

Thorns and Thistles

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[0:00] I've got a Bible with you. You can turn to Genesis chapter 3. We're going to be reading through the first 24 verses.

We'll actually read the whole chapter of Genesis chapter 3. Spent a lot of time in the first two chapters and now we move on to the next one.

So here's what happens, a very well-known story in the Bible. Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? The woman said to the serpent, we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say you must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden and you must not touch it or you will die. You will not certainly die, the serpent said to the woman, for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

[1:23] She also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked. And so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day. They hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, Where are you?

And he answered, I heard you in the garden. And I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid. And he said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?

The man said, The woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it. Then the Lord God said to the woman, What is this that you have done? And the woman said, The serpent deceived me and I ate.

So the Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals. You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers.

[2:32] He will crush your head and you will strike his heel. To the woman he said, I will make your pains and childbearing very severe. With painful labor you will give birth to children.

Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you. To Adam he said, Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, you must not eat from it.

Cursed is the ground because of you. Through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return. Adam named his wife Eve because she would become the mother of all the living.

The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the Lord God said, The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever.

[3:38] So the Lord God banished him from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray together. Let's ask for God's help as we study. Gracious God, your word is truth and we want to have this truth impressed upon our hearts this morning. And so we pray you'd help us to see into it, to see what's really there, that we might submit ourselves to you and learn from you and know you. Teach us about your son. Teach us about the grace of the gospel.

Change us by what we see. We ask this all for Christ's sake and his glory. Amen. So we're in the third week in our series on work, integrating faith and work, thinking about what it is that you do during the week and how your faith comes to bear upon that.

Now, a question I often get asked by people, particularly people who don't regularly attend church, although surprising also by some people who do quite often go to church, is this.

[4:56] Stephen, what exactly do you do all week long? Some of you have been wondering, right? What does the work of a pastor look like?

People want to know, because they see me for two hours on a Sunday, and then they wonder, well, what's happening exactly from Monday to Friday? What work are you doing exactly?

So let me let you into the working world of the pastor. Let's start on Monday. So on Monday, I wake up at about maybe 10 a.m. in the morning, have a leisurely coffee, read a devotional, and then head out for the main activity, which is a round of golf with all the other pastors who only work for two hours a week.

If any of you are thinking that's exactly what I do, that's not what I do. The way I've explained my job to others is something like this, when people have asked, is if you take maybe take a university lecturer, combine him with a therapist, and then combine him with a small business owner, and you get something of what my average work week looks like.

So study, research, teaching, counseling, lots of meetings and administration. That's basically it. Nothing too glamorous there. Now I'm starting by talking about my job because I love my job.

[6:22] I absolutely love my job. I feel incredibly privileged to be able to spend my working hours planning to teach the Bible to people and to share the gospel with people and to work and build a church and build church structures in our church in the denomination.

I absolutely love what I do. And yet as much as I love what I do, there are many, many moments of frustration, many moments of fatigue, many moments of dissatisfaction, and then just some days where I don't feel like getting out of bed at all, whether it's 10 o'clock or 5 o'clock.

You see, you can have the very, very, very best job in the world, but the fatigue and the frustration are still there. And so that's what we're going to talk about this morning together.

If God designed work for us, and He designed it as good for us, something that's key to who we are as people in such a way that if we don't work, it sort of breaks us down psychologically in terms of our sense of meaning and our sense of purpose.

Because if God designed us to work that way, then why is it that work is so hard sometimes? Why is it that work is so unfulfilling sometimes, so unfruitful sometimes?

[7:41] What went wrong? And to answer that question, we need to go to that chapter that I just read, the third chapter of the Bible, the fall of Adam and Eve. And there are three things I want you to see this morning, three problems I want you to see.

The problem of sin, the problem of sweat, and the problem of thorns. Problem of sin, sweat, and thorns.

Here's the first one, the problem of sin. The one thing that Genesis 3 most obviously does for us is it sort of sets up the drama of the rest of the Bible.

It puts forward the problem that the rest of the Bible will then spend its time trying to solve. And that is the problem of sin. So Genesis 3 really is the origin story of sin.

Go down to verse 1 again, and you'll see this, particularly in the first seven verses. So the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?

[8:44] And the woman said to the serpent, we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say you must not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden. You must not touch it or you will die. You'll certainly not die, the serpent said to the woman, for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and she ate it. She also gave some to her

husband who was with her and he ate it.

And then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together and made their coverings for themselves. So you'll be pretty aware now, having read Genesis chapter 1 and 2 for the last two weeks, that God creates a good world.

He says this world is very good. Adam and Eve are put into this world to enjoy the blessings of this world, but here they come and they get deceived by the serpent. Their sin, if you're trying to figure out what exactly is their sin here, their sin is transgressing of God's law, yes, they eat the fruit.

But in some ways, if you look at the way the story pans out and the interaction with the serpent, their sin is wanting to be like God. The serpent is saying, well, God is holding out from you, and if you get this, then you'll be like God.

[10 : 05] And as a result, what they do is they plunge the entire human race into a state of sinfulness. And so Christians have taught for thousands of years that we as human beings are born into sin.

That the original sin of Adam, in some way, affects all of us. In some sort of hereditary way, has an effect upon all of us.

That is, we're not born morally neutral, contrary to what some people might think. We're not born morally neutral and then sort of begin to sin. We sin, we participate in acts of disobedience to God because we are born into a state of sinfulness from day one as a result of our original ancestors' trespass.

That's what the doctrine of original sin is. So the Westminster Confession of Faith, in chapter 6, it puts it this way. It says, From this original corruption, by which we are utterly disinclined, disabled, and antagonistic to all that is good and wholly inclined to all that is evil, all actual transgressions proceed.

So basically what that is saying is that we're not sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners through that inherited sin nature that we get from Adam.

[11 : 51] Now I know that when you bring up the sort of Christian teaching, it raises all sorts of red flags in the minds of contemporary culture. People are like, well, I don't know what I think about that exactly. Some people look at this doctrine and they think, well, how does believing that, how will believing that make me thrive in work?

I mean, it feels like such a depressing doctrine. How is it going to make me better at work? See, there's a dominant school of thought in secular culture that the idea of original sin is really harmful and in conflict with human flourishing, and particularly mental well-being, having a good sense of self.

I mean, if we go out there and we tell people, you know, you're a sinner, their identity is one born in sin, you're just setting them up for untold amounts of shame and guilt and anxiety, that's not going to help them become mentally and psychologically healthy people, certainly not going to make them good and productive and fulfilled workers at work.

And so they would say, you see, sin is such a primitive and harmful idea. Instead, in our present culture, what we do, we try and account, because it's clearly out there, but we try and account for human bad behavior, primarily through environment.

So we would say, well, it's our context, it's our history, even our genetics that determines why we behave the way we do, why we might have negative feelings, negative emotions, why we find work unfulfilling or frustrating.

[13 : 25] And I want to say, certainly, there is plenty of social science out there that can tell you, evidence out there, that can demonstrate that our environment does affect our outcomes in life. It just does.

But here's the big problem. If we only have the environment to account for the widespread sort of moral deficiency that we see in human beings all the time, then we are actually greatly, greatly disempowered as people.

Because to be honest, there's not a whole lot that you can do about your genome, is there? About your DNA. There's not much you can do about where you grew up, what your family was like, how tall or how short you are, how athletic you are, how good you are with numbers.

You can't do much about your circumstances that have happened to you. And so if you stop short then of original sin, and you say, look, the world is like it is because of environment, then you leave yourself in a terribly disempowered place.

victims then just of this cruel world that we all live in. But if bad behavior and misery is about more than just our circumstances, not discounting circumstances, but more than our circumstances, then it means something can be done in how we respond to those circumstances.

[14:52] So the doctrine of original sin says that our moral corruption as human beings can't just be attributed down to environment. It goes deeper than that.

It goes to the very heart of who we are as people in Adam. And so as depressing as you might think that doctrine is, it is surprisingly empowering.

Because when you know that that's your problem, now you can begin to resist. Now you can start the fight back. You no longer have to be a spectator on the sideline of your life, just watching yourself getting beaten by circumstances around you.

Plus the other side of this is the reality that environment just doesn't account for all the human corruption and the evil that we experience in this world. It just doesn't.

And I think any rational person looking at things is going to be able to see that. Wars, hatred, discord, racism, all those sorts of evils still break out in educated, sophisticated, affluent societies.

[16:00] Societies that on the surface you would think, well, we've now fixed the environment, so we shouldn't have human bad behavior. But guess what? We still have human bad behavior, even in the most put together societies.

So we can't put it all down to environment. We have to have, I think, a robust doctrine of sin. Only then will we be able to understand, I think, why work can feel so fractured, why our performance in work can be so inconsistent, and why we can feel so dissatisfied in our work.

Notice that the root problem is sin. Now there are two very, very obvious implications to this, but they need to be said anyway. The first off is, if the root problem is sin, that it means that you go into, every single Monday morning, even before Monday, but every Monday morning you go into a world, a working world, full of sinful people.

That's the arena that you go into to do business or to build your craft. You go into, even if you work at a Christian school, anyone who works at a Christian school, you still go into a world full of sinful people.

Spurgeon, Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist, preached in a sermon on Genesis 3, using the image of thorns that comes up later in the curses section of Genesis 3, he describes it this way.

[17:26] He says, You do not have a week's dealings, a week's work, a week's going to and fro in this world without getting a pricking thorn here and there.

You cannot have much to do with the men of the world without finding that many of them are sharper than a thorn hedge. So you conduct your work among sinners.

It's just the reality of what you're going to face every single day. You conduct your work among sinners. That's going to produce deep frustration and difficulty in your work. Now you might say, Well, I don't work with anybody.

I work by myself. Well, here's the second implication. Secondly, you go as a sinner into your arena of work. The sin is not just out there.

It's in here too. So you can't just blame your frustrations on your boss or your colleagues or the greedy capitalists. Sometimes, after healthy correction or introspection, we're going to have to realize, I'm the thorny individual here.

[18:39] It's me who's pricking everybody else. It's my temper. It's my impatience. It's my pride that is causing havoc in my work life.

And so through all of this, we see, I think, that the root problem of this is sin. The problem of sin.

Now you probably expected me to say that. But Genesis 3 actually gives us some more specifics on how the fall of Adam and Eve affects our work.

So let's look at those. The first one is the problem of sweat. When God confronts Adam and Eve on their sin, one of the things He does is He pronounces curses. Second half of the chapter.

He curses the serpent directly. And then He pronounces curses, not directly on Adam and Eve. He never actually directly curses them. But He curses, He pronounces curses that affect the way they experience the world right now.

So look down at verse 16. To the woman He said, I will make your pains and childbearing very severe. With painful labor you will give birth to children.

[19:46] Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you. To Adam He said, Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, you

must not eat from it. Cursed is the ground because of you.

Through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground since from it you were taken.

For dust you are and to dust you will return. Now notice there in those curses, this is really, really important, they're still going to live out their designed calling.

The designed callings from Genesis 1 to 2 are not taken away. They're still going to live out their designed calling. They're still going to bear children. They're still going to build families. They're still going to work the land. But their experience of that is now dramatically altered by the fall.

And so there are two things there that Adam is told about his work. The first is this idea of toil. Verse 19, By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food. So there's the problem of sweat.

[20:52] Both in childbearing actually in verse 16 and the cultivating of the ground for food in verse 17, they're both described as toil and it's a Hebrew word that means something like hard labor or even sorrowful labor.

Labor with misery. And so we're going to work still, but there's going to be sweat. Now I think that that idea of toil and sweat in work is there mainly to highlight our finitude, that we are finite creatures, that we have limits.

And this is a really, really big reason for why we often struggle with work. What I mean is this. Next door, well across the road from my house is a cricket oval.

If you ask me to go to that cricket oval and jog once around the cricket pitch, just once around the oval at a moderate pace, I'll tell you something.

I'm probably not going to break a sweat. Especially with the Southeastern, the way it's been blowing the last few days, it dries up before the sweat can even come. But if you say, just go once around at a moderate pace, I'm not going to break a sweat.

[22:13] I'm a moderately fit person, not really that fit, but moderately fit. I won't break a sweat. It's completely within my capability. But ask me to go around that oval 10 times, same pace, maintain the pace, and I reckon by the third, maybe the second lap, I'm now starting to sweat as my capabilities are now starting to be stretched.

The sweat exposes my limits. I'm a finite human being. I can't keep running forever. And this is a massive source of frustration in work.

We're finite. We live in bodies of death, bodies that break down and decay, that can't keep going forever. I don't know if you realize this, but before the fall, Adam and Eve ate from another tree that's mentioned, a named tree.

They ate from the tree of life. God's glorious power sustained them so that they worked without sweat. They didn't feel the limits of earthly bodies in a negative way like we do.

There wasn't that decay. There was no death. On the other side of the fall, we're all too conscious now of our limits. One of the ways you can very clearly see this, I think, today is the rise in interest in productivity podcasts or productivity books and articles, whether you're listening to The Diary of a CEO or Deep Questions with Carl Newport or whatever other your favorite productivity podcast is that you go to.

[23:59] You have so many people right now, and you see this from the, how many people listen to these podcasts, you have so many people who are fixated upon improving productivity and efficiency. What is that?

What exactly is that? It's a way to try and beat or just cope with our finitude. We're trying to beat the sweat.

That's what we're trying to do. I can't work as hard as I want to. I can't achieve the things that I really want to achieve or sometimes I can't even, work up to the needs of just what needs to be done or what my boss requires of me.

And so there's sweat. There's toil. It's not a breeze. Even if my work is good, even if my work is fulfilling, my limitations make me feel frustrated at work.

They make me feel exhausted. Now, here's the bad news that I have for you this morning. I don't have a solution for this. I do not have a solution for this.

[25:02] This side of heaven, there is nothing I can do for you or say to you that's going to make the toil go away. And productivity podcasts are not going to take the sweat away either. They might help you be slightly more efficient within your limits, but they're not going to take the limits away

themselves.

So I can't make the toil go away. But then I think that is actually part of the point. The point of the toil, of the sweat, it's there in your life as a constant reminder to make you, as you work, as you sweat to long for a day when the toil is gone.

That's what it's doing there. It's there to make you long for redemption, for rescue from this fallen state. It's there to tell you that this life is not as it should be, that there is something wrong with this world, there's something wrong with you and there's something wrong with this world.

The world and you needs to be saved. That Hebrew word for toil, it occurs twice there in Genesis 3. It occurs only one other time in the Old Testament and that is in Genesis 5 when Noah is named. Lamech, Noah's father, gives him the name Noah which means rest. And why does he give him this name? What chapter 5 verse 29 says, because he will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed.

[26:35] Now you know the story of Noah. He goes on to become the instrument God will use in the first big act of redemption that we see in the Bible as he rescues people from the floodwaters, really from the evil and the depravity of the human heart which is the reason for the floodwaters.

He brings a temporary rest from the toil there in that moment through that rescue. And so that's what our experience of sweat does. It points us forward to a coming rest, a coming redemption, a coming ark that is going to save us from the turbulent waters that we have just been endlessly treading all the time.

So the problem of sweat makes us long for a solution. But then there's the problem of thorns. Verse 18, talking about the cursed ground, God says, it will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field.

Now I think this really speaks to the issue of frustration, the sense of frustration in work. Notice it's not that your work won't achieve anything in this fallen world. You will get to eat, the text says. So there is productivity, there is fruit that comes out of this whole labor. The work that we do and we need to always remember this as we think about the fall because I think we can have sometimes a very fatalistic view of the fall and forget Genesis 1 and 2 but the work that we do does make a difference.

[28:02] We can create wealth, we can genuinely help people, we can make great spectacles of art and beauty, we can achieve things. The fall does not mean that your work is completely fruitless now.

But it does mean that sometimes and perhaps in some occasions even a lot of the time we don't get the fruit that we want or the fruit that we think that all of our hard work deserves.

That image of thorns and thistles there is contrasted against the lush fruit-bearing trees that you find in Genesis 1 and 2, the first two chapters.

So the original design, in the original design there are no undesirable plants in the garden. It's only good stuff. You're not putting your seeds into the ground as a farmer and then coming back later and having to take out all the weeds and all the invasive plants that choke back all the good stuff that you try to plant and grow.

But now, after the fall, the weeds are there. The thorns and the thistles are there. That is, sometimes you're expecting to get a great harvest from your work but instead you get useless plants that sort of scrape and poke at your hands as you try and find salvageable fruit in between them.

[29:23] Now I think you and I know this experience. We know this experience. This is the teacher who week after week, year after year pours herself out to educate young kids but some of those kids because of poor home environments or bad decisions or a combination of both don't end up becoming productive members of society.

Instead they turn to a life of criminality or substance abuse. people who break their backs working to save some money to get a deposit for a bond to buy that house that they want in that area that they want close to the schools for their kids only to have the property prices in that area skyrocket pricing them completely out of that market.

market. This is the entrepreneur who has a fantastic idea an incredible idea and he puts all of his life savings into his new business venture which he has planned and he has researched meticulously he has identified this gap in the market that he is going to fulfill only to have the market shift so in the end there's moderate interest in the product that he is putting out there.

Friends we know what it's like to sow and to sow and to sow and to sow but just get more thorns than fruit more thistles than fruit.

This limitation on our ability to produce fruit directly proportional to our hard work is in some way and this is going to sound weird and counterintuitive but as with the previous point this is in some way a blessing from the Lord to us in a fallen world.

[31:14] It's a blessing because the one thing that it does is it reminds us in a very powerful and very tangible and very visceral way that we can't in our own strength produce the tree of life.

We can't cultivate that tree anymore. That opportunity is gone. We can't get it tree of life free from thorns.

We need God for our deeper sustenance and so that keeps us on our knees praying give us today our daily bread like we pray in the Lord's Prayer. It tells us that as the desert wanderings tell us a true manna comes from heaven.

If there were no thorns we would delude ourselves into a form of works righteousness. We'd start to believe the lie that we can justify ourselves through our work. In fact that's one of the dangers for people who are highly successful in this life.

If you accumulate wealth and status and security through your work you can easily start to think I don't need God. I don't really need God. Look at what I've built. Look at everything I've done with my hands my bare hands my hard work my sweat look at what I've built.

[32:26] Look at the salvation that I have brought about for myself and my family. And so you build a salvation but you miss the real salvation. What the thorns and the thistles do is they they strip away that delusion.

They are the blessing of God to knock sensibility into the self-righteous heart. That's what they are. Charles Spurgeon in that same sermon he puts it this way he says some of you cannot go to heaven with all your possessions and with all your prosperity.

It will be necessary to have these things cut away. You are like a ship that is going down through overloading and you will have to be unloaded that you may float and blessed is that hand of God which unloads you of many and earthly joy that you may find your all in the world to come.

Remember that God doesn't directly curse us in Genesis 3. He doesn't directly curse Adam and Eve. He curses the serpent directly but he doesn't curse us.

He curses the ground. He curses the environment and that's grace. That is grace. That is undeserved favor to us because upon that first sin we should be dead and buried in the ground but instead we are alive and we are now permitted to carry on work on top of the ground cursed as it is.

[34:05] You see at the end of the day the toil the sweat the thorns they are supposed to make us look upward and cry out for salvation. They are supposed to take our eyes off of the ground the cursed ground and cause us to look up.

Matthew Henry the great Puritan Bible commentator from the 17th century looking at this verse on thorns and thistles he says this he says this curse upon the earth which cut off all expectations of our happiness in things below might direct and quicken Adam to look for bliss and satisfaction only in things above.

When your hand gets shredded by the thorns as you are digging in your patch you have got to look up. That is what you have to do. You have got to look up. Imagine being at the foot of the cross on that dreadful day on Golgotha.

If you were there at the base on the ground and you looked up what would you see? Do you know what you would see? You would see thorns. That is what you would see.

as you gazed up at Christ completing his work of redemption his sacred work of redemption on the cross to redeem you you'd see thorns.

[35:32] He's wearing a crown but it's not a normal crown. It's a crown made of thorns and they pierce his brow they draw blood. it's as if in that moment Christ there with that crown piercing his brow wears all of our frustration he wears all of our misery he wears all of our dissatisfaction all of our toil all of our sweat he wears it all on his brow and when he dies he takes it all and he buries it in the ground.

And so one day because of that we will live in a world a new creation without sweat without toil without thorns. Just like Isaac Watts says in his famous hymn we sing this at Christmas time often but it's actually not a Christmas hymn he didn't originally write it as a Christmas carol Joy to the World No more let sins and sorrows grow nor thorns infest the ground he comes to make his

blessings flow far as the curse is found far as the curse is found.

You've got to look up you've got to look up to the crown of thorns and you've got to realize that Christ wears those thorns on your behalf and he will deal with them decisively.

Because when you know that when you have deep confidence in him doing that for you in his saving work and lifting that curse off of you well then when you taste and are able to taste something of that world to come that has no toil in it in this sense well then I think you suddenly start to become incredibly well equipped to live and work well in the world now with his presence frustrations.

You now don't ultimately succumb to despair when you're battling to produce the fruit that you want in your work. You don't ultimately succumb to discouragement at your own inability to achieve the levels that you want.

[37 : 48] Most of all you won't be crushed by your sin and you have a source of energy now in work a source of drive and purpose that I promise you no book on productivity can ever give you.

So lift your eyes lift your eyes off the cursed ground look instead at the Son of God who undergoes the curse for you and then sing these words to your soul over and over again no more let sins and sorrows grow nor thorns infest the ground he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found far as the curse is found.

Let's pray together. Merciful God there's a sense in which I don't even need to preach the first part of this sermon because all of us know the experience of frustration and work we know we feel the thorns and the thistles we feel the toil the labour pains and so we ask Lord that we would receive the blessing that those curses are designed to produce which is that they would turn us away from things that are temporary and turn us to find our ultimate joy our ultimate peace our ultimate hope in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Father every single moment when we when we are in that office environment or at our desk somewhere or at our workplace and that frustration comes in for some reason or another may it send our minds spinning towards the new creation may it send our minds spinning towards Christ bearing our thorns for us may it cause us to praise and to give thanks and strengthen us to labour on in this present world Father I pray for any person who is just really in the midst of the weeds right now in their work I pray that you would comfort them with these words this morning Lord that they would know that the curse will be lifted and they will be strengthened by your presence and by your gospel bless us in this endeavour Lord it's a hard word for us but bless us we pray and we ask this for Christ's sake and his glory Amen