

# Victim of a Scam

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 29 January 2017

Preacher: Nick Louw

[ 0 : 0 0 ] I want you to put your hand up if you've ever been a victim of a scam. Yeah, quite a few. And the rest of you may be too embarrassed to say. You know, scams are part of living in this world.

And often we find ourselves victims of a scam, which we only realize we've been victims of afterwards, after we've lost our money or whatever it is. The first time I was really exposed to this, when I was, I'll just tell you the story for the fun of it.

I was, it was in 1998 or something. I was still in high school. And my dad and I went to a holiday to London. He got a, you know, bonus from his work.

And they gave him a couple of air tickets. So he took me just to see London. And it was great. But I don't know if you know that London is famous for its grifters. Grifters are con men. And London is kind of one of the capitals of con men.

And we went there as, you know, ignorant tourists. And we were walking along one of the high streets in London. And we got a pamphlet in our hand for a shop just around the corner that was selling electronic goods at knockdown prices.

[ 1 : 0 3 ] And we thought, well, that's great. Obviously, you know, electronics are quite cheap here in London. Let's pick something up while we're here. So we went to the shop. And there was a guy, a very friendly guy. And there's all their products laid out on the tables.

A nice, you know, shop fitted out. Looks like a shop. And he said, have a look around and see what you want. And so there were lots of other people there in the shop. And we looked around and we said, oh, that looks good. Oh, what a good price.

And so he said, okay, this is the way we're going to sell these things to you. You've got to buy a token. We don't want to handle cash. So you've got to buy tokens from us. And you use the tokens to purchase the items.

And we thought, okay, well, that sounds legit. So everybody there, we didn't realize like they were all tourists. You know, the locals didn't fall for these things.

They bought these tokens. And then they said, okay, come up to the front table and collect your item with your tokens. And we came up. And all of a sudden, they brought out these black bags taped together with items.

[ 1 : 5 9 ] And they said, okay, here you are. Here you go. And they took our tokens. And they shut us out of their shop. They said, okay, shop's closing. All in a flash. And we were all out on the street. They closed the doors, disappeared. And we were busy opening our packages only to find that they were full of junk and not the electronic goods that we were hoping for.

And we turned around and looked back at the shop. And it was empty. Everything had been taken away, cleared out. And there was no one to be seen. And that was the first exposure I've had to being conned.

But it wasn't the last. You know, we can find scam artists and con men everywhere we look, can't we? I mean, even in your junk filter, in your email. If you look at some of your junk mail, I'm sure you'll find some scams.

Some old lady who needs help sending a bag of diamonds to a long-lost relative and she needs you to kind of help transport them or something like that. And those are obvious. But not all scams are obvious.

Some are quite sneaky and not as evident as we might think. History has seen a lot of very successful scam artists.

[ 3 : 01 ] I'm going to mention two. The first one is Frank Abagnale. I don't know if you've heard of Frank Abagnale. He was made famous in the movie Catch Me If You Can with Leonardo DiCaprio playing Frank Abagnale.

Well, a true story of a man who, amongst other things, traveled the world free of charge for two years by masquerading as an airline pilot and making use of the system of professional courtesy in American airlines where airlines would give pilots of competing airlines free passage if they had to get to another airport quickly.

So all they saw is, you know, this fancy uniform, this confident guy saying, well, I'm a Pan Am pilot. And they let him in and they let him fly around for free for two years before they figured out that he wasn't a pilot.

And when his cover was blown, he pretended to be a doctor and worked for 11 months as a medical supervisor before it was discovered that he knows nothing about medicine. He's one of the most famous con men in the world.

And he is actually working now to consult with the FBI to help them catch con men. He went to jail, but they actually said, OK, if you help us catch con men, we'll let you out of jail.

[ 4 : 08 ] And he runs his own company, anti-scam, anti-fraud company. Another famous scam, this is one of my favorites, a guy called Victor Lustig, who in 1925, posing as a French government official, managed to sell the Eiffel Tower twice to unsuspecting buyers and then made off with all their money.

I think that's great. It's bad, but it's classic. Now, there will always be a con man in our world ready to take advantage of the unsuspecting. And that's exactly what we see here in Joshua 9, because Joshua 9 is the story of one of the most famous scams recorded in the Bible, which the Gibeonites managed to pull on the Israelites.

Just a reminder of where we are in Joshua. If you haven't been with us for the last couple of weeks, the book of Joshua tells us about the Israelites, God's chosen people, moving into God's chosen place, which is the land of Canaan, now Israel, to live in a new holy kingdom under God's rule.

But to do this, God had commanded them to destroy the people who were currently living there. And this wasn't just to make space. It was also because these wicked people who were currently living there were due for God's judgment.

It had been a long time coming. And now God uses the nation of Israel to carry out his righteous judgment on these people, which is death. And we discussed last week, and we saw how God, because he gives life, has every right to take it away when and how he chooses.

[ 5 : 41 ] And the wages of sin is death. And to these people living in Canaan, their time had come. Their judgment had come. It's a warning to us. And Joshua is very violent.

It's very bloody. But it's right. And it warns us. It's a reminder that God is not to be messed with. That God is not the sanitized view of God that the Western world often give him.

No, this God is, he's hardcore. If you're not with him, you're against him. And you don't want to make an enemy of God. That's what we learn in Joshua. But also, the destruction of the Canaanites wasn't only for justice.

It wasn't only to see justice done. It was also necessary for the people of Israel if they were going to inherit the land. And the reason why is actually recorded back in Deuteronomy. You can turn there if you wish, or you can just listen.

Actually, it won't be up on the screen. But you can just listen. When Moses originally told the people God's command when they entered the land, he said this. In the cities of the nations, the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.

[ 6 : 42 ] Do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them. This is God's command to his people through Moses. The Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Jebusites.

As the Lord your God has commanded you. Otherwise, now this is the reason. Otherwise, this is Deuteronomy 20 verse 18. They will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods.

And you will sin against the Lord your God. You see, God's judgment to destroy every last one of these people was not just because they deserved it.

It was because if they remained alive, they would have compromised Israel's fragile holiness by tempting them away from God. And so disqualify them from entering God's holy land.

Because one of the qualifications of entering this holy kingdom that God was establishing is that these people obey the covenant requirements. And these Perizzites and Hivites and all the ites were going to tempt them away from obeying God.

[ 7 : 45 ] And that's why they needed to be destroyed. So that's how serious and dangerous sin is to the people of God. And today as well. Now we're not commanded to go out and destroy nations.

You'll be pleased to know like the Israelites were. They were at that time instruments of God's judgment. But we are not. Today Christians are instruments of God's grace. And yet, to be the people that God wants us to be, we have to take sin very seriously.

We have to take sin as seriously as His people did then. And we can't expect to enter eternal life one day if we think sin is okay. If we make a peace treaty with our sin, which we often do without even realizing it.

We let that little bit of sin into our lives and make a peace treaty with it. We get along with it. It's not nice. We don't like it. But we allow it. But God takes sin seriously.

That's what the book of Joshua teaches us over and over again. And He hasn't changed since then. God doesn't change. Even though He's shown us grace in Christ, He still expects us to rid our lives of sinful influences.

[ 8 : 53 ] To look out for sin. To purge sin from our lives. And not only because that is what heaven is, sinless.

But also because sin just destroys us. Sin harms us. Sin is bad for us. Even though we keep on drifting towards it. And so, again, we need to be reminded that to be a Christian, to follow Jesus, to live the life God has called us to, we can't make peace treaties with our sin.

All the more so because of how sneaky and deceptive sin can be. If you've been a Christian for any amount of time, you'll know how sneaky sin is. Which is really what this story, the Gibeonites, implies.

You see, this story is showing us how easily God's people can be deceived. It's a warning to us. And that's the first thing I want us to realize from Joshua 9 this morning.

Now, we read from verse 1. After the battle of Ai, the enemies of Israel formed an alliance against them. They started to see, okay, Israel is a real threat. And they formed an alliance to try to fight the Israelites.

[ 10 : 01 ] Except this people group called the Gibeonites who were smarter than the rest. Because they realized they had no chance of fighting against the Israelites. You don't fight against an army with God on their side.

That's just stupid. And they also knew, the Gibeonites also knew, that they couldn't go to the Israelites and ask for mercy. Because God had already issued their death sentence. There was no mercy left just by asking for it.

And so, they tried another approach. They tried to pull this elaborate scam. And the way they did it, I'll just remind you, from Joshua 9. They decided to go ask the Israelites for a peace treaty.

While pretending to be from a far off country. Not one of the ones that the Israelites had to destroy. And so, Israel were allowed to make peace treaties with countries who were far off. And as a convincer, because every good con needs a convincer.

They dressed up in worn out clothes. Packed their bags with moldy bread and broken wineskins. And then they arrived at Israel's camp. Sort of panting and puffing. Pretending to have come from this long journey.

[ 11 : 02 ] Even though they came from around the corner. And they claimed to have traveled a long way to get there. And they really looked the part. Now, what's interesting is that the Israelites didn't fall for the scam right away. They were skeptical.

They asked the right questions. Joshua himself came out and interrogated the Gibeonites. But their story was so good. It held together so well. And they played their part so well. That even Joshua eventually fell for it.

And so, he made a treaty with them. In the name of God. That the Israelites wouldn't harm them. And the Gibeonites, of course, were very thankful. And turned around. And off they went. No doubt sniggering to themselves.

That they had pulled a fast one on the Israelites. Now, a few days later, the Israelites decide to march towards the next cities in their campaign. And they get to what they didn't know at the time were the Gibeonites cities.

They arrive. And, of course, the Gibeonites pop their head over the wall and say, Hey, guys. Remember us? The people you promised not to kill? Well, suffice it to say, the Israelites were not too chuffed.

[ 12 : 01 ] They had been royally duped. They had been tricked. And you can imagine how they feel. You know, like you feel when you get tricked by someone. When you get conned. If you've ever felt that way.

You're crossed with the person who did it. But you're actually more crossed with yourself for falling for it. And they should have been crossed with themselves, the Israelites. Because they made a big mistake. Which is the reason they were fooled.

And the Bible tells us what their mistake was. And that's what we need to learn this morning. The Bible tells us why they were tricked. And we see it in verse 14. Have a look. The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord.

And that was their mistake. They thought they had this. They didn't need to bring it to God. No, they're smart. They're clever. They can work this out. They could see for themselves.

It was an easy decision. I mean, obviously these people are from a far-off country. Their bread is moldy. How can they be from just next door? And so the Israelites, their mistake was believing what they saw in front of their eyes.

[ 13 : 02 ] Just believing it. Without taking it to God. Relying on their own judgment. Believing the way things seemed to them without stopping and checking with God first.

That was their error, we're told. Relying on their own judgment. Relying on their own judgment. I remember when I was a child, when I was quite young, the bedside light next to my bed one night, I think it was bumped, and the cable of the bedside light fell out.

And I picked up the end of this cable, and I looked at it. And I was a very curious kid, and I didn't know much about electricity. And I remember having this insatiable urge to touch the end of it.

And then I remember the thought crossing my mind, maybe I should ask mom if this is safe first. And then I promptly went, nah. And I touched it, and I got the shock of my life.

Now, I can imagine, actually, my mom hearing this on the recorded sermon, going, you what? How did you do? Because I never told her. Anyway, I hope she doesn't listen.

[ 14 : 10 ] But the point was, I thought I could trust my own judgment. You know, I thought, well, it looks safe. And as humans, we've got this nasty habit of thinking we can trust our own judgment when it comes to life, when it comes to making decisions.

And yet, we're just like I was as that kid with that electricity. Especially when it comes to things that can harm us spiritually, we often don't realize. When we come across something or someone who can really harm us spiritually, who can really take us away from God, we often don't realize how dangerous that is.

But we were reminded last week, Satan, the enemy of God's people, who is living and real and intelligent, he is constantly scheming against God's children.

We're planning on plotting our downfall, thinking about every day, thinking about new strategies and ploys to trick us, to take us away from God and away from living the lives God calls us to live. And he will use anything and anybody he can find to do that in your life.

And all too often, he succeeds because of the simple fact that we fail to bring every part of our lives to God in prayer. Our prayer lives are quite poor at the best of times.

[ 15 : 19 ] And when we do pray, we tend to bring the important things, the things we know we need help in, but not the areas of our life that we think we've got under control. We tend to leave those to ourselves, not bring them to God.

We, in those areas, try to live our life according to our own wisdom and proceed in our life without God. And we fail. And we fail and we damage ourselves.

Like the song goes, Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

That's the lesson of Joshua 9. And you see, prayer is far more important than we tend to think. Prayer is the way we engage with the unseen, the things that aren't obvious to us, the world out there that is behind the curtains, that we can't see with our physical eyes, that is nonetheless around us every day.

And the biggest mistake we make is to ignore that unseen world and all the spiritual battles that are going on and just to concentrate on what we can see in front of us, just to concentrate on the material and the immediate and ignore the spiritual and the invisible.

[ 16 : 28 ] And we think we know how to proceed in our lives. And we don't. That's the thing. We can so easily be tricked. We can so easily be taken for a ride.

We don't know how to proceed in our lives. We don't know what to do with our lives in the time that we're given. For a pilgrim, you see, journeying through this broken world towards the promised land, there are hidden spiritual dangers around every corner and we've got to watch out for them.

Every day you will face trials and temptations and things and people that may seem harmless on the surface and yet can draw you away from God.

And if you aren't on your guard, bringing every day and every part of your life to God in prayer, then you're going to get duped sooner or later. I'm telling you that now. You know, that's why Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 26, watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. And Ephesians 6 says, pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. Be alert and always keep on praying.

[ 17 : 36 ] And Colossians 4 says, devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful. You see the language that's used here? Be alert, be watchful, watch and pray. It's the language of a sentry in a battle, being awake and looking out for the enemy at all times.

You can't rest. And so how do we do that? How do we stay alert? How do we stay watchful for sin's influence in our lives and the schemes of the devil? Well, you devote yourselves to pray on all occasions and keep on praying, even when you don't think you need to.

Even when there's not anything urgent and pressing in your life. Don't neglect the habit of prayer. Don't only pray when you need something. Because prayer is a way that we remain watchful and that we keep on bringing every little area of our lives to God and devote it to him.

And ask for his guidance, which of course he gives us in his word as we pray and as we listen to the promptings of the spirit. And so prayer, what I'm saying is prayer for a Christian should be like breathing.

You know, you don't forget to breathe, do you? You don't stop breathing because you forget that you need air. We shouldn't be able to go long without coming back to God in prayer.

[ 18 : 54 ] Setting before his throne the challenges and choices of our lives. And then seeking his will in each and every matter in our lives. Even the things that don't seem important. And we do that through his word.

You see, we need to realize this morning we can't survive as Christians without this constant communication with God. This open line of communication through prayer and through his word.

The Israelites thought they could get on and survive without it. And that's why they failed. But the story goes on. It doesn't end there. And it goes on to show us how they went on to handle their failure.

And there's something we can learn in that too. See, once they realized they had been swindled, the Israelites wanted to kill the Gibeonites. As you can imagine, they must have felt quite embarrassed.

And they wanted to get revenge. But that wasn't the only reason they wanted to kill the Gibeonites. They wanted to undo their mistake, which was to keep the Gibeonites alive. And this is where Joshua and the leaders finally do something good.

[ 19 : 58 ] They decided to choose the harder option and let the Gibeonites live as they promised them. And it's the harder option because the Gibeonites would, for generations to come, live in the same land as the Israelites and constantly threaten them spiritually.

As the Israelites were warned, they were going to remain a constant threat. It would have been much easier just to wipe out the Gibeonites, just to kill them then and there and pretend like all this never happened. And besides, that's what they were meant to do anyway.

So why didn't they? Why did Joshua and the Israelite leaders decide to keep the Gibeonites alive? Well, we see in verse 19, and it's because they had made a covenant in the name of God with these Gibeonites.

And Joshua knew that to break that covenant would therefore be to dishonor God, to dishonor God's name, to essentially break the third commandment, which is do not use the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Even though this covenant was made under false pretenses, even though it was made through deception, a covenant is a covenant. And God takes covenants seriously.

[ 21 : 14 ] That's what the second thing we learn here. God is taking covenants seriously. He's taking this covenant that Joshua made with the Gibeonites seriously. And we see in 2 Samuel, God actually upheld this very covenant that Joshua made with the Gibeonites by punishing a group of people who tried to attack the Gibeonites.

God took this covenant seriously, even though it was made through deception. Even though the Israelites were tricked into making it, the fact is that our God is a covenant-keeping God.

That is in the very nature of who He is. He keeps His promises. And so He expects His people to keep their promises too, because they represent Him in this world.

Now, just pause there. Our God is a covenant-keeping God. We see this over and over again. There's not one promise that God has ever made that He's broken, which is a huge encouragement to us when we read His promises in the Bible.

We don't read His promises and go, well, I hope God's going to keep that. We know through His track record that He has always kept His promises because He's a promise-keeping God. And so we know when He tells us that you can find forgiveness through Jesus, when He tells us that He has opened the way to heaven through Jesus' death on the cross, and all you need to do is repent and follow Jesus, you can know that He's not going to go back on that.

[ 22 : 33 ] You can know if you're a Christian and you've done that and you've repented and followed Jesus, God isn't going to go back on His promise and one day you find yourself standing before Him and He goes, oh yeah, that thing about forgiving your sins, I'm taking that back.

I've changed my mind. He will never do that. Okay, that's the sure foundation that only a Christian can have. And so God is a covenant-keeping God, and so He also expects those people who represent Him on this earth to be covenant-keeping people.

And that's why Joshua knew to break this oath, even though it would fix the problem, would be to dishonor God. It would be essentially to fix one sin with another sin. And isn't that always a temptation?

When we sin, when we make a mess up, when we make a mistake, it's almost always the easier option to sin some more to make up for that sin. You know, we do something wrong, and we're found out, so what do we do?

We lie about it, to try to fix it. We try to fix a sin with another sin. It's just one of the devil's basic tactics. Because our first thought is to sin in order to fix this.

[ 23 : 42 ] To produce ever more elaborate sins to cover over the original sin. Watch out for that, because it's one of the deceiver's tactics. And God, on the other hand, calls us often to walk the harder road to fix our mistakes, especially when it comes to keeping His promises.

If we are God's people, and we represent Him in this world, we must keep our word even when it hurts. And sometimes it will hurt. When we made a rash promise, when we made a promise with not all the information in front of us, and the temptation is just to go against what we said and break our promise, God wants His people to keep their word even when it hurts.

And that's why He blesses Joshua's decision here, because that's the decision he makes, to keep His promise even when it hurts. And all the more so, because in our world, promises aren't really seen as that binding, are they?

I mean, promises that are made, people quite easily break them without a second thought. And that's why we need to have written contracts, because we can't take people at their word in this world. Even the promises made by spouses to one another in their marriage aren't seen as binding anymore.

Divorce is seen as the easy option in our world. It's really easy to get divorced. It's just a legal process. You know, a man fails in his marriage. Maybe he commits adultery, or lies, or is doing something that is dishonoring his wife, whatever it is.

[ 25 : 13 ] But because of it, the marriage starts falling apart, and it goes from bad to worse. And over the years, it just gets worse and worse and worse, and the communication breaks down. And you know what he thinks? He thinks, well, the easiest thing to do is just to end it, just to get a divorce, without working to fix it, which is the harder option.

Divorce is the easy option. And he thinks breaking his marriage covenant will somehow undo his failure. But it won't. It'll only compound it.

You know, divorce, because marriage is just not working, is the coward's way out for both a man and a woman. It doesn't fix anything. It's the easy option, but it's the harmful option.

And yes, it's often much harder to stay in a marriage that's unhappy, a marriage that's not working. But it's the God-honoring thing to do, because if you are married, you made a covenant before God, and God is a covenant-keeping God, and he expects his people to be the same.

And almost always, whether it's for marriage or any other promises you made, the way that honors God is the more difficult way. In our lives, when we come to forks in the road, when we come to decisions, the way that honors God is almost always going to be the more difficult way.

[ 26 : 30 ] And it's the way that we, as God's people, need to choose. Because in the end, it's always the better way, as we see here. Because Joshua took the better way, he kept his promise to the Gibeonites, and you know what happened?

We read the rest of Joshua, God honored that, and he gave the Israelites victory, despite their mistake here. And that's the great thing about Joshua and I, and we see a big mistake that the Israelites made, and yet we read on, and we see that God moved, well, God moved them past their mistake.

He brought them above their mistake. He honored Joshua's decision. And not only that, he even used this mistake to bring ultimate good, which is the last thing I want us to observe this morning.

God used evil for good. He used a mistake. He used sin to bring out good. And now God is in the business of doing that. He loves doing that. He loves taking your mistakes, even your sin, and if you're his child, bringing them to a better end, bringing them to a good outcome.

Because look how the whole episode ends from verse 26. This is important to notice. So Joshua saved them from the Israelites, the Gibeonites, that is, saved them from the Israelites, and they did not kill him.

[ 27 : 48 ] That day he made the Gibeonites woodcutters and water carriers for the assembly to provide for the needs of the altar of the Lord at the place the Lord would choose, and that is what they are to this day. It's just a bit of a throwaway line.



We find out what the Gibeonites ended up doing, but it's so important because you see where the Gibeonites ended up? They ended up serving the Israelites at the very altar of the Lord in the heart of Israelite religion, which would later become the temple in Jerusalem.

The Gibeonites were the cheap labor for the Jerusalem temple. These enemies, these wicked pagan Canaanites who originally threatened Israel's holiness and relationship with God ended up helping the Israelites in their relationship with God by serving them at the temple.

And many of them themselves ended up worshiping the one true God. And we read in Nehemiah later in the Bible, the Gibeonites gave the Jews much-needed help in rebuilding Jerusalem after the exile, helping them to live in the promised land when originally they were the people who threatened Israel from entering the promised land.

Do you see how God turned it around? And God certainly has a sense of humor, doesn't he? The very people who were the biggest threat to Israel's holiness are the people who end up giving them wood to burn their sacrifices in the temple.

[ 29 : 08 ] The people who end up helping the Israelites rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, helping them in their relationship with God. God's got a sense of humor. It's a huge encouragement. God is in the business of turning our mistakes into his victories, and that is a big encouragement for any of us who mess up a lot, like me.

You see, if you know that you tend to mess things up in your life, you know what? I want to tell you this morning, if you're one of God's children through trusting and following Jesus, even your mess-ups don't interfere with God's good purposes.

He'll use even those mess-ups to achieve his ultimate plans for this world and for your life. Sure, they might hurt, and yes, you must avoid messing up as much as you can because you will pay for that.

It'll hurt. Your mess-ups may mean years of difficulty, but they will never stop God from fulfilling his promises and bringing you safely to eternal life, which is God's promise, God's covenant with his people, and he doesn't break his covenants despite your mess-ups.

Isn't that an encouragement? Because just as the Israelites went on to see the promised land despite their mistakes, God's people under his covenant today will go on to see eternal life despite our many mistakes.

[ 30 : 24 ] If you are a child of God, you can have that hope, that sure hope. But maybe you're not. Maybe you're not a child of God. Maybe you're not yet under his covenant protection.

You still don't know where you're going when you die. And if that's you, then I would encourage you to take a leaf out of the Gibeonites book this morning because they realized they were in trouble with a holy God as are all sinners.

And so, you know what, they did everything they could to make a covenant with Joshua to spare them. Of course, they didn't go about it the right way. But what they did right was to recognize their need to enter into relationship with Joshua and through their relationship with him they were saved.

They realized the only way they can have salvation is through having a covenant relationship with Joshua. Well, you know, Joshua in the Old Testament is a foreshadow of Jesus in the New Testament.

They have the same name, Yeshua. Joshua. And just as it was with the Gibeonites, when you too realize that you are in trouble with the just and holy God who will judge all sin, even the hidden thoughts, with his holy and perfect justice, you also need to enter into a saving relationship with Jesus.

[ 31 : 40 ] You need to realize that he is the only person that you can find salvation from your sins. But of course, where Joshua saved the Gibeonites reluctantly, Jesus is ready to save you willingly if only you would come to him in faith and repentance.

And so this story teaches us in closing not only about the justice of God and the danger of sin, but also it teaches us about the grace of God and his mercy towards those who come under his covenant, wicked as they may be, and who bow the knee to their rightful king that God promises to have mercy on them.

So have you done that yet? Have you bowed the knee to your rightful king? Have you given over control of your life to him who gave you life and gives you life every day?

Have you come under the rule of Jesus? And if you have, if you're a child of God this morning through Christ, will you continue from now on to depend on him every day, to bring all of your life before him in faithful prayer and know that as you follow him, he will surely lead you to eternal life.

Let's pray. Let's do that right now. Yes, Lord Jesus, we know that you live, you came to earth to die for sins. You came to earth to be the one who fulfills all of God's covenant requirements so that those who are in you can enjoy all of God's covenant promises which he will never, never break.

[ 33 : 07 ] Thank you, Lord, for this great assurance that you are a covenant-keeping God. Lord, help us to be covenant people by following Jesus Christ and turning away from our sin and putting off our sin.

Help us to be watchful and alert to the devil's schemes and help us, Lord, in this coming week and month and year just to develop the discipline of bringing every part of our life to you in prayer and submitting it to you and following your lead.

even in the things that we think are unimportant. Lord, help us to be people of prayer and help us to follow you, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.