

Separated to the LORD

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: 22 October 2017

Preacher: Edward Lobb

[0 : 00] We turn now to our reading from scripture, and you'll find this in the book of Numbers, chapter 6. And in our church Bibles, these are on page 114, page 114, Numbers chapter 6.

And in tonight's chapter, we're considering the Nazarites, those who took a special vow of consecration to the Lord. So Numbers chapter 6, verse 1.

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazarite, to separate himself to the Lord, he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink.

He shall drink no vinegar made from wine or strong drink, and shall not drink any juice of grapes, or eat grapes fresh or dried. All the days of his separation, he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skins. All the days of his vow of separation, no razor shall touch his head. Until the time is completed for which he separates himself to the Lord, he shall be holy. He shall let the locks of his hair, the locks of hair of his head grow long.

All the days that he separates himself to the Lord, he shall not go near a dead body. Not even for his father or for his mother, for brother or sister, if they die, shall he make himself unclean, because his separation to God is on his head.

[1 : 43] All the days of his separation, he is holy to the Lord. And if a man dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles his consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing.

On the seventh day, he shall shave it. On the eighth day, he shall bring two turtle doves or two pigeons to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the priest shall offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned by reason of the dead body.

And he shall consecrate his head that same day, and separate himself to the Lord for the days of his separation, and bring a male lamb, a year old, for a guilt offering. But the previous period shall be void, because his separation was defiled.

And this is the law for the Nazirite, when the time of his separation has been completed. He shall be brought to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and he shall bring his gift to the Lord.

One male lamb, a year old, without blemish, for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb, a year old, without blemish, as a sin offering, and one ram, without blemish, as a peace offering, and a basket of unleavened bread, loaves of fine flour mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and their grain offering and their drink offerings.

[3 : 12] And the priest shall bring them before the Lord, and offer his sin offering, and his burnt offering. And he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of peace offering to the Lord, with the basket of unleavened bread.

The priest shall also offer its grain offering, and its drink offering. And the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head, and put it on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offering.

And the priest shall take the shoulder of the ram when it is boiled, and one unleavened loaf out of the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and shall put them on the hands of the Nazirite, after he has shaved the hair of his consecration.

And the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the Lord. They are a holy portion for the priest, together with the breast that is waved, and the thigh that is contributed.

And after that, the Nazirite may drink wine. This is the law of the Nazirite. But if he vows an offering to the Lord above his Nazirite vow, as he can afford, in exact accordance with the vow that he takes, then he shall do in addition to the law of the Nazirite.

[4 : 31] The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel. You shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. So they shall put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.

Amen. This is the word of the Lord, and may it be a blessing to us this evening. Amen. Well, let's turn again to Numbers chapter 6 on page 114.

And my title for this evening is Separated to the Lord. Separated to the Lord. The Bible uses a number of different terms to describe what it means to become a Christian.

So, for example, and this is not an exhaustive list, but for example, repenting and believing, turning to the Lord, being saved, being born again, receiving Christ, or even being persuaded.

[5 : 53] But it also uses terms like being sanctified and being set apart. So, for example, at the beginning of 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul addresses his letter to those sanctified in Christ Jesus.

The Apostle Peter sends his first letter to those who are sanctified in the Holy Spirit. And you find a very similar idea in the opening verse of Romans, Romans chapter 1, verse 1, where Paul writes of himself as set apart for the gospel of God, or as the authorized version puts it, separated unto the gospel of God.

Now, the idea behind these terms is simple. A person, an individual, is removed from the general crowd of people and is set apart for a particular purpose.

Dedicated or consecrated or separated. And actually, we find this in everyday homely things as well. An armchair in the sitting room at home might be grandpa's armchair, and nobody else is allowed to use it.

It's special for him. Or a room in your house might be dedicated as the games room or the computer room. It's set apart for a particular purpose. Now, this is an idea which the Bible is full of.

[7 : 13] The Israelite nation is set apart from the Gentile nations so that the Israelites can eventually bring blessing from God to the Gentile nations. And then within Israel, the tribe of Levi is set apart to look after the tabernacle.

We saw that a week or two ago. And within the tribe of Levi, the family of Aaron is set apart to be the priests. Now, within the Christian church, every believer, every Christian is set apart.

Set apart by God to belong to him and to serve him. Every Christian has repented and believed.

Every Christian has been born again, has been persuaded of the truth about Jesus Christ, has received Christ, has turned to the Lord, and has been set apart from the rest of the population.

Now, if you're a Christian, I imagine most here tonight are Christians, is this something that you're aware of? That you've been set apart from other people? That you're not only a believer, but God has separated you to himself.

Not because you're nicer or morally superior to your friends who are not Christians, but simply because he has chosen you to belong to him. Well, let's turn to this chapter in Numbers, Numbers chapter 6, so as to learn from the Nazarites, who are also set apart.

[8 : 37] And the basic description of the Nazarites comes in verse 2. When either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazarite, to separate himself to the Lord.

Now, there's the heart of it. Separation to the Lord. A deliberate, voluntary, self-consecration to the Lord. Now, we'll look at the details in the passage in just a moment.

But first, let's notice two interesting features of the Nazarite. The first thing is that both men and women could take a Nazarite vow. And the second thing is that it was a voluntary decision.

And those are both striking features. Priests, for example, had to be men. And the Levites, who were responsible for the tabernacle and looking after its furnishings, they too had to be men.

But both men and women could be Nazarites. And it was also voluntary. The priests and the Levites, they were born into those roles. If you were born a Levite, it was no good trying to get out of your responsibilities.

[9 : 43] You had to serve your regular turns of duty at the tabernacle. But taking a Nazarite vow was not something you had to do. It was entirely a matter of personal choice.

And it was normally time-limited, as verse 13 makes clear. Just have a look at 13. This is the law for the Nazarite when the time of his separation has been completed.

So it seems that a Nazarite vow could be taken for a variable length of time, perhaps for a month or several months, even for a year or more. You may remember in the book of Judges that Samson's

parents were told by an angel before he was born that Samson had to be a Nazarite from birth. His hair was never to be cut lifelong. But that was the exception. It wasn't the rule. Normally, the Nazarite vow lasted just for a limited period. Now, this rather odd word, Nazarite, comes from a Hebrew verb, Nazir, which means to separate or to consecrate it.

So a Nazarite, by definition, is a separated one. Now, you and I, if we're Christian people, we don't have the option today to take Nazarite vows as such, not in this form.

[10:59] Number six is not inviting us to be Nazarites today. But it's here in the Bible for our instruction. And it will help us to think in a biblical and godly way about self-consecration.

If we are Christians, the Lord has already consecrated or sanctified us to be his by virtue of our conversion and our new birth.

But the example of the Nazarites will teach us to respond to the Lord's consecration of us by learning to consecrate ourselves willingly to his service.

He consecrates us as we're born again, and we then respond in self-consecration. Even Jesus, who was eternally consecrated to the service of the Father, took steps to consecrate himself. He said in his famous prayer to God the Father in John chapter 17, as he was praying just before his crucifixion, and he said this to the Father, for their sake, for the sake of my disciples, I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.

[12:06] The Lord Jesus desires that his disciples should be consecrated in truth, and the Nazarites will help us even though the features of their consecration may seem rather strange to us.

So let's turn to this chapter, and we'll see if we can drill down to the principles which underlie its main features. There are three main features of the Nazarite, and they all involve some kind of abstinence.

First, in verses 3 and 4, the Nazarite is to abstain from alcohol. Secondly, in verse 5, he or she is to abstain from haircuts. And then thirdly, in verses 6 and 7, he is to stay clear of contact with dead bodies.

Now, I shan't keep on saying he or she, because he or she is clumsy, isn't it? But whenever I say he, I mean he or she. So let's look at these three features in turn, and I'll take them in a different order.

First of all, let's look at the hair, which teaches us that separation to the Lord speaks of cost. Now, it's difficult for us to understand this feature of the Nazarite, because in our culture today, we've developed a multifaceted kind of hair culture.

[13:20] We'll just think of it. We'll just look around this room. We'll just think of the hair culture we have today. We have everything from head shavings, patterns woven in your hair, side partings, if you're very old-fashioned, curlings, straightenings, red, blue, and green, and yellow dyes, purple dyes, pigtails, ponytails, French braids, highlights, lowlights.

You name it, you can see it any day of the week in Glasgow, can't you? But in Old Testament Jewish culture, which was very different, there seems to have been a connection between hair and strength.

Now, it's not like that in our culture. We know that bald-headed men are just as strong as men with hair. Think of some of our top rugby players, strong as bullocks, but bald as coots.

But in Old Testament Israel, hair seemed to be, in some way, a symbol of strength. Do you remember the description of Absalom, David's son, just before Absalom rebelled against David and tried to become king in his place?

The account in 2 Samuel chapter 14 says this, In all Israel, there was no one so much to be praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom.

[14:32] From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him. And when he cut the hair of his head, which he used to do at the end of every year when it was heavy on him, he weighed the hair of his head 200 shekels by the king's weight.

I did my mathematical inquiries and discovered that 200 shekels is about 2.2 kilos. That is nearly five pounds in weight. Could you grow five pounds weight of hair in one year?

Now, why does the author of 2 Samuel describe Absalom like that? Surely because it suggests his strength and vitality, very handsome and very vigorous and therefore all the more dangerous as an enemy to his aging father.

Or think of Samson, who was a lifelong Nazarite. He should never have allowed that wretched woman Delilah to shave his head. Letting her shave his head was a fundamental disobedience to

the Lord on Samson's part.

It was a blatant breaking of his Nazarite vows. And the Lord disciplined him for his disobedience by depriving him of his strength. Though, as you know, his strength returned as his hair grew again.

[15:45] But he received strength not from his hair, but from the Lord. But the hair was a symbol of his consecration to the Lord's service. And just as you and I will be weakened in the Lord's service if we're disobedient towards him, so Samson was weakened by his disobedience.

Now, let's look at what happens to the Nazarite's hair. The second half of Numbers chapter 6 tells us what the Nazarite has to do at the end of his vow time. So look with me at verse 13.

When the time of his separation has been completed, he has to come to the entrance of the tent of meeting or the tabernacle. But he does not come empty-handed. He brings with him, verse 14, a male lamb, a ewe lamb, and a ram, all to be sacrificed as burnt offering, sin offering, and then peace offering.

And he must also bring, as verse 15 tells us, unleavened bread, loaves baked with fine flour, unleavened wafers with grain offerings, and drink offerings. Now, the sacrificial offerings which are described in the Law of Moses, it's quite a complicated thing.

But basically, these sacrificial offerings fall into two categories. There are those based on a sense of fellowship with God, and there are those based on a sense of alienation from God.

[17:11] The fellowship and peace and thank offerings show the Lord's people depending thankfully upon the Lord for his protection and provision. The other offerings, involving sacrificial blood, express a sense of sin and alienation, which seeks pardon and atonement.

So the first group of offerings express man's dependence on God, and the second group of offerings deals with man's alienation from God. And the regular offering of these sacrifices helped to keep warm a worshiper's relationship with God because they reminded him regularly of God's wonderful kindness to him, both in providing for his needs and in atoning for his sins.

But offering these sacrifices was not cheap. Just look again at verse 14. The three animals to be sacrificed must be without blemish.

So you couldn't go to your flock of sheep and pull out a runt or a lame one or one that was suffering with a chronic cough. They had to be valuable fit animals, the sort that you would want to keep back as your breeding stock for the following year.

The small farmer winces when he has to part with his best stock. But that's the point here. It's costly. So what happens? Well, the Nazarite brings his animals and the other offerings to the tent of meeting.

[18:35] Then, look at verse 18. He then brings out his cutthroat razor. Can you imagine that sort of razor? When you go to the barbers, do you submit to the cutthroat razor?

Scraping the back of your neck? Making you think of Sweeney Todd? So verse 18, it's rather dramatic. The Nazarite shaves his consecrated head at the tabernacle entrance, then gathers up the hair and puts it on the fire where the peace-offering ram is already roasting.

Just think of that. Roasting mutton and sizzling hair. Think of the smells. And what happens to the meat? Verses 19 and 20 tell us the meat goes to the priest as God's representative.

The worshiper doesn't get to eat any of it. So everything goes away. Everything is offered up to the Lord. The meat, the loaves, and the hair. Which symbolizes the strength and the vigor, the ability of the worshiper.

It's all being offered up here to the Lord. Now doesn't this help us to understand the full-blooded Christian life? The Bible teaches us to take all our powers and abilities, all our energy and strength, and to offer it up, no strings attached, to the Lord God.

[19:57] everything. So let me ask, what can you do? Do you have ability with your hands, good at making things or building things or mending things? Do you have powers of creativity, music, arts, writing?

Powers of organizing and administration? Powers of speaking or teaching? Powers of encouraging other people? How could you encourage other people? Cooking for them, helping them to relax, helping them to laugh.

Powers of leadership, the ability to get things done and getting other people to work together corporately and happily. Powers to run business, to make money, to provide employment for other people.

Powers of friendship and caring and compassion. Now, imagine that you have got a head of hair like Absalom just before haircut day, a great head of hair, and let your great head of hair represent all your abilities.

Now, take a razor to your head, shave your head, and then offer it up, the hair, on the fire to the Lord. You gave it to me, Lord, now I give it back for your use.

[21 : 11] That is the Bible's way of looking at life. Do you remember Francis Havergal's hymn, Take My Life, which begins, take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.

And in six or seven verses, she runs through the things that she has which she can offer to the Lord. Take my hands, she says, take my voice, take my silver and my gold, take my motives and my will, take my heart, take my love, finally, take myself, and I will be yours for all eternity. She died in 1879, at the age of 43. A short life, but a useful one with an attitude like that. Our problem is that because we're self-centered by nature, we want to keep bits of it back for ourselves. C.S. Lewis, before he became a Christian, regarded God as the great interferer. He didn't want the Lord to interfere with his personal arrangements. In Nazarite terms, he wanted to keep a few locks of hair back for himself.

Now, we can be like that, withholding certain areas of life from the Lord. Lord, don't touch that. That is sacrosanct. That's my pride and joy. We fear that our life might be diminished by handing some special treasure over to him, not realizing that the opposite is true.

[22 : 42] To give everything over to him is the way to the greatest joy as well as the greatest usefulness. He has given us everything and our life finds its richest fulfillment in giving back to him what he has given to us.

Let's not be niggardly towards one who has not been niggardly towards us. This is about love. It's about his love to us and our love to him in response. He gave everything for us at the cross. Is it too much for us to give him our lives in return? Yes, it will be costly at times, but that is a cost worth accepting. So if the Nazarite separation speaks to us first about cost, it speaks to us secondly about life.

Look again at verses 6 and 7. All the days that he separates himself to the Lord, he shall not go near a dead body. Not even for his father or his mother or brother or sister if they die, shall he make himself unclean because his separation to God is on his head.

Now at first sight this seems to be a very strange requirement. I don't know if you've ever been present at a death bed if you've actually witnessed a person taking their last breath.

[24 : 01] It's a solemn thing to witness and I would encourage you to do it. It is after all natural to want to be with your loved ones in their final moments. It's good to comfort them, to be present there, to hold their hands, perhaps to pray out loud or to read a Bible passage to them as they slip away.

But just think of it, if you're holding that hand, the moment that death comes and the last breath is taken, you're then holding a corpse. That's very natural and normal.

It's part of normal life and yet the Nazarite is strongly forbidden to even go near a dead body, not even the body of one of his close relatives. And verse 9 pictures the situation where somebody dies very suddenly, presumably standing or sitting next to the Nazarite and if that happens then the Nazarite has to shave his head and start the period of his vow all over again.

So this means if you were under a 12-month vow and somebody died in your presence after 11 and a half months are up, you'd have to start all over again. That's what verse 12 is saying.

The defilement of the dead body is so strong that it nullifies the vow up to that point. Now we live in a post-Nazarite era obviously, but what do we learn from this prohibition?

[25 : 20] The main lesson surely is that death is the primary demonstration of the curse that God placed upon the human race in the Garden of Eden. He said to Adam, talking about the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he said to him, the day you eat of it, you will surely die.

Death, therefore, is not a natural process, it is a supernatural judgment. It was from the power of death that Jesus came to rescue us so that even though we die physically, we're then raised to eternal life.

Just think of that story told in John's Gospel, chapter 11, where Jesus goes to the tomb of his friend Lazarus, whom he loved, and he gets there four days after Lazarus has been buried.

And you remember the story? As he approached the tomb, he wept. He wept. He sobbed. Now, why should Jesus do that? He knew that he was just about to raise Lazarus from the dead.

Surely he wept, not for Lazarus, but for the human race. It grieved him to the point of tears to think of the countless multitudes of people walking down the broad road that leads to destruction.

[26 : 38] Death is hateful, horrible. The prophet Isaiah, chapter 25, described it as the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.

Some years ago, I was taking the funeral service of a good friend of mine, a man who'd been a very fine Christian and a most effective gospel worker. And at the end of the service, his brother-in-law, a man that I knew very well also, and the brother-in-law was also a very experienced Christian, he was standing just beside me and suddenly he burst into tears and he said to me, Edward, death is obscene.

Now this was a man who knew his Bible really well and deeply understood the Bible's teaching about the resurrection of the dead. The power of death is broken by Jesus wonderfully and completely.

As the epistle to the Hebrews puts it, chapter 2, by his death, by Jesus' death, he has destroyed the one who has the power of death, that is the devil. We have nothing to fear from death if we're Christians, but it's still horrible and it made Jesus weep.

But the Nazarite, consecrated to the Lord, had to stay away from everything that spoke of death. Now what about us?

[28 : 01] Don Carson writes this concerning the Nazarite and the Christian. He says, that which is holy belongs to the living God, not to the realm of death and decay which arise from the horror of sin.

Death and decay and sin in all its horror. Those three things go together. We belong, Don Carson is saying, to the author of life, not to the power of death.

Our separation, our consecration to the Lord then, requires us to steer a course through life that keeps away from everything that smacks of death, decay, and sin.

We walk the narrow way, but we can easily stray from it into the bogs and myes of sin. Don Carson's phrase is the horror of sin.

And I think that's a very helpful phrase because it brings home to us the real, foul, degrading nature of sin. The Nazarite was to regard death with a sense of horror.

[29 : 02] Well, let's pray to the Lord to fill our hearts with great love for other people, but with great hatred for everything that the Lord hates, everything that has the stench of death and corruption about it.

Dishonesty, cheating, sexual immorality, greed, anger, jealousy, drunkenness, loss of self-control. These are all things that diminish a human being that will disable our capacity to live a life of love and service.

Let's ask the Lord to give us a horror of sin. I think most of us know what it's like to experience a sense of horror in some other way. Might be a horror at the idea of spiders, for example, or birds' wings flapping, or getting trapped in some very small dark space.

Well, let's pray that the Lord will give us a similar sense of horror, hatefulness about sin. The entry of sin into the world caused the entry of death into the world.

Sin belongs to the realm of death, but Christians have been separated out from that realm. We belong now to the realm of life, and we belong to the author of life.

[30 : 15] Then thirdly, the Nazarites speak to us of self-restraint. Verse 3, the Nazarite shall separate himself from wine and strong drink.

Now, when you look on to the end of verse 20, you can see that after the period of the vow is completed, the Nazarite is free to drink wine again. It's not a lifelong ban on alcohol, but it's designed surely to teach the Nazarite the importance of self-restraint.

And that's the lesson for us as well. Self-restraint in the use of alcohol, but self-restraint surely in every area of life. Let's think first about alcohol.

People often speak of alcohol as if it's a stimulant. Come in, George, and sit down next to me. Let me pour you a little glass of stimulating beverage. Glug, glug, glug. Caffeine is a stimulant.

Alcohol is a depressant. Tea and coffee G you up and get you going. That's why we need it in the morning. Alcohol slows everything down.

[31 : 19] Your thought processes, your speed of reaction, everything. And if too much is taken, it reduces healthy self-restraint in the things that we say to other people and in particular, it lowers the good barriers that we put up in our minds against sexual misconduct.

Now, the Bible does not command Christians to be total abstainers, but it does teach us to be very careful about alcohol. We all know how destructive it is when a person becomes gripped with an addiction to alcohol.

Listen to this from Proverbs chapter 23. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end, it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder.

So the Bible warns us and our experience of life also warns us. I guess we've all known people and families who've been horribly damaged, torn apart perhaps by alcohol.

It has brought many a Scot and many an Englishman to an early grave. But the Nazarite example surely takes us further than just alcohol.

[32 : 28] Think of the New Testament's teaching. When you study the ethical teaching of the Apostle Paul in his letters, you come to realize that the heart of Christian behavior, the heart of Christian ethics is self-control, self-discipline and self-restraint.

Jesus teaches self-denial as being right at the heart of discipleship. If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. Deny himself.

self. The self is the problem. It needs to be denied, controlled and restrained. It's constantly threatening to break out and do damage. It's like a pack of hounds that needs to be kept in their kennels.

And we are bound to say, is it possible to control this baying, restless pack of hounds that lives in my heart? The answer is yes indeed, by the grace of God.

We look to Jesus, the flawless example, of self-restraint. We learn his pattern of life, his self-control, his love and respect for other people as we read the four Gospels.

[33 : 37] We then see his self-restraint reflected in the example of his apostles in their New Testament letters. So we begin to learn the family likeness, the DNA, if you like, which is shared between Jesus and the apostles.

And we begin also to see it in other Christian people, especially those who have been on the narrow way for longer than we have. We see how the Lord has graciously curbed the forces of chaos in their lives.

And we begin to realize, and it's a lovely realization, that the Lord is able to remake and to reshape us as well. The Christian life, friends, gets better and better, I can promise you that, as we submit to the Lord's will, as we allow him to take the raw, rebellious material of our lives and to reconstruct us according to the pattern of Jesus.

So let's learn from the Nazarites to offer ourselves willingly. If we're Christians, the Lord has already separated us from the life of the non-Christian world.

Our response to him now is to say to him, please, Lord, further that process of separation and consecration. Help me to love being yours.

[34 : 53] Help me to long to know you better and to be more like Christ. So it's costly, it's not cheap. It's about life, not death. It's about self-restraint rather than chaos.

And look now how the chapter ends. It is so fitting. It ends with Aaron and his sons, verse 23, the priests of Israel.

Now they, of all people, and even more than the Nazarites, knew what it was to be consecrated. So what did their separation and consecration mean for the people of Israel?

It meant that they could bless them. Their words, their example, their influence was a blessing to God's people. Look at verse 24. The Lord bless you, they could say.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance, his face upon you and give you peace. The influence of the Lord's consecrated priests was to bring blessing to the people of God.

[35 : 59] And so it is today. All who are Christians are priests. The whole church has a priestly role to the people who are not yet Christians. So our words, our telling of the wonderful story of redemption through Christ, it's this that brings blessing to those who don't know the Lord yet.

And what is the consequence? Look at verse 27. In this way, they shall put my name upon the people of Israel and I will bless them.

This is what evangelism is all about. As we preach the gospel to the world, the very name of God is put upon those who respond in faith.

It's just like what happens at a marriage. A woman, as she marries, receives a new name which she then carries for the rest of her life. It changes her very identity.

And when a person embraces the gospel, the very name of God, the very name of Jesus Christ is branded onto them, heart and soul, changing their identity, their sense of where they belong, and their eternal destiny.

[37 : 10] It is a wonderful thing to be separated to the Lord. It's he who separates us by his choice and decision. our part now is to think hard about the implications of our separation and to live accordingly.

Let's bow our heads and we'll pray. Dear God, our Father, we thank you so much for this example of these men and women of old who consecrated themselves to the Lord.

We want to pray this evening, especially for those who are professing faith and joining our church, becoming members, admitted members of the church, and ask that in their hearts you will give them the joy of wanting to grow in the Christian life, wanting to experience your love and truth more deeply.

And for all of us, dear Father, help us to separate ourselves, to give ourselves willingly and joyfully, so that through the preaching of the gospel, through our lives and our words, we may bring the name of God and the name of the Lord Jesus to many.

And we ask it for his name's sake. Amen.