

Worship the Living God

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[0 : 00] We're going to begin our worship by singing to God's praise in Psalm 77, in the Sing Psalms version. Psalm 77, so on page 100 of the psalm books, we'll sing from verse 6 down to verse 14.

Psalm 77 at verse 6, Throughout the watches of the night, my songs I called to mind. I ponder deeply while my heart an answer tried to find.

Forever will the Lord reject and never show his grace. Has he withdrawn his steadfast love and turned from me his face? And then we see in verse 10 a response.

Then to my heart there came this thought. On this I will rely. The years of the right hand of power of him who is most high.

How God remembers us in all our needs. So we'll sing from verse 6 to verse 14 and the tune is Glencairn. I invoke the singing of Jadion, Schmidt divers out of England.

[1 : 07] interval six feet away from the r computational group.

I wonder deeply while my heart an answer I to find.

Forever will the Lord be dead and never show his face.

As he withdrawn his strength as love and turned only his face.

For all time has his promise in his God no longer kind.

[2 : 22] As he is, he traverses compassion from his mind.

Then to my heart there came this thought of which I will rely.

The years of the bright hand of hand of him who is most high.

I will recall the Lord's great peace pure works of long and long.

I'll meditate on all your act pure mighty deeds that show.

[3 : 39] O God, most holy higher ways what God compares with you.

You are the Lord of the hills who is part of the nation's view.

Let's come to God in prayer. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, as we continue in our worship of you this day, we do thank you for your word as we have heard it today, as we come to hear it once more, that we would never tire of it, that we would never tire of uniting our hearts in praise and worship to you, that our hearts would not go cold or hard towards you.

We often feel, Lord, that that would not be possible and yet your word reminds us that so often down through the generations of your people, your people have lost that focus, lost that attention to who they are to worship.

And yet constantly you remind us that only you are worthy of all our prayers and all our worship, that glory is to you alone. Even in these words that we have sung, we are reminded of it, that there is no God who compares to you, for you are the God of miracles, whose power the nations view.

[5 : 23] And yet as we think of these words in our own times just now and with all the nations around us, we know that we still see your power and your miracles at work in our midst, and yet we have no thought of them.

We have no thought towards you. And so we pray, Lord, that you will remember us, that you will awaken us, that you would give us the prayer of this psalm, that we would be a people who would constantly remember, that we can rely upon you, the years of the right hand of power, of him who is most high, the wonders of the Lord's great deeds, his works of long ago, that we can still look to these things, that we can still remind ourselves that you are still the God of miracles, that you are still the one, even today, who is able to do so much more than all that we ask or imagine.

And so give us faith, O Lord. Give us to look to you and to trust and rely upon you for all things. For in you we live, move and have our being, as your word says.

And Lord, there are times when we so often think we can rely on ourselves, but again and again, you remind us, Lord, that we are weak enough ourselves, that we are unable to do so much in our lives.

And especially, Lord, the greatest thing we cannot achieve is our own salvation. We cannot do anything to receive glory from you, that you would say to us, well done, on being able to do what can bring forgiveness of sins to yourself.

[7 : 01] We have to look beyond ourselves. We have to acknowledge our sin and look to the one who was without sin and the one who came to bear the sins of this world.

And we thank you that in Jesus Christ, we have that one to look to, that we can lift our eyes to him, that we can behold him, the one who was pierced for our transgressions, the one by whose wounds we can be healed.

And we thank you that it is your word that directs us in all of these things to see the wonder and the beauty of Jesus. And we thank you for the promise of the Holy Spirit, the one who leads us towards the wonder of Christ and the wonder of the glory of his name.

And we pray tonight that your spirit will be with us as we gather here and as others tune in online. We pray for your spirit to lead us in our worship, to guide us in your word, to teach us, to build us up, to challenge and rebuke where that is required, to do all things, O Lord, for us, that we might leave here with a clearer knowledge and a clearer understanding of who you are.

And our trust would increase, that our faith would go on strengthened, even for this week ahead, in all the uncertainties of it and the challenges that may lie ahead for us.

[8 : 26] That, as your word reminds us, if we were to have faith, even the size of a mustard seed, we could say to the mountains to be cast into the sea. So, Lord, give us that faith to look to you at all times and to lean upon you for understanding and wisdom and help in all life's experience.

We do pray for our people here. We thank you for every home and family represented. We thank you for our community, our church community, our church family.

And we pray, Lord, that you will bind us together day by day, that as the message of your word is delivered here this morning by the Reverend Colin McLeod, that we are to be a living church for you, that you would make us so, that you would enable us, Lord, to go on in your strength, to do all things well and to do all for your glory.

And we thank you for every service that we have to give to you. We thank you for the gift of prayer. We thank you that whether we are together or apart, we are to exercise that, that we are to look to you, O Lord, and wait patiently upon you.

We are to offer up our prayers to you for all things. And especially as we seek, O Lord, wisdom from you in all the days ahead, as we seek your blessing on all the works we are involved in, as we seek your help in all things.

[9 : 55] Lord, we thank you that we have a name to come to you with, that we pray, not in of ourselves, but in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank you, Lord, that together we pray that name this evening.

And may you teach us to pray, Lord. May you encourage us in prayer. May you give answer to your, to our prayers according to your will, as we ask it all, looking for your glory.

And may you teach us, O Lord, as we go on to know that you are the one who builds your church. As we think of every endeavor, as we preach the word, as we share it, as we meet for prayers during the week, as we look to your help for the holiday club and for the Fridays of the Free, for all that we do to reach out to our communities with the gospel.

We pray for patience. We pray for words to speak. We pray for your spirit to move among us, that we would see your power at work, that we would see the revelation of your acts once more in our midst, that we would give glory and praise to you.

We thank you too, Lord, that as a people, we can mourn with those who mourn as well. And we thank you for that power that there is in your people to gather round one another in such times.

[11 : 16] And as we have been touched by the sad news, even in these last days, we do thank you, Lord, that as you call your people home, that we have that great comfort and great assurance that to die is gain for your people.

And so we pray, Lord, your comfort in the midst of sorrow. And we think especially of the family of Charlie Finlayson at this time and ourselves as a congregation. We thank you for his humble service to you over so many years.

And we pray, Lord, for Catherine and for Ruthie at this time and the grandsons too and all the family as a whole. Lord, may your peace and blessing be over them.

May you draw near to them and comfort them throughout these days and give help, O Lord, in all that is to be done over these days. We thank you that your grace is always sufficient. And we pray for that to be poured out upon them and that they would know it in a special way. Lord, we do pray for those who are unwell at this time.

[12 : 23] We know there's been so much illness over these last few weeks, not just with ourselves, but throughout our island communities. There are so many who are unwell and suffering in different ways.

We just pray for healing and help in the midst of it. We thank you, Lord, for all the health service and for all that they do for us in hospitals and in the community and serving in so many different ways. We pray for them, Lord, that you will strengthen them and bless them. We do pray for our land at this time as well. In the midst of this last week and the general election that's taken place, a general election that has seen so much change throughout our land, not least in the leadership of our parliament.

We do pray for our new prime minister. We ask, O Lord, that you would lead them and guide them and his government and all who will serve in parliament in these coming years, either re-elected or elected anew.

We do pray for them, Lord, that you will guide them by your spirit and help them to know that your power is there for them, that they would call upon you and ask for your wisdom and your guidance.

[13 : 35] We do pray for our nation. We pray for the gospel as it goes out throughout our land. We pray for you to build your church in our midst, that you would have mercy upon us, that you would pour out your spirit upon us.

We pray that for the lands of the world, O Lord, in which we live, the nations, the peoples, all that we see around us. We pray, Lord, that you would pour out your blessing upon us, guide us towards you, that your word will be blessed to all ends of the earth.

We thank you for our time here, this evening, and we pray that you will continue with us, watch over our people, watch over those who are visiting with us over these coming weeks and people who are traveling away as well.

We pray your protection, your safety, your blessing, your refreshing upon us all. And we ask, O Lord, that above all, together we would praise you, together we would fix our eyes on Jesus and look to him, we might know his power and presence in our midst, and even going into this week ahead, that we would know your strength and your mercy with us.

We thank you for your grace and pray to know it more and more. So hear our prayers and pardon our sin as we ask all of these things in that precious name that we look to even anew this evening, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and his glory in our midst.

[14 : 58] Amen. We'll again sing to God's praise this time in Psalm 30 in the Singed Psalms version. Psalm 30 on page 34.

We'll sing from the beginning of the psalm down to verse 8. And then our next singing will be from the same psalm as well. Psalm 30 on page 34 at verse 1.

O Lord, I will exalt your name for you have rescued me. You did not let my foes rejoice and gloat triumphantly. Lord God, in need I cried to you and you restored my health.

O Lord, you brought me from the grave and saved my soul from death. We'll sing from verse 1 to 8 to God's praise in the tune of St. Andrew. Amen. O Lord, I will exalt your name for you have rescued me.

You did not let my foes rejoice and hope triumphantly.

[16 : 20] Lord God, in need I cry to you and you restored my health.

O Lord, you brought me from the grave and saved my soul from death.

You holy ones sing to the Lord. Sing out with joyful voice When you recall his holy name Let praise him and rejoice His anger, what an open glass Life on his river stays Though tears may last Throughout the night Throughout the night Joy comes with morning's rays Joy comes with morning's rays I never shall be moved I said In my hostility You made my mountain In grenade Changezil ritual Yet It's my house My heart was terrified To you, O Lord, I call the Lord For mercy, Lord, I cry We'll turn to read together now God's Word in the book of Acts.

[19 : 16] We're reading in chapter 14. We're taking up our reading at verse 8. Acts chapter 14, and we'll take up our reading at verse 8.

In here we find Paul and Barnabas. They've been traveling around different places. As you see at the beginning of the chapter, they've been in Iconium, and now they find themselves in Lystra as they are taking the Word of God to different places and facing up to many different challenges in the midst of it.

We're going to read then from verse 8, reading down to verse 28. Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet, he was crippled from birth and had never walked.

He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, said in a loud voice, Stand upright on your feet.

And he sprang up and began walking. When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lyconium, the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.

[20 : 34] Barnabas they called Zeus and Paul Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifices with the crowds.

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, Men, why are you doing these things?

We also are men of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave them without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.

Even with these words, they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them. But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

[21 : 51] But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derby. When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in their faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

And when they had appointed elders for them in every church with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia.

And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Atalia. And from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had fulfilled.

And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they remained no little time with the disciples.

Amen. And may God bless that reading from his word. Before we come to look at some of that passage, we'll again sing in Psalm 30. We'll continue singing in this psalm, the last verses of the psalm, verse 9 down to verse 12.

[23 : 17] What gain will my destruction bring if I descend to death? Will thus proclaim your faithfulness or praise you with its breast? Hear as I cry, O Lord my God, and listen to my plea.

Come to my aid and my distress. Have mercy, Lord, on me. We'll sing these four verses to God's praise in the tune of Spore. Amen. What gain will my destruction bring?

And why descend to death? Well, does your pain pure faithfulness or praise you with its breast? Be thus, I cry, O Lord my God, and listen to my plea.

Come to my aid and my distress. You turned my breathing into dust.

[24 : 58] For no longer was I sad. My sad, O God, You gave me most What joy that I was died.

Therefore, my heart will sing to you And never cease to praise To your great name.

O Lord my God, I will give thanks always.

Let's turn back to our reading in the book of Acts, chapter 14. We can read again at verse 15.

Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men of like nature with you, and we bring you good news that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

[26 : 27] Turn from these vain things to a living God. As we read through this passage, we are reminded so much of the grace of God, how he deals with his people.

We were thinking last Lord's Day about God's mercy and wrath. Remember mercy we were looking at in Habakkuk. And mercy is a powerful word, and we see another word that's powerful here this evening.

Grace. It is a wonderful thing. Question is, have you known it? Have you known the grace of God in your own life? Do you know it even just now?

Do you have it in your heart, that grace of God in all its power? Or what is the grace of God?

Perhaps maybe you're not sure just what is. The grace of God.

Well, grace is a reminder to us of something that we cannot do ourselves. It is by grace you have been saved, Paul says as he writes to the church at Ephesus through faith.

[27 : 33] It is a gift of God. A gift for what? For the forgiveness of our sin. And how is that accomplished? How are our sins forgiven?

Well, it's a faith that is based on what Christ himself has done for us. Martin Luther spoke of grace in the light of the impossibility of our sin being forgiven by our own actions.

He spoke of it in this way. He said, Since this was impossible for us, God ordained for us in our place one who took upon himself all the punishment we deserve.

He fulfilled the law for us. He averted the judgment of God from us and appeased God's wrath.

Grace therefore costs us nothing, but it costs another much to get it for us.

Grace was purchased with an incalculable, infinite treasure, the Son of God himself. That is the wonder of grace.

[28 : 42] What we could never do for ourselves, God by his grace has done for us through his Son, Jesus Christ. And as we look at this passage here in Acts, that is the grace that we see when Paul and Barnabas meet with this crowd at Lystra.

They think these two are the gods who have come down in the form of men, but they say to them, No, no, not us. It's not about us.

We are men just like you. But they say we bring you good news. Good news that you should turn from these vain things to a living God.

And it's this grace that runs through the Bible from beginning to end, the wonder of God's grace.

Every time we hear the word of God proclaim, every Christ-centered sermon, we hear the grace of God is running through it.

For we are always pointed to the wonder of Christ Jesus as our Savior. But there are times. There are times when we are more aware of it.

[29 : 52] There are times when we feel it more and clearly in our own hearts, in our own minds, how clear it is, especially in terms of how undeserving we are of this grace.

We don't deserve it. And that's what grace is all about. Just like mercy, undeserved, so grace, undeserved. And yet God pours it out upon his people that we might know it through faith in him.

You see grace running through the Old Testament. You see it through the experience of God's people with him. You think of the book of Exodus and how God dealt graciously with his people there when he gave the Ten Commandments to Moses.

While Moses was away, the people started to think he's not coming back. He's left us. So what did they do? They did what is natural in the heart of man. They made an idol.

They gathered the gold they could find and they made a golden calf that they might worship that calf. And when Moses came back down, when he returned, this is what he found.

[31 : 02] This is what God saw. And yet God graciously gave the commandments once more. You see it in chapter 34 of Exodus in verse 6.

As God speaks to Moses and meets with Moses again to make new tablets of stone and to give the commandments, he says in verse 6, the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. And so he goes on to remind them of the grace of God there. Did they deserve it? No. And that is grace shown.

The Lord is merciful and gracious and praise his name that he is. And so that's what we continue to see as you go on through the scriptures.

This grace being shown in the midst of a people who continually turn away from God. The reaction as we see who God is and his power and in all his glory, it should be for us to just bow before him,

to fall before him, pleading for mercy.

[32 : 21] But is that what we do? Well, as you see as you go through the scriptures, you think even of the children of Israel in the book of Exodus, what happened with them? They blew hot and they blew cold.

One minute they were trusting God, the next minute they were seeing something more appealing, another God, another idol they could worship that would help them more than the living God as we read of here.

And so as we come into the book of Acts, what we're seeing is this ongoing dilemma of the people of this world. How we turn away from the living God, turn to our idols, and worship them and the grace of God, the mercy of God is that he calls us back.

And that's what Paul and Barnabas are doing here. We see a similar people with a similar problem, but with that same grace still surrounding them and still to this day.

In the beginning of this chapter and when they were in Iconium, in verse 3 there, you read of the grace being preached there. So they remained for a long time speaking boldly of the Lord who bore witness to the word of his grace.

[33 : 38] They ministered the word of God and in the midst of the challenges that they faced, even stoning us, we see, they continued to proclaim the good news.

This morning, Colin, I think, was preaching on the theme of the living church. And we need grace to be the living church. And this evening, we're thinking of the grace that we receive from the living God.

There is a living God that is the heart of our church. Turn from these vain things, in verse 15, to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

We need grace preached. We need grace received. We need grace lived in our midst to be a living church, worshipping the living God.

And so do we see this God in our midst? Do we have this God in our midst? Are we looking and trusting to him in all things? I want us to see three things from these verses before us just to remind us to always have our eyes on the living God and the good news that he gives.

[34 : 53] And the first thing we see is the same old problems. Then secondly, we'll see that there's no more excuses. And then thirdly, we'll see that the gospel is key.

The gospel is at the heart. So the first thing we see is the same old problems. When you go back to the book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament in the first chapter there, it's a powerful book that reminds us of what our life is like.

And in verse 9 it says this, what has been is what will be and what has been done is what will be done and there is nothing new under the sun. The cycle of life just going on, going around all the time.

What has been will be and what has been done is what will be done. Nothing new under the sun. It's the same old problems over and over again.

And so that even as you think of the Exodus time, here we are more than maybe a thousand years later when we come to the book of Acts and you would think the people, well they're bound to have learned.

[36 : 00] They're bound to have made progress. They're bound to have learned from all the different experiences of seeing God's punishment on their sin in the Old Testament times when they were taken into captivity and yet his mercy and his grace in restoring them.

They've come to see the cross, the fulfillment and the wonder of God's love. They've seen Christ crucified. They're hearing this gospel message. They're bound to have learned.

They're bound to have made progress. They're bound to be living, worshipping God with all their hearts now. In many ways progress has been made in terms of buildings and cities and economies that have expanded and flourished throughout all different kinds of places.

That's what the book of Acts so highlights for us the different places the gospel was going to. The gospel was spreading. So yes, things have progressed.

Things have developed. And yet more knowledge isn't always the answer. Because the same problems still exist.

[37 : 10] And this great problem still exists. The problem that the people had in the days of Moses is still the same problem here in the book of Acts.

It's still the same problem today. And what is that great problem? Well, the problem is a people turning from the living God and turning to worship idols. Idols that take all kinds of forms. Idols that take all kinds of shapes. Idols that we don't even see. And yet we worship them.

Just as they do here in the book of Acts. And what you see here is just how quickly the hearts can turn towards idols.

You see it here in verse 11. When they had healed this man who was crippled from birth, what happened? People were amazed. In verse 11, when the crowd saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices saying in Lyconian, the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.

[38 : 23] And what did they do? They made Paul and Barnabas their gods. Barnabas they called Zeus and Paul Hermes. These were the gods they felt they were looking for.

They were looking to men. Just a wee aside here as we think of our own situation as a congregation going forward.

What are we looking for when we think of ministry going forward? We don't look for men. We don't look for someone who is going to lead this church.

We don't look for a man in that sense but to the living God. That is where we are to look. any preacher is here to point to the living God and not to ourselves.

And that's what Paul and Barnabas do here. That's what they say in verse 15. We are men of like nature with you. That is all we are.

[39 : 31] As the saying goes, the best of men are men at best. So let's not fall into the trap of looking to man but looking to the living God.

But when they say this, when they saw the fact that this healing had taken place, they say in verse 11, the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.

Look how close they are to the truth. Look how close they are to the truth. the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.

It's like it's in their heart to look for God. They're looking for God to come down. They're just looking at the wrong God. God came down in the person of Jesus Christ.

There's no one else we need to look to. He is God of gods. He is King of kings. He is Lord of lords. They have this confession that's so close to the truth and yet so far away.

[40 : 42] And so for ourselves too, we must think to ourselves, what God are we looking to? Do we fall into the same old problems of making idols or looking to the false gods?

You see here they even had names for their gods, Zeus and Hermes. These were the gods that the people were looking to for prosperity and they wanted to please these gods.

They were willing to offer sacrifices to these gods straight away in the person of Paul and Barnabas. But they say, no, it's not us.

How foolish it may be looks to you and I today that they would do this before any men, before anyone, that they would make these kinds of offerings. And yet, in our own hearts, we put other things before God.

God, and that is what idolatry is. The foolishness of idolatry. Somebody once put it like this, you are not a fool just because you have done something foolish, only if the folly of it escapes you.

[41 : 50] Doing something foolish is not what foolishness is about. It's not recognizing the foolishness in it. And that's the people here.

And that's so often what our own hearts can be like as well. We don't think it's foolish because we don't see the foolishness in it until it's pointed out to us. And that's what Paul and Barnabas do here in verse 15.

They point out this foolishness. Men, why are you doing these things? Why are you doing these things? Stop what you are doing.

we are not the gods that you are looking for. But let us tell you of another. We want to point you to the living God. The one who is God.

And there is no other. The same old problems still exist because we don't put God first. We look to men.

[42 : 51] So we are to look to the living God. The second thing we see here is there is no more excuses. We are so apt at making excuses for all our faults.

We become experts from a young age trying to hide our faults, making excuses for what we do wrong. It is somebody else's fault or something else's fault.

You can think of making excuses for not doing your homework, for being late for something. All of these kinds of things are from a very early age. We start making excuses.

But do we have an excuse? Do you have an excuse for not believing in the living God? Do you have an excuse that will satisfy God when he comes as to the reason why you would not believe, you would not trust fully in this living God?

Paul and Barnabas here show the people that have no excuse for not believing in God. There are no words that we can offer up that will appease God.

[44 : 02] And you see it in the end of verse 15 into verse 16. They're pointing them towards the living God who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways, yet he did not leave himself without witness.

He did not leave himself without witness. There is evidence for God all around us that we are not without excuse.

The living God is the one that we are to look to. God allowed, it says here, his people to go their own ways.

They were free, just as we are today, to do what we want, but they're not without excuse. God and this is the reality of this verse for ourselves today as well.

God leaving us to our own devices, you see it in the book of Romans as well, we'll quote that in just a moment, but he leaves people to their own desires.

[45 : 10] He gives them over to their own desires. He allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. And again, we could just apply that to ourselves today as nations of the world.

We are walking so much in our own ways. We are turning from the living God and going our own ways, doing our own things. But even then, we are not left without God's testimony to us in what is known as common grace.

And we see that in verse 17. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.

They are pointing them here to the fact that this living God, this is the God of prosperity. This is the God who is able to bless. This is the God who is able, the only God who is able to provide.

He is the one who has made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in him. So as we look around, we are without excuse. That is common grace, what we all see.

[46 : 25] But it's only God's special grace that can help us to fully see and to understand. But we're without excuse. As I said, the book of Romans, it shows it to us there as well.

In chapter 1, verse 18, it says, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For that can be known, for what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made, so they are without excuse.

There is no excuse, because we see by common grace the living God is all around us. So it's not a case of making an excuse.

Nobody told me. If only I had known, I would have done something about it. I would have believed. That's not an excuse, because the evidence of God is all around us.

[47 : 41] But we want to suppress it. We want to put it down by our nature and look to ourselves or to something else. But there's no excuse.

Imagine, even this evening, if a knock came to the door of this church and it's the Lord. You hear it. You hear him at the door and someone says, it is the Lord. The word says he is coming and we don't know when he will come like a thief in the night.

Are you ready? Are you ready when you hear that knock? Would you need to try and make an excuse tonight if the Lord returned, to come stumbling before him, trying to get words out, but there's no words, because there is no excuse.

Nobody told me. Not an excuse. the whole of this creation, it speaks to you of God. It's no excuse. I couldn't believe because the evidence wasn't there.

[48 : 48] It is. He has given us the sign. He has given us, He has shown us through the wonder of the gospel, through His giving His Son, through His crucifixion, through His resurrection.

It is all there. We are without excuse. There is no excuse. So are you ready?

If that knock comes, are you going to go and give an excuse, or are you going to go and say like Mary who saw the risen Lord and said, Rabboni, when she heard her name being called? Are you ready to grasp your Savior? The grace that He has shown you, have you received it? Are you overwhelmed by it? Are you overpowered by it? That it fills you with joy, fills you with emotion that the Lord would remember you. There is no excuse.

[49 : 51] The Lord, He is the living God, and He is the one that we are to look to. So there's no excuse. And what is it that's the key to this grace?

Well, thirdly and finally, we see here the gospel is key to everything. The grace of God that is seen through the gospel.

There's something different in these verses. There's something that has changed in these verses. It says, in past generations, He allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways.

Now, what is new? What is different? Well, there is a testimony. There is a testimony. There's no excuse because we have the gospel.

And we see this in verse 15, going back to that verse. Men, why are you doing these things? Why are you following your hearts that are just full of idolatry? Why are you doing these things?

[50 : 57] we also are men of like nature with you. But they say, we bring you good news. We bring you good news that you should turn from these vain things to the living God.

That is what the gospel is about. Why are you doing these things? Why are we going on in this way?

We need to turn to the living God. Not because we are afraid of the consequences of not doing so, but realizing what the good news means, what the good news tells us.

It tells us of the wonder of salvation in Christ. The wonder of forgiveness for our sin through him.

That we turn from these worthless things, these things that cannot save us, these gods as they have made them, that are dead.

They can't hear, they can't do anything. But we look to the living God, to the risen Lord, to the Son of God who is at the right hand of God on high, the Lord who is making intercession for us.

[52 : 13] We look to the living God. That is the good news. That if the Lord returns tonight, if he knocks on our door tonight, that we can be ready by the gospel, by faith in Jesus Christ.

Oswald Chambers, in one of his books, he says this, it is not repentance that saves me.

Repentance is a sign that I realize what God has done in Christ Jesus.

The danger is to put the emphasis on the effect instead of on the cause. Is it my obedience that puts me right with God? Never. I am put right with God because prior to all else, Christ died.

When I turn to God and by belief accept what God reveals instantly, the stupendous atonement of Jesus Christ rushes me into a right relationship with God.

By the miracle of God's grace, I stand justified, not because of anything I have done, but because of what Jesus has done.

[53 : 21] The salvation of God does not stand on human logic. It stands on the sacrificial death of Jesus. Sinful men and women can be changed into new creatures by the marvelous work of God in Christ Jesus.

That is the wonder of the grace of God through his gospel, the good news. Men and women, sinful men and women changed into new creatures by the marvelous work of God in Christ Jesus.

The grace that he has shown to us. Grace is to put our trust in him who is able to save, for we cannot save ourselves.

We see grace at the start of this chapter when they're speaking there of how they bore witness to the word of his grace in verse 3.

It is grace that ends this chapter as well. As they returned, as they went back to the place from which they were sent, the church had declared in them how the grace of God had been commended to them, it says in verse 26, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.

[54 : 45] It is grace that sent them. It is grace that kept them. And so it is this grace that we need to be a living church, to look to a living God.

There is common grace that leaves us without excuse, but it is a special grace that reminds us of all that we have in Christ.

Christ. We so often in our lives, we step into the unknown. We don't know what's ahead of us, but we know one who does.

A little story, just as we finish, of a couple who took their children on holiday. Young children, a son who was 11, and a daughter who was 7.

This was in America, and they took them to one of the big national parks there. And one day they took them to explore some of the deep caves in this national park.

[55 : 45] And they were part of a party that was being led by a guide deep under the earth into these caves. And at one point when they were way into the cave in one of the deepest parts, just to make the effect more dramatic, the guide switched off his light.

And the whole cave was plunged into darkness. No one could see a thing. The little girl was scared, and she started to cry.

Then she heard her brother's voice saying, don't cry. Somebody here knows how to turn on the lights. And that's the wonder of the gospel.

There are times when we are taken into a place where there seems to be just darkness all around us. But the good news is that we have a living God.

A living God who pours his light upon us. Yes, they were so close to the truth here. The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.

[56 : 54] We know through grace that God has come down in the likeness of man, in his son, Christ Jesus. The one who is the light of the world.

And it is his grace, it is his favor that we seek. We see in this passage the same old problems that keep repeating themselves again and again.

How quickly we can turn from the living God and look to the idols of this world. But we see we are without excuse.

But praise God we see his grace in the good news that we can turn from these vain things to the living God who is the God of all grace and the God of all miracles.

May we praise his name and seek his blessing. Let us pray. our father in heaven we do rejoice in your goodness to us.

[58 : 04] We thank you for your grace and the wonder of it. Undeserving as we are you have poured it out upon us. And we thank you that it is so shown to us at the cross where we see your love in giving your son that he would bear our sins.

We thank you for that good news of a living God. And so turn our hearts away from the idols that we so easily put there and help us to fix our eyes on the living God that you would go before us in all things pardoning our sin in Jesus name.

Amen. We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 145. This is in the Scottish Psalter version page 442.

Psalm 145 the first version at verse 7 and we sing down to verse 9. The tune is Effingham The memory of thy goodness great they largely shall express with songs of praise they shall extol thy perfect righteousness the Lord is very gracious in him compassion flow in mercy he is ever great and is to anger slow.

We'll sing from verse 7 to 9 to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. The memory of thy goodness great they harshly shall sight prayer means the world is stead In him compassion's hope.

[60 : 24] In mercy he is very late, And is to anger store.

The Lord Jehovah unto all, His goodness of delay, And over all his other works, His tenderer, Jesus.

After the benediction, I'll go to the main door. We'll close the benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be upon you all, now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.