

# Whom Will You Serve

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good. Well, please do turn in your Bibles to our reading for this evening, which is in Joshua chapter 24. And if you have one of the church visitor Bibles, you'll find that on page 198.

So that's Joshua 24, the last chapter, our last visit on Sunday evenings to the book of Joshua. Joshua 24. So if you've been here in the last few weeks, we've been looking together at these last chapters of Joshua.

And this is the third and final of the three great gatherings of the people just before Joshua died. So this is the last one, and it's the one where all the people are gathered together.

Everyone's there at Shechem to hear Joshua's words. Let's read together Joshua 24, verse 1. Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel.

And they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel. Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah the father of Abraham and of Nahor.

[ 1 : 21 ] And they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the river and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many.

I gave him Isaac. And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to which to possess. But Jacob and his children went down to Egypt.

And I sent Moses and Aaron. And I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it. And afterward, I brought you out.

Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt. And you came to the sea. And the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horses to the Red Sea. And when they cried to the Lord, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians and made the sea come upon them and cover them.

And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness a long time. Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived on the other side of the Jordan.

[ 2 : 29 ] They fought with you. And I gave them into your hands. And you took possession of their land. And I destroyed them before you. Then Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel.

And he sent and invited Balaam, the son of Baal, to curse you. But I would not listen to Balaam. Indeed, he blessed you. So I delivered you out of his hands.

And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the leaders of Jericho fought against you. And also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Gergashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

And I gave them into your hands. And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings, the Amorites. It was not by your sword or by your bow.

I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities which you had not built. And you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant.

[ 3 : 34 ] Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the river and in Egypt and serve the Lord.

And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your father served in the region beyond the river or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Then the people answered, Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods.

For it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt out of the house of slavery and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went

and among all the peoples through whom we passed.

And the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore, we will also serve the Lord for he is our God.

[ 4 : 42 ] But Joshua said to the people, You are not able to serve the Lord for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God.

He will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you after having done you good.

And the people said to Joshua, No, but we will serve the Lord. Then Joshua said to the people, You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord to serve him.

And they said, We are witnesses. Joshua said, Then put away the foreign gods that are among you and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel.

And the people said to Joshua, The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem.

[ 5 : 47 ] And Joshua wrote these words in the book of law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebin that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said to all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us.

Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God. So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance.

After these things, Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being 110 years old. And they buried him in his own inheritance at Timnath-Serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gash.

Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, and had known all the work that the Lord did for Israel. As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob bought from the sons of Hema, the father of Shechem, for a hundred pieces of money. It became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph. And Eliezer, the son of Aaron, died, and they buried him at Gibeah, the town of Phinehas, his son, which had been given him in the hill country of Ephraim.

[ 7 : 24 ] Well, may God bless to us. The reading is word this evening. Good Lord, as you sit, do you turn back to Joshua, and to chapter 24.

And we'll spend a few moments now thinking about that together. So Joshua 24. Let me begin with the words of a 20th century philosopher.

You may be an ambassador to England or France. You may like to gamble. You may like to dance. You may be the heavyweight champion of the world.

You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls. But you're going to have to serve somebody. Yes, indeed, you're going to have to serve somebody.

Well, it may be the devil, or it may be the laws. But you're going to have to serve somebody. Those are the words of Bob Dylan. And he's right.

[ 8 : 35 ] All people, in all places, at all times, have to serve someone or something. Whether we see the choice or not, whether we realize it or not, all of us serve someone.

But the question is, who? And the answer to that question, well, the answer to that question determines everything. Whatever it is we serve, whatever it is, it is our God.

So it's not so much a question of, do you serve God or not, but which one do you serve? Let me read again the central section of this great fell wear sermon of Joshua's.

Verses 14 and 15. That's the key question that he poses. Look again. Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness.

Put away the gods that your father served beyond the river in Egypt and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your father served in the region beyond the river or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.

[ 9 : 50 ] But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. This is the great question for God's people at all times.

It is the question, the great choice that we face every day. Choose this day whom you will serve. Now, this is really quite a shocking passage.

It's quite an extraordinary thing for Joshua to say. This is his farewell speech. Surely it's a time for nice words, don't you think? But Joshua doesn't hold back.

He sets out the response, the commitment expected of the people. And it's the response of exclusive loyalty to the Lord God.

But it is only in response to God's great and extraordinary faithfulness that the demands of exclusive allegiance and loyalty from God's people are made.

[10:49] Joshua knows what God's people are like. And although they would profess and profess often faith in God, they would, alongside him, serve the gods of the nations, the gods that they feared and sought to appease.

He was often just one God amongst many. but God would not stand for their syncretism. God demands exclusive allegiance.

He demands a choice. And the big question, the big question that's left hanging in the air with Joshua's words then and now is simply this.

whom will you serve? Whom will you serve? And the way in which Joshua goes about his sermon here, the things that he says should leave the reader, should leave you and I in no doubt as to what the obvious thing is to do.

In light of all that Joshua says, the obvious and the clear choice is to serve the Lord God. but the trouble is it doesn't often feel obvious.

[12:09] Come Monday morning when you're in the lecture room or in the office or sat in the waiting room at the doctors, when the pressures of the world close in around us, serving God doesn't feel like the obvious choice.

The gods of the world around us, the things that we see, the things that we seek after, money, sexual fulfillment, power, popularity, those are the things that our hearts cling to, aren't they? They seem, they often look more real, more tangible. And the choice is a choice that remains today. God is calling a people to himself and he calls you here tonight to a clear choice and it's a choice to serve him and to serve him exclusively.

So let's look at this chapter under two points. Firstly, verses 2 to 13, the call to exclusive service comes only after God demonstrates extraordinary grace.

[13:17] The call, that call that Joshua makes there in verses 14 and 15, that call to exclusive service comes only after God demonstrates extraordinary grace.

Joshua fills our vision here with the grandeur, the sheer magnitude of all that God has done for his people. Just cast your eye over those verses 2 to 13.

This is supremely about God and his grace. He takes an undeserving people and demonstrates to them again and again and again astonishing grace and provision.

Just notice where this account begins. Verse 2, it begins surprisingly. I'm not sure this is the place that I would have started, but Joshua is making a particular point by beginning where he does.

Look what he says, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates. Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor, they served other gods.

[14:23] Now isn't that extraordinary? We tend to consider Abraham a generally good guy, don't we? But no, here he is, a pagan who served other gods.

That was the starting point for God's chosen people, a hopeless pagan in a land beyond the Euphrates. And notice that word serve.

This is a chapter all about which gods are served. who will the Israelites serve now and in the future? And the starting point of all this, the starting point of the history of God's people was not promising.

They served other gods. And in the midst of this false worship, this false service, God enters the story. He takes Abraham, leads him into the land of Canaan, and so begins the extraordinary story of God's grace and of the outworking of his promises to have a people for himself, in his land, under his rule, a people that would be a blessing to the nations.

And verse two is where it all begins. It's a truly remarkable story. The hero of the story is not Abraham. The hero of the story is not any man, it's the Lord.

[15:47] And through this passage, he describes again and again what he has done. Just notice all those verbs associated with what God did. I took.

I led. I made. I gave. I sent. I did. I plagued. I brought you out. I brought.

I did. I brought. I gave. I destroyed. I delivered. I gave. I sent. I, I, I. It's all the Lord's doing.

amazing rescues, astonishing victories. Again and again, God is the hero. He is the one who has taken this people and given to them so abundantly.

we've seen it week after week haven't we through Joshua and here's the final paragraph, the abundant grace of God in full display. Look at verse 13.

[16:48] I gave you a land on which you had not labored, cities that you hadn't built and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant.

that was the ultimate gift of grace, wasn't it? What astonishing gifts. Not only that, but he gives him himself.

That was what God promised to Abraham all those years before. And it was God alone who has provided for his people. He's done it. He alone.

It was his sovereign and saving grace that Joshua is so wonderfully highlighting for us here. And the call that is made to the people in verse 14, the call to exclusive service comes only after the recollection of God's demonstration of his amazing and extraordinary grace.

Remember all that I've done for you. Remember where I took you from. Remember all the ways I've led you.

[17:59] Remember how in moments of utter helplessness I rescued you. Remember how I've shielded you from dangers seen and unseen. Remember how I've sustained you through the wilderness.

And remember that I am the one who has given you this plentiful land. Wouldn't those who were there listening to Joshua, wouldn't they, have felt the gentle gravity of God's grace, the beauty of his tender care, pulling them in to live lives of covenant loyalty to him.

What a great God. Look at all he's done. Great is thy faithfulness. grace. But this history of God's amazing grace, his demonstration of extraordinary sovereignty and saving grace is not unique to Joshua's time.

It's not unique to his first readers. It's true today for you and I. If you're a Christian here this evening, then you know that it was not because of anything intrinsically special about you that God saved you.

It's not because you deserved it. It's not because God was desperate to have you in his team. No, it was only because of his grace that he chose to love us.

[19:27] And we can look back upon grace, upon grace, as we remember all that God has continued to do for his people since that time, down through the ages and ultimately through the cross of Christ.

Peter, in his first letter, writes this, that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited by your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. That is how Christians today are brought from places of absolute desperation to the great hope of certainty and eternal life.

And so, as you consider all that God has done for you, not just through the work of Christ, but in all the blessings he gives you day upon day, as you consider all that God has done for you and continues to do for you, don't you feel the gentle gravity of God's grace, the beauty of his tender care pulling you towards covenant loyalty to him?

Just remember all that he's done for you. perhaps you're here this evening and you wouldn't describe yourself as a Christian believer.

[20:46] You need to know what God has already done to rescue and redeem sinful people like you and I. By nature, all of us reject God, rebel against his rightful rule.

and he's the one who made us. And as sinners, we stand in right judgment under him. And so to be a Christian does not mean earning browning points to make up for that or doing certain things.

To be a Christian means to fling yourself upon his grace, to rest upon what he has already done. He has demonstrated his love and his grace in the most extraordinary way possible.

Through the death of his own son, the Lord Jesus Christ died so that you might be saved, so that you might have the price for sin paid for you.

Abraham left behind pagan worship not because of anything special about him, but only because God touched him, only because God called him and showed him astonishing, amazing, undeserved grace.

[22:07] And that is how God still works today. He calls undeserving people, men and women, people just like you and me, and he calls you to exclusive service, but only, but only in light of the

extraordinary grace he's already demonstrated to you.

his call comes only after what he's shown us. Well, there's our first point, and it's only now, only now that Joshua has laid the foundation of God's work and grace that he sets out the commitment that is demanded from God's people.

Only now does Joshua set out the moment of decision, and the moment of decision flows immediately from all he's just said. notice the start of verse 14, he says, now therefore, in light of all I've just said, here comes our second point, verses 14 to 28, and it's this, the call to exclusive service means a clear, considered, and concrete choice must be made.

The call to exclusive service means that a clear, considered, and concrete choice must be made.

Whom will you serve? Joshua's appeal there, particularly in verses 14 and 15, is simply this, in light of all I've just said about what God has done for you, fear him alone, serve him alone, be faithful to him alone.

It's the logical and clear response, isn't it? Serving God means not serving other things, other gods. It's all about who you serve. Seven times that word crops up in verses 14 and 15, that little word serve, but what does it mean to serve God, or indeed to serve the gods of your fathers, or these other non-gods?

[ 24 : 09 ] What does it mean to serve God? Well, it's a question of wholehearted commitment and obedience to the laws. We've seen it demonstrated in Joshua time and time again, haven't we?

Just think back to Caleb in chapter 14, trusting what God had said, even if that meant at times standing alone, trusting God to do just as he said, even if the enemies around him looked frightening.

It's about trusting God, trusting him alone, wholehearted obedience. What we serve, we obey. What we serve, we seek to please.

What we serve, we make sacrifices for. What we serve, we are loyalty. And Bob Dillon said it, didn't he? You've got to serve someone.

You've got to serve someone. There's no neutral service. You're always serving something or someone. Every one of us serves someone or something, whether we know it a lot, whether we like it or not.

[ 25 : 17 ] none of us escapes serving something. And so Joshua urged his decision. You've seen and heard all that God has done. Will you serve him?

And it's a clear choice. It's a clear choice. Joshua is absolutely straightforward, isn't he? That a very clear and definite choice must be made.

Choose to serve God. And serving God, second half of verse 14, means putting away other gods. It's not possible to have it both ways.

You can't serve the Lord God and the gods of your fathers. It's either or. And here's where it gets interesting. I wonder if you noticed this.

I didn't notice it the first time around, but a good sermon from Dick Lucas helped me to see this. But a simple observation. Did you notice the choice that Joshua puts to the people?

[ 26 : 14 ] Look at verse 15. If it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your father served in the region beyond the river, i.e. the pagan gods of Abraham, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.

So even if you reject serving God, there remains a choice to be made. Either you have to choose to serve the gods of your fathers, or choose to serve the gods of the land where you now live.

Isn't that fascinating? I didn't expect Joshua to say that. I expected Joshua to say, serve God or something else. But he doesn't.

He says, choose God, but if you don't, you've still got a choice to make. either you choose the ancestral Mesopotamian gods or the contemporary Amorite ones.

Now the conservatives amongst them probably would have opted for the ancestral gods. The liberals amongst them would have gone for the contemporary Amorite gods. But there is a choice to make.

[ 27 : 30 ] Even if you reject gods, you still have to make a choice between which gods you will serve. Either the gods of the old days or the gods of the people around you.

You've got to serve someone. Bob Dylan's right. So even if you reject gods, there's still choices to be made. Do you go with tradition? Do you go with the traditional Christian understanding of things in this country?

The sort of Christian values that we've inherited with no real grounding? Or do you go with secular modern thinking? Which way do we go? On the ground, for those Israelites in those early days living in Canaan, they would have felt a pull in those two directions, either to the ancestral gods or more probably, more compellingly, they would have opted for the gods of the people around them. But they wouldn't have been able to serve both. They had to make a choice. They couldn't keep everyone happy. If they reject the Lord, then they're left with two bad choices. And that's the reality for you today.

If you don't serve the Lord, then you face a choice between which non-gods you will serve. Will you go the way of tradition?

[ 28 : 55 ] Or will you go with the gods of the people today, the people that we live amongst? will you go the way of inherited Christian values? Or will you go along with secular thinking?

And although the gods of the secular world don't take a physical form, they promise the same things. They promise prosperity, they promise sexual fulfillment, they promise religious relativism. But despite the promises of fulfillment and happiness, the gods of our age, they don't deliver. We're well on into the Life Explored course on Thursday evenings.

And one of the aims of that course is to try and help us see some of the false gods in our lives that we try and find fulfillment in. And it very effectively gets under our skin as we spend time together watching some films and listening to some teaching.

It gets under our skin. It exposes the things that we tend to run after to find fulfillment. Whatever it might be, whether it's money, or status, or the perfect lawn, whatever it is that we seek fulfillment in.

[ 30 : 13 ] And again and again, as we've been there on Thursday evenings at Life Explored, again and again, we see how these things are just dead ends. They don't lead anywhere in the end.

They are just awful slave masters. They never satisfy. And so we are foolish if we run after anything other than the Lord God's.

I think that's Joshua's point here. He's just piled up example after example after example of God's grace shown to his people. His great power demonstrated again and again.

This is the God you're to serve. And if not him, well, choose between those other non-gods. You can't try and have the best of both worlds.

God will not stand for that. So who will you choose? If not the Lord, then who or what? It is a clear choice that Joshua sets before us.

[ 31 : 15 ] It's an exclusive choice. You can't have them all. You have to choose. So Joshua urges a clear choice. But he also urges a considered choice.

Look on to verse 16 as we read of the people's response to Joshua. And it seems encouraging.

Look at what they say. Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods.

For it's the Lord who's brought us up out of the land of Egypt. Therefore, end of verse 18, we will also serve the Lord. For he is our God. It all sounds wonderful.

It's very encouraging. But much to our surprise, their confession is met with shocking words from Joshua. Look at what he says. You are not able to serve the Lord.

If you forsake him and serve foreign gods, he will turn and do you harm. Joshua's words are words of warning.

[ 32 : 19 ] And they're words of warning against easy believism. Joshua knows the hearts of the people and so he warns them. If you commit yourself to God, it must be a considered and cautious commitment.

He's warning against trite confessions, easy vows made without serious consideration. The Lord doesn't want mere confession with our lips.

real service, real worship is not just what we utter, but it's the lives that we lay down. So Joshua is saying, don't make commitments you're not willing and prepared to keep.

Joshua is doing here exactly what the Lord Jesus often did, refusing glib vows because he desired whole hearts. Jesus is never hesitant to set up the true cost of discipleship.

And Joshua isn't either. We are to count the cost and as Jesus warns us, we're not to put our hand to the plow and look backwards. So yes, Jesus does expect confession with our lips.

[ 33 : 33 ] Absolutely. But it doesn't stop at that. The real sign of genuine confession, the real sign of genuine confession with our lips is the obedience demonstrated visibly, concretely in our lives.

For the people in Joshua's day, that meant a rejection of foreign gods, a rejection of the gods that their neighbors worshipped. And for us today, are we heeding that warning?

A warning against mere lip service, a warning to be willing to count the cost for following Christ. Whether it be unpopularity in the classroom or in the lecture hall, whether it be being overlooked in the workplace for promotion because we hold to certain truths, because we hold to the orthodox understanding of human sexuality, because we hold to the understanding of gender that's held forth in the Bible.

Whether it be a hidden syncretism in our lives where we affirm certain things on a Sunday, but we just can't let go of the sexual freedoms we so enjoy that the world around us encourages us to enjoy and embrace and run after.

Joshua 24 urges us to consider carefully the vows that we make with our lips. Are we counting the cost? Are we remembering to whom it is that we make such vows?

[ 35 : 15 ] Look at how God is described there in verse 19. He is a jealous God. He will not allow, he will not stand for syncretism.

So we are to remember who it is to whom we make these vows. Joshua is urging cautious commitments. So not only are God's people, in light of his sovereign and saving grace, to make a clear choice and a considered choice, they are also to make a concrete choice.

When the Lord Jesus calls you, calls us to follow him, when he calls us to the life of faith, he calls us to complete devotion, to wholehearted service.

repentance. And when we consider all that he's done for us, that's the obvious response, isn't it? And that means concrete action. It means real repentance.

Just look at what Joshua says there in verses 22 and 23. He says, you are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord to serve him. Then put away the foreign gods that are among you.

[ 36 : 31 ] The implication being that they haven't yet put away these idols. They haven't yet put away the idols of the gods from the nations around them. The foreign gods were still in their midst.

They confess with their lips, yes, but there seems little action on the ground, no sign of real repentance. And so the choice to serve the Lord, well that always has concrete, real world implications.

James Philip in his notes on this passage says this, God is not interested in disembodied consecration. our response must not be in theory or in principle only, but in a body that is expressed in action.

He goes on to say, we need not doubt that the people were absolutely sincere in what they said, but the fact to say that the Lord our God will be served and his voice will be obeyed is not the same as saying we now put away our idols, our strange gods in this visible act of severance.

Joshua was calling the people to a concrete choice, not merely a theoretical one. And so if you're here this evening, he calls you, each and every one of us, in light of his grace, in light of all that he's done, to respond with wholehearted, concrete service.

[ 38 : 05 ] others. And that might well mean for you that you need to put away certain idols. Perhaps it's a relationship that you know can't continue if you are to serve the Lord wholeheartedly.

It may well be that the next job promotion you ought not to take because your career has become all-consuming, preventing you from real service of others in the church fellowship has become a God for you, an idol.

It may be the opposite. It may be that comfort and ease of life has become your idol and so you should take up more responsibility, whether in church or at work, whatever it might be.

Whatever it is, is the Lord placing his finger on a particular area of your life this evening, a hidden pagan God that you're running after?

might there be some concrete action that you need to take, even this evening? But if the Lord is placing his finger on something tonight, don't be discouraged.

[ 39 : 18 ] His is a gracious warning. If the Lord is convicting you of some area of life that needs addressed, don't be dismayed. There is hope for you as you look back on even greater demonstrations of grace, even the ones that we read of at the start of this chapter.

God has, in his ultimate act of grace, sacrificed his own son on the cross to pay the price for the sin of his people. There is a way back to God, so will you turn to him?

And that does mean turning away from other gods, all other gods. all other claims on the affections of your heart. It means turning on those. And it means turning to him.

Turning away from those things and turning to him knowing that his everlasting grace will welcome you and will not turn you away. But there is also greater warning for you.

There's greater grace, but there's also greater warning because if you do refuse to turn to him, there are greater things to come. Jesus Christ came not only as savior, but he came as judge.

[ 40 : 43 ] His death, life, and resurrection assure us that he is coming back. That is for certain. And when he comes back, that will be the day of final judgment.

And there's no running from that. So will you heed the warning? There is an exile coming far greater, far more terrifying than the one that the people of Israel endured, the one that Joshua fears.

And the one coming is a permanent exile. But for those who run to God, who turn to him with real repentance, there awaits a permanent future with him in the land that he's promised for all eternity. That is the great and the certain hope for the Christian. And it will surely come because as we've seen again and again in Joshua, not one word, not one single promise from the lips of God will fall to the ground.

All shall come to pass. Great is his faithfulness. And so the book of Joshua poses a simple question to you tonight.

[ 42 : 03 ] In view of all God's promises, in view of all that he's done, will you serve him? And will you serve him alone?

Joshua's answer, and I pray yours too. It's there at the end of verse 15. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord's.

Amen. Let me pray. Heavenly Father, you are the God of amazing and abundant grace.

And we're staggered as we read these words, as we look at the place from where you plucked Abraham. over the river, serving other gods.

You took him, and by your grace, you brought him to a land that you promised. And Lord, what hope that gives for people like us, how we need your grace, and what certainty and surety you have given to us as we look back on all that you've done, as we look back on your acts, your solid, concrete acts of grace in the Lord Jesus, and what hope that gives to us as we respond to your call, as we turn to you in faith, as we turn in repentance for the things that we so easily run after, the gods of the world around us that promise everything and deliver nothing.

[ 43 : 52 ] help us, by your grace, to serve you, and to serve you with our whole hearts. So would you, by your spirit, strengthen us for that task.

Remind us again and again of your great grace, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.