

Journey into Apostasy

Bible Characters

By Bob Vincent

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Trinity Presbyterian Church

2623 N Robison Road

Texarkana, TX 75501

Website: www.rbvincent.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/rbvincent

Our Scripture lesson is taken from 1 Kings 15, beginning there on page 551.

1 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijah became king of Judah, 2 and he reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother's name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom (Absalom). 3 He committed all the sins his father had done before him; his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his forefather had been. 4 Nevertheless, for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by raising up a son to succeed him and by making Jerusalem strong. 5 For David had done what was right in the eyes of the LORD and had not failed to keep any of the Lord's commands all the days of his life—except in the case of Uriah the Hittite. 6 There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam throughout Abijah's lifetime. 7 As for the other events of Abijah's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. 8 And Abijah rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. And Asa his son succeeded him as king. 9 In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king of Judah, 10 and he reigned in Jerusalem forty-one years. His grandmother's name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom (Absalom). 11 Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done. 12 He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his fathers had made. 13 He even deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive Asherah pole. Asa cut the pole down and burned it in the Kidron Valley. 14 Although he did not remove the high places, Asa's heart was

fully committed to the LORD all his life. 15 He brought into the temple of the LORD the silver and gold and the articles that he and his father had dedicated. (1 Kings 15:1-5)

The word of the Lord. [“Thanks be to God.”]

May we pray.

Lord, would you bless the reading and the preaching of your word that it would touch hearts because there isn't a person here today from our youngest person, Lord, whom we rejoice in hearing that sweet baby's cries, Lord, to the oldest here including the preacher, Lord, who doesn't need to hear the word of God in a way that touches our hearts and draws us to the Lord Jesus Christ. Grant it be so, Lord. For Jesus' sake, we pray. Amen.

Now, it's interesting, the *New International Version*, this is the 1984 version that you can no longer get anywhere thanks to Rupert Murdoch, and anyhow, that's not a joke. But the 1984 version of the *New International Version* was the product of a number of denominations in the English-speaking world, including Australia, including the British Isles, including America and Canada producing this document and it's a really great Bible.

It has some paraphrases that are useful. For example, in the original Hebrew, we have the statement that Maacah is the mother of King Asa as well as the mother of his father Abijah (1 Kings 15:2, 10), and it just illustrates a basic principle, the word father and the word mother in Hebrew, ab and em, can refer to an immediate ancestor like your own literal father or your ancestor (‘āb, אב; ‘ēm, אם, Koehler, Ludwig and Walter Baumgartner (1958), *The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill), pp. 2, 61). In fact, it can go back a number of generations. So when it says his father was so-and-so, his mother was so-and-so, it may refer to several generations back. It's just how the word av or ab and em are used in Hebrew. So they've paraphrased that so that you don't get confused.

And so anyhow, I want you to notice something. If you look at verse 3 concerning Abijah, and that's 1 Kings 15:3, page 551:

He committed all the sins his father had done before him; his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his forefather had been. (1 Kings 15:3)

Now that is an interesting statement, isn't it? Who is David?

David is his father (אָבִי), and that means that he is the great-grandson of David. David's son Solomon, and Solomon reigned from 970 to 931 BC.

David had reigned from 1010 to 970, and then we go to Rehoboam, who is the grandson of David, 931 to 913.

If we go to Abijam (or, Abijah) and he reigned from 913 to 911. And so we see here Abijam did not do, did not follow the Lord the way that David his father had followed. Notice what that means, that means that this man's father and grandfather had not followed the Lord. Do you ever think about that?

So here is a skipping of generations. David followed the Lord. Notice the Scripture is explicit and tells us that David followed, verse 5:

David had done what was right in the eyes of the LORD and had not failed to keep any of the Lord's commands all the days of his life—except in the case of Uriah the Hittite. (1 Kings 15:5)

Now that's interesting there because it doesn't mean that David was without all sin, it means he had not sinned with a high hand.

What does it mean to sin with a high hand? To sin with a high hand is to say in effect to God, "I don't care what you say. I don't care what you're telling me. I'm going to do it my way."

That's sinning with a high hand. It's different than the kinds of sins that we often commit on a daily basis when somebody pulls out in front of us, or when we see this terrible thing on the news, or this happens, or that happens, or our spouse annoys us. And I know that poor Sandy has me, and I have annoyed her a whole lot more than she annoys me. But everybody, if you've been married very long, experiences annoyance.

So we're not talking about careless words here and there. We're talking about a deliberate act, and in David's case—we won't go back through that—but in David's case, that whole period of time when he hardened his

heart at the time when kings go out to war (2 Samuel 11:1), David decided to take it easy and stay home, and he sinned with malice aforethought, and there were dreadful consequences.

But notice again that if we look there at verse 3 of 1 Kings 15:

He committed all the sins his father had done before him; his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his forefather had been. (1 Kings 15:3)

And if you turn back a few chapters in 1 Kings, we want to see something there and that's this, 1 Kings chapter 11, and let's look at verse 4. 1 Kings 11, looking at verse 4 and that is page 542, and it says in verse 4, and this is a warning particularly to people like me.

Why is that? "As Solomon grew old," you'd think that as a person grows old—as we looked last week at old counselors and young counselors and old prophets—that they would be wiser. And I think Solomon did at the end of his life write Ecclesiastes when he finally—I think he repented before he died. But Solomon when he got old that means that he was finally secure. He had to work long enough to have plenty of money in the bank. He wasn't worried about it. One word, you know, trying to identify where we are today (But in Solomon's case, it means that he had tried everything and found no satisfaction in anything

<https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=810141328431>).

And it says: When he grew old, "his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God," notice, "as the heart of David his father had been" (1 Kings 11:4).

Look at this list, verse 5,

He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done. (1 Kings 11:5)

We'll come back to that in a moment.

On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods. The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. (1 Kings 11:7-9)

Now I want you to look at this. This is very striking, and it says again in verse 6:

Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done. (1 Kings 11:6)

Now people sometimes read the Bible, and they read it in an unbelieving way and say, “Well, obviously this is wrong because David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband murdered.”

You’ve got to understand that the Bible is written as a whole book that needs to be read following the references, and the Bible will make clear in one place what’s obscure or may **seem** to give us the wrong idea in another one.

In other words, it’s very plain in this very chapter that we read later, that is in chapter 15, that David had sinned but what we want to see here is this amazing thing, here is a man who had as a father David and yet, having experienced unbelievable prosperity, he was an incredibly wealthy man because he capitalized on the fact that the *Via Maris*, which later was called that, the *Via Maris*, the Way of the Sea, that the place from the fertile crescent, in other words the place from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers down to where Egypt is, people had to travel through this territory, and Solomon mastered it. And he was a tradesman. He would buy things for a certain amount and sell them for another amount (1 Kings 10:28-29).

So Solomon understood how to make money, and he had an incredible gift of making money, and he was able to subdue all of the enemies of God, and he reigned in a supreme way. He built the temple of the Lord, he built his own temple, but he’s led astray because he married outside the Lord. That was something explicitly forbidden in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible (Exodus 34:16; Deuteronomy 7:1-4).

Why are we forbidden to marry outside of the Lord? Because God's design for marriage is an intimacy of the inner person. God created Adam and Eve, male and female he created them, and he made them one flesh. That one flesh relationship is the most intimate of all relationships in the world and when you become one with another person, you influence that person, and that person influences you (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:20-25).

And so Solomon practiced polygamy, and that was not forbidden in the Old Testament, for the hardness of their heart God permitted it (Cf. Matthew 19:8), but he forbade intermarriage with unbelievers (1 Corinthians 6:15-20). The Bible doesn't say anything negatively about interracial marriages (Numbers 12), but it says a great deal negatively about marrying someone of a different faith, because in the most intimate way of life, which is prayer, when you're praying with a person, how can you pray with a person who doesn't believe in your God? How can you pray with a person who doesn't respect the value system that you get from Scripture? It can't exist. And what happened is, as this man gets older, he begins to forget the good dealings of God with him over the years, and so his heart turns away.

It's utterly unbelievable what we read there on page 542, where we're told that he built these temples for these gods.

I remember meeting Moloch. Met him face to face. It was in 2008. Sandy and her sister and I had traveled to Egypt celebrating our 40th anniversary, and her sister came along, and we toured Egypt, and then we climbed Mount Sinai, and then after coming down from Mount Sinai, we went to Jordan and we visited Jordan, we saw Mount Nebo and other things in Jordan, and then we took a tour after other people in our group left us, Sandy, and her sister, and I, and two Filipino ladies toured Amman and other places for a day or two.

And in the Islamic world, a Muslim man can have up to four wives at once, and so it was interesting as we walked the streets of Amman, Jordan, I had behind me four women and I'm sure the Muslim men looking at me thought, "Man, that guy's got to be rich or he must have a whole lot of washers to fix all those sinks for all those women." Anyhow, so while we're there, we went to the high place of Amman, Jordan, and I met Moloch there.

Moloch was a rock, but they burned children alive in sacrifice to Moloch (מֹלֶךְ/mōlek, or מִלְכָם/milkōm). And the same is Chemosh (כְּמוֹשׁ, kēmōš). Chemosh and Moloch, **in essence**, are the same god, just with different names.

And can you believe that Solomon, the son of David, actually built on the hills around Jerusalem? Jerusalem is a city of seven hills (Scopus, Olivet, Corruption, Ophel, Zion, New Mount Zion, and Antonia).

Can you believe that he had built temples for his foreign wives burning babies to these pagan gods? It's unbelievable how this man could have turned his back on God, and that's why when we read over in 1 Kings chapter 15, it says there concerning Abijah that he "committed all the sins his father had done," 1 Kings 15:3, "his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his forefather had been," and so on.

Now we go over from him, we're just going to pass him by. We've got two kings that are omitted there, well, actually three. We have Solomon omitted. We have Rehoboam omitted. And then we have the next king, Abijam (Abihah), omitted. So we go down to Asa and we're told there that Asa, 1 Kings 15:11, "Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD," page 551:

"Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done. (1 Kings 15:11)

Notice what had been happening in Judah during this time with three wicked kings. With three wicked kings. Look what happens. "He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his fathers," fathers plural, "fathers had made."

So his father, his grandfather, and his great grandfather had made these idols. That's a striking statement, isn't it?

Who were the male shrine prostitutes? Well, in those days, in the Near East, they had shrine prostitutes. They had male shrine prostitutes, and they had female shrine prostitutes. They were full service. And so, anyhow, why did people go and engage in ritual prostitution? This was a big deal in the ancient Near East.

Ritual prostitution meant this: when you went to the temple or shrine or the high place of that god, and you engaged in physical relations with the person that worked there, whether male or female, they believed you were actually joining yourself to that god. That's what they believed.

Just as we have the Lord's Supper, and we believe that when at the end of our service, not today, but at the end of our service, following the preaching, when we partake of the Lord's Supper, the bread and the wine, we believe that we are having communion with Christ. That's why we call it Holy Communion.

So they believed that when they engaged in physical relations with a male or female shrine prostitute, they were engaged in communion with that particular god, and they believed that that would bring fertility, that that would bring prosperity, that that would bring good crops. And so that's the deal there.

But notice, this man is very zealous. Verse 14, "Although he did not remove the high places, Asa's heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life." But, and you've got to remember, as Paul Harvey used to say, the rest of the story.

Turn with me, if you will, to 2 Chronicles chapter 16 and I pray that in my life, I will not have a 2 Chronicles 16 written about me. 2 Chronicles chapter 16. What do we see here? And that is on page 695. Page 695 and we'll pick it up in verse 1. 2 Chronicles 16 verse 1.

In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the territory of Asa king of Judah. Asa then took the silver and gold out of the treasuries of the Lord's temple and of his own palace and sent it to Ben-Hadad king of Aram (that means Syria) who was ruling in Damascus. "Let there be a treaty between me and you, as there was between my father and your father. See, I am sending you silver and gold. Now break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so he will withdraw from me." (2 Chronicles 16:1-3)

So that happens, and so he enters into this deal. He gets entangled with a foreign nation, and he sends a bribe, “Break your covenant with Baasha” (who’s the king of the northern kingdom).

And so what happens? Look at verse 7, next page, 696.

At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him: “Because you relied on the king of Aram (that is Syria), and not on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand.” (2 Chronicles 16:7)

Now notice what he says in verse 8 and we could go and survey these other things, but we’re not, in the interest of time, going to survey them.

Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen? (2 Chronicles 16:8)

Now look at that next sentence there in that verse 8,

Yet when you relied on the LORD, he delivered them into your hand. (2 Chronicles 16:8)

Now verse 9 is a wonderful verse. This is a verse I memorized years ago,

Yet the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. (2 Chronicles 16:9)

I want to comment on that for a moment. In other words, this man had seen great victories.

One of the things that I began to do years ago when I saw a really dramatic answer to prayer is I began to keep a journal of answers to prayer, because it’s easy to forget them, and sometimes I’m looking for something that happened and I go and now it’s about 150 pages long, and it’s just an outline kind of, of my life, but especially significant things. And so I wrote it down. That was the incident where I had put, I’d put \$110 in the collection plate on a Sunday morning and I said, “Lord, you know, I’m really hurting financially,” and I’d read the previous week, “In that year Isaac sowed and reaped in the land a hundredfold” (Genesis 26:12), and I said, “Lord, I could

really use a hundredfold blessing.” And I said, “Lord, you know, you haven’t promised to give me a hundredfold blessing, but I could really use it. Please, Lord, bless this money and return it to me a hundredfold.”

Now again, God doesn’t promise you that as such, so directly as he’d done for Isaac, but you know six weeks later I opened up an envelope and it was in 1996, and inside that envelope were 200 shares of Wachovia Bank stock, and I got and looked and I checked, I got the mail on a Saturday, and I discovered that Wachovia Bank stock closed on Friday evening at \$55 a share. \$55 a share. 55 times 2 is 110 times 100. Wow. It was to the penny a hundredfold. It was a very dramatic thing, and I wrote about it. I thought, wow, this is something you want to remember (<https://www.rbvincent.com/wachovia.htm>).

And so that’s when I began to write down God’s amazing answers to prayer. Sandy and I have seen so many amazing answers to prayer.

Even yesterday, we prayed as our son and grandson were down near Venice, Louisiana, which is the very end of the Mississippi River where cruise boats go out into the Gulf, and they were hunting nutria. It was a deal that Benn had worked for his clients out of Houston; the man wanted to go on this hunt. And Benn said, “Please pray that we have some sunshine,” and we asked God to part the clouds, and we saw pictures, he sent us pictures of those dead rats. And you know what a nutria is?

It’s a giant rat with orange teeth. Just imagine, they’re ugly, and they’re fat, and they’re actually, because they’re harming our environment, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries puts a bounty on them. People go and get to hunt them, and you can eat them.

I understand—somebody told me that in New Orleans, a Taco Bell was putting them in—but I don’t know. They have fur. They were raised originally for fur.

But anyhow, God heard that prayer. We just wanted our grandson to see that God answers prayer, and when they were riding down, he had gotten his permit, so his daddy let him drive the car through New Orleans. Wow! That’s something, having just gotten his permit. And at a point, all of a sudden, they heard a screech, and there were a bunch of cars piled up behind them. It didn’t touch them.

And we just want our children and our grandchildren to know there is a God in Israel who hears and answers prayer and that's why I keep a journal.

God does amazing things. He hears and answers prayer. The greatest apologetic we ever had for our children as they went off to school and left us was a legacy of answered prayers: Getting ourselves into a great difficulty again and again and again, and God answering these prayers and writing them down.

So here's an example, and the example that we find there on page 696 concerning Asa, the second sentence in verse 8,

Yet when you relied on the LORD, he delivered them into your hand. (2 Chronicles 16:8)

And that wonderful promise, "For the eyes of the LORD range to," see I memorized the King James Version, "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself mighty to those whose hearts are fully his."

Think about that. Do you want to see deliverance in your life? Do you want to have a legacy to pass on to your children that there's a God who hears and answers prayer? Give your heart fully to him. That doesn't mean you'll never trip up, doesn't mean you'll never sin again, but it means that your heart is centered on the Lord, that you want to do his will, and when you're aware you haven't, you repent and say, "Lord, I was wrong. You were right. Please forgive me."

And so notice what the preacher said after that,

You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war. (2 Chronicles 16:9)

Wow. The preacher went from preaching to meddling. And from now on, you will be at war. Now notice the reaction of Asa, and I think back to Asa's father and grandfather and great-grandfather, and what happens later in life.

Asa was angry with the seer because of this; he was so enraged that he put him in prison. (2 Chronicles 16:10)

I'm very grateful that nobody can put me in prison for preaching and stepping on toes, although I've told you about the time the man pulled a shotgun when I was preaching on a street corner outside of a bar. Anyhow, so I'm grateful.

At the same time Asa brutally oppressed some of the people. The events of Asa's reign, from beginning to end, are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the physicians. (2 Chronicles 16:10-12)

Now, is it wrong to seek help from a physician? Of course, not but you'd better seek the Lord first, because lots of times things happen to us physically, financially, and other things to get our attention.

"Is God trying to tell me something in this," I always try to think that if I have trouble in the night or whatever and wake up with a problem. I think, "Lord, are you telling me something here?" Always ask that. But you see, his problem is what? He'd cut himself off from being able to hear from God. Can you do that? You can do that and still be a Christian.

I'll never forget a lady whose funeral I did, and she got mad at God, and she wouldn't let go of being mad at God. She could not hear from God. I remember back when we used to have a boat.

We took her and her husband out on the lake, and we talked for hours, and she just said, "I can't let go of it." She hated her husband's family and her husband said, "We're going to have to invite my family to our wedding anniversary, our 25th wedding anniversary."

"I don't want to invite them!" And she was so mad over it, so angry over it because she did not like his family, that she got bitter and bitter and bitter, and then one day I tried to counsel and I said, "You all need to come with me."

I drove them over to a psychiatrist and I left them there because I knew it was time to punt, and to punt to a professional, a psychiatrist, not a

psychologist, a psychiatrist. And you know, he never did help her. She tried to take her life a couple of times, and then she actually did take her life and I did her funeral

(<https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=918081830454>).

Can a person get out of the sanctuary, out of fellowship with God, and refuse to have any dealings with God? “I don’t want to talk to God anymore. I know what he’s going to tell me. No, I don’t want to hear from God.”

And here is Asa. Look at Asa. All the blessings he had had in life. The wonderful, amazing, dramatic answers to prayer. And here he is,

Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the physicians. Then in the forty-first year of his reign, (he reigned a long time), Asa died and rested with his fathers. They buried him in the tomb that he had cut out for himself in the City of David. They laid him on a bier covered with spices and various blended perfumes, and they made a huge fire in his honor. (2 Chronicles 16:12-14)

Do I believe that Asa went to heaven? I do. I believe that once saved, always saved. If you’re saved.

But if you can go on and on and on and on and on and on and on in sin and constantly ignore the Lord, something’s going to happen.

The first thing that God will do is to send you an affliction like this. Why did God send that affliction to his feet? So he would say, “Lord, you’re right. I’m wrong. Please forgive me, Lord. I want to hear from you. I want to have dealings with you, Lord, again.”

You know, if you’re not happy today, and I address this particularly to people who may be watching, if you’re not happy today, you’ve got to ask the question, why am I not happy?

The number one reason that people are not happy is they know something that God has called them to do, and they’re bound and determined, “I ain’t gonna do it!”

Well, I want to tell you, you'll never win with God. You think you can beat God? God will keep the pressure on, and there's what happens in Asa's life. Asa got angry because he had been rebuked because he had not trusted the Lord but trusted in his money and bought off the king of Damascus.

He doesn't want to hear from God. "I don't want to hear it. I don't want to hear it. I don't want to hear it. Shut up! I don't want to hear it anymore."

And you know, if there's something in your life that you know God wants you to do, I'm going to tell you the number one thing that God wants people to do if they profess to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, I'm talking to you, that's this: Have you forgiven everybody that's hurt you?

You don't live in this world very long without people hurting you, and Jesus teaches us when we pray the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

And then he adds this enjoiner on it, "If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." And he tells a story about a man who refused to forgive and because of that, he was turned over to the torturers (Matthew 18:34, *basanistēs, βασανιστής, οὖ, ὁ* "guard in a prison, freq. under orders to torture prisoners" (Frederick William Danker, ed. (2000), *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. Third edition (Chicago/London: Chicago University Press), p. 168).

I want to ask you today, on the 18th day of February, 2024, are you being tortured? Is there something that wakes you up in the night, and you just can't get rid of it? And you keep thinking, oh, it comes up,

"You need to forgive Leroy. You need to forgive Jethro. You need to forgive Ellie May. You need to forgive Uncle Jed. Because they've done you dirty, we know. They've done you dirty."

"They've really done me dirty. How can I ever forgive them?"

If you don't forgive them, you're going to be turned over to the torturers, Jesus says in that parable. Are you being tortured today? Is there something

you know you've just got to do and you say, "No, I'm not going to do it!" Then I've got to tell you, I've only got one message for you, you can seek the physicians all you want, you can get all the prescriptions you want, but you're going to have trouble sleeping, you're going to be awakened in the night, and that spot that itches suddenly is going to itch, and you're going to just be in misery.

Why don't you go ahead and deal with your business today? Deal with your business today. Say, "Lord, I choose to forgive," and name the person out loud to the Lord and you know what? The moment that you choose to forgive, though you may have to do it over and over and over again, the moment you do, it's broken.

Do you know that you can be here today and have committed first degree murder, and nobody knows about it, and you can walk out of here forgiven today?

"Are you kidding me? I could have committed first-degree murder, and nobody knows about it, and I can walk out of the Trinity Presbyterian Church on Robeson Road in Texarkana, Texas today, forgiven and right with God, and at peace in my heart, can that happen for me today?"

Yes, because,

"I serve a risen Savior
He's in the world today.
I know that He is living,
Whatever men may say.
I see His hand of mercy;
I hear His voice of cheer;
And just the time I need Him
He's always near."

And Jesus is here for you today. Won't you come to him? Won't you give him the thing that's bothering you? Won't you surrender all? Won't you lay it on God's altar and say, "Lord, I can't handle this anymore. Please take it from me."

Let's pray.

Lord, we pray that anyone listening to this word today would choose to ask your help, because we're not able to free other people without the work of the Holy Spirit, to ask you and say, "Lord, help me to forgive that person who's stuck a knife in my heart, Lord, and twisted it.

Please help me, Lord. I don't know how to do it. Give me your Holy Spirit's grace to forgive that person."

Or Lord, if there's something else that somebody's holding on to, maybe it's an affair that nobody knows about, Lord, then take that and bring it to the altar today and say, "Lord, I don't know how to stop this. I don't know how to be released. Would you give me grace today to let go of it?"

And Lord, would you give us grace when we've confessed our sins to believe that because Christ is risen from the dead that you will forgive us here and now. In Jesus' name, amen.