

Joshua 07-05-04b

Let's resume our study now in the book of Joshua, in chapter 7, and we are looking at this concept that is so important for our application. It's really central. Most sin can be traced to, if not all sin, but certainly most sin can be traced to putting ourselves in God's place, giving to ourselves that which belongs to God, honoring ourselves above Him, seeking our goals instead of His, trying to fulfill our plans instead of His, taking to ourselves what rightfully belongs to Him.

We are enjoined in Romans, chapter 12, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, which is to be holy and acceptable to God, and it is our reasonable service. It is expected. That's what we should do.

We belong to God. He is our Creator. He is our Savior.

He is our Redeemer. And that is our purpose. It's our duty.

And to fail that obligation, we have most often put ourselves on God's throne. This is the ultimate and original sin, isn't it? Satan said, I will be like the Most High. I will ascend.

I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. And those five I wills make a God, small g, out of the creature. And we do the same thing, and we think, well, but I'm pretty good.

I'm mostly holy, if you put all of my stuff in the balance. I'm a good person. Lots of unbelievers say this.

They can't really believe that a God in Heaven would send them to the lake of fire, if there was such a thing, and they're pretty sure there's not. But if there were, they think they're on safe ground, because on balance, they're average, or better than average. They're pretty good.

You look at God's treatment of the nation of Israel, you've got thousands and thousands of people, and you've got one area of sin. You've got one disobedience, and it taints the entire nation. So, we see this principle of the danger of taking that which belongs to God, this kerim.

And not everything is devoted to God, and there is mercy, there is compassion. God bears with us. As David says, He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust.

And my famous naval quote, which I remember the beginning of a whole lot better than the end, but the idea of what it takes to be a good naval officer, it says no good work should be left to pass without a commendation, without being noticed, without being recognized. And at the same time, a good officer should correct those things that are not good. But you have to be careful to distinguish what is well-meant shortcoming from heedless or stupid blunder.

And that's how that quote ends, it is not enough that an officer... If I started at the beginning, I could probably get all the way to the end, but I won't. But it's important when you are looking at a shortcoming. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

What is the nature of that shortcoming? Is it well-meant? Is someone trying? Is it the inevitable things that happen because we are not perfect? Or is it part of a pattern? Is it part of an intent? Is it part of a mindset? And part of an attitude? And part of an approach that constantly, consistently puts self above other things. God distinguishes this in us. And there is a difference between a well-meant shortcoming, which we acknowledge to God, and He forgives and cleanses, and the sin of the high hand.

If we disregard, after we have come to a knowledge of their truth, and willfully disobey, as it says in Hebrews, there is no more sacrifice for sin. That's not covered, and you'll go out under the sin unto death. You can expect fearful judgment from God.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when you fall into His hands, trying to run the other way, instead of running toward Him, and pleading for His mercy, and asking for His forgiveness, because you genuinely want to live your life to please Him. Achan made no such approach, had no second thoughts about his action, until he was methodically and systematically identified. Didn't volunteer.

He fessed up when he was cornered, and basically had no choice. But this has been the problem in Israel. Like Jacob, and some other archetypal figures in the Old Testament, Achan is a metaphor, really, for the nation of Israel, in the energy of the flesh, unwilling to seek God's righteousness.

We saw this in Zechariah 5. We saw it in Malachi 3. We see it in the words of the Lord, in Mark 7, verse 11. Jesus is speaking, and talking about the behavior of the Pharisees, who are ostensibly the religious leaders in Israel. And He says to them, all too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your traditions.

This is Mark 7, verse 9 and following. You reject the commandment of God, and keep your traditions. You've modified, you've substituted, you've made some subtle shifts and changes.

You've compromised, and you've ameliorated, and you've leavened, and you've syncretized, and you have concocted a mixture of God's law and your own tradition. This is what you keep. For Moses said, Honor your father and mother, and he who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.

Very strong. Curse your father and mother? Go down to the mall, you can hear people cursing their parents every day. Sit outside any public place of business, and you'll hear teenagers, giving their mothers, usually, what for, all day long.

It's heinous. The penalty for that in Israel was death. That was the penalty on the books.

How often it was actually inflicted, we don't know. But God said, He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death. That's God's attitude toward the rebellious, snotty, back-talking, sin of the high hand, in being supercilious, and arrogant, and talking down to one's parents.

Verse 11 of Mark 7, But you say, If a man says to his father or mother, Whatever profit you might have received from me is korban. Korban is a lot like karam in Aramaic. It means devoted to God.

It's a devoted thing. It's a synonym for karam. And this practice was going on in Jesus' day, where it would be time for a son to take care of his aging parents.

And they're no longer able to support themselves, and it's time for the father to, the son to take care of his father and mother. And when he ought to be doing that, he would say, Well, I really don't have the resources to care for you, because these are dedicated to God. This money, this property, this portion of my flocks and herds or whatever, I have set this aside and designated it as devoted to God.

I can't give it to you. Well, he's kept it to himself, and on paper, it's designated for God, and upon my death, it will go to the synagogue, or the temple, or whatever. But in the meantime, I enjoy the full use of it, and I can't use any of it on my parents, because it's dedicated.

I've got to save it, so that when I die, it will go into God's work. Jesus said, When you do this, you no longer, and he said, You Pharisees, and you scribes, and you Sanhedrin members, you religious leaders, encourage this, because you're getting an endowment. You're saying, Oh, sure, don't spend that on your parents and waste it away.

You keep that. See, it was a win-win situation for the guy who declared it Korban, and for the beneficiaries, who upon this guy's death, would receive his wealth. He got to enjoy it while he's alive.

They got to enjoy it while he's dead. The parents are left out in the cold. And so, it was kind of a wink-nudge arrangement between well-off Israelites and the religious establishment.

Much as you would see taking place in history of the last 1500 years between Catholics and wealthy people. Well, that's why Jesus says, You say, If a man says to his father or mother, Whatever profit you might have received from his Korban, you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition, which you have handed down. Many such things you do.

You've created traditions that put you in the driver's seat, put you as the beneficiary,

and you're robbing God. That individual who sets aside things for his own use and then for the religious leaders is robbing God because it is the God-fearing, God-honoring practice to obey and fulfill God's command. And you are denying that obedience and that portion of God's plan that cares for the parents when they are old through the children.

That's God's Social Security. That's God's Medicare and Medicaid. The family, the offspring in Israel in those days, cared for the elderly, brought them in and looked after their needs, made sure they wanted and lacked for nothing.

You find a similar idea in Luke 16. Luke 16.16 Jesus says, The Law and the Prophets until John. It was the Law and the Prophets until John.

Since that time, the Kingdom of God has been preached and men try to force their way into it. It's tough to get a good idiomatic translation. You can see the parallel over in Matthew.

I believe it's in chapter 7. But since that time, the Kingdom of God has been preached, but everyone tries to take it by force. You want to grab a hold of the things that God is trying to give you. You want to seize them.

Why does Achan need a bar of gold and 500 shekels of silver and a robe when God is giving him and all of his countrymen the entire land? He wants a short-term, instant gratification and is trading it for inheritance for himself, his family, his descendants, unto however many... He's in the tribe of Judah. He's eventually going to be part of the ruling leadership of the nation, if he's patient, if he has faith. But he trades that all away for an instant gratification.

It puts you in mind of some other biblical characters like Esau. He traded away his birthright for a meal. Finally, you can look at Romans chapter 10.

This is where Paul really sums up this whole idea. Romans chapter 10, right at the beginning of the chapter. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved, that they may be delivered.

I bear them witness. They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. It's an ignorant zeal.

Now think about this. A zeal for God. Most people think, well, I love God.

I honor God. I go to church. I attend Bible class.

I pray. I read my Bible. I do this.

I do the things. I have a zeal for God, and so I'm set. What does the history of Israel teach us? I mean, Achan was in the battle.

It's not like he ran away. He rushed in. He followed orders.

He marched for the seven days. You know, Achan went around that city for seven days with all the rest of the Israelites. He had a week to think over what he was going to do.

And when the walls fell and he rushed in toward the center of the city as he was instructed, he did everything right. He was swinging his sword. He was hacking and slashing and killing and doing everything he was supposed to do.

And then he had a moment of weakness. He had a moment of failure. He had a moment of covetousness.

And he took what belonged to God. And he knew better. He knew it in his heart.

He knew it as he was picking it up. He could have dropped it, and he didn't. He took it all the way to his house, stared at it, realized that somebody was going to ask questions, and he dug a hole in the middle of his tent and buried it.

What's going to happen to a Babylonian garment when you bury it? How are you going to spend a wedge of gold and 500 shekels of silver that everybody around you knows you didn't have before? It's so counterintuitive, counterproductive, counterintelligent to do this. But this is what selfishness and covetousness does. It makes us stupid.

Zeal for God, not according to knowledge. Romans 10, 2. Verse 3. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness. What is the cure for this kind of problem? Have familiarity.

Have knowledge. Have insight. Have deep understanding of God's righteousness.

What does it take to lay hold of God's righteousness? How important is God's righteousness? How important is it to think the right thoughts whether someone is watching or not? How important is it to do the right thing whether someone is looking or not? Do you think anybody saw Achan take the gold and the silver and the Babylonian robe? It would have been turned in. Everybody knew it was Charim and he would bring a curse on Israel. He did it in secret.

He did it when nobody was looking. He became a sneak. And then he implicated his family because they had to know.

He couldn't hide it from them. And they knew. And they said nothing.

And they became as guilty as he. They being ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness. I will do what is right in my eyes.

I will do what I think is best for me. This is the gospel that is preached in our culture today. You've got to do what satisfies you.

You've got to pursue your dreams. You've got to follow your painted wagon wherever it's going to go. And it's in the movies.

It's in psychology. It's in schools. It's in organizations.

It's no longer a matter of achievement. It's no longer a matter of hard work. It's no longer a matter of diligence or integrity or character.

Well, it's okay if you broke the rules. It's okay if you tread all over people around you and leave cleat marks on the backs of your fellow students or your family members or whoever because you're pursuing your dream. This started back in the 60's.

This focus on a dream idea. Nothing against Dr. King and nothing against the nun that sang it in the Sound of Music, but it's not about dreams. It's about plans and purposes and goals that are given to us by God.

We are not here to follow our dreams. We're not here to have dreams. Well, I have a dream that I'm going to have a worldwide television ministry.

I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that. I have a dream that I... We are not our own. We are bought with a price.

If you start following your plan and your dream and your goal, you have taken what belongs to God, which is yourself, and you're using it for your own purposes. And it's wrong. This is the sin of Achan.

They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. Three times in one verse, it's righteousness. What is right? Righteousness has become one of those holy words that we almost don't think about anymore.

It is that which is right and proper and good. It's rightness. They, being ignorant of how right God is, how proper, how beneficial, how good God is, seeking to establish how right they are.

Isn't this what the world does today? It's self-vindication, self-justification, self-defense. It wasn't my fault. I have a problem.

I saw some video of a erstwhile faded TV star falling back into problems of substance abuse and then explaining away, well, the reason this video was made of me in my fallen from soberness state is I was intentional. I wanted to educate my family on how bad it is to relapse from your AA program and hopefully it will be a... It wasn't really my fault. He said it's a part of the recovery process to lapse.

What? It's a part of recovery to lapse? I thought recovery meant you don't lapse. You may lapse, and you can take responsibility for lapse. You can say, I screwed up.

I goofed. It was stupid. There is no excuse.

Or you can say, well, it's all part of the process. Everybody has to lapse. It's kind of like the five steps of grieving or something.

And as you're recovering, it's normal. I don't really have to take responsibility for that. It's a part of the process.

Abdication of responsibility is immature. If you're mature, you take responsibility for what you do. Being ignorant of God's rightness.

God is right on this. God has the best plan. God's purposes are perfect.

We have to acknowledge that. He knows more than we do. He's smarter than we are.

His plan is larger and grander. If Achan could have kept his eye on God's rightness in bringing the people of Israel in to purge the land of evil, to grant them the inheritance promised to their forefathers, if he could have kept his eye on God's rightness, he wouldn't have done something that felt right in his own eyes. He would not have sought to establish what he thought was right.

Well, I think it's right. I've been marching for seven days. I deserve a little bonus here.

God won't mind if I take a little something. Have not submitted. The fundamental problem with this whole thing is lack of submission.

What is the bane and the anathema in the world today? You can't be submissive. Submissive means inferior. Nobody should be submissive.

You know the way you get no submission? Communism. We're all the same. We all wear the same pajamas.

We all wear the same straw hat. We have all things in common. Nobody's above anybody.

Except, of course, the great big government. Have not submitted. To accomplish God's purpose, to receive God's benefits and God's inheritance, we have to submit.

What does the scripture say? Submit yourself under the mighty hand of God so that he can exalt you. God is right in this. If we submit, he exalts.

If we give him what is his due, he blesses us a hundredfold in abundance. Remember the thing in Malachi? I didn't keep reading, but he talks about if you give God what is his due, the tithe, he will open the windows of heaven and abundance will rain down. If you try to cling to that little, in the Old Testament, the ten percent, that which belongs to God rightfully, that's going to turn to ashes and you're going to lose everything God wants to

give.

It's completely counterintuitive. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. Over and over again in chapter 10, we hear the first part.

It's righteousness, righteousness, righteousness. What is right? What is proper? What is good? What is beneficial? What is the thing that makes sense? God's rightness. Don't try to establish your own rightness.

Don't fail to submit to the rightness of God. Christ is the end of the law. Now, with a view toward rightness, for rightness, Christ has been made unto us, first and foremost, what? Remember that list? He has been made unto us righteousness and peace, justification, wisdom. He has all of those things to us, but the first one on the list is righteousness.

Well, this is what's going on with Achan. And this is why the penalty is so severe. When you get back to this disgraceful act and Achan admits it, Joshua sent messengers and notice that there are certain sins even when you confess them, the judgment is not taken away.

It used to be, some of us have been associated with a mindset that said, well, you know, first John 1-9, you can basically go murder a room full of people and then confess it and all bets are off. The blood of Christ covers all sin. You're forgiven and cleansed and so on.

I would suggest to those people that they come read Joshua chapter 7. Achan acknowledged his sin. He confessed it publicly, public confession of sin. And the penalty was not removed.

Why? Because his heart was not right before God in the commission of the act, in the identification and determination of who performed this act and he had to be outed by the Urim and the Thummim. By the way, I was thinking more about the Urim and Thummim. They sometimes say that those words in Hebrew, starting with Aleph and starting with Tav, there is some thought or suggestion that Urim means lights and Thummim means perfections.

The lights and the perfections or some such thing. And in my mind, I've always thought, and this is a completely minor point, but I've always figured that if God was going to say yes, it would be two Alephs on the lots as they are cast. And if it's thumbs down, it would be two Tavs.

It would be two As if you're thumbs up and two Zs in the Hebrew Aleph bait if it's thumbs down. But if that assignment is correct, it would actually be the reverse. The two Alephs would come up and that's bad news.

You want the perfections, you want the completeness, you want the Tav to come up. You want tails, tails, not heads, heads, the cow's head. But it's doubly significant because if

you're identified as under the curse or as a double no there, what are you looking at? You're looking at those ancient glyphs for the Aleph, which is the sacrificial animal, the ox, the ox head is what you're looking at.

If it's negative, you're also looking at the remedy as those two Alephs come up. It's no accident that that shape, that letter shape is the primary sacrificial animal in Israel. And time for the cure, time for the remedy because all is not well.

At any rate, in verse 22 of Joshua chapter 7, So Joshua sent messengers and they ran to the tent and there it was hidden in his tent with the silver under it. This means he dug a hole and he put the 500 shekels of silver which is about 5 pounds of silver and the wedge of gold was about 50 shekels, so that's about a pound and a quarter. You can figure that out by the ounce and multiply times, I don't know what gold is now, five or six hundred dollars an ounce, but you can figure that's 20 ounces of gold times, let's just say it's 500 dollars to make the math easy, that's what, ten thousand dollars? Something like that? That's my math, right? Well, anyway, multiply it out.

He's got a little bit of gold, a little more silver, and this garment, probably wrapped the silver and the gold in the garment, carried it like a bag to get it back to his tent. And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel and laid them out before the Lord, restoring to the Lord, this is the lex talionis, you restore that which has been lost or taken. If an eye is taken, an eye is restored in that mindset.

Brought it before the Lord. Joshua, all Israel with him, took Achan, the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had and brought them to the valley of Achor. Achor and Achan both have come to me, we don't know necessarily what they originally meant, but they have come to mean destruction.

And Joshua said, why have you troubled us? If you read this in the new English translation, Achor, Achan and Achor, the R and the N are almost interchangeable. The Nun and the Resh are often interchanged. There are other words where this takes place.

But the word basically means trouble or disaster. And this is probably the name that it gained after this episode. But they took them to the valley of disaster, it says in the NET.

Why have you brought disaster on us? Why have you brought Achor on us? The Lord will Achor you this day. You have troubled us, the Lord will trouble you. You remember over in the New Testament, I believe it's in Peter, where he says, when God comes and he's going to recompense, and he will trouble those who have troubled you.

It's a New Testament reiteration of this same principle. Same thing we saw in Revelation chapter 18, by the way. When God says to his people, who are in Babylon, come out of

her, my people.

I'm going to recompense to her what she has done to you. So all Israel stoned him with stones, and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. They raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day.

And the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day. It's really interesting, by the way, that the word to this day occurs in the book of Joshua, I believe it's 12 times.

It's either 12 or 21. I think it's probably 12. There's two of them right here.

Still there to this day. Rahab dwells in Israel to this day. It tells you that the original versions of these stories were set down in writing within the living memory of people who witnessed them.

Now, back to what we reminded ourselves of at the beginning of the first session tonight. What happened when Israel crossed into the land? What was the first memorial for the new nation? It was a stack of stones, right? And what did it memorialize? When your children come and ask you what is this stack of stones, what will you tell them? This is the place when God delivered us in safety into the land of promise. This is the place.

And these were stacked up at the time. These stones came from the bottom of the river. We walked across dry shod.

It is a memorial to the faithfulness and the grace of God. It is a memorial to the fulfillment of God's promise. We walked across... You know how in business sometimes you walk in and you see a dollar bill in a frame on the wall? This is the first dollar my business ever earned.

You know, this is the first... When I was in Lebanon and I went and delivered howitzers to a Lebanese artillery battery. They were American M198, 155 millimeter howitzers. Great weapon for certain things.

We delivered them to them. We trained them on the use of them. I had five enlisted army guys who trained the gun crews.

I trained the officers in gunnery and how to get firing data, how to lay the batteries, make sure they are pointed in the right direction, make sure all the guns are shooting the same thing at the same time. We spent weeks and weeks training these guys. Finally it came time to actually fire these weapons.

And so a target was selected and data was computed and the quadrant elevation and deflection were set off and the powder was cut and the rounds were loaded and the breeches were closed and the lanyards were in the hand of the gunner and the chief of

smoke of the battery waved his hand and bang, off they went. And then they took the first primer from the first weapon and gave it to the battalion commander who had come out to witness the first rounds fired out of these new weapons. And it was mounted on a plaque and a great fuss was made over these great new weapons that they got.

And it was the first one. It's a memorial. It's a remembrance.

This is the beginning of a new thing. And believe me, it was the beginning of a new thing because those people could not hit the broad side of a barn with artillery when we got there. They were killing their own people.

They were blowing up their own neighborhoods. They had no idea where they were. Well, I could wax on about that.

But it was the first. It was a memorial. It was put on a plaque.

These stones out of the river. This is the first act of gracious provision that God has made for His people in the land. And it's a memorial.

What is the second memorial in the land of Canaan for the people of Israel? It is also a stack of stones. And it's not the one you think. It's the walls of Jericho.

The walls of Jericho are a giant pile of rocks. Giant pile of bricks. And it's a memorial to the grace of God.

In particular, who lived in those walls before they became a heap? Rahab. It's no accident. It's no happenstance that she dwelt inside those walls.

And the stack of those walls and her deliverance not being destroyed in their rubble and not being destroyed in the aftermath. It's a memorial to the grace and the faithfulness of God. The first memorial is a small 12 stone memorial for the nation of Israel.

One stone for each tribe. The second memorial is a huge pile of all kinds of rocks from a Gentile city memorializing the deliverance of a Gentile woman and her family. The third memorial is what? This heap of stones stacked over Achan and his family.

There to this day. Remember Joshua said... Remember the curse that he pronounced about Jericho that we saw at the end of the last chapter? The guy who tries to rebuild this will pay for it with his firstborn and his lastborn sons. And it's fulfilled later on.

Why would that curse be made? I ask myself. Was it made in any other towns? It didn't say that about Hazor or Ai or any of the rest of them. Why did Joshua specifically pronounce a curse on anybody who rebuilt Jericho? That's God's monument.

That stack of stones is supposed to stay a stack of stones. It's a monument. It's a remembrance.

It is the strongest fortress in Canaan. It is the initial fortress that God knocked down. Leave it there as a memorial.

Don't rebuild it. And the guy that did paid dearly because he undid what God didn't want undone. It's a memorial.

Achan's pile of stones is sort of a negative memorial. That pile of stones in the Valley of Achor still there to this day. Now, I don't like to jump ahead and steal my own thunder, but you know that in Joshua chapter 8, the army of Israel is going to go attack Ai and through a really brilliant stratagem, defeat the men of Ai and the men of Bethel.

You know this. You know these stories, right? Go to the end. Go to verse 27.

The livestock and the spoil of that city, Israel took as booty for themselves according to the word of the Lord, which he had commanded Joshua. They are obedient. They are faithful.

They are doing God's will. Look at verse 28. Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation to this day.

And the king of Ai, he hanged on a tree until evening, and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should do what? Take his corpse down from the tree, cast it at the entrance of the gate of the city, and raise over it a great heap of stones that remains to this day. These are memorials. Do not forget, there is a twofold mission when God's people move into the land of promise.

It is to receive the inheritance and receive the blessing, not that we take with our own hands, but that we receive from God. Remember Jesus. It dovetails so well with our study in John chapter 7. Jesus said, y'all are trying to get this bread from me.

You're trying to take me by force and make me king. The Son of Man has come here to give you a gift. And instead of receiving the gift, instead of recognizing the Son, you're trying to force the kingdom.

You're trying to grab it and take it yourself. It has never been the problem in Israel to try to seize by force what God wants to give by grace. To accomplish by works what God wants to accomplish through faith.

And we can make this mistake. There are now at the end of chapter 8 four memorials and they haven't even been in the land a month. The first two memorials are a memorial to grace.

The second two memorials are a reminder of both the good and the bad. Achan is pretty much all bad in the valley of Achor. But at Ai, you have both combined.

You have the destruction of the city, but anytime you mention Ai, you remember, well, it

took two tries. Had to get it on the second try after that failure. What's going to happen with Israel? When will they finally come in and take the land and be obedient? They're going to do it on the second try, aren't they? They basically fell with Achan when the Lord Jesus came and offered them the kingdom the first time.

And it's going to be the second time. There are two heaps of stones at Ai. One memorializing the proper destruction of the city not by supernatural means.

Israel destroys that city. Israel goes in and takes it at God's command. And then there's also a heap memorializing that the king of that evil city has been destroyed.

There are two memorials because it takes two tries to get Ai. It's going to take Israel two tries to get into the land of promise, to get into the millennial kingdom. We are the people who are supposed to get it right the first time.

We are the people who have been given the opportunity like Rahab to be grafted in to God's plan and purpose, to be a fruitful branch as that graft, to bear fruit, to be pruned so that we can bear more fruit, and to not let ourselves get in the way, to not make the mistake that Israel makes in trying to take by our own efforts that which God wants to give us if we will only have the faith and the patience and the obedience to qualify for it. Well, these are fruitful issues to meditate on, to find personal and individual application for. And we will stop at this point and cover the second attack, second battle of Ai next week.

But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the illumination that it provides to our path and within our souls.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will use these things to convict us, to equip us to be able to judge ourselves, and to rightly divide your word and make application of it so that our lives are pleasing in your sight and glorifying to the Lord Jesus. We ask it in his name. Amen.