

Acts 9:10

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[0 : 00] Now, we look at Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 10. Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 10. The writer here, as you realize, is speaking about the rites and ceremonies that were laid down in the Law of Moses.

And he says this about them. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings. External regulations applying unto the time of the new order.

Now, I expect that when a missionary is preaching in a congregation while he's in furlough, he's expected to say something about missionary work.

At the same time, he's also meant to give a proper sermon. And it really is rather difficult to do these two things well. And what I want to do is open up this passage in a normal way.

But at the same time, bring in references to the situation in South Africa. So that you can see how this might apply in those circumstances. And in that way, we hope that you'll both get a message from this passage and some sort of insight into the work that we're engaged in amongst the Xhosa people in Southern Africa.

[1 : 29] These are external regulations applying until the time of the new order. I want to ask four questions about these words.

And the first question is this. Why did the writer say this? What's he talking about here? What's the purpose of speaking in this way? Well, it's generally acknowledged that the writer is writing to Hebrews, that is to Jewish Christians.

They've been brought up in the Jewish faith. They're familiar with what we call the Old Testament. They're acquainted with a form of worship that was laid down in the Old Testament.

The men, at least amongst them, will have probably been to Jerusalem. They've offered animals there a sacrifice. They've seen the priest. They've seen the temple.

They've seen the whole rigmarole for themselves. And they were brought up to respect that and to love that way of worship. But now they've been brought to know Christ.

[2 : 37] And they've given up their past way of living. And they've taken on the new life that comes to them in Christ. And they've been very zealous Christians.

They've been persecuted for their faith. And they've withstood that persecution. And they've been very supportive of one another. They seem to have been outstanding Christians. But now something seems to have happened to shake their allegiance to Christ.

They seem to be in doubt. And they seem to be in danger of abandoning their faith in Christ. And going back to their old way of doing things.

And the writer is writing to them to tell them, Don't go back. Remain firm in your faith. Don't abandon what you've got in favour of what you used to have.

And he pursues this purpose by taking things out of the Old Testament and showing that Christ is far, far better.

[3 : 42] He says, for example, in the opening verses, You used to get revelation from God by dreams and visions and things like that. And occasionally, from time to time, the prophets would speak because they had God's word to them in that form.

But now, in Christ, the Son has come. The very image of God has been amongst you. Surely, surely, that's a better revelation than ever you had before.

Christ is superior to the prophets. And so he goes on. Christ is superior to the angels, which had some role in the Old Testament. Christ is superior to Moses, the greatest, probably, of all the leaders of the people of God in the Old Testament times.

Christ is greater than Moses, he argues. Christ is greater than Joshua. Christ is greater than Aaron, the great priest. And that's a particular point that the writer develops.

Christ is the best priest that there is, the great high priest that fulfills all that was spoken of in the Old Testament and brings it to a completion. You can't get anyone better than Christ.

[4 : 54] And that really is what he is arguing in this passage. He is saying, look at these rites and ceremonies connected with the priesthood and connected with Old Testament worship. What is their status?

They were just outward regulations applying until the time of the new order. Christ is better than that. He is superior. You can't get anyone better than him.

So don't think of going back. Because if you go back, you're abandoning Christ, who is better than anything you could ever imagine. That's why he's speaking in this way.

Now this is suitable for us all. It was suitable for them because of their circumstances. It's suitable for us as well. When we become Christians, everything usually is pretty good for a while.

But it often comes in that we begin to be less developed, to be less enthusiastic about our faith. And our devotion slacks.

[5 : 55] And even if it's only inwardly and not outwardly, there's a danger of going back to the old way of life. And some people feel this very, very strongly. The pull to the old way of life.

And we've got to say to all of us, look, what a stupid thing to do. Because now that you've got Christ, you've got the one that's better than anything. If you go back to your old way of life, you're going back to something that's second rate.

Because there's no one better than Christ. And that's a message, therefore, appropriate for all of us who are the Lord's people today. And for others who aren't as well.

There's no one better than Christ. Now, I would like to suggest that this is the sort of message that we feel particularly relevant amongst the Cosa people amongst whom we work in Southern Africa. And that, I say, for two reasons. Firstly, of course, many of them have become Christians from a normal Christian background. But some of them have become Christians from the background of African traditional religion.

[7 : 05] And all of them are surrounded by practices that are traditional. And some of them are really what we would call pagan and unbiblical.

And yet, they're very attractive. And people will think, why can't we be cautious like we always have been and do what our fathers used to do and keep up the old traditions?

And there's always this pull away from Christ towards the Old Testament, towards their old practices that they were brought up in. And that's something very, very strong.

Because there are people that love traditions and think of themselves as one with their ancestors. And there's a very strong, strong pull back to the old way of life.

And a passage like this is of first importance. Don't go back. What you've got is far, far better than anything that you ever gave up. And there's another reason why this is, I think, quite important and useful for working amongst the cross of people.

[8 : 11] It seems to me that an awful lot of what goes on in the Old Testament, or went on in the Old Testament, finds a parallel with traditional practices amongst the cross of people.

For example, even their traditional way of life. You know, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They looked after animals, their herds and their flocks.

They hardly ever planted crops, because the animal husbandry was their job. And for that reason, they were semi-pneumatic. If there wasn't enough pasture, they'd just move on to another place where there was pasture.

And they worked in that sort of climate where that was necessary. And that's just what I think the cross of people used to be like before the white settlers came and took their country away from them.

So, that's the sort of style that they used to have. They still are fond of animal husbandry. They don't bother over much with crops and even their gardens. They tend to neglect that everybody must have animals.

[9 : 12] And in the old way of life, I think, the cross of people used to move around quite a bit. If there was no pasture, they just moved on to somewhere else where there was pasture. And it seems to me that they click, you know, they click with the stories of the patriarchs in the Old Testament.

And they say, that's the sort of people we are. And not only that, but in many of their practices, it's much the same thing. For example, the circumcision in the Old Testament.

Well, circumcision is a big thing amongst the cross of people. It's done in a different way for different reasons. But nonetheless, it's a big thing. So much so that an elder said, circumcision is from God.

And he was talking about cross of circumcision when he said that. It's from God, he says. Because they found it in the Old Testament as well, you see. And not only that, but there's all sorts of washings that they might have to go to cleanse themselves outwardly, you know, for their spiritual well-being.

If they've been at the cemetery, traditionally they've got to wash to get cleansed from contamination, just like many of the washings in the Old Testament.

[10 : 21] They don't like the flesh of pig, just like there is in the Old Testament. They don't eat blood, just like there is in the Old Testament. And there's polygamy in traditional cross of society, just like we find in the Old Testament.

And it seems to me there's a very, very close bond between the traditional practices of the Xhosa people, and no doubt of other African peoples as well, maybe, and what we find in the Old Testament.

And this comes to a climax, probably in the sacrifice of animals. If something goes wrong, it's the ancestors that are unhappy, and the way to please the ancestors is to kill a goat in their honour. So a traditional Xhosa practice, which is still very prevalent amongst Christians and those that aren't Christians, is to sacrifice animals. A goat or a cow, perhaps, in honour of the ancestors. But it rings a bell with them, because here they find it also, in the Old Testament, the sacrifice of animals. Now, that's what makes me think, you see, that the Xhosa people identify very much with the Old Testament, and they feel at home in the Old Testament, and they would probably support some of their practices, because they find them in the Old Testament.

[11 : 38] No. So, you see what I'm getting at. It's very important, therefore, that we say, well, what is the status of Old Testament worship? What does the Bible say about these rites and ceremonies?

And that's why this verse is so important, because this tells us what God's perspective on these things is. And therefore, that's why this sort of passage is very, very important, because it says to us, don't go back.

You can't find anyone better than Christ. But it says to the Xhosa people, don't go back to your old traditions. They may be very like the old traditions of the Old Testament, but this passage is saying that something better has come than these traditions of the Old Testament.

Don't go back to that, therefore, because something better is here. That's why this verse is in the Bible. That's the purpose of the writer in giving us this instruction. And that's our first question answered then.

Why did he say this? To warn us that there's nothing better than Christ. The second question is, what does he say here? And he says three things here.

[12 : 48] He says that Old Testament religion, the rites and ceremonies given in the time of Moses and practiced for centuries. Old Testament religion was a matter of rules and regulations.

Old Testament religion was based on material and physical things. And Old Testament religion was designed to be temporary. These are the three things that he says here.

Let's just develop these a wee bit. Old Testament religion was a matter of rules and regulations. External regulations.

It's like these government directives that come to us about access to buildings, about child protection.

I presume they come in considerable detail. Or what the charity commissioners ask us to do. Or what Oscar is asking us to do now. It seems to me that they come in rather detailed form.

[13 : 56] And there's a whole list of things you have to do and things you can't do. That's the sort of thing I mean by regulations. And that's the sort of thing we've got in the Old Testament. If you know your Old Testament well, you'll understand this.

And if you don't, well, this is the sort of thing that happened. Everything was laid down in detail. On such and such a day, this had to happen. And the priest would dress himself in this way and put on everything that was required.

And then he'd go to that place and he'd do something. And then he'd move over here and he'd do something else. And then he'd move back and do something again. And it was all laid down in

detail.

Rules and regulations that had to be followed. And it came to be indeed that much of the Old Testament in general, quite apart from the worship aspect, was thought of in these sort of terms. Rules and regulations that had to be obeyed. So, I think you can see therefore what the writer is saying here. Firstly, he is saying the Old Testament majored on rules and regulations.

[15:03] The second thing that he says is the Old Testament majored, the way of worship in particular, majored on outward things. Outward regulations.

External regulations. Carnal ordinances is the old version of the Bible that some people still use, tells us. And that's obviously true as well.

He's talking about matters of food and drink and washings. Washings. If you could eat that food or not eat that food, that's the sort of thing that Old Testament worship was taken up with to a large extent.

If you could drink that or not drink that. And then again, washings. If you touch the dead body, you had to wash. If you had some bleeding, you had to wash.

If you had certain diseases, you had to wash. Washing, washing, washing. Washing of the body. That was the thing that mattered. Outward things. And this passage here emphasizes that.

[16:03] These things were outward. They refer to the body. Not inward and spiritual, but outward and physical. And if you think about it, you see, the whole of the Old Testament worship was that sort of thing.

It was largely based on what was outward and physical. The priests, for example. Who were the priests? They were the descendants of a certain tribe.

It was their physical genealogy that qualified them to be priests. It was outward. The regulations of the priesthood. Outward.

If they had hunchback, for example, or other physical deformities, they couldn't be priests. It was all a matter of the shape of the body or the quality of bodily life.

It was outward and physical. And they dressed up in outward things that were meant to create an impression of beauty and of glory. And they dressed up in fancy clothes that would make people say, Oh, aren't these priests outstanding?

[17:05] The way they look, it really makes, it's very impressive and it moves me, the splendor of this occasion. It's outward. It's physical. And they had a building, the temple, where they worshipped.

And it was a beautiful building with gold and engravings and so on and so on. It was all outward. And there was incense that appealed to the sense of smell.

And there was musical instruments that appealed to the sense of hearing. Just as there were these beautiful garments that were mentioned in the beautiful building that also appealed to the sense of sight.

It was sensual in the sense that it appealed to the senses. It was outward. It was physical. It was carnal, if you like to use that word. And so it was in regard to the sacrifices.

Animal sacrifices. That was the thing that mattered. So, when the writer says here, these were outward, external regulations, if we know our Old Testament probably say, yeah, that's just the way it was.

[18:10] Everything there was outward. So that's the second thing he says. It consisted of rules and regulations and it consisted of rules and regulations that referred to outward things.

The third thing he says here is that it was only temporary. New, sorry, external regulations applying until the time of the new order. Applying until the time of the new order.

The writer is saying, look, God ordained these, so they were good, but only for that time. There was nothing wrong with them because they were in the purpose of God, but they weren't designed to be permanent.

God had introduced these things for the circumstances of that time, but they weren't designed to remain forever. There was going to be a new order coming and the implication is that in this new order, things will be the very opposite of what they were in the old order.

So, these things were not designed to be permanent. Now, that's a difficult idea for some people to take in because, after all, it was God that made these things.

[19:21] God set up that worship. How come it wasn't permanent? Well, that was his way of dealing with people in those days. And this writer speaks in terms of a shadow and a reality.

Which is better, the shadow of something or the real thing? And, of course, the real thing is the real thing. The shadow is just imperfect and relatively obscure.

That's the way it was in the Old Testament. It was just a shadow. In the New Testament, we've got the reality. Now, this to me is a very, very important idea that we need to get across here and also in South Africa.

These things that the Kosa people feel so at home in, they were only designed to be temporary. They weren't meant to be lasting. And we've got to try and get that across.

And there's two illustrations that I use and I'll just tell you what they are. Under the old apartheid regime, in general, the country districts where the black people lived were not well supplied with services.

[20 : 27] And, for example, most country villages did not have electric light. and now part of the new policy of the new government is to bring electricity to all the villages.

So, people are putting away their candles because now they've got electric light in their houses. And that's the illustration that I use when I can. I say, look, when you get electric light, you don't bother with candles.

You see, the electric light is better. The candles belong to a bygone age. The full light is here. Why bother with the candles? And I say, well, that's what it is like in the Old Testament.

The candles were fine for a time. That's what we've got in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament, the electric light is here. So, something better has arrived. Why would you go back to the Old? Another illustration I use is this.

There is a very important time in a person's life, in a male person's life, is when they become men. And traditionally, there's various ceremonies connected with that.

[21 : 36] But in the late teens, the men will go through these initiation ceremonies, which involve circumcision and other things as well, and so on. And they go out from their villages and live out in the bush, out in the open countryside, for a few weeks, and do their things, and then they come back.

And it's a new life they come back to. They go out as boys, and they go through these ceremonies, and they come back as men. And it's a very, very big thing in life, because it's a complete change. You give up your old way of life, which was childish and boyish, and you adopt a new way of life, which is now as a man. And if you call a man, if you call him a boy, as most white people actually do speak about their gardening boy, it's a terrible, terrible insult, because they've put their boyhood behind them, and now they're men.

Well, now, against that background, I say this, look, in the Old Testament, it's like as if the people were just boys. They were just beginning to learn things, little by little, like children have to learn at school.

But in the New Testament, it's like as if they've become men. You don't do what you did when you were a boy, now that you're a man. You leave that behind you, because that was okay when you were a boy, but it's inappropriate now that you're a man.

[22 : 59] And that's what it was like in the Old Testament. It's as if they were in their boyhood. And now in Christ you have come to manhood. So why go back to the past, when you've arrived at this new stage in your experience?

It's like a man behaving as if he was a boy. You don't do it. It's something absolutely revolting to you. So that's the way that it was in the Old Testament as well. These things in the Old Testament were designed for people when they were in their spiritual boyhood.

But now in Christ they've come to manhood. So don't go back to these old things. And that's how we can try and put over this message that these things were only temporary.

temporary. They weren't designed to be permanent. So what is he saying here? He's saying the Old Testament religion consisted of regulations that referred to outward things and that were only designed to be temporary.

The next question that we want to ask is what does he mean by speaking in this way? And I think you can see that he's clearly implying that a new order has come in which things are done in the very opposite way from which they used to be done.

[24 : 18] He's saying look, these things were only in force until the time of the new order. And his old way of thinking is this, the new order is here.

Christ has come and he's brought a new way of doing things into being. And that's the first thing that he's meaning by speaking in this way.

He's saying the time of the new order is with us now in Christ. We have come to a new level, a new way of thinking, a new way of doing things because Christ has brought this new order into being. And Christ himself spoke in exactly the same way. remember John 4, if you know your Bibles, Jesus met with a Samaritan woman.

And the Samaritans were sort of half Jewish only and they worshipped in a wee bit different way from the Jews and were very proud of it. And there was different tension between Jews and Samaritans. And the Samaritan woman says to Jesus, where's the proper place to worship? [25 : 23] Is it in this mountain where we worship or is it in the mountain that Jerusalem where you people have your temple? And so she's asking a question about the right place to worship.

And Jesus says, the time is coming and now is. For neither in this mountain, Jerusalem, nor in Jerusalem will people worship.

Their worship in spirit and in truth. Jesus is saying, a new order is coming and it's now here. And it's not based upon where you worship or buildings that you erect or anything like that.

It's based upon spiritual things. Why is it based upon spiritual things? Because God is spirit. He doesn't have a body. He doesn't dress up in fancy garb.

He doesn't have a nose to smell things and ear to hear things. Not literally anyway, he doesn't. God is spirit. So we worship in accordance with the sort of God that we are worshipping.

[26 : 28] And therefore God seeks people to worship him in spirit and in truth. And that's just what the writer is meaning here. There's a new order that has arrived in which things are done in a substantially different way from what they were in the Old Testament.

Now what does he mean by this? Well he means that it isn't now a matter of rules and regulations. It isn't a matter of do this, do this, do this, do this.

As if by fulfilling a list of do's and don'ts, you could be a Christian. Worship in the New Testament isn't like that. We're not told anything about an order of service or you must stand there and then you must go there and you must do this and you must do that.

Laid down like a government paper with rules and regulations that needed to be followed. We don't have that in the New Testament because things aren't like that.

They're big general principles, not rules and regulations that you follow. Now many people are mistaken on this point. They think that if they dress up in their best clothes and come to church and sit in their familiar pew that their family sat in for years and if they go through the routine and they open their Bibles and sing when they're meant to sing and go through it all, it's a sort of ritual that they follow.

[27 : 54] And some people are so mistaken as to think that that's true Christianity and they make it a matter of rules and regulations and think that in that way they become Christians. Not at all.

It's not a matter of rules and regulations. And even Christians who are genuine Christians sometimes think that Christian behavior is like that. And they make up rules and regulations down to the last detail and they think that strict subscription to all these rules is what God requires of them.

And it seems to me that they've neglected the thing that matters most. It's broad spiritual principles that are of importance and not detailed legalistic like dealings that are important in the Christian life. There's a new way of doing things that isn't based upon rules and regulations. And why is it like that? Because it's not outward any longer. It's inward.

And this is the big thing that you see. Nowadays we're not interested in washing the body. We're interested in washing people inwardly from their sin. We're not interested whether a priest has got a hunchback or some deformity or not.

[29 : 07] We're interested in seeing that God's priests are holy. It's got nothing to do with what is outward and physical. And it isn't a matter therefore of what you eat or what you don't eat or what you wear or what you don't wear or how you wash your body.

It's got nothing to do with things like that. Because the new order is something that is inward and spiritual rather than outward and physical.

And that is the great thing that the writer is meaning here when he speaks these words. Now, this is so important. but just look at it.

Everything that was outward and physical in the Old Testament is superseded and fulfilled in what is inward and spiritual in the New Testament.

Everything that is outward becomes inward. Everything that is physical becomes spiritual. Who are the priests? priests. Not people that have got bodily qualifications descended from the right person or perfect in bodily form.

[30 : 13] Not them at all. The priest of God is the one that's in the right relationship with God through Jesus Christ. He's able to go through Christ into the presence of God.

He's able to go there himself. And therefore, everyone that is resting upon Christ because of that spiritual qualification is a priest. And what does he wear?

Not some fancy garb which makes people gasp and say, oh, isn't he beautiful? What does the priest of God wear? He wears holiness. Let your priest be clothed with salvation.

Let your priest be clothed with righteousness. In the beauty of holiness, we minister before God. It's inward and spiritual, not outward and physical.

And where's the temple now? It's no building, although we may well use buildings, but they're never the house of God because it's the people that are the house of God. We are the temple of God when we've got the Spirit of God in us.

[31 : 11] It's not a building of granite, beautiful though it be. It's a person whose life has been transformed by the Spirit of God, in whom the Spirit of God is living and working.

That's what makes us to be stones in the true temple of God. And it's a spiritual house that is being built up, not a physical one. And where's the incense now? It's the prayers of God's people.

And where are the musical instruments? It's the heart that is right with God and that sings spontaneously with joy, motivated by the Spirit's work. That's the instrument that we use nowadays, not hearts and liars and whatever else you have in the Old Testament.

And that's the way it is right across the board. What is outward and physical is replaced by what is inward and spiritual. And this comes to its climax, of course, in regard to the matter of sacrifice.

What do we offer? Not bulls and goats any longer, because Christ has offered himself once and for all. And that's the great sacrifice to which we look.

[32 : 18] and when we look to him and rest upon him and trust in him for forgiveness, then what sacrifices do we present to God? A humble and a contrite heart.

That's the sacrifice that God is pleased with. The fruit of our lips, the praise that comes from our heart, that is the sacrifice that we offer. Something spiritual, not physical, not mediated into physical things.

It's altogether spiritual, because Christ has come, and brought this new order into being. That's the sort of thing that the writer is saying here, therefore.

He's saying to them, look, you're familiar, you were brought up in it, where everything was based upon physical things, and it was a matter of keeping a long list of rules and regulations, but that was just temporary.

Now the real thing has arrived. The candles have to be put away, because the light is here. The boyhood is to be put behind you, because manhood is here. Christ has come, and brought all that to its fruition, and made everything spiritual realities, and inner change in our hearts by the power of the Spirit, as we rest upon Christ, and a new life that is lived by the power of the Spirit, worshipping God in spirit and in truth, and following the leadings of the Spirit through the Word, as he directs us from day to day.

[33 : 40] That's the life that we've got now. That's the worship that we've got now. That's the style that is appropriate in this new age, into which we've been introduced by Christ themselves.

Which is better? It's obvious which is better. Bulls and goats, what does that seem like compared to the blood of Christ?

What is incense compared to the prayers of God's people? What are lifeless musical instruments compared to a heart that is transformed by the power of God's Spirit? What are beautiful clothes compared to the holiness of a person's life?

These outward and physical things. They're second rate. The real thing has come in Christ. That's what he's saying here. So, the last question is, how does this fit in with its purpose?

And you can see right away, how can these people possibly go back to the old way of life once this thing has been taught to them? You know, how could this fail to reach their hearts and to stir their conscience?

[34 : 41] Who wants to go back to that? Rules and regulations, the slavery of it all, and the emptiness and the outwardness of it all? Who wants to go back to that? When there is Christ offering a new life through the power of the Spirit in a new dimension of living.

Which is better? There's no doubt at all which is better. And therefore he says to them, don't think of going back, because that's going back indeed to something that was good for its time, but is really only second rate, because Christ is the perfect one who has introduced a new way of doing things entirely.

Keep your eyes fixed upon Christ and maintain your loyalty to him, because there is no one, there is nothing that measures up to the standard of Christ.

And that's what he says, well, to ourselves too well, we'll miss that in a moment. That's what he says to the cross of people as well. Well, we take this and we say, look, what's the point of keeping on sacrificing goats to your ancestors if Christ has died once and for all?

That's empty and meaningless in comparison to this. What's the significance of washing your body to be freed from contamination or not eating certain foods at certain times or whatever, compared to what you've got in Christ?

[36 : 04] That's like using candles when the electricity is here. It's like continuing your boyhood now that you're men. So we say, don't think of going back. You've broken your connection with aspects of your traditional practices because you thought they were contradictory to the Christian faith.

So keep going in that path because Christ is better than anyone. These things that are your culture that are so similar to the Old Testament, they're being surpassed by something greater.

So don't think of going back to that. Keep your trust in Christ. So as a result of this, remember the cause of people and the struggles that they have and remember the missionaries and their own teachers who try and teach this truth.

And in your prayers, remember these things and you'll be able to appreciate better something at least of the sort of situation in which we live and minister. But the real question is, what does he say to us today?

And of course he's saying exactly the same thing as he's saying to everybody else. There is no one better than Christ. If you have expressed loyalty to him, if you have come to him, then don't think for a moment of going back because that would be a backward step indeed.

[37 : 22] Keep your faith firm because there really is just no one, no one that is like Christ. He is better than anything that could be imagined and don't let your devotion to him waver in any way.

That's what he says to us all. And we've got to think in our own lives what that means in practice. I don't know what it means for you. We've got to think that out for yourselves. What does this mean in practice for you?

How has your devotion been slackening? How has your allegiance to Christ been diminished?

We've got to repent of that and turn from it and say, no, from this time on I'm going to remain firm in my faith because there is no one like Christ.

And if there's anybody here that doesn't yet know Christ and you're seeking perhaps for something, this passage tells us this wonderful thing. You might seek lots of ways to find what it ever is you're looking for.

But I'm sure of one thing, that you won't find anything better than what you have in Christ. That whatever religion you look at or philosophy of life or traditional practices you look to, I'm certain of this, that when you really look at Christ you discover there is no one that can meet my need like him.

[38 : 37] There is no one that can do what I need to have done to me but him because there's no one so perfect as Christ is. So come to him and rest upon him and give your life to him.

Seek forgiveness and ask that this new life would be yours and that from this point on you would live in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. There is no one like Christ.

May God bless to us his own word. Let us pray. We thank you Lord for these words that we have been thinking about and for the message that they bring to us which isn't always easy to grasp fully but yet is so important for our understanding of the scriptures and of our outlook in general and which also is of such importance for us in our individual experience and we pray that if there are things difficult here that folks do not immediately understand they may be able to wrestle with this and come to a fuller appreciation of the truth but we pray that all of us may be able to grasp

immediately the central point that there is no one like Christ and we pray that you would teach us this and impress it upon our hearts in such a way that we will give ourselves without reserve to him. Throughout this your own day we pray that throughout it we might be aware of your presence and that we may give ourselves to you more and more and enjoy the rich blessings that this special day brings to us.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.