

John 4 v 39 - 54

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[0 : 00] So if you'd like to find in your Bible the Gospel of John and Chapter 4. The Gospel of John and Chapter 4. We're going to read from verse 39 through to the end of the chapter.

Jesus has been on his way from Judea, that's in the south of the country, up to the north of the country and he's passed through a place called Samaria. And when he was there he met a woman at the well and spoke with her and talked with her and she went and told all her friends about Jesus. And so we're going to pick up the story from what happened when she told all her friends about Jesus and then what happened after that. So verse 39 of John and Chapter 4. Here is the faithful account of Jesus' life. Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him, that's Jesus, because of the woman's testimony. He told me everything I ever did. So when the Samaritans came to him they urged him to stay with them and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, we no longer believe just because of what you said. Now we've heard for ourselves. We know that this man really is the saviour of the world. After the two days he left for Galilee. Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honour in his own country. When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had all seen that he had, they had, they had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, for they also had been there. Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine.

And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son who was close to death. Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, Jesus told him, you will never believe.

The royal official said, sir, come down before my child dies. Jesus replied, you may go. Your son will live. The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, the fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour. Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, your son will live. So he and all his household believed.

[2 : 51] This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee. It's so good, O Lord, that we can bring every need and matter to you, knowing not only that you hear us when we pray, but knowing that you are pleased to answer the prayers of your people. And we have, each one of us in our lives, the testimony of that, the evidence of that. We, each one of us, have been recipients of your blessing and help in times of need or in times of trouble, Lord, or in times of help. You have heard us and you have helped us and helped us as others have prayed for us too. And so we are convinced of the power of prayer because we're convinced of who you are, faithful God, covenant-keeping God, a God who always fulfills his promises to his people.

And, Lord, not because of who we are. Thank you that we don't have to be able to say, well, I've been good enough that you should hear me pray this week, for none of us are good enough. Again, it is grace. It is because, Lord, of your love, not because of anything in ourselves.

But we do want to pray. We do want to bring to you needs. We pray for those who are away from us, several folk at the time who are away. We ask you to protect them and keep them, especially to be with those who are involved in camps and beach mission, like Caleb and Emily.

We pray that you would encourage them after they've been very busy this summer. We pray give them the energy they need. But we pray, Lord, again that these camps and this work, oh, Lord, with beach mission may be fruitful. We don't want it simply to be a good time for young people, though we do want it to be that. We want to be a time of spiritual blessing, a time when hearts are changed, lives are transformed, when Jesus Christ is received.

And so we do pray, oh, Lord, that this may be the case, that many young people over this summer may be converted and born again, and not just young people, but parents and grandparents and older folk too. For we know, oh, Lord, that you are gracious and that this is the day of salvation. [5 : 05] And so we pray that you would be at work. We ask again, oh, Lord, for your help, for your church around the world. We continue to remember your people in Iraq who are facing such terrible persecution because of ISIS. We do pray, oh, Lord, that you would be with them, help them, surround them. We know, Lord, that they are fearful and we can understand that. But we pray again that they may be able to rest in you. We ask that in your mercy and grace that you would overthrow the plans of the enemy. For we know that it is Satan who is behind these works of evil. We pray that his purposes and plans would not triumph, but rather, oh, Lord, you would triumph over him as you always do.

We continue to remember your people in other parts as well, still facing trouble, Syria, Lord, which, and those in Gaza. Thank you for your Christian people there who are serving you. We pray, Lord, for those who are on the mission field and ask you to watch over and keep them. Think of Ben and the family as they go to Africa very soon. Protect them and encourage them and help them and settle them. We pray again for the needs of our folk nearer at home. We pray for the children who've gone into Sunday school. How we long again that at an early age they may know you and love you. Help those who teach them, that they might teach your word faithfully and clearly, and that your Holy Spirit would take your word and apply it to young hearts and lives, that they may follow you all their days. We pray for the needs of young people in our church and in this town. And as we meet on Tuesday, we ask for your leading and guiding, that we may know your will and that we may be able to serve you in this way of helping young people find Christ. We do pray for the many thousands of young people, Lord, in this town who have no knowledge of you, ignorant of you. Lord, who have never been told the gospel truly as it really is. And we pray, O Lord, for them, that you would have mercy and grace upon them, that they may hear your truth, hear your grace, hear your salvation, that they might be protected from the many things that damage and destroy life, and that, Lord, they may love and know you. We pray again, Lord, for the open air next week and ask that you'd help us. We want to be faithful as we present Jesus Christ in public, as we make him known. And so we pray that you would give us good weather. We pray, Lord, you would give us those people to pass by and to stop just those people that you are drawing to yourself and dealing with. And we pray again that in this town there may be many whose hearts are changed and whose lives are transformed. We know that you are such a God who delights to rescue sinners, who delights to be a savior. And so we praise you for our salvation, and we believe and trust that what you have done in us, you can do and will do in the lives of others too. So take us and use us as a church here in this town, and all those who love you and know you in this town. Take us and use us to be lights to this dark world. For we ask these things in Jesus' name, as we ask for his help now, as we hear him speak to us in the pages of scripture, may our ears be open and may our hearts receive the truth you have for us. Amen. Well, we're in the Gospel of John on chapter 4, which we read just a few moments ago. And it'd be good if you had that passage open, it would be helpful to you as we look together at this event in the life of our Lord Jesus and how he dealt with the situation that was brought before him. Now, as you're well aware, the longstanding hostility between Israel and the Palestinian people has been in the news over these past weeks. It's sadly just, again, another outbreak of what has been almost centuries-old hostilities.

Back in 2002, a similar event took place. Just to recount to you what happened. On Sunday, the 4th of August that year, a young woman of the name of Ashrat, Amram, was waiting for her bus at Meran Junction in Israel. At last, the number 361 arrived. But to Ashrat's disappointment, it was crowded. It was overflowing and there wasn't even very little space to stand. And so, although it meant having to spend more money and more expensive, she decided to take one of the taxis that were parked in the rank just a little further up the road. She recalled what happened, in her own words. When I opened the door of the taxi, I heard the bomb. I turned my head to see what had happened and I began to run. A suicide bomber had detonated his device on the bus. Ashrat suffered only superficial injuries and came out of hospital the next day. But eight people were killed in another 50 injured. If you'd have spoken to Ashrat that morning as she left home and asked her, will you be pleased to see the bus crowded with people? No doubt she said, no, it's a real annoyance to me when it's full. I have to pay for a taxi, which costs me more money. Similar stories,

of course, have been told about how staff at the World Trade Center were ill on September the 11th, unable to come to work that day. They were saved when terrorists flew planes into the Twin Towers, killing over 3,000. Even in London on July the 7th, 2005, again, people were running late for work, missed the tube, missed the bus, and so were not caught up in those four bombs that killed 50 people in London. It's not very nice missing the bus or the tube. It's not what we want to happen.

[11 : 14] It's not nice when we find that the bus is full and we have to pay for a taxi to get on it. But the reality is that like all events in our lives, things don't happen by chance. And not just the little things, not just the missing the bus, not just being ill for work one day, but even the very difficult, the disappointing events of life, the heart-rending events of life are all under the sovereign, almighty hand of a loving, heavenly Father, whose will is always to do his children good.

Jesus, when he was speaking in Matthew 10, reminded the people there of the care of God for those who are his. He says, are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. Even the very hairs of your head are numbered, so don't be afraid, you're worth more than many sparrows. The things that happen around about us, the death of a little bird is not outside of the sovereign concern and care of God, and so much more so with you and I.

The events of our lives, the disappointments of our lives as well, are those things which God has a purpose for and overrules in. But of course, the reality is, if we're honest, the first thing we do when we do not get what we want is that we complain. When things don't go the way we planned, then we feel that we are being wrongly treated. We are losing out on something in some way. The problem is, of course, is that we have been molded into that way of thinking that it is our human right to have what we want when we want it. We've got into the idea that you can have anything you want. You can have instant credit to purchase whatever your heart desires. Even when it comes to the simple thing of having a cup of coffee, when you go out, you can expect to have it just the way you want it. Those were the days when you felt you were really in a very expensive coffee shop when they offered you cream or milk. But nowadays, of course, you know that you can have it espresso or americano or latte or mocha, cappuccino. You can have it low fat, full fat. You can even have it with marshmallows on top. You can have it however way you like. And so we've got used to almost in every sphere of our lives having it the way we like it. And we think, of course, that getting what we want and things going our way is always the best for us. Because we've got into this mindset of thinking that our judgment is best. If I want it for me, then I must be right. No one knows better than me what's good for me. And therefore, when I don't get what's good for me, I don't get what I want.

The problem is, of course, with that way of thinking, that self-confidence in our own judgment is that it's constantly thwarted. Because throughout our lives, we don't get what we want.

Things don't go our way. Things go against us. But if we are Christians this morning, if we know this living God, then there's no cause for us to be alarmed when we face the disappointments and the difficulties of life, we can be assured that our God is the God who does always what is best for us.

[14 : 46] We have his promises. Romans 8, 28, for we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, those that he has called according to his purpose. If you read the context of what Paul is saying about that verse, he again goes on to speak about we face death every day.

He speaks about the trials and the difficulties and the hardships. That promise is not just in a vacuum, that God works all things for good. So I want us to look at this second miracle that we have in the Gospel of John because I hope that we will see that there are invaluable lessons for us in the life of faith and in the circumstances, particularly when things do not go our way.

John draws attention particularly to the fact that this second miracle is very much like the first. The first one is in chapter 2 and concerns the wedding at Cana where Jesus turned the water into wine. This miracle also took place at Cana when Jesus was there. It also took place on the third day after the two days he'd been in Samaria. It also begins by Jesus, first of all, rejecting a request.

Back at the beginning in chapter 2, Mary had approached Jesus about helping out about the fact that they'd run out of wine and Jesus said, what's he going to do with me? It's not my time yet. And even here, when the royal official first asks Jesus, Jesus gives him what seems to be a rebuke.

Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you'll never believe. And then we find that both of these miracles are accomplished by Jesus simply by him speaking a word, simply by giving

directions to the servants to fill the water jugs, simply by saying here in this instance to the father of the child, you may go, your son will live. No great waving of hands, no great effect, partly only and just his word.

But what is most striking, of course, between this first miracle of the water and the wine and this second miracle is how stark a contrast the situations are. As I said, in the first miracle, it's at a time of joy and rejoicing. It's a time of a wedding when everybody's together and having a good time. It's a joyful occasion. But the second miracle takes place at a time of great sadness and sorrow. A young child, we don't know his age, is at the point of death, a time of great grief and sorrow, joy and sorrow. Jesus is there at both occasions. And in both situations, he is working. Now what do we know about this second situation? What do we know about this man? Well, we know something more of him than we do about the wedding guests in the first miracle. We see that he was an official in the court of King Herod. We are told a royal official. Capernaum, which is where he lived, was where the king, King Herod, had his headquarters. It's the place from which he ruled. He was under the Roman authority, but he had a certain amount of power. And he clearly had a certain number of officials. This was one of them. We don't know how high up he was, but it's certain that because he was a royal official, he was somebody who had influence. He was somebody who was respected. He was somebody who almost certainly had some money as well. But all these things, this position that he held, did not give him immunity from the disappointments and the sorrows and the trials of life. Because even though he was a man who probably almost always got what he wanted, he had people under him, people who he commanded and directed, almost certainly though he was given respect wherever he went because he was in the service of the king. And even though he had this wealth, he had all the comforts of life. They couldn't protect him from the sorrow, the grief of his son being, what we might say, terminally ill, fatally ill.

[18 : 49] Something happens to him that he doesn't want to happen. Something happens, something gate crashes his life that he is not prepared for and he has no way of dealing with. His son, who he loves, is very sick and ill.

And you can be sure, of course, that it's not something that he wants, is it? No father wants a child who's ill. This is something that goes against his will, goes against his desires, goes against his plans, goes against his hopes. No doubt he had hopes for this boy. Perhaps he thought that he could follow him into the king's service. Perhaps it could be, he could be his replacement or anything like that. All sorts of hopes and dreams are lying on a bed of sickness.

I wonder if in your life, dear friends, you have gate crashes. I'm sure you do. Events, circumstances, situations that come along that mean, this is not what I want. This is not how I see things running. This is not how I plan. This is a disappointment to me. Perhaps we can learn something from this man and his encounter with Jesus. The first thing I think that we need to recognize is this, is that not getting what we want when things are a disappointment to us, not getting what we want is good for us when it moves us to seek Christ. It moves us to seek Christ.

Clearly this man had heard about Jesus. We're told that he did. There in verse 47, when this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee, he heard about Jesus. He heard about Jesus probably upon the previous miracle in Cana, almost certainly about the miracles he'd performed in Jerusalem because we're told that lots of people had heard about these things. There in verse 44, 45, they'd seen all that he'd done in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, for they also had been there. So the news was around and about, and this man had heard. There was this miracle worker, this Jesus, who had done these incredible things. And he was a man who had to have his ear to the ground. He was a man who had to know what was going on. And what he heard about Jesus gave him hope, about the miracles he'd done.

And so he sets off and travels from Capernaum to Cana. It's 25 miles. It's a good days, long days journey, at least, probably more, depending on the terrain and the mode of transport. But here he goes.

[21 : 23] He goes to Jesus. He seeks Jesus. He leaves the boy who's sick on the bed, possibly for the last time, thinking that maybe he might never see him again alive. And he goes to Jesus. Doesn't send a servant to fetch Jesus to him. He goes himself with a personal request that he should heal his child.

Now, it's very probable this man would never have met with Jesus otherwise. How would he ever have come to Jesus? How would he ever have been moved to seek Jesus Christ for himself if it hadn't been that this calamity, in one sense, had come into his life? He was a busy official. He was

working for the king. He couldn't just, in one sense, drop everything and do what he liked. He would have had a busy schedule. He probably would have gone through the whole of his life working for her. He was a busy day. He was a busy day. He was a busy day. He was a busy day. He was a busy day. He was a busy day. He was a busy day. He was a busy day. He was a busy day. How often is this story repeated through the Bible and in the world today? How God deals with people by tragedy, by difficulty, by disappointment, by things not going the way they'd planned. And somehow, they are brought to this place where they end up meeting with God. Think of Moses. He was the son or the grandson of Pharaoh in Egypt. He thought that he could be the deliverer of God's people. So he kills one of Pharaoh's soldiers. But then he runs away. He's chased out. Death threats after him. His whole life, in one sense, is finished. He's just a shepherd guiding a load of sheep around a desert.

But there he meets with God. Again and again, that situation takes place. But you want to say, well, why is it so good? Why is it so good to come to Christ? Why is it so important that this man seeks Christ and knows Christ? Why is it that God moves in and through the trials and difficulties, the gate crashes of our lives, to bring us to Christ? Why is that for our good? Well, because coming to know Christ is coming to know God, and for this very reason we're created. And to know God is to know life itself. Here's what John writes in one of his letters. He says this, this is the testimony. God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life. We need each one of us to come to God through Christ. Saint Augustine wrote this, because you made us for yourself, our hearts find no peace until they rest in you. We wander and drift through life looking for satisfaction, fulfillment, accomplishment, and we will continue to drift through life until we come to Christ. And God uses the sufferings and the difficulties of life to bring us to himself. They're his ropes in one sense that take hold of us and draw us to him. So often we just meander through life, everything going fine in one sense, not really having our boat rocked. But unless God meets with us and deals with us, unless God draws us, unless God shakes us, then we shall be eternally lost. We shall be eternally separated from him, not just in this life, but in eternity. We shall bear the punishment for our sins, and we shall spend eternity in hell. That's why it's good. It's good when we don't get what we want, when it brings us to seek

Christ, as it did for this man here. And so he travels, and he comes, and he seeks Christ. But then we realize as well that the first thing he says to Jesus is, he says to him, or begs him rather, to come and heal his son who is close to death. But Jesus gives him a rebuke. Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, Jesus said, you'll never believe. It seems to sort of put a rebuke to him. He doesn't get what he wants. He asks for Jesus, and Jesus doesn't give him immediately what he wants. And so we see not getting what we want is good for us when it increases our faith, increases our faith. You see, this man had to learn of the almighty power of Christ. He had to learn something which he'd never understood before.

[26 : 00] Certainly he was someone who had some faith. He wouldn't have traveled all that distance unless he had some faith that Christ could help him. It may have been just a vague hope. It may have been just a last resort.

It may have been that he'd been, he'd got all the doctors in Capernaum, even perhaps even the king's own personal doctor, I don't know. And he'd got them to look at his son, but nobody had been able to help. So a last ditch attempt, he goes to Jesus. He has just this tiny bit of faith. But you see, his faith is weak.

What does Jesus rebuke him? Because what's he saying? He says, he says, come down. Come down. In other words, come to Capernaum and heal him. You need to be there, Jesus, to do this work. You need to be in Capernaum.

You need to be by my son. Like any physician and doctor, you need to be close by and lay hands on him and do something to him to heal him. His faith was restricting Jesus to be only working in the place where he thought he could work. So Jesus doesn't give him the answer he wants. He doesn't answer the prayer.

But instead, he gives him something better. So the man says again, doesn't he? Come down. But Jesus says, you don't need for me to come down. You don't need for me to be in Capernaum.

[27 : 23] All I need to do is speak. Your son will live. He needed to learn that the power of Christ is something beyond anything else, that the power of Christ is beyond his understanding and comprehension, that he can have real faith in this Jesus.

Jesus heals the child from a distance of 25 miles, and so by so doing increases this man's weak faith so that he could believe that Christ could do all things. What started off as just a small faith, a hope, we might even say a mustard seed, grew and developed to become a strong faith. And what amazing faith it is, isn't it, here in this official. Notice what it says there in verse 50, the second part. Jesus says, you may go, your son will live. The man took Jesus at his word and departed.

He took him at his word. He doesn't still argue. He doesn't debate. He doesn't say, well, no, Jesus, you've got to come. He doesn't start to wrestle with him or in any other way. He simply accepts what Jesus says is true. And he doesn't even hurry back, rush back. We're told that when he meets the servants who are coming from his home, it was the next day. There's a peace that has flooded his soul in one sense. There's a confidence, there's an assurance that has filled him, which he never had before. And it came through the sorrow and the disappointment of his son's illness. His faith is increased. His faith is matured. His faith is deepened.

You see, the trouble is, again, that if our faith is never tested and challenged by the gate crashes and the disappointments of life, then our faith will always just be shallow. It'll always be just the faith of sunny days, not the faith of rainy, stormy, troubled days. We have to pass through, pass through those times that we might prove the faithfulness of our Savior. See, faith is a channel.

[29 : 40] It's good for us when our faith is tested because it makes our faith enlarge. Faith is the channel of every spiritual blessing. It's like a conduit, like a pipe. Faith, we receive all the blessings that we have by faith. The smaller our faith and the smaller our peace, the less our joy. They restricted our confidence and assurance flowing into our lives. But the greater our faith, the stronger our faith, the bigger our faith, the more we enjoy of Christ, the more we delight in him, the more assured we are of his love, the more we can face those challenges that come. So not getting what we want is good for us when our faith is increased. Large faith believes God for all things, trusts God for all things.

There's one more thing here as well that we see. Not getting what we want is good for us when it multiplies Christians. This man goes home, doesn't he? On his way home, we're told the servants met him, verse 51, and he asked them, when did his son get better?

They said, the fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour. That's about one o'clock in the afternoon, our time. Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, your son will believe. So he and all his household believed. He and all his household believed. This man not only has the joy of the disaster being averted, the disaster of losing his son is changed, but more than that, he and all his family come to this saving faith in Jesus Christ. They come to believe that he is God's Messiah who has been sent into the world to rescue them from their sins. What began as a crisis in the family, a time when all were full of fear and anxiety, is changed into the happiest and most joyful time they'd ever known.

[31 : 45] He had gone to Christ for healing of one member of his family. Now every one of them was healed from the worst disease of all, the disease of sin and death.

He'd sought God to bring a temporary deliverance from the power of death for his son, but they all received life everlasting and eternal. He went to find the answer to a physical need, and he returned with a solution to every spiritual need. Isn't that amazing? He goes with this tiny hope, this glimmer of hope, this possibility of faith, and he comes back and not only does he have this great faith in Christ, but all of his family have this great faith in Christ as well. What a wonderful transformation has taken place in this home, and it began, it began with the sorrow and the heartache of a young lad dying.

However terrible, however tragic, however painful that really is, physical loss, physical suffering needs to be put into contrast with what is spiritual and eternal. You see, as far as God is concerned, and rightly so, our souls are of greater worth than our bodies. It doesn't mean that God doesn't care about the body, he does, but he cares for our soul because our soul is eternal. It is forever. Our body is for now, for a moment, for a time. We can't always see what good God is bringing out of the things that we don't want to happen in our lives. We can't always see what he is doing in these bodies of ours and in our circumstances and situations, but faith believes him rather than what it sees.

Paul writes those incredibly challenging words in 2 Corinthians 5 verse 7. We live not by sight, but by faith. That's the Christian life. It's taking God at his word. It's believing that his word is more trustworthy than the circumstances and the situations we face. We believe God and we trust him to

operate in our lives in spite of what we think is best, in spite of what we think is for our good, in spite of things happening that we do not want to happen.

I went to read this a few weeks ago, but I couldn't find the passage, so I'm going to read it now and it applies as much today, I think, as it did a few weeks ago. It's from the epilogue of Johnny Erickson's first book and it tells of an incident in her life.

[34 : 53] This is her speaking in a public meeting. Wouldn't it be exciting if right now in front of you I could be miraculously healed, get up out of my chair and on my feet? Just so you know, Johnny Erickson was paraplegic.

What a miracle. We'd all be excited and praising God. It'd be something we could confirm for ourselves. We'd actually see the wonder and power of God. Wouldn't that be thrilling?

I was speaking to an audience of 1,600 young people. I paused as they visualized the scene. Then I continued. But far more exciting and wonderful in the long run would be the miracle of your salvation, the healing of your own soul. You see, that's more exciting because that's something that will last forever.

If my body was suddenly and miraculously healed, I'd be on my feet another 30 or 40 years, then my body dies. But a soul lives for eternity. From the standpoint of eternity, my body is only a flicker in the time span of forever.

Afterwards, someone asked me, do you suppose you were so strong-willed and stubborn that the only way God could work in your life was to zap you, as they put it, and put you in a wheelchair? I shook my head.

[36 : 11] In the Psalms, we're told that God does not deal with us according to our sins and iniquities. My accident was not a punishment for my wrongdoing, whether or not I deserved it. Only God knows why I was paralyzed.

Maybe he knew I'd be ultimately happier serving him. If I was still on my feet, it's hard to say how things might have gone. I probably would have drifted through life, marriage, maybe even divorce, dissatisfied and disillusioned.

When I was in high school, I reacted to life selfishly and never built on my long-lasting values. I lived simply for each day and the pleasure I wanted, and almost always at the expense of others.

But now you're happy? A teenage girl asked. I really am. I wouldn't change my life for anything. I even feel privileged. God doesn't give such special attention to everyone and intervene that way in their lives.

He allows most people to go right on in their own ways. He doesn't interfere, even though he knows that they are ultimately destroying their lives, their health or happiness.

[37 : 18] And it must grieve him terribly. I'm really thankful he did something to get my attention and change me. You know you don't have to get a broken neck to be drawn to God.

But the truth is, people don't always listen to the experience of others and learn from them. Let's pray together. Throughout this time, O Lord, as we've been considering the events and the life of this royal official, his son, family, and their meeting with Jesus, so many things have come up into our minds.

So many circumstances in the past and even in the present, which we find painful and disappointing. And, O Lord, we confess again that we have to say we don't know why these things are happening to us.

But we do know you. We know that you are the God who cares for us, who loves us, who has a purpose for us.

We know that, O Lord, that these problems and difficulties and actions, though they are painful, yet you are able to take and transform into something beautiful and good.

[38 : 58] And so, O Lord, we ask that, like this man, you would increase our faith, where we struggle and wrestle with you, where we try to restrict you and say you can't possibly work here but only there, where we try to demand of you what we want instead of submitting to what you want.

And so we pray, O Lord, that you would meet with us even now, that you would take those very painful, hurtful things. Not that you would take us out of them or remove them, because, Lord, it is your purpose that we should pass through them, but rather that, Lord, you should give to us that faith to trust you in them and look with that hope and expectation for the day when we shall see the good that you have brought from them.

We ask especially, O Lord, if there are any of us here this morning who have never come to Christ and never sought him, who have turned away from him and rejected him, that, Lord, you would draw us.

Thank you that you don't always draw us through difficulty and trial. You can draw us through other ways, too. We pray, O Lord, that you would take hold of our hearts and our lives and that you would not let us go until we have sought you and received from you the word of life, which you are only too pleased to give.

We ask again, O Lord, that in the days ahead that our faith would grow and deepen and that through that faith that you've put in us, we may see many people coming to trust in you.

[40 : 37] Thank you that this man saw his family converted and saved. We pray for our family, for those loved ones. We pray for those around about us, that, Lord, as you work in our lives, so you would work in and through us into their lives, that they may enter into the joy of sins forgiven and of peace with God.

Hear us then, Lord, and lead us then, Lord, and be with us as we know you shall be. For we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.