

Help!

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[0:00] Acts 16, 9-10, we see a vision to Paul.! And this evening, hear the word of the Lord.

! That's what we want to do. Not so much what I say, but the word of the Lord. It speaks for itself. And this word, help, resounds really loudly here.

Acts 16, verse 9. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of 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 us for to preach the gospel unto them.

Paul was struggling to find the will of God. And the Lord gave him here a vision in the night. Firstly, a call for help. A call for help!

[1:05] Come over! And help us! A call for help. Do we care enough to stop and look and stop and hear to stop and care?

We're all busy in our lives. It's like we're busier than ever, isn't it? It seems. Despite all the mod cons and all the technology, it's like every day is just jam-packed.

I can say that for me. And I'm sure it's true for many here. That we get busy and we don't stop and listen and care. Stop and hear. Stop and help.

The story of the Good Samaritan teaches us that. We know the story of the Good Samaritan. It's very familiar. Where it teaches us how to avoid being uncaring. How to move beyond self-centeredness.

To move beyond being too hurried. Move beyond being isolated. Move beyond intentional insensitivity. It's like you switch it off and on when you feel like it or not.

[2:11] Move beyond thinking someone else will help. Someone else will help that person. And really it's about how to increase our care level. You know, the care factor.

People joke about it, don't they? It's the care factor. Sometimes you don't care. And this is what someone said about caring people. Caring people put aside prejudices.

Caring people notice others' pain. Caring people take time to be compassionate. Caring people get involved. Caring people are not stingy.

People are calling us. Begging us. Crying out. Help us! And Paul, in this vision, he heard the cry. And their cries are ringing still in the streets all around us. Aren't they? I know when there was a need, there was someone I knew to call. There was a woman.

[3:15] I was miles away. And there was a woman here that needed some care. She was a homeless person that had stationed herself just outside these very doors here.

And I knew to call on Marjorie. And she knew others that could come and help. And lend a hand. And reach out. Take time to care. There's a woman. It was hard for me as a man to help this woman.

Being a man. And I knew who to call in that situation. To call. That call for help. Who would respond? Who would take action? And their cries are ringing still. Even in these very streets.

Just outside this door of this building. This very building. Their cries are ringing still all around us. People of God. And so the same cry. The same cry that Paul heard.

The same cry. Help us! There's people crying out for help. Now this particular person. She really didn't express that need.

[4:11] And in fact when we offered to help. She said she was okay. But nevertheless I'm sure there was real need there. Real need. Someone especially sleeping out rough.

These cold nights of late. To think that someone's in a desperate state. To get to that condition. And so the same cry is ringing out still. All around us. All around. In this suburb.

In this city. There's a passionate appeal. A crying out for help. And in this story. This vision that Paul had. This man was different.

He was from another culture. He was from another country. Maybe he spoke another language. I suppose. And. Sometimes we.

We kind of reserve who we help. Who we don't help. People. And. In Paul's vision. It speaks to us of that. Looking beyond. What we used to.

[5:11] And there's numbers around about us. People. We may not. Be accustomed to. Relating to. People crying out for help. Sometimes they don't say it.

But you know they're crying out. And some of them. And some of them don't really understand. What. They need help from. What their real. Deepest need is.

Of course we know what the deepest need of all of us is. But they have need. People all around us. Urgent. Heart wrenching. Gut wrenching need. Their soul aches.

Their spirit grieves. Their inner man cries out. For an answer. A deep felt need. Within them. And what a privilege we have. You have.

As God's messengers. Men and women. Messengers. What a privilege you have. To be called. Upon. To be called out to.

[6:07] People need you. They need your message. They need the message. Through your lips. And. It's easy to get tired of people calling for help. Now sometimes we get.

Compassion fatigue. Don't we. You just get. Oh. Someone else. Wants my. Time. Wants my. Help. And it's easy to say.

Let someone else. Answer the call. Pass the buck. And I didn't mean to do that with this lady. But. But I knew who to call. In that situation. But. You know. Let someone else do it.

I'm too busy. I'm this or that. And what was the call. Come over. Into Macedonia. And help us. Responding to this call for help.

Meant that Paul. Had to put himself out. He had to actually put himself out. To take some. Hard yards. To go. Elsewhere.

[7:05] It. Meant for Paul. Travel. And trials. And Paul. Had faced beating. And bruising. And prison. For Christ. On this journey. This was no easy.

Round the corner thing. This was. Putting himself out. And. Will we put ourselves out. I know I talked on this theme. Of late. Will we go that extra mile. As it were.

For Christ. Will we go the distance. Or will our Christianity. Just be. As far as it's convenient. And comfortable. And it fits in our.

Kind of. That package of time. We. Sort of give that little package of time. To God. And. We're just a Sunday Christian.

That can be an easy trap. How far do we go? How did. How far did he go? For us. From heaven's height. To the very lowest of the low.

[8:01] To take on human skin. To be manifest. Revealed. In the flesh. In human. A human frame. And. How far did he go? For us.

Are we willing. To be living sacrifices? We're called to be that. To put our lives on the line. To put our own desires aside. To give up our own wants.

And comforts. That another. Can benefit. That another. Can be reached. To give. And keep on giving. Because. We care. About more than just ourselves.

How much. Are we willing. To help. In this vision. Paul heard the man. Do we stop. To listen. To care. Or do we block our ears. To things.

That might. Mean. We've got to put ourselves out. Or do we just communicate. At the superficial level. And not beyond. Hold. It's like. Someone has said.

[8:57] This. To go deeper than. How are you. I know Julian. I was just talking about it lately. And you say. How are you. And sometimes. You don't really. Even. hear what they're saying. Let's face it. It's just a token phrase that people use. Sometimes we don't really stop and listen

and really, really hear how they are, how the other person is. And often the reason we don't care for each other is that we don't hear when someone expresses a need. There was one woman who was fed up with the click, clicky, superficial level of communication in her church. And this woman, she thought one day, I'm going to conduct an experiment. And to everyone who asked her while she was passing here and there, passing through the hallways, she said, how are you? When they asked her, how are you?

She replied, lousy. Some didn't even hear what she said. Others said, oh, I'm sorry to hear that. But no one asked her, why? No one went any deeper, no deeper. To ask probing, thoughtful questions, especially about her struggles or her spirituality or what was really wrong.

Mind you, sometimes you can get in trouble with things like that because I was talking to some dear person of late and I said, how are you going spiritually? And boom! I set a bomb off or something. It was an explosion and a reaction. Maybe I touched a nerve there.

I didn't mean to say it in a hurtful way. I truly meant to care for this one. And I said, how are you going spiritually? And poof! How are you going? And sometimes how are you going spiritually? Because I care about your soul. It's the most important part of you. It's who you really are. And so, how do we care? How do we empathise with people? In Galatians 6 verse 2 it says, bear one another's burdens. Do we do that? We're told we are to bear one another's burdens. So that means we should stop and take time to really ask, how are you?

How are you going? How can I encourage you? How can I support you? How can I lift you up and walk with you? To try to feel what people are going through. To listen without judging.

[11:35] And this is especially hard for born again Christians sometimes because sometimes we might respond. as some might respond like this when someone says, I feel lousy. Oh of course your life is messed up. You broke commandments 2, 4, 7 and 8. You know, sometimes people can be like that and you know, I really needed that. Listening doesn't mean our convictions go out the window but just that we give them time to pour out their heart. It's giving people time and it's taking time to care.

So the Lord gave Paul a vision and he heard a call for help. He heard the call for help, number one. Number two, the Lord gave Paul a vision and he heard the call of God. Verse 10, immediately we endeavoured to go gathering that the Lord had called us. Sometimes, I know for some, they spend a lifetime waiting for the call of God and they never hear it because they miss it.

They miss what's blatantly obvious, what's plainly obvious in their faces. Or they want to get better trained or qualified such that it's something later instead of now. The time that we have, now.

And so, it's interesting that Paul understood this need expressed. It was a call for help. And they understood here that this call for help was the Lord's leading. It was the Lord leading them.

It was the Lord's calling, the Lord's leading, through the voice of the crying one. And God was speaking to them and they sensed the very call of God himself. Now, sometimes we dilly-dally and we don't fully grasp that there is a need that we must be responsive to. Somebody else will do it.

[13:46] Notice they did respond immediately. Immediately. Verse 10, immediately, it says. Immediately, Paul went to Philippi, the first city that he could get to in Macedonia. Verses 11 and 12. Paul answered the call.

He got his running shoes on and he got down and moved. He got his faith into his shoes and started walking. Paul answered the call. He went along with Silas and Luke to Philippi. And at Philippi, he preached the gospel to a gathering of a few women. Verse 13. And verse 14, God moved. Lydia, he did his word.

And it says, the Lord opened her heart and she was converted. The Lord opened her heart as Paul faithfully delivered the word of God. And she was saved. Later, we see the conversion of the jailer. Paul responded immediately. Are we quick to take action or must we be prompted, cajoled, bribed, mithered or specifically asked to do something? Or will we see the need and get to the work?

Sometimes the need is the call. That's been my experience really in many ways. That we don't wait for some flashing light or some peculiar thing. But we just see something needs doing and doing. Many wait for the call of the Lord and they miss what he has been telling them and what he's been putting in front of them to do, to be. Will we serve in the place of need or must we wait for some

recognition? Or wait for some office? Wait for someone to lay hands on us and appoint us or to give us some special invitation to do a particular thing. Sometimes we will pick and choose what need we will respond to. Or will we just step forward and get the job done? Will we be a servant? Or must we have some title or a job that we prefer? Sometimes

[16:20] God might call us to something that we find hard to do. Something that we feel unqualified to do. Something we feel inadequate, unable to do. All the more we ought to do it rather than wait. Will it be that we will wait? Do we hear his call? If it's his call, if it's his voice, his urging, his pleading through the circumstances around about, will we heed?

Will we do? Or will we maybe put it off? Put it off till it becomes more convenient, more comfortable. Maybe we will wait so long that it is sadly too late. Too late. It's interesting how the word of God talks about now. Now. It's a very evident word. Now. Because now is all we've got, isn't it? Let's face it. So will we act immediately, promptly, instantly, courageously against our own voice that says no, no to God? Does the Holy Spirit have a hold of our heart strings? Is he tugging at our heart, prompting us, provoking us? Will we resist or will we take action? I love Isaiah 6 verse 8. Isaiah said, also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I. Send me. Paul heard the call for help. He heard the call from God. And thirdly we see he heard the commission of the Lord. Because the message Paul heard loud and clear, effectively was, go and preach the gospel. Now he wasn't there at the end of Matthew and Mark, but Paul likewise had the same prompting, the same mission, the same commission. Go and preach, go and evangelise, go and be my witness.

No matter what the danger, no matter what the opposition. And it's for all of us, isn't it? To open our lips and to speak the gospel. Speak it. In your own way. Your own words. Your testimony.

Your witness is yours. And God will use you to deliver it. You're his messenger. Everyone here. All of us. We're all his messengers. And every believer has ministries. We see Romans 15 through 16. The many ministries. You know, there's lists of gifts. And Romans 15, 16.

There's various lists. 1 Corinthians as well. We see the ministry of encouragement here. Of giving. Of fellowship. Of witnessing. And we can all do something. And being a witness is a work God calls every Christian to. So the message, the message must be broadcast loud and clear. And every one of us has a voice. Thank God for that. There's no one here who's mute. And some of you can speak in languages I can't get my head around. I mean, English is hard enough. But we know that some of you can speak in different multiple languages to people that you can get a hearing from that I could never reach. And so the message must be broadcast loud and clear. And this is the greatest help we can give, isn't it? The greatest help. That we can give another to show how we really care is that the best and most important way we can help anyone is to point them to Christ. Amen. That's the best and most vital and most essential help that we can ever give to show another eternal soul an eternal change of destination. An eternal change of destiny. To help set a soul on track for eternal blessing and bliss. To help steer a ship bound for shipwreck to a safe harbour. It's your voice. It's mine.

[20:55] A help that reaches out a hand to the perishing and plucks them as brands from the burning. That's you. That's me. That's all of us. That helps guide a weary traveller to a place of soul rest.

That helps drive fear and sadness far, far away. That helps redirect a hell-bound sinner. A hell-bound no-hoper, as someone classified people as. To a place of comfort and sure, confident hope and peace. A help that lifts a poor burdened sinner and gives them a lift and a light.

Joy and riches beyond compare. Joy and grace. You know, in some ways, this could be totally a left-field thing, but it's like we're real estate agents, isn't it?

That there's some eternal real estate and it's free. And we want to see others go to those mansions in glory. We want to see others so that one day we can go and visit them up there.

When we pass from this earthly life, that there's some heavenly real estate. And it's yours for the taking. And for each one that we can reach out.

[22:16] We want to see them there, don't we? Our loved ones. I do. I deeply do. And I deeply, earnestly pray for those who I don't believe they've got a portion of that real estate yet.

That they will. That they will. And they'll hear his voice. I go to prepare a place for you. That belief. It's like, wow.

It's incomparable. The riches, the real estate, as it were, that awaits. Yet many have not made their reservation. They don't even have a passport yet, as it were.

But friends, what a help we can give. Joy and riches beyond compare. This is so important. And that help that we can give that shows a sinner how to be saved.

Saved. Gloriously saved. And how to live as God's true faithful soldiers in the battlefield of life. Many of you have been through some battles.

[23:25] Wow. Near-death experiences. Battles. And you've got a testimony to give to many. Open your lips and give it.

Help. There's people crying out. Maybe they're not crying out vocally. But they are. Deep down, there's a cry for help. In the lost soul.

And this help that we can offer, that we can extend. This help goes on forever. This help is the essential and most real, most needed. Most vital. Paul had the vision.

He saw the man from Macedonia. Come over and help us. Can't you hear them? Can't you hear their desperate cry? Paul heard the cry.

And he responded. Immediately. Can you hear the Macedonians today? We could think of other lands, other cultures, other countries, other places.

[24:27] But even our own. Our own immediate place. There's Macedonians everywhere, as it were. Will we reach to the people beyond our own comfort zone?

Outside of our circle. To step outside and reach out. Now there was a time as a new believer that I heard of a family and they were evidently not saved.

And I just felt this pressing burden that I had to tell them. Because you don't know how long have we got. And I made that point of telling them.

And I was telling them most earnestly. They didn't listen. But I felt better afterwards. You know. We need to, don't we? Sometimes we don't have that sense of urgency.

You know. One of my friends passed away in recent time. And he took his own life.

[25:30] And you think, didn't I listen to him? You can think that, can't you? I think that. I think that still. It was only a few months ago that I did visit him in his home.

And I spoke with him and I didn't pick up anything. But there must have been something wrong. And it's, do we really hear people crying out?

It grieves me to think, could I have done more? Could I have done more to care? Could I have done more to help him? Could I have done more to really listen to his gut feelings? And friends, we need to have a heart that's in tune.

And I feel very sad still about what happened with him. He was a believer, I believe. Strangely enough that he would even do that as a believer. But I can't get my head around why he did it. What he did. What on earth happened to him. But something must have been wrong on the inside of him. And we need to reach out to people while we can. Don't we? There's people crying out.

[26:33] Maybe there's people we know. That are just on the edge. On the edge. Wow. Can we listen? Can we help? Can we do something? Can we try?

We can only try, can't we? The Lord Jesus came for the people who needed help. And Matthew 9 verses 10 through 12. And it came to pass that Jesus sat at meat in the house.

Behold, many publicans and sinners came. And sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples. This is Matthew 9 verse 11. Why answer to your master with publicans and sinners?

But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. And friends, there's no better place for the sick to be than with the doctor.

The great heart doctor of Christ our Lord. The great physician. And they came to him. The Lord Jesus, he was not standoffish. Not high and mighty. You know.

[27:36] He wasn't like that. But he stood down. And he lifted up. And so should we. Someone has phrased it like this. How tender is your heart?

And this is how someone's put this sort of message I'm trying to get across. Help! Help! How tender is your heart? Tuning people out. A secretary on the job is engulfed in problems.

Her husband left her. A son is in rebellion. She can barely make ends meet. She cries out for help. We don't hear. A fellow employee is overwhelmed by the complexity of overwhelming, of overcoming his chronic drinking problem.

He longs for a friend. We are deaf to his cries. The owner of the petrol station where we've traded for years has just lost his wife.

His eyes echo. His loneliness. We don't see. A wife would love to share with us the trauma and trivia of her day. Just to have a listening ear.

[28:43] Our ears are closed. And as the perfect ending to such a self-centered week, we hurry to church to thank God for his blessings. You know.

How tender is your heart? We can miss it, can't we? You know, it's like those ones that passed the beaten man on the road, the Samaritan, stopped and helped.

But others were busy. Off to a religious meeting. You know, there's the sense of it there that they had some duty to perform perhaps.

Maybe they were going to some, oh, I've got to get to church on time. Maybe that's a good excuse for being late. But, you know, we see that they're hurrying and scurrying along and not stopping.

How tender is our heart. You know, there's some Macedonians calling out to us. In Elizabeth. In Salisbury. All around about. Crying out for help.

[29:42] Can you see them? Can you see them? Can you hear them? See their pleading, their urging, their desperation. Will you hear their call? And will you hear God's call?

That still, small voice. Sometimes his still, small voice is in the everyday. And he urges us.

He urges you. Still. To go. Will you obey his commission? As he sends and sends and sends.

Yet more are needed. And the harvest is great. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest. He's the master of it. He's got it in control. He's the Lord of it. He owns it.

He is the master of it. We're his servants. Yet. To go into the harvest field. And he is the Lord of the harvest still. And labourers are needed still.

[30:36] Friends, I just want to encourage you tonight. Paul had a vision. In the night. A man of Macedonia. Saying, come over and help us.

And after he had seen the vision. Immediately we endeavoured to go. Go. Into Macedonia.

Assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us. To preach the gospel. So it's a call for help.

There's human needs all around about.

Now, sometimes people are crying out without saying anything. Aren't they? Isn't that so? We just have to have our eyes to hear. Eyes to see. Ears to hear.

Their hearts cry. A call for help. Let's have those listening ears. Those looking eyes. And that call for help could be the call of God. Could be what we've been waiting for.

[31:34] May not be some blinding vision. Or some supernatural tingles on our spine. It could be just the reality.

There's work to do. The call of God can be in the everyday. Awareness that we can have. Of what he's given us.

What he's put in front of us to do. The people he's put in our path. And we see that commission to go. They assuredly gathered.

The Lord had called them to preach the gospel. To go and preach the gospel. And so that commission is for all of us. It's not limited.

It wasn't just to the disciples. Paul was called to go. We're all called to go. Every one of us. We must go. So that means getting our shoes on.

[32:30] Tying your shoelaces. And going. One step in front of the other. And you might say. Preacher. I don't know how to witness to anybody. I've never really opened my mouth.

And said anything about Jesus. That can happen. We can all clam up. And it's a bit hard. Wow. Someone might call me a Bible basher.

Or someone might report me to the boss. If I'm at work. Well do it. Not in work time. But find that moment of time. When you're not going to get in trouble with the boss. You've got your own time.

Your lunch time. Whatever. It's one foot in front of the other. Baby steps. And you can be a witness by just a few words.

A few. Drop a little seed here. A little seed there. A little word here. A little word there. And you'll get that one who will want to open up and talk. And have that conversation.

[33:28] And introduce them to your best friend. The Lord Jesus. Amen.