

Exodus Chapter 19

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, a warm welcome to all you, welcome visitors as well and people who were here for a long time returning, Frank and Pauline, Fred and Pauline, sorry I only met them this this morning, but welcome, it's good to have you back and good to welcome others as well who are visiting us on holiday too. And we've got a verse to set our minds thinking as we come to worship, it's there on the screen from Psalm 89, it says, I will sing of the Lord's great love forever, with my mouth I'll make known your faithfulness from, make your faithfulness known through all generations. Why does the psalmist say he's going to sing? Well he's going to sing because he's experienced the great love of God, it's something that he's known, we don't sing about things we know nothing about in that sense when you, it's often about our experiences of love or heartache or whatever. And what is this love like of which he's going to sing and speak about? It's a faithful love, your faithfulness, it's not a fickle love, the love of God is not passing, it's not just here today gone tomorrow, it is everlasting, it's unchanging, it is permanent. And our first hymn says let's sing new songs, sing to God new songs. What does that mean? It means every week we have new experiences of God's love, every week we experience more of his faithfulness and when we come to worship on a Sunday morning it should be out of the experience of God's faithful love that we can sing to him of the good things that he's done for us. Let's stand and sing 31. Sing to God new songs of worship, all his deeds are marvelous. 31.

sing to God new songs of worship, all his deeds are marvelous, he's thankful for the and rare glory oh my de dared. é and culture sing to God new songs of worship, all his deeds are marvelous,ld to God sing to God new songs of worship, all his deeds are marvelous, so King sing to God whole new songs of worship, s speakers of Minneapolis Neirable He has brought salvation to us with His hand and glory.

He has shown to all the nations righteousness and saving life. He has brought His truth and blessing to His people Israel.

The psalmist said that he would sing of the Lord's great love and with his mouth he would make known the faithfulness of God. And we make known God's faithfulness not only as we worship Him but as we speak to Him in prayer.

So let us do that now. Let us come to God in prayer together. We thank You, O Lord, that throughout history, throughout time, those who have been Your people, who have known You and experienced You, have been able to sing of Your love and faithfulness.

[3 : 4 0] We thank You, O Lord, that You are the God who does marvelous things, wonderful deeds, the God who acts, who moves, who instigates, the God who is involved in the life of Your people in the most intimate ways, in the minutest detail.

There's nothing about us or about our lives which is hidden to You. Nothing about us or our lives, Lord, which You don't know about. Nothing about our lives, O Lord, that You do not care about or concerned about.

And wonderfully, for those of us who know You as our God and know You as our Heavenly Father, there's nothing in our lives that You are not involved in. Lord, You have had Your hand upon us and revealed Your love to us throughout our lives, even in those times when we did not know You, even in those times when we were in rebellion against You, when we sought to go our own way, when we made terrible and huge mistakes, when we sinned, when we were faithless and foolish.

We thank You even then. You did not give up on us. You did not forsake us. But You continued to show Your faithfulness to us to bring us to this very day where we are gathered together with Your people, gathered together to worship You, to sing, O Lord, of Your loving kindness.

We thank You again, O Lord, that we are here. We're here because, O Lord, we know that we need to bring You our praise. We need to bring You our worship. You deserve it because You are the

only God, the true God.

[5 : 10] But we're here, O Lord, as well because we need You. We need to know Your help. We need to know Your Word. We need to know that gracious touch of Your Holy Spirit in our lives.

Lord, we have been through a week. A week, Lord, in many times we've failed, many times we've forgotten You. Many times we've struggled, Lord, and found things tough.

But, O Lord, we thank You that You brought us here because You want to bless us and do us good. You want us, Lord, to receive from You good things. You want us, Lord, to hear from You good things.

You want us, Lord, to be blessed in such a way that our lives are affected and changed, in such a way, O Lord, that we might go into this new week with real faith, with hope, with confidence.

Blessed, Lord, with peace, trusting in You. And so, Lord, we pray in this time, make us ready to receive those blessings. Lord, work in our hearts. Help us to have minds which are set upon thinking about You, not upon all the worries or concerns of the week past or ahead.

[6 : 11] Help us, O Lord, to have those hearts which are saying, Lord, I want to receive from You that I might live for You, that I might follow You, that I might show by the way that I live that You are number one in my life.

So, Lord, prepare us and help us now that, Lord, as we come to Your Word and as we come to the communion table as well, Lord, we may know, Lord, what it is to receive from You good things.

We ask again, Lord, the forgiveness of our sins through Your Son, the Lord Jesus. And we ask for the help of Your Holy Spirit, that wonderful comforter, counsellor and helper who You promised to give us and who indwells everyone who trusts in You.

We ask these things in the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Amen. Amen. And we're going to pick up the story from God's leading and care of His people through the desert.

Now, around about six or seven months ago, we got to verse, chapter 18, and we've had a long break since then. We did about several months through Exodus, the beginning of Exodus, and saw how God had great concern and care for His people in slavery in Egypt and how through Moses He brought them out with great power and delivered them, brought them out of Egypt, then brought them across and through the Red Sea, that miraculous and glorious work of God, and has been leading them through the desert.

[7 : 45] And so we're going to pick up the story as they arrive at what will be the most important part of their journey at Mount Sinai. So Exodus, chapter 19, if you've got one of the church Bibles, that's page 76, and we're going to read the whole chapter together and look at it in a few moments' time as well.

On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt, on that very day they came to the desert of Sinai. After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain.

Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob, and what you are to tell the people of Israel.

You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession.

Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites. So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak.

[9 : 09] The people all responded together. We will do everything the Lord has said. So Moses brought their answer back to the Lord. The Lord said to Moses, I'm going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you.

Then Moses told the Lord what the people had said. And the Lord said to Moses, Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Make them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, Be careful that you do not approach the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain is to be put to death.

They are to be stoned or shot with arrows. Not a hand is to be laid on them. No person or animal shall be permitted to live. Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they approach the mountain.

After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them and they washed their clothes. Then he said to the people, Prepare yourselves for the third day.

[10:26] Abstain from sexual relations. On the morning of the third day, there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, with a very loud trumpet blast.

Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord descended on it with fire.

The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace. The whole mountain trembled violently. As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

The Lord descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up. And the Lord said to him, Go down and warn the people so that they do not force their way through to see the Lord and many of them perish.

Even the priests who approach the Lord must consecrate themselves or the Lord will break out against them. Moses said to the Lord, The people cannot come up Mount Sinai because you yourself warned us, put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.

[11:41] The Lord replied, Go down and bring Aaron up with you. But the priests and the people must not force their way through to come up to the Lord or he will break out against them.

So Moses went down to the people and told them, and God spoke all these words. Please be seated.

Again, would you turn back to the passage, Exodus chapter 19, that we read just a few moments ago together. That's page 76, if you have one of the Red Church Bibles.

Exodus chapter 19. So as I said by way of introduction, we were looking at this book, the events of God's people over the space of their journey from Egypt to the promised land that God had given and promised to Abraham many, many centuries earlier.

And so far as we've gone through the journey, if you can cast your mind back or if you know the story, you'll know that along the way, God has always provided for the needs of his people as they were in the desert.

[12:54] They were hungry, and so God gave them manna from heaven, this amazing food, which came every single day, apart from the Sabbath day, and they fed and ate it.

When they were thirsty, God changed a pool of water at Mara, which was bitter and poisoned in one sense. He changed it into fresh, sweet water for them to drink.

And then as they were thirsty again, he brought water to them from the most unlikely of places, from a rock, which gushed forth water and they and their flocks and their herds were provided for.

So God has been providing for their very real needs. But God has not yet provided for them for the most important need that they had.

He has not yet given to them his word. Remember the words of Jesus, quoting in fact from the Old Testament when he said, man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

[13:57] God had not given them any instruction. He had not given them any commands. He had not given them any guidance, as it were, as to how they were to live and how they were to be led on this epic journey and in the future.

But all that's about to change. We're stepping into a new era in one sense in Exodus. Because from chapter 20 onwards and over the course of 11 months of their time, God does nothing else but communicate with them, speak with them, his commands, his truths, those things which are needful for them to live.

It begins with the Ten Commandments, which we'll begin looking at in a week or two. And then he moves on to explain about how those Ten Commandments impact all of their life, whether it be in the home or in business or in the nation itself that they would become.

And especially God gives them instruction and guidance as to how they can interact with him, how they can be in relationship with him, how they can hear him, know him, worship him, how they can live before him in a way which is a blessing to them and in a way which is right and pleasing to God.

Now I've said that the greatest need is for the Word of God. Jesus, in fact, has said that as well.

And for us, there's nothing more important than we know God's Word.

[15 : 19] Nothing more important to our well-being, spiritual, physical, and in all things that we know what it is that God requires of us and what it is that God says to us.

As Christians, there's nothing else that gives us greater strength, a greater encouragement, greater support, greater faith for living for Christ in this world than knowing his Word and applying his Word. Our ignorance of the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest cause of our doubts, our fears, our unhappiness, our sorrows. Our neglect of studying God's Word and obeying God's Word is the major reason why we fall into sin, into doubts, and into those failings which we long to be free of.

But it's not just Christians, it's not just God's people who need to hear God's Word. The world around about us is a world which is in great need of the message of God.

for every single generation, the greatest need is to hear what God says to the people of this world. It's not that we should hang upon the words of the latest scientists or that we should be concerned about the latest report over global warming.

[16 : 36] It's not that we should know what is the investigation and the cause of a particular social breakdown. But the rejection and the denial of God's Word is what has brought upon our nation and every nation the greatest tragedy and sorrow.

Not just those political failings, not just those financial problems, but especially those evils, those sorrows, that misery that stalks the homes, the streets, the counties of our nation.

But even the loss of God's Word and those effects of the neglect of God's Word, the consequences are temporal.

They're temporary. They're just for a passing. They're, yes, the breakdown of family life, the breakdown of society, the breakdown of all sorts of great things that have been a blessing to us.

But the great concern to hear God's Word concerns eternal issues, concerns our salvation, and the eternal repercussions of not knowing God, which is hell itself.

[17 : 46] Now, why am I saying all these things? Because I think it's so important for us that we are prepared in our hearts and our minds to hear what God has to say to us. And I believe that's what God thinks about it too.

Because chapter 19, as we've read together, is really a chapter where God is preparing his people to hear his Word. He doesn't just immediately blurt out and say the things that they need to hear or declare his commandments.

He is preparing them in three distinct ways to receive his Word. There's three elements of preparation, and those three elements of preparation are important for us whenever we come to read our Bibles or to hear God's Word preached or taught in some way.

If we're to get the best out of God's Word, and for many of us that's a problem because we struggle with reading the Bible, we find it hard, we find it incomprehensible, we find it irrelevant at times as well.

If we're to get the best out of God's Word, then we are to face it and come towards it with preparation, not simply opening it at a chapter and hoping that something's going to leap out at us.

[18 : 51] God is gracious and sometimes that happens. But being prepared to hear him. When we come to church on a Sunday morning as well, yes, often we're in a bit of a rush. We goff down our breakfast, we have a quick shave, we put all our clothes on, we splash a bit of deodorant about because we're having time to wash and we come to church.

Sometimes we just sort of arrive late or we arrive just in the nick of time or whatever it may be. We need to prepare to hear what God has to say to us when we come to fellowship together.

So what does God do? What three preparations does he apply to the people here and that we need to apply to ourselves? Well, first of all, in verses 3 to 6, I would say to you that God reassures his people of his love for them.

He reassures his people of his love for them. That's a very good place to start, the best place to start to remind ourselves, reassure ourselves that God is a God of grace and that he has a love towards us.

He reminds them of what he did for them in love for them. Verse 4, you yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

[20 : 05] What a wonderful picture that is of God's rescue of his people. Like an eagle, he swoops down, not upon his prey, but upon those that he cares for and lifts them up, lifts them up out of their slavery.

400 years they'd been enslaved in Egypt. In fact, only three months earlier to this very moment, this occasion, they were still in Egypt, they were still in fear of their lives, they were still under the law of Egypt which was such that if they were to have and give birth to a son, that son was to be thrown into the Nile and drowned.

God comes with swift and strong deliverance. He lifts them up and has lifted them up out of that terrible place and most of all, notice how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. God's wonderful salvation is not simply to deliver us from the things that oppress our lives or to set us free or to make us happy, not even in one sense to set us free and deliver us from judgment and hell on that day when we stand before God, but especially God saves us for himself.

He saves us that we might be part of his family. He saves us that we might be drawn into a living relationship with him. He saves us that we might know him. How often do we think about that?

[21 : 27] How often do we remind ourselves and assure ourselves God loves me? Before we read anything, before we read about what his instructions are, his commands are, or whatever it may be, we need to remind ourselves we've been, we're a rescued people.

We're a saved people. We're a delivered people. The chains of guilt, the chains of death, we've been set free from all of those things. When Paul writes to the Christians in Ephesus, he reminds them of this wonderful truth in this way.

Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace you've been saved.

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Do you remind yourself each morning that you are loved of God? And you might say, well how can I know? How can I be sure that God has loved me? Well, we have the proof, don't we?

[22 : 43] the evidence of God's love for us, don't we? In the very person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, how can God love me when things are going wrong or things are difficult or things are hard or my life is a mess or I'm...

No, the proof and the evidence is that God gave his son for us to rescue and save us. That he shed his blood upon the cross to pay for our debt. This is the evidence, the historical, real evidence, not the subjective feelings that I have that I feel lonely or I feel tired or I feel hard done to, but the real historical objective evidence is that Christ Jesus, the son of God, God himself came into this world to live and to die for you.

Here's what Peter writes in his letter. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

The proof and the evidence is what Christ has done for us. He paid the price. God ransomed and redeemed us, not with money, not with gold, not with silver, not with things which are nonsense come and go, but he redeemed us and rescued us at the price of the very blood, the very life of the son of God himself.

God doesn't just remind them of what he's done for them, but he also reminds them of what he thinks of them, how he looks upon them with a wonderful love and care.

[24 : 23] Listen to verses 5 and 6. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession. What a wonderful thing for God to say of you and I.

You are his treasured possession. Precious. I wonder if you've got a nickname with your spouse. Perhaps you call each other by a silly name from time to time or even in the family there's a name that you might call one another.

Perhaps it's a name you wouldn't want other people to hear. You know, Tulip or Lovey Dovey or whatever it may be, something like that. And you would be embarrassed for anybody else to hear you say or call your partner that or your husband or wife that or even your children that.

Look at God though. He's not embarrassed. He says, you are my treasured possession. I'm pleased to call you that. I'm pleased to give you that wonderful nickname if I can put it that way. You are precious to me.

That's how God feels about us. That's not just how he thinks about us. He feels about us. When he looks upon you and I, those who have put our faith in him, those who have been brought into his family through the wonderful work of Jesus on the cross, God looks at us.

[25 : 36] He says, you're treasured possession. You're precious to me. And of all the people in the world and of everybody else, you matter to me. Now that's important when we come to God's word, isn't it?

Because it's very personal. Whatever other people may think about you, even what you may think about yourself, the reality is what God thinks about you is what matters, what counts, what God feels about you.

And he says, you're the most precious object of my affection. So when we come to hear God's word, let's come with that thought. This is God speaking with the God who loves me, who's speaking to me.

Many people come to the Bible and say, oh, it's God's judgment. It's God saying nasty things about us. It's God being harsh. No, to begin with, first of all, for the Christian, the words of God are the words of our Heavenly Father who loves us.

I don't know whether you're interested in poetry. There's been a sort of a spell of programs about poetry on the BBC just recently. But when you read poetry, the poetry of these great people, Byron and others like that, you read often it's an expression of their love for their partner, love for their person that they're separated from or whatever.

[26 : 58] and they write them a letter or write this poetry and send it to them to express and to tell them just how they feel about them. I don't know whether you've ever had that experience. It's not quite the same nowadays, but in the old days, of course, when you might have to be separated because perhaps the husband or the boyfriend or whatever may have had to go into the army or go to war, whatever it is, letters would be exchanged, wouldn't they?

Imagine you're waiting at home, waiting for a letter from the person who you love with all your heart. You'll be eagerly waiting by the doorstep, hearing the footsteps of the postman coming, looking for that letter, longing for that letter.

Is that how we feel about God's letter? God's word. I'm so excited about what God's going to say to me today. I'm so excited about what he's going to explain to me of his love, of his care, his concern for me.

That's exactly what God wants us to feel. He wants us to feel and to know that as he writes to us in his word, he's writing out of love for us. His concern is for our greatest good, our greatest blessing, our greatest joy.

But notice as well, we see that as God speaks about his love for them, he also speaks about his wonderful future for them, his purpose for them, his desire for them.

[28 : 16] Verses 5 and 6, or certainly some 6, the second part of verse 5, although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Yes, God was going to give them his laws, he was going to give them his commandments, he was going to give them his instructions and directions, but ultimately, God was giving them those things so that in their lives, the world around about may see that they are God's people.

The world around about may see that they are a people who have a privilege and a purpose. See, when you love somebody, there's a very important element to love and that is trust, isn't it?

You trust that person. That's why love is hard at times, especially if we've been brokenhearted, especially if people have let us down, it's hard to love again because love includes trusting someone, trusting them with your heart, trusting them with your life, trusting them with so many things.

And God, as an expression of his love for us, his people, and his love for his people then entrusts us with this incredible vocation, this incredible calling. He says, you will be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

[29 : 28] A priest was somebody who acts as a mediator between God and man, just like Moses was doing here. He was taking a message from God to the people and then from the people to God.

It wasn't that God didn't hear them and he could only hear them, but he was acting as this priest, this mediator, this go-between. And dear friends, as Christians, we are called to be priests in the sense that we are the go-between between God and the world around about us.

We're the ones who are to take this wonderful message of his love, of his salvation, of his forgiveness in Christ, and we're to do that not just by the way we speak, but by the way we actually live.

So that in everything we do, we are like a holy nation. Holy means to be set apart for God's unique use. To be set apart to live for God, to show his glory, to show his care and his faithfulness to the world.

That's why he saved these people. He brought them to himself, yes, that they might know him and enjoy him, but he brought them to himself that from him in one sense they might go, they might be a nation that shares and speaks of and lives for his glory.

[30 : 38] That's exactly why he gives them his commandments, exactly why he gives them his word, why God has given you his word. Why should we take notice of his word? Well, because his word teaches, helps us, instructs us to live those lives which are our privilege.

Yes, our responsibility and our duty, but first of all, our privilege to be God's people in this world out of all the earth, out of all the people in Whitby, as Christians, they're called to be those who show him to the world because he loves us.

Because he loves us, we want people to know that love too. So when we come to the word, when we come to the Bible, when we come to read it, when we come to hear it, our attitude needs to be something like the hymn, which we often sing, we didn't sing it today, but the hymn writer of old puts it this way, Master, speak, make me ready when your voice is truly heard, with obedience, glad and steady, still to follow every word.

Reassurance that we're loved. Two very brief things as well that we need to look at this morning. God doesn't only remind them that he loves them, or reassure them that he loves them, which is so important, but two other things, he reminds them that he is holy.

He reminds them that he is holy. There's two very strong instructions that God gives through Moses to the people, which show how serious God takes his own holiness, his own purity, his otherness in one sense.

[32 : 14] God is not like us. He is not the same as a really nice person. He's not the same as our Father, whether he's a good Father or a bad Father. He is someone who is utterly different, and therefore he is utterly pure and holy.

The first instruction they had was in verse 10. The Lord said to Moses, Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Make them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day. God was going to descend to the mountain. He was going to reveal himself to them and speak to them, and to do so, they need to be ready, and they need to realize that God was holy.

He commands them to wash their clothes. What is he doing that for? Well, in one sense, he's showing them and revealing to them that there is an uncleanness about them in comparison to God. There is a sinfulness about them.

They are to consecrate themselves in that sense, keep themselves away from anything that might contaminate them, anything that might be sinful or wrong, anything that might cause them to fall into sin.

[33 : 20] And so we find there, strangely we might think, abstain from sexual relations. God delights in a loving marriage and the expression of love in sexual relationships, in marriage.

So it's not wrong, but God is wanting them to set their minds apart to seek after him, to have their full concentration upon him. You only wash those things which are dirty, and therefore he's saying, in relationship to me, I am pure, but you are dirty, you are sinful.

There is, God is holy. Another way in which, of course, he calls them to recognize his holiness which is his language and warning about limits around the mountain.

Verse 12, put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, be careful that you do not approach the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain is to be put to death. Moses had to put up a fence, there had to be a God rally in one sense, all around the mountain that people might not come up the mountain hoping and curious maybe to see God. That's how he explains it later on, isn't it?

[34 : 29] He says, verse 24, go down and bring Aaron up with you, but the priests and the people must not force their way through to come up to the Lord. And again, in verse, yeah, verse 21, do not force their way through to see the Lord and many of them perish.

God repeats that instruction. Why does God put that instruction? Why can't they come up the mountain? Why do they have to be kept away from God? Because that's literally what's happening, being kept back from God, arm's length from God.

What's happening here? What's it all about? Well, as I say, he is holy and we are not. The consequences of anybody coming into the very presence of God just as we are with our sin would lead to our destruction, to God breaking out against us.

People, God's holiness is not a passive thing. God being pure and holy doesn't just simply mean that he doesn't do anything wrong, that's true, he doesn't lie, that's right, he never sins, that's right, but it's more than that.

God's holiness is that he is actively angry against evil. He is actively opposed to wickedness and to that which is wrong. And so if we approach God with our sin, it would be like a spaceship flying into the sun, consumed and burnt up because we cannot come just as we are to God, we cannot come on our own terms to God.

[35 : 57] All of us have sinned and fallen short, the Bible says. And his love, therefore, warns us, just as we would lovingly warn a child and say, look, don't go near the oven because it's on, don't put your hand near it because it's hot and it will burn you.

What do we do that way? Because we love that child, we don't want them to be hurt or harmed. So God says, look, I don't want you to come near to me just as you are. If you're going to touch something hot, you need to put the oven glove on because otherwise you'll burn yourself.

Don't come near because God is holy and our sin makes us combustible in the presence of God. So when we come to God's word, dear friends, yes, we reassure ourselves we are loved and that Christ has forgiven us, but we remind ourselves that when we come to God, we're coming to one who is holy, we're coming to one who is altogether different.

We're coming to God as those who are, yes, sinners. Forgiven sinners, yes, wonderfully by the cross. Sinners that are right with God, but we are those who have imperfections, we have failings, we don't come with a sense of arrogance or self-reliance, we don't come with our own presuppositions and say, well, oh yes, well I know what this says, I know what this means, I know, I understand.

We come against, with humility. If we come with pride then we'll be blinded to receiving God's word. That's the reason why so many people can read the Bible and never be affected by it. They come with a sense of arrogance.

[37 : 24] Well, yes, this is written by stupid people thousands of years ago. They're illiterate people. Unscientific people. So we come with our preconceptions and ideas.

No, we come with humility. Lord, speak to me. I want to hear what you have to say to me and I want you to help me. And again, what we see here in connection with that, finally, is that God reveals to them his power.

He reassures them of his love, he reminds them of his holiness and he reveals to them his power. What an amazing sight it must have been. Verse 16, in the morning of the third day, thunder and lightning, thick cloud over the mountain, a very loud trumpet blast.

We're told in verse 18, the smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently. Whatever 5th of November display you've ever seen is nothing compared to this. The loudness and the banging and the roaring and the smoke and the, what, special effects?

What's God doing? Well, it's having the desired effect, isn't it?

[38 : 26] Because we're told there in verse 16, everyone in the camp trembled because there, the great power of God is being revealed but only in a very small way. To us, it's immense, like a huge volcano erupting.

To God, it's nothing, it's easy peasy. It's just him showing that he has power. Mighty, awesome power. That's important as well.

When we come to the word of God, we need to recognize we are coming to a powerful God, a mighty God. Not a God who's a pushover, not a God who's weak and effeminate, not a God who's somehow just a puppet dictator, as it were, who can be pushed about, who's driven by the winds and the feelings of people.

No, he's the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. He's a God who created all things, who sustains all things. What he says, he does, what he commands us to do, he will equip us to do.

He has the one, he's the one who can empower us. You see, when we think about sin, we realize just how weak we are, how failing we are. We look at the challenges of God's word and we say, how on earth can I be this person that God wants me to be?

[39 : 36] I just can't do it. That's a good way to start because we then go to God and say, I need your help to do it. God wants us to put our faith and trust in him for the strength, the power, the

ability.

The apostle Paul, who was a man of exceptional skill, but he says this in Philippians 4.13, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

He put no confidence in himself as a religious leader or a theologian. His confidence was in Christ who strengthens me. So when I come to God's word, I'm saying, Lord, thank you that you love me, that this is your word for me because you want to do me good.

Thank you, Lord, that your word reminds me that I'm a sinner, that I'm failing, that I'm needy. That's why I need your word because I don't know it all because I need to learn, I need to be instructed. But Lord, thank you too that your word tells me there is power for me and strength for me to live that life that you want me to live.

I can't do it myself. But Lord, I know that you can equip me to do it. So we come with faith, confidence, assurance. We come prepared to hear what God has to say.

[40 : 47] By meditating on his love, his holiness, his power, we're ready to hear and we're ready to live out his word. This isn't just simply a book which tells us the history of God's people.

It isn't just a wonderful historical account of something that God did in the past. This is up-to-day present. This is telling us who the God is we've put our faith and trust in. This is telling us what God is like and what it means to live for him and how he is part of our lives.

It is up-to-date. It is relevant. And are we ready to receive it? Or are we simply going to be those who just brush it aside? Who ignore it?

Who reject it? Fail to receive from it? Or the good things God has for us? Well, in a few moments we're going to be coming, in one sense, to carry out what God has commanded us to do.

We're going to be coming to the communion table, the Lord's Supper. This is something that Jesus instructed his disciples for their good, for their blessing. And so in a moment we're going to be preparing our hearts for that as well.

[41 : 54] Let's sing together from our hymn books as we prepare, as we come, as we think about the things that we've heard as well. Our heart of God is our heart of To uniformly