

Paul's Calling

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

Date: 03 March 2024

Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

- [0 : 00] We can resume our public worship of God by singing to the praise of God from Psalm 33. Psalm 33, and we're going to sing from verse 6 to verse 11. Psalm 33 at verse 6.
- The heavens, by the word of God, did their beginning take, and by the breathing of his mouth he all their hosts did make. The waters of the seas he brings together as an heap, and in storehouses, as it were, he laith up the deep.
- Let earth and all that live therein with reverence fear the Lord. Let all the world's inhabitants threaten with one accord. For he did speak the word, and done it was without delay.
- Established it firmly stood, whatever he did say. God doth the counsel bring to naught which heathen folk do take, and what the people do devise of none effect doth make.
- [1 : 17] Oh, but the counsel of the Lord doth stand forever sure, and of his heart the purposes from age to age endure.
- God doth stand forever, and of his heart the Lord. We can sing these verses, Psalm 33 from verse 6. The heavens, by the word of God, did their beginning take. The heavens, by the word of God, did their beginning take.
- And by the three-finger, the smile, the eye, the love of God, did their beginning.
- The waters, the sea, the sea, the breeze, together as a leaf.
- And in short horses, as it were in the air, at the heart of the sea.
- [2 : 41] Let earth and all that live therein with reverence fear the Lord.
- Let all the worlds inhabit and spread it with one accord.
- For he did speak the word undone. God does the justice of the Lord.
- God does the strength of the LORD. God does the Father herein to not, quith you even b Bethlehem. And what the people do devise of none effect doth make.
- O but the counsel of the Lord does not forever shoot, and all his heart ne'parvoses ramish to a genuine view.
- [4 : 52] Let us join together in prayer. Let's pray. Most gracious God, enable us to determine afresh that we are in your presence, that we have a sense of it, and that you are pleased to make yourself known to us.
- We acknowledge that we do not deserve that inestimable privilege of being found in close proximity to the God who is God over all.
- Our God, said your servant of old, is an all-consuming fire. Holiness marks out who you are and how you behave in all situations.
- Sometimes we limit the extent of your holiness to be simply an act of judgment, or an act of divine wrath.
- And indeed, we know that holiness is something that is to be seen in the way that you reveal yourself in such acts.

[6 : 30] But you are holy in all your ways, whether it is in the expression of your love, and it is to be seen most clearly in the way that you have loved this world, and given your only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

You gave your Son, and that in order to redeem a perishing and a fallen world. We marvel at the extent of it, the nature of it, the way in which it touches our lives.

We don't need to look beyond ourselves. You know our heart. You know the activities of our heart.

The thoughts and intents thereof are open to the all-seeing eye of the God who is God over all.

And there is nothing that we do in secret that is not as equally known to you as the thing that we give most publicity to.

[7 : 53] And yet you are gracious and long-suffering and kind. And your patience is marked out by the fact that we are able to meet as we do this evening afresh.

We pray then your blessing upon us out of the depths of your being, and that you would bless us according to the provision made for us in the person of your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we have met, and whose word we have upon our lips.

We pray for your blessing upon individuals, upon families, upon our community as a whole, the streets, the highways and highways that mark out our island community in its extent.

Every home, every household. Be they homes and households of faith, or may they live in the darkness of ignorance, and perhaps even more sinister, while we know of none that are like this.

We know that there are occasions when you have revealed in certain places that there are those who are in the grip of darkness to the degree that they would maliciously and deliberately even desire for the cause of Christ to be overturned.

[9 : 48] And they do all in their power, even to the degree and the extent of seeking the face of the enemy of our soul, that he may have the ability to do his will.

We give thanks that greater is the one who is in us than the one who is against us. And we ask, Lord, that you would mercifully draw to yourself even the most desperately wicked of sinners, and that they may know that there is a God in heaven who is able to cleanse to the uttermost any and all who would come through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Remember those amongst us who are unwell. we pray for them, ask that you would enable them to recover from their illness if such as you desire for them.

If their illness is irrecoverable, we would pray that you would grant grace to them to be sustained through the course of that illness to its end, whatever that may be.

we remember those who are terminally ill, some resident in their homes, some resident in the hospice and the homes of our island.

[11 : 18] The frailties of old age have overtaken some, and while the faculties of mind and body may diminish, nevertheless they contain as the temple of the Spirit the very evidence that there is a God in heaven of you people amongst them.

This is most certainly true. So we commit and commend them to you, those who came to know the Lord through their journey in this world, who trusted their soul to his keeping.

To them we offer the praise and the prayers that their witness merits and to be remembering them even when their own faculty of mind is suffering to the degree that they cannot memorize the things that were so much part of their life and that they derived pleasure from.

May you reveal to them your face afresh that they may discern you in your people as they visit them and as they remember them even at the throne of grace.

we ask Lord for the sick and the suffering that they may know the power of the good physician even the great physician.

[12 : 59] We pray for the grieving and the sorrowful those who are looking upon empty places that were once filled by loved ones. You have at times taken your people away from this world.

For them it is unmercy. for them it is the fulfilment of the promises that the Lord has given to his own to take them to be where he is and their place with him will never again be emptied.

Remember those who are sorrowful because of their passing and we ask Lord that you would sanctify these griefs to one and all.

Visit our sinful world with grace to accompany every experience that is ongoing whether there is war may peace come whether there is starvation and disease and all manner of experience that follows on from our fallen condition.

Hear our prayers on behalf of those who are unable to pray for themselves sanctify every visitation in providence to your people as they are involved in these situations and we do remember that you have people who testify to your goodness and grace the world over even such as are embroiled in war at this time or suffering from calamitous events as they unfold.

[14 : 40] Continue to watch over us at this time we pray. Our gathering here may be blessed all the gatherings of your people throughout our island.

We pray for those who met together to remember the death of the Lord Jesus Christ until he come. Those who by faith were able to do that may the purpose for which the Lord gave to us that memorial service that they may be strengthened in all the faculties of soul that mark them out as your people.

To all others it may be a condemnatory gathering because they have not solicited by faith the grace that is afforded to all who would believe in him.

Bless the preaching of the word the world the world over and all who go out in Christ's name may they be strengthened to fulfil their calling.

Hear our petitions and cleanse from all sin. In Jesus' name we would ask it. Amen. Amen. I'm going to sing from Psalm 27 from the beginning of the Psalm to verse 5.

[16 : 05] The Lord's my light and saving health who shall make me dismayed. My life's strength is the Lord of whom then shall I be afraid. When asked mine enemies and foes most wicked passions all to eat my flesh against me rose they stumbled and did fall.

Against me the one host encamped my heart yet fearless is. Though war against me rise I will be confident in this. One thing I of the Lord desired and will seek to obtain that all days of my life I may within God's house remain.

That I the beauty of the Lord behold may and admire and that I in his holy place may reverently inquire. For he in his pavilion shall me hide in evil days.

In secret of his tent me hide on a rock me raise. These verses and 27 from verses 1 to 5 the Lord's my life and saving health who shall make me dismayed.

listening to My life strengthens the Lord of whom, then shall I be afraid.

[17 : 48] When us, my enemies, and foes, most vivid persons all, to lead my flesh against the earth.

This jungle land is born. Against me, though I lost any time, my heart yet fear ashes.

Though all against me lies, I will be confident in this.

One thing I of the Lord desire, and will seek to open.

That all days of my life I live within crossers remain.

[19 : 37] That I love you, the beauty of the Lord.

Behold me on bloodline. And that I in His holy place, may revel me in quiet.

For He is the williams, may hide in me who it is.

In secret of His hand me hide. And on the rock me rest.

I'm going to read from the scripture of the New Testament and from the book of Acts.
Reading from chapter 9.

[21 : 04] And we're going to take up the reading in verse 19. In this chapter, as you will know, this contains an account of the encounter that Saul, or Paul, as he came to be known, had with the Lord on the way to Damascus.

And we read from verse 19.

Which called on the name, which called on the name, which called on the name, on this name in Jerusalem. And came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests.

But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him. But their laying away was known of Saul, and they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

[22 : 41] Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples.

But they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

And he was with them, coming in and going out of Jerusalem. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians.

But they went about to slay him, which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarshish.

Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

[24 : 01] And so on now, may the Lord add his blessing to this reading of his word. To his name be the praise. We're going to sing verses from Psalm 119.

Psalm 119 and verse 57. And we're going to sing this section of the psalm. Psalm 119.

Thou my shrewd portion art alone, which I did choose, O Lord. I have resolved and said, that I would keep thy holy word. With my whole heart I did entreat thy face and favour free.

According to thy gracious word, be merciful to me. I thought upon my former ways, and did my life well try. And to thy testimonies pure, my feet then turn and die.

I did not stay nor linger long, as those that slothful are. But hastily thy laws to keep, myself I did prepare.

[25 : 07] Bands of ill men me robbed, yet I thy precepts did not slight. I'll rise at midnight thee to praise, even for thy judgment's right.

I am companion to all those who fear and thee obey. O Lord, thy mercy fills the earth. Teach me thy laws, I pray.

This section of Psalm 119. Thou my shrewd portion art alone, which I did choose, O Lord.
Thou my shrewd portion art alone, which I did choose, O Lord.

I have resolved and said that I would keep thy holy word.

With my own heart, thy good and treat, thy case and failure dream.

[26 : 33] According to thy gracious word, be merciful to me.

I thought upon my former wish, and did my life well try.

Until thy testimony give, my hidden heart redime.

I did not stay nor linger long. I saw such a joyful life.

But yes, believe, thy law to keep, myself I did prepare.

[27 : 59] And so will men near all near die.

Thy precepts did not slight. I'll rise at midnight thee to praise.

Even for thy judgment's right. I am compliant to all those who fear and thee obey.

O Lord, thy mercy fills the air. Teach me thy laws, I pray.

I would like us now to turn to Paul's epistle to the Galatians in chapter 1.

[29 : 18] And we're going to read verse 15 onwards. Galatians chapter 1, verse 15.

Verse 15. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace to reveal his son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.

Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia and returned again unto Damascus.

Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and abode with him 15 days. And so on.

And so on. And so on. And so on. We are returning to this epistle this evening. I have to confess that in the prayer meeting on Thursday, we looked at this epistle and part of it.

[30 : 29] And it wasn't really my intention to do that. But I decided this evening to look at the verses that we have been looking at recently as a form of trilogy.

And combine what we have seen in the last time we were together on a Sunday evening with what we considered on Thursday evening and what we are looking at this evening.

This morning we considered the gospel from the perspective of Paul as he wrote this epistle to the church in Corinth.

And we noticed briefly that the gospel is central to who Paul is. And we focused in particular on what the gospel is, what the gospel does, and why Paul had to take this gospel.

He was compelled to preach it, and clearly what he preached he meant to be believed.

[31 : 59] And this ties in with what we considered on Thursday evening where we, that chapter we read in the Acts of the Apostles, describes to us the experience of Paul as he comes to encounter the living Christ for the first time in Persia.

Whatever experiences he had, whatever experiences he had with Christ prior to that, this was the occasion where Christ dealt with him in Persia. And he knew that to be the case.

And in that same chapter, which we read, second part of the chapter, we see the aftermath of that encounter with Christ.

And how Paul, having come to faith in Christ, has to deal with the consequences of it within the church of which he is now a part, and also the reaction of those who were not part of that church.

And on the Thursday evening, what we saw was of the biographical, where Paul describes to us the kind of person he was.

[33 : 22] How he clearly saw himself as somebody who had a calling from God, which was to persecute the church.

And he went out of his way to do that with great vigour and zeal. And after confessing that, he then explains why he now understands that he was wrong in doing that.

And that he is now under new management, as it were. He is now someone who has to preach the very Christ that he persecuted.

Preach to those who are believers. And preach to those who are yet to be believers in order that they might believe.

So in this section of the epistle to the Galatians, we see how Paul not only continues to line for us the obligation that he has to preach Christ, but he presents it to us in such a way that helps us understand why it must be so.

[35 : 02] That his appreciation of what has taken place in his life that caused a change in him, and that made him to be what he was not, is the result of what God had done in his life.

And I suppose we can't appreciate how it was for the apostle, because we don't live in that kind of situation.

Christ left Paul in no doubt as to who it was that met with him. And as a result of his encounter with Christ, we read how Paul at once preached Christ.

He preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the Son of God. Now, it's not commonplace in our day for a person to encounter Christ and to be converted, and instantly to go out and preach the gospel.

But I would imagine that the person who encounters the living Christ, that there is the desire to speak of that Christ to others. I think that is a common experience.

[36 : 31] I don't know if I could say or should say that it's always the case that the newly born-again Christian convert instantaneously feels the need to tell others about Christ.

Certainly, it was my own experience, and I've met many people who, having come to faith, one of the evidences of that is that they want to share that Christ with others.

But in Paul's particular situation, we have to remember that it was shortly after the Spirit was poured out upon the church, and the influence of the Holy Spirit was much in evidence in the church and on the lives of those who were for the first time hearing the gospel.

So his going into the synagogue to declare Christ to anyone was probably much to do with that. But alongside that, you have to put this, that Paul was somebody who was learned, somebody who was a scholar, somebody who, because of his background in the teachings of Scripture, was equipped upon conversion to go out and preach Christ in a way that not many would be able to do.

I've told you before of the time when I was in university, I was studying English literature, and one of the professors, he was taken from the Old Testament part of the university, and brought in to lecture us on the book of Job as a work of literature.

[38 : 32] And I was never so disappointed in my life at the endeavours of an individual to present a spiritual book with absolutely no spiritual ability.

He was completely blind, and he explained the experiences of Job purely as a work of fiction. And if anything convinced me of the blindness that is oush by nature that it.

But Paul, you have to remember, was somebody who was blind, but God opened his eyes. And when his eyes were opened, many of the truths that were at his fingertips took on new life and new meaning.

And it meant that the Christ that was an anathema to him became everything. And it was no hardship for him to go to others and preach that Christ.

But I want us to look at the verses here and remind ourselves of the knowledge that Paul had, regardless of background, regardless of upbringing, regardless of learning.

[40 : 02] One thing that he is clear in his own mind on is this, the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners, even in his own salvation.

He says, when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace. Paul, Paul, at this point, turns the focus away from what he felt, what he had to do, what he was obliged to do, what he was able to do, to what God had done.

And what God alone was able to do. Now, if I were to attribute the salvation of Saul of Tarsish to what he was by nature, from the knowledge that we have of his own confession, of his own autobiography, the kind of person that he was, how he went about purposely seeking to enslave the church and at times to put them to death.

If I were to say to you that God was willing to convert him because of what Paul had done, well, you would think that I've lost the plot entirely.

the last person you would expect to experience conversion would be the Apostle Paul because of what he had done, because of who he was.

[41 : 46] And I don't think that many would agree with me if I believed that it was entirely because of what God, what Paul was, that God came into his experience.

Clearly it wasn't. But Paul himself looks to God for the reason for his conversion.

And where does he start? He doesn't start with what he became or what he was persuaded to become. He doesn't start to talk about, well, God must have seen how endowed I was with ability with ability and with understanding of what the Bible taught.

He goes back beyond that to find the reason. And the reason is in God and God's willingness to do what he did on the basis of who he is, not who Paul is or who Saul is or any other individual for that matter.

The words that came to mind when I was looking at this are the words that we have in a shorter catechism. And the question is question 20. And the question is did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?

[43 : 19] And the answer given in the shorter catechism is this. God having out of his mere good pleasure from all eternity elected some to everlasting life to enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a redeemer.

Some of you will be familiar with these words. But what I want to emphasize is this. God having out of his mere good pleasure elected some to everlasting life.

And this is the truth that Paul believes. In order to rationalize or explain how he came to experience salvation this is what gives him confidence that God has acted on the basis of something that is true about God and God alone.

Not what is true about him but what is true about God. God. And I think we have to remind ourselves of that because if you are a Christian you know that God came into your life not because well surely not because of the good things that he saw in your life because I think if anything when God works in our life as Christians he tells us about himself his own goodness his own holiness his own purity and so on but he also teaches us that these are the very things that we are entirely lacking and he sets about reminding us of the kind of heart that we have the kind of people that we are by nature and not

God I wouldn't insist because there are people who when they come to faith in Jesus Christ they are drawn by the love of Christ and they are persuaded of the loveliness of Christ and I believe that only the spirit can actually do that for them and if the spirit is doing that for them I wouldn't take that away from anyone but more often than not what the spirit does is he helps us appreciate our own sinfulness in order to help us understand how Christ is the right fit if you like he is the savior that our sinfulness requires and while if that is true and I believe it is any temptation that we have to believe that when

[46 : 29] God came into my life or your life as a Christian he did so because he looked at you and he said well there's a fine example of somebody that will make an outstanding Christian there is somebody who is just the kind of person that I'm going to work my miracle in that's the way some people think about Christians they look at them and they say well it was inevitable that that person would come to Christ because it's that kind of person it's got that kind of side to him that makes them ready to embrace Christianity well I don't think that you can at all permit that kind of thought process to be your thought process as if you're a believer you're not the person that Jesus

Christ came to save is in need of salvation and if that person is in need of salvation ask yourself the question what are they being saved from well they're being saved from their sin well they're also being saved to be or they're not to be holy to be like Christ they are always sinners to begin with however much they understand or appreciate their sinfulness and Paul often repeats this in his epistles he reminds those who read his letters something that he himself is convinced of that where we are going to find the starting point for God working in our life you have to go beyond the start of life itself God he says has chosen us in him in Christ before the foundation of the world again he says

God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation he's telling the church that he's telling the people of God that he's telling them so that they know whoever is involved in their salvation God is involved in it God is at the heart of it and that is something they must incorporate into their thinking and have it as a foundation stone upon which they are building their understanding of what the gospel is doing what we are to understand is that God has made a choice entirely based on what he is or who he is rather than anything that we were that we are or that we ever can be when it pleased

God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace Paul says it pleased God this is an awful truth for some to appreciate how you know the pleasure of God is entirely bound up in the salvation of sinners and if it's not in the salvation of sinners then that pleasure is in nothing else he says it pleased God to reveal his son in me but you know we have to understand that the gospel works through grace salvation is all of grace and you know one of the most famous of hymns composed by John Newton he sings there of amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me now the basis for

John Newton's consideration of self as a wretch was his own experience of what he once was now Paul could could in the same using the same terminology describe himself as a wretch but many a wretched sinner has been found by reason of God's grace and only by reason of God's grace many a mother's love has been exhausted and exasperated and the mother driven to despair and yet that son or daughter was found by the grace of God so that something that's something wonderful we cannot underestimate the potential that God has to reach out to the desperate fallen wicked world in which we're in and bring individuals out of the corruption in which they find themselves and we have to guard against judging people as if they're beyond the pale as if they're not able to be reached by the gospel that's not the gospel if they can't be reached by the gospel it's not the gospel

[52 : 12] Paul even a soul had the eye of God upon him and that is something when you consider the enmity that was in his heart against God himself in the passion of his son and yet the eye of God was upon him the eye of benevolence the eye of love the eye of kindness waiting for the moment at which his grace would be revealed in Christ to this fallen wicked person sometimes we don't understand well we cannot understand the providence of God we would say why do you allow people to go to the extent that they do away from God why do you allow people to fall into all manner of sinful behaviour before you stop them before you reach out to them it is

God's prerogative to do that it's not me to not my role to answer for God you remember Joseph in the Old Testament and the providence of Joseph how complex and how convoluted his walk was and how he went from one crisis to the other from one prison to another and yet when it came to the time when he spoke to his brothers who were terrified that he would exercise retribution against them his words to them were so wise you thought he said evil against me you thought to carry out evil against me but God meant it unto you for good to bring to pass even the things that will mean that my people will live

I think that shows you how much is hidden from our eyes in the way that God works and the purposes that he has for his providence that we cannot see and we cannot understand and yet when it is outworked then you see the wisdom of God in it but only then only when that happens and if you look at the life of Saul of Tarsus up to the point that he met Christ there is not a soul that would say oh here is my chosen vessel here is the man by which I am going to spread the gospel here is the person who is the very person that is necessary for my word to be disseminated to all kinds of people God was in his life even though he was not able to express it like that now that does not mean that

Paul at any time excuses his wickedness far from it I doubt he ever forgot it but with God's help he is able to bring the lessons that he encouraged that he was encouraged by to fruition in his experience to utilize them to use them for the glory of God the very things that probably were negative in his life God endows them with the wherewithal by which these things are turned to good it pleased the Lord to reveal his son in me that I might preach him among the ether that third thing there is I think it speaks to us of the illumination of the Holy Spirit if you read the

ESV it says it pleased the Lord to reveal his son to me but that's not what it means there's no doubt that he revealed his son to Paul or to Saul as he was but he revealed his son in him by the spirit of almighty God illuminating his mind his heart his soul with the truth of God as it applied to the person of his son and that is something that we need to appreciate that Paul regardless of the graces that he came to enjoy prior to that all his learning all his ability would have been of no profit but when the light of God's countenance through the spirit became his privileged possession through the regenerating power of the

[57 : 53] Holy Spirit then it's as if he had been living in the night all his days and the light of God's grace revealed to him things about God that he never knew until then Joseph Pippa and an author writes the God who chose to salvation and service also equipped with the gifts all he saves and I think that has to be understood as through whoever God saves he accompanies salvation with the gifts and the graces that are part of his provision and Paul was no exception although perhaps you might argue that the gifts and the graces that Paul came to enjoy were of greater measure than ordinary mortals but whatever these gifts were and however he managed to display them it was plain to all that it was supposed the church church were concerned because of his history the church were concerned of what they knew about him but the illumination that we have here if you remember

I think we quoted in the morning from the epistle to the second epistle to the Corinthians but Paul himself goes on in that chapter in chapter 4 I think it is to say for God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus or Jesus Christ it almost describes to you this experience that that Paul is referring to here the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit he had to have that enjoy that to experience that just the same as every other person to reveal his son in me and then Paul says that I might preach him among the heathen and well that's what we have by way of testimony to what

Paul has done in that passage that we read together what do you find you find the apostle instantly goes to preach goes to preach the message of Jesus Christ you know it's worth it while reading that short passage how Paul feels compelled to speak of Christ all that heard him were amazed and said it's not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem and came hither for that intent and he tells us that he was proving that this is very Christ and then in verse 26 when Saul was come to Jerusalem he assayed to join himself to the disciples but they were all afraid and so on they know of his background and they know through others of how he came to faith but from the moment that he experienced the saving power of

Christ in his life it was his intention to make that known to others the Christ was revealed to him the Christ that was revealed in him is the Christ that he has to reveal to others and wherever he went and it's interesting if you carry on reading down to the end of this chapter how Paul goes everywhere to preach Christ to the Gentiles to preach Christ to the heathen he's not on a tour he's not on a holiday visiting the different parts of the world that are interesting to him after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and stayed with him 15 days and he goes to Syria Cilicia the churches of

Judea and all of these places that he goes to his one interest one desire to reveal Christ to others to speak of Christ to others to preach of Christ to others and that's really the thing that we find here that Paul's experiences whatever they were they took him to this they took him to be the ambassador of God to be the one who became the master theologian of the New Testament church the one who was able to speak to all kinds of people whatever their backgrounds whatever their persuasion he was able to present Christ to them and that's the important thing that's the thing that we ought to remind ourselves of that there are many things that are a distraction to the church of

[64 : 08] Christ and if it loses sight of what the church is and what the church is for and who is the burning issue of the day every day Christ Jesus and him crucified and if we don't have that at the heart of our church life of our Christianity of our testimony of our witness to others whatever we are whatever we become then we've moved away from where we should be it pleased the Lord to reveal his son in me that I might preach him among the heathen and this is the thing if God in his mercy in his grace in his wisdom from all eternity has seen food to reveal Christ to you it's this your burning ambition to reveal that

Christ to others to speak of that Christ to others to encourage others so that they might be in a way where Christ might meet them and if you're not a Christian surely the Christ who met with this notorious sinner and that's what he was Saul of Tarsus who changed him from what he was to the most famous of all of God's apostles surely you would want to know that Christ for yourself if you're happy as you are without Christ I would say there's something wrong if you're content as you are without Christ then you need to meet this Christ for yourself to show to you what you can be with him that you're not already without him may bless to us these few thoughts let us pray the Lord and God help us to appreciate the dealings that you have with this man of God you made him to be a man of

God you made him to be an apostle or the apostle to the Gentiles you brought him from the darkness of unbelief to the marvellous light of the grace of God in Christ Jesus we pray that we might appreciate the translation that took place and that it is by your hand alone that it is possible whatsoever is each one forgiving sin in Christ Amen I'm going to sing in conclusion verses from Psalm 73 Psalm 73 from verse 25 to the end chapter make of my heart God is the strength and portion forever for lo they that are far from thee forever perish shall them that are hearing from thee go thou hast destroyed all but surely it is good for me that I draw near to God in God

I trust that all thy works I may declare abroad whom have I in the heavens eye but thee O Lord alone Amha I in the heavens I but in thee O Lord alone and in the earth I beside beside thee there is none my flesh and heart do think and fear but God does heal me never for all my heart

God is strength and portion forever for love affected love and shit for all her and■■■■ identify that Let that Yahweh from the go, Thou hast destroyed it all.

[69 : 29] But surely it is good for me that I draw near to God.

In God I trust that all thy works I may declare abroad.

Amen.