

Counter Cultural to the Core

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[0 : 00] Well, we're coming now to our Bible reading, so please do pick up your Bibles and turn to Leviticus chapter 11.

And a little later in our service, Stephen Ballingall will be preaching to us from this next section of the book of Leviticus, a much neglected book of the Bible, sadly.

And this section is really all about living at one with the Lord of life. So we're going to read the whole of Leviticus 11, beginning at verse 1.

So hear the word of the Lord. And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, speak to the people of Israel, saying, these are the living things that you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth.

Whatever parts the hoof and is cloven-footed and chews the cud among the animals, you may eat. Nevertheless, among those that chew the cud or part the hoof, you shall not eat these.

[1 : 22] The camel, because it chews the cud and does not part the hoof, is unclean for you. And the rock badger, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you.

And the pig, because it parts the hoof and is cloven-footed but does not chew the cud, is unclean to you.

You shall not eat any of their flesh and you shall not touch their carcasses. They are unclean to you. These you may eat, of all that are in the waters, everything in the waters that has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers, you may eat.

But anything in the seas or the rivers that has not fins and scales, of the swarming creatures in the waters and of the living creatures that are in the waters, is detestable to you.

You shall regard them as detestable. You shall not eat any of their flesh. And you shall detest their carcasses. Everything in the waters that has not fins and scales is detestable to you.

[2 : 46] And these you shall detest among the birds. They shall not be eaten. They are detestable. The eagle. The bearded vulture.

The black vulture. The kite. The falcon of any kind. Every raven of any kind. The ostrich. The night hawk.

The seagull. The hawk of any kind. The little owl. The comarant. The short-eared owl. The barn owl. The tawny owl. The carrion vulture.

The stork. The heron of any kind. The hopu. And the bat. All winged insects that go on all fours are detestable to you.

Yet among the winged insects that go on all fours, you may eat those that have jointed legs above their feet. With which to hop on the ground.

[3 : 42] Of them you may eat the locust of any kind. The bald locust of any kind. The cricket of any kind. And the grasshopper of any kind.

But all other winged insects that have four feet are detestable to you. And by these you shall become unclean. Whoever touches their carcasses shall be unclean until evening.

And whoever carries any part of their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. Every animal that parts the hoof. Every animal that parts the hoof.

But is not cloven footed. Or does not chew the cud is unclean to you. Everyone who touches them shall be unclean. And all that walk on their paws among the animals that go on all fours are unclean to you.

Whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until evening. And he who carries their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. They are unclean to you.

[4 : 51] And these are unclean to you among the swarming things that swarm on the ground. The mole rat. The mouse. The great lizard of any kind.

The gecko. The monitor lizard. The lizard. The sand lizard. And the chameleon. These are unclean to you among all that swarm. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening.

And anything on which any of them falls when they are dead shall be unclean. Whether it is an article of wood or a garment or a skin or a sack.

Any article that is used for any purpose. It must be put into water. And it shall be unclean until the evening. Then it shall be unclean.

Sorry, then it shall be clean. And if any of them falls into earthenware vessel, all that is in it shall be unclean.

[5 : 54] And you shall break it. Any food in it that could be eaten on which water comes shall be unclean. And all drink that could be drunk from every such vessel shall be unclean.

And everything on which any part of their carcass falls shall be unclean. Whether oven or stove, it shall be broken in pieces.

They are unclean and shall remain unclean for you. Nevertheless, a spring or a cistern holding water shall be clean.

But whoever touches a carcass in them shall be unclean. And if any part of their carcass falls upon any seed grain that is to be sown, it is clean.

But if water is put on the seed and any part of their carcass falls on it, it is unclean to you. And if any animal which you may eat dies, whoever touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening.

[7 : 02] And whoever eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. And whoever carries the carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening.

Every swarming thing that swarms on the ground is detestable. It shall not be eaten. Whatever goes on its belly and whatever goes on all fours or whatever has many feet, any swarming thing that swarms on the ground, you shall not eat.

For they are detestable. You shall not make yourselves detestable with any swarming thing that swarms. And you shall not defile yourselves with them and become unclean through them.

For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy.

For I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground.

For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God.

[8 : 14] You shall therefore be holy. For I am holy. This is the law about beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms on the ground.

To make a distinction between the unclean and the clean. And between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.

And may God bless to us this, his word. And it's all God's word. Good evening all.

If you could please keep your Bibles open at Leviticus chapter 11. That would be very helpful as we go through this strange and unfamiliar passage together. The world we live in is not neutral.

Each generation of Christians has to learn that the world we live in is not morally neutral. It's not in the grey with no axe to grind. But instead, all around us, there are people and institutions with varying agendas which seek to deny the lordship of Christ and the goodness of his law.

[9 : 26] And this is not new. Yes, there might be unique issues in the modern world that the church needs to learn to respond to. But through the ages and in every generation, God's people have always lived in a world which does not honour him.

And instead rebels against his good rule. And the more that Christians grow in holiness, embracing their identity as people who are saved by God's grace and made to be holy, we will become less like the world around us.

Because we live in a world under the curse, teeming with people who are also under the curse, who are not children of God, but children of the devil. So our politics, our media, our cultures, our sports teams, the holidays we're told to celebrate, our education system, our workplaces, all carry agendas.

And they all hold dear different beliefs to what God reveals to be true. That is the arena in which we live. So how are we as Christians meant to engage with a culture which is so hostile to Christ and his people?

That's the big question that Leviticus chapter 11 is asking here. How are God's people to live in a sin-soaked world? Put very simply, we are to be holy.

[10 : 44] Which means being counter-cultural. We are to live distinctively, living in a way which is set apart from our culture. We're not to give in to the world and become more like it, but to stand out and live boldly for the glory of God.

For he has saved us to be his, to belong to him, and to be a light to the nations. That means that our lives are always going to be uncomfortable in the real world, because embracing holiness necessarily involves rejecting the sin of the world.

As one commentator puts it, Christians will always be non-conformists in a world which marginalizes God. That's the message we see in this chapter.

And this is an unusual chapter of the Bible, isn't it? I'm sure you'll have thought that as you read this passage. This is different, and it feels very foreign and far removed from our Christian lives today. And that's true, this is foreign. It does sound foreign. And these regulations are far removed from us today. We as Christians don't practice these laws as they are in the form we find them. That's partly why this is some of the most unfamiliar terrain of the Bible.

[12 : 01] But that doesn't mean that we may consign this passage to the rubbish heap. For every word of scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for our Christian living.

For what was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that we might learn how to live wisely as God's people today. And this passage is relevant to our Christian lives, because the Lord reveals himself through this.

He didn't have a complete character swap in this chapter. This is not a different God. This is the same God who gave us Psalm 23, Romans 8, and everything else. And this chapter shows us how we are to be like him.

And this chapter fits into a larger section in Leviticus, starting in chapter 11, going through to chapter 15. It's formed of two sections, with chapter 11 teaching us of the food laws, and chapters 12 to 15 teaching of the laws of bodily fluids and diseases.

And what we see in these passages is that those who are unstained from the sin of the world, chapter 11, and as we'll see next Sunday evening, those who seek cleansing from their own sin within, are those God will welcome in and enjoy relationship with.

[13 : 21] Because relationship with God is what Leviticus is all about. That's what these rules all serve, maintaining and enjoying relationship with our holy God.

Try to remember that any time you turn to this book, and view it through the lens of relationship with the Lord. Now to dig into this passage, we're going to look at the regulations, the reason, and the reality of the food laws.

So firstly, let's consider the regulations. And here we'll try to get into the text and see that these laws teach Israel core truths about their identity in God. That they are set apart from all creation, and are not to allow the sin of the world to work its way into their culture.

We won't have time to get into the nitty-gritty of the text in the time we have, because if you focus on the details too much, then you'll miss entirely what's being said and why it's being said. This passage is prompted by the Lord's command in the previous chapter to Aaron the High Priest. You can turn there now. If you flick back to chapter 10, verse 10, the Lord says to Aaron that, you are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean.

[14 : 43] And that's not just saying the same thing twice. Holy is not the exact same as clean. Common or unholy is not the same as unclean. They are different words used to describe different categories.

If we conflate them, then we're going to get tied up in knots about what is called unclean, because there are several things called unclean which are actually good things which the Lord has commanded and created.

And to understand what's being meant by this language of clean and unclean, it's helpful to think of these as ritual states and temporary states.

They are ritual in that they concern how Israel were to approach God in worship. They were all tied to tabernacle or temple worship.

Being clean meant that you were acceptable to come into the presence of God in worship. Being unclean meant that you were unacceptable to enter into God's presence. So if you were unclean, you were still a believer.

[15 : 46] That's key to know. You were still a member of the household of God. But you couldn't join in with the Sabbath day worship, the gathering of God's people. And that's because when

uncleanness comes into contact with a holy God, it's like throwing a crumpled piece of paper into a fire, engulfed in flames, gone, turned to ash immediately.

And Israel had just had a very visual lesson in what happens when something unholy approaches God the wrong way. As in chapter 10, Nadab and Abihu, the sons of the high priest were consumed by fire from the tabernacle when they approached him in the wrong manner.

And clean and unclean are also temporary states. The Israelites weren't permanently unclean after one infringement of the law, but they could wash and then wait until evening.

Then they were ready to approach God and worship again. That's the typical response to these laws. Washing and waiting. No sacrifices required, no blood spilt, but simply wash and in the evening you're clean again.

So that's how they are ritual and temporary. And now the passage splits roughly into two, with verses 1 to 23 focusing on eating and verses 24 to the end focused on touching dead animals.

[17:08] We'll go over the detail of the text very briefly so that we can get our heads around the basic idea of what's going on here. In this first section, in verses 1 to 23, the underlying principle is that there is a chosen type, a particular form of animal that stands out from the rest of creatures in the same realm.

They are chosen as set apart and the way they are, their nature reveals that. And the pattern's quite similar for this section. There's a qualification given, often accompanied by what it does not mean, and then a sample list of animals that clarifies it.

And the list of animals are extensive, but they're not exhaustive. Instead, these laws provide Israel with a map and compass to navigate their diet, teaching them to think critically about the world out there, discerning what is clean or unclean.

You'll notice that in verse 3, speaking of the animals of the earth. It says, whatever parts the hoof and is cloven-footed and chews the cud among the animals you may eat.

So whoever has a cloven hoof, meaning a hoof formed of two parts, and also chews the cud, is clean. Chewing the cud is when the animal brings up food from their stomach to then chew over and digest again.

[18:31] Quite often we use that phrase, chewing the cud, when we're speaking of someone ruminating over a thought and then they return to it later. And that's where the phrase originates from. It's a similar idea. So because of that, animals like cows, goats, sheep, deer, amongst others, are all clean.

It then goes on in verse 4 to say that these animals must fit both of these categories, parts, parting the hoof and chewing the cud. And if they didn't fit either or only fit one, then they're unclean, such as pigs, lions, camels, and many more beside.

So verse 8, do not eat or touch them. They are unclean to you. It's formulaic about the way it goes about these animals and all these sections follow that similar pattern.

They take a whole class of animals and then pick out one grouping from there, saying that this specific group is clean and everything else isn't. So from all the creatures in the waters, verse 9, the specific group is those with fins and scales.

If the animal exhibits those traits, they're clean. Anything that doesn't fit that category, so things like crab, lobster, sharks, jellyfish, scallops, all unclean.

[19:45] The creatures of the air, from verse 13 onwards, are a little bit harder to pin down. You'll see in the footnotes that we actually don't know the identity of many of these birds, either because their names are unrecognizable to us or they've gone extinct.

But there seems to be a link with these birds being predators. They're birds of prey. The birds that are unclean are largely those who feast on the blood of other animals, something that Israel is explicitly told not to do themselves in chapter 17.

So there might be some level of identification between these animals and Israel itself going on. Following on, the winged insects are mentioned in verse 21, and the chosen few are only those which hop on the ground.

They are clean. Those which don't, unclean. But locusts, crickets, grasshoppers, all clean. They are those which are unique and stand out in their grouping of insects.

That's the main principle that the first half is communicating. That within a large grouping, there is a chosen cohort, a specific group chosen that is clean, set apart in its population.

[20 : 58] And Israel is given the map and compass to navigate and think critically about the natural world. Then the second half of the passage from verse 24 onwards, the underlying principle here is that death is to have no place in the presence of God's people.

The world out there is not neutral, and the brokenness of the world out there is not to infiltrate its way into the people of God, because they have the privilege of belonging to him.

Death out there taints what is holy and set apart for the Lord if it comes into contact with it, chiefly as people. So, verse 24 to 28, anyone touching a dead carcass of the beast of the field becomes unclean.

And if they carry it, their clothes become unclean, and for both of those things, wash and wait until evening. Then verses 29 through to 38, these unclean swarming creatures which dwell on the ground are considered.

Particularly, you'll notice if they climb into a vessel of some sort, things that animals like lizards and mice tend to do. Whatever it comes into contact with is declared unclean, and either you wash it or you break it, removing the uncleanness which taints what it comes into contact with.

[22 : 19] And verses 39 and 40, even clean animals that God has set apart as clean, if they die naturally, not in ceremonial sacrifice, they become unclean through death.

They are bearing the marks of the curse. So symbolically, transmit that to whoever touches them. So anyone who comes into contact with any dead animal, unless it's been ceremonially slaughtered in the tabernacle, is unclean.

And they must wash and wait until the evening, until they're ritually clean again. They must remove the stain of fallenness that they've come into contact with before approaching the Lord in worship. That's the point of these verses on death, that sin is out there and it is not to infiltrate and seep its way into the lives of God's people. They're to wash it away, remove it, break it if you have to, and not allow the sinfulness of the world to taint them.

Now that's a very whistle-stop tour of the food laws. There's an unbelievable amount of detail you could go in there, which I don't know the answer to, if I'm honest. Please don't ask me too many questions about this afterwards. I don't really know what a hoopoe is, and I don't intend on finding out.

[23 : 32] These laws, they're just so foreign to us, aren't they? And there are a bunch of questions about these and we don't have the time to answer them all. But they are there for a purpose, and that's what we'll turn to in our second point, where we see the reason for these laws.

And what we'll see here is that the Lord has given these laws so that Israel would identify with these animals. They would see themselves in them and therefore embrace God's call to be holy.

These laws served as a lesson for Israel on how to become like the God they belong to and how to stop the sin of the world from tainting them. The qualifications of these animals are all quite connected, and I think that's where the big markers lie to help us see what this is all about.

That's where the clues in the passage are. All of the clean animals are described in relation to their environment. That's where the Lord wants our focus to be in this, how he describes these animals, not on the list of animals themselves.

Look at verse 3. The beast of the field is described by their hooves and eating habits. So how they relate to the fields they inhabit. They don't have paws which are open to the ground, but hooves which are sealed and set apart from the land.

[24 : 56] Verse 8. The fish of the sea and rivers are to have fins and scales so protected and sealed off from their environment. It functions almost like an armor, not letting anything in.

The winged insects, verse 21, are to hop on the ground, rising above, separating them from the rest of their class. Within each class of animals, there's this unique grouping that is clean, chosen out of all the animals that are there because of how they relate to their environment.

And the Lord wants Israel to identify with that. What God is teaching Israel through these laws is that just as these animals are set apart from their environment, you are to be a people who are set apart from yours.

You are not to be tainted or polluted by the sin of your environment. You are to be what you are, a people who belong to a holy God who are distinct from the culture of the nations around you.

And what a good message to hear for those people who were going in to take the land of Canaan with all of its peoples, with all their cultures, all their false idols.

[26 : 14] Moses' message to his first hearers was to stand firm in the Lord by standing out from the world around them. That was what the Lord wanted to achieve in the lives of the Israelites, that they would be holy and distinct from the world around them, totally and utterly devoted to the Lord their God.

And why were they to do that? Well, there's a parallel between this additional qualification of the land animals that's actually quite significant. In verse 3, whatever parts the hoof and chews the cud is clean.

Remember, that's when the animal partly swallows, it goes into their first stomach and then brings up the food to chew on again. It helps digestion. And the phrase we have translated as chewing the cud should be literally translated as bringing up.

Which, if you skip towards the end of the passage and look at verse 45, how does the Lord describe his relationship with his people? He says, I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God.

Brought you up. It's the same root phrase. It's the kind of thing that's really quite obvious if you're listening to this in Hebrew, but sadly, I've not quite learned that yet. But our English translations don't quite capture it.

[27 : 40] Israel were to look at these animals which chew the cud and see themselves in them. See their own story in them. That just as the cow brings up the grass of the field, so the Lord brought them out of Egypt and they belong to him.

There was a reminder built into their food laws of just how the Lord has graciously and wonderfully redeemed them to be his own and they belong to him so they are to live like him.

So these laws, they were never just about animals. They were about people. The animals were not unclean or unholy in themselves.

There wasn't anything wrong with them. But the people who ate them were unclean. That's the distinction made. That these food laws are to remind the Israelites that there is sin out there in the world and the Lord's people are to be set apart from it, clean from it.

It was reminding them at every mealtime that they are a people saved by God's grace to be clean before him. But even more than being clean, they are to be holy before him.

[28 : 49] That's the interesting shift in language that happens in verses 44 to 45. Maybe you noticed that as we were reading it. All through this passage it speaks of clean and unclean, clean and unclean, clean and unclean.

And then suddenly it changes into speaking about holiness. Remember, clean and holy are different categories. And that signifies again that this goes deeper than just food.

The ritual purity pointed towards moral purity. What you ate was representative of who you were. And that's what the Pharisees of Jesus' day misunderstood so spectacularly.

They loved their washings and their food laws, their religious adherence where they could tick a box and feel righteous. But Jesus reprimanded them because they were missing the point entirely.

Food itself doesn't make you unclean, but your heart does. Your evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting and much more. That is what defiles a person.

[29 : 57] Not bacon, thank the Lord. And that's why he criticized them so heavily for their washings as they were missing the point entirely, thinking that the washings made them clean rather than the saving work of the Lord who brought them up out of Egypt.

But Israel, as Moses spoke to them, as they were about to go in and take the promised land, they weren't to become like the nations around them. They were to think critically about the sin out there and not allow it to seep into their culture and into their lives.

They were to be entirely devoted to the Lord their God, holy to him, even in the most basic elements of their days, like what they had for their breakfast, lunch and dinner.

So in these laws, God was making his people holy, setting them apart from a sin-stained world. But what about us now?

How do these laws apply to us today? That's where we come to our final point, where we see the reality of the food laws for us today. And we need to be quite careful about the implication of these laws in our lives.

[31 : 17] We're not to take this chapter and copy and paste it into our Christian living, and there are several reasons for that. Most crucially, because Jesus in his ministry has said clearly that these food laws don't apply in the same way as they did in the Old Covenant.

He said that in Mark 7, where Mark's comment is quite emphatic. Jesus declared all foods clean. In addition to that, we have stories like what we read in Acts chapter 10, where the apostle Peter was presented with a vision of clean and unclean animals descending from heaven on a sheet, and the Lord tells Peter to kill and eat all of them, because all of them are clean.

There's no clean and unclean distinction anymore. Throughout the New Testament, it's made clear that any food that was unclean has been made clean, and the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles has been abolished through Christ's work on the cross.

Of course, Jesus makes us clean, and he cleanses us forever, which we thank the Lord for. But if we only focus on that, then we'll miss the enduring relevance of these laws for our Christian living today.

And the underlying truth of what God was wanting to do in the lives of his people as he got under their skin and got them to realize their identity, he still wants to do that today. He is holy, Israel was to be holy, and so are we.

[32 : 44] So the message for us today is this, be holy as God is holy. become more like God by cutting out the sin of the world.

And do not be surprised and don't give in when what we believe and how we act brings tension and derision from the world. We are to embrace who we are as people saved by a holy God.

These laws taught Israel that just as God was to be holy, they were to be holy too. who they were was intimately connected with who God is, which is part of the joy of having a new identity in Christ. We are new creations in him being remade in the image of our creator, our holy God. So, be careful about what shapes us as people.

evil. The world is not neutral. And it's not only biased, but it is biased towards sin. So we need to be on guard about what we read, what we take in, and what is influencing us.

[34 : 01] We are all much more influenceable than we think we are. Just as the Israelites had to look at every animal with a critical eye, seeing if it measured up to God's standards of cleanness, we are to look our culture in the eye and see how it measures up to God's standard of holiness.

That doesn't mean that we can't enjoy culture, that we are to be huge buzz kills who hate everything that comes from the world. Of course not. It's a good gift from our creator God and he wants us to enjoy it.

But we must engage with it critically, considering what message it's communicating and what the Lord actually thinks about it. God wants us to view culture through the lens of who he is, which we find revelation of in his word.

The word is our map and compass for navigating culture, so dig deep into it and consider how it interacts with the real world. We all drink in information and agendas every day.

We've never had so much information at our fingertips, but we cannot allow that to seep into who we are and shape us as people, shaping our decisions and priorities and behavior in life.

[35 : 17] The world's biggest concerns are not to be our biggest concerns. We've got better stuff to be getting on with. We are not to be a people who jump on the bandwagon with every moral cause of the day.

Before we commit to anything, we need to consider how God views it through the lens of scripture, how his word and how his holiness views that matter, whether it's one of his priorities.

And in fact, being holy means more often than not, we will be actively against the moral causes of the world. We will be countercultural because our world is biased towards sin and it does not want to acknowledge the plain truth that Christ is Lord and he is Lord over all.

people. So, don't be surprised and don't give in. Don't be surprised when people outside the church raise eyebrows about what we do or say in faithfulness to Christ.

If we're going to become more like God, then we must become less like the world. Every day, Israel was being reminded that who they were as God's people was different from the world around them.

[36 : 37] At every mealtime, they were reminded of that, that they were to be set apart from the sin of the earth. Our church will make decisions that raise questions from outside.

We will take stands on things that make life in the real world difficult or uncomfortable. Things that invite question and derision from those who do not know and oppose Christ.

That is part and parcel of belonging to a holy God who by definition is set apart from our sinful world. All of us, by virtue of belonging to him, are countercultural.

It's not something you can opt into. It's not a cause for only our leading lights to engage in. It's who you are as a Christian. So we can't be surprised when the world hates us, slanders us, and tries its hardest to silence us, telling us that our views don't have a place in modern society.

We belong to a holy God, and remember that when the world hates you, that it hated the Lord Jesus first. Of course, that doesn't mean we're to be deliberately provocative, just seeking to get a rise out of people.

[38 : 01] I want to be clear about that. The Lord didn't give these laws so that his people would feel superior, arrogantly throwing around their doctrine, their supposed holiness in the face of others, and there's evidence that the Pharisees did that.

I'm sure we've all witnessed people like that, and it does not honour the Lord. He wishes his truth to be spoken in love, to appeal to a person, not to antagonise them.

So the Lord wishes for his truth to be spoken in love, to appeal to a person, not antagonise them.

And we must be prepared, knowing that our obedience to Christ will bring reproach from the world.

And we are also, not just to be not surprised, but also not to give in, don't give in.

As we take a stand for Christ in the world, as we embrace the holiness that he has saved us for, we will face pressure to conform. Just as Israel were to cleanse themselves from the sin of the earth, so are we.

[39 : 14] We're to remove it from us. And this battle feels quite often like a lonely one. For those of you at school, you might be the only Christian in your class or your year group or maybe your entire school.

And every day as you walk through the doors of that school building, it might feel like you are in enemy territory, on a battleground, behind enemy lines on your own. If that's you, then be faithful to the Lord Jesus.

Fly the flag for him and no other, because he loves you and he is with you and he sees the stand that you make for him, even if no one else does. Remember that you have been saved by a holy God, to be holy, and that by refusing to bow the knee to the powers of this world, as intimidating as they are and they do feel intimidating, you are embracing your identity in Christ.

You are being the person God wants you to be and delighting your father in heaven. Don't give in and don't be ashamed. Keep on flying the flag for Christ.

And the same goes for all of us, wherever we face opposition. We all live in the real world and we know people who oppose Christ, who carry agendas, even the lovely folk we know do that.

[40 : 43] We will all face pressure to give in, to conform, but we must continue to be faithful to the one who has brought us up out of Egypt. We must be faithful to the Holy One who has made us his own and use these tensions for the glory of God.

Because as people who belong to the Lord, we are the salt of the earth. We are the light of the world, just as Israel were to be a light to all the nations. These laws, as much as they observed distinctions between people, they were never meant to push outsiders further away.

They were made to bring people near with Israel's holiness beautifying and adorning the promises of God. Always drawing people in to become worshippers of the God of Israel.

We as a church need to be ready not to conform to this world, but be transformed by becoming more like the God who has saved us. Because God has saved you.

He has brought you up out of Egypt, out of the realm of sin and death through the wonderful, atoning, cleansing blood of his son. And he wants his people to look like him, to bear his mark of ownership with glory.

[42 : 11] Let us be holy, for he is holy. Let's pray. Our Father God, we thank you that you have brought us to yourself, that in your steadfast love and rich mercy you have saved us from the penalty of sin and death that we deserve through the perfect cleansing blood of your son.

We thank you that you have made us your own, that each of us, despite our sin, belongs to you, our holy God. Help us, Father, to embrace the call of the gospel, to be holy, distinctive, to cut out the sin of the world that can seep into our lives, instead becoming more like you.

Help us to be ready for the reproach of the world, but give us resolute spirits, refusing to give in by conforming to the ways of the world. Father, make us holy as you are holy.

In Jesus' name, Amen.