

# Matthew 26:1-35

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Matthew 26. Before we get started on it, I just want to review a comment from last week.
- ! Denise last week made a really useful comment that made me aware that we need further clarity on these end time judgments as to where they fit and what the chronology of them is.
- And what do they mean to us, if anything? And so on. So I've decided that in the new year I will do a more fulsome study on that topic. Because what I realized when I had a closer look at it is that everybody out there is confused about it.
- You get so many, many different views as to what happens when, what comes first. Is one also part of the other? Are they conflated in some way? It's just a mess. And God didn't give us a mess.
- Yes. So I'm going to set aside a Sunday to actually study that so that we are, we're either all identically confused or we all have identical clarity.
- [ 1 : 0 6 ]     But clarity is what we seek. I always said that when I find things that are either wrong or just unclear, we would always address it. And it's in keeping with that promise that I wish to do so.
- There do appear to be three judgments, the beamer seat judgment, the sheep and goats judgment, and the great white throne judgment. But commentators and scholars are confused about, are they all separate?
- What order do they happen in? Are some of them mixed up with the others? And so on. I'm not going to go deeply into it now because it just wouldn't do it justice.
- But the one thing I am sure of, the principle that we discussed in the sheep and the goats judgment applies to all Christians. You're either a sheep or you're a goat. If you're saved, you're a sheep.
- And so the benefits and the blessings of that will either come to you as soon as you're raptured, or it'll come to you at the end of time if you're saved during the tribulation. But we all basically finish up in the same place with the same blessing, I believe.
- [ 2 : 1 6 ]     And in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 10, we read, and it was written to Christians, that all of us will stand before the judgment seat to receive recompense for what we've done, both good and bad.
- But that judgment seat was not the judgment, the great white throne judgment against sin. It was the beamer seat. And the beamer seat traditionally was a raised platform upon which you would invite the winner of a sports event, or you'd sometimes invite somebody who was going to be part of local government or council, or sometimes you would invite someone to give an account of themselves to the local people.
- Paul preached from, it's believed, the beamer seat when he preached in Ephesus, for example. So it's clear that this judgment seat does not jeopardize anyone's salvation.
- And I just wanted that to be crystal clear. We're not facing the judgment seat to be castigated for our sins. We're going before God to be congratulated for what we've done or potentially disappointed for what we didn't do.

But it's not a matter of saved or unsaved. It's a matter of the level of reward that one gets for one's conduct. And I thought I needed to clarify that before we move on.

[ 3 : 50 ] Simply put, sheep love God's body and goats do not. And I hope if there was any lack of clarity last week, certainly there was for me because I had to go away and study it again.

And that led me to thinking, I need to do a session on this. So there we go. Having studied to the end of chapter 25, we've completed our consideration of the Olivet Discourse.

Chapters 24 and 25 are known as the Olivet Discourse. And this discourse has told Jewish disciples what to expect in their future history, much of which we are currently living through.

We see what's happening to the Jews of today and is very much in keeping with what was promised during the Olivet Discourse. And we've read through some parables exhorting those who await Jesus' second coming to be expectant, to be faithful, to be ready.

And then towards the end of chapter 25, Jesus speaks at some length about the time of judgment that will come. A time when people will be divided, like a shepherd would divide a flock into sheep and goats.

[ 4 : 56 ] And clearly, the sheep are analogous with those who were saved and the goats are analogous with those who are not. One bound for heaven and eternal life, one bound to hell to eternal punishment.

Very stark. And all of this discourse, from the beginning of chapter 24 right to the end of 25, was to prepare the world for his departure from it and second coming to it.

And so as we begin chapter 26, what we see is Jesus' final preparations for his death. That's what it begins with. And if we turn there, Matthew 26, the very first verse tells us, when Jesus had finished all these words, so that's the Olivet Discourse, when he'd finished that, when he had finished all of these words, he said to his disciples.

So we know that what we're about to read follows on chronologically directly after the Olivet Discourse was given. And I say that and make a point of that because in a minute we actually divert.

And it's almost like there's a little bit of the passage that's in parentheses where it reverts back and talks about previous things. But the thrust of the thing is to continue from the Olivet Discourse.

[ 6 : 13 ] When Jesus had finished all these words, he said to his disciples, Now this is where we go back in time to about six days or four or five days.

Now when Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at the table.

But the disciples were indignant when they saw this and said, Why this waste? For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor.

But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.

For when she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.

[ 7 : 36 ] And here we are, two and a half thousand years still speaking of it. Then one of the twelve named Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests and said, What are you willing to give me to betray him to you?

And they weighed out 30 pieces of silver to him. From then on, he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus. Now on the first day of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, Where do you want her to prepare for you to eat the Passover?

And he said, Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, The teacher says my time is near. I am to keep the Passover at your house with my disciples. The disciples did as Jesus had directed them and they prepared the Passover.

Now when the evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with twelve disciples. As they were eating, he said, Truly I say to you that one of you will betray me.

Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to him, Surely not I, Lord? And he answered, He who dipped his hand with me in the bowl is the one who will betray me.

[ 8 : 46 ] The Son of Man is to go just as it is written of him. But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.

And Judas, who was betraying him, said, Surely not I, Rabbi? Jesus said to him, You have said it yourself. While they were eating, Jesus took some bread.

And after a blessing, he broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat, this is my body. And when he had taken a cup and given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Then Jesus said to them, You will all fall away from me this night. For it is written, I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.

[ 9 : 49 ] But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee. But Peter said to him, Even though all may fall away because of you, I will never fall away.

And Jesus said to him, Truly I say to you, that this very night before a rooster crows, you will deny me three times. And Peter said to him, Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you.

All the disciples said the same thing too. A large chunk of scripture, and what I've decided is, we'll do it. And if we think at the end of it, I haven't been thorough, we'll do it again when I come back.

It's just that there's a lot to cover, but there's so much narrative there, and I didn't want to break it up too much. So what he first says to them is, in verse 2, You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be handed over for crucifixion.

So the first and interesting point is, according to Jesus, they knew. Now he had told them previously, he'd said, I'm going to die, I'm going to be crucified, I'm going to be taken away.

[ 10 : 55 ] And he'd even said, these religious people are the ones that were going to do it. So he's reminding them of something they already know. And in John's Gospel, I'm not going to turn there because it's too big a diversion, but one of the things he says in John's Gospel is, you're sad because I'm going away, but I will be back.

And there's this sense of which, this is something that is in the Word of God, it has to happen, and instead of being sad about it, you should be rejoicing about it. In the book of Hebrews, we read, it was for the joy that was set before him, that he endured the cross.

And you think, crucifixion was so barbaric, how can anybody have joy over that? Well, we are the reason that he had joy over that, because he knew that that would save us.

So he was making the point to them that they should be pleased about this. But then verse three, the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest named Caiaphas.

And they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill him. But they were saying, not during the festival, otherwise a riot might occur among the people.

[ 12 : 10 ] It's really interesting that it was essential that he died publicly and at Passover. The dignitaries, the religious people were saying, not during the festival.

And yet all the time, God's plan was it would be right during the festival. It had to be during the festival. This was to be a public death, where in his complete innocence, he died for the sins of the whole of mankind.

It would not have been appropriate for it to be a hidden thing. But these religious people were afraid of spoiling their reputation by doing it at the wrong time.

And so they plotted to seize him by stealth. And in the end, they finished up seizing him at the very time they said they didn't want to and crucifying him at the very time they said they didn't want to.

But they didn't let that get in the way. I would encourage you to read John chapter 13 and John chapter 14, because this records more of Jesus's explanations at that time, his explanations of how the thing was going to unfold.

[ 13 : 24 ] In fact, if we turn to John 13, what you see, and I'm going to skip through it, you can see that we're at the same event, really.

Now, before the feast of Passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour had come, that he would depart out of this world to the father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

So we're at the same event with John's take on it rather than Matthew's. And what you then have, I'm skipped down to verse five. He washes the disciples feet.

And he does this with opposition from Peter. So verse seven, what I do, what I do, you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter.

And Peter said to him, never shall you wash my feet. And Jesus answered him, if I don't wash you, you have no part with me. And then Peter said, Simon Peter said to him, Lord, then wash not only by feet, but also my hands and my head.

[ 14 : 25 ] So to your Peter, he doesn't really get it. Does he? Jesus said to him, he who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean.

And you are clean, but not all of you. You see, there's a, he was setting them an example of servitude and of how they should put themselves last and put others first.

Um, and he did it. And when you think that he did this on the eve of his own death, his mind wasn't on his own death, particularly.

It wasn't, I won't say it was no big thing because it obviously was a big thing, but it's, he wasn't at the moment because of all that's going on in my family, I'm distracted. Jesus wasn't distracted at all.

He wanted them to get this message before he went to be with the father. Um, and for some reason, I mean, if we, if we just skim on through it, uh, he washed the disciples feet.

[ 15 : 31 ] He refers to Judas verse 18. I do not think of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen, but it is that the scripture may be fulfilled.

He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me. And so he's, uh, he's expecting this betrayal. Um, in verse 21, Jesus, uh, when Jesus has said, said this, he became troubled in spirit and testified and said, truly, I say to you that one of you will betray me.

That word betray. It's the same word. You know, when you read Romans one and it says, um, um, that people who indulge in persistent sin will be given over.

The Greek word is paradidomi. The same word is used here. They're going to give me over. And it suggests not just an offhand thing, but a permanent change of relationship.

I will be given over. In other words, there is no way back. Once paradidomi has happened, there is no way back. And which is why the, the, the verses in Romans are so compelling because it makes you realize there are people who've been given over to their sin and the results of their own sin in a way that there is no way back.

[ 16 : 53 ] It's a, it's a sobering thought, but Matthew just presents a small part of all this account. When he says, you know, the Passover is coming in two days and I will be handed over for crucifixion.

And we know from previous readings that the disciples are a bit confused. In fact, we read of, uh, them saying, what does he mean that he'll die?

And what does he mean that he'll rise again? And, you know, surely, yeah, he'll, he'll rise again in the resurrection, which is the general resurrection that is for all mankind. But the idea of Jesus having a resurrection from the dead of his own was foreign to them.

They, they were confused by it. And so he did say, you don't understand it now, but afterwards you will. So we've got this thickening plot to kill Jesus actively, but ignorantly trying to avoid crucifying him at past, Passover to avoid a riot.

They were going to steal him away and kill him. Uh, but his death was always going to be public. The whole point of Passover is that it is and was a prophetic feast.

[ 18 : 01 ] It spoke of the sacrifice of the lamb of God. So to fulfill the prophecy embodied in the feast and to fulfill the word of God and to qualify as the sacrifice that would pay for the sins of the whole world.

It had to take place at Passover. Uh, it, the Passover feast, and we're going to do the feasts in the future. Uh, but the Passover feast was backward looking.

It looked at when God had delivered them from Egypt. After the lamb had been slain and the blood put on the door, lintel and posts to protect those houses.

And I use this vernacular just to make it meaningful to protect the houses of the saved. Uh, the ones who had obeyed and put the blood on their doors were saved.

And so it looked backwards at that event, but it also looked forward to this event. When the shed blood of Jesus would deliver us from the power of sin.

[ 19 : 07 ] And God has this habit. You may have noticed in scripture of telling his enemy, Satan, what he's going to do and when he's going to do it. And Satan is powerless to prevent it.

And as a military leader, that must be amazing to be able to say to your enemies, I'm going to do this. And you can't do a thing about it. Uh, it's not in the world's eyes, good military strategy to let your enemy know what you're going to do.

And you can only do it if you are all powerful. So then we move on to, um, back to Matthew. So we've then got this meeting at the house of Simon, the leper.

Uh, when Jesus was in Bethany, this is verse six, when Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster vial, a very costly perfume, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at the table.

But the disciples were indignant when they saw this. And they said, why this waste for this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor. This is really interesting because when you read this in John's gospel, I think it's John's account that says it was Judas that stirred up this feeling of what a waste, what a waste we could give this money to the poor.

[ 20 : 32 ] And it's also John's gospel that reveals that G that Judas was thieving from the coffers. So he wanted more money in the coffers because then there'd be more to thief.

And he's about to betray Jesus anyway. So he was, uh, a disciple in name only, you might say. I find it interesting.

And we'll get to this next, when we study the next part of the chapter. But it's interesting that when Jesus, uh, when Judith, when Judas Iscariot comes to betray Jesus with a kiss, Jesus is greeting to him, knowing everything about him was friend.

You know, what have you come for friend? And he knew that this was no friend. But then neither was I. I suspect neither were any of you.

But he saved us anyway. And unfortunately, couldn't save Judas Iscariot. That's another story for another day. So, this must have been an amazing meeting because you've got, um, it's at the home of Simon the leper.

[ 21 : 50 ] Actually, it's a misnomer that, isn't it? It's Simon the ex-leper or the former leper because Jesus had healed him of his leprosy. So everybody's coming to the leper's house to find that the leper's not a leper anymore.

And they wanted to see Lazarus, the ex-dead guy. I mean, what an occasion. And then Martha comes in, with, Mary rather, comes in.

Mary was the sister of Martha and the sister of Lazarus. So you've got a kind of a family event going on here. And, again, John's account tells us that many had come, not only to see Jesus, but to also see Lazarus, who'd been raised from the dead.

I thought they would have been curious about the leper as well. Anyway, she starts to anoint him with this spikenard, this, this stuff that is, it smells great, but they use it for burial.

And she was pouring this stuff over him. And Jesus said, she's preparing me for burial. Now, there are two ways you can look at this. One is that she was doing it as an act of reverence.

[ 22 : 57 ] And he interpreted it that she, he, she was preparing him for burial as in, she's preparing me for burial, but she doesn't really understand that. Or she knew she was preparing him for burial because she'd read the Bible and knew he had to die.

And I suspect the latter is the case. I suspect she knew what she was doing. She was anointing him for burial. I could be wrong. The scripture isn't clear on that.

This container of oil would have been worth about a year's wages. So it was a massive gift. And Jesus says, as we've already said, wherever this gospel is preached, she's going to be famous for what she's done.

And of course, we are still celebrating it to this day. And she is famous for what she's done. But this preparation for burial led to this uproar started by Judas.

What a waste. Fancy pouring that all over the, you know, it must've gone over his head and then all over the floor. What, what a waste. And what he says is the poor, you always have with you, but you don't always have me with you.

[ 24 : 07 ] And she's, she's doing something that blesses me. It's so important to do things that bless Jesus. Given his power and anointing, he could have created on the spot, several gallons of spikenard if he'd wanted to, but he was responding to the heart of a woman who was sincerely crying out because, I believe, she knew he was going to die.

Did she understand that he was not only going to die, but he was going to die for her? Scripture's not clear on that. So Judas has shown his true colors because he, you know, we could get more money in the kitty so I can nick it.

Having had this revelation about Judas's character, what we then learn is he offered to betray Jesus to the high priest. And this is where we go slightly back in time.

Well, we are slightly back in time. So what's happening now is this is six days before Passover. And you get that from the other gospels. And it says in verse 14, then one of the 12 named Judas Iscariot went to the chief priest and said, what are you willing to give me to betray him to you?

And they weighed out 30 pieces of silver to him. From then on, he began to look for a good opportunity to betray Jesus. This passage of scripture carries two deep sins.

[ 25 : 33 ] One is betrayal in the sense of, as we said, paradidomi given over. What are you going to pay me to give him over to you? And of course, then we've got Peter and we've got not betrayal, but denial, which is still a pretty serious thing because it's still a denial.

Means to disown. If you look, if you look the word up when you get home, it means to disown or to utterly cast aside. So when, when Peter, and we're not getting to it in this, in this passage, but when Peter denies, it's a huge deal.

So you've got Judas, huge deal, Peter, huge deal, one forgiven, one not. And, and you'll pick up as you read it, because I advise you to read ahead for next time, that the key, the key factor, where the forgiveness comes to Peter, but not to Judas, is the simple concept of repentance.

All right. Peter was sobbing because of what he'd done. Judas was just, Oh, what have I done? And he was trying to escape the consequences. That's all. So this is six days before Passover, that the stage is set.

And Judas goes to, goes to the, the chief priests and everything else. And says, what will you give me? What will you give me to betray him to you?

[ 27 : 09 ] And so they prepared 30 pieces of silver for him. So it's at six days before that he starts looking for this opportunity to betray.

Verse 16, from then on, he began looking for a good opportunity. Now on the first day of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?

Now there is a small confusion in there sometimes, unless you know a little bit about Jewish, ritual and the way they conducted their feasts. Strictly speaking, the feast of unleavened bread starts the day after Passover.

This is before Passover. And they're saying, and it's described as the first day of unleavened bread. So how does that work? And it's very simply a bit of an idiom, really, that the Jews colloquially would refer to the whole period as the time of unleavened bread, starting on the evening of Passover.

Because they would, they would group together in their minds, the evening of Passover, the Saturday, and then the day after Passover.

[ 28 : 20 ] Passover. So this would be the evening of the 13th, the 14th of Nisan, and then from the 15th on for seven days. So there's like an eight day period.

They just used to lump together and call it the time of unleavened bread. So that kind of gets rid of an apparent contradiction. It's just the way they spoke of that period of time.

And so he says, it says here, verse 17, on the first day of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, where do you want us to prepare it for you? Verse 18, go into the city to a certain man and say to him, the teacher says, my time is near and I am to keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.

I don't know whether Jesus had set this up in advance, or whether this man was just responsive to the Holy Spirit and was a man who was going to say yes. But clearly these arrangements in the heart of the Lord had already been made.

And so we have the Passover being instituted in verse 20. Now, when evening came, Jesus was reclining at table with 12 disciples and they were eating.

[ 29 : 28 ] And he said, truly, I say to you that one of you will betray me. Um, being deeply grieved, they said, surely not I, Lord. And he answered, he who dipped his hand with me in the bowl is the one who will betray me.

That little expression in verse 23, you get a further expansion of that in John 13, verse 26, which it's clear that those words were actually said to John, the disciple that was reclining on Jesus's chest.

So it wasn't something he blurted out for all to hear. You know, this is the guy who's going to betray me. It was John who said, who is it Lord? And he said quietly to John, it's Judas.

Now that allowed Judas, because I'm sure that if they'd all known, they'd have pounced on Judas and he would never have got to go. But Judas then got to escape the occasion. And he went to go and find the chief priests to obey.

And when you think about it, this is the first opportunity. They started six days before looking for an opportunity. And now we're eating the Passover in this room. And then we're going to go to the Mount of Olives and sing a hymn.

[ 30 : 41 ] So it's the first occasion when Judas can actually say, I know where he's going to be. So I can take you to him. And I always wonder, you would have thought that Jesus would have been so well known.

But he had to say to them when he came to betray, he had to say to them, the one who I kiss is the one you need to arrest. And you think, did they not know that?

Clearly they didn't. So he said this to John and the others found out a little bit later. And the account speaks, as I've said, of this given over paradidomi, the same word used in Romans 1, 24 and 26 to describe people being given over to depravity, a state of permanent change.

Once given over, there is no way back. So then what we get is Judas has made this bargain and the last Passover is beginning.

And Jesus has revealed Judas's intentions. And so Jesus says to John, he who dipped his hand with me in the bowl is the one who will betray me.

[ 31 : 54 ] The son of man, this is verse 24, the son of man is to go just as it is written of him. But woe to that man by whom the son of man is betrayed. It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.

And Judas, who was betraying him said, surely it's not I, rabbi. And this is, this is just what sin does, doesn't it? It denies the truth right to the very last.

And Jesus said, you said it. You're the one that said it. And at this point, because the betrayal hasn't yet happened.

At this point, Judas could have said, games up. I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to betray you. Have your money back. I'm not interested. But he didn't.

He went off. To betray him anyway. And once people are locked into certain sins and they've been given over to those sins, there is no way back.

[ 32 : 53 ] It's almost like they are programmed from then on to carry on committing that same sin, which would explain why that the Lord describes us as like dogs returning to their own vomit and like hogs returning to the wallowing in the mire.

It's the sin nature. It always goes back to more sin. You're only certainly speaking personally. I only started to fight my sin when I got born again.

So, verse 26. While they were eating, Jesus took some bread and after blessing, he broke it and gave it to his disciples and said, take, eat. This is my body.



The coming verses, because there's another one, isn't there? And then he had taken a cup and given thanks and gave it to them saying, drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many and for forgiveness of sins.

These few verses are the basis upon which the Roman Catholic Church puts out the doctrine of transubstantiation. And that doctrine says that the bread literally becomes the flesh of Jesus Christ and the wine literally becomes his blood.

[ 34 : 08 ] It's probably enough for me to say that is nonsense. However, a small explanation. This doctrine didn't even come into being until the year 1215, which was at the Fourth Lateran Council.

And it was embraced and taught by Thomas Aquinas, who lived from 1225 to 1274. It was a Roman Catholic invention, this doctrine.

That's the first thing. The second thing is, if we were literally consuming the body and blood of Christ, that would be cannibalism. And cannibalism is a sin. Thirdly, it's not unusual for Jesus to refer to himself metaphorically.

He not only said, this is my body, this is my body. He also said, I'm a door. Right? He was speaking metaphorically, using something to assist the listeners' understanding.

He specifically says, and it's not recorded in Matthew's Gospel, but it is in John's, he specifically, in Luke's, he specifically says, do this in remembrance of me.

[ 35 : 20 ] So it's an act of remembrance. This is so that you won't forget. And as I was going through this, it occurred to me, this occurred to me. We often break bread, and we remember what the Lord did.

There's one aspect of it, that I very rarely remember getting a mention, during the breaking of bread. And that is this. He breaks bread with them, and he says, I will not drink of the fruit of this vine from now on, until that day, when I drink it anew with me in my Father's kingdom.

In this breaking of bread ceremony, he was not only saying, remember what I did. He was saying, remember, you have a future with me. I'm going to drink this with you, in future, in the kingdom.

And I've not quite before, grasped that aspect of the breaking of bread, that it doesn't only look backwards, it looks forwards, it's prophetic. And I praise God for that.

So, in the last few minutes, and I am more than happy to go over more of this again, on another occasion, but I just want to bring us to a close. What we've then got is Peter, verse 31, you will all fall away, because of me this night, for it is written, I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock, shall be, scattered.

[ 36 : 47 ] But after I've been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee. And Peter said, not me, even though all may fall because of you, I will never fall away.

Jesus said, before the rooster crows, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. And he said, no, even if I have to die for you, I won't deny you.

But we sometimes miss this last verse, and all the disciples said the same thing too. And Peter gets pilloried for this, and yet he wasn't alone.

All of the disciples had the same, not me, I'll be there to the end. If I have to die with you, I have to die with you. The thing is, I am sure, it's not written down, so I could be making this up, but I'm sure that they sincerely meant what they said.

You know, I've been brave in moments like that. It's all right, you can count on me, uh-oh, what have I signed up for here? Do you see what I mean? I'm fairly sure they were sincere.

[ 37 : 52 ] And what this led me to is this, and I finish with this. They all wanted to be strong, and none of them were.

And yet at Pentecost, they suddenly became strong, and would die rather than deny Jesus. And I think, just to finish on a scripture, in Luke 24, verse 49, they are instructed, wait in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

The ability to stand, the ability to show courage, happens only because of the Holy Spirit enabling you to do so. It's not something you can drum up from inside, and I'm sure there are some men that can.

You know, soldiers on the battlefield, who put themselves by way of harm, probably not even aware of God, but it's the thing you do as a soldier. But generally speaking, we can't manufacture this kind of courage.

It comes because God indwells us by his Holy Spirit, and empowers us to do what we couldn't previously do. And that's the only reason he gets the glory for it.

[ 39 : 10 ] Because if Ray is such a courageous guy, that he can go out and do all this, then Jesus doesn't really get a look in. Everybody goes, oh, wasn't Ray a wonderful chap? No, Ray's useless.

Unless he's empowered by the Holy Spirit, and then he becomes useful. Father, I thank you for this passage of Scripture, which has been a struggle this week to study, and I do thank you that we got there.

I do pray, Lord, that you would keep our hearts and minds open. We can do more on this if it's needed. Father, I pray that as a church, you would keep us right and keep us straight.

I pray that any mistakes I make, you will walk all over them, and that you will correct them. And as we read these wonderful things, and as we're about to go on to read about your death and your resurrection and your ascension, that even though these are things we already know, we will be so impressed by them that we will be permanently changed for the better by studying them again.

Father, I thank you for this church. I thank you for the heart of love you've put in the people here. I thank you that you've given me, amongst other things, wonderful friends here.

[ 40 : 44 ] And I pray, Lord, that you'll fill their hearts with a hunger for your word that will not be put out, a fire of hunger that will be impossible to quench.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen.