

# Acts Chapter 7

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[ 0 : 00 ] Good, I'm glad you agree. Let's come to the Lord in prayer. Let us pray together. Lord, we are truly astounded, amazed, bewildered. Lord, we stand with mouths open wide at the wonder of your love and grace to us, sinners as we are, that you should ever have given your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come into this world, to take on our humanity, to suffer in our place, to pay for the sins that we have committed, that we might be free, that we might be rescued, that we might be pardoned, that we might be forgiven, that we might inherit and receive everlasting life, that we should be called the children of God.

Oh Lord, we can all well remember that day when we were in the dungeon of sin, when we were in darkness and blindness, when we couldn't see the wonder of your love, when we groped around in life looking for and seeking for answers.

Thank you that you shone the light into that prison cell. You burst open the doors. We could never escape ourselves. We could never dig a tunnel out or file the bars from the windows.

It had to be you coming and rescuing us. And again, we say this morning that salvation is all of the Lord. It's your doing and your work. It's your grace. It's your power. It's your love.

It's your faithfulness. And oh Lord, we ask that this morning that if we have in any sense still trusting in ourselves to be right with God, that we would chuck away that foolish thought, that we would get rid of that idiotic idea that somehow we can be good enough for God, but that we would see that if it wasn't for the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, died in our place, we could never be forgiven.

[ 1 : 43 ] We could never be saved. We could never be rescued. Oh but Lord, we are. And this morning, this Sunday morning, again as we gather, we are gathering with the hosts in heaven and your people all around the world, those many, many, that multitude that no one can number, all singing your praises, all rejoicing in your love, all basking in the sunshine of your grace.

And oh Lord, we ask that this morning you would warm our cold hearts, you would stir us and move us to see again what it is that we have in Christ and who we are in Christ and cause us again to bring you the worship and praise, not just of our lips but of our lives, and not just on Sunday but Monday and all through the week and all through the days that you give us ahead.

May our song, may our desire, may our longing be to live for him who died for us. So Lord, be with us. Send your Holy Spirit afresh upon us this morning where we are burdened or anxious or fearful, where we are troubled.

Lord, may we cast our cares on you, knowing you care for us. Where we have drifted and wandered far from you. Lord, perhaps not on the outside but in the heart. Draw us near again.

Cause us to run the race set before us with the passion and the zeal and the desire that only you can give. Oh Lord, comfort us, meet with us, bless us we ask.

[ 3 : 07 ] We bring these prayers in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to be turning and reading from the book of Acts.

Acts and chapter 7. Acts and chapter 7. If you have one of the church Bibles, the Red Church Bible, that's page 1099. Page 1099.

Acts chapter 7. Can I just again encourage you please to come along this afternoon. If you've been before then you know what it's like. It's very much our evening service just out in the open air.

There'll be obviously some hymns and prayer and Bible reading and word of testimony. And on Wednesday I said if anybody would like to be able to give their testimony in the open air.

And I wonder if anybody's had a thought about that. Linda did really well last week. But if you feel able to, even if you don't feel able to but are willing to, give your brief three or four minute testimony this afternoon in the open air.

[ 4 : 13 ] That'd be great. Please see me after the service this afternoon, this morning. So that's four o'clock down just at the end of the road on the cliff top there for about 45 minutes. Please pray for that.

And please be there. We've been so blessed this year because we plan to have four. And we've, God willing, this afternoon we'll have had all four of them. So that's great. The weather hasn't been disruptive at all.

Well let's read together then. I'm going to read beginning from verse 17. Verse 17 of Acts chapter 7. So Acts chapter 7 verse 17. Picking up the story that Stephen is preaching and talking to the people about what God has done for them. As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased.

Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our ancestors by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.

[ 5 : 22 ] At that time Moses was born. And he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for by his family. When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son.

Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Was powerful in speech and action. When Moses was 40 years old he decided to visit his own people, the Israelites.

He saw one of them being ill-treated by an Egyptian. So he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them.

But they did not. The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, Men, you are brothers. Why do you want to hurt each other?

But the man who was ill-treating the other pushed Moses aside and said, Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?

[ 6 : 21 ] When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons. After 40 years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai.

When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to get a closer look, he heard the Lord saying, I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look. Then the Lord said to him, Take off your sandals for the place where you are standing is holy ground. I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt.

I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt. This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, Who made you ruler and judge? He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. He led them out of Egypt and performed wonders and signs in Egypt at the Red Sea and for 40 years in the wilderness.

[ 7 : 27 ] We'll stop there. If you have your Bible to hand, then it would be helpful if you were turned to Acts in chapter 7.

We're going to be looking at that verse, some of those verses and some other verses as well in the New Testament in a little while. Well, it's been two months since the Brexit referendum.

And of course, that is ongoing and the implications of that referendum will continue to go on for many months. Excuse me. To come.

And it was a very simple choice, wasn't it? Either you chose to stay in or you chose to leave Europe. And the consequences of that choice, as I say, will affect us as a nation and others as well for a long time to come.

Every day we're presented with choices. We're constantly having to make them. From waking to sleeping, we are having to make decisions based upon a choice of options that we have.

[ 8 : 38 ] When you're in bed and the alarm goes off, you have to make the choice. Shall I get out of bed? Or shall I press the snooze button and have another 10 minutes lie in?

It's only when we've made a choice that we then make an action, that we act upon our choice. We act either to stay where we are, gunking in bed, or leap out and face the day.

All choices are followed by actions. If we make a choice, but then do nothing to act upon that choice, then that choice is utterly meaningless, pointless.

So if whilst standing in front of the cake counter in Botham's Bakery, you choose the cake you want, but don't ask for it, then your choice has been irrelevant.

Except possibly to your stomach, which has already been preparing to receive the tasty morsel. It's precisely because our actions have consequences that our choices are either made instantaneously or over a long period of time.

[ 9 : 43 ] Perhaps even a time of thought, maybe prayer, maybe seeking the counsel of others. The consequences of whether you choose a cake or not may only affect the size of your waist the next morning.

But the choice of whether you and who you marry may have a very long, far-reaching repercussion upon your life and many others besides.

So all our choices are made because of influences upon our thinking. Influences that steer us one way or the other.

In the lead-up to that Brexit referendum, the politicians on both sides were spending enormous amounts of energy seeking to influence us in the way that we vote.

Hoping, in one sense, perhaps to manipulate our thinking so that we would decide as they would choose us to decide. But in the matter of cakes, I seem to spend a lot of time in cake shops, don't I?

[ 10 : 41 ] I don't know why that is. In the matter of cakes, many other things influence our choice. The price of the cake, the size of the cake, how appealing it is. If you're on a diet, how many calories are in it, and so on.

If you're choosing who to marry or not, then similarly there are several influences. Are they a Christian? Do they love me? Do I love them? Are they caring? How good-looking are they? Now, we've been reading about Moses here in Acts chapter 7. And if you flip over for a moment to Hebrews in chapter 11, keeping your finger in Acts 7, but flipping over to Hebrews 11, we have there amongst the pantheon, as it were, amongst the honors list of people of faith in the Old Testament, Moses being spoken of in verse 24.

Hebrews 11, 24 says, So here's Moses, and we're told that Moses has made a choice. He knows the importance of choice. He knows the importance of choice, the seriousness of the choice he made, and he finds that his choice was influenced, caused him to act by faith when he'd grown up.

[ 12 : 19 ] He refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be treated along with the people of God, rather enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasure of Egypt because he was looking ahead to the rule.

There were influences upon his choosing, upon his decision. He made a life-altering choice. A life-altering choice at the age of 40.

That's what Acts chapter 7 told us. For Moses, life began at 40. And it wasn't a choice between one of several options. It wasn't a choice between one of several cakes, if we continue that illustration. It was between two simple alternatives. One way of living or the other. And that really defines how we live as Christians today.

The choices that are set before us, on the whole, are simple, one or the other choices. They may seem to be more confusing than that, but ultimately that's what they are.

[ 13 : 21 ] Every choice that we make is between what we want, what God wants. What God wants and what the world expects.

It's a simple choice between, if we can put it this way, right and wrong. What does that look like in practice? What does it mean to have to live each day making a choice between God wants and we want?

What does it mean for Moses as he made this choice, verse 25, he chose to be? What he could have been? Well, first of all, all choice begins with something negative.

All choice is a negative act, a negative decision. It's refusing something, as we're told there. He refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

Go back to cakes again. There we are in front of Botham's Bakery, in front of the glass counter. If we choose one cake, we are rejecting the others. We're refusing them.

[ 14 : 26 ] Unless, of course, we're really greedy that day and we buy all of them. But if we're choosing one, we're refusing several others. So Moses refused something.

He refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He gave up all that he'd known. He gave up his life as he'd known it that far. All the things that had guided him.

All the things that had directed him. All the things that had brought him through childhood, through his youth, even to adulthood. Notice that we read there in Acts 7, verse 22.

Moses was educated and all the wisdom of the Egyptians was powerful in speech and action. So he knew everything. All he'd known had been Egyptian. All his language was Egyptian.

In fact, when he runs away and goes to Midian, the daughters, or the women that he meets at the well, all say, There's an Egyptian. He rescued us.

[15:22] They saw him as an Egyptian. He spoke as an Egyptian. He walked as an Egyptian, if you know that song. But he gave that up. Everything about his life.

He was expected to follow a particular pattern of lifestyle. And that would have included, of course, the Egyptian gods. The myriad of gods that they worshipped. He would have been brought up to worship them. Including his grandfather, who was considered to be divine as well.

His life up to that point was Egyptian. But more than that, he was refusing and rejecting his future as an Egyptian. Here he is, the grandson of Pharaoh. We know that he must have held a high, prestigious position.

And would have done. Maybe he'd gone on into some realm of government, or in the army, or whatever it may be. He would have been one of the most important people in the most important nation of his age.

He refused it, though. He said no to it. Now, dear friends, we too are people who, like Moses, have been shaped by our past. And we are people who are expected to follow a certain pattern of lifestyle as we continue in this world.

[16:34] In Romans chapter 12, verse 2, Paul warns us and tells us not to conform to the pattern of this world. The shaping of this world. But we are. The influences that we have in our lives, all the way through from our childhood up until this point, have shaped us.

Now, some of those shaping influences have been helpful. If you were brought up in a Christian home, you've had an exceptionally blessed period of your life. If you were able to go to Sunday school, then you've been blessed and shaped and molded to hear the things of God.

Perhaps in your education, you've been blessed as well with friendships and so on. In so many ways, there are good things that shape us. But there are also very bad things as well. Our thinking and our lifestyle, our habits, have been shaped by those things that are opposed to God's will.

The peers, the friends that we had at school, when we had to fit in with the crowd or fit in with them. They molded us and shaped us away from what God wanted, more often than not. The society in which we live.

Some of the education that we receive at school. Some of the media. Much of the media that we see on the TV or in magazines. It all shapes our thinking, which is contrary on the whole to the way of God.

[17:50] That what matters is how you look, not how you live. That you're important if you have money. And unimportant if you're poor. These things affect us. And at times, it can seem almost impossible to break free from the mold that has been set about us by the world in which we live.

Particularly when we're young. But not only when we're young. Even as we get older. As we grow as Christians, there's still an expectation that we try to fit in with as much as we can.

And we can find it impossible to break free. To be the people that God wants us to be. To put our faith in Christ and live for Him. I wonder if that's how you feel.

You feel as if you're trapped in a mold. My husband's expectations of me. My wife's expectations of me. We're not Christians maybe. The expectations of my parents.

Expectations of my children. Expectations of the world. My job. My boss. They're pressing me to be something I know that I don't want to be.

[18:56] Something that God doesn't want me to be. But I'm finding it impossible to break free. I believe that's how Moses must have felt. In that same way. Everything about him was Egyptian.

He dressed Egyptian. And everything about him spoke Egyptian as I said. But he broke free. He refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. And the writer tells us how he did it.

He did it by faith. Did it by faith. He didn't do it because he had a strong willpower. He didn't do it because he had a determination. And he was a stubborn old so and so.

And when he set his mind to it. That's what he would do. No. Faith. Faith in God. Trust in him. And the amazing thing is this dear friends. That that's the same resource that you and I have.

To say no. To what is wrong. Here's what Paul writes to Titus. In chapter 2. For the grace of God has appeared. That offers salvation to all people.

[ 19 : 53 ] It teaches us to say no. To ungodliness and worldly passions. That's the incredible thing that's happened. When you become a Christian. Is that by the spirit of God. The grace of God within us.

We have the power. Not only to be free from sins. Guilt and shame. But free from its power. Why is it that the people of the world.

The people of history. If we look back. The people who changed history. The people who transformed lives. People like William Wilderforce. Who overcame slavery after 30 years. How could they keep going?

How did they do that? How could they be different? Because they were imbued with the very grace of God. The spirit of God lived within them. And he lives within us. And therefore dear friends.

We do not have to. Follow the mold of the world. We do not have to conform to the pattern. Paul tells us that. Do not conform. As Christians we're meant to be different people.

[ 20 : 48 ] And one of the things means. Sadly. It's not the only thing as we see. But one of those things means saying no. That wasn't it was it?

He didn't just refuse. But he also chose. There was an alternative. There was a positive aspect to his action. His action was negative in one sense. But it was positive in the other.

No to that. Yes to this. What? Yes to becoming part of the people of God. Notice that. He chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God. He chose to be associated with God's people.

Chose to be associated with the Hebrews. But who were they? Who were they compared to Pharaoh? Who were they compared to Egypt?

They were slaves. They were ill-treated slaves. Here's what Exodus tells us about the situation that Moses was born into. Exodus 1. The Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly.

[ 21 : 52 ] They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields. In all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly. And we know Acts tells us as well, doesn't it, that later on a command was given that all the Hebrew boys had to be thrown into the river to be drowned.

To associate yourself with the Hebrews was to associate yourself with the outcasts, the hated, the despised, the unwanted, the unlovely. And there's this wonderful sense of comparison, isn't there, that we have here.

He says, verse 26, he regarded disgrace of greater value than treasures. He chose ill-treatment and gave up honor.

Moses had this incredible choice to make. He refused the palace and the patronage of the king and took up with a group of persecuted slaves.

Not very appealing, is it? Seems a bit of a foolish choice to make. Set before us. Seems an unreasonable choice to make. Are you going to go down there, be ill-treated, despised, possibly killed because you don't work hard enough?

[ 23 : 08 ] Or are you going to live in a palace, be honored and respected and have treasure? It seems unrational. But dear friends, always, doing what God wants is going to be undesirable.

Doing what God wants is always going to be hard. Doing what God wants is always going to be tough. By faith, Moses was exchanging one way of life for something which on the face of it looked much worse, but was in fact much better.

On the face of it, it looked like a stupid thing to do. On the face of it, it looked foolishness. On the face of it, it looked like madness. But in reality, it was the best thing he could ever do.

The best choice he ever made. The best decision. The best action. Because the single most important thing about the Hebrews was this, that they were the people of God.

And so what Moses was doing, as we're told here, he chose to be with the people of God. They may have been slaves. They may have been persecuted. They may have been despised, ill-treated.

[ 24 : 14 ] But they had God with them. And that makes every difference in the world. For Moses, that choice brought him into life with God.

Whatever else it offered. Whatever else it promised or held out. It offered him life with God. You see, the world around about us will offer us all sorts of things.

It will offer us all sorts of rewards. It will offer us honour. It will offer us treasure. It will offer us what it says will be happiness. But it always lacks the one vital ingredient that makes life worth living. It always lacks the one thing that above all else gives meaning to life. And that is God. Paul in Ephesians 2 describes what it must be to be without Christ.

To be a non-Christian means to be without hope and without God in the world. You see, there is no hope in the world without God. There is no purpose in life without God.

[ 25 : 22 ] Yes, you can run 10,000 metres and win a gold medal. But that's just passing. It's for a moment. As he says here, he chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

Moses gave up earthly pharaoh for a heavenly king.

He gave up an adopted mother for an everlasting father. He gave up the honour of people for the glory of God. Here's the very crux of every decision that we make.

Here's the hinge point, as it were, the decisions that you and I face tomorrow and every day of our lives. Is it Egypt or is it God?

Is it sin or is it Christ? Christ, as the choice reiterated here, the treasures of Egypt or the disgrace of Christ?

[ 26 : 26 ] Easy living, at least on the surface, for hardship. We face those choices each day. And we're pulled and pushed and drawn to those choices which will make life easier for us, make life simpler for us, make us more acceptable, popular, give us a boost up the career ladder.

The other option, it seems, is absurd and foolish. But it's the only right answer. It's the faith answer. So what is it that moved Moses to do what he did? What is it that moved him? What is it that he could see that nobody else could see? What power has faith to convince a person that it's better to give up treasure for suffering and disgrace and actually to do so you're better off?

It's the sort of faith that we sang about in that little song we sang just a few moments ago which is taken from Philippians in chapter 3. Here's Paul, in one sense a very blessed and privileged young man, we're told, in his relationship to the Hebrews, a Pharisee and so on, incredibly well educated. But he says this in verse 7, Whatever were gains to me, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.

[ 27 : 59 ] I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ. You notice how he speaks again and again of loss, of lost, of giving up for something better, something more wonderful.

That's the sort of faith. See, when the Bible talks about the world in which we live and it talks about the pleasures of the world and the enjoyment of the world and the riches of this world, it terms them in this way.

1 John chapter 2, 17, The world and its desires pass away. It looks wonderfully attractive. It's all sparkly. It draws us like magpies to the ring.

But it must come to an end all too quickly. It's only fleeting. There's that wonderful example of that, isn't there, in the story of the prodigal son that Jesus taught about. That young man who was given half his inheritance.

Wow, he was rich. He went off to this city. He squanders it and spends it on party, wild living, and prostitutes. I know the thing he wanted to do. And there, what happens? In a little while, we're told, he's down in the pig pen, hungry for the pig's food.

[ 29 : 07 ] That's life, though. And we see it around about us. The world sees it around about us again and again, and yet, sadly, neglects to acknowledge it.

That if you live for sin's pleasures, when they're past, as they certainly do, then you're left empty, naked, and nothing but judgment to face.

How many celebrities have taken their own lives in the past few years? Have died of drug overdoses, of abuse to their bodies. People who've risen to the very top, at the top of their place. Amy Winehouse, a woman of incredible singing talent. They all die so young. The world at their feet, but what a price to pay for a few fleeting years of fame and fortune.

Why is it that hundreds and thousands of people will be applying to the X factor when it starts again soon? In the hope of becoming a star, a celebrity, the hope that somehow this will make things better for my family.

[ 30 : 10 ] You often hear them say that. That it'll pull me up in society. That it'll give me some recognition. It's what I've been living for, longing for, dreaming for, but what do they have when they

get there?

They're there for a moment, and then they're forgotten and gone on the whole. And that's only if they get there. The tens of thousands who walk away, you've had four no's.

Only faith gives us sight to see the reality. The reality of what life is like, the reality of the situation, that these things that we choose, which are seeming so exciting, are just passing.

But choosing to have short-term suffering with Christ is to have long-term gain. That's what we read here about Moses.

He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt. And they had a lot of treasure because he was looking ahead to his reward. He looked at everything that Egypt had to offer him, sparkling, honor, glory.

[ 31 : 15 ] And he said, and he looked at Christ, and he saw that it included suffering and hardship. But he saw that the reward there was much, much better and greater. And he made the sensible choice.

You see, living by faith is the reasonable choice, the reasonable way of living. It makes sense. Who wants to live for something that's just going to last for a little while and then it's going to be completely lost and destroyed when you can live for something that is for eternity and forever? It's a no-brainer, isn't it? But only faith sees it that way. Only those who see that it is God who has given us the opportunity of life eternal that sees it that way.

Yeah, Moses suffered. The first thing we do when we choose Christ is that we suffer often. And he suffered at the very hands of one of his own people, one of the Hebrews.

He says this, this is the same Moses he rejected with the words, who made you ruler and judge? But all suffering is temporary too.

[ 32 : 22 ] All suffering is passing. Apostle Peter writes to the Christians who were being persecuted in the first century. He says to them today, speaking of them, he says, now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

Notice that for a little while. Now when we're suffering it feels like an eternity, doesn't it? When we're going through persecution or when we're going through hardship at work, workplace or mocking or whatever it may be, when we're having to make sacrifices for following Christ, it can feel like an eternity but it's only brief, it's only passing.

At the very longest it is for this lifetime, 70, 80, 90 years. But the rewards are coming. Some of the rewards we have in following Christ are ours now.

Even now we know the love of God in our hearts by his spirit. Even now we know the forgiveness of our sins. Even now by following Christ we're spared from all sorts of heartache and sorrow that many people bring upon themselves because they choose to do what they want rather than him. But the best is yet to come. Whatever we've tasted of, whatever we've known of in faith in Christ now in this life is just a fraction, just a tiny amount of the joy and the bliss and the delight and the reward that is ours in eternity.

[ 33 : 41 ] For Peter writes to those Christians before he speaks of their trials he speaks in this way. Praise be to the God and Father our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy he's given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you who through faith is shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed at the last time.

In all this you greatly rejoice. The best is yet to come. We have a foretaste of it. We enjoy it now this fellowship with God but there's something better.

So what's your choice this morning dear friends? What's your choice? Jesus said it out clearly. He talked about two pathways. The pathway the narrow one that leads to life and the broad road that leads to destruction that many will go down.

He talked about the two builders the one who built his house upon the rock certain and solid to survive the very storms of life and one who built his house and his life upon the sand so that when the storm came it collapsed it lasted but a moment.

[ 34 : 56 ] what are you living for this today? Are you living for the now? Are you living for what you can get out of life now? What's in it for me?

I want people to like me. I want people to think greatly of me. I want to have possessions and money. I want to live my life for me. Or is your choice to say no I want to live my life for Christ.

He gave his life for me. He suffered and died for me. He gave his life for me that I might have eternal life eternal joy eternal bliss. And though following him is hard at times and it means saying no to things even that I would like to do I know that it's worth it.

He's worth it. That's how we've got to start the Christian life. If you're not a Christian this morning you've got to start with that choice that decision. If this morning you walk away you refuse Christ you reject him you've made a choice.

I will not have him as my saviour. I will not live for him and acknowledge him as my Lord. If you reject him and refuse him then you bring upon yourself dear friends the sorrow and the sadness of that life which is lived for the passing but has no hope for the future.

[ 36 : 10 ] But if you are willing if you are willing Jesus said whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. If you're willing then you can come to him. You can say Lord Jesus I want to live for you from today I want to know that forgiveness for my sin I want to know the peace and the blessing you bring I want to say no to sin and living for myself anymore and I want to have that certainty and assurance that one day I shall have the reward that is to come.

Are my choices governed by short term pleasure or long term reward? Do they conform to the world's will or to God's will? Here's what Paul says as we close in Romans 12 Therefore I urge you brothers and sisters in view of God's mercy and all that he's done for us in Christ to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God this is your true and proper worship do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind then you'll be able to test and approve what God's will is his good pleasing perfect will.

Let's pray together now. All of us are in your presence oh Lord and all of us are known to you each of us has to confess that we have made choices which have not been your will we've made decisions and choices which have been for our own pleasure our own desires and we know that we've done them Lord and we know that Lord if we continue in that way if we continue to go the way we've gone and continue to choose that which is for ourselves then we will only bring sorrow grief heartache we pray Lord that you would not only forgive us our sins forgive us for those decisions we've made but Lord that you would please put within us that grace that power to say no to unrighteousness and yes to godliness

Lord we're afraid at times because we know that there is a cost in following you in the short term but Lord in the long term the joys and the blessings far outweigh it give us that courage and boldness Lord to live for you today and in every day when we face those choices and decisions to put first what is it that you want Lord what is it that you desire what is your will help us to know your will and to do it then we ask for we ask these things in and through your son the Lord Jesus Christ Amen