

A Healthy Gospel Church

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[0 : 00] It's good to be able to come together and worship God and as we gather this evening we'll begin our worship of God singing in Psalm 1. Psalm 1, the Metrical Psalm.

We'll sing the whole of the psalm. That man of perfect blessedness who walketh not astray and counsel of ungodly men nor stand in sinner's way nor sitteth in this corner's chair but platheth his delight upon God's law and meditates on his law day and night.

Down to the end of the verse, Mark 6. For why the way of godly men unto the Lord is known whereas the way of wicked men shall quite be overthrown. We'll sing to God's praise. That man hath perfect blessedness who walketh not astray and counsel of ungodly men nor stands in sinner's way.

Nor sitteth in this corner's chair but placeth his delight upon God's law and meditates on his law.

And the day and night. He shall be like a tree that grows near planted by the river Which in his season yields his fruit, and his bleep fatheth never.

[2 : 20] And all he does shall prosper well, the wicked are not sold.

But like they are unto the child which when Christ will unflow.

Then judgment therefore shall not stand such as ungoldly are.

Nor in the assembly of the just shall wicked man appear.

For why the way of godly man unto the Lord is known.

[3 : 46] Whereas the way of wicked man shall quite be overthrown.

Now bow before God and pray. Let us pray. Now gracious and ever blessed Lord we thank you that we can come into your presence and call you Father.

You taught us to come before you and say our Father. Who art in heaven. Hallowed be thine. And we pray Heavenly Father that as we come into your presence that we would indeed recognise.

That you are indeed our God and our Father. That you are high and lifted up. And Heavenly Father you desire that we come and we worship you. And we pray Heavenly Father that even as we have sung.

That we would indeed walk in your ways. That we would know what it is to meditate upon your word day and night. That we may indeed be directed on what it is to glorify and enjoy you forever.

[5 : 04] And we pray Heavenly Father that as we gather here this night. That you have taken each one of us from our homes and taken us here. And Heavenly Father that we would know what it is to be still.

And know that thou art God. And that we would indeed trust in you. Recognising that you know the end from the beginning. And the beginning from the end.

And that Heavenly Father that as we gather here. That you have ordained for us to be here. Ordained for us to come and to sing your praise.

Ordained for us to come and lift our burdens before you. And to listen to your word as it is read. And to learn what you have to teach us from your word this night.

We recognise that there are some that come with burdens. Mourning the loss of loved ones. Some that come worried about health. Of their own health or the health of loved ones.

[6 : 09] And Heavenly Father your word teaches us to cast all our cares. Our anxieties upon you. For you do indeed do care for us. We pray Heavenly Father that as we gather here.

That we would indeed be still. That we would seek to learn from your word. And that Heavenly Father that we would know what it is to gain strength from your word.

To gain strength from even just being together and encouraging one another. The congregation here this morning. That we are not without hope.

You sent your son into the world. To die for each and every one of us. To take away our sins. Because Heavenly Father there was only one that was good enough.

To pay the price of sin. So while we may be helpless to find our own way. We thank you that through your son that there is indeed hope.

[7 : 15] And as your word teaches us. All we have to do is come. And believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we will be saved.

So we pray Heavenly Father for any of us now. Whose hearts may be far from you. That they would indeed be stilled at this time. And as they come.

Heavenly Father as you have brought them here. That you have indeed opened their hearts. Open their hearts to know the love that only comes from you. And that they would indeed see Jesus.

And that they would cry out. Lord be merciful to me you sinner. Well Heavenly Father we continue to. Pray for.

The word that is preached this night. Not just here but across the islands. We remember that there are many congregations. Similar to the congregation here. That are currently vacant.

[8 : 20] And we thank you Heavenly Father. That even this night. That the tool pits are filled. And that your word is going forth. And we do indeed acknowledge.

That it is your word. Not the word of man. But Heavenly Father. The word that you have given each one to preach. But we do indeed recognize.

That there are vacancies. And that there is a need. Your word teaches us again. That the harvest. Is indeed plentiful.

And the harvest is there. And it is worked. And we do indeed pray. That you would send out laborers into the harvest. And Heavenly Father even now.

That you are preparing one to come here. And we pray. Heavenly Father. That as a congregation. Wait upon you. That they would indeed know what it is.

[9 : 16] To be blessed in that waiting. That you would keep them firm. Upon the solid rock of Christ. That they would not neglect. In coming together.

To encourage one another. And meet together. When the doors of this church are open. Whether on a Sunday or midweek. That heavenly father. Or the strength.

The strength that we gain. From just being together. Worshipping you. That we would need hunger. And thirst after that. We so often pray for revival.

That we recognize. That that revival. Must begin within our own hearts. As the psalmist cried out. Restore unto me. The joy of thy salvation.

And heavenly father. That first day that we met. With you that you called us. That we would indeed. Rejoice. Once again. That you would give us that fervor.

[10 : 17] That desire. Not just to meet together. But to compel others. To come in and meet with you. So be with us. As we gather here this night.

As we cast all our cares before you. We pray where it is. And that each one of us would know. What it is to leave them with you. Not to cast them down.

And then take them up again. But heavenly father. To cast them before you. Knowing that you have promised. That your yoke is easy. And your burden is light.

So we thank you. That we can come. And we can come freely. And we pray. That we would indeed be blessed. And go out. And be a blessing to others. And all this we ask.

As we ask forgiveness of our sins. In Jesus name. Amen. We'll further sing to God's praise.

[11 : 16] In Psalm 65. Psalm 65. In the Metrical Psalms. We'll sing from the beginning of the psalm. Down to the double verse 5. Praise waits for thee in Zion Lord.

To thee vows paid shall we. O thou that art. O thou the hearer art of prayer. All flesh shall come to thee. Iniquities I must confess.

Prevail against me do. But as for our transgressions. Then purge away shalt thou. O God of our salvation. Now in thy righteousness. By fearful works.

And to our prayers. Thine answer thus express. Therefore the ends of all the earth. And those afar that be. Upon the sea. Their confidence.

O Lord. We'll place in thee. We'll sing to God's praise. Praise which for thee. In Zion Lord.

[12 : 16] To thee our state shall be. O thou that ye.

And the heart of flesh. O flesh shall come to thee.

Iniquities I must confess.

He will against me do. But thou. But thou.

For our transgressions. Then purge away shalt thou.

[13 : 18] Bless. Blessed is the man. The man who thou dost choose.

And makes the approach to thee. That thee within thy courts.

O Lord. May still. Thou. And with thy goodness.

And with thy goodness. The goodness of Thy house, Even of Thy holy place.

O God, all Thou salvation, Thou in Thy righteousness, Thy fearful heart unto our prayers, Thine answer dost express.

[15 : 07] Therefore the ends of all the earth, And those afar that be upon the sea, And the confidence, O Lord, will face in Thee.

And I open God's word in the New Testament, In the book of Acts, And at chapter 16.

The book of Acts, And chapter 16. And we'll read from the beginning of the chapter, Down to the end.

Amen. Paul's missionary journey into Philippi.

Then came he to Der and to Lystra, And behold, a certain disciple was there named Timotheus, The son of a certain woman, Which was a Jewess, And believed that his father was a Greek, Which was well reported of by the brethren That were at Lystra and Iconium.

[16 : 48] Him would Paul have to go forth with him, And took and circumcised them Because of the Jews which were in those quarters. For they knew all that his father was a Greek.

And as he went through the cities, They delivered for them the decrees to keep, That were ordained of the apostles and elders Which were at Jerusalem.

And so were the churches established in faith, And increased in number daily. Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia And the region of Galatia, And were forbidden of the Holy Ghost To preach in the word in Asia, After they were to come to Mysia, They assayed to go into Bithynia, But the Spirit suffered them not.

And they passing by Mysia, Came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man on Macedonia, And prayed him saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us.

And after he had seen the vision, Immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, Assuredly gathering that the Lord Had called for us to preach the gospel unto them.

[18 : 08] Therefore, loosing from Troas, We came with a straight course to Samothrace, And the next day to Naipolis, And from thence to Philippi, Which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, And a colony.

And we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the Sabbath, We went out of the city by a riverside, Where prayer was wont to be made.

And we sat down and spake unto the woman, Which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, A seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, Which worshipped God, Heard us.

Whose heart the Lord opened, That she attended unto these, The things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptised, And her household, She besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, Come into my house, And abide there.

And she constrained us. And it came to pass, As we went to prayer, A certain damsel, Possessed with a spirit of divination, Met us, Which brought her masters much gain, By soothsaying.

[19 : 21] The same followed Paul and us, And cried, Saying, These men are the servants of the Most High God, Which show unto us the way of salvation.

And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, Turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ To come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

And when our masters saw that the hope of their gains were gone, They caught Paul and Silas, And drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, And brought them to the magistrates, Saying, These men, being Jews, Do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, Neither to observe being Romans.

And the multitude rose up together against them, And the magistrates rent off their clothes, And commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, They cast them into prison, Charging the jailer to keep them safely.

Who, having received such a charge, Thrust them into the inner prison, And made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed, And sang praises unto God, And the prisoners heard them.

[20 : 49] And suddenly, There was a great earthquake, So that the foundations of the prison were shaken, And immediately, All the doors were opened, And everyone's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awakened out of his sleep, Seeing the prison doors open, He drew out his sword, And would have killed himself, Supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

But Paul cried with a loud voice, Saying, Do thyself no harm, For we are all here. Then he called for a light, And sprang in, And came trembling, And fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, And said, Sirs, What must I do to be saved?

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, And thou shalt be saved, And thy house. And they spake unto him, And the word of the Lord, And to all that were in his house.

And he took them the same hour of the night, And washed their stripes, And was baptised, He and all his straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, He set meat before them, And rejoiced, Believing in God, With all his house.

And when it was day, The magistrates sent the sergeant, Saying, Let those men go. And the keeper of the prison, Told this saying to Paul, The magistrates are sent to let you go, Now therefore depart, And go in peace.

[22 : 18] But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly, Uncondemned, Being Romans, And have cast us into prison, And now do they thrust us out privately.

Nay, verily, But let them come themselves, And fetch us out. And the sergeants told these words, And to the magistrates, And they feared when they heard, That they were Romans.

And they came and besought them, And brought them out, And desired them to depart, Out of the city. And they went out of the prison, And entered into the house of Lydia.

And when they had seen the brethren, They comforted them, And departed. Amen. And may God bless the reading, Of this holy word. We'll again, Sing to God's praise, This time in Psalm 119, Psalm 119, The fifth part of the psalm.

Teach me, O 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, Even with my whole heart, I shall observe it carefully.

[23 : 30] In thy law's path, Make me to go, For I delight therein, My heart unto thy testimonies, And not to greed incline. And then to the verse 39, 40, Turn thou away my feared reproach, For good thy judgments be, For thy precepts I have longed, In thy truth quicken me, And sing to God's praise.

Teach me, O Lord, Lord, the perfect way, All life is set, And to all service to the end, I shall my heart incline.

Give understanding unto me, So keep thy law shall I, Give me, Give me, With my whole heart, I shall, O servant, Give fully.

Give me, And thy law shall I, Give me, Give me, Give me, For I delight therein, My heart unto thy testimonies, And not to greed and crime.

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, In to thy servant, Lord, Who is devoted to thy fear.

[26 : 35] Tarn thou, How in my fear, Grief road, For good thy judgments be.

Though for thy precepts I have longed, In thy truth, Quicken me.

As we turn back to God's word in Acts 16, Let us just pray again. Dear Heavenly Father, we do indeed thank you that we have your word to be able to read it.

And we recognize that your word has been given to us, To direct us on how we may glorify and enjoy you forever. So we pray that as your word has been read, As we now break it down, Heavenly Father, That we would indeed search our own hearts this night, To find out what it is that you are teaching each and every one of us.

For your word has been given to teach us, To direct us, To correct us. And we pray that as preacher and hearer alike, That we would indeed apply your word to our hearts, As you open it to us this night.

[28 : 09] In Jesus name. Amen. So if you've got your Bibles open, Acts 16.

What we're going to look at is what this passage teaches us, About being a healthy gospel church. Many of you might be aware that the Three Church of Scotland, Set a vision at the General Assembly in 2021.

That vision being that we would have a healthy gospel church, For every community in Scotland. And you might be asking yourself, What does it mean to be a healthy gospel church?

Is it we've got large numbers? We've got plenty of money in the bank. We've got plenty of families, Young people. We're running different clubs within our church. We've got good numbers attending our prayer meeting.

What does it mean to be a healthy gospel church? Well, within the vision that the Free Church set out, It states, A healthy gospel church is committed to the worship of God, On obedience to the Bible.

[29 : 29] They promote discipleship, And are characterized by loving relationships. And they are intentional about sharing the gospel message locally, And throughout the world.

The key to that is that Jesus Christ is at the very center, Of a healthy gospel church. Before we dive into Acts 16, To see what it has to say to us, About being a healthy gospel church.

There may be one or two of you saying, Why does the church need a vision? It says in Proverbs 29 verse 18, Where there is no vision, The people perish.

And in the New Kings James Version, It's translated, Where there is no revelation, The people cast off with strength. People go and do their own thing.

Or people perish. If there is no vision, No vision of what God is going to do for us. Did Paul have a vision?

[30 : 39] When he set out, On his missionary journey. What we read is that, As Paul, Silas and Timothy, Set out on their initial missionary journey, The doors quickly closed for them.

Verse 6, It says, Now when they had gone through Phrygia, And the region of Galatia, They were forbidden by the Holy Spirit, To preach the word in Asia.

And they had come to Mysia. There they tried to go into Pithynia, But the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, They came down to Troas. But then in verse 9, And a vision appeared to Paul in the night.

A man of Macedonia stood, And pleaded with him, saying, Come over to me. Come over to Macedonia and help us. Now after he had seen the vision, Immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, Concluding that the Lord had called us To preach the gospel.

The missionary team now had a vision. And they set out on that vision That created a mission for them. They didn't hang about.

[31 : 53] They set out immediately. And then they sailed from Troas. It says in verse 11, Therefore sailing from Troas, We ran a straight course to Samophis.

And the next day came to Napolis. And from there to Philippi, Which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia. A colony. And we were staying in that city for some days.

They set out without hesitation. It was clear that when they had set out before, The doors closed for them. For on this occasion when they set out, Having got a vision from God, They were unhindered in their travel As they went to Macedonia.

Are you feeling at times that the doors close for you When you're trying to do something?
Are you seeking as Paul did, To find out what God's vision, And being open to God's vision.

The vision didn't come to Paul during the day. The vision came at night. Which means that God is available to us. Not just in the daytime.

[33 : 06] But in the night time. And seeks to speak to us. If we are open to his calling. Without hesitation, They came across the sea to Macedonia.

Spurgeon writing on this. It wasn't something I had ever thought of before. In this manner, The gospel came to our quarter of the globe.

By Paul crossing the Mediterranean Sea, The gospel first came to Europe, As we have it recorded here. And Spurgeon goes on, Blessed be God, That ever Paul was led to cross the sea.

May other lands rejoice, And missionaries of the cross, Who shall visit them from us. So I ask you the question, What's the vision for the church in Kalanish?

Do you have a vision of sending people out with the gospel? It doesn't mean that you need to cross the sea. Are you prepared to cross the street with the gospel?

[34 : 17] To share the gospel? Are you prepared to go out with it? It's something for each and every one of us to think about. And it brings us back to the question that's before us.

What is a healthy gospel church? The first statement that we read talks about being committed to the worship of God. Paul and his missionary team arrived in Philippi.

And we read that it was a foremost city. It was a city that as we go on and find out about, Had a prison. But the one thing that we find out is, That it doesn't have a place of worship.

While Philippi was one of the foremost cities, As described as being a colony, They had forgotten about the worship of God.

In those days, For there to have been a synagogue and a community, There needed to be 11 men that came together to worship.

[35 : 26] So in that place, So in that place, Which was a foremost city as it says, They couldn't find 11 men, That desired to worship God. But what we do find is, That there are women, At a place of prayer, Down by the river.

A small group of women, That met at a place of prayer. And sadly, In some congregations, Some people would say that not much has changed.

In many of our churches, Across the islands, Even here. The number of women, Far outnumber, The number of men, That come to our prayer meetings.

Spurgeon comments, It is well worthy of note, That the first gospel address delivered in Europe, Was heard at a prayer meeting. We ought therefore to prize this institution, Very highly.

You are here tonight, You are here to hear God's word. God's word is preached, At the midweek meeting. Are you there, To hear it?

[36 : 42] Are you there, To come together, To encourage one another, Around God's word. Are you committed, To the worship, Of God. I remember, When we became a new, Congregation down in Tarbert, We didn't have, Our own building.

We were very often meeting, Week to week, In different places. But you know what, God never, Had us, Had us cancel a meeting, Because we had nowhere, To meet.

We met in a shop, We met in the back room, Of the community centre, We met in the hotel, One night. God always provided, Somewhere for us to meet. And what an encouragement, It was for us, As a congregation, To be able to come together, And pray, And worship God, Together.

It's well worthy of note, As Spurgeon said, That the first gospel address, Delivered in Europe, Was heard, At a prayer meeting.

Will you be at the prayer meeting, This week, To hear, God's word. And while we're there, We hear, Of Lydia's conversion.

[38 : 01] I love the way, That this is recorded. And a certain woman, Named Lydia, In a cellar of purple, Of the city of Thyatira, Which worshiped God, Herbis, Whose heart, The Lord opened, That she attended, Unto the things, Which were spoken, Of Paul.

Whose heart, The Lord opened. Paul preached the word, But it wasn't Paul, That opened her heart. As one of the other commentators said, Paul could have stood there, At her heart's door, Knocking all day.

But he had no power, To open her heart. Only God, Could open her heart. But what he did, What he could, He preached, He preached, The word.

And in sharing God's word, To those that God put in his way, Their hearts, Their heart was opened. Retaking every opportunity, To share God's word, With those, That God puts in her way.

And then trusting that word to prayer. And that God would open, Heart. And that God would open. Hearts. Lydia's heart was opened. We didn't, Don't read, In contrast to Paul's testimony, That there was a bright light, And Paul couldn't see, Anything after that.

[39 : 30] A dramatic, Damascus road conversion. Lydia was simply there, Hearing God's word. And her heart was opened. You may be here this evening, Thinking, Unless God shows me something miraculous, I don't think my heart will ever open.

We read further on about somebody, Who faced an earthquake, And faced the thought of death, Before he came to God.

While we have opportunity, And you are here listening to God's word. Call out to him. Call out to him, Call out to him, And believe upon him. In the simple, Sitting in the pew, And hearing God's word.

Oh, to see Lydia converted. The encouragement, That it would have been for Paul, And for Silas, As they came across, From Macedonia. In Paul's vision, In Paul's vision, It was a man, That had called them across.

What would God, Got in store for them? Where they going to meet? A man, The following day? What do we read of? We read that their circumstances, Very quickly changed.

[40 : 55] From going from the high, Of seeing, Lydia converted. In an exchange, That they had, With the demon possessed woman. Their situation, Very quickly changed.

And they're taken in, A kangaroo court, And they're cast in, To the centre of the prison. Locked in the stocks, Right in the centre.

The jailer, Having been charged, To make sure these men, Don't escape. But Paul and Silas, Were committed, To the worship, Of God.

What do we read in verse 25? And at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed, And sang praises unto God, And the prisoners heard them.

The circumstances, Had changed significantly. But even, In the position, That they found themselves, All they could do, Was pray to God, And sing praises to him.

[42 : 05] They didn't pray quietly, In their own hearts. They didn't come a tune. They prayed, And they sang, So that prisoners, That were there with them, Heard them.

They don't know, They don't know, What it is they prayed. They don't know, What it is they sang. They probably sang the psalms. But whatever they prayed for, God answered their prayer.

Answered it in a way, That they possibly didn't even expect. And then we read, And then we read, Of the man, That has no name, Other than being the Philippian jailer.

The Philippian jailer, Was a man that was confident, In his own ability. He had been given a task, He fulfilled the task, To the full. And so confident, He went off, To sleep.

Thinking that nothing would happen, That these men would never be able to leave, The prison. But he woke with a shock, As the earth, Literally, Shook.

[43 : 23] And the doors of the prison, Flew off. And the stocks, And the chains, That were there to hold the prisoners, Were broken. As we read in verse 26, And suddenly, There was a great earthquake, So the foundations of the prison were shaken, And immediately, All the doors opened, And everyone's bands were loosed.

I ask the question, Are we committed to the worship of God, In every situation, In our lives? And in being committed, Even in the dark times, Do we have the expectation, That as we worship God, We will see him move, Amongst us.

This account of Paul's journey, In Acts 16, It's only a short account, But we see his commitment, And the commitment of Silas, To worship God, In the different circumstances, And situations, That God worked, Into their lives.

Another marker of a healthy gospel church, Is obedience to the Bible. The Bible. What does this passage teach us, About obedience, Well, We learn that as Paul and Silas, Started out, In the missionary journey, Right at the beginning of the chapter, As they went through the cities, They delivered to them, The decrees to keep, Which were determined by the apostles, Apostles and elders at Jerusalem, So that churches were strengthened, In the faith, And increased in number daily.

The importance, Of being taught, What the apostles and elders had decreed, Was foremost, In Paul and Silas's, Ministry.

[45 : 24] Not just to see people converted, But to see people rooted, And grounded, In God's work. They wouldn't have had the new test, The old and new testament, As we have it today.

But they would certainly have had, The scriptures of the old testament. And they would have taught, What it said, In the scriptures. We can think back to, When God called Joshua, When he commissioned him, Taking charge, Of the people of Israel.

And he said to them, In Joshua chapter 1, No man shall be able to stand before you, All the days of your life. As I was with Moses, So I will be with you, I will not leave you, Nor forsake you.

Be strong, And of good courage, For this people you shall divide, As an inheritance, The land, Which I swore to the fathers to give them. Only be strong, And very courageous, That you may observe to do, According to all the law, Which Moses my servant commanded you.

And then it goes on, Do not turn from it, To the right hand, Or to the left. That you may prosper, Wherever you go. This book of the law, Shall not depart from your mouth, But you shall meditate, In it day and night, That you may observe to do, According to all that is written in it.

[46 : 48] For then you will make, Then you will make your way prosperous, And then you will have good success, Have I not commanded you? Be strong, And of good courage, Do not be afraid, Do not be afraid, Nor dismayed, For the Lord your God is with you, Wherever you go.

And we sang in Psalm 1, The importance, Of meditating upon God's word. Not turning to the left, Or to the right, But being obedient, To God's word, And walking in it, And we may indeed, We may be blessed.

And in being blessed, In turn we can go out, And be a blessing, To others. The important thing, As we read in verse 5 there, That as they taught, The churches were strengthened, And they increased, Who of us wouldn't, Want to see the church, Strengthened in faith, And more coming, To know God.

You have been blessed, For many years now, As a congregation, Hearing the preaching of God's word, Strengthening each one of you, In the faith.

Will you go out, Having been blessed in that way, And share the word, With others. Will you be bold, Will you be strong, Will you be courageous, As God called Joshua to be.

[48 : 32] Will you be obedient, To the word of God, And go in his strength. A healthy gospel church, Discipleship.

I've already read, In verses 4 and 5, That Paul, Went round the cities, Teaching and encouraging, The new believers. And sought to disciple them, It's a process, That took time.

We know that even when Jesus, When Jesus was on earth, He spent three years, Teaching his disciples, To ensure that they were ready, For his departure.

Discipleship, Isn't something that happens overnight, Isn't something that happens, With a 12 step program, Discipleship takes time. Discipleship takes time. And Paul and his team, Took that time, To teach from God's word, But to encourage, The new believers.

We even see that, With Lydia, And with the Philippian jailer. And how even after, He was encouraged to leave, The town, He went back to Lydia's house, To encourage her, As they went on.

[49 : 52] And the other thing, That Paul did, Didn't just preach, In a community, And then move on, And forget, About the people, That had been converted.

We're blessed, To have each of Paul's epistles, As he wrote to the people of Galatia, The people of, In the Ephesians, And Colossians, And Philippians, Encouraging them, Challenging them, But all the time, Discipling them, In accordance, With God's word.

The jailer, That we read of, In the situation, That he was converted, He didn't know, What was required of him. Sadly, While Paul and Silas, Sang, And prayed, The jailer was asleep.

Are you asleep here this evening? Or are you hearing, What God is saying to you? Because had, The jailer, Maybe been awake, He might have realised, What was required of him.

Instead of having to come and say, Sirs, What must I do to be saved? And the answer that was given, The simplest of answers, Believe, In the Lord Jesus Christ, And you will be saved.

[51 : 24] Are you needing saved tonight? Lydia, Was saved because she was at the place of prayer, Place of prayer, And God opened her heart.

We read, Of the Philippian jailer, Who slept, When God's praise was being sung, And the very foundations of his world, Were shaken.

So much so, That he was prepared to fall on his sword, Until Paul cried out to him. My encouragement, My plea, Is don't leave it until it's too late.

While you're here, Cry out to God. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, And you will be saved. Healthy gospel churches, Are characterised by loving relationships.

Just very briefly, There are two similar examples, In the passage, In verses 15, And in verses 33 and 34.

[52 : 37] After Lydia's conversion, And after the conversion of the Philippian jailer, What do they do? They open their homes. They open their homes to Paul, And to Silas, And they have fellowship together.

Are you, As a Christian, Characterised, By loving relationships, By being willing to open your home, And share God's word. Are you characterised, By loving relationships?

What is your reputation, Within the community, Within which you stay? What is your reputation, Do people say, Do people say, As a Christian, I want to find out more, About what makes his life different?

Or are they saying, He calls himself a Christian, I don't want to know anymore. Are we characterised, By loving relationships? Not just when we're here in the church, But in every aspect, For every aspect, Of our lives.

Finally, Gospel churches, Healthy gospel churches, Are intentional, About sharing the gospel message, Locally, And throughout the world.

[54 : 04] One commentator, Writing on the passage says, I wonder if you've thought, Of your church's missionary effort, Or your witnessing to a neighbour, You say it's difficult to witness today, Because so many people in our day, Don't want the gospel.

They don't. They very seldom do. Most people today, Are self satisfied. They don't want anything, That might upset their lifestyle. But if that is the case, Why not refocus your witnessing, For a time at least, On those that are hurting, And do have needs.

In the past, The gospel has spread best, Amongst the masses of humankind, Who have a crying social, Intellectual, And other needs.

They've been open to the gospel, Because they needed help. Christians helped them, And brought the gospel too. The commentator goes on, Maybe one reason, Why the Protestant church, In this country in particular, Are not prospering, Is they are going to those, Who are prospering, Prospering, When they ought to go to those, Who have known needs.

What need, Do we see round about us? What need, Do we know that people have? And how as a church, Can we meet them?

[55 : 29] A healthy gospel church, Needs healthy Christians. And for those that are Christians, Here tonight, Can we answer these questions, Each one of them, Positively.

As a healthy Christian, I am committed to the worship of God, And obedience to the Bible. I promote discipleship, And I am characterized, By loving relationships.

I am intentional about sharing the gospel, Locally, And throughout the world. And importantly, Jesus, Is at the very center, Of my life.

Now you may be sitting here tonight, Thinking, Now that's okay, He's spoken to the Christians, He's told them, What we should be doing, And how each one of us, As Christians, Should be living our lives.

This doesn't really apply to me. And just before we finish, I can't ignore the fact, That there were three different stories, Within the passage, That we read.

[56 : 45] Three different encounters, That Paul and Silas had. They met with Lydia, They met with a demon possessed woman, And they met with a Philippian jailer. The question to you would be is, Who are you most like?

Are you like Lydia? That you come to the place of prayer? Don't always know why we attend, But we come. Is it out of a sense of duty?

Or do you have a genuine, As to what God is saying to you? Or are you in your heart, Like the demon possessed woman?

You know exactly, What it is that you should do. But all you are prepared to do, Is rail against it, And try and put others off. He warned, In Genesis 6 verse 3, My spirit shall not always strive with man forever, For indeed, He is flesh.

If God is speaking to you, And you know the way of salvation, What you need to do, Is to stop fighting, And come to him. And finally, As we looked at the Philippian jailer, Are you confident, In your own ability?

[58 : 06] Are you thinking, That you have no need, Of God? Are you thinking, That you have everything stacked up, The same way as the Philippian jailer, Did that night.

That he had Paul and Silas, Locked up in the centre of the prison. Everything was just great. And are you sleeping? And be disturbed in your sleep?

Not by an earthquake, But by God's word, Knocking on your heart's door, I have come for you. Are you prepared to open your door, The door of your heart?

Or are you going to leave here, And walk away once again, Thinking that you have time, Thinking that you have no need, For this decision to be made tonight. An earthquake, An earthquake, That shook the prison, Took the Philippian jailer to his knees.

He was at the point of death, Until somebody called out, Or Paul called out, Don't harm yourself. Only then, Did he see his need of Christ.

[59 : 24] You have an opportunity now, Before you leave this place, To call upon God, And ask for mercy, As each one of us needs to do, Because of the sin within our lives.

God be merciful unto me a sinner, On the Lord Jesus Christ, And be saved. This passage, Is a challenge, For each and every one of us, The preacher, And the hearer alike, Are we listening, To what God is saying to us.

I pray that we are, And that we commit, Our lives maybe for the first time, But even recommit, To walk with God, Each and every day, To follow his word, And to share his word.

Let us pray. Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, We thank you for your word to us.

We recognise the challenge of it. We also recognise the need, For each and every one of us, To come before you unbendingly. And Heavenly Father, That if we feel that we have no hope for us, Hope for us now.

[60 : 50] That we can come to the one, That has all the hope. And provides all hope for us. For he has promised, That he has gone before us, To prepare a place. And we need not be helpless, In our way to find it.

For all we do is, We come, And acknowledge that you are our Lord, And you are our God. And believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, And be saved.

May each of us know, What that is to do this night. And that we would go on, And walk with you. And walk in your light. And share your light, With those that we come into contact with.

In Jesus precious name. And for the furtherance of your kingdom. Amen.

mouth unto him cried my tongue did him extol if in my heart I sin regard the Lord me will not hear but surely God me heard and to my prayers voice O let the Lord our gracious God forever blessed be who turned not my prayer from him nor yet his grace from me and may we indeed know God's grace this night let us sing for this all that fear God come here I'll tell what he did for my soul I will my mouth unto him cry my tongue did him extol if in my heart

[63 : 10] I sin regard the Lord me will not hear but surely God me heard unto my prayers God is gave the air O let the Lord Lord our Lord our Jesus God forever blessed be who turned and not my prayer from him not not yet his grace from me!

!! close with benediction to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our saviour be glory majesty power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages now and forever amen