

1Corinthians 17-12-17b

Let's continue our study now in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and we're examining this proposition that Paul has put forward that rather than being foolish and rather than being something to be rejected, the message of the cross is actually a transcendent expression of power and a transcendent expression of wisdom. And failure to appreciate it on the part of the Jews or the Greeks isn't a reflection on God, it is a reflection on us because when we have a heart that is seeking and accept God on His terms, we then gain the wisdom and we gain the power that others might see lacking in that message. And what it boils down to is this, in a nutshell, we have the opportunity to either recognize or to reject a problem in our soul and that problem in three letters is sin.

That is why Jesus said when the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict the world of sin and of the concomitant standard of righteousness and judgment that follows, but it's sin. When Paul says, I preach to you as of first importance this gospel, Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures. It's not just that Christ died, Christ died for our sins.

And this action on God's part to deliver us from sin, think about Romans, all have sinned, come short of the glory of God, the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life. John 3.16, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, not just as an abstraction, not because He enjoys the sight of bloody sacrifice, but so that whoever believes in Him should not perish. It is the solution to the sin problem.

Now, where is the wise? Where is the expert in the Old Testament law? Where is the debater of this age with an answer to the problem of inherent human failing, inherent human corruption, our inherent selfishness, our ability to create destruction wherever we go despite our best efforts? What is it that is paved with good intentions? The road to hell is paved with good intentions. We mean well. Doctors that injected women with thalidomide meant well.

Doctors that stuck leeches on people meant well. Guys working on nuclear reactors meant well. Have you seen these commercials that I was talking about my failing and watching too much television, but late nights you see these commercials, did you have a repair made with mesh? You know, these guys screwed up, sue them.

Did you take this medicine? People are dying and their livers are falling out and you know, sue them. These blonde headed ladies come on and you know, the compensation you deserve and all of it is well meant technology and medical practice, but people's replacement joints are failing and their meshes are failing and their this, that and the other. There is a litany, there is an endless number of things that you can go sue for.

Did you breathe asbestos in while you were doing this and so? Sue them. Well, all of this was well intended, but it falls short. Government is well intentioned.

There is some portion of the government somewhere that is trying to fix health care, past and present, and they are well intentioned, but it is egregious failure all around. There are people who need care that aren't getting it. There are people who don't need care that are getting it for free.

The government trying to get people educated and the system is abused and trying to keep people from starving and the system is abused. Well meant shortcoming is the trademark of human life. We are sinful.

We are corrupt. We don't have all the facts. We make decisions that we think are good based on limited information and they turn out to be terrible.

How many times has this happened to you? Right? Think back. You did a thing because you thought it was the best and it turned out awful. You called one plumber and you should have called another.

You used one mechanic and you should have used another. You drove one car and you should have drove the other. You trusted one friend and you should have trusted the other.

You listened to one piece of advice and you should have listened to the other. You read one website and you should have found a different one. You tried one recipe and you should have used a different one.

It is the milieu of human life that we fail. The root of it is the cause of it and the core of it is sin. Why do animals die anytime humans take an action? Do you drive on highways? Thousands of animals were slain so that you could drive that highway.

Do you breathe air conditioned air? The power plants that produce that power slay animals all the time. Ever ridden on an airplane? Those airplanes kill birds. The airports have killed wildlife.

Do you eat vegetables and fruits? Pesticides and plowing have killed untold millions of other life forms so that you could eat that thing. Do you eat meat? The animal had to die so that you could eat it. You cannot exist in this world.

You cannot draw breath. You cannot wear clothes. I don't care how synthetic they are.

If you're wearing synthetic fabrics, guess what? Those came from the petroleum industry and the petroleum industry kills billions of animals every year. You cannot live here without being destructive. It is a result of sin.

Did anything die when Adam and Eve lived in God's perfect environment of the garden? No. Trees didn't even die. They just plucked fruit.

It was a byproduct of their life. It may have even helped them. It enabled a little more light to filter through to their leaves.

And there was a symbiotic goodness in God's perfect creation, which by the way is coming again. In the kingdom of the Father, everything you do is going to exude goodness. It is going to multiply goodness.

Just moving around in God's creation with what you have learned in this life and the service that you can perform for Him is going to give off goodness like perspiration. You will unconsciously produce good. Good will be a byproduct of everything.

Where now, except in the realm of the spiritual for those who are being saved, pretty much everything you do creates destruction. The second law of thermodynamics just permeates everything. And the second law is a consequence of sin.

The world doesn't want to believe that, but it is true. We live in an entirely different environment because of sin. And that sin didn't begin in the garden.

It began in the throne room of God. That is where the universe was engendered with the potential for failure. So there is a decision point for all of us when we are made aware of sin.

And we all have, all of us with a healthy conscience, anybody with enough neurons to rub together to have human thought recognizes in ourselves that failure, that lack, that shortcoming. People can shovel all kinds of things into that. You can shovel in ambition and you can try to get ahead and achieve and accomplish.

You can shovel in relationships and try to love and to benefit. You can be self-sacrificial and say, well, I will atone. I will work off this guilt in some way.

I think I have done more good things than bad things. Everybody knows they have done bad things, both intentionally and unintentionally. But I think I have been a pretty good person.

I am spiritual in my way. I go out and gaze at the leaves blowing in the wind. I am spiritual.

Everybody tries to ameliorate and tries to assuage and tries to anesthetize sensitivity to the wrong that we are responsible for, the wrong that we commit. Well, I will make new policies. I just don't have two recycling deals.

I have four. I spent \$15,000 extra to get an electric car because I am doing good for the environment. I contribute to the National Society for the goodness of something.

I spend. I finance others. I even do myself.

I volunteer. I volunteer. I work off my guilt in some way.

I wear a hair shirt of some sort. I penalize myself in some fashion. Why do people do that? We all have a sensitivity.

Well, God says what you think makes sense in terms of filling that gap and compensating for

that failure and that corruption really doesn't. And something that you wouldn't expect is the only solution. Now, you think about this.

I know all of you have been on the web. I know this. Nobody listening to the sound of my voice hasn't been on the World Wide Web.

And when you go to some page that is an aggregate thing, I have to get to my AOL mail now. Verizon sold their mail to America Online and I haven't lashed it up to a client yet, Thunderbird or Outlook, so I have to use the web interface. Well, AOL, anytime you say, give me my AOL mail, it takes you to the AOL homepage first and you have to click on mail to get there and so you have to see all of this other material first.

And I wrote a nasty letter to Verizon back when they were doing that because they were putting a lot of Rainbow Coalition stuff on that page that I was required to look at before I could get to my mail. And I wrote them a note and I said, I'm canceling my service if you don't give me a way to not have to look at politically charged stuff when all I want to do is read my mail. And the same thing with AOL.

Well, all I want to know is this. Tell me if you have not seen this woman got rid of the bags under her eyes with this weird old trick. You can save money on your taxes with this weird technique.

Have you not seen these little teasers that say here's this counterintuitive procedure by which you can solve a problem? Now, they wouldn't do that if people don't click them. I didn't know that soaking my dentures overnight in lemon juice would make them whiter or I didn't know that putting avocado oil on my juniper would make it blossom. I didn't know that this weird counterintuitive thing is the key.

Who would have thought that you could do this strange procedure and get a benefit from it? People are willing to believe that all day long, all day long. Get rid of wrinkles with this weird old trick. They don't tell you what the trick is because they want you to click.

And of course, in order to read the weird trick, you got to read 15 pages of two pounds in a five pound bag, all accompanied by ads that they have been paid to present. And they say, we will get 150,000 people a day to see your ad because they're trying to find the weird old trick at the end of this long rabbit trail. That's how it works.

But why do people persist with it? You can't believe how this actress looks today. Remember when she was young and vibrant back in the seventies or the eighties? You'll never believe what she looks like now. Try clicking one of those.

19 pages later, you still haven't seen her. You've seen every other thing in the world and about 250 ads, but there's something that you want and counterintuitively and people will try it. Oh really? If I rub a egg yolk into my hair every night, it'll get thicker.

Try this weird old trick. Strap cucumber slices on your eyes and the bags will go. You can tell I've been looking at these eye bag solutions.

I can't believe these things. I don't know. I think you're just stuck with them at a certain point.

But the point being, why are we so willing to accept a quote weird old trick in other realms? But when it comes to, there is a solution to the corruption of your nature. There is a solution to your fallen and failing heart spiritually. Oh no, that can't be right.

But there are a portion of us to whom it makes sense. My creator can tell me what to do. I can fix a problem like that and nobody else can.

All the rest of us are equally fallen and fallible. I can't look to other fallible people to make me whole again. I need to go back to the manufacturer.

I need to go back to the source, to the one who built me and who knows me and who has approached, who has crossed the gulf between me and him more than halfway and has demonstrated his love for me. When I was like I am, I was in the gulf, Jesus died for me. That is a transcendent message.

It doesn't have to make sense. I don't need an explanation right now. An explanation will come once I've accepted it.

Believe me, I've had years of training and experience in parsing all of the components of salvation and it makes so much sense. It's crazy. Redemption and reconciliation and propitiation and the atonement and the picture of it in the Old Testament and Joseph with the coat of many colors and his father treating him as dead and then deliverance coming for his brothers in his actual sort of return from the dead and Joseph as a picture of Christ.

It's a beautiful thing. Nobody could have seen that coming even looking at it. You see it in retrospect and the interwoven fabric of salvation in every page of the scriptures is just wondrous to behold.

The testimony and the witness of the word to itself is just so overwhelmingly plausible and makes a kind of sense. Humans could not have written an interwoven account across this many years with this many different authors in this many different contexts that is so internally self-consistent. You go right down to the individual words in the original language and the tense or the voice or the mood or the case of these words and down to the smallest detail.

It has integrity. It's like a Mandelbrot set. It doesn't matter how much you zoom in.

It's just infinitely more self-consistent and follows the very same pattern. You've seen these Mandelbrot repeating patterns. You zoom it in and there's the pattern.

You zoom it in and there's the pattern. You zoom it in. You can zoom in until your computer breaks and you're never going to exhaust that symmetry and that beauty and that consistency.

God invented mathematics. God invented those sets. I was thinking about the hymn, How Firm a Foundation.

The old hymns, the people that wrote those, and there's some question about who even wrote the lyrics to How Firm a Foundation, but the words are a wonderful testimony. Listen to these words. How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word.

Not laid for your philosophy, not laid for your vast erudition and wisdom and way to get ahead in the world. The foundation for your faith is laid in His Word. What more can He say than what He has already said? To you, who to the Savior for refuge have fled.

It is said to those who go to the Savior for refuge. You recognize without a lot of logical argument, that's what I need right there. I need forgiveness for my sin.

I need to be delivered from my own fallen nature. I need a kind of life I cannot obtain and nobody in this world can give me. Nobody in this world can conquer death.

Nobody in this world can conquer sin. Look at all of the psychologists and psychiatrists and all the stuff that's been Skinner and Freud and all these other people trying to parse the human mind and everybody is still as ugly and corrupt as they can be. It doesn't matter how much therapy they take.

Only God can heal the soul. You who to the Savior for refuge have fled, have a foundation laid for your faith in His Word that is unshakable. It is recognizably solid.

Does a baby need to be argued into the value of his mother's milk? He knows when he gets it, he's got it. There is an instinctive recognition, this is the stuff. More of that please, right? You don't have to be a genius to know that you're being fed.

You don't have to be a genius to know that you're being healed. That what someone is doing for your malady is working. This is a lot of us both personally and in looking at others and even in our pets recognize that glucosamine chondroitin in some cases works miracles.

We've got a dog that his back wheels almost quit turning. Major reached the point where he could barely get up after laying down his hind end and trying to go up and down steps and trying to jump any kind of a height. It was just like things were rusted up.

And we thought, well, glucosamine, we've had good success in knee joints in some of us. Let's give him the dog version. So we got him some dog glucosamine and started giving that to him.

I don't need anybody to argue me with the science. Since we've been giving him that and he got on it after a couple of months, oh my gosh, it's all the difference in the world. He bounds up the stairs, he gets up and down with no trouble.

He doesn't make this deep old man groaning noise when he's laying down and when he's getting up. It's the only thing we changed. And look, I don't care what anybody says, proven,

unproven, what goes into your tummy can't get into your joints.

You can argue that all you want. Take a look at John 9. Turn over real quickly to John chapter 9. Classic case of this. God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise.

And he's chosen the weak things to confound the strong. While you're turning to John 9, let me read you a few passages. Matthew chapter 4 verse 8. The devil took Jesus up on an exceedingly high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

If you were going to help the world, wouldn't it be handy to rule the world? Satan says, look, I'll give you all of this. And it was his to give. God made him the God of this world.

And the God of this world can confer power in this world and wisdom in this world to whomever he wishes. He's going to do it in the tribulation period to the Antichrist. What Satan offered to Jesus, he's going to give to the Antichrist.

The Antichrist is going to say, okay, sure. Bring it on. Let me have it.

All the kingdoms of the world and their glory. But what did Jesus say? Later on in Matthew chapter 11 verse 25, Jesus says, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. Those who are willing to accept what they can experience themselves as working.

I don't know. You guys can debate and argue and use logic and expose fallacies and premises and all of that, propositions and all of that. Do all of that that you want.

Let me tell you something. I'm just a babe. And when I find mom's milk, that's good enough for me.

I got it right here, right now. Talk all you want. John chapter 9, you remember this is the story of the blind man and his encounter with the wise men in his culture.

Jesus said the same thing in Luke 10, 21. I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight.

John chapter 9, Christ heals the blind man. And after he does so, the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, isn't this he, the one who sat and begged? Verse 9, some said this is he, others said, well, he just resembles him. It can't be the same guy.

It must be somebody that looks like him. He said, I am. Interesting.

What is Jesus' name? What is God's name? What did God tell Moses from the bush when they asked who sent you? I am has sent you. And when they say, we're not sure if this is the guy, he says, I am. He's a reflection of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is irrefutable evidence. They're going to refute it anyway. But he's irrefutable evidence that the I am has acted, has spoken, is there.

How were your eyes opened? He said, a man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said, go wash in the pool of Siloam. I went and washed and I received sight. They said to him, where is he? He said, I don't know.

So they brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. It was the Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees asked him how he'd receive sight.

He said, he put clay in my eyes and I washed and I see. Pharisees said, this man is not from God because he does not keep the Sabbath. He's working on the Sabbath.

He's making mud on the Sabbath. You know, spitting in the dirt and rubbing it between your fingers, that's work. He's lawless.

He's a lawbreaker. Piece of logic. The scribes, the wisdom of the world.

Others said, how can a man who is a sinner do such signs? He's a man, therefore he's a sinner, so he can't be doing anything for God. Piece of logic based on limited information. Jesus is somewhat more than a man and somewhat more than a sinner, is he not? There was a division among them.

They had a debate. Where is the debater of the age, the wise? So they said to the blind man again, what do you say about him because he opened your eyes? He said, well, he's a prophet, i.e. he's from God. He's a man from God.

He's the genuine deal. The Jews did not believe concerning him that he'd been blind and received his sight until they called the parents of him who had received sight. First of all, they reject the miracle.

Well, first of all, the whole thing is a farce. It's a fallacy. It never happened.

Have you ever heard atheists say Jesus never even existed? And you say, well, there's plenty of historical witness. They say, there is no contemporary historian that says anything about Jesus. Excuse me, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Josephus are all contemporaries and they all speak of Christ.

Well, I refuse to believe that that's a legitimate testimony. I think that was all made up after the fact. Well, even if they dig a copy of any one of the Gospels or Josephus out of a jar that can be firmly dated to 50 of the Common Era, A.D. 50, they still won't believe.

Well, somebody stuck it in the jar later. I quibble with the dating or whatever. So they want to reject the reality that the testimony is based on.

But they ask him, is this your son who was born blind? How does he now see? Parents have

said, we know this is our son and that he was born blind. How he sees now, we don't know. Who opened his eyes? We don't know.

He's of age. Ask him. He can speak for himself.

His parents said this because they feared the Jews because there is this oppressive suppression of anything they don't like. And these people are afraid. They've seen what these powerful people do.

This is the powerful of the age, the Dunamis, the Iskaros of the world. And they knew that if anybody confessed that Jesus was Christ, he'd be put out of the synagogue. He'd be ostracized.

So his parents said, ask him. So they called the man and said, give God the glory. Give God the glory.

Like this is their whole purpose. We just want to be sure God gets the glory here. So let's just start with that.

We know that this Jesus is a sinner. He says, I don't know if he's a sinner or not. Here's what I know.

You can argue that he's a sinner. You can put the proposition and debate all day long whether Jesus is a sinner, has to be a sinner, must be a sinner, made mud on the Sabbath so he is a sinner. Here's what I know.

I was blind and now I see. So they said, what did he do? How did he open your eyes? I told you already. You did not listen.

Why do you want to hear it again? Because no amount of presenting the message is going to convince those who do not want to believe, who've got some other acts to grind, who prefer some other explanation, who don't have an open heart. Do you also want to become his disciples? And of course the answer to that is, it's pointless to tell them again because they don't want to become his disciples. This is sort of a second class condition here.

I don't know if it is grammatically, but it certainly is argument wise. Do you want to become his disciples? Expecting a negative response. They reviled him and said, notice when you give testimony that pokes a finger in the eye of somebody that wants to believe something else, they will revile you.

Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you for my name's sake. You're his disciple. We are Moses' disciples.

So now, this is the well-born idea. Philosophically, we follow Moses. We are the scribes.

We're the experts. Don't be telling us anything. You're from a bad source.

We're from a good source. We know God spoke to Moses. As for this, derisively, we don't know where he's from.

He's not eugenos, which is, by the way, also where they get eugenics. Same word that we have in our passage. Man answered and said, well, this is a marvelous thing that you don't know where he's from, yet he's opened my eyes.

We know that God does not hear sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, he hears him. Since the world began, it's been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

Well, here's a piece of logic from the not well-born, not scribal guy. They answered and said, you are completely born in sins. You are completely not eugenos.

So, we can't refute the truth of what you just said, so we're going to impugn the witness. You can't be right, because look where you come from. And trust me when I tell you, your witness for Christ will be reviled on this basis.

You don't know what you're talking about. It's well known that Christians are less educated. Well, of course they are, because we're not looking for the answers to life by getting more and more degrees and going further and further down the road of science.

We've already found the answer. I don't need fulfillment by getting three or four doctorates. I'm not on a search and on a quest.

I've always thought this is silly. Anytime you see this statistic, well, it's been proven that the higher the education level, the fewer Christians of any faith there are. In other words, the smarter you are, the less likely you are to believe.

Nonsense. The more you're a believer, the less likely you are to have to go seeking fulfillment in education and buying into the message that is constantly delivered in education. Next time somebody quotes this to you, if they ever do, turn it around and say, well, it's also a statistical fact that the more and more theological education that somebody gets, the less likely they are to be an atheist.

How many atheists do you find in seminary? Well, how many believers are you going to find in the halls of academia? Most of us get enough of an education that we can provide for our families and do good work. Nothing wrong with getting a bachelor's degree or a master's degree, but those who are higher and higher educated and just get more and more degrees and just want to explore all the halls, what are they looking for? They're looking for something that they haven't found in Christ because they haven't accepted Christ. And of course you're going to have the majority of your atheists wandering the halls of education.

And you're going to have the majority of believers wandering the halls of church and faith and spiritual renewal and fellowship and, by the way, those outworkings of love that have resulted

in hospitals in earlier centuries. Who was it that created the first institutions of learning? It was the Christians. Look at all the universities in this country that started out as seminaries and started out as theological schools.

The idea was you get literate so that you can understand the Bible. That's why the McGuffey Readers and so many of the other early things ended up using biblical allusions and biblical references. The early pioneer education was heavily biblical.

And the idea was we want you to be able to explore the Word of God and to understand when the preacher preaches what's going on. But it's been perverted now to a system that is the traditions of men and the heart of it's been removed. So Jesus heard that they'd cast out the blind man.

When he had found him, he said, Do you believe in the Son of God? Interesting question, isn't it? He answered, Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him? Jesus said, You have both seen him and it is he who is talking with you. He said, Lord, I believe. I believe because I know what you have done for me.

That's the basis of our belief. Any Christian testimony, especially people that have come to faith as an adult and have spent some time out in the world and have looked to other answers and have tried other solutions, the transforming power of Christ in the life is all the argument we need. I know that I was blind and I know that now I see.

I know that I was corrupt and fallen without hope and without God in the world. Now I have hope. There is new power.

There is a new direction. There is a regeneration in my soul. You can't argue somebody into that.

You can't put it in a flask and say, there it is, see, science proves renewal of the heart. That's going to be foolishness to a scientist. But it is the power of God to us who are being saved.

So just remember, not just at the inception, not just when we are saved, not just when we are speaking the truth to others in love about being saved, about coming to faith in Christ, but in an ongoing basis. Not many mighty are called. Not many well-born are called.

Not many who have got a lot of strength and power. And what does that mean? Our ongoing deliverance also doesn't depend on us suddenly becoming financial geniuses or circumstantial wizards or being just truly excellent at our job. And this is going to be the path to success.

We're going to put something by and have a wonderful retirement. We're going to succeed and be influential and be a great force for God in the social world. We're going to build a big church with a giant steeple and a lot of plush upholstered pews.

We're going to have a large family and do this, that, and the other. Many of the standards of

the world are not going to be met in our ongoing, quote, unquote, being saved. We're subject to the same vagaries as everybody else.

There are losses in our life. There are circumstantial shortfalls. We may be short of money.

We may go down a bad road and make a circumstantially bad decision, something that looks foolish to the world. But we don't worry about that. Why? Our life is on a different plane and on a different basis.

And we've got a God who is wise. We as a human race screwed up and fell into sin. God fixed it.

You and I, living our lives, are going to make bad decisions. We're going to fail. We're going to fall short again and again.

But we pick ourselves up like that quote from Theodore Roosevelt. The man who is in the arena, marred with dust and sweat and blood on his face, but he picks himself up. The strength we use to pick ourselves up is God's strength.

The hope that we have is that in the same way that the biggest failure the human race ever perpetrated was solved by God, and He has used the foolishness of this world and the weak things of this world to manifest His glory. Remember Paul with his thorn in the flesh. My strength is sufficient for you.

My grace is sufficient for you. And when we are weak, then we are strong. When we are out of options, when we are out of wisdom, when we are incapable with wisdom and strength and natural assets, that's when God's glory is most evident.

Unbelievers would say, well, that's just almost literally a hell of a way to live. Well, it is a heavenly way to live. It is the spiritual wisdom that transcends the wisdom of the world.

It's not going to make sense. It shouldn't make sense. If God is truly God, then He should be as far above us in wisdom as we are above our pets.

And things ought not to make sense if He really is as wise as He should be. And of course He is. So the things that can be known about God are His power and His deity.

We know this from Romans 1, 20-22. And people who profess to be wise become fools when they encounter that and reject it. There is a wisdom that is transcendent.

How many times does Paul say, we are fools for Christ. We are considered nuts in the priorities that we set. We have options that we don't exercise.

And we do things that seem very counterintuitive because we partake of the life of God and the wisdom of God and the power of God in Christ. Well, that is where we are headed in 1 Corinthians. And God chose what the world considers foolish to shame those who think they are wise, verse 27.

He chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. Satan and his minions are wiser and more powerful than any of us.

And God is going to bring him to naught through us. Out of the mouths of babes and suckling infants, God has ordained praise. Babes and suckling infants.

God has hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to babes. It is that innocent trust, that instinctive turning toward God that we who are being saved have that transcends any wisdom of this world. We have been united with Christ.

He is our wisdom. He is our peace. He is our holiness.

That is what we will pick up next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the deliverance we have in Christ.

We thank you that we did not have to be smart. We didn't have to be possessed of qualities of body or of spirit or of any other sort to receive your redeeming love and the cleansing and renewing grace of which we have all partaken. It came to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

It came simply as those who had been bitten by the serpents in the desert of the Old Testament day when Moses raised up the serpent on the pole. As many as looked, lived. We have looked to Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith.

In that look and that placing of our faith in him, you have done for us what the world could never do, what we could never do for ourselves. We thank you for that. We thank you for new life.

We thank you for new hope. We thank you for a fruitful and productive and meaningful life leading to an even more fruitful and living presence in the ages to come when the Lord Jesus returns for us, presents us before your throne without fault, blameless and ready for service. We pray that this passage will be a motivation and an inspiration for us in the days ahead, that it will cause us to evaluate the way we use our time and our efforts in this brief life so that we are not led astray by what passes us by the wisdom of this world, that we are not complacent, that we are not indifferent, but that we can make the most of the opportunities and the resources that you have given to us in Christ and that in so doing we can reflect his glory and yours now and in the ages to come.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.