

Fellowship With Our Father Who Forgives and Forgets

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[0 : 00] That's all of our notices for this evening, and so we're now going to turn to our Bible reading. Stephen Ballingle, one of our ministers in training, is continuing to preach to us from the book of Leviticus, as he has so helpfully been doing.

And this evening, we get to a really key section of this book, a key section of the Old Testament. And so we're going to read together this evening Leviticus chapter 16, the whole chapter, verses 1 to 34.

And if you don't have a Bible, there's plenty of visitor's Bibles around the auditorium. Do grab one at the red, at the side, at the back, and follow along as we read together.

Leviticus chapter 16, beginning at verse 1. The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the Lord and died.

[1 : 04] And the Lord said to Moses, Tell Aaron, your brother, not to come at any time into the holy place inside the veil before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die.

For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. But in this way, Aaron shall come into the holy place with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.

He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body. And he shall tie the linen sash around his waist and wear the linen turban. These are the holy garments.

He shall be of his body in water and then put them on. And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two meal goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering.

Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

[2 : 13] And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for Azazel. And Aaron shall present the goats on which the lot fell for the Lord and use it as a sin offering.

But the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.

Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall kill the bull as a sin offering for himself. And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the Lord and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small.

And he shall bring it inside the veal and put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is over the testimony so that he does not die.

And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat on the east side. And in front of the mercy seat, he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.

[3 : 25] Then he shall kill the goat, the sin offering that is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veal and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat.

Thus he shall make atonement for the holy place because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins.

And so shall he do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. No one may be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the holy place until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel.

Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the Lord and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat and put it on the horns of the altar all around.

And he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times and cleanse it and consecrate it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel. And when he has made an end of atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat.

[4 : 40] And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel and all their transgressions, all their sins.

And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.

Then Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting and shall take off the linen garments that he put on when he went into the holy place and shall leave them there. And he shall be of his body and water in a holy place and put on his garments and come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people and make atonement for himself and for the people.

And the fat of the sinner offering he shall burn on the altar. And he who lets the goat go to Azazel shall wash his clothes and be of his body and water. And afterward he may come into the camp. And the bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place shall be carried outside the camp.

[5 : 59] Their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be burned with fire. And he who burns them shall wash his clothes and be of his body and water and afterward he may come into the camp.

And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you.

For in this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the Lord from all your sins. It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you and you shall afflict yourselves.

It is a statute forever. And the priest who is anointed and consecrated as a priest in his father's place shall make atonement wearing the holy linen garments.

He shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar. And he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly.

[7 : 05] And this shall be a statute forever for you that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins. And Aaron did as the Lord commanded Moses.

Amen. This is God's word. And we'll return to it shortly. Good evening, everyone.

Please do keep your Bibles open at Leviticus chapter 16 as we go through this passage together. I've said before that the book of Leviticus is mountain-shaped, that its peak comes in the middle of the story, and that is where we are tonight.

We have finally ascended the mountain. The Day of Atonement stands out on its own as the beacon of light that pools together and makes sense of the rest of the book, almost working like the gravitational pull.

Everything finds its meaning in this one chapter. That's because Moses has used a Hebrew literary device called a chiasm, with each section on either side mirroring each other so that the focus is all drawn in to the center.

[8 : 23] Your eyes can't look away from there. That's true of the book of Leviticus. And if you were to zoom out a little bit more, it's actually true of the whole Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, from Genesis to Deuteronomy.

Moses has organized Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy chiastically, with the focus gently angled towards what happens in this very chapter.

That's not to diminish the other books. They are utterly foundational and essential for us as Christian believers today. But Moses has deliberately designed his five books like this so that our eyes are drawn in to what we're studying tonight.

I think it's helpful to imagine the first five books of the Bible as like a feature room in a grand museum full of truly beautiful works of art. You know, it's in the paid exhibit, the one you've actually got to pay good money to go into.

And as you walk into this exhibit, this majestic space, you are presented with a series of paintings on either side, which all correspond to one another. With Genesis closest to you on one side, Deuteronomy on the other, then slightly further in, you have Exodus and Numbers at the same point on either side of the room.

[9 : 40] And as you travel deeper into the room, you notice that all the lighting is gently angled towards this one piece right at the heart of it, where we see a painting of one male goat wandering out into the barren wilderness as the sun sets behind it.

Moses wants our eyes drawn towards the center of the Pentateuch, the focus of the museum, which is this, the Day of Atonement. And the point he is making through this chiasm is that having your sins forgiven is what all God does stands on.

Being made at one with God, living with him, being reconciled to him, is the key to our whole purpose as humans. Through that sacrifice, God resets the stage so that life with him may flourish. He gives us a clean slate so that we might serve him with glad hearts. He wipes away our sin so that we can devote ourselves to him.

Essentially, Leviticus 16 exists to make every other chapter of the book possible as God makes for himself a people who joyfully live with and serve him.

[11 : 04] The big danger of this passage is that we take it on its own and forget that it's surrounded by moral commands, by the way to respond to God's atonement as one of his people. We need all of Leviticus to make sense of this one chapter because it's only when our sins are forgiven that we may live with God and enjoy what it means to have true, fantastically beautiful fellowship with him.

That's the focus of all of God's work in creation, in redemption, in giving the law, in dwelling in the tabernacle, in setting up the priesthood, and taking Israel through their wilderness wanderings towards the promised land.

Man living in the light of God's glory and goodness. That's why Moses angles the light here as he shows us how God is going to accomplish all that he's planned and give his people a fresh platform from which they can serve him.

That's the picture our passage paints. Although we've seen in Leviticus so far that that is anything but straightforward. That's why this passage is rooted in the events that happened in chapter 10 with Nadab and Abihu.

Verse 1 of chapter 16 is a clear warning to remember what happens when sinful people approach the Lord without his sacrifice. When sin meets God, death has to happen because it's so offensive to him and it's the fair punishment for rejecting his holy rule.

[12 : 36] So how can sinful humans like us live and enjoy life with a holy God who is rightfully angry at our sin? That's the question that the Day of Atonement answers as we go further up and further in and finally, finally get access to God's presence himself.

Let's dig into these verses and try to familiarize ourselves with what's going on. we'll look firstly at the ritual of the day. The ritual. And we're going to take a whistle-stop tour through the chapter in six stages.

There's a lot of detail here so I've tried to break it up into fairly bite-sized chunks. So stage 1. The people prepare. In verse 29 the people are told to afflict yourselves and do no work.

before this was verse 31 a Sabbath of solemn rest which is literally translated as a Sabbath of Sabbaths. And the Sabbath has given great prominence in the Old Testament so for this to be called the Sabbath of Sabbaths well it doesn't get bigger than that.

This day was the most important one in Israel's calendar every year by a country mile. As all the drama of the day happened everyone in Israel would stand around the tent with hundreds of thousands of people quietly gathered.

[14 : 03] It's like a silent version of the pyramid stage at Glastonbury ten times over with Israelites stretching away as far as the eye can see. None of them were allowed inside the tent and they couldn't see in as the outer walls of the courtyard were over two metres high.

So they actually had no idea what was going on in there. But their fate was in the hands of another in the hands of their high priest their representative. Their atonement wasn't up to them.

Although they don't only observe but they participate too. Verse 29 they were to afflict themselves meaning deny themselves to fast and do no work.

They are repenting knowing that what is about to happen is happening because of their sin and their life depends on it. Stage 2 Aaron prepares Now Aaron prepared by washing himself in verse 4

removing his uncleanness and then he puts on linen clothes which were set aside for this day particularly.

Aaron usually walked around looking like a king as the high priest he had clothes of royalty dressed in gold and purple wearing precious gems and he was set apart from the people.

[15 : 21] You can read more of that in Exodus 28 later on if you like. But on this day Aaron had to take off his royal robes and put on the clothes of a servant a common slave.

There is no pretense in the presence of God. He sees us exactly as we are. Then Aaron gathers everything he needs. Verse 3 a ram and a bull for himself and verse 5 two goats and a ram from the people.

And now the two goats have special roles here. One is verse 9 presented to be killed as a sin offering and the second goat is verse 10 for Azazel.

And the meaning of Azazel is debated. Some people seem to think that it speaks of a demon spirit which sin is being handed over to or sacrificed to but there is no evidence of that in the passage.

That appears to come from Jewish legend rather than scripture. However, Azazel seems to be a title given to this goat which is translated really helpfully by the King James Version as the scapegoat.

[16 : 26] The one who takes the blame even though they are not guilty of it. Stage 3 Aaron approaches the tent. And for Aaron to approach the tent he has to be atoned for first.

Verse 11 Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. Aaron the high priest and the most holy most set apart person in the whole of Israel is just like the rest of them.

A sinner in need of forgiveness. Not only him but his household too meaning the household of priests. Even the priests the holy family within the holy people whose whole lives were dedicated to you guessed it being holy they were sinners in need of being reconciled to him.

then Aaron is about to enter into the most holy place which is at the rear section of the tabernacle the most holy part of the tent where God himself lived the earthly embassy of the heavenly throne room.

To do so he has to take some burning coals and place them inside the veil filling the most holy place entirely with smoke as it functions almost as a protective layer for himself as a sinner in the presence of God lest he die.

[17 : 54] Stage four Aaron cleans the tent as the sinful priests have come near the presence of God and done their day-to-day work there the tabernacle needs to be cleansed of their sin.

So Aaron takes the blood of the bull sacrificed for him and the priest and he sprinkles it verse 14 on the mercy seat. The mercy seat was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant and that's where God would appear and rest upon as he came to meet with his people with one job in mind to give them mercy. This aspect is really one of the most strange points of the day because Aaron is just in the tent on his own with the presence of God right there through the smoke flinging blood all over the place. And he does that because the people's sin has dirtied the house of the Lord. God is himself perfectly holy and clean and pure but because he has chosen to be in relationship with his people his tabernacles become unclean.

It's like he's a king who's come to live amongst unclean farm animals. The Lord is living in as verse 16 says an unclean tent in the middle of an unclean people.

[19 : 11] So that's what all of this sprinkling of the blood in the tent of meeting is doing. It's cleansing the tent of the people's sin therefore making it a place fit for a king.

Stage five Israel is atoned for and this is at the heart of the passage and this small section is really the centre of the centre of the centre of the pentateuch.

This is where the lights are focused drawing our eyes towards this very moment. Aaron has these two goats one of which has already been killed and the other one is this scapegoat.

Look with me at verses 21 and 22 to see what happens with the scapegoat. Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel and all their transgressions all their sins iniquities on itself to a remote area and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.

Aaron was to confess all the sins transgressions iniquities everything that was wrong with them onto the head of this one simple goat the scapegoat and then send it out into the wilderness.

[20 : 41] The goat carries all the sin of the people far away from the Lord's people and his presence and now the tabernacle faced westward and the goat was taken in the opposite direction as their sins were removed as far as the east is from the west.

Their sins are gone they're just removed taken away dealt with so they are clean and forgiven reconciled to right relationship with God.

It's a beautiful way of picturing how the Lord both forgives and forgets our sin. He puts it to death in the form of the first goat and removes it far far away from his presence.

As far as the east is from the west so far has he removed our transgressions from us. the slate is clean the stage has been reset for life between God and his people to flourish once more.

Final stage stage six sins remains are banished. Aaron then brings the day of atonement to a close with a series of cleansings and offerings. He removes his linen clothes and leaves them in the place the Lord was present and then he washes.

[22 : 01] He then burns up all the sacrifices to the Lord and the remains are put outside the camp miles away from Israel. They have come into contact with sinful people so they are to have no place near God's presence.

And in verse 34 we're told that this event was to happen every single year. Every single year the people of God were going to keep on sinning.

So every year they would need this sacrifice to keep them at one with the Lord. This event the day of atonement was the highlight of Israel's calendar as it was the time they saw how God would remove their sins and provide them with a clean slate to obey and serve him from.

That's the ritual. Let's now see the reason for the day of atonement, the reason for the day of atonement. The day of atonement was teaching Israel that our sin ruins and corrupts our relationship with God, that the only way to repair that is God's chosen sacrifice, and that the Lord through atonement gives a fresh platform for faithful life with him to flourish.

Israel had it built into their calendar that every year on the tenth day of the seventh month they had to come before God and seek forgiveness for their sin. There was a date in their diary that was always on the horizon where their sins would need to be atoned for.

[23 : 35] And as Aaron went into the tent, as much as this was utterly unique for him, it was also a universal thing, as his role as the high priest was to represent all the people of Israel as he went in there.

So all of them were meeting with God that day. All of them were venturing inside the tent, living through their representative. The only way to be forgiven is through God's chosen means of forgiveness.

Your sins had to be transferred onto this goat, this innocent, clean animal. Everyone, everyone needed the sacrifice that God provided.

There was no other way for them to know the Father except through that. Your sin had to go on the head of the goat and be removed far away. And doing so, created a place for true life to flourish.

Because Leviticus 16 is the gravitational pull of the book, you need the whole book to make sense of what the Lord was doing here. For everything else in Leviticus, true worship of God, confession of sin, devotion to him, living faithfully, loving him, being holy, enjoying his blessings, and giving everything we have for him.

[24 : 55] All of that only happens when you are clean from your sin. Relationship blossoms only once sin has been sent as far away as it can, and the Lord forgives his people.

That's the point of atonement, at one make. It takes two parties whose relationship is ruined and brings them together so that the fellowship is repaired and good and healthy relationship can begin. Through this sacrifice, God was clearing away all their muck and mess and dirt so that fellowship with him could flourish. But the day of atonement, for all the Lord's kindness in resetting the stage, it was lacking.

For all it achieved, there must have been a feeling of something missing, of waiting for something more. We'll see that shadow in an A, B, and C here.

So firstly, access. One of the amazing things that happens during the events of this day was that Aaron was able to have access into the most holy place, where the Lord's presence rested, hidden behind a tall and really thick curtain, which had cherubim embroidered on it, kind of like those which guarded the Garden of Eden.

[26 : 15] It was an incredible thing that Aaron could get in and walk out the other side alive and well, and it was only possible because of the blood of another. But out of all Israel, one man could go in, and he could only get in on one day of the year for no more than a few minutes.

And even then, the most holy place was filled with smoke so that Aaron wouldn't die. What were the people outside thinking? They couldn't go in, and they couldn't get access to the Lord on the same level.

Surely that wasn't all there was. That doesn't seem like great, fully restored relationship to me. Secondly, blood. On the day, Aaron sacrificed two rams, one goat, one bull, and one goat was sent away into the wilderness.

Four animals dead, and one sent away for all the sin of the people. And if you were to count up all of their sin over the past year, all the times they had failed to worship the Lord, all the times they had failed to love their neighbor, all the times they had failed to thank the Lord for his kindness, all the times they had lustful thoughts for people they shouldn't have, all the times they had broken the law, all the times they had broken the commandments, four dead animals, and one sent away for several hundred thousand people's worth of sin.

Surely that blood's not enough. Or let's think about how this is just constant. The people were to perform this whole ritual once a year forever, again and again and again and again.

[28 : 04] They were to sacrifice these animals because they just kept sinning. for all of the instruction about how to be holy and clean, the people just couldn't do it.

They couldn't manage it. And we can't either. As soon as one day of atonement was done, the people would sin again. They would immediately be in need of forgiveness.

And the clock would start ticking until next year when their sin would be dealt with once more. A genuinely thoughtful Israelite would have looked at all this in all of its wonderful goodness and thought to themselves, this is amazing because I am atoned for.

But there's something more, isn't there? Well, let's think finally about the reality of the day of atonement. Because this day was wonderful, but it was always waiting for the fulfillment that is Jesus' day of atonement on the cross of Calvary.

For us, understanding what happened on the day of atonement should help us appreciate the cross of Christ all the more. We'll notice three things about Jesus, that he is our priest, our payment, and our proof.

[29 : 20] So how is Jesus our priest? Well, right at the start of this day, Aaron has to sacrifice for himself. And in terms of access, well, he barely got near the Lord's presence.

He did get in, but only one man was able to enter God's presence for one day of the year, when the place was full of smoke, and he couldn't even see, and he was only there for a few minutes, and there was a high chance of death.

It really wasn't that much, was it? However, Jesus is not like Aaron. Jesus is sinless, so he can enter the most holy place by the power of his own blood, rather than that of animals.

That's why when Jesus died on the cross, the curtain of the temple, which separated the people from the presence of God, was torn in two. The curtain was there to protect anyone from walking into God's presence, because sinful people have no business being in the presence of God.

We shouldn't be able to be there and come out alive. It stood like a wall, keeping distance between God and his people for their own good. But that curtain was torn in two, from top to bottom.

[30 : 32] God's door was opened. Because of Jesus' blood, we don't have to stand far off, but we may call the holy God our father and draw near to him in the full assurance of faith, because we've got a man on the inside.

So unlike the priest in Leviticus who offered the sacrifices year after year, because the people were still sinful, Jesus offered his sacrifice once, because his sacrifice cleanses all of his people for all time.

He did the work of the priest better than any priest could, because with his blood, the slate is permanently clean. To see how Jesus is our payment, let's think about the goats offered in the ritual.

One goat was killed, and the other, the scapegoat, was led out into the wilderness. And the writer of Hebrews says that Jesus suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

Jesus died outside of Jerusalem, outside the camp, so that people would be made holy through his blood. And that's because he was enduring all the punishment we deserve for breaking God's law. [31 : 47] We don't only deserve death, but we deserve to be pushed out, away from God, ejected from Eden, removed from the tabernacle, vomited out of the promised land, thrown into the lake of fire.

That's what we deserve. And as Jesus died outside the camp, he became both the goat that was killed and the scapegoat sent out into the wilderness, bearing all the weight of the sin of his people and taking it as far away as possible.

The Lord Jesus himself was pushed out, away from the camp, and even more shockingly, away from his father when he was on the cross. Jesus, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He was cut off from the father, and he took that pain on our behalf so that we never have to suffer it. He had to be cut off like that to take our punishment for sin once for all, for all who trust in him. To see how Jesus is our proof, did you notice what Aaron the high priest was wearing and what he was to do with his clothes? Verse 24, once atonement had been made, Aaron takes off his linen clothes and leaves them in the tent.

[33 : 07] He was to leave his linen clothes in the presence of God, in the place where atonement was made. So if you were to pop your head into the tent of meeting, if you saw a folded up pile of linen clothes, you would see and believe that atonement had been made.

Listen to what John in his gospel says when two disciples ran to Jesus' tomb. John saw the linen clothes lying there, but he did not go in.

Then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb. He saw the linen clothes lying there and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen clothes, but folded up in a place by itself.

Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in and he saw and believed. If this was a movie, then the camera would be zooming in on the linen clothes.

It would start way, dramatic music playing in the background and then slowly focus in on them. And you watching it would just know what it meant without any explanation. The linen clothes lying there shouted out the message loud and clear.

[34 : 17] Atonement had been made. It was done. It was finished. Jesus had done it once for all.

He had repaired the relationship once and for all. God. Because he did it not as an animal, but as a man. A perfectly faithful man who obeyed the law of the Lord flawlessly in every single way because he is the Lord.

He is the lawgiver. He died as a man representing us, us, so that he could pay the price properly like those animals never could. And so he would bring to an end the whole sacrificial system because he had done everything it was pointing to.

It was obsolete because it's been finished. It's been done. Nothing can be added to his perfect work of atonement on the cross. Jesus is everything we need and everything that the day of atonement was pointing to.

As the people participated in this day, they were anticipating something better and participating in Christ as they did so. So what difference does the day of atonement make to our lives today?

[35 : 38] Does it matter at all? Well, each of us is sick with the same disease, sin, which ruins our relationship with God.

Whatever we do in this life, we will end up meeting our maker. We all share the same destiny that one day we will breathe our last and be standing face to face with the Holy God, asked to give an account of our lives before him.

You will come before him as you are. He sees you as you are. And in your own strength, you will be found guilty as you are. If you're here tonight and don't know Christ yet, then remember that whatever you do in this life, whatever choices you make, whatever paths you follow, meeting God at the end of it is utterly inescapable.

All roads lead to you being eye to eye with the God who made everything, the God of all holiness, being asked what you've done about his son. Israel had a day in the diary and so do we.

Our days are numbered because death is the great leveler and it comes to us all. Your good deeds don't make up for all your bad ones. That's not how it works because your blood is full of sin.

[37 : 07] You and all of us need God's sacrifice, which he so graciously provides. And either your sin will be sent away from him or you will forever.

Only through trusting in Christ, may your sin be led out into the wilderness, removed as far as the east is from the west, nailed to the cross, dead and buried. And then you may call God your father and live forever.

So come to him, be cleansed by him and live with the freedom that belonging to God brings. Put your trust in Christ and enjoy the relationship with him that you were always destined for.

And for those of us who are trusting in Christ, we are to look at the great atonement and be utterly transformed by it. Because Moses was wanting the day of atonement to transform everything about his healer's lives.

This was a one day event with a lifetime scope. He wanted Leviticus 16 to impact their lives by overflowing into a flood of obedience as they lived out the rest of his book.

[38 : 27] And everything on there hangs on there being a sacrifice for sin. That's why Moses angles the museum lights towards this chapter. Because in it we see how everything that the Lord does holds together.

That for God to live with man, man's sin must be dealt with properly, fully, forever. That sacrifice is the foundation upon which relationship between God and man is built.

Moses wanted his readers to be liberated to trust and obey the Lord in all he taught, fueled by the forgiveness they had received for real relationship with God to flourish.

And isn't that just obviously true in your life and in our church life? Aren't the Christians you know who honor God most gladly, who are so keen to obey and serve him with a joyful heart, aren't they those who know how sinful they are and how much they have been forgiven?

Aren't they those who cling, cling to the cross of Jesus, have surrendered to him and allow him to transform everything about their lives? Isn't the time you have been most on fire for the Lord and served him most gladly when you were aware of how gracious he is to you in the gospel?

[39 : 53] Isn't the time when you were so delighted to sit and listen to his commands when you knew what a wretched sinner you were, yet how great a savior he is?

For some of us, it might be quite some time since we can remember serving the Lord quite like that. Maybe we've grown cold.

Maybe we've been scarred and embittered by our experiences in this life. Or maybe we feel such shame of our own sin and our repeated failures of obedience.

We know the relationship isn't quite what it used to be. The honeymoon period has gone. Maybe we've grown tired of God's forgiveness. And the spark has died.

Well, friends, if that is you, then in the blood of the Lord Jesus, our Father in heaven gives us a clean slate from where we may experience abundant life and joy in his presence.

[41 : 03] The stage has been cleared and reset. The slate is clean. And today, today, you can be free to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

How much more are we forgiven in Christ? And how much more are we to serve and love our God? Because the gospel is the fuel we need for life and joy in Christian service.

So hear the word of the Lord. Love your neighbor as yourself. Love one another. Be faithful to the Lord in your relationships. Celebrate all the ways he's been so gracious to you.

Celebrate him every week among his gathered people. And devote everything you are and have to him and him alone. Christ's blood cleanses ourselves.

And it cleanses our church. He died so that we might live with God in faithful fellowship with him. Where acts of faithfulness, of devotion, of love for God would flourish and grow.

[42 : 13] There is no punishment for us to receive anymore. No debt for us to pay. And what that does is it frees us up to serve him gladly.

The shackles of sin are off. The weight of our shame is lifted. And we are finally free to take up our cross and follow him.

To deny ourselves and be willing to sacrifice everything we have so that we may bring glory to our Heavenly Father who has saved us at such cost to himself.

Brothers and sisters, that is how we are to enjoy our relationship with our Heavenly Father. by giving everything we have to the one who has given us everything we need.

Don't go on sinning. Don't go on doing the very things that wrecked this relationship in the first place. But serve him. Devote yourself to him.

[43 : 13] And enjoy the freedom you have in him. Because God has sent his son to die on the cross so that we might be rescued into his service with a new master who loves us.

The Lord wants us to be a church family who enjoys the forgiveness we have in Christ by joyfully giving everything we have to the one who has given us everything we need. Let's pray together. Our Lord and our Father we know that we are great great sinners who have ruined our relationship with you.

But your Son the Lord Jesus is our great Savior. Help us to love him to see how great his sacrifices and respond with glad obedience and joyful service to you.

In Jesus name. Amen.