

Catford Lectures 2007-2008

Part 9

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[00:00:00] Now, it's my intention to read a portion of scripture, but before that I've got some questions to ask.

I don't want you to feel inhibited or embarrassed. I'm going to give you three questions. Biblical knowledge and interest in studying the web is declining among the north people.

Not only we who are found in this hall, there may be one or two bright exceptions, but generally speaking the interest is waning. Christian convictions and conduct are waning, are declining too.

There's no getting away from it, that's how it is. It seems that many young people are far too introspective, happy with their own little worlds, living in their own world of dreams and pleasures, [00:01:02] concerned with SMS texting powers rather than with their knowledge of the Bible text.

They give little thought to what God wants them to be occupied with. Of course the need for proper behavior and good example exists among those of riper years also. The leadership of love and faithfulness is essential there. So my web wouldn't only be for those of younger years, but for everyone present. But before giving their lecture, I'd like to ask these questions to test your Bible knowledge.

I see some people already looking at their Bible. Well, I'd like to ask each successive generation of Chapter 2 workers questions like these, so you're going to be subjected to the same kind of questioning. [00:02:01] After various clues, eventually we get the truth or the tooth drawn.

So here's the first question. Which three portions of the Bible unfold God's prophetic dealings with his people?

Each chapter or section lists a succession of seven things to delineate a historic forecast. What three passages are they? Does anyone know?

You don't have to be on the platform to answer it. Okay, anyone got the answer to that? Which three sevens are these?

I'll give you some clues, since no one's given you an answer. In India, they'd all rush forward with an answer, wouldn't they? No, not here it seems.

One passage deals with a prophetic forecast concerning Israel. You know what chapter that's about?

Then, one chapter deals with the Kingdom.

And lastly, two chapters dealing with the prophetic forecast of the Church's history. [00:03:07] What three chapters am I talking about? All three portions.

No clues?

No? There's one at the back moving his head. Alright, well it was either Dr. W.T.P. Wollstone or Christopher Wollstone, George Davidson doesn't say which one, who reportedly said that if you grasp these passages, you'll have a good grasp of God's dispensational ways. You'll find that in his book, My Feasts. If you haven't got it, I'm sure Nick will provide it. Any listeners know what I'm referring to?

Alright, what are they then? Leviticus 23, Revelation 2 and 3.

Good, you got that?

Leviticus 23 deals with Israel, Matthew 13 with the Kingdom, Revelation 2 and 3 with the Church. [00:04:03] I still have three questions, that was the first one. I don't know if you shone too brightly there. The next question. What three ninth chapters in the Old Testament deal with confession of the failure of the people of God?

And then his confession made by a man of God, I suppose, largely marked by integrity and fidelity, rather than by the sins he confesses. What are those three chapters?

Daniel 9, very good.

Ezra 9, yes.

And third one?

Nehemiah.

Good, right, very good.

Excellent.

Now, you've probably always heard that these three chapters have a similar character. And the ones I've given will be answered. I'm going to add a fourth one. [00:05:01] A fourth chapter, fourth ninth chapter. Admittedly a little different, but it goes along the same lines. And the question is, well, it's Ezekiel chapter 9 we're going to read.

But before you look at it, do you know its contents?

That's the third question. If you know its contents, without looking at your Bible, write it on a piece of paper and give it to a neighbor, and I'll check up at the end of the meeting to see if you were right.

Any persons, especially under 30, who can write down a one-line summary of the contents of Ezekiel chapter 9, pass it to their neighbor, and let me have it at the end of the meeting. That would be brilliant.

I don't hear a great rustling, but anyway.

[00:06:02] Well, I'm going to give you the answer in a moment, the one-line summary of the chapter.

But I wanted you to write it down so I could check you out at the end of the meeting. You see, I feel that we've got to get acquainted not only with questions like these, which are quite simple, questions on biblical subjects. We have to think through what we read in the world.

We have to strengthen our knowledge of the Bible. We have to get to know the patterns that are found in the scriptures, the interesting details, the order, the content, the subject matter.

And we need to store these things in our memories. Of course, I don't know all the answers. I only ask the questions.

But they're challenging questions. And I suppose questions like that for each of us put us on our metal. I don't have a good memory. But you can always do memory therapy and so improve what you have. [00:07:04] Now, my subject and the answer to the third question is, the subject of Ezekiel chapter 9 is the dealings of the man with the writer's inkhorn.

The writer's inkhorn.

Open your Bible, chapter 9, only a few verses, 11 of them, and we'll see what this is all about. He cried, it was so, in my ears.

Verse 1, with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lies toward the north, and every man a sword or weapon in his hand. And one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. [00:08:01] And they went in and stood beside the brazen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side. And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sang, and that cried for all the abomination that be down in the midst thereof. And to the others he said, in my hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite. Let not your eyes stare, neither have ye pity.

Stay out for the old and young, both maids and little children and women. But come not near any man upon whom is the mark, and begin at my sanctuary.

Then they began at the ancient men, which were before the house. And he said unto them, Defile the

house, and fill the courts with the slain. Give ye forth. [00:09:01] And they went forth and slew in the city. And it came to pass, while they were slaying them and I was left, that I fell upon my face and cried, and said, O Lord God, wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy poor city of thy fury upon Jerusalem?

Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness.

For they say, The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not. And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, and neither will I have pity. But I will recompense their way upon their head. And behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the ink on by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

Thus far.

[00:10:01] These are just some reflections on the ninth chapter that I want to give you. Of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel is one of those prophet-priests in the Old Testament. Jeremiah and Zechariah were the other two of the three.

Of these, Ezekiel is probably the best known for his obscurity.

That's a paradox, I suppose. Best known for his obscurity.

To the average reader of scripture, his prophecies seem to be a maze of incoherent visions.

One commentator, I don't recommend him, he said this, he said, Ezekiel is a kaleidoscope of rolling wheels and dry bones that defy interpretation.

Now, this impression will cause you, I suppose, an average Bible reader, to shy away from even becoming acquainted with this book, this wonderful book, [00:11:04] and so will miss one of the great portions of God's word. For many, his imagery seems over-elaborate.

His symbolism makes the whole book a veritable enigma.

You can't understand it. It can only, well, how did he understand this book?

It can only be understood by the reverent reader of scripture.

Looking up to God, dependent upon the spirit of God, one enthralled by the spirit of truth.

You must apply yourself to diligent spiritual study and greater familiarization of the language of Holy Scripture in general in order to search out the treasures contained in this precious mine, the book of Ezekiel.

[00:12:02] Now, the prophecy of Ezekiel, it opens with the most impressive of chapters, with the unfolding revelation of the grand and integrated purposes of God.

And then the succeeding chapters, for many, are a closed book. And then, as you get towards the end, chapter 33 to the end, I think that's 48, things get a bit clearer. We've had some preaching on that. We've heard something on that. It's a final and a better-known section which concludes Ezekiel's writing, declaring God's future plans, wonderful plans, for his people and the temple.

And I suppose for some of us, we feel that there's waters to swim in there. But in the middle section, we tend to neglect it.

Well, in our lecture, we can't do the whole book. [00:13:02] I can't give you a summary in so brief a time. But I propose in this study to focus on just this one chapter 9, just to give a little glimpse of some of the treasures hidden in the book, so that its message should not lie neglected, should not lie buried, unobserved, unheeded by you or me.

If you find a gem in a Bible book, it might be encouraged to look for others, and so become better acquainted with the book, the word of God generally, but in particular, this book of Ezekiel.

Now, there are helps that will assist you in getting a better acquaintance, a familiarization with the book of Ezekiel. And I suppose you're going to expect me to say what I'm going to say next. You know, A. C. Gaeberlein has written a helpful commentary. [00:14:03] F. W. Grant also.

There'll be a good help to you. A. C. Gaeberlein has given an introduction to the book.

Jean Quetelin's Day by Day, or Derby Synopsis, are also very good overviews.

Make sure you have a good library with commentaries on every book of the Bible, so that if you find a passage hard to understand, then hopefully, amidst the books, you'll find some answers, you'll find some help. Occasionally you'll get a peculiarity, and you may find all the commentators skip the passage.

But build a good library.

Buy books. Read books. Use books.

You'll get some understanding. [00:15:01] And don't be among those who say, oh, I only read the Bible, I don't read the book. Do you think God will reveal everything to you?

He's revealed something to others.

And you can gain an ounce of help from your companion. Or from those that have gone before and put their thoughts into a book. So take advantage of helpful, printed ministry.

Some of you are doing that already. But I suspect some of you are not.

And it's to you these words are addressed. Now, the ninth chapter here, as before, is full of interest and relevance for today. You can scarcely imagine that such an old book would be so relevant. But I hope you'll want to look further, perhaps into its setting. Comparisons with Daniel 9, Ezra, and Nehemiah 9 will result, I think, in fruitful meditations when you get home.

[00:16:02] And you'll be encouraged by looking at it.

To me, I think the message of the ninth chapter is somewhat pivotal. God's right wing purposes of government will not be thwarted by man's rebelliousness and his moral deadness. God will accomplish his purpose, but holiness becomes God's house forever. And his kingdom and his lordly rights over his people will be established in righteousness.

He won't gloss over evil and the abominations that can erupt from time to time.

He has to deal with it.

Just as they were being dealt with among God's people in Ezekiel's day. Just as they were being dealt with by the Apostle Paul when writing to the Corinthians in relation to some of the terrible things that were found there. So God will deal for his glory.

[00:17:01] But then, and only then, will grace and mercy flow in abundance to those who look to him and tremble at his word.

Now, in chapter 8, this is a bit of the context, the idolatry of a very gross kind was being practiced. It was really the fixed intention of the people, living in the holy city of Jerusalem, to engage in everything that was wicked. All through that chapter they were shown one abomination after another. And the Lord shows to his servant Ezekiel that really the temple itself had become the high court of wickedness. What can be done? What must be done?

How to purge evil?

How to deal with sin among the people of God?

And then there was the worship of the sun by the elders and the weeping for Tammuz. I think that was the lover of Venus in pagan idolatry.

[00:18:05] The women were weeping for that.

And that brought God's fixed determination to execute an unsparing judgment against their corruption. Against the abominations that were done among his people.

And really to do so was essential in order to satisfy the claims of a holy God. He couldn't let it go on.

It was an absolute imperative that the testimony to his name, which was centered in those days at Jerusalem, be purged of the virus of a rebellious false worship that unchecked would destroy any testimony to the truth of God in the world at that time.

And that's the background crisis to the chapter we are considering. Now we are going to look at the verses. Verse 1. Ezekiel had a desire to walk with God and to serve Him.

[00:19:04] He wanted to do that in difficult days.

And there is a parallel for us. Do you have the desire to honor and serve God? It's in difficult days.

Now he submitted into the privilege of being told what God is about to do. And he's made the messenger and also the recorder of God's intentions. And we have this chapter opening, verse 1. God calling upon the responsible representatives, angelic representatives, heavenly watchmen over Jerusalem to draw near.

And it seems from the language that God himself is deeply and profoundly moved. Supremely moved by the condition his people, and in particular Jerusalem, had got themselves into. Now here's the question for you. Are your hearts, are your minds moved?

[00:20:02] About the spiritual state around us. The low condition that is found in professing Christendom. All those who profess the name of the Lord.

And much more those that profess identification with the divine center. What are your feelings about those things? Do you have any thoughts about that? Or are you just thinking about yourself? Are you really in tune with God's thoughts? About the terrible departure that has occurred in Christendom from God's standards. Now, here we see these, I believe they're angelic beings. And it's a common enough feature in scripture to see angels being used to execute some discriminatory judgment on behalf of God. We get that in Matthew 13. The son of man shall send forth his angels. [00:21:01] Shows it clearly. And if you go through the book of Revelation you've got angelic activity in this way. Now here the angels are spoken of as six men. And each has a slaughter weapon in his hand. It's not the work of Ezekiel to do this. It's not the work of Ezekiel to execute this judgment.

He holds a priestly perspective. Of course he's in harmony with the mind of God. But the historical agents of this prospective judgment I suppose would be the Chaldeans themselves coming in upon Jerusalem. But the prophecy here is rendered in such a way that the leader is to regard the coming calamity as coming directly from the hand of God mediated by these men with the destroying weapon in their hand. It's a terrible thing when God sets his face against the place where his name had once dwelt. [00:22:07] His name dwelt there at Jerusalem.

And how relevant is this today for us? Where professing Christian countries make laws which militate against the Bible's sound teaching and counsel. First in small deviations they are set against the holy standards fixed by God.

There continues to be the promotion of unisex clothing and hairstyles. Dismantling the original order. Male and female created he then.

Then they celebrate their gross immorality with pride.

And the established religion is weak. And tore on to moral and doctrinal evils. There's matrimonial breakdown. It continues. And all the sad consequences that follow. [00:23:02] The toleration of pornography.

Ah, we live in the West where we give equal rights to women. And yet they are more abused in the West by this means than elsewhere perhaps. All under the guise of human liberties. Intimate chaperones.

Many things done in secret.

And then people are following savagery. Yes they are. With body piercings and tattoos.

New ages.

Worshipping the sun and nature. Everything contrary to God's will. Stated so clearly in his word. I could give a big list. It's not my purpose to describe all the things and evils of today. It's not edifying. But just to give you a glimpse. And when these things are manifested among the children of God. [00:24:03] Things I've just mentioned. Remember.

Galatians 6 tells us. God is not mocked.

For whatsoever man soweth, that shall he also reap. Don't think we're immune from God's judgment. There's a parallel I'm sure. A warning for us each.

We do well to heed. Now let's get on to our next verse. Verse 2.

These angelic watchmen approach to the upper northern gate of the temple. And they take their place before the Lord. Before Jehovah. And then in this verse a man with a writer's inkhorn. Which really is a writing case. A writing case. But I like the phrase writer's inkhorn. We don't have them nowadays. People don't even know how to write. They put finger tip to keyboard now. Not pen to paper.

But anyway.

Or thumb to whatever it is to do an SMS text. [00:25:03] But in those days they still used writing cases. A writer's inkhorn.

And he's an angel. He's introduced. Perhaps he is the seventh one. Or perhaps he's one of the sixth. I like to think he's the seventh one. And he's clothed in linen. And I suppose that might be compared to the linen robe worn by the priest on the great day of atonement. When the children of Israel afflicted themselves. According to Leviticus 16.

And his existence reminds me.

The fact that he's there reminds me. That amidst judgment God will remember mercy.

It's a wonderful thing. We deserve judgment.

But God's ready to come in with mercy. It's a wonderful grace.

Grace displayed alongside divine holiness.

And then in him I think we see an angelic ministry to the areas of salvation.

[00:26:04] You should notice the fact that the great altar. The place of the judgment on earth is mentioned there. Now for the Christian we have nothing to do with the wrath of God. Because our substitute.

Our blessed substitute from God has borne all in his body on the tree. He's paid the price.

But you know we want to realize that God is a sin-hating God. And he can act governmentally even amongst his own. Now the angels wait before they execute this holy and righteous judgment.

Unbelievers don't understand judgment. It's truly God's strange work. But they see it neither is righteous nor holy. And they have many questions about it. But God acts in a holy and a righteous manner when he executes judgment upon sin. But grace will stay the blow of divine judgment and indignation.

Until those who had separated themselves from the evil are identified. [00:27:05] Until they are manifest. And God's looking today for those who will be identified with his interests.

In holiness and truth.

Be identified with his interests.

In holiness and truth.

And as we go down our verse. Verse 3.

The glory of the Lord was gone up from the cherub whereupon he was to the threshold of the house. He's just gone to the doorstep. The glory is departing.

It's first step to go is made. It was on the threshold. The glory of God should have dwelt in the temple. But now it's on the threshold. And Ichabod in the making. The glory has departed.

It was just coming.

God cannot dwell where his character is compromised. He may pretend it to be so. But he cannot dwell where his character is compromised. [00:28:05] And where his glory is given to another. His honor will not dwell where he is dishonored. And yet.

In spite of the abominations done in Jerusalem. I swear to God.

God is lingering. God is.

It seems reluctant to leave. You know it's a very solemn thing. To disown a testimony.

Sometimes we've done that too badly. It's a very solemn thing to disown. What professed to be a testimony to the assembly. To say no that's no longer an assembly. He'll rubbish that. In spite of God. God lingers. There must be long patience. He lingers for his people to be in right relationship with himself. He lingers as if there might be a moment of repentance.

[00:29:02] I think of what Hosea records. I think in his eighth chapter. No it's the eleventh chapter. How can I give thee up?

My repentings are kindled. It is as if God tarries. And then he sends his messenger off. The man of

the inkworn. To see how many that there might be in the city. Who love and care for his interests. Who sigh and groan and mourn.

For the abominations done in the midst thereof. In Egypt long ago a distinctive mark. When the children of Israel had left Egypt. A distinctive mark was put on the dwellings of the children of Israel. Now a mark is made on the foreheads. A sign or a seal.

Of God upon those who had spiritual intelligence. [00:30:01] Who felt like God felt.

Who had true communion with God. Who had fellowship with God in this matter. Where abominations were done in the place where he had been pleased. Long ago to put his name. Mark. Had to be put on their head. And I think the mark was the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Tau. Or Tau.

As it looks like in our Psalm 119.

The last letter, letter D. And I've read in a book that in the ancient Hebrew scripts in Ezekiel's time.

This letter didn't have the shape of a T but the shape of a cross. It was a mark akin to an X. In place of a proper signature. God had put his mark there. On their foreheads.

How little the prophet would have known of the significance of what he records here for our learning. [00:31:04] Is it not our privilege to be identified with the man of sorrows? The man who bore the cross. Is it not our privilege to share in his rejection? To be with the few that are identified with him. In the outside place.

Outside the camp.

Those who are thus identified, I suppose, may be an unseen company.

We don't know them all.

We only know some of them. There are little accounts in this world. But what a wonderful thing Paul tells Timothy. The Lord knows them that are his. That's a wonderful thing. We don't know them all. But the Lord knows.

We might use that verse as a comfort text above our mantelpiece or in the hallway. The Lord knows them that are his. But really it's a little rebuke, you don't know, but a goodness. The Lord knows them that are his. He's got his eye on everyone. And it is he that delights to record the names of those that honour his name. [00:32:09] And the people whom God approves of in these dreadful circumstances are not known for their bright and cheerful countenance. They're not jolly people who are just skating through the world as happy as happy can be. No, they're characterized by a chastening solemnity. A sobriety and a seriousness about the whole condition of things. It was a case of serious departure from the word of God on the one hand. And perhaps indifference to God's holiness was prevalent. Did that make them happy? Oh yes, the joy of the Lord was their strength. But you know their deportment was marked by a solemn mourning. There was no room for pride on their part. [00:33:01] They couldn't say, look how good we are and how bad they are. And how often we say that. Look, everyone's done what does what's right in their own eyes. And we point to the others. But it says everyone did that which was right in their own eyes. Yes, we're included in the everyone. There's got

to be a sense of the failure as we saw, as we referred to in Ezra Nehemiah, Daniel 9. On the part of the person who was praying the confession. There's no room for pride. Only self-judgment in the light of God's word. That's good for us all.

Paul tells the Corinthians, if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. And are we sufficiently clear about the desolations that are all around us? Only then, once we've got God's evaluation of the situation, will there be a proper display of a broken spirit, which I believe is of great value in God's sight.

[00:34:06] Now we move on.

Of course, when the Lord Jesus had come to Jerusalem some 600 years later, he wept over the same place. And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it. He said to them, if thou hadst known even there, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now are they hid from thine eyes. For the day shall come upon thee, that thine enemy shall cast a trench about thee, encompass thee around, and keep thee in on every side. The fact that there were some who could be marked off as having the same mind as the Lord himself, was clearly a delight, I think, for the Spirit of God. For the Spirit of God, even if the mass of the people, [00:35:03] mass of the subjects of Jerusalem, were the subjects of extreme wrath and repulsion. Now, as we go through our verses, verse 5, chapter 9, verse 5, we see that God's stern justice demands absolute punishment and retribution. The angels must smite without mercy. I think this command must have grieved God's heart. He doesn't desire the death of a sinner, but as a righteous judge, he'll not have the righteous die with the wicked. And judgment is always discriminating, I believe. The godly ones are made known, and they are spared. And you know, the church will know this, in relation to it, the blessed hope. She will be kept from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon the whole world, to try them which will dwell upon the earth. And then we look at verse 6.

[00:36:02] Lay utterly old and young, and so forth. Begin at my sanctuary.

Light and privilege are always considered when God makes his judgments. You've got the ancients, the elderly, they had privilege, they bear the deepest responsibility. Their years were not exempted. You might say, well, I'm old. I've been faithful in the past. No, that's how it is now. Their years weren't exempted. But rather, their stone is deeper in Calum. And so, they have to begin with the ancients. The fullest responsibility is with those who should have been examples, and should have maintained the duty of moral leadership among God's people. Neither had spread from the top downwards. Therefore, judgment must follow the same course. And so, God says, he deals with the matter which is nearest to him. [00:37:02] He says, begin at my house. Oh, how God felt this matter.

Begin at my sanctuary.

It must have touched his heart. His house was defiled by idolatrous superstitions and abominations. Look at chapter 5 of Ezekiel, verse 11.

Wherefore, as I live, sayeth the Lord God, surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee. Neither shall mine eyes spare, neither will I have any pity. I suppose the New Testament Christian counterparts of this is found in Peter, in Peter 4.

For the time is come, is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God. And if it begin first at us, [00:38:01] what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel?

We, what is nearest to God, bears the greatest responsibility. You desire that place of nearness, you are responsible before God to maintain it in holiness and righteousness. If we profess to be gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus, we certainly cannot have any fellowship with what is contrary to the holiness of that name, or what contradicts it.

For without holiness we will not see the Lord. Even the house of God was to be defiled. It says that in verse 7. Defile the house, fill the courts with the slain. The land would be defiled in a day yet future to Ezekiel's time.

And it would only be when a fountain would be opened for uncleanness that their sin, according to Zechariah's prophecy, would be taken away. [00:39:04] Now I'm sorry to say this, but I think it is a misnomer to call their land their holy land at the present time.

I don't think it's an intentional insult to the Lord, but it is a misnomer.

But for the present that land is defiled by the murder of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. But the sin will be taken away in a quickly coming day. That's a wonderful thing, a wonderful prospect. But here we have in the 7th verse, defile the house. Yes, defiled by death, the greatest defiler of all.

And then verse 8, Ezekiel, he's interceding.

I was left and I fell upon my face, our Lord.

He cries out on behalf of the residue, on behalf of the few reserved survivors of a great people.

[00:40:03] And you see, he was a man of compassion. He had a feeling for the people, for the nation, for God's people. And he's horrified that God's sanctuary should be defiled. And yet God allows it, God directs it for a purpose. He's very concerned, he falls on his face. What concern do we have about the things of God? Do the things concerning the assembly testimony, do the things concerning the gospel testimony affect us in this way? Or do they just pass by as if there's nothing at all to them?

The people had had adequate time to repent and to flee idolatry and their abominations. But rather they used that time to multiply their perversity. And the urgent cry to the Lord was, that Ezekiel give shelter to the Israeli in communion with the Lord. And the grief and the horror of the moment not only impressing itself upon Ezekiel's mind, [00:41:03] but I'm sure on God's heart too. As we go down, the iniquity, verse 9, is exceeding great.

The exceeding sinfulness of sin is brought out by God's reply. How little we understand how great an affront sin is to God. Men would learn that sin cannot be done secretly or unnoticed. People try to do that.

But God sees.

Men try to sin in secret.

But God is there.

And God sees all.

And especially in regard to what professes to bear his name. He sees it all.

You can't hoodwink God.

Men may think they get away with profanity or murder. They may think they can get away with all sorts of things. [00:42:01] But God's eye sees all man's perversity and unnoticed sin.

But God's eye sees all man's perversity and wickedness. There's no escaping it.

Now as we go, we're coming near to the end of our passage. The holiness of God is unsparing of the sinner still in his sin.

Unrepentant, unforgiving.

Mine eye shall not spare, and neither will I have pity. So says his tenth verse. I will recompense their way upon their head. For our God is a consuming fire.

That people would receive the due reward for their sins. Now in this verse, no intercessor's voice is heard. No Ezekiel praying.

How unspeakably solemn.

When the day of grace is over.

And then lastly.

The awful scene is really made more impressive.

[00:43:05] By the report that the task has been completed.

I have done as thou hast commanded me. The command to slay you was to be literally done. It wasn't to be spiritually fulfilled. It was to be literally done. And men will be obliged to sit up when God begins his strange work.

But then it will be too late. What a shock to ungodly sinners.

How does this impact upon us? Do we not consider what Paul said to the Corinthians in his second epistle? Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. Is it not a motivation in service? In gospel work?

The man clothed in linen. I suppose the symbol of divine righteousness. As opposed to our righteousnesses which are described in scripture as filthy rags. [00:44:01] He completes his assignment. He's ready.

He's finished. He's the obedient servant of God. And then for the rest.

His companions. No mitigating sympathies or sentiments. They go about to do their work.

Servants of righteousness. They obey.

But those who were marked by the sign for the abominations done in the land were spared. This certainly was a consolation to Ezekiel. But the unrighteous majority would be killed by the coming Chaldean invasion.

Following not a multitude to do evil, we're enjoined in the Pentateuch. The details of this section I think are very important for us. Because they enable us to understand why conflict and death are often described in the Old Testament. [00:45:01] It seems to be a stark contrast with the New Testament which is full of grace and love. We see that they are only the grave consequences of evil done by man against God.

I'm just thinking of what we get in 1 Corinthians 10.

As of Israel generally.

Yet God was not pleased with the most of them.

JND translation.

The majority of anything in a fallen world is not a guarantee. Don't follow a multitude to do evil. It's the few. It's the narrow path.

It's the twos and threes. That may well have the secret of the Lord. We must come to a conclusion. What can be summarized by our instruction in this ninth chapter? We shouldn't forget in these dark days of Christendom. Established sadly even non-conformity is increasingly following the doctrines of demons. [00:46:06] That God has a remnant which sigh and mourn over the low state of things. But low conditions in the Christian testimony should serve to bring to light faithful men. Not discourage them.

Should bring you to light. Should bring you forth.

To stand up. Faithful men and women to stand up for the Lord. You know circumstances bring out what is in a man. The situation, the trials that you face. It's a test to see what person you are. What character you have. You know it's not a time for lukewarmness. It's not a time for shilly-shallying and self-seeking. But rather for zeal and devotedness to Christ. We may not see all whom God would identify with his token of approval. But the real known to the Lord. And the real is doing very highly. [00:47:03] For their labor and for their love to his name. They may be few here and there. But they are not solitary. And as long as the Lord has not come to take us to the Father's house. I believe it's still possible to have fellowship with those of like precious faith. Of those that are concerned about the situation in which we find ourselves at the present time. His word gives us a clear indication that we can follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace.

With them that call on the Lord of the pure heart. Right up until the moment when he comes for his church. Finally I want to signal, point out two things. Number one.

Right at what I said at the beginning. Remember?

The need for Bible study. The love of his word. The study of the scriptures. Attending to ministry.

Reading good books about the Bible. [00:48:02] You'll not get the truth of the Bible by a process of osmosis. It doesn't suddenly pour into your veins. It doesn't suddenly arrive in your head. It's the result of determined purpose of heart.

Get God's word into your mind. Read the Bible.

It requires labour.

Much study and diligence. If you want to be an effective Christian. If you wish to know the will of God. In relation to the present circumstances. If you want to be guided by him.

At the present time.

You will have to read your Bible.

There's no shortcut.

You see these people who sighed and mourned for the abomination. They knew God's will.

They didn't get in their heads by magic. They knew the will of God. That's the first thing.

Get to know your Bible better. Shame on you if you don't. [00:49:01] Secondly.

The knowledge of God's will leads to sanctification. Practically. A holy walk amidst the wicked and the perverse generation. We need to be practically holy.

This is vital of our testimony is to be of any use to God in this present evil world. I think I'll close with reading some verses from 1 Thessalonians 4. 1 Thessalonians 4 Chapter 4. 1 Thessalonians 4.

Finally then. Brother and furthermore. Finally then brethren.

We beseech you and exalt you by the Lord Jesus. That as you have received of us how you ought to walk and to please God. That ye would abound more and more.

[00:50:02] For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God. Even your sanctification.

That ye should abstain from fornication. That every one of you.

Should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor. Not in the lust of concupiscence.

Even as the Gentiles which know not God.

That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter. Because the Lord is the avenger of all

such. As we also have forewarned you and testified. But God hath not called us unto uncleanness.

But unto holiness.

He therefore despises not man but God.

Who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.

May the Lord see on his word to your hearts and consciences. [00:51:02] For his name's sake.

Now. I'd like us to sing a final hymn. 201 by Lord Cecil.

Thou holy one and true.

Our hearts in thee confide. And in the circle of thy love. As brethren we abide.

Thus for teach us that name to own. Whilst waiting all for thee. And holiness and sin to shun.

From all untruth to flee. Let's rise to sing our last hymn 201.