

# Exodus 24:1

by Carl Armerding

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of responding to God's invitations for deeper spiritual communion and growth, as exemplified by Moses in Exodus 24.*

**Duration:** 40:52

**Scripture:** Exodus 24:1-3, Exodus 24:12, Exodus 24:17, Matthew 11:28, Ephesians 1:3

**Topics:** "Covenant"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the consecration service in Exodus 24, where Moses sprinkled blood on the people. He describes the awe-inspiring sight of the God of Israel, with a sapphire stone under his feet. The speaker acknowledges that it is difficult to explain how God made himself visible to the people, but compares it to how God made himself visible through the incarnation of his beloved son in the New Testament. The sermon also addresses the importance of prioritizing one's spiritual life and the common neglect of the devotional life among believers, particularly among young people.

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## Transcript

Let's turn to the book of Exodus chapter 24. 24th chapter of the book of Exodus. I'd like as we read this chapter that you would take note of the number of times that the Lord invites Moses to come up to him.

Exodus 24, and he said unto Moses, come up, come up unto the Lord. Thou and Aaron may divinify you, and the seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the Lord, but they shall not come nigh, neither shall the people go up with him.

And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

He sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of action unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people, and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and feel peace.

And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you, concerning all these words. Then went up Moses, and Aaron may divinify you, and the seventy of the elders of Israel. And they saw the God of Israel, and there was under his feet, as it were, a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.

And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand, also they saw God, and did eat and drink. And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mountain, be there, and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law and commandments which I have written, that thou may teach them. And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua, and Moses went up into the mount of God.

And he said unto the elders, Carry ye here for us, until we come again unto you. And behold, Aaron and her are with you, if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them. And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.

And the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. On the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud, and the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went up into the midst of the cloud, and got him up into the mount.

And Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights. As most of you know for the last few years, in fact fourteen years to be exact, we have had the privilege of dealing with a good many young people in our work at Wheaton College. And they have come to us with their problems from time to time, and it's given us quite an insight into the private life, shall I say, of many of those who profess to be children of God.

Among one of the things which I think I've discovered is more common than anything else, is the neglect of what one might call the devotional life of the child of God. Many of these young people, after they have shared with us some of their difficulties, some of their problems, have had to confess that somewhere along the line they had been neglectful. And that neglect generally took form of, well I just don't have time to read the Bible, I just don't have time to pray as I should.

And then they expected, of course, to live a successful and happy, fruitful Christian life, and it isn't possible. And it was with that in view that I began studying the Word of God more carefully to see just how some of these old saints lived, and what accounted for their success and their spiritual prosperity. And among those is this man Moses, of whom we read so much in this 24th chapter of Exodus.

Moses was a great character. If you doubt that point, if you doubt that statement, you need only to take a concordance and look up the references to the name of Moses in the Bible, and I think you'll be amazed. Suppose you leave out of account all references to the Lord in your concordance, but take such great names as the name of Abraham, for example, the name of David, and so on, and just look at for yourself to see how often this man Moses is mentioned, and not only in the Old Testament, but also in the New.

This is an important character, a very important character, and yet he was exceedingly human. Sometimes, you know, when you get your eye on a big extraordinary character like this man Moses, you just wonder if he isn't somewhat different from the rest of us, and somehow or other his pattern of life doesn't fit ours. You know, we're so prone to argue that way.

We read the biography of a great saint, for example. I remember how I did that with the life of Hudson Taylor. I read the life of Hudson Taylor, well I said, well yes, but of course he was an extraordinary

character, and yet the more I've learned about Hudson Taylor, the more I've come to conclusion that he was a man of like passions with ourselves, and that's exactly what Moses was.

And therefore, what we're going to have to say about Moses this afternoon will not simply have, shall I say, a sort of an academic interest for us, but we're going to see in this a pattern which we believe God would have us follow in our everyday living. Has it ever occurred to you that when you accepted the invitation to come to the Lord Jesus Christ as your savior, that you were only accepting the first of a great string of invitations? The word of God is just full of these invitations, and I'm afraid so many of us have ceased with the taking of the first, and we've forgotten all about the rest. Now, I know that the expression of second blessing has fallen into disrepute, and I can tell you the reason why, of course.

It's because some people get the idea that they're not completely saved until they get what they call the second blessing. But leaving that out of account, because we believe when we're saved, we're saved, and if we did not accept anything else but that first invitation, we would be saved for eternity, thank God. It only requires to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal savior, and that's it.

And thank God if you've done that this afternoon, and if you're here without having done it, I do trust, dear friends, that before we go on any further, that you'll be thinking seriously about this matter of getting into living touch with the Son of God. This may be the crucial afternoon in your life's history when the Lord Jesus might be speaking to you, and perhaps speaking to you for the last time. This may be your opportunity.

So, if you haven't done that, my dear friend, and even in an audience like this, I found it not safe to assume that we have a hundred percent Christians here. There may be someone here this afternoon who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ, and you don't have to move out of your seat to get in touch with him, because he's extended to you the wonderful invitation recorded for the 11th chapter of Matthew. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Friends, that's the best tranquilizer that I know of for a poor lost sinner that ever was. You can take all the pills in all the bottles that the druggist ever put up. There's nothing that'll beat this.

When the Lord Jesus Christ says, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest. I wouldn't feel the afternoon wasted if what we have to say this afternoon will result in one person coming to know the Lord Jesus the way the afternoon would be well spent. But now, having said that, I'm going to leave that decision with you, my unsaved friend, if you haven't made it until now.

I want to move on to this other invitation which God has given to us, and I take it that when he gave it to Moses, he was giving it to you and to me. We were reading this morning in our epistle of Ephesians that God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, and therefore whenever you find a spiritual blessing, whether it be in the Old Testament or the New, it's yours. He's blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and I can't conceive of any greater blessing for a Christian than will result from accepting the invitation that we have repeated in this 24th chapter of Exodus.

Look at it, please, again in verse 1 of the chapter. Come up unto the Lord. You know, dear friends, this is an invitation that doesn't leave you on the same level.

It doesn't leave you on the same level. If that were so, the Lord would not say come up, he expects you and me to make progress in our spiritual living. He wants us to come up from that level on which we're

living, to move up.

Too many of us are living on too low a level, and the Lord is here inviting us to a higher level, and we believe that Christian life should be that. It should be from glory to glory, it should be upward all the time. But you know, dear friends, a movement like this requires fresh spiritual impulses to keep it going.

The spiritual life never moves under its own momentum. It can't, because it's an upward movement. Anything that goes down will move under its own momentum, but not this.

This is something that requires fresh spiritual impulses to keep it going, and no one can give you those impulses but the blessed Holy Spirit. I believe there are two forces at work when God gives an invitation like this. There's the roaring power of his own blessed presence, and there, shall I say, the compelling power of the Spirit of God leading me up to this higher level.

Come up, come up unto the Lord. My dear brother and sister in Christ, let me ask you this question this afternoon, and as I ask it of you, I'm asking it of myself. Am I living on any higher spiritual plane this year than I did last year? Am I living on any higher spiritual plane this month than I did last month? Or am I content to live on the level of the world, to go along with the masses, content with the fact that I know the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior, but never making any upward progress? Oh, how sad it is sometimes to sit by the dead side of an older Christian who's on the point of going into eternity to meet the Lord, and this is all he's got to say to you as he wrings his hands and says, oh, if I only had it to do over again.

I remember the night I was baptized. An old granduncle of mine came to me, and the tears were screaming down his cheeks, and I thought, why, he must be glad that I've taken this stand for the Lord. So I expected to get quite a word of encouragement from him, but you know what he said to me? Choking with emotion, he said, oh, he said, I hope it will always be as sweet to you as it is tonight.

I looked at him, I said, Uncle Barney, you mean to tell me that it's not sweeter now than when you first came to know the Lord Jesus? He says, I can't say that it is. I went to my room that night, and this was my prayer, dear friends, before I turned in that night. I said, oh Lord, don't let this ever get less sweet than it is tonight, and he's answered my prayer.

I've had over 50 years to prove that, and I'm here to tell you this afternoon, dear friends, that it not only can be, but in the case of this poor saved sinner, it is sweeter than it's ever been before. And thank God for the compelling power of the Holy Spirit, as well as the drawing power of the invitation that says, come up, come up. Now you notice in this first invitation, others are included.

It says, come up, come up unto the Lord, thou and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, seven of the elders of Israel, and worship ye afar off. You see, there's quite a group of us. There's almost as many people as I was going to say as were here this afternoon.

But you'll notice in the next verse, God says, and Moses alone shall come near the Lord. Now I don't think that this means that the others wouldn't have that privilege also, but what the Lord is saying here to Moses, he's saying to you and me this afternoon, this matter of corporate fellowship is a very lovely thing. It's a lovely thing for me to come here this afternoon and to fellowship with you.

It's a joy indeed to renew my acquaintance with my brother Westwood, whom I met 24 years ago in Scotland, and he was kind enough to ask me to share an open air meeting with him on the mound in Edinburgh. And these are real joys. But friends, there's nothing to take the place of individual communion

with the Lord himself.

Moses alone shall come near the Lord. And now you would have thought that Moses would have been so ready to accept this invitation that he wouldn't even have turned around to say goodbye to these fellows. He'd much as say, I've got an invitation to meet the Lord, and I don't even have to explain to anybody else.

Why, he could have let Joshua to explain his absence. Anybody come along and say, isn't Moses around? Isn't Moses around? Have to see Moses right now. Got something that has to be decided.

And Joshua would say, well, Moses had a special invitation to go up to see the Lord, and you can't see him this afternoon. There are times when I believe the Lord claims priority in your life and mine, and says I'm first. I'm first.

But let's see what happens. This will bear out what I said a little while ago. This man is a man of like passions with ourselves.

Notice please in the third verse of our chapter, Exodus 24 verse 3, for those who came in a little later, Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. The word judgments here really means decisions. Evidently there were matters that required divine direction in decisions, and these judgments were God's decisions which Moses had gotten direct from the Lord.

Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments or decisions, and all the people answered with one voice and said all the words which the Lord has said will we do. Yes, but Moses, this isn't taking the invitation, is it? Oh, but the Lord's people need to, they need to be fed, they need to be ministered to. That's right, they do.

And how often we put that in the first place? Those of us who devote our full time to the service of the Lord, and I don't think I'm misstating it when I say that in our 14 years of ministry at Wheaton College, that's what it was because our time was devoted to the teaching of the word of God. But how easy to give this priority over anything else. Ministry to the people of God.

Won't you please be seated, David? Come on, lots of seats up here. Yes, ministry so often takes the first place. And this is something I've no doubt that a minister of the word, a laboring brother so-called, which is the denominational label that we have, how easy for him to get his ministry the first place.

The Lord sits them up underneath. Well, you say, well, maybe this was so pressing that it just had to be done. Very well, then let's look at number four, verse number four.

And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. Oh, he's got a writing ministry too. And this writing ministry can be so demanding.

At the present time, I'm writing Sunday school lessons for the American Sunday school union. And you know, sometimes you get so absorbed in this 13 lessons to a quarter and you have a deadline to meet and everything else has to give way to this because this has to be written by a certain time. It isn't like a book that you might have a year or two to complete.

This is something you got to do now. And so comes the writing ministry. Of course, some of you won't be in this class this afternoon because you don't engage in that form of ministry.

And yet it's a very important branch of the ministry. I'm connected, as some of you know, with the Central American mission, also with the China Inland mission. And we have discovered in these last few years, the importance of written ministry, of a literature.

And this is a wonderful ministry. One isn't minimizing the importance of it for a minute. But my dear friends, when Moses put this ahead of the invitation to come up, it was really a slight one.

He could have argued and said, Lord, but this is so important that I should write. Then we read in the next part of that fourth verse, and he rose up early in the morning and we thank God for that. He didn't lie around in bed and he built an altar under the hill.

He's got a building program. Oh, you say this is a wonderful building program. Has it ever occurred to you that there probably were plenty of altars in existence by this time on which they could have offered their sacrifices? But I can just imagine some of the older brethren and coming to Moses and saying, now Moses, you know, some of those altars that we built when we first came out, they're getting to look a bit shabby now.

And don't you think we'd better build a nicer, beautiful one? I remember a design down in Egypt that I think would just make a capital altar for the Lord. You say you're working your imagination pretty hard. Oh, I'm not.

Because you remember there was a king who sent up to Damascus to get a copy of an altar and he had it all made ready for when he got back. Yeah. The building program.

Oh, sometimes the building program is very necessary, I admit that. I wouldn't stop any of you from building a new chapel in which to have gospel meetings and worship the Lord. But I'm asking you again, what are you giving priority to your life? What are you giving priority? But notice the rest of that fourth verse.

He built an altar under the hill and 12 pillars. Who in the world told him to put up 12 pillars and what are they for? A pillar was generally put up for display. In 1958, we're in Brussels in Belgium.

Among other things, we visited the World's Fair. And of course, being good American, I had to go to the American building and see it. Frank enough to say that I passed up the Russian building.

Didn't have time enough for it. But I didn't pass up the Israel pavilion. It was a modest little building.

But out in the front of this Israel pavilion were 12 banners representing the 12 tribes of Israel. You know, sometimes people talk about the lost 10 tribes. Well, they didn't admit there were any tribes lost.

They had all 12 of them represented on these banners. And on each banner, they had some symbol that represented that particular tribe. In the case of the tribe of Judah, of course, it was the well-known lion.

In the case of the tribe of Dan, it was the well-known serpent and so on. They were there for display. We went inside the building to see what else they had, and here were the great promises made to Abraham that God had promised him to give him the land.

It's going to be his. God had promised him these wonderful things, but never said one word about the promise of the seed through whom the blessing was to come. Not one word of repentance.

The whole thing was there to glorify Israel with no thought of repentance. I wonder what these 12 pillars were for. I wonder.

And for people who are on the march, and supposed to be a pilgrim people, what in the world good would these 12 pillars serve? They'd have to leave them behind just as surely as there's a cloud moved by day or the pillar of fire by night, they'd have to leave them behind. Why put this up now to leave it behind? And then we read in the fifth verse of a youth movement. Oh, this is important too.

You've got to have youth movements, and I'm all for it. I believe this is the future of our assemblies is in these young people that are coming, the people that are coming to the Sunday school, young people's groups. I'm all for it.

But friends, when this takes the place of this going up and accepting this invitation, something will happen. Now, what these young men did is wonderful, isn't it? Because they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings. And one can see in this very lovely symbols of worship and communion, and how they need instruction along these lines, don't they? Sometimes we criticize the young, because in their approach to the worship meeting, they seem not to know what's appropriate.

Well, it may be due to a lack of instruction along those lines. We need instruction along those lines. But Moses, have you forgotten what the Lord said? And so I could go on.

I'm not going to go into great detail in the next few verses here, except to point out that we have a consecration service when Moses sprinkled the blood on the people, and so on. But notice in verse 9, they finally got moving. Exodus 24, verse 9, they actually got moving now.

Then went up Moses, and made that, and by Aaron, 70 of the elders of Israel. And what a sight greeted them there. Think of delaying to see a sight like this.

What you and I wouldn't give this afternoon, dear friends, to have a vision like this, when they saw the God of Israel. It was under his feet as it were a pavement of a sapphire stone, as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. Somebody says, explain it to me.

I can't. I don't know how to explain this. How God made himself visible to them, I don't know.

I know now how he did it in New Testament times. He made himself visible in the person of his beloved son through the incarnation. Just how he did this here, I don't know.

But the scripture does say that they saw God, and they ate and drank. We read here in the 11th verse, they saw God and did eat and drink. They not only saw him, but they had communion, and he laid not his hand upon them.

Now, this has been understood in two different ways. This laying on of the hand might be interpreted to mean that he didn't lay his hand upon them to judge them. But I'm just wondering if it might not also mean that he didn't lay his hand on them to choose them to do anything, choose them to do anything for him.

But in the 12th verse, he renews his invitation. How gracious he is, isn't it? And you'll notice in this renewal of this invitation in verse 12, when he says to Moses, come up to me and to the mount and be there. I think this is important too, how often we are there and we're not there.

You know what I mean? I can tell as I look into some of your faces, that I don't have you with me all the time. I don't have you with me all the time. Something I said 10 minutes ago started your mind thinking along another line, and I lost you.

You were not here. I might have mentioned, say for instance, a bride or a bridegroom in a talk somewhere, and suddenly a girl who's going to be married next week, she can think of nothing else but that. I've lost her.

Of course, I was responsible. I sprung that by starting off with a bride and a bridegroom. That's the way it goes, doesn't it? You ever come to a morning meeting for the remembrance of the Lord Jesus, and discover after you've been there 10 minutes that you haven't been in his presence at all? Oh, you've been there physically.

But were you really there? Were you so conscious of his presence that nothing else could bother, nothing else improved? You were there. Oh, I trust when we meet tomorrow morning, should our Lord will, that we'll really be here, beloved. We'll really be here.

To leave behind the cares of the week, everything, to be here in his presence. Yes, come up unto me and be there, he says. And then he promises to give him the tables of stone and the law written and so on that he may teach.

And so Moses goes up, but he's so concerned about the people of God, he just can't let go. He just can't let go. You know, there's two ways of looking at this thing.

Moses must have had the heart of a true pastor. He just couldn't forget those people whom God had put in his care. And so he's concerned about them.

And he says to, verse 14, he says to the elders, carry ye here for us until we come again to you. And behold, Aaron and Hera, will you, if any man has any matters to do, let him come unto them. He's so concerned.

Sometimes we wish there were a little more concern, especially for those of us who have come into what we call the golden years, who by reason of our age, for no other reason, we could be classified as elders. We trust we'll also meet the qualifications of the word of God, that our families are brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that we really qualify as elders, and have a care for the flock of God. But, wonderful as that is, the Lord says, I want you to come up to me.

And finally, Moses goes up. Verse 15, Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And you may wonder why in the next verse, the Lord makes Moses wait six days before he says anything.

How many days did Moses make the Lord wait? I don't know. But I can suggest a reason at any rate, dear friends, that maybe it took Moses six days to get his mind in that frame where God could really communicate to him, because he's got something very important to communicate. And it would take him all this time to shed these things and get rid of them.

Oh, how much time it takes sometimes to just concentrate on this book one thing, to come up on the Lord. And then we read in the 18th verse, that he went up into the midst of the cloud, and he was up there 40 days and 40 nights. And the next thing you read in this book is the communication concerning the tabernacle.

All the wonderful details connected with it. I wonder if Moses realized what God was really asking him to come up there for. Moses, did you have a building program down there when you built an altar and 12 pillars? Oh, I've got a building program that's so far ahead of that, that you'll be ashamed that you ever wasted any time putting up those 12 pillars when you see what I've got.

And anyone who has studied the tabernacle in this imagery will realize how wonderful this is. This was what God had to communicate to him. Something that would speak so eloquently of the Lord Jesus Christ in every one of its details.

I remember listening to the late Samuel Rideout years ago, and I don't know anyone whose book on the tabernacle has ever been a greater blessing to me than Samuel Rideout's book. Mr. Rideout was speaking on the tabernacle, and in speaking of the various articles of furniture and so on, details, he was trying to find some little things that might represent you and me. That evening he was speaking on the golden candlestick, beautiful type of the Lord Jesus, with its seven branches or lamps shining.

And of course, this would have been easy enough to have transferred that to make it a type of Christ and the church. But I remember how Mr. Rideout wound up that evening by saying that he didn't think there was much else in this whole thing that we could really apply to ourselves except the little bit of wick through which the oil passed, through which it was burning. And each day Aaron had to snip the burnt part off this wick and put it into a snuff dish to save it.

And Mr. Rideout likened that to those of us through whom the Spirit of God is pouring forth the witness of Christ. We burn up in the witness, but God saves the charred ends. One of these days to reward those who've been willing to be nothing but wicks to convey the Spirit of God to others, to serve as a light shining in the dark place.

In other words, to be nothing in ourselves, to make everything of the Lord Jesus. Friends, this afternoon I just want to close on the same note with which I began. How much do we value this invitation? Do you think that from today forward you're really going to value the invitation to come up to the Lord and you're going to make time for it? You're not going to allow the duties of the day to crowd out this most blessed experience.

I do hope that one of the things that will grow out of our conference here at Oakland will be this, that there'll be a deepening of our spiritual life every one of us. And if we're spared to come back here for other meetings, that we may be able to confess with joy what a wonderful thing it was to be introduced to this most blessed privilege of coming up into the presence of the Lord to spend time with him. You may say to me, yes brother, I know, but I just can't get up early.

Maybe you don't go to bed early. Maybe there's other things that you could easily do without. That time you spend in front of the TV, you know that's been misnamed TV, it should be TW.

Time waster, that's what it is. I don't even own one of the gadgets. I don't have a Sunday newspaper delivered at my door, because I will not allow anything.

I'm so weak that I'd get into that thing if it was there Sunday morning and before I know it I'd be reading it. I know I'm so weak I couldn't stand the temptation, so I say to the Lord don't bring me that, because that day, that's the day for him all together. That's his day, that's his time.

And I like to get up early in the morning. It's been the habit of a lifetime to get up early in the morning to have an uninterrupted time with him. His belovedness paid off, it really has.

I'll never forget what a Jewish doctor said to me up at Mayo's some years ago. I went up there for a physical checkup, they thought I was afflicted with cancer and so on, I had other troubles. This Jewish doctor looked me over.

He said to me, in sort of a broken English, he says, you don't smoke, do you? I said, no, I don't. You don't drink, do you? I said, no. I said, I take it you mean alcoholic liquor? No, I don't.

Says, I take it you don't run around at night, do you? I said, no. I said, I don't do that. I said, I'm a Christian and I thank God for a Christian home.

I said, I try to live to the glory of God. He looked at me, he felt my body as I stood there stripped before him. He says, it's paying you big dividends, isn't it? Wouldn't it be like a Jew to say that? It's paying you big dividends.

Friends, it does pay dividends. But don't let's think about the dividends. Let's think about the joy that it'll give him when we accept his invitation.

He says, come up unto me and be there. Let us pray. Oh, blessed God, our Father, we're ashamed when we think of how often we have neglected this most precious privilege of our whole pilgrimage here below, to take off time for thee, Lord.

Who is more worthy of our time than thou art? Thou who has provided for our eternal blessing, oh God, forgive us that we have neglected to give thee a few minutes of time now. Dear Lord, if there be those of us here today who have habitually neglected thee, we pray that through this portion of thy word thou would speak to our hearts that from this day forward, resolved by thy grace and under the power of thy Holy Spirit, to give time to thee. That our lives may be filled with the peace that passes all understanding.

To be living witnesses of what the Lord can do, for he said, I will keep him in perfect peace. His mind is stayed on thee because he trusteth in thee. Dear Lord, to this end bless thy word, we pray.

And now bless us still further, Lord, as thy beloved servant, our dear brother, shall minister to us further from thy word. Grant, Lord, that we are finded in our heart to say with thy servant Samuel, speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. In Jesus' precious name we pray.

Amen.

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