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Date: 20 February 2011

Preacher: David Earnshaw

- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Father, we come as a congregation of your people into your presence this morning, and we come to worship you. We give you thanks that you are the only God who really is.
- As we live in a world filled with many ideas and philosophies and so-called gods, Father, we know that they're false, and there's only God, only one God who really is, and Father, it's you, the Lord.
- And we give you thanks that by your Son, the Lord Jesus, and by the Holy Spirit, we can come into your presence and call you our Father. We can talk to you, and we can worship you.
- And Father, we ask and pray, create within our hearts a desire to know you better. Think of the psalmist who said, oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let's exalt his name together.
- Father, we know that psalm. We know it in print. But Lord, in reality, may it walk off the page of Scripture and into our hearts that we too may have this desire to magnify you, and to worship you, and to praise you, and to glorify you, and to exalt you, and to lift you high.
- [ 1 : 1 7 ]     We give you thanks that your faithfulness is higher than the clouds. We give you thanks that your glory is beyond comprehension, and your love is overwhelming.
- What is staggering is that such a God as you are, is that you come to people like us in grace and mercy.
- Father, we ask and pray. Father, we ask and pray. Make us overwhelmed with your amazing grace. Father, thrill us with your love.
- We have to admit, Lord, there isn't too much round about us these days to cheer us. Pretty tough days, Lord.
- But we give you thanks that we have a God who is constant and reliable, and that the good news of sins forgiven and peace with God is still good news.
- [ 2 : 1 4 ]     Father, we pray, may we never lose the wonder of it. Forgive us that we so often do. It almost becomes the norm. Yes, of course, the Lord Jesus died. He's my Savior.
- He's my Lord. We move on. Father, it was a hymn writer who said, when I survey the wondrous cross, when I stop and think about it, when I gaze upon the sacrifice, the Lamb of God, then I'm humbled and I'm broken inside.
- And Father, we pray, make us the kind of people who gaze on your grace and who enjoy your amazing mercy and who are also astounded by your holiness.
- Father, you tell us that you're totally different from us, and that is right. And because you're different from us, we hardly understand you. You've told us yourself that your thoughts are not our thoughts, and your ways are not our ways.
- And Lord, that's true. There's so much that you do that baffles us. It perplexes us. It leaves us speechless. But Father, you are God, and you are the Lord.
- [ 3 : 3 1 ]     And while we don't understand you, we ask and pray for patience and humility. To accept what you give us. And Father, I guess all of us at some stage or other, even now, find ourselves struggling with different aspects of your will.

Maybe the silence of heaven. Maybe an unanswered prayer. Maybe a relative who's kicking over the traces. Children who have no desire to follow the gospel. Lord, all these things bother us and perplex us, and we bring them before you.

Lord, why have I lost my job? Lord, why am I ill? Lord, why is it so hard financially? Lord, why me?

And Father, we bring all these to you. Sometimes not even looking for an answer. But for an awareness that we know, that you know, and that you care for us.

Father, we ask and pray as we open your word this morning. May you speak to us in a fresh and in a clear way.

[ 4 : 45 ]     Father, if sermons equal flying hours, then some of us have flown around the world hundreds of times. But Lord, we haven't come for a sermon.

Otherwise, we'd just listen to a CD or go on the internet and search around. Father, we haven't just come for a sermon. We've come for a living word from heaven. Think of how you ripped open the heavens there on the Mount of Transfiguration and said to Peter and James and John, This is my beloved son.

Hear him. Hear him. Father, I ask and pray. I know it's dangerous. But speak, O Lord, as we come to you.

May you speak clearly and powerfully to each one of us. That as we go home for our dinner, we go home amazed at what you have said to us.

Thrilled, challenged, invigorated, overwhelmed, that the God of the universe has spoken to somebody like me.

[ 6 : 06 ]     And Father, we bring our sins to you. And we give you thanks to the place called Calvary, where sin can be dealt with. And we give you thanks. There is the Lord Jesus Christ, your dear Son, and our Savior, who paid the price for us to be redeemed.

Oh, Father, thank you. And we pray that we may know the breathless wonder of being forgiven. That amazement, I'm delivered, I'm set free, I'm clean, all because of the Lord Jesus.

Father, I ask and pray, by the Holy Spirit, will you draw near to every one of us as we meet here. Speak to the young people, Lord, as they study your word downstairs. And speak to us, we pray.

Because we ask it in our Savior's precious and lovely name. And all God's people said, Amen. When I was in school, one of my teachers was called Mrs. Chew.

And Mrs. Chew lived over the road from where we lived. And when you're not the brightest bulb in the box, living over the road from your class teacher was not a smart move on behalf of my parents.

[ 7 : 41 ]     One day in her class stands out very vividly. She came in after lunch and said she had a meeting to attend to. And therefore she was going to give us some work for half an hour.

And she was going to leave the door open to the next class. Our class backed on to the headmaster's class, Mr. Wilkinson. And you may find this hard to believe, but when I was in school, my headmaster used to smoke in school.

He actually smoked while he was taking the class. And you always knew when he was behind you because you could smell him. And he was no stranger to the slipper or the cane.

So when Mrs. Chew said, The door is open to his class, you knew what that meant. She then produced a jar that was half filled with rice. She said, Get out a piece of paper from under your desk and take a short pencil.

I am going to shake this jar and I want you to draw what you can hear. So Mrs. Chew took hold of this jar and did this.

[ 8 : 46 ] Shoo! Shoo! Shoo! Did it for about ten seconds. She then put the jar down and said, Right, I'm going out. Thirty minutes. Be quiet. Draw what you've heard.

Everybody in the class, with the exception of one, drew Mrs. Chew, shaking a jar half filled with rice. She came back in and looked at all the work and to use a 21st century expression, she flipped.

She said, Didn't you listen to what I said? Draw what you can hear, not what you can see. And then she brought out Philip Savage. This is etched on my mind.

I probably need counselling. Look at Philip's work. Philip had drawn a man with a big brush sweeping up leaves.

And he'd got it. Shoo! Shoo! Shoo! We hadn't. And you know, sometimes we come to God's Word with that kind of blindness.

[ 9 : 53 ] All that we can see is what is painted in the Scripture. And I believe that sometimes we can become so literal in our understanding of the Bible.

Don't get me wrong. We have to take God's Word literally. But sometimes we are so literal that we miss the picture. And I want to speak about three things this morning that God says He has, which I don't believe He has at all.

Not that God is telling lies, but three things that God says, I have got. But if we just focus on those things, we miss what He's actually saying. So what are those things? I'll tell you before I start.

The first thing is this. God says He has a bag. And then secondly, He says He has a bottle. Just so it happens to begin with B. Not my kind of doing.

And then thirdly, it says God has a book. But God doesn't need a book. Why does an all-knowing God need to write things down in a book? He doesn't forget a thing.

[ 10 : 52 ] And also, a God who is everywhere, why does He need to put things in a bottle? As if, I better keep that there. He's everywhere. And a God who is all-powerful, why does He need to put things in a bag?

And Scripture says, just don't look at the bag and the bottle and the book. Look beyond those to see what God is actually saying. And so, I want to speak about those three things this morning.

And I trust that in all of this, God may speak to us very powerfully. Generally speaking, I admit, I like to go through a passage systematically. But sometimes, you see something in Scripture which leaps out and says, preach me.

And that's what I want to do this morning. I'm aware too, that I'm wrestling with the NIV. As the reading was being read there by Richard, I thought, that's interesting. That's not how I read it in the text.

But we'll come to that when we come to it. In Job chapter 14, verse 17, Job chapter 14, verse 17, Job says this, My transgression, that's my sin, is sealed up in a bag.

[ 12 : 05 ] My sin, says Job, is in a bag. And the idea is, and God has got His hand on that bag. Now, let's speak about that for a few minutes.

I mean, the book of Job is a great book. I say it's great for us to read, but it wasn't great for Job to live through. The book of Job is an account of a man wrestling with God.

You find him wrestling with God, you find him wrestling with himself, he's wrestling with his problems, he's wrestling with other people, he's wrestling with his circumstances, it's all a wrestle.

Why? Because this man had lost everything. I say everything, he'd lost everything except two things. You know, he lost his children, just like that.

I mean, it's one thing to lose a child, but in one day to have all your children wiped out is, I can't get my head around that. It's one thing to lose a bit of money on the stock market when your shares don't do very well, but to lose all your money in one day.

[ 13 : 15 ] This man lost everything. He lost his health. The Bible tells us quite clearly that his health was so bad that his skin turned black and began to peel off.

And the Bible says his breath was so foul, the word halitosis comes to mind, was so foul that folk had to turn away from him. And here's this man so ill sitting on the rubbish tip outside the city, scraping off the pus from his boils, skin just peeling off, breath foul.

He was in a terrible state, but he never lost his faith. And amazingly, he says, even though God slay me, I will still trust him.

And secondly, he never lost his wife. Some have said, it's a pity he didn't lose her as well. I said, why is that? Because the only thing she said to him was, if I were you, I'd curse God and die.

I find it very interesting after that, we never read of her again. Here's a wife who should be saying to her husband, this is terrible, but we're going to go through this together. Oh no, if I were you, I'd curse this God and die.

[ 14 : 28 ] So he had his wife and he had his faith. Do you know something? When you go through hard times, you start to get very philosophical.

You start to think about what's life all about? Why am I here? What's the purpose of life? And if you had gone through Job's experience, I think you too would ask lots of questions. Where's God in all this?

Where are my friends? Well, if this has happened to me, then what does that do about what has happened in the past? And so Job gets very philosophical about life.

And as he looks around, he says, Lord, I know that if you cut down a tree, this is all in chapter 14, Lord, if you cut down a tree, I know that eventually it will come back. Generally speaking, that is true.

It isn't always true. Sometimes if you cut down a tree, that's the end. Depends on what kind of tree it is. But generally speaking, most trees, if you cut them down, will start to eventually come back up from the root.

[ 15 : 26 ] And Job says, I've seen that, Lord. And here's a man who's been cut down. And he says, Lord, but if a man is cut down, will he ever come back?

Obviously think about himself. In fact, chapter 14 is so mixed up. It's not a criticism, it's just an observation. It's like a letter my wife and I received perhaps around Christmas time.

It was so mixed up. Because the person was just writing as it came out. But by the time you got to the end, you knew exactly what they were saying. And here, Job 14, it's here, he's there, he's here and there.

He's kind of all mixed up. But by the time you get to the end of chapter 14, you know exactly what he's saying. And that is, Lord, just bury me until this bad time is over. And then, like a tree, would you please bring me back again?

Who hasn't said that? Who hasn't said, you know, I just wish this month had never happened. If I could just kind of relive this month, I'd just stop in bed for the month.

[ 16 : 31 ] And then, when it's over, I get it and think, what was all that about? We've all been there. We've all had those kind of days. You bump the car, the washing machine breaks down, somebody rings and says, oh by the way, you're the bank this much.

You go, what a day, I just wish it, I just wish it hadn't started. Job says, amidst all this, Lord, and you have my transgressions in the bank.

now, what on earth does that mean? Well, believe it or not, scholars can't agree. They can agree on this.

Number one, Job's sins are in a bag. Number two, they agree on this, that the bag is in God's hand. And number three, they all agree that the bag is sealed.

you have sealed up my transgressions in a bag. But why? And there are two possible suggestions and sometimes when scholars can't agree, I think we get the best of both worlds.

[ 17 : 36 ] Some argue, Job was saying that God had his sins in a bag because one day God was going to open that bag and pull out what was in to look at it. That may be true in relation to Job, I don't know.

But I do know this. It's certainly true in relation to every human being who's ever lived. And I could say quite categorically this morning, quoting Job, chapter 14, verse 17, Lord, all our sins you have got sealed in a bag.

And one day you're going to open, if I can put it like this, the bag of our life and pull out what's on the inside and say to us, well, that's a staggering thought, isn't it?

The reason why people live today as they do in the world is because they are totally oblivious of the fact that at the end of life they're going to stand before God and God is going to unseal their life like a bag and bring out what is in and say to them, well?

And the fact that a professional footballer is on £150,000 a week will be irrelevant. The fact that someone drives the latest car will be irrelevant.

[ 19 : 01 ] The fact that someone is the most attractive person in the school or the college or the company will be irrelevant. God will say, I'm looking under the skin, I'm looking beyond the material, I'm looking at you. Well?

Romans 2 verse 16 says this, God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9 27 puts it very powerfully, it is appointed unto men once to die and after death the judgment.

And I tell you on the authority of God's word this morning that David Enshel and everyone in the sound here in my voice this morning, everyone will stand before the Lord one day and he'll open our lives like a bag and say, what's in there?

And some solace say, well maybe that's what Job is hinting at. Uh-uh. Some say, no, no, no. Job is saying, no matter how hard life is, I know that God has got my sins in a sealed bag and they're safe in the sense never to be opened again.

That could be true in relation to Job because after all the Bible will say that Job was a righteous man. But you know, that is certainly true in relation to us as well.

[ 20 : 24 ] Listen to this verse from the book of Micah chapter 7 verse 19. He, the Lord, will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

And the idea is of our sins being in a bike and God seals the bike and then throws it to the deepest part of the sea.

And in the words of Corrie ten boom, as soon as the bike hits the water, God will put a sign, no fishing. Remember when that Air France flight came down over the Pacific about two years ago?

Apparently the black box flight recorder, which is orange, not black, was lying somewhere on the bottom of the Pacific and they went looking for it. Why?

Because even the depths of the sea these days are not beyond our technology. But in Bible days they had none of that stuff. So what was dropped out at sea was lost forever. And Micah says God will take our sins and put them in the deepest part of the sea never ever to bring them up again.

[ 21 : 28 ] What a contrast. He will open our life and look at us or he will never open our life and look at us. So what makes a difference? We know in relation to us it's our attitude to the Lord Jesus.

That's why the Lord Jesus came into the world. That he may take our sins and take the judgment for our sins in himself.

So that never again will I be judged for my sins. Why? Because the Lord Jesus has already dealt with my sins once and for all. The Bible says he's nailed them to the cross. Or in the words of Micah he's put them in the depths of the sea.

Not that they don't matter but the price has been paid. And so everyone in this building this morning either your sin has been dealt with or it hasn't been dealt with.

and you either say to the Lord open my heart and search me oh God now or you say no I'll leave that till the end of life and I'll see what you pull out.

[ 22 : 43 ] The Bible says while it is now the day of grace while it is now the day of grace you come before the Lord and say Lord I'm embarrassed about what is in the back of my life.

But I believe that the Lord Jesus came into this world to deal with those things by dying on the cross. Do you know something if my sins were put on that wall behind you I would never ever come to Whitby again.

And if yours were there I would never have come in the first place. We're all in the same boat folks. We can put on our best Sunday suit or skirt or dress or whatever we wear these days but that makes no difference.

It's the heart. And the glorious thing about the gospel of Jesus Christ is he came to deal with what is on the inside. The heart of the matter said one man is the matter of the heart.

And he came to deal with the heart by taking our sins and deal with it once and for all. The hymn writer put it like this. My sin Oh the bliss of this glorious thought.

[ 23 : 55 ] My sin not in part but the whole was nailed to his cross and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Oh my soul. I say thank you Lord that you have a bag for my sins that you dealt with sealed and slung away.

It's wonderful. And oh what a soft pillow to sleep on. To know that you sleep on the pillow of God's forgiveness. That you go to bed you have your worries and I have my worries.

You have your trials I've got my trials but you put your head on the pillow and say Lord in spite of all my circumstances it's well with you and it's well with me.

Beautiful. Is that your experience? When did the Lord open your life up and deal with those sins? When did he do it? Has he done it? Because that's where the Christian life begins.

God has a bag for our sins. But secondly God also has a bottle for our sorrows. I don't mean to be rude about the NIV but it certainly clouds the whole issue here.

[ 25 : 13 ] But believe me it is there in the text in Psalm 56 verse 8. In Psalm 56 verse 8 the psalmist says this You number my wanderings You put my tears in your bottle.

Psalm 56 was written by David when he was in the hands of the Philistines and he began to cry out to God. Obviously his heart is broken and in the state of brokenness and distress he said Lord when I wept you put my tears into a bottle.

Let me say five things about this to try and clarify what David is saying. We know that the Romans and the Greeks it was part of their custom that one way of showing your grief was to cry and to collect your tears in a bottle called a lacrimatory.

It sounds to me like something you need to go and see the doctor over. Have you got anything for a lacrimatory? And the idea was the bigger the tears then the bigger the reflection of your grief.

And all this gave birth to the expression of crocodile tears where you cry and you see it and send it to the funeral but you can't go yourself but they'll know I feel very sorry for them.

[ 26 : 40 ] And then when you buried the person there was a long line of lacrimatory bottles of tears from those who grieved over your passing. That has nothing to do with the text.

But I just wanted to say that. David doesn't say that God collects my tears in a divine lacrimatory. The second thing is this.

The word bottle is not in the text either. It's the way that the translators have put the word. I often laugh when I read the book of Judges where it says that Sisera ran into the tent of Jael J-A-E-L and it says he was thirsty so she opened a bottle of milk.

What was it Unigate or Asda? You know? Again it's a poor translation. It's the word skin. You know the old typical Bedouin Middle Eastern skin where you have a skin, probably a sheep's stomach that has been cleaned out and then you're filled with water and it holds quite a lot of water.

So David doesn't say you collect my tears in a bottle. He literally says you collect my tears in a skin which is even bigger than a bottle which means an awful lot of tears.

[ 27 : 54 ] The third thing to say is this. On seven occasions in the life of David we read of David crying.

On one occasion he says Lord my bed is wet because I've been crying all night. He said I'm full of tears. And you know when you read through the Bible the Bible is full of tears. Job cried, Abraham cried, Hagar cried, Esau cried, Jacob cried, Moses cried, Hannah cried, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Esther.

That's just the Old Testament. Four times Paul speaks of his tears and then even the Lord Jesus wept. And five times we're told that hell is a place of tears.

And if I say to you here's a piece of paper and here's a pencil who wept the most in the Bible? I wonder who'd get it right.

The man who wept the most in the Bible and his tears are recorded on eight occasions is Joseph. Joseph, the book of Genesis.

[ 29 : 15 ] Tears tell me that people feel things. and the fact that there are so many tears in the Bible and that is just the tip of the iceberg tells me that our faith must also involve our heart.

I've been a pastor for 24 years and the last two years I've been on the road. So every Sunday I preach in a different church all around the country. you'll be amazed and I say this carefully at how cold and how emotionless many of our meetings are.

Stand up, sit down, stand up, sit down, pray, preach, sing, go home. It's orthodox, but where's the heart? Where's the heart? If some of us lived our married life as we lived our Sunday life we'd be divorced.

Because the wife would say, well if you call that passion my dear, I'm going. And vice versa. And here's a man who wept before God.

And here's Paul weeping over the church. And David says when I cry, Lord, you collect my tears. in a skin.

[ 30 : 41 ] God Amir said this, not that she was a believer, she was a Jewess, she was quite convinced about Judaism and all that goes with it. But she says only those who know how to weep with their whole heart know how to laugh.

A person who is constantly laughing doesn't know what joy is about, it's just laughter. But a person who has wept and then laughs, they know what laughter is all about because it's like the mountains and the valleys, isn't it?

When you live in a valley perpetually and then you go up a mountain and you go, this is awesome. Live there all the time and you just take it. It's like living by the sea. I lived by the sea for ten and a half years and opened my window every morning and there was the sea, Swansea Bay.

and I opened my curtains on Yarmouth Close in Swindon over somebody's backyard and I think, oh, I had that for ten and a half years.

I didn't appreciate it. Now I do. I go, look, the sea. And life is a mixture of joy and of sorrow and of highs and of lows.

[ 31 : 50 ] And David's psalms speak of the many, many tears that he shed. There's a great modern song, I'm sure you know it, for the joys and for the sorrows.

For this we have Jesus. You say, well, that's too modern for me. Okay, what a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. I went through that hymn.

He speaks of griefs, trials, temptations, discouragements, weaknesses, sorrows, cares and rejection. That's eight things that get him down. But he says, in spite of all that, what a friend we have in Jesus.

But David says, Lord, when I cry, you collect my tears in a skin. I don't believe for a moment it says that somewhere in heaven there is a tear room.

Ah, these are the tears of Abraham, and these are the tears of Job. it's a figure of speech. Look beyond the jar and the shaking of the rice. What is God saying? What God is saying through this is this, I care.

[ 33 : 02 ] I care. And David says, when I wept, the Lord knew I wept. And sometimes with the Lord, we don't want an answer.

we just want to know that he knows. And if he knows, that's all I need to know.

There's a hymn that is in the Alexander hymn book. The Alexander hymn book was written by Charles Alexander. Charles Alexander married into the Cadbury family.

And quite an interesting bit of history there with Charles Alexander and the Cadbury family. I remember going into Birmingham, doing a bit of research, finding out the history there and so on. It's fascinating.

But he wrote his own hymn book. And there's a hymn there I've only ever heard sung once in my lifetime. I don't think it'll ever be sung while I'm around. Those things have disappeared very quickly. But I love the words. It goes like this.

[ 34 : 03 ] I know, my heavenly father knows, the storms that would my way oppose, the balm I need to soothe my woes, how frail I am, to meet my foes.

He knows, he knows, the storms that would my way oppose, he knows, he knows, and tempers every wind that blows.

He knows. my father went through World War II. My father was a Bren gunner with a King's Royal Border Regiment.

And my father went over at D-Day. And he lost a lot of colleagues. On one occasion, he was a company of 100 men and 97 men were killed.



He was one of the three survivors. my father was a very interesting man to have around the house. Sometimes I got the impression that he won the war, but he didn't. But that's the kind of upbringing that has.

[ 35 : 12 ] Dad tells another story. But while my father was going through the war, he was writing to a young lady that he went to school with. He fell in love with her and absence made the heart grow fonder, so he began to write to her.

But the girl's mother wasn't too impressed with my father. So whenever the letters arrived from France and then Belgium, and then later on India, they were burnt.

And the young lady never could understand why my father never wrote back to her, but she kept sending letters to him. And then, amazingly, they twigged what was going on.

So she said, you better write to my auntie. So, rightly or wrongly, my father used to write to the auntie, and that's how the letter came to Edna.

When the war was over, he married Edna. Two years almost to the day after marrying her, and by then, my sister had been born, Edna died.

[ 36 : 17 ] So having come through World War II, having lost hundreds of colleagues, survived by the skin of his teeth on many an occasion, having then come home trying to get your life together, you then marry a sweetheart from school, you then have a little girl, you then bury her.

And my father finished up as superintendent of a cemetery and crematorium, so it was also his work. I remember my father telling me, he said, you know, not long after I'd buried my first wife, he said, I came home from work, my father got it, from bed, dress his daughter, take her to his parents to feed her for the day, look after her, go to work, to a cemetery, come home, pick his daughter up, put her to bed, that was his life, thinking, what on earth is life about?

He said, I was just sat at home, just flicking through my wife's Bible, when a piece of paper dropped out, which said, be still and know that I am God, written in their handwriting. He said, I thought it was very nice and very precious, just put it back in.

He said, before I went to bed, I flicked through the evening rag, the Blackburn telegraph. We all have one in our area. You know, many, many years ago, most of our local papers used to publish scripture.

In the personal column, there was just a little bit of scripture. The Daily Telegraph still does it. My father said, I just turned to the paper to see what was in the paper that night, and sure enough, it was Psalm 46 verse 10.

[ 37 : 58 ] He said, I went to bed, got up in the morning, was walking down the road at 7 o'clock in the morning to go to my parents to drop off his daughter, my sister, when an elder from the local church was walking down the road.

My father had the shock of his life thinking, what's an elder doing walking down my road? He lives three miles from me. The elder stopped my father and said, Jim, I had to come because the Lord woke me up in the night.

And he's got a word for you. He said, my father, it's okay. He spoke twice last night. He said, the elder, what are you talking about? He said, I can tell you what the Lord said.

He said, be still and know that I am God. By the way, that wasn't a charismatic church. That's just being open to the Lord.

God knows. And the fact that he knows is the strength that we need to carry on.

[ 39 : 11 ] Sometimes God doesn't answer our prayers for reasons that he knows best. That often perplex me by the fact that he knows.

What is it Peter said? Casting all your cares upon him because he cares for you. The Lord Jesus is not a wand to all our problems.

Just wave a wand, say a quick prayer, all will be changed. Sometimes it doesn't change, but he knows. How do I know? Because David says, he takes our tears and he puts them in the skin.

It's David's way of saying, he cares. he cares. So God has got a bag for our sins and he has a bottle for our sorrows.

And finally it's the book of Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament. In chapter 3 verse 16 which says this, Malachi tells the Malachi tells us, he writes down.

[ 40 : 40 ] In fact, Malachi tells us three things. And by the way, the days were pretty tough. Generally speaking, life is tough anyway. And the days in which Malachi were living weren't exactly rosy days. They were tough days.

And there were people who got together who loved the Lord. And they got together to encourage themselves. Who got together? Those who feared the Lord. feared the Lord.

What is it the old hymn says? Fear him, you saints, then you will have nothing else to fear. Do you know it's so easy in the Christian church to be fearful of what the church is doing down the road?

And it's so easy as a minister to be fearful of what other ministers may think about you. But happy the man who fears the Lord. Happy the woman who fears the Lord. To say, I couldn't care what anybody else says, graciously, but I haven't got to stand before them.

I've got to stand before the Lord. And it says, those who feared the Lord. What is it Peter says? Perfecting holiness. How? In the fear of the Lord.

[ 41 : 59 ] Then it says this, they also meditated on his name. So here were terrible days, here were God's people who feared the Lord and who meditated on his name. Is that what you do as well?

I don't mean read a good book, and believe me, I love reading. I think I was born with a book in my hand. That's why I was so heavy. It was a book. I love reading, don't get me wrong.

But I know even as a Christian minister and as a Christian, it is so easy to fill your life with Christian stuff, but the Lord gets squeezed out. How about even sometimes in your quiet times, not even asking the Lord for anything, just meditate on his name?

Do you think the Lord will say, well because you've asked for nothing, you've been that busy meditating on me, I'm not going to give you anything. Think the Lord's like that? I try and help myself by going through the alphabet.

Say, Lord, I'm going to meditate on everything to do with A in the alphabet. I'm very, very simple. Lord, you're almighty. Just think of the power of God. Lord, you are amazing. Go through all the A's.

[ 43 : 13 ] Keep you going. I struggle a bit with the X's and the Z's. But we can get there. But just, it's surprising how Christianity is a matter of, do you know them? Do you know which church you go to? Do you know who's in that church?

What's going on? You can fill your life with all what I call Christian movement, but not even know the Lord. It says they feared him, they meditated on his name, then it says this, they also fellowshiped together.

Surprising how we have fellowship lunches. No, it's a lunch. Can I have some fellowship over a cup of tea and biscuit? No, it's a cup of tea and biscuit. Fellowship is talking about the Lord.

A cup of tea and biscuit is a cup of tea and biscuit. Fellowship is when all that you have in common is the Lord Jesus Christ. I pastored in Wales for ten and a half years.

I lived there for over 15 years. My wife is Welsh and speaks the language and all the rest have been imbibed in that kind of culture. Some very good things about Wales and one of the things that came out of Wales in the revival was that they had experience meetings.

[ 44 : 25 ] People panic when you mention that these days. An experience meeting is where you could testify what the Lord's been doing in your life. That would be pretty searching in some churches.

Say, okay, we won't get too heavy, just this month. Not what you've been reading, but what has the Lord been doing in your life this month? have you received his grace?

Has he drawn near to you? Have you had a chance to witness to someone about the Lord Jesus? What was the outcome? That's fellowship, where we encourage one other than the things of God.

What does it say? When this small gathering of people in the days of Malachi fellowshiped together and feared the Lord and meditated on his name, he says, listen, he heard, he heard, the Lord listened to them.

And then it says, he then wrote, and he wrote a book of remembrance, it was written before him, for those who fear the Lord.

[ 45 : 38 ] Now God doesn't need to write a book as if, now watch a place in 1989, oh yes, I forgot. God knows everything. I always chuckle when I read Genesis chapter 8, it says, Genesis 8 verse 1, here's Noah in the ark, it says, then God remembered Noah.

Oh yes, of course Noah's in the ark. It's a Hebrew way of saying that the Lord then brought him right back into the middle of the picture. God hadn't forgotten him, it was only him and a few family relatives in the boat alive.

But it's, now he comes back into the picture. We almost have the same picture, do we not, at the resurrection where out went the message, go and tell his disciples and Peter.

Go and tell Peter. The Lord remembers. He asks us to remember him on a regular basis and that's where we break bread.

But what is even better is that he remembers us. That is what is so haunting about Matthew chapter 7 where the Lord Jesus on the day of judgment will say to some depart from me.

[ 47 : 06 ] No, I never knew you. No, no, I didn't know you. Does it mean he's ignorant? No, he's not ignorant. It's just saying you're not part of the remembering. And I say to you very simply this morning, I trust you've understood, try to pitch it at a level that all of us understand, that God has a bag for our sins.

he has a bottle for our sorrows. He has a book for our sayings where he writes down everything we say, provided we fear his name.

My prayer is that the church here in Whitby may be filled with men and women who are keen to remember his name and to meditate on it.

Say, Lord, even if you don't answer all my prayers, I will still trust you. But thank you, Lord, that I know that the sins I've committed are sealed, nailed, for in the words of Micah, they're in the deeper sea.

What an amazing God we have. And all that is free. Now, I call that a bargain.

[ 48 : 31 ] That's free. That's God's amazing grace. Let's pray together. Wonderful grace that gives what I don't deserve.

Father, forgive us for sometimes filling our church life and our own lives with so much chatter and tittle tattle that we just play around on the edge of spiritual things but never talk about you, never share the gospel with anybody.

It almost becomes a social life to us. Father, may we be like these people in the days of Malachi who meditate on your name and who fellowship together. And I give you thanks that when people do that, you notice it.

And Lord, in a congregation like this, I am conscious there are many people who shed tears, sometimes in private, because of what they're experiencing. Lord, remind them this morning that you care for them.

And thank you for Calvary. Thank you that Jesus Christ came into this world to deal with our sin. That's wonderful news.

[ 49 : 49 ] And Father, we just want to say thank you. And we offer our thanks in his lovely name. Amen. Amen.