. Now, if we are Christians, we have been rescued decisively, eternally, by the death of the Lamb of God.

That's what we're moored to in the past, the cross and the resurrection of Jesus. It's those great events that define our lives. And we are now in the hands of a father who is more than able to bring us to the eternal promised land, to his presence, and to live with him forever.

Let's bow our heads and we'll pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. guide me, oh my great redeemer, pilgrim through this barren land.

I am weak, but you are mighty. Hold me with your powerful hand. So we pray, dear heavenly Father, that the lives of each one of us may be pleasing to you.

that you will help us not to make unwise decisions but to be wise and to make use of all the provision, the kind provision that you have made for us. And help us, dear Father, to find our identity, our stability, the moorings for our life in the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[40 : 09] And we ask it in his name. Amen.