

Hosea 4:1-5:15

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[0:00] Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land. There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in the land.

There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery. They break all bounds and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Because of this land, because of this, the land dries up and all who live in it waste away.

The beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away. But let no one bring a charge. Let no one accuse another. For your people are like those who bring charges against a priest.

You stumble day and night and the prophets stumble with you. So I will destroy your mother. My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests.

Because you have ignored the law of your God. I also will ignore your children. The more priests there were, the more they sinned against me. They exchanged their glorious God for something disgraceful.

[0:58] They feed on the sins of my people and relish their wickedness. And it will be like people, like priests. I will punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds. They will eat but not have enough.

They will engage in prostitution but not flourish. Because they have deserted the Lord to give themselves to prostitution, old wine and new wine take away their understanding. My people consult a wooden idol and a diviner's rod speaks to them.

A spirit of prostitution leads the mystery. They are unfaithful to their God. They sacrifice on the mountaintops and burn offerings on the hills. Under oak, poplar and terebinth where the shade is pleasant.

Therefore, your daughters turn to prostitution and your daughters-in-law to adultery. I will not punish your daughters when they turn to prostitutions nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery.

Because the men themselves consort with harlots and sacrifice with shined prostitutes. A people without understanding will come to ruin. Though you, Israel, commit adultery, do not let Judah become guilty.

[1:59] Do not go to Gilgal. Do not go up to Beth-Avon. And do not swear as surely as the Lord lives. The Israelites are stubborn like a stubborn heifer. How then can the Lord pasture them like lambs in a meadow?

Ephraim is joined to idols. Leave him alone. Even when their drinks are gone, they continue their prostitution. Their rulers dearly love shameful ways. A whirlwind will sweep them away.

And their sacrifices will bring them shame. Hear this, you priests. Pay attention, you Israelites. Listen, royal house.

This judgment is against you. You have been a snare at Mizpah. A net spread out on Tabor. The rebels are knee-deep in slaughter. I will discipline all of them.

I know all about Ephraim. Israel is not hidden from me. Ephraim, you have now turned to prostitution. Israel is corrupt. Their deeds do not permit them to return to their gods.

[2:59] A spirit of prostitution is in their heart. They do not acknowledge the Lord. Israel's arrogance testifies against them. The Israelites, even Ephraim, stumble in their sin.

Judah also stumbles with them. When they go with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord, they will not find him. He has withdrawn himself from them. They are unfaithful to the Lord.

They give birth to illegitimate children. When they celebrate their new moon feasts, he will devour their fields. Sound the trumpet in Gibeah, the horn in Ramah.

Raise the battle cry in Beth-Avon. Lead on, Benjamin. Ephraim will be laid waste on the day of reckoning. Among the tribes of Israel, I proclaim what is certain.

Judah's leaders are like those who move the boundary stones. I will pour out my wrath on them like a flood of water. Ephraim is oppressed, trampled in judgment, intent on pursuing idols.

[4:00] I am like a moth to Ephraim, like rot to the people of Judah. When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah his sores, then Ephraim turned to Assyria and sent the great king for help.

But he is not able to cure you, not able to heal your sores. For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah. I will tear them to pieces and go away.

I will carry them off with no one to rescue them. Then I will return to my lair until they have borne their guilt and seek my face. In their misery, they will earnestly seek me.

You want to keep your Bibles open and apps open? We'll start at chapter four. If you're just joining us, then we are working our way through this book of the Bible, the book of the prophecy of Hosea. That we've been seeing at the same time, it is two stories. It is a very human story between a husband and wife, Hosea and Gomer.

[5:00] In classic Spoonerism, I had him married to Homer, which is a whole other sort of Simpsons episode possibility. It is at the same time a human story, but also it is a spiritual story of a breaking heart of a man whose wife has left him for another man and for other men.

And of a God of whose heart is breaking over his people who have left him for other gods who are no gods at all. Chapter one, we saw the faithfulness of God.

Chapters two and three, we saw God as our redeemer. And here in chapters four and five, you sense the solemnity of it because we're encountering and seeing him as judge.

Chapters one and three were heavily narrative. They painted the kind of the picture, the story. Chapter two was that powerful prophetic prose that led us into the depth of the anguish of the situation, the anguish in Homer's heart, Hosea's heart, there we go, and the anguish in God's heart. But here in chapters four and five, we find ourselves taken from those pictures into the courtroom, don't we? And here we're given insight into something that even as it was read, it feels uncomfortable, a little uncomfortable to us, but actually is crucial for us, crucial for us in our understanding of the Lord's.

[6:32] And crucial is this idea that yes, he is maker. Yes, he is sustainer. Yes, he is redeemer. Yes, he is judge. But he is, yes, he is our redeemer, but also he is our judge.

He is the judge of all the earth. And there are many things that we can say about that, the scriptures say about that, but I just want to highlight a couple of things as we begin to think about God as judge.

We need to think about God as judge because firstly, we will never fully understand the wonder of the cross, why Jesus died for us, if we do not understand this aspect of God's character.

We need to understand also that God's judgment, when he comes as judge, his judgments are not like ours, sort of tainted and so on.

His judgments are always right, always fair, always fully just. They're not petty. They're not capricious. But come from the heart of one whose heart we've already begun to see, who is, the scriptures tell us again and again, is slow to anger, abounding in love, who does not delight in judgment.

[7:39] So much so that the reformers called the work of the judgment of God, the work of his left hand. So we need to understand that it will give us a better understanding of the cross.

We need to understand that his judgment is not like our judgment, it's always fair and so on. And that there is a day of judgment coming, that he will judge the living and the dead on the last day. We will all have to stand before him and give account for our lives, the lives that we've lived. And that he has dropped into, fourthly, he's dropped into time and space the measure that he will use, so that we know exactly what he is expecting of us and the standard against which we will be judged.

He's dropped the plumb line against which our crookedness, our sin will be measured, and it is this. It is the eternal law, isn't it, that stands forever because it is an overflow and outflowing of his character.

Those ten words of life that we looked at in Exodus 20, the ten commandments. And those ten commandments can be summed up just in one word. And the word is love.

[8:50] Love. Love that goes in two directions. Firstly, vertically, love for him. And then horizontally, love for a neighbor and one another. And we saw how the first four commandments are those vertical, in that vertical direction of love for him and how we can love him.

And the rest of the commandments are in that horizontal direction, how we love one another. And he is the God who sees everything, all angles, all perspectives, all the attitudes of our hearts and the actions that we have taken.

And that people may be able to feel that they can pull the wool over others' eyes in this life, but there will be no pulling the wool over God's eyes on that last day, where we will give a perfect account of our lives to the one who sees all.

So we've been seeing how the Lord has used a broken marriage to vividly describe the state of affairs of his relationship with his church at the time, his bride.

We looked at the elements of the wedding and the vows between God's people and God's in Genesis 15 and Exodus 24. And the terms of the marriage reiterated in Deuteronomy before the people entered the land and sought to live with God as his people in his place under his rule and his blessing in perfect relationship.

[10:15] But now that things have gone wrong, God wants to draw them back to see what has gone wrong in order to ultimately to draw them back to himself.

And he will refer back to the ceremony and to the vows that were made and the agreement that came between the people and himself. Isaiah was a contemporary of Hosea.

And through the Lord, he states what the Lord is seeking to do. Isaiah chapter 1 verse 18, the King James Version. Come, says the Lord, let us reason together.

He is reasoning with them, helping them to see the reality of the situation in order to bring about a change of heart that ultimately leads them back to himself. So here we are in the courtroom.

And there are two charges that we will see being set. One against the people, the church, in chapter 4 verses 1 to 4. One against the priests and the prophets, chapter 4 verses 5 to 9.

[11:19] And then together in verses 4, 10 to 14. There are two sets of charges given. And then there are two warnings given. One to Judah in chapter 4 verses 15 to 19. And one to Ephraim or Israel.

Israel and Ephraim are synonymous. Ephraim was probably the largest of the tribes at the time. And so the names are interchangeable in chapter 5 verses 1 to 15. So first of all, then the charge against the church.

You can see in chapter 4 verse 1, there's a sort of call to order, isn't there? Both in the beginning of chapter 4 and chapter 5. It's almost like, here, here. Almost all, you know, it's like the prophet is saying, all rise as the judge enters and hear what is to be said.

And then in chapter 4 verse 2 and then verses 4 to 19, the evidence is presented. In 4 verse 3 and chapter 5, the judgment, the verdict is read, if you like.

And a key idea is expressed really in chapter 4 verse 7 that sums up really what has happened and describes the situation. It is this, that they, the church, have exchanged their glorious gods for something ultimately disgraceful.

[12:35] If he is truly their shepherd, king and husband, then they who were once found by him have now found themselves lost.

And in chapter 4, we see how actually over maybe two or three generations, a good-going church, how it can end up.

Though it's still busy and we know that from the context in Isaiah and other places. But actually, the reality is, after two or three generations, verse 8, they were relishing wickedness.

Where things that should be declared holy and good are despised and thought of as sin. And those things that are actually sin before God are celebrated.

A church that no longer has confidence that ultimately God is good. And that his gospel is good news. And that it does actually provide a better story than all the stories and narratives that the world offers.

[13:41] And when we begin to see that those are the dynamics that we're reading about here in Hosea, what is a very old and quite remote story suddenly becomes a very contemporary tale.

These things continue to happen and have happened down the ages and have been happening in the church, the visible church in the West over the past decades.

I grew up in the west coast of the Highlands by the sea. And when I was growing up, large metal buoys were sort of spread across in the sea that just gently clanged away in the waves, warning that there were rocks, warning of shipwreck.

And this prophecy of Hosea, in a sense, has clanged away across the ages. It clanged firstly in warning to the southern kingdom of Judah.

And we see that in chapter 4, verse 15. But it has clanged away as a warning. And Paul tells us that these stories are given as a warning to us, that we might learn from them to every generation of believers since.

[15:01] And so we need to take these things seriously. This is what God wants us to hear. He wants us to know so that we can avoid the mistakes of the past. So let's slip back into the courtroom to watch and hear the proceedings.

Verse 1, here's the charge that is against them, that there is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in the lands.

These are, if you like, the internal affections of the heart that are being exposed. And there is no love in their heart for God.

There's an abandonment, if you like, of the essence of the first four commandments, which were in that vertical relationship of love for God, the God who first loved us.

Now, immediately, the defense may be on their feet. Objection. Oh, the festivals are full. The sacrifices are made at the temple. And so on, chapter 5, verse 6 there.

[16:05] But, and there have never been any more priests than we've had now. Chapter 4, verse 7. So they may be moving for immediate dismissal, saying there's no evidence for this charge, is there?

But if such a thing were available at the time, it might just so happen that anyone who had their ancient Bible app, you know, it's only the Old Testament, obviously, because that's all they had, you know, might have beeped to say the text for the day.

What would it have been, maybe? Isaiah 29, verse 13. The Lord says this, These people come near me with their mouth, and honour me with their lips, but their hearts, that's another thing, they're far from me.

Their worship of me is based on merely human rules that they've been taught. Okay, so what is the evidence then? How can we know when the heart has gone dead to God?

When the church has gone astray? Even though the services may be full. Well, I think what we'll see is that there's actually no fruit of righteousness. There's no evidence in their lives that actually they love the Lord.

[17:16] That theirs is just a Sabbath faith. Worshipping on the Lord on the Sabbath, but no reality in the other six days of the week.

A Sunday faith, if you like. And no reality of faith in the other days of the week. Either in their heart, verse 1, or in their life, as we'll see here in verse 2, when five of the ten commandments are reeled off as broken.

And we see that not only love for God has gone, but there's no love of neighbor. God's redeeming purposes have been lost as his people have walked away from his love.

And you can put a finger in this passage and look at Exodus 20 with me, and you can see just which commandments he brings up. Isaiah chapter 4, verse 2. He speaks about their cursing, maybe the breaking of the third commandment, misusing the Lord's name, or foul language, or lying, breaking the ninth commandment, murdering the sixth, stealing the eighth, adultery the seventh.

Society has broken down, isn't it? And there is, verse 2, the breaking of all bonds, and bloodshed upon bloodshed. The law that set out the paths of righteousness that the shepherd would kindly and gently lead them on, set out the new life of the people of God as they entered into the promised lands.

[18:50] It's just left behind. It's abandoned, isn't it? When there's no love for God, there is no love for his ways, is there? No desire to be faithful to him in the everyday, in the little things, as well as in the big, in the shaping of our consciences, in dealing with our temptations, and the restraint of our will, in the words of our mouths, or the desires of our hearts.

The actions that we take are no longer taken in the light of the gospel, but in the darkness of a will that is no longer subject to or acknowledges the Lord's.

And when that happens, our consciences become seared, they become hardened by sinful action. They're no longer tender to the Lord's. And we're no longer thinking, how can my thinking, my being, my acting, my reacting be shaped by the gospel and by the new worldview that it gives about my identity, about my value, about my worth?

And they had. And when these dynamics happen in the church, we become functionally pagan, living like the nations are right, even though the worship services are full.

And of course, you know the scriptures, this doesn't happen overnight. It happened over several generations. Each generation just giving in to compromises, making life that little bit easier for them to live with the nations around, to make them more prosperous, that we lie here, that we're cheating on that property deal there.

[20 : 35] The leaders not just trying to make life easier for themselves, not challenging the worship of the Baals up in the high hilltops that he speaks about in chapter, in verse 13. So busy with their lives, not seeing the priority to encourage others to sit with their kids and to talk about the Lord around the dinner table, to pray with them, read the scriptures.

And of course, yeah, they're still out at the weekend, though, at the services. But actually, faith is dying. True, genuine faithfulness is going.

See, the church in its success can easily fall asleep and three generations later find itself utterly unfaithful. Somewhere along the line, people had become irritated with the clanging of that bell as it gently gave the warning of Hosea.

Somebody rose out and puts a bit of cloth around it, muffles it, silences so it no longer sounds, so that no one is hearing or heeding its warning of danger. And the decline in this way of the church in any generation is slow.

And it will be subtle at first. What is one degree off in one generation, 200 years later as the time frame was here, you see that it is way off.

[22 : 14] And of course, in terms of trying to bring this into our own time, we don't have to think too far. I don't want to berate things, but we have seen over the generations, since the 1800s, what has happened when theologians started to unjustly pull apart the Word of God, things later shown to be nonsense, but it set the rot in.

Like the Lord talks about in chapter 5, verse 12. I don't know if I've mentioned this, but already it's happening in some of the newer denominations that have started in recent days, in recent years.

They're beginning to go down the same path as the older ones tolerating the more progressive theological agenda. And within a few generations, if they do not heed the warning of the prophets, they'll become totally liberalized and die.

But what is the result for a church that has just walked away? Well, it is judgment. Verse 3. As we see what is being outlined here, they're really the forfeits, aren't they?

The curses that were outlined in Deuteronomy 28 in the agreement that the people made with the Lord and the Lord with the people. And what we see in those verses, Ryan pointed out in our community group ultimately is decreation.

[23 : 36] At a time when actually the people of God were living faithfully, we see sort of new creation burgeoning forth. Actually, what they're witnessing is decreation. Verse 3.

And we saw that principle when we looked at Genesis. You know, at the beginning of Genesis, the waters covered the earth and then God speaks and it was and what happens is that the earth is formed and it is filled.

The seas recedes and life burgeons forth. But as the people walk away and, you know, Adam and Eve lead us in sin, what happens by Genesis chapter 6 is that the waters are covering the earth. Decreation has happened. And then again as we sort of walk through the scriptures, what is happening is God establishes his personal relationship with the people of God, what do we see? In a sense, new creation. If you like, taking hold new people in a new way with blessing on this new land that they are forming and filling. Sort of bringing back the blessing that was to be a form of the blessing that was to be in the beginning.

[24 : 48] But then as they walk away, what happens? Decreation. Paul really, I think, is probably drawing heavily on Hosea in Romans chapter 1 where he talks about these very things.

That society is given over to itself but is decreating as a sign of it is under judgment. I don't know if you looked at your news app this morning and thought, are we seeing, I mean, obviously news, they only tell the bad stuff.

And there are many good things happening in society, I'm sure. But actually, are we seeing signs of new creation or decreation? as we've walked away from him. Francis Schaeffer used to say that when we kill God, actually we kill humanity.

Why did he say that? How is that? He said that when we put to death the notion of an infinite personal God, humanity is left with the impersonal world of its own shifting values in regard to human meaning, dignity, and morality.

humanity. We deconstruct what is true reality and recreate humanity in our own image and it isn't pretty. It is not a better story.

[26 : 06] And we see that vividly presented here that the people of God have put to death the true knowledge of God. That comes in the repeated phrases of verse 6. My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge because you have rejected knowledge.

I also reject you as my priest because you've ignored what the law of God. And so verse 14, a people without understanding have come to ruin. And when the Bible speaks of knowledge, it's not just head knowledge, it's a relational knowledge.

It's not just knowing about, but it's a knowledge that leads to an actual knowing personal relationship with the Lord. So it's interesting that David in Psalm 23, for example, doesn't say that the Lord is our shepherd, but he's my shepherd.

It's personal. That's not as if the knowledge wasn't actually out there. It was fully available in the words. It was meant to be taught to them from their infancy as we were learning last week as we thought about God's covenant relationship with our kids.

But they have actively, willfully rejected it. But it's not just the people who have rejected the prophets, and the priests also are in the dock, and the prosecution turns to them.

[27 : 25] Verse 4. And it links, as they link the people's charges with the priests, and both are guilty alike.

Verse 5, the prophets too, bringing destruction on Mother Israel, on the nation. And so there's the charges against the people, then the charges, secondly, against the prophets and the priests.

Verse 6. The priests also have ignored the law of God. Verse 7. It's not that there was any shortage of them. The festivals were going like a fair.

Great numbers of priests. But what were they teaching? What was being practiced? What was being promoted? What was being permitted? Were they teaching it without practicing it?

Or were they effectively taking kind of scissors to the Word of God and ignoring certain bits? And if that was the case, then there's nothing new under the sun. In the second century, there was a huge scandal caused by a guy called Marcion, who decided effectively to take a pair of scissors to the scriptures and cut out the bits that he didn't like.

[28 : 38] The Old Testament, that went for a start. He wasn't keen on the God that he felt was presented in the Old Testament. Not a massive fan of Paul either. You know, massive redaction going on there.

Even the words of Jesus or the words of the Gospels, especially where it pointed out that Jesus might actually be fully God and fully divine. As I mentioned, that process also was repeated in the 1800s and 1900s.

God is the effect of these things. Well, of course, it brings lack of confidence in the Word of God and so people turn away from it. So there is that kind of way of turning away.

But also, sadly, there is another way of turning when those who are given platform and position live double lives.

I could sadly go on a big list of popular Christian speakers and church leaders who had considered fruitfulness as a substitute for faithfulness.

[29 : 41] Just because their ministry was going well, they used it as an excuse to live immoral lives. You live long enough, you can recount a big long list of it, and I don't want to do it because it just saddens my heart.

That they are one thing at a conference platform, they start well, but finish poorly. one thing on a conference platform or on a Sunday morning, another thing the rest of the time, that performance outweighing personal godliness, competence negating the need for Christian character.

I will mention one contemporary example, and I take no glory in these things, and I'm certainly not saying that I am perfect, and if there's one finger pointing out there are three pointing back. But I remember a fellow trainee for ministry who was training with me at the time had left his wife and his children for a fellow ministry candidate.

He divorced his wife, got married, he took up a charge, and then in the parish that he was in, a distressed wife came to him and asked for help because their marriage was falling apart, her husband was conducting an affair, and all he could counsel her was this, oh well, these things happen, you can't deny your heart.

[31 : 08] He had lost all moral authority to teach the words, and what the word clearly states, and so basically had to do it. What was the net result? Well, it's akin, isn't it, to verse 8, relishing wickedness.

And like I say, when I'm pointing one finger out, there are three pointing back. It's easy to see the sin in others and neglect the presence and power of it in my life or our lives.

How are we giving in to temptation? Maybe living one way on Sunday, but another through the week, ignoring God and his ways for our lives in our workplace or in our homes or in our communities, in our families.

Exchanging, verse 7, our glorious God and all that he has for us and all that he wants to give to us for something disgraceful. But here, the leaders feed on the sin of God's people.

There's willfulness in all of this, isn't there? You can't help but thinking of biblical examples like the sins of Eli, the sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas in 1 Samuel 2, using the tabernacle of God to pick up and sleep with women who came there to worship, abusing their power and position.

[32 : 33] Rather than feeding the flock, they were feeding off the flock, using it for their own advantage and gain. Verse 9, then.

The focus moves away from the priest and they're all gathered in the dock together, the priest and the people. There, Hosea describes life and what Jeremiah describes, life sort of drinking from broken cisterns or C.S.

Lewis described as living life satisfied with mud pies in the slums when they could be making sandcastles by the beach. Verse 10, they have these insatiable desires.

They eat but they never have enough. They worship, verse 12, wooden idols. And there's a spirit of prostitution that they have by which it means just unfaithfulness to the Lord.

They're up in the high places paying for prostitutes in worship of the Baals. Verse 14 is that sort of given over sense that Paul talks about in Romans 1.

[33 : 35] If that's the way that you want to go, then on you go. Proverbs 14 reminds us that it is righteousness that exalts a nation, actually a church.

Here in verse 14 it is unrighteousness that brings it to ruin. And as we look at these verses there is something about seeking satisfaction other than in the Lord that will ultimately leave us unsatisfied. And that is the essence of verses 10 to 14, isn't it? We hunger and thirst but we will refuse to eat of the bread of life and drink from the water of life that will truly fulfill and satisfy and last. in a way that the world will never provide. Tolkien tried to convey that in the Lord of the Rings trilogy in the elven bread.

You just needed to take one bite of it and it would just sustain you for the whole day. see what sustains us as believers is when we are tempted to find it in the world but actually the scriptures keep coming drawing us wooing us alluring us back and saying no find it in the Lord find it in new creation breaking out in your life life.

[35 : 04] So those are the charges to the people the prophets and the priests here then there's the warnings firstly to Judah chapter 4 verses 15 to 19 so Gilgal and Beth Abon were the alternative illegitimate places of worship set up after Israel was annexed you know there was the division of the northern tribes or the southern tribes the northern tribes could no longer go to Jerusalem and so they set up Gilgal and Beth Abon and those quickly those centers quickly turned to idolatry.

In verse 16 I think we hear something of God our shepherd king and husband's heart who longs to draw them to life in the lush meadows but they stubbornly refuse so intoxicated by other loves there's no love for God verse 1 but there are loves for other things where are they there verse 18 they love shameful ways see when the darkness gets a hold when the decreation begins we begin to despise the light that we want that once was loved its morality is mocked its behaviors is berated it is disgusted rather than delighted by righteousness rejects its redeemer lambasts its lord words

and maybe you know like my life before i came i was once numbered amongst those who did those very things till new creation broke through and in god's mercy we were not reaping the whirlwind of chapter 4 verse 19 of our iniquity but an abundance of grace and mercy and then he addresses a warning to israel chapter 5 there's so much in these chapters time doesn't allow me to go into it but the solemn word of verse 6 kind of sums it up when they go with their flocks and herds to seek the lord in other words they go at the temple to sacrifice for their sin they will not find him he's withdrawn himself from them what a terrible thing david having committed such heinous acts knew that those kind of things could be a reality for him but in genuine repentance he pleads before the lord that such a thing would not happen to him do not cast me from your presence or take your holy spirit from me such a thing would be so too terrible for me but hosea warns of increasing judgment for

Ephraim for Israel if they do not repent and behind every word of judgment there is the implicit call to repent isn't there but he will come to them if they do not repent like the moth destroys he eats the fabric and so on and if they don't repent at that then he will come to them like the lion that will attack and carry them off and of course he's referring to Assyria who ironically they look to in verse 13 to protect them but they are the ones who will exile them but it is in that exile verse 15 that actually hope the glimmer of hope is presented isn't it while you're there when you look back and consider your ways and think of the foolishness of it actually it is there that you will seek me and there you will find me there maybe crying out as

David did in those verses surrounding the one I read earlier verse 10 create in me a pure heart oh God renew a steadfast spirit within me restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me what's happening in those he's pleading for new creation to break forth in his life again when we have been seeking and know we need the Lord when we can see that we are sinners in need of a savior when we sense the decreation in our souls we cried out and Lord save me and what happened new creation birthed in our souls and in our lives that's how Paul describes isn't it 2nd Corinthians therefore if anyone is in Christ new creation the old is gone the new has come and all of that new creation all of that ability to seek in the midst of the exile all of that is made possible only because ultimately the one who will go to the dock is not us but

God himself he will go and he will be sentenced and he will be judged and he will take the wrath and he will take the exile that we deserve to give us the righteousness that we don't so that we as we were sung earlier singing earlier may be declared not guilty freed not because of what we have done but because of what he has done and as that new creation that new life comes through repentance and faith what we begin to see is the great reversal if you like of what is happening in these chapters in chapter four the reversal that there is now faithfulness and trust in the life it might be faltering but it is there but the spirit is helping us trust him walk faithfully before him and so much love for him as we receive so much love from him and we delightingly!

[41 : 12] acknowledge him in our lives the law that we so loved at one time delighted to transgress verse two becomes the thing we delight to trust in as our guide as a means to help cultivate life in Christ and a lovely chat with someone recently just saying how they were loving just reading the scriptures and just seeing what God said and responding to it Matthew 6 verse 6 but when you pray go into your room close the door and pray to your father who is unseen then your father who sees what is done in secret will reward you he said I did it I just told I'm going to do that he said what blessing every day to just go into that place shut the door and seek him and find him and no wonderful answer to prayer so this is a solemn chapter!

isn't it? as it speaks about God yes we've heard him as faithful we've heard him as redeemer but we need to understand that he is judge also so what is this passage teaching us what is it speaking to your heart well maybe this morning the thing if you've not come to Christ yet is come come to Christ and receive new creation in your soul or believer hear the call of the Lord to come and love him with all your heart with all your soul with all your mind and your strength find joy and delight in him and his ways trust in him with the whole of your lives let him meet you in the valley as well as on the mountaintop let him help you stay faithful to him who is faithful to you but also for us as we come to the table and remember the sacrifice that he made on our behalf and we come the invitation to the table is to all those who truly love the

Lord but if for whatever reason you feel this morning you don't want to participate there's just something you know you need to deal with the Lord or you're not a believer feel free to pass it on nobody minds but we come to his table and as we come we remember that the one on the night

that he was betrayed took the bread and he broke it and said this is my body it was broken for you in your place same way also he took the cup the cup of salvation and he said this cup is the new covenant that is established in my blood drink of it all of you the apostle Paul reminds us that as often as we eat this bread and we drink this wine we proclaim the Lord's death that God cast his judgment where on us who deserved it no on himself who didn't deserve it as

Christ stood in the courtroom he stood in the dock that we deserve to stand in he stood in the dock for us that as the sentence was read it was our sentence that he was taking for us and standing and say I will bear the judgment that they deserve I will take hell's separation for them actually for you and for me that you and I the guilty may go free that whilst we encounter God as judge and hear his judgment yet we also know him as redeemer spared the judgment by his mercy and his grace from the one who took the judgment for us willingly dying on the cross his body broken his blood shed that you and I could know the wonder of his love new creation breaking forth in our lives so come eat drink pause and remember what he did for love's sake for you and of his great love for you but as we come let me just pray

God our father these have been solemn passages that we've been looking at and we know that they are your words for us for all scripture is God breathed and useful for teaching rebuking correcting and training and righteousness that the man of God and woman of God might be thoroughly equipped for every good work and so even though we find it difficult Lord we sit and we receive it and we hear its warning but also we hear your call your desire to allure us and win us and woo us and have us as yours and for us to know the fullness of your love and the new life that you want to give to us in Christ by your spirit so Lord draw us afresh to the foot of the cross we ask and remind us again of the judgment that you bore for us so that wrath and mercy would meet and we would be recipients incredibly wonderfully of your amazing grace

[47 : 05] Lord take us to the cross this morning and lead us help us to gain afresh the wonder of who you are even though you are judge and what you would do for us Lord lead us we pray in Jesus name Amen