

Rejoicing in the Gospel

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[0 : 00] We welcome you to our services today as we seek that the Lord would be pleased to bless each one of us as we come together to offer him praise and thanks for his loving kindness towards us.

Let us join together in prayer. Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, our Heavenly Father, we give thanks unto thee that we have access into thine own presence, that we can come with boldness and with confidence, and that we can lay our petitions before thee, knowing, O Lord, that thou art the only one who can meet with each one of us at our point of need.

We give thanks unto thee, O Lord, for the riches of thine own grace. And we pray, O Lord, that today that we may be conscious of thine own loving kindness towards us, for thy mercy and for thy grace, for all the tokens of thy goodness and kindness, that thou dost so abundantly outpour upon us every day.

We give thee thanks, O Lord, for this opportunity that thou hast given to us to come together in an act of worship, to give thee the honour and the praise and the thanksgiving that thou art due.

We give thee thanks, O Lord, that thou hast opened this way for us through thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one whom thou didst send into the world, the one who took our nature unto himself, the one who bore our sins upon the cross, the one who died and was buried, and who rose again and who ascended to thy right hand, having finished the work that thou didst give him to do, who hast purchased for us eternal redemption.

[2 : 38] And we give thee thanks, O Lord, for his continual ministry at thine own right hand, and for the great promise that he shall return to receive his own, those who have put their trust in him, and who have followed him in this world, those who have been his witnesses in a hostile world, that they shall be brought at last to be with them in the inheritance that he has prepared for them.

And we give thee thanks, O Lord, that we can have that living hope today, that we can look forward with anticipation to the day when we shall be crowned with him.

O Lord, we pray that thou would bless thy gospel today, that those who are still outside the sphere of thine own grace, that they may be drawn by thy spirit through the gospel today, to lay down all their hostility, and to embrace the mercy that is set before them in Jesus Christ, to lean upon him, and to trust in him, to come to experience the salvation that he has worked out for sinners, such as we are.

O, we give thee thanks, O Lord, that thy promises that if we confess our sins, that thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Grant to us, O Lord, that at this hour we would come and take that place that belongs to us in humility of mind, of heart and of spirit, and that we would confess our sins, seeking, O Lord, that cleansing which thou alone can give.

[4 : 51] O Lord, we give thee thanks for the good news of Jesus Christ, and as it is being proclaimed today throughout our nation, we pray that it may go forth in the power and demonstration of thine own spirit, that it would convict and convert, and that it would build thine own church here on earth.

O, we come before thee, O Lord, seeking thy blessing upon our homes and upon our families, upon our community here, and upon those who join with us this day in our worship outside our own community.

We pray, Lord, that thou wouldst be with them also, and bless them, and we pray that thy blessing would rest upon our loved ones, wherever they may be.

Thou knowest, O Lord, and thou knowest their circumstances and their situations, and we pray, O Lord, that thou wouldst meet with them at their point of need.

O Lord, remember those who are ill, remember those who are in hospital. We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless them and bring healing to them, as that is in accordance with thine own will.

[6 : 13] Bless their loved ones, we pray thee, who are anxious for them. May thy comfort fill their heart. We remember, at this time, our doctors and our nurses and all our key workers, and we pray, O Lord, that thou would bless them and be with them and uphold them, we pray thee.

Remember, O Lord, before thee, our young people and our children, and seek thy blessing to be upon them, O Lord, we pray that thou would raise up a generation that would fear thine own name.

Remember the elderly, the lonely, we pray, O Lord, that thou wouldst draw near to them. And as we come together today to worship thee, we pray, O Lord, that thy blessing may rest upon us, giving us the liberty of thine own spirit.

As we come to read thy word, and as we come to meditate upon it, O Lord, open our hearts that thy word may be lodged in our hearts, that it may bring forth evidence in our lives.

Remember our nation, remember our leaders, grant to them wisdom. We pray, O Lord, that thou would bring us to days of repentance, days when we would sorrow over our sins, and when we would turn and seek the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

[7 : 48] We seek, O Lord, that thou would continue with us and forgive us for all our sins, in Jesus' name, and for his sake. Amen.

Let us now read the word of God as we find it in the New Testament in the Acts of the Apostles and chapter 28.

This chapter brings before us the journey of Paul to Rome. And we take up our reading as they come to the port of Potolay and as they meet with some brethren there.

So we'll take up our reading and Acts chapter 28, verse 14. When we found brethren and were desired to tarry with them seven days, and so we went toward Rome.

And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Abbey Forum and the three taverns, whom, when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage.

[9 : 06] And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard. But Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

And it came to pass that after three days, Paul called the chief of the Jews together. And when they were come together, he said unto them, men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who, when they had examined me, found would have let me go because there was no cause of death in me.

But when the Jews speak against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar, not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. For this cause, therefore, have I called for you to see you and to speak with you, because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

And they said unto him, we neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee.

But we decide to hear of thee what thou thinkest. For us concerning this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging, to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets from morning till evening.

[10 : 50] And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed, not among themselves, they departed. After that, Paul had spoken one word.

Well, he spake the Holy Ghost by his eyes, the prophet, and to our fathers, saying, Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and not perceive.

For the heart of this people is what's gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had great reasoning among themselves.

And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came unto it, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

[12 : 07] May the Lord bless unto us the reading of the portion of his word. Now today we are going to continue our study of the epistle of Paul to the Philippians.

So we turn now to that epistle and chapter 1. Philippians chapter 1, and we'll take a reading from verse 12.

But I would, ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather into the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places.

And many of the brethren in the Lord walking confident by my bonds are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of goodwill.

The one preached Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds, but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

[13 : 23] What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

That is, now, verse 12 to 18. So far in our study of this letter, we have noted the special bond and affection that Paul had towards the church at Philippi, and that the church there had the same bond and affection towards Paul.

He prays for them and makes his requests with joy. He tells them the content of his prayer, which is that their love would increase in knowledge because of their personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, but also that they would grow in judgment or discernment, that they would have the spiritual ability to apply the knowledge that they have gained to everyday situation.

knowing God through the Lord Jesus Christ and understanding people, being able to discern people and situations are all necessary for love to abound more and more.

Paul prayed for them and that they may be a people of sincerity, of honesty, and cleanness of mind to live lives that are transparent before God and other people.

[15 : 08] He says that he may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ. That is, that they would be genuine. wine. It is generally accepted that the word sincere comes from two Latin words, sign, which means without, and serre, which means wax.

Sign serre, without wax. As we noted the last time in ancient times, instead of throwing cracked pottery away, dealers were in the habit of filling in the cracks with a hard wax that would blend in with the colour of the pottery.

This made their cracks practically undetectable in the marketplace, especially if they were painted or glazed. But when the pottery was held up to the light, especially to the sun, the wax became detectable.

So that honesty, *lo schmach*, their finer progress by this caption *sign serre*, which means without wax. And that is where our word sincere comes from.

Paul is saying that the flaws in the lives of believers must not be covered up with wax. Our lives are not perfect. In this life we will always have flaws, but we must not disguise them artificially.

[16 : 30] That is, we must not wax over them. We must be sincere. We must be honest. We must confess our sins. Not wax them over.

Not try to hide them, but be sincere and honest. Now, because of the special bond and affection of the church here at Philippi towards Paul, there is no doubt that they were concerned for him.

There are now a number of years since they had seen Paul and obviously news had reached them of the things that had happened to him. They would have been grieved at the fact that he was in a Roman prison held in chains and they were probably concerned also about the future of the gospel.

If Aproditus would have conveyed their concern to Paul and now Paul in his letter is wanting them not to be anxious about him or the gospel.

And the reason that he does not want them to be anxious about him or the gospel is that because his circumstances rather than being a hindrance to the gospel as they might believe and think have in fact led to the advance of the gospel.

[18 : 03] And he wants the church here at Philippi to have a clear understanding as to how his imprisonment has affected the gospel.

But I would you should understand brethren that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather into the furtherance of the gospel so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places.

Paul speaks of those things which happened to me. And we have the beginning of those things recorded for us in the Acts of the Apostles and chapter 21 from verse 17 forward.

After his third missionary journey Paul arrived in Jerusalem and his whole vocation, his whole calling appropriately changed. he was soon assaulted and arrested and bound and brought to trial.

He had to face five trials. The first was before a Jewish crowd, the second before the Supreme Jewish Council in Jerusalem, the third and fourth in Caesarea before Felix and Festus and the fifth was also held in Caesarea before King Herod Agrippa II.

[19 : 34] But even then his sufferings were not over. Then came the prolonged trial of his journey to Rome, the storm at sea, the shipwreck where his life hung as it seemed in the balance.

He was nearly killed by the soldiers. He was poisoned by a snake. When he eventually came to Rome, we are told that when the Christians at Rome heard of their coming, a delegation was sent out to meet Paul and his company, some of them travelling thirty or more miles to the three taverns, whom, when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage.

Now, it must have been an emotional experience for Paul to meet the Christians of the church at Rome, to whom he had written a letter expressing his desire to come among them.

But now he has reached that desired goal, although under considerably different conditions than he had hoped for. He had come not as a free man, but now he comes bound with Caesar's chains.

we are told that the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but Paul was able to dwell by himself with a soldier chained to him that kept him.

[21 : 13] He had some freedom of action. He may have visitors and write letters in the portion of scripture that we read in Acts 28.

And there in verse 17, we are told that it came to pass that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together and they came to hear Paul.

In verse 30 of that chapter, we are told that Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house and received all that came unto him.

So that although he was chained to a soldier every day and every night, yet he had some freedom.

Now one of the lessons that we can learn from this is about the providence of God who works everything in conformity with the purpose of his own will.

[22 : 22] Nothing can succeed against the Lord. The providential activity of God is seen in the way that Paul is brought to Rome safe and sound.

Nothing was going to prevent or obstruct or stop the purpose of God in bringing Paul with the gospel to Rome.

Paul writing to the church at Rome says, and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Now that does not mean that the things themselves are good. They may be evil, but the result for the Christian is always good. All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Remember when Peter writes, though now for a season if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations. That is, if necessary one can be grieved by various trials.

[23 : 37] trials. These trials are permitted by God at times for our correction, for our instruction, but in this case that we have here before us today, all these things that came upon Paul was permitted so that the gospel might be spread to others.

And here Paul wants the Philippians to know what has happened to him, has really served to advance the gospel.

They are to understand that its effect has been quite the reverse of what they might have expected. He makes several reference to his bonds or his chains in verse 7 and in verse 13 and in verse 14 16.

What would have been conventional wisdom and obstacle and hindrance to any advance of the gospel has actually served to advance the gospel.

the fact that Paul was chained, did not terminate his work in proclaiming the gospel.

[25 : 00] He did not finish his work in proclaiming the gospel. Reminding us that though the messenger may be bound, the message cannot be bound.

He was still in chains and the future was still uncertain. But there is something else that is true and that is that those things that had happened to him had really served to advance the gospel and for Paul that was a reason for him to rejoice.

In verse 12 Paul looks back on the past, the providence that took him to Rome. But then in verse 13 to 18 he looks at his present circumstances, his present condition.

And Paul spells out how all these things have worked out to advance the gospel so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places.

And many of the brethren in the Lord walks confident by my bonds are much more bold to speak the word without fear. First of all, let us consider this.

[26 : 23] Paul was able to bear a remarkable witness to the imperial guard. And there would have been a set of rough and brutal soldiers. And this set of soldiers were the official bodyguard of the emperor.

father. Now, Paul's attitude here is especially important for us to observe. And it is a good example for us.

When we try to visualize the scene, Paul is imprisoned and he is chained to one of the elite soldiers all the time. A different soldier taking up the duty every six hours.

so that in a day he would have had four different soldiers chained to him. Did Paul complain? Did he complain that this was unjust?

No, he did not. Instead, Paul saw this as an opportunity to witness. He saw the guard at the end of the chain as a person who was a sinner and that needed salvation.

[27 : 32] So he presented him with the gospel. How Paul did this we are not told.

But it is interesting what we have already read in the book of Acts and chapter 28. And we see there written there in verse 23 and when they had appointed him a day, that was the Jews that he invited to come and to hear him.

There came many to him and to his lodging, to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets from morning till evening.

He was expounding to the Jews who had come to hear to hear him. But remember that at the same time as he was there expounding to the Jews, that there was a soldier chained to him.

Possibly more than one, because here we are told that he did this from morning till evening. I do not think that Paul stood and began preaching to the Jews or the God, giving out all the points of his sermon.

[29 : 01] But I think that Paul presented the gospel not only in his preaching here as noted, but also in his conversation and lifestyle.

There is no doubt that the God and Paul would talk. And I'm sure that in conversation the reason for Paul's imprisonment would come up.

Paul would explain the reason for his imprisonment in Rome. He would explain that it was all because of his identification with the Lord Jesus Christ.

He writes, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places. The guards would have been left in no doubt why Paul was chained, that his imprisonment is neither for crime nor for politics, but with his being in Christ, a follower of Jesus Christ.

It was evident for them that his imprisonment has to do with his Christian faith. Now, Paul would also be a praying man and the guard would hear Paul praying.

[30 : 19] None of his prayers are recorded for us. but what the guard would hear were the words of a man who had a relationship with his God, a man who was so content with his situation, who praised God.

Maybe Paul prayed for the imperial guards and even prayed for the guard to which he was chained in a very personal way. It is interesting the effect that personal prayers, especially people are named, can have on people.

Therefore, I think that it is worthy practice when we are praying with someone to name that person in our prayers. prayers. And as we have noted, Paul was allowed visitors.

So the guard would have been in on to the conversations that took place, as we have already noted from the book of Acts, when the Jews came to hear Paul, the guards would have been privy to that conversation, that preaching that took place there between Paul and the Jews.

And of course, Paul wrote letters from prison, of which this letter is one. Now we believe that Paul dictated those letters and someone else would be writing them down.

[31 : 46] Again, the guard who was chained to Paul would hear Paul's words, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places.

Now, Paul moves from the effects of his chains upon the soldiers and those around him in the palace and in other places and he moves to the effects on the Christian community at Rome.

He says, And many of the brethren in the Lord walk in confidence by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

As Paul reflects upon this matter, he recognises that God has used his imprisonment to help others to be bolder to speak without fear.

Paul does not tell us the link between his bonds and their increase confidence. However, I think we can rightly assume that Paul's demeanour, his behaviour and the way in which he conducted himself while chained and in prison would not have gone unnoticed by the body of Christians at Rome and that such an example could only be a stimulus and incentive for them.

[33 : 24] Here was a man who was suffering and yet here is a man who has no bitterness in his heart. He is no complainer of his providence.

They would be aware of his unbroken confidence and trust in a sovereign God who was in control even when things seemed to be the exact opposite.

He saw himself not so much as a prisoner in the hands of Caesar as a preacher as a witness in the hands of a sovereign God.

We have already remarked upon the way that Paul witnessed although imprisoned and chained to a soldier how it was a positive fruit-bearing thing and now here we see how his witness affected the body of believers at Rome that became more confident and much bolder to speak the word without fear.

Should we not examine ourselves and ask how has my life ever had this effect upon other Christians?

[34 : 46] Today you may have chains of your own something that imprisons you perhaps confined to your home or perhaps confined to a sickbed whatever it may be remember this should not be a cause of discouragement to you in the circumstances which are given to you by God it can be used by him to make you a living witness for him just as Paul was to the soldiers but more so even to those who look upon you that you may be a living witness to the grace of God in our confined space one can be a great encourager to the church I think often that we forget what we owe to those who are confined to their homes and to care homes and other places believers who are on their knees in unceasing prayer for the good of the cause of

Jesus Christ leads me to think that we are the recipients of many blessings because of them because of those who are confined and bound as it were to their own particular chains who are imprisoned in a sense and yet who are praying for the cause of Jesus Christ not only in our community but more general that we owe a lot to them and that eternity is going to reveal a lot to us Paul now follows the encouraging word of verse 14 with this unexpected note in verse 15 some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife and some also of good will the one preached Christ of contention not sincerely supposing to add affliction to my bonds but the other of love knowing that I am said for the defence of the gospel you know we may sometimes have the idea in our mind that the early church that the apostles set up especially

Paul we think sometimes of the church of past years and Christians of past years and we have this image of them that they were so perfect and godly but the fact is that this perfection that we assign to them is only in our imagination they had their own problems as we see here to be true of the church at Rome they had the same problems as we have today the church at Rome had the problem of divisions just as the church at Corinth had the problems of division the church in every age has had problems and very often it is one of divisions within the brotherhood of verse 14 there are two groups that are divided by their different attitude towards Paul it is not the gospel that is dividing these people it is their attitude towards

Paul repent Paul's teachers like those in Galatia who sought to draw people away from the true gospel, who in Paul's terms preached another gospel, who tried to add to the gospel with their insistence of circumcision and other Jewish rituals.

They are not like those others in Corinth who tried to subtract from the gospel by denying bodily resurrection. They are not sheep in wolves' clothing for they do preach Christ.

[39 : 20] They preach the gospel message of salvation through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. What divides these two groups is not their Christian identity or their Christian message, but their different attitude towards Paul.

We could call them the anti-Paul group. Though animated by envy rather than love, they were indeed preaching Christ. Their motives were shamefully selfish, but their message truly presented the gospel of Christ.

They did this out of envy and strife. Possibly they were jealous at Paul's success in the gospel. And we know how jealousy destroys Christian witness.

How jealousy destroys the oneness and the togetherness that ought to be in the body of believers. They were doing it out of strife.

They just like to argue and to be against each other. And you know there are people who love that. They love to argue and to be against others.

[40 : 38] The contemporary church is still full of such. How we should give the more earnest heed to the words of the apostle to the church at Corinth that was plagued with divisions.

When he says to them, But now are there many members get one body, and the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again to the head, to the feet, I have no need of you.

Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we be so more abundant honour.

And their uncomely parts are more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need, but God have tampered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked.

That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care, one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.

[41 : 41] Or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. You know, as we recently noted, we sometimes divide ourselves from other Christians because of very trivial reasons.

It may be they come from a different ethnic background, or a different culture, or they speak a different language. And so often we come to the conclusion and the belief that we are right and that they are wrong.

But the truth that we are all equally sinners, and that we are all equally recipients of the grace of God, that should overcome all divisions that we impose.

That we have all, each one of us, our own particular position in the body of Christ. That we are all different members in the one body of Jesus Christ.

However, in Rome, there were others, those whose pure motive is goodwill. He writes, They see that Paul can no longer be involved in preaching Christ publicly.

[43 : 10] And they know that he is in chains for his defence of the gospel. And their motivation is love for the apostle Paul, but more so, love for the gospel. And notice Paul's response to all this.

And here is a vital lesson for me and you. What then, he says, Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

The main point for Paul was that the gospel was being preached. People were hearing the gospel of salvation. So, whatever harm those people were out to cause Paul to try and humiliate Paul by exalting themselves above him, actually, it caused Paul to rejoice because Christ was preached.

The furtherance of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the salvation of sinners through the gospel, is everything for Paul. That his imprisonment, his curtailment, has been a means used by God to further gospel, is as such for Paul of genuine joy, that Christ is being preached, is for Paul a such of genuine joy.

For Paul the gospel was everything. He had written in his letter to this very body of believers at Rome, For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

[44 : 59] And the word ashamed there, in a biblical sense, means disappointed. In other words, he is saying that he will not be disappointed with the gospel because of the power that accompanies it.

In fact, when he says, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, there is the sense in which he is saying, I glory in the gospel of Christ.

What does the gospel mean for yourself today? What is important, and of some urgency to consider, is our relationship with God.

If we look to churches or denominations, all we find there is imperfection. If we look to other people, and if we try in our foolishness to attain to the status of other people, really at the end, all we can see is imperfection.

There will be jealousy. There will be envy. There will be strife. There will be divisions. But you see, our salvation does not depend upon denominations.

[46 : 18] It does not depend upon other people. every true, genuine believer, but on Jesus Christ.

It doesn't depend even on true, genuine believers, but simply and totally and absolutely on Jesus Christ.

salvation is personal, and it is concerned with your relationship to Jesus Christ. The church at Philippi had tensions, as we shall see later, but Paul was assured that despite her imperfection, and despite her tensions and divisions, she would be brought to perfection in the day of Jesus Christ.

You know, the Christian, the genuine believer, isn't perfect in this world, but he's on a journey towards perfection. Dear friend, do not look to anyone, or any institution, but to Jesus Christ, for in him is salvation alone.

And he is the very heart of the gospel. He is the good news. He is the gospel. Christ is the gospel.

[47 : 50] And here is Paul, and he's imprisoned, and he is leading a Christ-centered life, a Christ-centered witness. Even in his sufferings, he is still leading a Christ-centered life.

And in the fact that Christ is preached, he rejoices, even if the motives of those who are preaching it may be selfish, and may be out to humiliate him.

Nevertheless, he rejoices in the fact that Christ is being preached. Christ in all, and is all. a Christ-centered life.

Because in him only is salvation. So my dear friend, do not look to anyone. Do not look to certain denominations or institutions.

Look to Christ. For in him is salvation. May the Lord bless our thoughts. Let us pray. We give thanks unto thee, O Lord, for the gospel.

[48 : 59] for the good news of Jesus Christ. And we give thanks to thee, O Lord, that the gospel has been proclaimed in our midst, in our nation, and in our communities today.

that the good news of Jesus Christ. And we pray, O Lord, that there may be that drawing power of thy spirit upon our people to look over people and institutions and denominations and churches and so on to look to Jesus.

for in him is salvation and in him alone. we pray, O Lord, O Lord, that thou would heal up divisions that there may be among us.

That thou would bring us to that oneness and togetherness in Jesus Christ. But we know, O Lord, that we live in an imperfect world.

But blessed be thy name that through thy grace that we are on a journey. A journey to perfection. And as thy apostle Paul was so assured that where thou hast begun that work, that thou would bring that work to perfection in the day of Jesus Christ.

[50 : 24] And so we look to that day with anticipation, with a longing to the day when everything will be perfect and there will be no more divisions.

There will be no more envy. There will be no more jealousy. There will be no more strife. But Christ will be all and in all. We ask, O Lord, that thou would continue with us during the day and forgive us for all our sins.

And we seek, O Lord, that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit would be with you all.

Amen. Amen.