

Matthew 9

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Shall we open the scriptures and read from Matthew's Gospel, the ninth chapter of Matthew's Gospel. We're going to read from verse 1 to verse 17. And Jesus entered into a ship, and passed over and came into his own city. And behold they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed. And Jesus seeing their fate, said unto the sick of the palsy, son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. And behold certain of the scribes said within themselves, this man blasphemeth.

[00:01:05] And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said wherefore think ye evil in your hearts.

For whether is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say arise and walk.

But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins. Then said he to the sick of the palsy, arise take up thy bed and go into thine house.

And he arose and departed to his house. But when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God which had given such power unto men. And as Jesus [00:02:03] passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom. And he said unto him, follow me. And he arose and followed him. And it came to pass as Jesus sat at meet in the house, behold many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, why eateth your master with publicans and sinners. But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, they that behold me not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth. I will [00:03:05] have mercy and not sacrifice. For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Then came to him the disciples of John saying, why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not. And Jesus said unto them, can the children of the bride chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up, taketh from the garment, and the rent is [00:04:03] made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles, else the bottles break and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish. But they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved. The Lord bless that portion of his word to all our hearts. Good afternoon, I'm so pleased that you brought all the family this afternoon, and I hope what I've got to say won't be too technical or too complicated, or that the words I use won't be too long, so that they all understand. The Lord has given me a simple passage from the scriptures to talk to you from, and I want to talk about the middle part of the passage [00:05:01] which concerns Matthew and the Lord Jesus, or rather the Lord Jesus and Matthew, and so as to help you to remember the structure of the passage, it falls into four parts,

and they all begin with a C. So I hope that you'll have some hooks to hang the Lord's message on, in those minds of yours, which if they're anything like mine, they're full of little corners where things get lost, you have a job to find them afterwards. The first of my C's is commitment, and it concerns the call of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the story, Matthew gives his testimony of how he came to be a follower of the Lord Jesus. He was [00:06:04] sitting there in his office, doing his everyday job of work, when the Lord Jesus passed by and called him. It wasn't a general call that was made, it was a personal call to Matthew, and the call was, follow me, just that, no strings attached, no conditions, nothing added, just a simple command, and Matthew hears the Lord's command, and says, and he arose and followed him. If we came to see what other people said about this, we'd find that both Mark and Luke add a little something to Matthew's account, because they both tell us that [00:07:02] he left all and followed him. But you see, Matthew is a very modest man, and he says simply, he arose and followed him. In other words, he was obedient to the command, and to the call of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the call of the Lord Jesus Christ, implies a commitment. It's not possible for anyone to respond to a call of the Lord Jesus Christ, or anyone to become a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, without entering into a commitment. Now you see, I've used a long word, haven't I? What's a commitment, you ask me? I'll tell you what a commitment is. When you get to the stage in your life, when you decide that you're going to marry, and you take a wife, you enter into a commitment, and you make some promises to your wife, and you tell her that you're going to love her, and honor her, and cherish her, and [00:08:04] with all your worldly goods, perhaps you're going to endow her, and so on, and from that time onwards, you're no longer the free agent that you were before, but you've entered into a commitment. If you buy something, perhaps a house, and you sign a deed of purchase, then in signing that deed, you enter into commitment. You perhaps say, you won't keep pigs in the back garden, and you won't put a notice board in the front garden, and you'll keep the paintwork in good order, or something of that sort, you'll enter into some commitments, when you buy a house. How much more does a man enter into commitments, when he becomes a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, being a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, rising up and following him, is not the same thing as believing on him. I [00:09:04] believe there are hundreds and hundreds of people in this world, who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. They've got what the preachers call, saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They know that their sins are forgiven, and yet they've never become followers of his. And you know the Lord Jesus wants us not only to be believers, but he wants us to be followers. He wants us to be disciples. He wants us to walk in the path that he's marked out before us, with his own feet through this world. And he wants us to walk in the particular path, that he's marked out for you and me, as individuals walking in this world. All the circumstances of our life, that he's marked before us. The service which he has for us to perform, for his sake. Those people that he wants us to speak to, those [00:10:01] tasks for him, that he wishes us to perform. The sort of lives that he wants us to live. They're all included in the commitment that we take on, if we respond to the call of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he says to us as individuals, follow me. And you know as I read my Bible, I find that it's only those that are called to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, that became followers. If you turn back into the previous chapter, and you look at verse 19, you see there, a legal man, a scribe. Certain scribe came and said unto him, master I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And what does the Lord Jesus say? He says the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay [00:11:04] his head. In other words, Mr. scribe, don't you imagine you can follow the Lord Jesus Christ, lightly, or for an adventure, or out of any sort of bravado, or in the strength that you have, and think on, and think that you can go on being the same sort of person, after you've started to follow him, as you were before you followed him. Because if you follow the Lord Jesus Christ in a world like this, first of all he'll lead you into a desert, and in the desert you'll find there are no sheets on the beds, you'll find there are no comfortable houses to live in, you'll find there are all sorts of privations, which the Lord Jesus met up with in his

life, and he will ask you to share them. You know in the times of the early church, and also in some countries of the world today, it means a different thing to follow the Lord Jesus, than it does in this Christianized country in which we live. How much does it cost us today, if we say, I wish to [00:12:06] follow the Lord Jesus Christ, when we respond to his word, and we follow him in the waters of baptism, and we confess ourselves to be worthless before him, we take the place of death under the waters, and desire to walk with him in the newness of life. How much does it follow us? Perhaps we get some snide remarks from our family, perhaps from our workmates, perhaps from people that we know, the neighbors, perhaps they make unkind remarks about us, but you know we still go on living, in some respects, the civilized life that we lived before in the world. We're not altogether outcasts from society, are we? But you know you went into a Hindu country, or a Mohammedan country, or one of these countries where Christianity is not regarded as the national religion, how much more would it cost you to become a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ? You'd [00:13:04] be cut off, you'd be disowned, you'd be shown the door, and your belongings perhaps might be thrown out after you, and from that time onwards, you'd find that you were something like the Lord Jesus Christ, when he said, the Son of man hath nowhere to lay his head. You see, it's a path which costs something, the path of following the Lord Jesus Christ. And there's another man in this eighth chapter, if you look in the 21st verse, another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father, and Jesus said unto him, follow me, and let the dead bury their dead. This man, what said he would follow the Lord Jesus, but he wasn't going to regard it as the most important thing in his life. It was an important thing in his life, something that he was going to take seriously, but there was something else that had to take the first place, and that was his duty to father. He says, father's an old man, and he's a sick man [00:14:02] perhaps, and I've got to look after him first, and when I've looked after him, then I'll see about following you. And the Lord Jesus says, you follow me, and let the dead bury their dead. And so I say to you from the words of the Lord Jesus this afternoon, that the following of the Lord Jesus Christ, is an urgent thing in your life. It's got to take precedence over all your other commitments. You've got to do this first, and the Lord Jesus will see to the needs of your father, and of your mother, and of anyone else that you may be concerned about. And then if you just go on looking in that eighth chapter, in the 23rd verse, you find that when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And what happened? There arose a great tempest in the sea. And we know the result, don't we? There's the boat, rocked on the sea. And there's the Lord Jesus, with his head on the pillow, and he's fast asleep. And there are the disciples in a state of [00:15:05] near panic, because they've seen storms. And they say, here's the master, and he's fast asleep, and he doesn't realize what a desperate situation this is. We've never seen a storm like this, in all our seafaring experience. But you see, they were following the Lord Jesus Christ. And so he could say to them, when he'd rebuke the wind and the sea, he could say, O ye of little faith. You see, in following the Lord Jesus Christ, one puts oneself in his hands, and one has the same security, the same unassailable position, beyond Satan's power, beyond man's power, beyond the dangers that are common to this life. If one is in that path of following the Lord Jesus Christ, one is in the hollow of the Lord's hand. And as the Lord promised Paul, when he was in his service, he says, not a hair of your head shall [00:16:01] be injured, because I have you in my care. This is the result of the following of the Lord Jesus. And then you see, just to follow on further, as to the commitment. It's more important than our daily life, than our job. Matthew has to leave all, as I said before, and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. And instead of receiving the taxes that he sat at his desk, as he did before, he entered into that glorious position, that the Lord described in the fourth chapter of John, when he showed the disciples the fields of white, all ready to harvest. And he says, he that reapeth, receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal. And you see, Matthew was going to rake in something better than those taxes. He was going to rake in, that glorious harvest of men's souls, for the Lord [00:17:02] Jesus Christ. What a privilege, for those who are blessed by the Lord Jesus, to share with him, that great work of gathering

in, those who are appointed to eternal life. The commitment of following the Lord Jesus Christ, it displaces family ties. If we turn for a moment into the Gospel of Luke, in chapter 14, what do we find there? In verse 26, he turned and said unto them, if any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. You see, the following of the Lord Jesus Christ, in one sense, is a desperate matter. It means that one has [00:18:03] to be prepared, if need be, to turn one's back on one's family, to see one's family suffer, for the sake of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in the 10th of Mark, the disciples said to the Lord Jesus, Lord we've left all, and followed you, implied, what are we going to get out of this? And the Lord Jesus tells them, that in this life, they're going to receive brothers and sisters, and all the family blessings, and in the world to come, life everlasting. So much more does he offer, than ever he calls upon us, to set aside for his name. And then the commitment of following the Lord Jesus, challenges our resources. Again in the 14th of Luke, in the 28th verse, he tells there, of the one who says, when he's [00:19:01] going to set out into battle, he has to count the cost, he has to decide whether with a smaller army of 10,000, he can contend with the great King that comes against him, with an army of 20,000. We have to count the cost, before we set out in following the Lord Jesus Christ. But in following the Lord, we follow the one who could say, at the end of the 16th of John's Gospel, be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. And if you turn now, on to the next chapter, after the one that we read, in the 10th chapter. I just want to read the 32nd verse, through to verse 39. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. And whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am [00:20:04] come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it. And he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it. He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. And to understand those words, I think we've got to picture the [00:21:04] Lord Jesus Christ himself, in his pathway on earth, as the one who went through this life, which he walked here on earth, with one thing before him, all his life long, all his service through, one thing before him, and that was the cross. The Lord Jesus was the man who was going towards Jerusalem, and Jerusalem was the place where the prophets were killed. And his footsteps led inevitably to the culmination of his service, which was the cross. And you know I believe that the Lord Jesus, when he was up on the mountain, not only prayed for the needs of those he was meeting with in this life, not only prayed for those poor disciples that he was struggling to teach, but he prayed for strength because he was a man, to confront that great test, which was at the end of his service, which [00:22:02] was the cross of Calvary. And what that meant to the Lord Jesus Christ, you'll never know, and neither shall I. But as we think of him, in the Garden of Gethsemane, as we do so often on the Lord's Day morning, as we think of him hanging there in the hours of darkness, we enter a little into what it meant to him to be made sin, he who knew no sin, so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. And he says, if any man come after me, let him take up his cross. And in Luke it says, let him take up his cross daily, it's not just once, it's a continual action, to take that cross and to follow it, to follow the Lord Jesus as one who bears a cross, not his cross, but my cross, in the same way that he bore the cross for me. And those who think about their own mother-in-law, and all the other troubles they have in their life, and they talk about the cross they have to bear, they know nothing about this, they've never entered [00:23:01] into these thoughts. These thoughts are desperate, desperately serious thoughts, which the Lord Jesus lays before his followers, so that we might share the experience which he had in his life,

and so that in following him, we might walk the same sort of pathway which he trod. The commitment of following the Lord Jesus. Now I haven't got much time left, have I? Never mind, the next C for you people that are looking for the hooks, the next C is the condescension. Condescension. You know the Queen, when she goes visiting, she condescends to receive a bouquet from one of the little children that comes running out of the crowd. That's what condescension means, it means a greater person, bowing down in an act of courtesy and kindness, towards somebody who is on a lower plane. And you [00:24:06] read in this story, in the ninth of Matthew, how the Lord Jesus, the Lord out of heaven, the Son of God, the one who made the worlds, everything in the world was made by him, and for his glory, and how he condescended, there to sit down at the table with Matthew. It says the house. If you read in Luke, you read that Levi made him a great feast in his own house. He was a man of some substance. His house was big enough to contain a great feast. And you read in Luke again, that in his house, there was a great company of publicans and sinners that kept up, that sat down with him at this feast in his house. But you see Matthew is a humble man, and he says as Jesus sat at meat in the house, it so happened that people came and sat down with him, publicans and others, that sat down with him at the [00:25:04] table. But it was a great feast, it was a great occasion. Matthew was celebrating the greatest thing that had ever happened in his life, greater than his 21st birthday, greater than his wedding, greater than all the things that had happened to him in his life. This was the call of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was going to make a feast, to celebrate it. The Lord Jesus had deigned to call Matthew from his tax collector's desk, to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus himself. And then having called Matthew, he comes into his house, and there he sits down to feast before him. And you know, we can't but be surprised, although we're used to the number of times in the Gospels, that the Lord Jesus is spoken of, his name is linked with the publicans and sinners, with the publicans and harlots, with all those people that were the outcasts and the despised of [00:26:04] this world. Those people whose lives were unsatisfactory and ungodly, and his name is linked with them in Holy Scripture, those with whom he kept company. And if we're thinking people, we ask ourselves, well why didn't he go to the respectable people in the world? Why didn't he go to the Jewish leaders, the Sanhedrin, or to the Pharisees, or to the Sadducees, or to the scribes, the doctors of the law? Why didn't he make these his friends, and minister to them, and then they could perhaps have changed their approach, and had more success in teaching the people the law? But no, you see, in every one of these companies, there's a barrier, a barrier, a barrier that he can't get through, even he can't get through that barrier. What sort of a barrier is this? It's the barrier of man's self-esteem [00:27:01] before God. And you know this is the one thing, the one thing in the life of a man, or a woman, or a boy, or a girl, the one thing that stops the blessing coming through from the Lord Jesus, to your soul. As long as I hold myself before him as respectable, as having done something worth his notice, as being fit to keep company with him, as somebody that has the right of approach to him, in my own strength, for what I am, any of these things, then we can't get near the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the other side of that veil, in the temple, you remember in the temple, God's presence dwelt behind a veil, in the thick darkness, and nobody dared to go in, except the high priest, who went in, in fear and trembling, once every year on the Day of Atonement, and took the blood. And you know, if I have [00:28:03] in my heart, feelings about myself, and my own fitness, to be with the Lord Jesus, my fitness to draw near to the Lord Jesus, then for me, he's the other side of that veil, he's unattainable, he's beyond my reach, and I can't get to him, and he's got nothing for me, nothing at all. And that's why he came to those people, who made themselves out to be nothing. And he explained it, in a story that he told, about the two men that went up into the temple to pray, the publican and the Pharisee, or the Pharisee and the publican, and how that the Pharisee who came, and would not lift, the publican who came, would not lift up his face to heaven, but bowed down before God, and said, God be merciful to me the sinner, was the one to whom the blessing came. He went up to his house, justified rather than the other. And so you see, the Lord Jesus has to come to

these people, because there's no one else that he can reach, no one else. And so he comes to [00:29:04] those that are outcast, and those that don't try to make themselves out to be respectable before God. And you know, if there's anybody here on this first Catford Lecture of this year, anybody who has never come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, for themselves, I just want to say this to you, that you'll never find the Lord Jesus as your Savior, until you find that place on your knees, and you say, God be merciful to me the sinner. Until you realize that everything in your heart, and in your life, in God's sight, is totally unacceptable, fit to be thrown out onto the rubbish heap, no good to God. The Lord Jesus had to tell them, the people in his day, says the flesh, that's the natural man, it profiteth, nothing, it's no good for God, it's got to be thrown away. And this is what we [00:30:04] confess, when we take the place of baptism, and we're laid under the water, everything that we represent, is put away out of sight, before God, because it's unfit for his presence. And so the Lord Jesus comes, in condescension, and he takes a place, in the house of Matthew, in the company of those who don't make themselves out to be respectable, before him. And then, as soon as he does this, we come to the third hook, and the third hook, is the controversy. I don't mind if you call it a controversy, but I looked it up in the dictionary, and it says controversy, in the dictionary, my dictionary. And the controversy arose, because those respectable people, that I've been talking to you about, they came [00:31:03] and asked the disciples. You can imagine them, in a busybody way, buzzing around that table, where the feast was set, and whispering to the disciples, what does your master think he's up to? What do you think he's doing? Doesn't he know these people, who they are? They did the same thing. One of them did the same thing, when the Lord Jesus came into his own house. You read about it in the seventh of Luke. And he said, this man, if he was a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is, that touches him, for she's a sinner. And they say to the disciples, your master doesn't know what he's doing. Why doesn't he keep his place? He's a teacher. He wants to get into the professional circle of the teachers. And see that he keeps the dignity of the teachers together. And doesn't drag our name down into the dirt like this. And they're concerned about it. And here's a controversy rising up. And the Lord Jesus, has to reply to them, in a way [00:32:04] which is fitting to their condition. And the reply he gives, coming to the middle bit, but the reply he gives, finishes up. They that are whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick. And you know, I feel it's ironical. Ironical, as he speaks to them like this. How often was the Lord ironical, in the way he spoke to people. And I feel that he looked through them, as he said, they that are whole. He looked at them, like he looked at those people in the eighth of John, when he said, let him that is without sin, cast the first stone at her. The Lord Jesus, looks right through us. He doesn't see the outside. He doesn't see that smug expression we have on our face, that respectable suit of clothes that we're wearing. He doesn't see anything like that. He looks right through and he sees the man behind the facade. He'd got something dreadful to say to them, which we haven't got time to talk about this afternoon. He said it's in the 23rd of [00:33:01] Matthew, at the end of his, end of his ministry. And every time it was, woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. But now he says to them, they that are whole, don't need a doctor. If you're fit, if you're alright, you don't need a doctor. If we were spiritually alright, we shouldn't need, perhaps, to come here this afternoon, to hear a word like this. But it's because we all have a need of the Word of God, continuously, to reach our inadequacies. Even if we're converted people, even if we know the Lord, even if we're followers, we need the Word of God, continuously, to keep us clean, to keep us fit for the Lord's presence. They that, those that are whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick. And he said, here I'm come, not to call the righteous, but the sinners, to repentance. And so the contradiction is dealt with. But, during the dealing, [00:34:05] dealing with this contradiction, he throws out what I'm calling now, the fourth C. And that's the conundrum. The conundrum. What's a conundrum, you ask me?

Well, that's a riddle. A riddle. You know, like Samson asked. He says, out of the strong came forth

sweetness, and out of the eater came forth meat. What is it? You know what it was, don't you? It was a swarm of bees in a lion's carcass. And they had to guess it. And they couldn't. Never mind. The Lord Jesus, I believe here, and I'm not being funny, please my elder brethren, I'm not being funny. I believe here, that the Lord Jesus threw this out, as a riddle to these scribes and Pharisees. Those people who pretended that they knew the law. They claimed that they knew the law, and they understood the law. He said to them, you go and learn what this means. And he went back to the Prophet Hosea. The Prophet, that draws a [00:35:02] picture of the nation of Israel, like an unfaithful wife. The Prophet, that talks about the nation of Israel, by the name of the child, not having obtained mercy.

And the Prophet, that talks about them as, not my people. And then he goes to the chapter in the Prophet, in which it says, that your, your righteousness, your repentance, is like the morning dew. It's like the early clouds, which appear in the sky. You come to me and you say we're sorry, we're going to turn to the Lord, we say. He said, your repentance is like the morning dew. Like the mist that appears on a summer morning, and before a few minutes has passed, it's gone away. And there's the clear sky. And you say, where is it? It's vanished. It's such a temporary, it's such an insincere thing. Takes them to that chapter. And then he takes them [00:36:04] to the verse in the chapter, which says, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice. He says, you go away and learn what it means. And you know it, they didn't. They didn't, because, if you go forward three chapters in Matthew's, Matthew's Gospel, he has to say to them again, if you'd known what this meant, you wouldn't have condemned the guiltless. So they didn't. After three chapters, at the time of his rejection by the nation, they still hadn't learned what it meant. I will have mercy, and not sacrifice. And I wonder if we know what it meant, means. I'm sure my older brothers know what it means. But you know, I should like to, I won't do it of course, but I should like to take a show of hands this afternoon, of those that really know what it means, when the Lord Jesus quoted this verse out of his ear, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice. And you know this comes as a challenge to [00:37:05] you and me, this afternoon, as it came to those Pharisees. I'm not trying to say that we're like the Pharisees, but it comes as a challenge, because this represents the attitude of heart that God looks for. What did he find in them?

He found those that are willing all the time, to bring their offerings, to bring their sacrifices, to go through a ceremonial, to be technically correct according to the law. And yet when he looked into their heart, he found that it was rotten. And you know, to help us to understand this verse, the word mercy, is not the word that we think about mercy, that the judge has on the prisoner, when he says, well I won't send you to prison, I'll put you on probation. That's not the word. But if you look into one of the, what should we say, the more modern [00:38:01] translations. If you look for instance into the revised standard version, you'll find that the word mercy is rendered steadfast love. And if you look into J.B.

Phillips's translation of the prophets, you'll find that he renders it true love. And if you look into the Young's concordance, you'll find again that it's rendered steadfast love. And what God looks for, in the heart of man, is steadfast love. He looks for steadfast love towards himself. I will have steadfast love, and not the continual bringing of sacrifices. And you know, I wonder, I'm not a scholar, and I don't understand Hebrew, and I don't understand Greek, but I just wonder if this wonderful word for love, that we have in the New Testament, and which is so beautifully demonstrated to us in 1 Corinthians 13, isn't the New Testament equivalent to that word for mercy, which [00:39:03] we have so often used in the Old Testament. All through the Psalms, God is merciful and gracious. The mercy of God, the tender mercy of God, it's the same word, this steadfast love. I will have steadfast love, and not sacrifice. And so you see, I'm going to leave that thought with you. What does God look for in you

and me? What does the Lord Jesus look for in you and me, if we are going to become, or if we have become, if we are his followers? He looks for steadfast love. And steadfast love is something which sets self aside. Steadfast love is something which is directed towards himself. He is the one we love, because he first loved us. Steadfast love is the response to the love in the heart of God. [00:40:03] And steadfast love to God, steadfast love to the Lord Jesus Christ, has to find its expression in steadfast love towards my brother. Now I'm going to tell you a little incident. It's a sad incident, it's an incident that upset me, and you'll forgive me for telling it, perhaps you'll think afterwards, I ought not to have told it, but it upset me. I went to a morning meeting on the Lord's Day morning, to remembrance of the Lord, and after the breaking of the bread, a brother got up to minister the word. And he ministered out of the last chapter of John's Gospel, where the Lord throws out the challenge to Peter, and he says Lovest thou me? And you know he went on in his ministry, all he wanted to say was to criticize. He wanted to criticize those that weren't dressed in a manner [00:41:02] which he considered suitable for the presence of the Lord. And this was after the breaking of the bread, when we'd shown the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I say to you, my brother and my sister, if we have this attitude, if this is what we see in love to the Lord Jesus Christ, if we see an obsession with outward trivialities like this, if we can't see in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, a need for a response of love towards himself, and a covering love towards my brother, so that we don't see their faults, we don't see their outside, but we look into their hearts, and we see in their heart, what the Lord Jesus has produced there, we see Christ in my brother. I trust we do this, and you know if there's something about my brother that upsets me, then let me go quietly and humbly to my brother outside the meeting, in his house perhaps, or in my house, or somewhere where I shan't hurt his feelings or upset him, and let me whisper it lovingly in his ear, that he upsets me by something that he does or [00:42:02] says, and let me consider myself like the scripture says, lest I also be tempted. I will have mercy and not sacrifice. I will have steadfast love and not sacrifice, and if you had known what this meaneth, I will have steadfast love and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless. May God bless his word to every one of our hearts.