

Paul is Commissioned

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Date: 10 March 2024

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[0 : 0 0] We can resume our public worship of God singing Psalm 12. Psalm 12. I'm going to sing the whole psalm.

Help Lord, because the godly man doth daily fade away, and from this among the sons of men the faithful do decay.

And to his neighbour every wanteth utter vanity. They with a double heart do speak, and lips of flattery. God shall cut off all flattering lips, tongues that speak proudly thus.

Will with our tongue prevail, our lips are ours, whose Lord are us. For poor, oppressed, and for the size of needy rise will I, saith God unto him, and safety said, from such as him defy.

The words of God are words most pure. They be like silver tried, in earthen furnace seven times, that hath been purified.

[1 : 1 2] Lord, thou shalt them preserve and keep, for ever from this race, on each side walk the wicked, when vile men are high in place.

Psalm 12. We're singing the whole psalm to God's praise. Help Lord, because the godly man doth daily fade away. Help Lord, because the godly man doth daily fade away, and from all among the sons of men, the faithful new decay.

unto his neighbor, everyone, the other one in ye, they will not above the heart whose feet, will not above the feet, or children of all blambring which, come therefore shut them down.

with us. With our hungry hell her that I love them for them for good oppressed and
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wicked man while men are holy and blessed let's join together in prayer let us pray ever
blessed God as we draw near our throne of grace remind us that it is indeed a privilege
that it is a throne of grace that we are met together around the day will come when we will
be summoned to another throne to bow the knee in your presence as the king the judge of
all the earth we pray that you would remind us of the need that there is to avail ourselves
of this provision that allows us access by way of Christ Jesus that he is a great intercessor
of his own people the one who is most able to plead our cause in the courts of heaven and
we solicit his help because we know that he is an advocate with the father even

[6 : 3 7] Jesus Christ the righteous we bless you and thank you that even in this world that is so full of types and shadows of greater truths that there is a cogent reminder to us of the truths of the scripture and we see around us so many evidences of of your own hand at work in creating this world and upholding it by the word of your power creating it for your own glory and establishing it until the very point at which you decree its dissolution dissolution we cannot contemplate what that will entail other than to be informed by what your word sets before us and even then our limited faculties find it so difficult to conceive of an act of destruction equal of which this world has never seen even going back to the days of

Noah where the floods covered the face of the earth and destroyed all living creatures save those who were contained within the ark and yet a greater act than that awaits this world and you have decreed it so and we are hastening towards it however much we think otherwise we know that you have so said and if you have so said so it will be it will be the very thing that will come to pass we pray for this world that lies in iniquity and sin and we pray for mercy that a day of power would once again be the portion bestowed upon us a day where you would pour out your spirit upon this world we know from scripture that there were times in the experience of your own chosen people when they descended into total atheism they lived creating gods of their own making and living as if there were none and yet you came into their experience and revealed yourself to them and through them to yourself bestowing upon them penitent hearts the will to repent of their sin and to forsake them and embrace the provision made for them in the righteousness that God alone possessed and that your word declared to them we ask

Lord that such days would once again be the days that we would find ourselves in we know that judgment must begin with the house of God and that contains much by way of truth but we believe that if there is to be a revival of religion it begins with your people who have descended into a slumber out of which none can awaken in except it be the voice of the above Lord help us to realize that to solicit your help and to cry out that you would rend us into the heavens and come down we pray for the preaching of the gospel wherever you have determined that your word would be declared we ask that those who would declare it would do so freely fearlessly and without ambiguity that they would be able to set before the mind's eye of those who are sat under the gospel the provision made for sinners in the person of Jesus

Christ that they would be left in no doubt that there is but one saviour even Jesus Christ and that salvation is necessary even essential and without such salvation the perils of a lost eternity they rise up before us so wherever Christ is lifted up in the gospel this evening here in this place in the neighbouring congregations whatever the denomination whatever the gatherings are even those who sit by the fireside and able to visit the public means of grace by reason of their disposition we remember them to you and ask that the word would be blessed to us all and that we would know a day of your power remember those who are unwell those who are elderly and infer those who whose minds are decayed and who suffer from all the various ills that accompany such the breaking of the body the breaking of the mind all of these decapitudes are part and partial of our sinful condition not that anyone would sin a greater sin and these things reserved but rather that this is the consequences of the fall and we pray

Lord that you would remind us of that that you would visit the sick according to need whether they are at home being cared for in hospital places appointed for their care in old age remember those in hospice and we pray for any that connected with ourselves as a congregation we pray for those who are grieving and sorrowful those who are looking upon empty places may that gaze be sanctified to them not averted but brought into sharp focus that where there was once life now there is none where there was once someone that was known and loved there is no more to be found in this world that is the way it will be for all of us at one point we have already experienced it in our own lives every single one of us in one way or another we have had loved ones taken from us and we have experienced the hurt and the pain that that brings remind us of the provision that is made for us even as you have disclosed it to us in the past we pray for this world remembering our nation those who form part of it among us many of them godless and indifferent to the needs of their soul will not penetrate the darkness and speak loudly so that they would hear the voice of

[14 : 45] God the Lord that they would hear what you speak what you speak to Israel is peace and only peace by way of Jesus Christ we ask that you would bless the nations of the earth that are in turmoil those assailed by war famine and all other natural calamities that visit us from time on time in the third world we may avoid many of these calamities but there is no assurance given to us that they will not come our way at some point but at the present we remember to you those poor poor creatures who are devoid of many of the creature comforts that we enjoy aplenty some devoid of shelter or clothing or food or sustaining their bodies some living in terror for fear of the bullet other bomb that may come their way without announcement how drastic their life is living in the shadow of death constantly amongst these poor creatures of your own loving people you have loved them with a great love your love is no less for them than it is for us but your love is able to cater for them in their need in a way that we cannot begin to appreciate for you surround them with a sense of the everlasting presence of

Christ and for them we pray and ask that you would sustain their faith throughout it so hear our prayers bless your word to us as we sing it bless our consideration offered may the peace of God that passes all understanding be our portion may we lift our voices with gratitude for thanksgiving that we recognize that the privilege that we have is a privilege from your own hand hear us and pardon us in Jesus name amen let us sing to God's praise again singing the words psalm 119 psalm 119 at verse 33 we're going to sing this section of psalm psalm 119 verse 33 teach me oh lord the perfect way of thy precepts divine and to observe it to the end I shall my heart incline give understanding unto me so keep thy law shall I yea even with my whole heart

I shall observe it carefully in thy law's path make me to go for I delight therein my heart unto thy testimonies and not to greed incline turn thou away my sight and eyes from viewing vanity and in thy good and holy way be pleased to quicken me confirm to me thy gracious word which I did gladly hear even even even to thy servant lord who is devoted to thy fear turn thou away my feared reproach for good thy judgments be lo for thy precepts quicken quicken me these verses 33 to 40 psalm 119 teach me oh lord the perfect way of thy precepts divine teach me oh lord the perfect way all thy wishes divine and who was there to the end

I shall lie hard and hide give understanding unto me so give thy lotion I yet you let my whole heart I shall all serve and care for thee and thy lost heart make me to go for my heart and will the joy the them and how you know

Turn the love away my side and eyes from your equality.

[20 : 50] And in thy good and holy way, it is to quake on me.

Confirm to me thy gracious word, which I did not hear.

In turn I serve my Lord, who is devoted to thy here.

Turn the love away my here in broad.

Are good thy judgments be. Lo, Lord, I praise as I have longed in thy truth with me.

[22 : 23] Amen. Let us hear God's word as we find it in the New Testament. Paul's epistle to the Galatians, chapter 2.

And we're going to read verses 1 to 10. Paul's epistle to the Galatians, chapter 2. Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas and took Titus with me also.

And I went up by revelation and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run or had run in vain.

But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised, and that because of false brethren and a wares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage, to whom we gave place by subjection.

No, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. But of these who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me, God accepteth no man's passion.

[24 : 03] For they who seemed to be somewhat in confidence added nothing to me. But contrarywise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter, for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles.

And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

Only they would that we should remember the poor, the same which I also was forward to do.

So on, may the Lord add his blessing to this reading of this portion of God's word. We're going to continue singing some verses from Psalm 119.

Psalm 119, verse 129.

[25 : 30] And we're seeing the whole of this section. Thy statutes, Lord, are wonderful. My soul them keeps with care.

The entrance of thy words gives light, makes wise who simple are. My mouth I have wide opened, and panted earnestly, while after thy commandments I longed exceedingly.

Look on me, Lord, and merciful, do thou unto me prove, as thou art wont to do to those thy name who truly love. O let my footsteps in thy word and right still ordered be.

Let no iniquity obtain dominion over me. From man's oppression save thou me. So keep thy laws, thy will.

Thy face make on thy servant shine. Teach me thy statutes still. Rivers of water from mine eyes did run down when I saw how wicked men run on in sin and do not keep thy law.

[26 : 43] And do not keep thy law. These verses, Psalm 119, verse 129-136. Thy statutes, Lord, are wonderful. My soul them keeps with care.

Thy statutes, Lord, are wonderful.

Thy soul then keep with care. The end of the world to My mouth I have wide open and unpounded in me.

All under my commandment, I long may be in thee.

Look on me, Lord, I'm blessed before, to the man to be full.

[28 : 28] As the heart one to do, Lord, I give hope to live all.

O let my heart that's in thy word arise, till order be.

Let no iniquity of his dominion over me.

From man's old precious in the me, so keep thy yours, thy will.

Thy grace made on thy bare land. Thy peace meet as a beautiful day.

[30 : 00] Rivers of water from my eyes.

It run now when I saw a wicked man.

Then my heart all is in. And you are here, my Lord.

I'm going to turn to the passage that we read. Paul's epistle to the Galatians, chapter 2. And this evening we're going to look at this next section of the epistle.

As we try and work our way through this letter of the apostles, we have noticed how much of the introductory part of the epistle is autobiographical.

[31 : 20] It tells us something about the life of Saul, of Tarshish. It tells us something about how Paul, the apostle, came into being.

And he's still following that vein of explanation, if you like.

He's describing to us his own personal experience. As we have seen, his reputation had gone before him.

His notoriety as a persecutor of the church was well established. And having honest conversion, having instantly gone out to preach the same gospel that touched his life.

I suppose we have to believe that. Although his encounter with the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ was a personal encounter. It was still an encounter with the embodiment of the gospel.

[32 : 35] And that was what changed his life. And his calling from that moment on was to preach the gospel wherever his lot would be cast.

And likely as it may seem, he had limited contact with the other apostles. Those who were formerly disciples of the Lord Jesus.

But those who shared a post-resurrection encounter with him. So that the most well known of them, the apostle Peter and John.

And he had mentioned as made of James, the half-brother of the Lord Jesus. That his contact with them was limited.

Even though he refined from, if you read the account of the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul.

[33 : 43] You'll find that he did have occasion to meet with Peter. I think last week we read from the book of Acts on chapter 9. And we see from that that he spent time with Peter in Jerusalem.

And met also with James briefly. And it was probably at that time that the apostle became aware. Probably acutely aware of the effects of the enemies of the gospel.

The gospel on the gospel that he himself preached. That just as surely as he was preaching the gospel. There were those who were engaged in trying to undermine the gospel that he preached.

And the passion that he himself was. One of the commentators. One of the commentators.

I think it's John Stott who says that. One of the things that the apostle became aware of was. That just as surely as he was actively declaring the message of salvation.

[35 : 10] Wherever he was called to do so. There was an insidious attempt made by the enemies of the cross. To undermine his endeavors as we said.

Wherever he went. Wherever he went. He found that these same people. Are those who followed their example. Doctors footsteps. And we have seen that already.

We have mentioned it already. That that was part and partial of Paul's experience. In preaching the gospel. In preaching the gospel. And. The.

The. The. The. The endeavors to. Discredit. Discredit the messenger. And discredit the message. And. Discredit the message.

And. I think we should. Just. Take that simple. Fact. To be a fact. To be a fact that applies. In every generation.

[36 : 13] Not just through for the apostle Peter. Or James. Or John. Or Paul. But through for. Every preacher of the gospel.

In every generation. That the devil is intent. On disrupting. The efficacy of the gospel. That is preached. That is preached.

And doesn't mind how he does it. But this is one strategy of the devil. That goes on. To this day. And if you're familiar with the church. And familiar with.

The names of those who. Who associated with the church. Or. Are members of the church. You will know that. At some point in your life.

You will have. Come in contact with some. Or learnt of some. Who. Made a profession. Or who followed. A perceived calling.

[37 : 11] Into the church. And for a time. Their walk. Was circumspect. And. Their association. With the church.

Was considered. To be. Exemplary. But. At some point. They. Fell away. Or. Their. Lives. Were discredited.

By. Something. That went on. In their lives. Now. When that happens. It does happen. There's no getting away from it. When that happens. You ask yourself.

What the outcome of that is. And. For all. The. The blessing. And. God can bless. What he chooses to bless. He can bless. The testimony. Of the saints.

Of God. He can bless. The witness. Of the church. Through. Through. Through. The saints. Whoever. They may be. And even.

[38 : 06] Those. Who. Associated. With. The church. Through. Through. The saints. Whoever. They may be. And even.

Those. Who. Associated. The church. In whatever capacity. And. We have to say. That. There are times. When. Those.

Who. Have a genuine. Relationship. With Christ. As members. Of the church. Or as preachers. Of the gospel. That they. They fall.

Into disrepute. And. When they fall. Into disrepute. One effect. Of that is. That the. The.

The fruit. Of their labor. And God. May be pleased. To. Provide fruit. For their labor. Up until. That point. But what happens is.

[39 : 04] That. That fruit. Then becomes. Questioned. That becomes. A tarnished. In some way. That's not to say. That the fruit.

Isn't there. That. That. The effect. Of their. Falling away. Is often. Something. That is destructive. Of their testimony.

Not just then. But what went. Before it. And the devil. Knows that. And the devil. Will always. Do. His utmost.

To ensure. That. If this is successful. That he will. Prevent. The testimony. Of the church. From continuing. In whatever way.

So you remember. As I must remember. That. As. Individual. Professors. If we have been. Kept. By the power of God.

[40 : 00] To the present. Well. We should thank God. For that. But we should always. Remember that. There's. There's a hair spread. Between us. And doing something.

That will bring. Shame on God's. Cause. And. We would want. Whatever. To be spared that. Not just for ourselves.

But for the cause. That we love. And. You know. Paul. Was the target. Of the devil. In that respect. And. He.

He was. Too aware. Of it. All you have to do. Is read the scriptures. The scriptures. Don't need to go into. Biography. You don't need to go into. Your own.

Personal experience. If you read the names. That are included. Within the scripture. Of people. Who were identified. As the saints. Of God. And at some point.

[40 : 57] Something went wrong. Something happened. And their witness. Came to nothing. Now. Sometimes. The word of God. Allows us.

To believe. That these people. Were. The Lord's people. Even though. They went away. For a time. God. Spared them. And God. Restored them.

Perhaps. For his. Own glory. In this world. But. If they were his. To begin with. He. Will never let his. Hold. But that doesn't.

Mean to say. That. When. We do wrong. That these wrongs. Will. Will affect. Our lives. In this way. Now.

Paul is aware of that. As I said. But. We're looking at these words. Which. When I try to. Put them together. And to. Divide them. Into.

[41 : 54] Manageable portions. I think there are. Three or four things. That. I would like to. Highlight with you. The. First of all.

He gives a reason. For. Returning to Jerusalem. And. That reason is stated.

But it's not. Terribly clear. And there is some. Dispute about. What. Exactly.

Does it mean. That I. Went up. Again. To Jerusalem. Which. At which point. In Paul's. Experience. Is he referring to.

That lies between. This. Fourteen year period. That he returns to Jerusalem. But. I don't have an answer for that. But.

[42 : 49] There is. A return. To Jerusalem. After fourteen years. Then we're told. Of who. Is with him. As he returns. He has Barnabas. And.

Tactus. With him. And that is significant. Significant. In the light of. What he later comes to stress. Within this epistle. Is. But it's significant.

That these two. Are the two. That are named. Barnabas. And Tactus. And. I'll explain. What I mean. By that. Thirdly. We can.

Understand. As you would expect. That Paul. Preaches the gospel. But. He also. Brings. The gospel. That he preaches.

Into private examination. What does that mean? What does he mean. By that. That he. He preaches. Among the Gentiles. But then privately. To them.

[43 : 45] Which were of reputation. What does it. Suggest to us. That took place. And finally. The commission. That he received. Following. His. Consultation.

With. The. The commission. That he received. Following. His. Consultation. With. The. Apostles. And.

We'll try and. Frame. Our thoughts. Around. These. Four. Headings. Now. What we find.

In this chapter. Is. What. Some. Have. Called. A. Progress. Report. As if you had. A.

Report. During. The. School. At. The end. Of. Every. Term. You. Get.

[44 : 40] A. Report. From. The teacher. As to. How. You're. Getting on. And. Paul. Paul.

Return. To. To. Jerusalem. After. 14. Years. Suggest. That. There. Is.

Some. Of. The places. That. He. Identifies. That. He. Is. The. Is.

The. Is. The. The. The. Is. Is. The. Is. My.

To. To. The. The. Is. To. that plot out for you the journey that Paul took.

[45 : 35] Remember, in those days, he wasn't travelling by jet, he wasn't travelling by car, he wasn't even travelling by horse on car. More than likely, he was walking the very difficult terrain in between these important places.

And every place he went, he made his presence felt by preaching the gospel. Now, some insist that the 14 years are measured from the time that he was converted to the time that is spoken of here.

But whatever the time means, whatever it means, just I think the best thing we can do, and we can do it comfortably, is remind ourselves that this is an accord given to us by Paul of his own personal experience.

And the 14 years which he mentions encapsulate a lot of things. But I think if you remind yourself of the things that we said as an introduction, these are the things that he had to live with as a preacher of the gospel.

This is not something that happened once or twice or thrice. It was something that was ongoing. Wherever he went, there were those enemies of the cross intent on preventing the mission of Paul from taking place in one way or another.

[47 : 16] So he lives with this. This is something that is vexatious to him personally. And it's a constant reminder to him of the nature of ministry.

And I think also, you know, if we elevate Paul to the superhero that some consider him to be, then we lose sight of how difficult this kind of life was for the apostle.

Albeit knowing the way that God supported him and encouraged him in the work. But always keep in mind that this was something that he lived with constantly.

But he is directed by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. And that is something that was significant for Paul in his role as preacher of the gospel.

He was open to the Spirit's leading. And often you find and make mention of this, how he is aware of God directing his footsteps.

[48 : 39] And he wasn't in any way in questioning the reason for him coming back to Jerusalem.

He was convinced the Lord meant him to be there. And the Lord required him to be there. And you'll find, for example, in Romans 8, He speaks of the Spirit ministering to the Lord's people in directing their footsteps as an evidence of their sonship.

Remember, he tells us there in Romans 8 that it is a confirmation to the child of God that they are indeed sons of God because they are led by the Spirit of God.

And he, as somebody who is teaching and preaching the spirit of adoption to others, knows the importance of having that testimony of his sonship, confirmed by his obedience to the leading of God.

If you're a Christian tonight, I think this is one thing that probably vexes you as a Christian, that you're not as open to God's leading as you would wish to be.

[50 : 08] But given that it is something that the Lord has given to us as proof positive of our sonship, of our adoption into the family of God, that we are open to the leading of God, then it should be something that we cultivate and encourage where at all possible.

And that's what Paul says, I went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, he says, almost insisting the reason is not false.

And when we consider his companions, we need to remind ourselves of, again, what is going on in the life of the apostle.

If we thought that whoever gave this idea of a progress report, Airing, the apostle's development as an apostle, and he has to develop, he has to grow, he has to learn from his experience.

It doesn't matter who you are. If you're a Christian, when you grow, as a child, you are expected to continue growing.

[51 : 45] You are expected to learn from your experiences. If the experiences are mistakes, then you learn from your mistakes, so that you don't do the same mistakes again.

But in your development as a Christian, then that is natural to you. It was natural to the apostle. And I'm sure that he progressed as a Christian with the dealings that God had with him in person.

But when he preached the gospel, something that he would do in any case, it seems he is to preach his gospel before those of repute.

And you read further on down who these of repute are. because when you go down to verse 9, when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship that we should go to the heathen and there to the circumcision.

These are named, but even without them being named, it is clear from what what Paul is saying that he preaches the gospel within the community but also he declares the gospel that he preaches to them.

[53 : 26] I preach among the Gentiles but privately to them that were of reputation lest by any means I should run or had to run in vain.

Now what does he mean by that? What does he mean as to understand by that? Is he, is Paul at this point doubting his own gospel, doubting his own ministry and looking for confirmation for himself in order to pursue his calling?

I would very much doubt that he has already been laboring for, as he says, 14 years. What then is he seeking or wanting to establish?

Well, he is wanting to deal with those who are his accusers, those who are readily denying his calling and trying to sabotage his ministry by suggesting that his gospel is not the true gospel.

And Paul wants to hear authoritatively that what they're saying, which he knows to be false, that they also know within the church that the gospel that he's preaching is the genuine gospel of Jesus Christ.

[54 : 49] And I think that again is something that establishes with certainty the level at which this kind of pressure that Paul was under affects his ministry.

It's not something trivial. It's not just words. Why would Paul wish to go to the church and bring to the attention of the church the gospel that he is preaching if it is of no concern to him or if it is of no concern to anyone.

And if he knows and he does know, he's already stated it, we've seen it stated clearly, that he is not in any way concerned about the gospel that he is preaching, that it is a false gospel, gospel.

But he is concerned about the accusations and the endeavors that are made to undermine his ministry.

So he is speaking privately is in order to establish to others that what he is doing is right.

[56 : 08] we have to remind ourselves of the historical setting, but we also need to bear in mind how much the church's time is spent dealing with internal disputes.

Just go to the beginnings of the New Testament era, and you'll find very early on in the experience of the New Testament church that there were divisions, and that there were discords and disputes, and they had to spend time trying to unravel the difficulties that had manifested themselves.

That was how it was then, and that is still how it is. If you think you're living in an unusual generation that has seen more than its fair share of division, and you think that it is something that is unusual, and it is something that is of the kind or sort that was never heard of before, you're deluded, because throughout the history of the church, the church has always found ways of falling out with itself.

that's not the way it should be, that's not the way it could be, but it's always been the case that there is some point of doctrine that becomes an issue, and it becomes such an issue that it separates a brother from a brother and divides congregation from other congregations, and Paul knew that, knew the potential that there is always in the church, and it was true for him at this time, and while we find ourselves spending an inordinate time, amount of time, trying to resolve these difficulties within denominations, we should consider that the reason for them, which cannot be overlooked or denied, is often caused by the machinations of the enemy of our soul.

You know, if Christ is to be preached, and he is to be preached, and if the gospel is to be preached by the church, what better way of distracting it from its principal calling than to get the church spending so much time trying to resolve issues which, however important they are, and however necessary they are to be resolved, if we spend that time looking at these things, and I've been around for long enough to have read so many papers on so many issues, and you could say well they were important, they had to be decided, they had to be settled, but how many man hours were given to writing these papers in order that the church could arrive at a considered view, and that's happened throughout the decades, throughout the centuries, going back to the days of

[59 : 54] Paul himself, and one cause, one effect of that, is that the ministry of the church suffers, and we have to guard against that if we are in a position to ensure that issues that can be resolved at the very outset can be resolved, or should be resolved, we should do all in our power to do that, but as we said, there are people Paul knows, insinuating themselves into the church of Christ, they have no right to be there, and yet they have made themselves at home within that church, and having established their connection with the church, they don't care whether the church is involved in the advance of the kingdom of

Christ or not, all they're caring about is their own advancement, and that was what was happening here. Well, there is easily a simple answer to all that, it is a very simplistic answer at the same time, time, and what we need just to say is it can and does happen.

Who is with Paul? Well, we're told Barnabas and Tactus are with Paul. We know from the book of Acts that Barnabas was a Jew, he was a Levite, and he was instrumental in introducing the apostle Paul to the rest of the church.

If you go to the book of Acts again, the passage we read there last week in Acts 9, you'll find that Barnabas is the one who gives Paul a seal of approval before the saints.

He gives Paul a definite introduction, that this is a man of God, this is somebody who has experienced conversion, this is somebody who knows, who has the gist of the matter in him.

[62 : 19] Titus, on the other hand, was a Gentile Christian. He was a convert to Christianity from idolatry, perhaps, but he was a Gentile.

And the suggestion by many is that Paul deliberately took Barnabas with him to give credibility to what he was to do in Jerusalem.

But he took Titus with him to ensure that his own role as an apostle to the Gentiles would also be given credibility.

If you read verse three, neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And that because of false brethren unawares brought in who came in privileged to spy of their liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us to bondage.

This is just an introduction to the main core of the teaching that Paul is going to introduce. But he is insisting at this point that despite being a converted Gentile, and that the church was originally Jewish, and most of the converts within the Jewish church converted to Christianity, all bore the mark of circumcision.

[63 : 54] The males bore the mark of circumcision as something that was the covenant sign given by God to Abraham. So the Judaizers who were to come to the fore were those who were insisting at some point, and more vehemently as you go on, that all who came into the church should always be converted, but also have the sign of circumcision, the covenant sign given to Abraham.

Now, Paul at this point says, Tachtas, being a Greek, he was not compelled to be circumcised, and he makes emphasis, he brings an emphasis to bear on that, to whom we give place by subjection, know not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

So the argument that he is making at this point is this, that he strenuously believes that the gospel is the gospel of Jesus Christ, which declares that salvation is by faith alone, in Christ alone.

It doesn't require an embracing of the former practices of the Old Testament, the practices that were ceremonial purely.

all of these have been done away with by the cross, and Paul is going to insist on this, and even now as he introduces Titus to them, this is what he is saying, I'm not going to hear of it, whoever it is that might intrude their thoughts into this, that they might suggest that Titus should be one of these people.

[66 : 04] And Martin Luther, for example, sees the epistle to champion the cause of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. And what Paul is wanting at this point to insist on, later on he'll broaden his argument and insist on his argument, but what he is saying at this point is this, that the Christian church is made up of Jew and Gentile, and the Christian is not bound by the law of either, because Christ has set them free.

Their chains are broken, and they are made free indeed through the blood of the cross. Now, Paul's gospel, he goes on to say, is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But he also explains that Peter's gospel is the gospel of Jesus Christ. John's gospel, James' gospel, did the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But Paul recognises and understands that he has a mission to the Gentiles, whereas Peter has a mission to the Jews. God has given him this calling to preach the gospel in these two different contexts.

But the gospel that they preach is the same gospel. It's the gospel of salvation by Christ. And it may be that in a sense we see more and more of that today.

[67 : 48] What I would say to you is that I'm preaching the gospel to people who are gospel hardened. People who are gospel hardened. I don't know if you would consider yourself to be gospel hardened.

But you're people who have sat under the gospel. Some of you are converted, but not all. And you heard the gospel preached so often, not just by me, but others.

I've never found myself in this pulpit listening to a preacher who preached from this pulpit that I couldn't say were preaching the same gospel that I preached.

I never found that to be the case and I'm glad that I can say that. More often than not, I felt that they preached the gospel better than me, but that's something else.

It's not a better gospel. And yet, I understand that the way the gospel has to be preached to you because of your exposure to the gospel for so many years may differ to the way the gospel is communicated to people who have very little contact with the gospel, who have barely, if ever, been inside a church.

[69 : 09] They have a notion of what the church is and what the gospel is, but they have little of your experience of gospel preaching. preaching. And that requires an experienced preacher to understand the kind of preaching that they engage in.

The gospel doesn't change but the way that it's communicated inevitably does. You go to Acts 17 and you'll find Paul there going to preach the gospel to Jews.

He goes to them in their places of worship. And with his own background of Judaism and a very knowledgeable background of Judaism, he preaches the gospel to them that they can understand using the terminology that is more suitable to their background.

But the same gospel, Jesus Christ and him crucified, the alone saviour of sinners. But in the same chapter you find him go to Marshall and he preaches the gospel, the same gospel but in a different way because the people he is preaching the gospel to there are Gentiles.

They are people who don't know anything about the God of Paul. people. They have their own gods, they have their own mode of worship, they have their own experience of spirituality.

[70 : 51] But Paul has to bring them to the truth and bring the truth to bear upon their perverse and perverted way of thinking. But it's only the gospel that will change the Jew or the Gentile.

So Paul is contented to preach the gospel as God means him to preach it to the Gentile. Even though he's a Jew, a Benjamite, somebody who was steeped in the theology of Judaism.

And yet God has decreed that he goes to preach that gospel to the non-Jew. Whereas Peter is given the dedicated task of preaching to those who are from a Judaistic background.

Paul doesn't object as far as we can see. The final thing we can notice here just briefly is this, that in verse 10, Paul is told by the fathers when James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go into the heathen and they unto the circumcision.

But they emphasize this, only they would that we should remember the poor, the same which I also was forward to do. Which seems strange, in the middle of it all, this emphasis given to Paul, not just to preach the gospel, but to remember the poor, which seems a strange request.

[72 : 33] Christ. But if you go back in the experience of the Reformed Church, the Reformed Church insisted, you go back to Knox or Calvin, that there are five marks of the Christian Church, five marks of the Christian Church.

Four of them you would probably expect to find, beginning with the preaching of God's Word, the administration of the sacraments.

Church discipline. That is a mark of the Church. The Church has to exist in a disciplined way, and its members are under the discipline of the Church.

The mode of worship. How the Church worships God, according to the Scripture, according to what God insists is the truth, and the truth is what is at the heart of the worship of God.

But the final thing, and the fifth mark of the Church, is the ministry of the Church to the poor. The ministry of the Church to the poor.

[73 : 53] Now that would have been relatively easy to fulfil in Paul's day, because there were no social services. There were no organisations that were dedicated to ministering to the poor.

But this is the predicament the Church finds itself in now. People will say the Church is not a social service, and that's true.

the Church shouldn't be involved in social work, and that's true. But if it is so true that we completely ignore the duty that we have to minister to the afflicted because of the poverty that they find themselves in for whatever reason, that we are neglecting part of the calling of the Church.

I'm not saying it's an easy thing. I'm not saying that's something that you cannot do without applying your intellect to it. What can I do?

What should I do? What can I leave to others? It's never simply a blanket statement. Let society deal with the poor.

[75 : 21] the Church has a role to play, but the Church has to understand where the boundaries are, where the parameters of their role is.

And I think we find ourselves today in a situation where some of the things that the Church ought to be doing are not being done by the Church.

But sometimes it can go so far the other way that the Gospel itself is neglected. And what you find is that the Church is involved in social work and not evangelism.

But that's the predicament. But Paul is here given an instruction to remember the poor. Only they would that we should remember the poor.

And as Paul as an aside says, the same which I also was forward to do. More or less, they reminded me. But I was already aware of that.

[76 : 25] And you find that reading the book of Acts, that that is a burning desire on the part of the Church that they remember the sick and the widows and the orphans and so on.

I hope this gives you some, you might think, well there's not much doctrine there. Well if you can't find doctrine there's something wrong with you. The thing is to find out for yourself the person that Paul was and the situation that he was in and how God used him and how God taught him and how God brought the truth that needs to be applied to our own hearts and minds to light.

May bless those people. Let's pray. O Lord, bless you and open our eyes to see the wonder of your interest in fallen man.

Cleanse from sin. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. our closing psalm is psalm 25, the first version of the psalm and we're going to sing verses 6 to 10.

psalm 25, first version. By tender mercy's Lord, I pray thee to remember and loving kindnesses, for they have been of old forever.

[77 : 53] My sins and faults of youth do thou, O Lord, forget. After thy mercy think on me and for thy goodness great. God good and upright is, the way he'll sin or show, the meek in judgment he will guide, and make his path to know.

The whole paths of the Lord are truth and mercy sure to those that do his covenant keep and testimonies pure. Verses 6 to 10. Thy tender mercy's Lord, I pray thee to remember.

Thy tender mercy's Lord, I pray thee to remember.

Thy tender and loving kindnesses for they have been old forever.

My sins and faults of you do thou do thou know, O Lord, forget how there thy mercy hang on me and for thy goodness great.

[79 : 28] God good God good done of right is the way his inner shore, the king and judgment he will
lie and make his heart do love.

Behold us of the Lord, our truth and mercy ■■■■■ hoky o hot chosen ho heaven who
will são o po idé and abide with you all, and I want all this.

Amen.