

Guilty of the Blood of Righteousness

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Date: 18 June 2023

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[0 : 0 0] Before the preaching of God's word, please take your Bibles again and turn to Matthew, the book of Matthew, chapter 23. As we continue to consider Jesus' words to the Pharisees.

Matthew chapter 23, verses 29 through to the end of the chapter. Let's hear God's word. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!

You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, if we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.

So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers. You snakes!

You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify.

[1 : 0 9] Others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

I tell you the truth. All this will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who sent to you. How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.

But you are not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Amen. Let's hear the word of God preached. Well, I invite you to have your Bibles open to this portion in Matthew 23.

We've come to the last and longest of Jesus' seven woes spoken to the Pharisees, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees.

[2 : 2 4] He's warning the crowds gathered at the temple. It's his last words to the people of Israel before he is crucified. And he's warning them because he loves them and doesn't want to see them perish by following the example and the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees.

And so woe number seven exposes yet another aspect of their hypocrisy. In fact, it's the height of their wickedness. That's why it's safe for the last.

It has to do with their attitude toward the prophets of God who brought God's word to Israel in the Old Testament. So a prophet was one to whom God supernaturally revealed his word.

And then gave them the assignment of taking that word and telling it to the people. It was not their own idea. It was the very living and active word of God.

So when Old Testament Israel broke their covenant with God and became unfaithful to him by worshiping other gods, by breaking his commandments, God sent the prophets with his word of rebuke, pointing out their sins and calling them to repent and to return to the Lord.

[3 : 47] And if not, he would judge them with the curses of the broken covenant stated in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27 and 28.

And though there were exceptions within Israel, the prevailing attitude is recorded in these words back in 2 Chronicles. That although the Lord sent prophets to the people to bring them back to him, and though they testified against them, they would not listen.

They would not listen. They didn't like being confronted with their sins. They didn't like the threat of God's impending judgment.

And so they persecuted and murdered the true prophets of God. And they found false prophets who would tell them what their itching ears wanted to hear.

Now, does that sound familiar to you with regard to our own day? It shows us that nothing has changed, only the names. So, Elijah, he's complaining that all of God's prophets have been put to death.

[5 : 01] And that he alone is left. Well, not quite, Elijah. Obadiah has secretly hidden a hundred prophets in two different caves and has been feeding them.

Isaiah, for prophesying the rebuke and judgment of God, was sawed in two. Jeremiah was thrown into a pit and left to die and only to be rescued later.

Peter, indeed, his own hometown, his own family conspired to kill him. Micaiah, well, he's kept in prison because he had nothing good to say about King Ahab.

And so it went for God's messengers who brought his word to Israel. And so consistent was this treatment of God's prophets that the Lord Jesus could say to his followers in Matthew chapter 5, if you are persecuted for righteousness sake, rejoice and be glad.

For great is your reward in heaven. For in the same way they treated the prophets who were before you. That's right, they persecuted them. They killed them.

[6 : 09] It wasn't a comfortable job to be a prophet in Israel. It was more like a death sentence. It's interesting that in Acts chapter 7, the first martyr of the Christian church, Stephen, asked the religious leaders of his time, was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute you?

Did not persecute. Now that's quite an indictment. Name one. That was the way the people treated those who bore the word of God to them.

They would not listen, but instead persecuted them. So now, here we are. Jesus is speaking and he's addressing the Pharisees.

What's their attitude toward the Old Testament prophets of God? Well, they're pretending to honor him or to honor them, both by what they're doing and what they're saying. So what are they doing?

Verse 29 tells us, Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous.

[7 : 19] Oh, how they honored these dead prophets with lavish tombs, marble decorations, marking out their graves.

And they were proud of them. That's what they were doing. What were they saying? Verse 30, In other words, they're saying, we're not like our fathers.

We're better than them. They killed the prophets, but we honor them. Just look at the tombs we built for them and decorated for them.

And the Lord Jesus says, it's all a big show. You hypocrites, you love to think you're better than others, pretending to honor God's Old Testament messengers, when in fact, you're just like your fathers.

And if you'd lived back then, you'd have been right in there with them, casting the first stone. Verse 31, So you testify against yourself, you Pharisees, that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets.

[8 : 41] So Jesus is saying, in complimenting themselves, they were in fact condemning themselves, because they were confessing more than they realized when they said that they were sons of murderers.

Even though they said, we wouldn't have, but our fathers did. And Jesus is saying, you're not only physical descendants of those forefathers, you have the same murderous heart attitude that they did.

So Jesus is here showing their solidarity of spirit with their forefathers who persecuted and killed the righteous prophets of their day for preaching the unpopular message of sin and judgment if they did not repent.

And in spite of all your protesting to the contrary, you are just like your fathers. So this is Father's Day. And there's a lot here about fathers and children.

These Israelites were just like their fathers in the way they treated God's prophets. You are their true children, Jesus says.

[9 : 45] And of you the proverb is true then, like father, like son. And that's the bare truth behind your hypocritical mask. Take away the mask.

You're pretending to honor the prophets with your words and decorating their graves. This is your attitude toward the bearers of God's word.

And so a year or so later, after Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension, Stephen, the first martyr, would say to the Jewish leaders in Acts 7, 51 and 52, you are just like your fathers.

Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the righteous one. And now you have betrayed and murdered him.

Well, they were furious at Stephen and gnashed their teeth, dragged him out of the city, stoned him to death, proving the truth of the words that he had just spoken.

[10 : 46] You're just like your fathers. They killed the prophets, and now you have killed the righteous, the prophet, Jesus Christ, and are now killing me.

So there's an important lesson here for us, and it's this. It's always easier to honor a dead prophet than a living one.

Because you can always distance yourself from the rebukes of the dead prophet, saying, well, if I'd have been there, I would have listened and obeyed.

But when the living prophet is rebuking you for your sins and is pointing his finger at you and saying, you, you, you are the man.

This is the sin. Well, that's a different matter. And that stirs up hatred and murder in the heart. So the real test is, what are you doing with the present-day messengers of God's word?

[11 : 50] What are you doing with Jesus Christ, the righteous one, the great prophet foretold in Deuteronomy 18, who is himself the word of God incarnate, who said, I am the truth, and I'm here to bear testimony to the truth.

What are you doing with him and the words that he brought us? The fact is, the Pharisees were hating him for what he said. Even as he was preaching this message and were plotting to kill him and would do just that in just a couple days.

And that would show what they really think of God's living prophets who bring God's life-giving word. This is the test, then, of every generation. What are you doing with the word of God in the mouth of present-day preachers, bearers, messengers of God's truth?

Well, today they're canceling them, aren't they? Today they're calling them evil. Today they're calling them harmful enemies of the nation that must be silenced.

And so again we see nothing has changed. From the Old Testament prophets who came with a rebuking word and a call to repent, less judgmental.

[13 : 13] To the time of Jesus, 2,000 years ago. To today, it's the same. It's the same. Only the names are different. And what are you doing?

What are you doing with the Lord Jesus Himself? His words. Like the Pharisees who honored the dead, prophets, you may wear a cross around your neck in supposed honor of Jesus Christ and yet in truth be a hostile enemy of Christ and His words and show it by simply not submitting to the law of God.

Ignoring His warnings to repent and shoving from you His loving calls in the Gospel to come to Him and live. So having exposed the Pharisees as being united in heart with their murderous forefathers, He then tells them in verse 32, fill up then the measure of the sin of your forefathers.

Interesting statement, isn't it? Fill up then the measure, the cup of your sin, the sin of your forefathers.

Their bloody cup is not yet quite full. Oh, there's a lot of blood in there, but it's not yet quite full. But you, their sons, will soon fill it up, is what Jesus is saying.

[14 : 41] The Bible teaches us that God is ever so patient with His enemies. He promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants, but He waited 400 years before giving it to Abraham and his descendants.

Why? He tells Abraham, because the sin of the Amorites who live there has not yet reached its full measure. Genesis 15, 16.

But when their sins had reached their full measure, God's patience with sinners was ended. And in wrath, He destroyed them and drove them out and gave their land to the descendants of Abraham.

It's also true of Israel, God's nation. Where God's patience ends, His wrath is poured out. In 1 Thessalonians 2, 15 and 16, Paul speaks of the Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out trying to keep us from giving the gospel to the Gentiles.

And he says, in this way, they always fill up their sins to the limit and the wrath of God has come upon them at last. So, the nations, the Gentile nations, they filled up the cup of their wrath, their cup of sin and then God's wrath was poured out.

[16 : 11] Israel filled up the cup of their wrath and then God's wrath was poured out on them. And what's true of nations is also true of individuals. God's patience with sinners does not last forever.

Proverbs 29, 1 says, a man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.

There is an end to God's patience and the beginning of His wrath. Someone has written anonymously that there is a line by us unseen that crosses every path.

The hidden boundary between God's patience and His wrath. Oh, where is this mysterious line by which our path is crossed?

Beyond which God Himself has sworn that He who goes is lost. How far can one go on in sin? How long will mercy spare?

[17 : 13] Where does grace end? And where begin the confines of despair? An answer from the sky is sent. Ye who from God depart, while it is called today, repent, and harden not your heart.

We don't know where that line is. We don't know when the cup of sin will be full and God will say, that's it. Sudden destruction, everlasting damnation, forever and ever.

So seek the Lord while He may be found. Call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake His way and the evil man His thoughts. And let him turn to the Lord and He will have mercy on Him and to our God for He will freely pardon.

Well, these Pharisees and Jewish leaders acting for their nation were fast filling up the measure of the sin of their forefathers and their murder of the Messiah and His messengers, the apostles, would be the last straw bringing inevitable judgment in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

at the hands of the Romans. So Jesus here puts the true labels upon these so-called separated ones, Pharisees. They're hypocrites, He says.

[18 : 33] And notice what else He calls them in verse 33. You snakes, you brood of vipers, how will you escape being condemned to hell?

John the Baptist in his ministry, Brother Jim was just reminding me this morning, it said, to the Pharisees, who warned you to flee the coming wrath? You snakes, who warned you?

And now Jesus, at the end of His ministry, says, you snakes, you brood of vipers, how will you escape being condemned to hell? You pretend to be Israel's good teachers leading them to heaven when all along you are deceitful, poisonous snakes leading them to hell.

there's only one way to escape. It's through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, the Lord Jesus whom they were rejecting and just days away from murdering, and so for them there will be no escape.

He's the only way to the Father. So what will Jesus do to these enemies of His? Of whom condemnation is ripe?

[19 : 51] Well, He says in verse 34, therefore, I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. That's called loving your enemies. You've hated and killed and persecuted the prophets that have been sent to you, so therefore, I am going to send you more.

What a Savior is Jesus. But for the greater part of them, they would only seal their doom, for they would have none of it, as Jesus Himself knows.

And so He goes on to say of His gospel messengers that He's going to send them. He's going to send out the apostles to proclaim the gospel. Go to the Jew first, and then to the Gentiles.

And Jesus says in verse 34, some of them you will kill and crucify. And that's just what happened to the twelve. All of them, according to church history, died a martyr's death, but for John who was exiled.

Others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. That summarizes well what happened to the Apostle Paul as we saw in the Sunday school hour. Five times I received from the Jews the forty stripes minus one.

[21 : 12] Kids, do the math. Five times thirty-nine. That's how many whips came upon the preacher of the gospel from the Jews. Jews.

Jesus was sending these prophets, sending these preachers, these missionaries, and they would be the ones to persecute and kill them. And so, verse 35 and 36, and so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom you murdered, you murdered between the temple and the altar.

I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation. It would be this generation that would finish filling up the cup of the nation's sins by murdering the Messiah and His messengers.

In Luke chapter 11, Jesus said on another occasion, this generation will be held accountable for all the righteous blood shed from the beginning of the world.

They testified that they approved of what their forefathers did. Interesting. They approved of what their forefathers did by repeating the same actions.

[22 : 38] I wonder if you know that in God's justice, guilt is shared with those who not only do the evil, but those who approve of the evil done.

Romans 1.32 says that God's judgment is coming not only on those who do such things, but also on those who approve of those who practice them.

Many evil things are being done in the nation today. not by everyone, but when you see how many approve of what they're doing, Jesus is saying they too will be held guilty just for approving of the evil that is being done.

Just as Saul was giving his approval to the stoning of Stephen, he didn't throw a stone, but he gave his approval and therefore he was guilty of the blood of Stephen.

like an accomplice to the murder, guilty because he was in on it, you see. And so the Jews of Jesus' day showed their approval of their forefathers' murders of the prophets and so they shared in the guilt of their forefathers, indeed, in all the righteous blood that had been shed from the beginning to the end of the Hebrew Bible.

[24 : 05] You see, the Hebrew Bible ended in 2 Chronicles, the way they organized the books of the Bible and the Hebrew Bible. It ends not with Malachi, but Malachi comes before and it ends with 2 Chronicles, the history of the Jews.

And so he's saying, from the blood of righteous Abel. You know, the first martyr in the world was martyred because he was righteous? And the last one in their Hebrew Bible was this Zechariah, son of Berechiah.

You can read about him in 2 Chronicles 24. When Zechariah confronted Israel's leaders with their sins, they plotted against him and by order of the king they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the Lord's temple.

And all that blood guilt, you see, is crying out for vengeance. And Jesus is saying, you are guilty of every drop of it because you have approved of their blood shedding.

And it would soon reach its climate and fall on this generation that Jesus was speaking to. In a few days, the Jews would be calling on Governor Pilate to crucify Jesus.

[25 : 30] Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, had tried him and found nothing wrong. And so he says, why? What crime has he committed? And they responded just by turning the volume up and cried all the louder, crucify him, crucify him.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere but that instead a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd saying, I'm innocent of this man's blood.

It's your responsibility. We still have that saying, don't we? We're going to wash our hands of the matter. That's what he was doing. I'm publicly washing my hands of this matter.

I'm not guilty of his blood. You are. You know what the whole Jewish nation responded? All the people answered, let his blood be on us and be upon our children.

Now they didn't drive the nails through Jesus' hands and feet but they were indeed responsible for Jesus' blood and therefore guilty. And by the way, Pilate too cannot so easily wash his hands of Jesus' blood because he was to give out a just verdict and he violated justice.

[26 : 49] He condemned a man he knew was innocent. Yes, Jesus came to his own and his own received him not but despised and rejected and killed him.

And so then, in less than 40 years, Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed by the Roman army with as many as a million Jews slaughtered. Their cup was full.

As a nation, it had reached its limit. The die was set. There's no turning back. And God came to require payment for all their blood guilt, the curses for the broken covenant.

And he takes away the kingdom from them and he gives it to a people who will bring forth the fruit of it. So as we come to the end of this hard-hitting chapter of seven woes upon the Pharisees and the horrific judgment to fall upon the nation for rejecting the truth and, yes, the truth incarnate, we're left with what?

How does it end? It ends with a lamenting Jesus. It's a striking picture we're given. He's not rejoicing to see their well-deserved judgment.

[28 : 09] He's grieving their stubborn-hearted rebellion and rejection of him and his gospel. It is the cause of God's wrath that is falling upon them.

Now, a couple days earlier, he had sobbed, is the word. He had wept over Jerusalem. It's the strongest word of sobbing as the crowds were shouting, Hallelujah! To the Lord who comes in the name of the...

To him who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna! Jesus is weeping, sobbing as he comes over the brink of the hill and sees Jerusalem because they did not know the time of their visitation.

God had come and he knew what they were going to do to him and he knew what God was going to do in punishing their sin. And so he had wept over Jerusalem.

Now he groans out this lament. And with these last words spoken to the nation, we have the heart of Jesus laid bare and we don't want to miss this.

[29 : 13] This is the heart behind everything that we've heard now in chapter 23. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you.

How often I long to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. So here he's addressing the whole nation under the title of their capital city.

And the double cry of, Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, shows the intense emotion of our Savior. It's reminiscent of David's words at the death of his son.

Oh, Absalom, my son, Absalom, my son, my son. It's that same kind of emotional lament in our Savior. How often I have longed to gather your children together.

I would posit that that how often goes clear back into the Old Testament. You know, Jesus existed before his birth. He's the eternal son of God.

[30 : 22] And he sent his prophets to Old Testament Israel, calling them to return. How often, even back then, the eternal son of God was longing to gather them to himself as they turned away from him, sending them servants and prophets to call them back, only to watch them kill one and another.

You remember those parables that he told about that very thing. Sending his prophets to collect the fruits and they killed the prophets.

So, yes, even in the Old Testament, but even for the last three years, the Lord Jesus zigzagged all the roads of Palestine, calling the children of Israel to return to him, sincerely longing to gather them from the coming storm.

Like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings at the first sound of the approaching storm or the shadow of an overflying chicken hawk.

And she gives the clock, the call, and would lift her wings, calling her defenseless chicks to come and to find protection under her wings.

[31 : 48] Such was the loving heart of Jesus. Jesus is portraying his own heart in that metaphor for us. Oh, how often I have longed to gather you, the whole wayward nation from the well-deserved wrath of God that was threatening them.

But they were not willing to come to him that they might have life and were even now ready to crucify him, the only Savior bringing salvation to condemn sinners.

A lost sinner friend, the only safe place to be from the coming wrath is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Come to Christ today, lest these words should be spoken to you in the day of final judgment.

How often I long to gather you like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

I was willing, but you were not. I was willing to save you, but you were not willing to be saved by me, so depart from me. I never knew you.

[33 : 08] And if you are finally and eternally lost and left to suffer eternal punishment, you will have only yourself to blame, not Jesus.

He was able and willing to gather you to himself. He called you more than once. Often he called you. Longing to gather you with sincere desire that you would come to him, but you were not willing.

Oh, but if I had lived in those days, I would not have taken part in his crucifixion. Oh, it's always easier to say you would have done better than others. But what are you doing with Jesus today?

What are you doing with his calls? He is the prophet God has sent with the truth. He is the truth, and he's offering to gather you. What are you going to do with that today?

In these words of Jesus, man's excuses are wiped out, and the dirty, rotten secret is out, and it's this. There are none who want to be saved but aren't.

[34 : 27] Oh, I want to be saved, but he's just not saved me yet. No, not according to Jesus. There are none who want to be saved but aren't.

If you're not in Christ today, the reason is because you don't want him. That's what he says. And the final day will prove it, that you are just as unwilling as Jesus is willing.

So hear the Lord's heart for rebellious Israel. Clear back in Ezekiel's day. As surely as I live, declares the sovereign Lord, he's swearing by this truth. The Lord is.

I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live, that they turn from their wicked ways and live. Oh, turn, turn from your evil ways.

Why will you die, O house of Israel? And our Savior's heart is unchanged who says no less today, come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest, and all that the Father has given me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will in no wise cast out.

[35 : 44] But since they were unwilling, Jesus will say in verse 38, look, your house is left to you desolate. He's speaking now to the Jews for the last time.

Look, your house is left to you desolate, deserted, unprotected. Yes, Jerusalem, the city of God, the place where the Most High dwelt in the temple.

And it was God's presence in Jerusalem that made this people different from any other nation of the world. But not any longer.

you will no longer be any different from the rest of the nations because I'm leaving your house. Jesus is about to walk out of the temple for the last time and I'm leaving your house to you desolate, deserted, without God, the Son, in the temple.

It's Ichabod. The glory has departed. no longer will His presence be a wall of fire around them and the glory within.

[37 : 00] No, now left unprotected and exposed to the gathering storm of God's wrath, they will feel it full force as the Romans came and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, marking the end of the whole theocracy of Israel as the special nation of God.

and as Jesus is leaving, He says, for I tell you, you will not see Me again until you say, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. You find that in Psalm 118 in verse 26.

It's a messianic passage. It's referring to the Messiah. He's the one who is blessed and who comes in the very name, the very attributes of the Lord.

Lord. They had just said these words days earlier as He wrote into Jerusalem, Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

They were identifying Him as their Messiah. But before the week is out, they will say, we were wrong. You're not the Messiah after all. You're a phony. You're a blasphemer.

[38 : 09] You're a pretend Messiah. You deserve to be crucified. And so that's where He was going. And why they would see Him no more.

He was going to the cross of Golgotha to be rejected as the Messiah who comes in the name of the Lord. And from there to the dark tomb and then to rise again, but to only appear to His disciples, His followers for some 40 days, period of 40 days.

And then He ascended into heaven, not to be seen by the Jews ever again until that day when I return to judge the world in righteousness and every eye will see me, even those who pierce me and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that I am who I claim to be.

Jehovah, Yahweh, the great I am, the blessed one who comes in the name of the Lord. You will be forced to acknowledge that as I come back in judgment.

Well, let me close by returning to the important question from Jesus for every one of us. How will you escape from being condemned to hell? You know, that's what we all deserve for our sins.

[39 : 35] you, me, we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and the wages of sin is death including the second death of the lake of fire.

That's what we deserve, that's what we have coming. The only thing the law of God says to sinners is you're condemned, you're guilty. That's all the law has to say to a lawgiver or to a lawbreaker.

You're guilty. Look, you're guilty. And so, you and I won't escape from being condemned to hell any more than the Pharisees if we do not repent and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to save us.

You know, Hebrews 2 verse 3 asks the same question. How will you escape if you neglect so great a salvation? Well, you won't is the answer. You won't escape.

There's only one way of escape drawn up from eternity by the wisdom and the love of God that he would send his one and only son to live the perfect life that we didn't and to die the hellish death that we should have under God's wrath.

[40 : 50] That's where he was going just a couple days after Matthew's sermon in 23 ends. Condemned by these very men, condemned falsely for crimes he did not commit, but justly condemned by God as he bore the sins of his people.

For the Father laid on him our sins and he bore them to the cross and he who knew no sin became sin for us and was condemned in our place.

In my place condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah, what a Savior. Savior. And so what the law could not do, it couldn't save us because it was weakened through our flesh.

We just kept sinning against it. All it says is damn you, damn you, you're guilty, you deserve it. And so what the law could not do, God did by sending his only son and by him he condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus so that whoever is in Christ Jesus it can be said of you, there is therefore now no condemnation.

Why not? Because you're in Christ and in Christ the condemnation has already fallen. I've told it often, I want to close with it again. The American Indians taught the early frontier men how to fight and how to survive a prairie fire.

[42 : 26] And when they saw the smoke billowing in the distance heading their direction, they would, the Indians would take all of their belongings. Well first they'd go outside of the camp and they would burn off an area, a controlled fire like we see the farmers do along the fence rows.

and they would put out the fire once an area was burned large enough and then they would bring out their wives and children and all their belongings and they would get into that burnt off area and then they would be able to wait for the destroying fire without fear.

And here it comes and it's roaring and the wind's blowing but as soon as it reached that burnt off area it went on around it. Why?

Because the fire had already consumed everything combustible. There was nothing more to burn. And so the fire went around them.

They escaped. Why? Because they were in the burnt out area. You know the wrath of God, the infinite wrath of God has already been poured out once.

[43 : 35] It happened at Calvary on Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. The only one who could bear infinite wrath was God's own infinite son and the fire of God's wrath consumed him.

We said it this morning, our God, in our memory verse, our God is a consuming fire and the fire of God's wrath consumed the Lord Jesus as he had our sins all put upon him.

And so for anyone who is in Christ, there's no condemnation. the condemnation has already fallen. It's already fallen on him. Get into Christ.

You know, he's willing to have you. Are you willing to have him? Let's sing of our our Savior. It's number 175. Man of sorrows.

What a name for the Son of God. It was our sorrows. It was our pain. It was our condemnation that he bore. Let's sing our praises to him.

[44 : 35] Number 175 standing as we sing. Father, we're amazed at the grace that you have. We're amazed, Lord Jesus, at your mercy.

Holy Spirit, that you would attend this gospel message today being sent out to all the nations, to the Jew first and also to the Gentiles.

telling them of the willingness of the Lord Jesus to gather them into his arms and to save them.

Where else do we find such mercy and grace but in you, such love for your enemies? And we pray that that gospel message would not be wasted upon any sinner here and any who hear this gospel today.

Gather many into your arms and save them and receive all the praise and the glory for having done so. Thank you, Lord, that you would go to the cross and suffer the condemnation I deserve and that many of us here are standing on that burnt ground of Christ and him crucified and so we can face life and death and everything in between with the confidence, the confidence that we are yours and you are ours forever and forever, that goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives and then we will go to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

[46 : 11] We praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.