

SUMMER 3 - Acts 16-28 - The Gospel in Greece - Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth

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- [0 : 00] Since I'm in Doncaster, which is a fairly salubrious part of Melbourne, I could begin with a poem and you would respond warmly. Last eve I passed a blacksmith's door and heard the anvil ring the vesper chime.
- When looking in I saw upon the floor old hammers worn with beating years of time. How many anvils have you had, said I, to wear and batter these hammers so?
- Just one, said he, then with a twinkling eye. The anvil wears the hammers out, you know. And so I thought, the anvil of God's word.
- For ages skeptics blows have beat upon. Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard, the anvil is unharmed.
- The hammer's gone. There was a rerun of the movie The Da Vinci Code on Channel 9 last year, about 10pm at night.
- [1 : 23] Remember The Da Vinci Code? Had its moment in the sun? Made Dan Brown's squillions? With those silly claims about Jesus being married to Mary and the Holy Grail and just nonsense.
- And it's now gone and forgotten, a rerun late on Friday night on Channel 9. Another hammer, beaten, lying on the floor.
- The anvil of God's word, unharmed. Have you heard of the Jesus Seminar, I wonder? A group of liberals who have discovered that Jesus did not rise from the dead, didn't die an atoning death, didn't work miracles.
- They're famous, they read the Bible, by these coloured beads. The coloured indicate how reliable a given text is. Did Jesus really say these words?
- Did he do these things? If they gave a verse a red bead, then Jesus probably said that. Like, turn the other cheek. Or did that.
- [2 : 27] Ain't with sinners. If it was a black bead, well, he didn't say it. Or do it. And they discovered in their wisdom that around 18% of the Bible, the Gospels, are red beads.
- But 18% are reliable. The rest just made up. By the writers. Heard of them, the Jesus Seminar? They're almost forgotten now.
- Another hammer, beaten on the blacksmith's floor. But the anvil of God's word remains, well, by and large unharmed.
- Every year or two, a new fad. A new book's out, which suggests the Bible can't be trusted. And I think bit by bit, these fads can erode our confidence in God's word and the Gospel.
- Back in 1953, at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, you may know that the Archbishop of Canary gave the Queen a Bible and said these words.
- [3 : 31] Our gracious Queen, to keep your majesty ever mindful of the law and Gospel of God, as the rule for the whole life and government of Christian princes, we present to you this book.

The most valuable thing. The most valuable thing this world affords. Here is wisdom. This is the royal law.

These are the lively oracles of God. This book. The most valuable thing this world affords.

Should Charles be crowned, I'm not sure what the Archbishop will say. But I'm not holding my breath.

Back then, we believed, didn't we, in England and Australia, we believed this, that the Bible was valuable. When I was at school in England as a boy of eight, nine, ten, we had Bible along with maths and English and history.

[4 : 36] We had regular chapel in my government school, where we sang hymns, said prayers and read the Bible. Now in Melbourne, we want to banish the Bible from every school in our state.

So I think this, then, all can erode our confidence in God's word. So tonight we'll see again, I think, the authority and power and triumph of the Bible and God's word as it meets people's minds.

As Paul proclaims the gospel across Europe and lives are changed under the power of the gospel and the persuasive impact of God's word. So I want you tonight to leave here, I hope, more encouraged to read, preach the Bible and the gospel.

Well, let's turn in our Bibles, then, to chapter 17. We're going to look at, last time, if you weren't here, Sunday night we saw Paul in Philippi. And Paul, the amazing ministry there, as Paul begins the evangelization of Europe.

And Paul meets three people. He meets the Gentile god, Pharaoh Lydia, and the Lord opens her heart to receive the gospel, to receive Christ. Then he meets a slave girl with a spirit of divination or a python spirit, and he cleanses her.

[5 : 45] Then, of course, the earthquake and the wonderful conversion of the Philippian jailer. And there was opposition to Paul, and he's asked to leave town. And so he does.

He heads off to Macedonia. He's still in Macedonia. He heads off about a 160-kilometer journey to Thessalonica. Let's turn, then, to chapter 17, verse 1.

When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolos and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.

As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead.

This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah, he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.

[6 : 50] But other Jews were jealous, so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob, and started a riot in the city.

They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas, in order to bring them out to the crowd. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting, These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house.

They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus. When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil.

Then they made Jason and the others postpone and let them go. So as was his custom, Paul goes to the synagogue and he preaches Christ.

Or to be more specific, he opens the scriptures and engages with them, explaining and demonstrating that Christ had to die and had to rise again.

- [8 : 04] He tries to persuade the Jews that if they read their Bibles carefully, they must draw the conclusion that the Christ, the Messiah, had to die an atoning death and rise again.
- Christ died the atoning death and rose again. Ergo, he must be the Messiah. Read your Bibles carefully and you'll draw that conclusion.
- And on three consecutive Sabbaths, he argues, persuades and explains. And I think by and large, his ministry is effective. Some Jews believed, and a great many women, and some prominent women.
- Just looking around tonight, why are women so responsive to the gospel?
- I just look around tonight. And in most of these meetings, the majority are women. There's a little known saying by Muhammad. This isn't pronounced too publicly, this saying of Muhammad in the Hadiths.
- [9 : 06] Muhammad once said this. This is an infallible statement of the Prophet. I had a chance to look into paradise. And I found that the majority of the people were poor.
- And I looked into the fire in hell. And there I found the majority were women. That's Muhammad.
- But if we pull back the curtain and look into heaven, it is teeming with women. Luke then records the, I think by now, almost expected backlash by the Jews.
- To Paul's effective ministry. They're jealous. I think to some degree at Paul's success. He's won converts, and he's won some prominent women, some wealthy women, who would support the synagogue.
- Well, they're now gone. But also, I think they're jealous because they're zealous for the law. A zeal not according to knowledge. Anyway, they form this mob. They go down to the town square early in the morning, where men who want work are there.
- [10 : 10] And they find some kind of layabout, some men. They're called variously ruffians, bad characters, louts. But you can't go past the old King James Version, can you?
- They're the same, lewd fellows of a baser sort. Well, they find these ruffians, and who start a riot following the command of the Jews, who are paying their beginner riot, end up at the house of Jason, where Paul's been staying.
- And in God's kind providence, Paul is not there. And Paul's just recovering from a beating, a severe beating in Philippi. They are flogged.
- But he should be weak, I imagine, very tender. And to again be arrested and beaten could be nearly fatal. So in God's good kindness, Paul is not there.
- But Jason is. They bring him before these officials, about five or six magistrates, who oversee the justice in the city.
- [11 : 12] And ensure that there is no chaos in the city. Because this city, like most in the Roman Empire, had a degree of autonomy from Rome. They ruled themselves to a degree as long as there was peace.
- But if there was chaos, Rome moved in. So these men's job is to maintain peace and make sure there's no upheaval. And Jason's brought before these men. And there are laid before Jason two accusations against Paul.
- We see them there in verses six and seven. These men who have now caused trouble all over the world have now come here.
- And secondly, they are defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there's another king, one called Jesus. They're troublemakers. And they call Jesus a king. Almost the same accusations led by the Jews at the trial of Christ before Pilate.

Remember what they said? Luke chapter 23. We have found this man subverting our nation. He's a troublemaker. He opposes paying taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ a king.

[12 : 25] The same accusations here. Wherever they go, they cause trouble and they speak of another king. And both these accusations superficially seem to have some merit.

Wherever Paul went, there was trouble. He's asked to leave towns or he fled from a town. He is in many towns a persona non grata. And you could be mistaken for believing that Paul's preaching was, if not treasonous, at least politically subversive.

He called Christ a king. He spoke of another kingdom. He spoke of Christ's parousia. Coming, the word used for the coming of the emperor.

We know from 1 Thessalonians 1 verse 10, He told people to turn from their idols and serve God. Idols like statues to Caesar. The emperor claimed to bring peace and safety to the empire.

Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5, While people are saying peace and safety, destruction will come upon them. So you could hear the preaching as subversive.

[13 : 39] And to some degree, our preaching is subversive. We give to Caesar what Caesar's. We honor the emperor, Tony.

We pray for our authorities. But the Aussie government is not our ultimate authority. Our commonwealth is somewhere else.

We are, in a sense, politically subversive. Well, Luke just concludes the account of Paul's time in Thessalonica by telling us that Jason posted bail.

He paid some kind of a fine, has the charges dropped, and assures the authorities that Paul will leave town immediately, and Paul does. And Paul leaves Thessalonica.

We now move to the second. We've got to three places tonight. Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. And he comes to Berea, verse 10. A very different town with very different people.

[14 : 43] I've done itinerant preaching now for about 40 years. I've spoken at, I don't know how many, church camps, or conferences, or conventions.

And it's a wonderful privilege. And by and large, I enjoy it, and I don't tire of it. But you do meet a fairly wide range of responses from people in churches where you preach, even Christian people.

I've spoken at church camps, and I've walked away thinking that was just another church camp. People didn't come with any particular sense of expectation that God would work or they'd meet God.

They came, had fun, had a mindless trivia night, had a couple of talks, and went home.

And by Monday morning, for them and for me, the camp was probably forgotten. I've done lots of those. I've done others too, which are quite special.

[15 : 46] I spoke a couple of years ago at the North Coast Christian Convention, North Coast New South Wales, lovely part of the country. Ballina, Grafton, Tweed Heads.

500 people came. That's about what you get for the summer convention at Belgrave Heights in a city of three and a half million. 500 came. On Sunday morning, they just closed the churches.

And they all come to the convention. And it's not just the numbers. It's just that people went there with such a desire to hear God's word, such an openness and responsiveness.

I'll never forget. I met with a couple after one talk. He's a semi-retired doctor in the late 50s. And God had been prompting them to think about missionary work.

And they'd been pushing God away. And they were cut to the quick. Cut to the quick. It's a joy to speak to people who are hungry to hear God speak and want to be changed.

[16 : 53] And Paul found, too, a wide range of responses to his preaching. I think he had very few missions which were as fondly remembered as the one in Berea.

It's a brief account, but I think it belies lies the success of the ministry and the enthusiasm of the people's response. Paul walks 80 kilometers to Berea.

He goes, as is practiced, to the synagogue first because the gospel is for the Jew first and then the Greek. He preaches to the Bereans who he calls more noble than the Thessalonians.

It doesn't mean by that that they're nicer people or they're more morally virtuous. I think the world could be better rendered. They're more open-minded. They're more prepared to give Paul an honest hearing.

They sincerely search the scriptures. They want to know what God is saying. I've been reading John in my quiet times lately.

[17 : 50] I've been reading this the last couple of days. The story of Nicodemus in John 3. I think he was a nobleman, Nicodemus. A bit like the Bereans.

When he says to Jesus, we know you are a teacher who has come from God, I think he means it. Unlike other Pharisees. And while he doesn't understand it, while he's still in darkness, I think he wants to learn.

And as the gospel goes on, he does learn, Nicodemus, and comes to faith. I think he's a genuine seeker. Like the Bereans. They sincerely search the scriptures to see if it's true.

And many Jews come to faith. Again, many prominent women, and this time, even the men. Hallelujah. The men come to faith. But yet again, of course, the Jews come to seek to stop the preaching.

They come from Thessalonica. They come to Berea. And again, try to cut short his ministry. Church history is the record of the length people go to, especially religious people, to stop the preaching of the gospel.

[19 : 01] And I found it's religious people, and in particular, Christian people, who can be the most antagonistic. I was asked some years ago by a church in Perth to go there and run a mission for them.

It wasn't an evangelical church. It was probably middle-of-the-road Anglo-Catholic. They'd never had a mission, never done any evangelism.

But the pastor, the minister, wanted to do some. He had to come over from Sydney and help them to do it. He followed protocol and informed the local bishop of his intention.

He said this to me later in an email. The bishop replied to him in one of the most distressing letters I have ever received.

It is a most bizarre attack on me. I've been a priest for 36 years and never had anything like this to deal with. What was his crime?

[20 : 12] He wanted to preach the gospel to do evangelism and he asked a man from more college to come and help him and we are both attacked and maligned.

Reflecting later on his ministry in Thessalonica Paul would say these timeless words You know quite well that we were destined for trials In fact when we were with you we kept telling you that we would be persecuted and it turned out that way as you well know.

You do know that don't you? That God has ordained you and me for trials. As you read the papers and watch TV we are becoming as I said the other night we are becoming in our nation more and more hostile to the gospel.

That should not surprise us. We were destined for that. And if you preach Christ as in Paul's day as through 2,000 years of history you will be persecuted.

And so Paul comes to Athens verse 16 A very different audience and therefore quite a different approach.

[21 : 32] Even today I think there's an aura around Athens isn't it? The birthplace of the Olympics the once the great international center of the world where you found Plato Aristotle Socrates by Paul's day it was a shadow of its former glory it was still the intellectual center of the world and one day the apostle walked into this great city and nothing prepared him for what he saw there.

We moved to Melbourne eight years ago but I came here 20 years ago just for a visit I was for a debrief with my mission I had a free afternoon so I thought I'd just walk around the city of Melbourne I'd heard of the Crown Casino I thought well I'll just go there my support was getting low and you never know well no so I just went to the Crown Casino and you're sure well maybe you haven't been there I was I was taken aback the gold the silver it dripped with wealth opulence sparkling shining chandeliers it was it is a monument to human greed and folly self-indulgence decadence and I remember being fairly disgusted by it that's how Paul felt when he and much much more so when he walked into Athens this one great city he found himself in a veritable forest of idols he said there were more idols in Athens than all of Greece put together altars statues shrines temples to Apollo

Jupiter Venus Bacchus Mercury Neptune thousands of them and the word that Paul used to describe how Paul felt we have verse 10 he was greatly distressed it was it's paroxysm he was in paroxysm he was churning inside a deep a deep disgust grief anger indignation sees Paul it's the same word the Bible used of God when God sees his people bow down to hunks of water stone God has paroxysm this gut-wrenching anger he breaks out in judgment or sends a prophet to speak against them it tears Paul apart to see God robbed of his glory and the glory given to worthless pieces of stone or to fictitious characters like Apollo and Venus the great mission of Muslims

Henry Martin wrote in the 19th century I could not endure existence if Jesus was not glorified it would be held to me if he were always to be dishonored and for Paul to walk around Athens and see all those statues and idols is held to him so he does the one thing he can do he preaches Jesus and the resurrection and of course a crowd gathers including some philosophers and they hear Paul and frankly they're unimpressed they say verse 18 what is this babbler trying to say the word is literally spermologos it refers to a bird that picks up little seeds and drops them again it's someone who plays with ideas a pseudo-intellectual a scavenger for new ideas a faddist who picks up the new fad and plays with it for a while but more seriously they accused

Paul of bringing into Athens some foreign gods namely Jesus and Anastasus resurrection they take hold of Paul bring him to the Areopagus or literally Mars Hill so he can explain himself he's not strictly on trial but he's before some men who direct the life of the city and they can determine his future they're not sympathetic to Paul's preaching so here's Paul facing a fairly hostile audience he needs to watch his words but inside still churning inside are what he's seen the idolatry and so Paul begins to speak now when you face a hostile interrogator it's important to choose your words carefully my father in law spent 38 years in Pakistan speaking to

[26 : 25] Muslims and from time to time he'd be asked this question Mr. Dehart what do you think of Muhammad now it could be an innocent question it could be a sly question in a land where to blaspheme the prophet is punishment by death well Mr.

Dehart be careful what you say what do you think of Muhammad my father would say something like this well of course if I believe what you believe about Muhammad I'd be a Muslim but I'm not a Muslim I'm a Christian he's just said though not in so many words Muhammad is not the prophet of God is not sent by God and cannot be relied upon he said all that without actually saying it when facing hostile audience choose your words carefully and Paul needs such wisdom as he preaches so Paul begins like this verse 22 people of

Athens I see that you are in every way very religious the word is the word it's *desi daimon* it has two meanings it can mean very religious it can also mean very superstitious or both what's Paul mean is he calling them religious or superstitious he wouldn't begin his defense I think by insulting these people and they hear him say religious but we know how Paul feels at this moment his gut is churning his sort of righteous indignation of their idolatry he sees its folly and emptiness we know what Paul thinks they are deeply superstitious so there's lovely irony in Paul's words like a double entendre a bit like those drawings you see we look from one point of view they look like something another point of view like that picture you see look from

Sidon it's an old hag but close your eyes look again it's a pretty woman the same picture but look from different points of view betrays two different things that's how Paul's speaking here this double entendre it does it again and again throughout this sermon they think he's saying they're deeply religious they're actually exposing the ignorance and foolishness of their idolatry he thinks it's a port for this contention that they're very religious among the smorgasbord of idols he sees one inscription to an unknown god and the other hand he's saying here's some proof maybe that you're aware out there is some other gods who might be true on the other hand here's an idol what's the idol's name I don't know the idol's name is ignorance here's your confession that you don't know the truth about god paul is saying all around me i see evidence of your foolishness and stupidity and ignorance which masquerade itself as religiosity the true god is one god says paul from one man adam he made all people all belong to him he cares for them he sends rain sun harvest he signs them different places to live he gives them all things how do you think this god lives in a temple made by human hands there's diana's temple there's zeus's temple he can't go to her temple she can't go to his how ridiculous and to think that the god who made everything who gives every breath we breathe depends upon us for things how crazy to think that god needs us i tell a story sometimes of being about 14-15 in a church growing up in a church in wollongong at a sunday evening service and the sermon was droning on and around the church the old church were plaques on the wall like many old churches do and i would sit down and read the plaques this particular plaque by my pew had in memory of horatio macadamia who died in this church doing a very long sermon in 1882 and then there was a verse there under the name and the date of his death and the verse was for the lord hath need of him i thought to myself 14-15 i didn't mean to bible college i wasn't a theologian but i thought hang on i'm sure i was told that god didn't need us but well the bible says for the lord hath need of him luke 19 verse 31 i thought i'll look it up it's the time when our lord sends two apostles into jerusalem to prepare for his entry to the city and to find a man with a donkey if the man asks you why are you taking my donkey you say for the lord hath needed it refers to a donkey for the lord you'd be a donkey to think that god needs you that's what paul is saying here you'd be an ass a donkey a fool to think that god gives us all things we don't need god we don't need god and then in a final demonstration of their ignorance paul pointed out the truth that's been staring them in the face but they just can't see it he even quotes their poets who make the point that god is near to us he's very near he's so near you can grope for him and maybe find him but actually even that word grope

you grope don't you in darkness you grope through a thick fog you grope with your arms out stretched trying to find you know that something's there but through the fog and the haze and the darkness you just can't take a hold of it that's what Paul sees all around him people know God's there but they're groping in darkness in a thick fog like blind people and they just can't get their hands on it you may know that's the music I wrote a book on spirituality and in research I went down to the mind body spirit festival in Sydney which is a smorgasbord of idolatry folly everywhere here are people most of them well to do educated gropey in the dark and believing the dumbest things there's

[34 : 05] Madai Nolan who claims that she's cured wandering spirits in an Indian burial ground and brought new life to failed businesses she offers black hat feng shui cures part of her success is she's gotten hold of a powerful magic cloth from a monastery in Nepal she tells her customers if they bring something red to her seminar something red and have their photo taken with the altar cloth then spirit guides often appear in the photos I mean can you believe it or touch base with the show number one right on sorcery and witchcraft Deborah Gray author of the bestseller how to turn your ex-boyfriend into a toad people are buying it and there are astrologers and palm readers clairvoyants hypnotherapists all after your dollar offering cures for everything from bankruptcy impotency cancer and

AIDS and they're there by their thousands and the nonfiction sections of bookshops some of the biggest sellers are these books and spirituality people groping in the dark through the fog and the haze they know God's out there but in their blindness and darkness they can't find him so Paul says what therefore you proclaim as unknown or what you're completely ignorant about I proclaim to you so now in verse 30 to 31 he proclaims Jesus in the past God overlooked such ignorance but now he commands all people everywhere to repent for he set a day in which he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed he's given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead having exposed their folly he proclaims the truth

I just said we just come back from America a few days ago and while there I went to see a college football game along with 60,000 others and if you know American football they have what's called the last part of the game is the two minute warning the final whistle two minutes and the game is over well Paul says God has called the two minute warning on our world the times and people could plead ignorance are over although of course from God's perspective no one has been innocent all idolatry is culpable deserves judgment but by and large God has in his mercy withheld judgment the very fact that Athens was still there full of idols is God's mercy he's withheld judgment but no longer can you plead ignorance because God has spoken clearly and ambiguously and universally you must worship the one true

God who is the creator and sustainer of all things and worship because he is the judge of all the earth because he has set a day for all people men women believer unbeliever when in righteousness he will judge the world and proven this to raising Christ from the dead and making him the judge of all people so turn away from your idolatries receive his amnesty and trust in Christ I mentioned a moment ago Henry Martin the missionary to Muslims he finished Cambridge University turned his back on a successful career in the UK and went to India to Kolkata while his friends wanted to stay in the city and work amongst the expatriates but he wrote this

I almost think that to be prevented from going amongst the heathen as a missionary would break my heart I've hitherto lived a little purpose more like a clod than a servant of God now let me burn out for God while there he saw a Hindu procession he saw people bowing down before things just made of stumps of wood and he said this this excited in me more horror than I can well express I thought that if I had words I would have preached to the multitudes all day if I lost my life for it it's sobering to go to a place like Pakistan where I spent 11 years and to walk down the streets just chock a block with people and to know that everyone is a Muslim is following a false prophet every single one and everyone robs

[39 : 44] Christ of his glory denies he's the son denies he's divine denies he's the savior and it grieves your heart to see the one who deserves glory robbed of that glory and so Paul proclaims Christ and warns people of the coming judgment and again Luke concludes with the responses to his message again three kind of standard responses some sneer oh religion poisons everything some say well this is worth a second look do you have a book I can read and some believe let me just conclude as I said that our world's anger at the gospel has not abated last year in Peshawar two suicide bombers killed 85 worshippers in a

Pakistani church in Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood destroyed last year 42 churches in Somalia Al-Shabaab who slaughtered scores of people in that shopping mall in Nairobi has reportedly vowed to kill every Somali Christian in northern Nigeria Boko Haram has butchered thousands of Christians according to the German based International Society for Human Rights four out of every five acts of religious discrimination in the world today is directed against Christians Christians the secular US think tank Pew Forum says Christians face harassment or oppression in 139 nations or three quarters of all countries on earth but we still like the apostles we still preach we have friends who work in

Pakistan last week we received an email from them they're going back there in a week's time he said this nevertheless as we go we feel the pull of forces in this country that would hold us back concern for our parents who are having to cope with the challenges of significant health issues sons and their families who though grown are still in our hearts and who can measure the pull of our first granddaughter at that the sinking feeling we get as we re-enter a stressful environment of terrorist activity we do not go because we are not afraid we go because we want to be faithful and obedient we take the words of the psalmist when I am afraid I put my trust in you I doubt Paul was unafraid as he spoke after rejection after flogging after beating

I doubt he was unafraid God but he put his trust in Christ in God and preached so friends keep on believing the word of God and preaching the gospel as I say to my students at MST when you talk to a mission agency which is doing a hundred really good things and they ask you why do you want to go to Uzbekistan or Cambodia or Syria say because I want to preach the gospel because they need to hear about the love of Jesus when you're asked why do you want to be a youth worker in your church say because while these kids parents think the most important thing is the BCE result and university entrance I want these kids dreams ambitions attitudes lives shaped by the

Lord Jesus I want them to think about a lifetime in gospel ministry and when asked by your disappointed parents and friends why you phone away a lucrative career in marketing or engineering or medicine to preach Christ tell them because all this profits nothing if they fall for their soul and God has fixed a day on which you will judge the world in righteousness through the man he has appointed so I'm not ashamed of the gospel for it's the power of God for salvation to the Jew first and also the Greek let's pray father thank you again tonight for the reminder of the both the faithfulness of your servant but also your faithfulness in attesting your word and seeing your word work in people's lives we thank you for the power of the gospel back then and still today thank you that by your grace and power you open people's hearts you turn lives around thank you for the courage of men and women who've endured the fires of persecution to preach

[45 : 33] Christ and father forgive us for those times when we've been silent and shrunk back we pray indeed you would embolden us to faithfully relentlessly proclaim the Lord Jesus the judge of all the earth and the saviour of all the world amen