

# Dangers, Discouragements and Delights

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[ 0 : 00 ]     2 Corinthians 3, verse 12. You'll find it around page 1162 if you're using the church Bibles.

! 2 Corinthians 3, verse 12. We are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

But their minds were hardened, for to this day when they read the old covenant that that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.

Yes, to this day when ever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another.

[ 1 : 21 ]     For this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways.

We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word. But by the open statement of the truth, we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

For God, who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

[ 2 : 30 ]     But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

And so on. May God bless that reading from his word. Let's again just engage in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Our gracious Father in heaven, we do thank you for your word.

And we thank you for the wonder of it, that you are a God who speaks to us through it, and that we see the amazing power of your word in it.

For it is a word that is able to bring light to us of the knowledge of the wonder of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ. And we pray today, Lord, that we will have, as it were, that veil lifted from us today, so that we might see more of the beauty of Christ, and that that might reflect in us, that it might build us up in our faith and encourage us and strengthen us, and that we might go on from here, Lord, into this new year ahead, in whatever it entails that we would go on in that sure knowledge of the hope that there is in Christ.

For we know that it's a hope that is unchanging. And although we so often say it, Lord, we know we do live in a world that is ever-changing, a world where we see so much around us that in the beginning of a new year, it leaves our hearts with that sense of pain and grief, when we hear of tragedies in so many different places around the world, and when we hear of grief in the midst of families near and far, when we see the anxieties that this world can bring to so many, and the troubles that are so many.

[ 4 : 27 ] And yet, O Lord, as your word says to us today, we thank you for this ministry of hope that we have, of the gospel and the riches of it, and how Paul, as he wrote to the church in Corinth, reminded the people there, and even ourselves today, that because of this gospel, we do not lose heart.

And help us day by day, Lord, that we would not lose heart, that we would not lose faith in you. For we thank you that you are God of gods and Lord of lords, that you are above all, the maker and sustainer of all things.

The universe around us, the heavens, the skies, the world in which we live in, they all declare to us the glory of God, and the power and majesty that is yours.

And so we pray, Lord, that you will encourage us, that you would remind us today that we belong to a God who is great and awesome, and that as we put our trust in you, that we have that great hope, and that great assurance, that great comfort, that you are with us.

And we thank you today, Lord, that your word reminds us that you are building your church, and that throughout the world, you have your people. Throughout the world, Lord, your kingdom is coming with power.

[ 5 : 50 ] And we know that you use so many different means to bring people to yourself. We know that you use your word above all. We know that you use your works of providence.

We know that you use your spirit. We know that you have power in all of these things. And we pray, Lord, that around the world today, that people would hear and see and know of that power.

Your word being proclaimed throughout all corners of the earth. We thank you for the promise that it will not return empty or void, but accomplish all that it is sent forth for.

We do pray a blessing on your word to all ends of the earth, in our pulpits, around our islands, and our communities here, that your word will be powerful and effective, that throughout our land and throughout the world as the gospel is proclaimed, that people would have ears to hear and be stirred up in their hearts to receive it and to understand it.

And we thank you too, Lord, that even in your works of providence, whether they are things that bring us great delight or that leave us with a sense of much sorrow and sadness, that still in these things, Lord, you are speaking, you are ministering to us, you are reminding us that our greatest need in this world is to know the eternal life on offer in Christ Jesus.

[ 7 : 12 ] And so we pray, Lord, that in all providence that you would minister to people near and far. And we pray for your spirit. We thank you for the Holy Spirit that is so able to apply these things to us.

And we pray to know the power of the spirit in us and through us and with us today, that your spirit would minister to us all in our hearts, in our lives, in our homes, in our families, and in our communities at large.

Oh, Lord, that we would know that you are with us. And we thank you that today we can pray for those in different circumstances, those in need, those who are mourning and grieving, those who are anxious over loved ones, those who are unwell, even seriously unwell for some.

We thank you, Lord, that you are able to surround them, to comfort them, to uphold them, to strengthen, and even to speak to them in the midst of all of these things. We do pray comfort for them.

We pray, Lord, for those who are going into a new year, making plans and looking forward to many different things. We all may have different plans that we are making, but, Lord, we do commit it all to you for ourselves as a people, as a congregation, as a denomination, oh, Lord, as we think of our congregations throughout our islands, and the number of vacancies at this time, and the need of ministers for the gospel here and far and wide.

[ 8 : 39 ] We do commit, oh, Lord, these needs to you, asking that you will provide in your way and in your time. And we pray, Lord, for our denomination, for the Free Church of Scotland as it ministers throughout this land and to other parts of the world as well.

And members who go near and far, oh, Lord, spreading the good news of the gospel, we pray, Lord, blessing on us as a people. And upon the Church of Christ, we thank you for the foundation of it all, the cornerstone, who is Christ Jesus.

And we pray, Lord, that all we do would be for his glory and for his sake. So hear our prayers. Continue with us now as we look to you and ask your blessing on us with the forgiveness of all our sin.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Before we come and look at this passage together, we'll sing again in Psalm 86 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 86. We're going to sing at the beginning of the Psalm, verse 1 to verse 8. You'll find it on page 340 of the Psalm books. Psalm 86 at verse 1.

[ 9 : 53 ] O Lord, do thou bow down thine ear and hear me graciously because I so afflicted am and am in poverty. Because I'm holy, let my soul by thee preserve it be.

O thou my God, thy servant save that puts his trust in me. We'll sing from verse 1 down to the verse marked 8 to God's praise.

The tune is ears now. Amen. O Lord, do thou bow down thine ear and hear me graciously singing, Let thy soul, thy gift, be severed thee.

O love, my God, thy self-answer, thou putest trust in me.

Then unto thee, my daily life, be merciful to me.

[ 11 : 39 ] Rejoice, my servant soul, for heart I lift my soul to thee.

What thou art gracious, O Lord, and may ye true for him.

And rich in mercy of that hope upon thee to believe.

Dear Lord, my freedom to the voice of my request attain.

Then God will spite and hold on thee, for thou wilt answer sin.

[ 12 : 56 ] Lord, heaven is done among the gods, and may with thee compare.

And like the works which thou hast done, not any more is there.

Amen. We can turn back to our reading in 2 Corinthians chapter 4.

We read again verse 1 and verse 6 here. Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. And then down at verse 6.

Paul here is writing to the church at Corinth with a sense of longing and belonging to them, having visited them in the past.

[ 14 : 16 ] Part of his missionary journeys was establishing churches. As you see, the letters being written to the church at Philippi, to Corinth, to Ephesus, to Galatia. There was churches being established in so many different parts.

And Paul was reporting this back to Jerusalem, where he had come from, and reporting back to others there what was happening, what was taking place, how he had seen many coming to saving faith.

And there was a real sense of encouragement that even in the midst of troubles and trials that they were facing as a people, that the gospel was taking root.

And therefore, he says in verse 1 there of chapter 4, we do not lose heart. God is working. And the knowledge of the glory of Jesus Christ is being made known throughout so many different places.

And he was writing back to these churches to encourage them to keep on, and to encourage them of a sense of a wider belonging, that they are not alone.

[ 15 : 22 ] And a new year, as we begin it, is always a time of reflection. We look ahead. We look ahead, maybe some of us, with a sense of excitement as to what might be in store in this year.

But we may also look ahead with a sense of uncertainty, maybe a sense of anxiety as to what might be ahead of us in this new year.

But when it comes to going on, to going forward into a new year, something that often helps us as a people is a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging.

That we are not alone. That whatever we face up to, we are not alone. That we have others who encourage us along the way, individually and collectively.

And so as we think of ourselves as a people, we shouldn't think of ourselves just as individuals, but as a collective body of God's people, as a church.

[ 16 : 21 ] That is what church is. It is about people together. The church at Corinth was a people who were gathered together there as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. If I was to ask you today, do you have a sense of belonging? Do you have a sense of belonging here? Or perhaps, if I was to ask you, what church do you belong to?

Do you feel part of? Do you feel a sense of belonging to the congregation here, to Stornoway Free Church? I hope we all have that sense of being among people who are friendly, whether we're here every week, or whether we're just visiting, or here from time to time, that there is a sense of belonging, of being together here.

But it's bigger than that, isn't it? It's not just a sense of belonging here by ourselves, but we belong to a wider body of people as well.

We belong to the Free Church of Scotland. Our denomination, which is national and even international in different ways, is a sense of belonging there.

[ 17 : 29 ] Do we have it? Do we know it? Do we experience it? Well, it should be there for us, that we feel part of a wider body of believers, even other congregations throughout our islands here, throughout our nation here, that we have a sense of belonging to one another, of praying for one another, of remembering one another.

But above all, we should have a sense of belonging in a much larger sense as well, a belonging in the sense of to the Church of Christ, that we are not just individuals, that we are not just a congregation, that we're not just a denomination.

We are a body of believers that is worldwide, a body of believers that goes to all the ends of the earth and down through all the generations of time and going forward until the Lord's return, that the Church of Christ will be built, that he is building his church, that his kingdom is coming with power.

So we are part of a bigger church. And because we are, we're accountable. We're accountable in many different ways as well, accountable in the sense of getting encouragement, not just accountable in the sense of what are you doing, but accountable in the sense of being encouraged.

So that together we are accountable to one another, we encourage one another. And we're also accountable in the sense of a congregation belonging to a presbytery, the Western Isles Presbytery, which is the gathering of all the free churches in the Western Isles.

[ 19 : 03 ] There's a sense of accountability there and encouragement towards one another there. And there's accountability in the sense of belonging to the free church, where there's encouragements there that we can pray for the wider work of the denomination.

And when we think of the denomination, we think of the vision that it has for our country and even for the world. It has a vision statement of the free church, a healthy gospel church for every community of Scotland.

And as we begin a new year, we think of that being a prayer point for us, for ourselves to belong to a people far and wide, a healthy gospel church for every community in Scotland and beyond, as we think of our accountability and encouragement in being part of the church of Christ.

Does it seem a realistic target that for 2025, to have a healthy gospel church in every community of Scotland?

Well, I guess it depends on what we are looking at and who our focus is on. As Paul was writing to the church at Corinth, it was part of a wider body of people, a wider vision, that the glory of God would cover the world as the waters cover it, as the glory of God would be known as the waters cover the skies, that we would see the glory of God in our midst, that we would see the glory of God being spread far and wide.

[ 20 : 39 ] And one of the great ways of doing this is that sense of accountability and the sense of encouragement. Encouragement to one another and encouragement to others far and wide.

And as Paul is writing here, it's that sense of encouragement in not losing heart. Do not lose heart because we have this wonderful light of the gospel in our midst.

We've had missionary speakers coming to us from different parts of our own nation who go to different parts of the world and there's always a sense of encouragement and hearing from them.

Not just when we hear that many people are being converted, many people are being saved, but also that when we hear when there are times of great challenges and great persecutions, that people are remaining faithful, that they are not shrinking away, but that the gospel that they have known is not being veiled, but that the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus is being seen in these lands as well.

And so there is a wonder in the gospel that it reaches out far and wide and that together we are part of this great body of getting encouragement from others and encouraging others as well.

[ 22 : 00 ] I know I mentioned before about the children going back to school and you'll be getting report cards at different stages along the way as well and it's always exciting, always good to get a good report card that says you're doing well.

But it's not always the case. It certainly wasn't for me. There was always times when you could do better, shall we say. But sometimes you need that just sense of encouragement.

It's not you're not doing well enough, you're getting kicked out of school. It's not, no, you work hard. You've got to improve in certain areas. There's encouragement and help to do better.

That's the way a good teacher comes alongside and that's the way Paul, as a preacher of the gospel, comes alongside the churches he's writing to, a sense of encouragement. Imagine if we were to have a report from the Presbytery or the Mission Board as a congregation here, what kind of report would it be?

They would maybe come and see what we're doing and would maybe be praised for many things. But I'm sure they would also identify weaknesses, areas where we could do better. But in it all, there would be a sense of encouragement, be encouraged in the gospel.

[ 23 : 16 ] And so as we go into 2025, we want to do so with that sense of being encouraged, that we belong to the great church of Christ, that we belong to each other in that sense where there's encouragements in the midst of everything that's going on.

What you find with Paul is he's writing with this encouragement in the midst of different situations. And there's three things here that I want us to think of, things that we face ourselves and things that Paul was facing and the church of Corinth was facing too.

And every church, every believer faces these things. As we go into a new year, we face dangers, just like Paul had dangers that were going on around him here.

There's always things that are dangerous for us. There's also a sense of there are always discouragements around us. There are always things that will leave us a little sense of discouragement and anxiety and fears.

They're always going to be there. But above all, as Paul is writing, he has these things in mind, but also he has in mind the delights. The delights that there are in the gospel.

[ 24 : 27 ] The joy that there is. The hope that there is. You find that as he's writing to all the different churches and as he's reporting back to his own mission board, if you like, in Jerusalem, where he had left to go on his mission journeys.

He's reporting back, yes, there's dangers. Yes, there's discouragements. But there's delights. There are great things happening. And so we can go into 2025 being aware of these things as well.

And always just to look at these three things, the dangers, the discouragements, and the delights, and to see what we can take from each of these. Paul, as we see first of all, the dangers that were around him, he was accountable for his part of his ministry to report back to Jerusalem, to the believers there.

There was a council there, a body of people who he would report back to. He wasn't just going out by himself. He wasn't doing things just in his own way. He was accountable to others in the sense of reporting back what had happened, but also in being encouraged by them as well.

He was sent out in his missionary journey, so this encouragement behind him that there were people praying for him. And so as he's going about and seeing all these different churches, he's encouraged and he's challenged.

[ 25 : 51 ] And he also writes back to them. And that's where the letters come from. The letter to the Corinthians. He's writing back to them here in 2 Corinthians to encourage them and to help them along the way.

Corinth was a major city to which the gospel came. It was a large city, a busy city with all kinds of trade passing through it. And all kinds of people were coming from all kinds of places.

It was a diverse place. And therefore, it wasn't just a place of the Christian church. It was a place of all kinds of faiths and religions and even, some would say, no religion at all.

So there was a mixture of people and a mixture of messages. And therefore, people believed in different things. And so there was dangers in that.

There always is when there's a mixture in society. Because as G.K. Chesterton once put it, he said, when men choose not to believe in God, it's not that they don't therefore believe in nothing, but they can then become capable of believing in anything.

[ 27 : 00 ] and that's the danger when God is pushed out, when God is not thought of. And that's the danger that Paul found himself in here as he went into Corinth and as he was writing back to them.

There was a danger that the people would be pulled away in a different direction. And it's a danger we face ourselves today. We know it only too well. Going into a new year, there's a danger of all kinds of people around us.

All kinds of faiths in this world. All kinds of access to different ways of thinking and beliefs. It's a danger but it's also an opportunity.

Because it's a great opportunity to present the gospel. John Knox, more than 500 years ago now, one of his prayers was this.

He said, give me Scotland or I die. And it sounds maybe in some ways quite an arrogant prayer. But isn't it a brilliant vision to have Scotland as his prayer focus and the people belonging to it.

[ 28 : 12 ] That they would come to know salvation in Jesus Christ. It wasn't any small vision that he had but a great vision for the glory of God.

He knew the dangers that there were at that time of people turning away from God but his passion was stirred up all the more. Give me Scotland or I die.

There was this sense of we need the Lord and this urgency in it. And that's really what Paul has here. This great passion because he knows the dangers that are around and yet he knows the glory of God.

The glory that is veiled to some. but the glory that is being revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. And he knows that this ministry is not just his but that God is behind it.

In verse 1 he says, therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God we do not lose heart. By the mercy of God God is in it. And then in verse 5 he says, for what we proclaim is not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord.

[ 29 : 21 ] So in the midst of all the dangers of different faiths and different religions around him what he is saying is that we have this wonder this wonder of the gospel the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It's not about us but about him. And he also makes sure here of the danger of maybe watering down the gospel in any way.

In verse 2 he shows there's a danger here for us as well. But we have renounced disgraceful underhand ways. We refuse to practice cunning or tamper with God's word.

We're not going to change this word to suit. We're not going to change this word to make it more palatable to anyone. We're going to present the truth of God because that is what saves.

And so this temptation might be there to do things differently or to use underhand tactics as he calls it here. But no he says we will preach the gospel.

[ 30 : 25 ] We'll present the gospel in its fullness in its glory and its truth because it's not about us it's about the glory of God. And so he's reminding ourselves here too the word of God is central.

The dangers of not knowing it or of pushing it away or of tampering with it it's always a danger but we don't lose heart because we have this ministry by the mercy of God we have the word of God.

And so in the midst of the dangers that we are surrounded in one takeaway from this would be learn the word of God. Know the word of God.

As we said earlier to the children when Peter writes he says always be prepared to have an answer for the reason of the hope that you have within. So we learn the word of God.

That's the answer to the dangers that we see around us of tampering with God's word of watering it down in any way. Learn and remain faithful to the word of God.

[ 31 : 35 ] That is key. The second thing we see here there are dangers! discouragements. When you read the early part of the book of Acts it's always a great place to go back to.

It's exciting there's so much happening. You see the spirit poured out. You see sermons that convert thousands. You see the glory of God working in powerful ways.

But if you continue reading through the book of Acts it doesn't take long until you come upon the different challenges that there are as well and discouragements that soon arise.

It doesn't take long to appear. And that's there for ourselves to know as well. As Paul is writing here he's showing something of his own vulnerability in this way as well.

There are ups and downs in the Christian faith. Even in his own ministry work he comes across times of discouragement Times of challenges.

[ 32 : 38 ] And we are learning these things so we know ourselves this is the way it's going to be. Ministry is challenging not just for a minister but for all of us together when we are the church of Christ there are challenges to our faith all the time.

And it's good for us to hear that that there are challenges and especially when we think of Paul writing to the church at Corinth there were those who would not believe there were those whose faith was veiled as it were they were kept from seeing the glory of God.

And so for ourselves too there are these challenges. We don't tamper with God's word but just because there's differences around us doesn't mean that we back off.

What Paul is saying here is we keep presenting the gospel even in the midst of discouragements even in the midst of people who are not believing in a society where so diverse and open to many teachings it's so important that the gospel is at the heart that the gospel is there for all to see and to know because we know that there is one who is active and he speaks of this here in verse three and four even is veiled it is veiled only to those who are perishing in their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ that Satan is active therefore there is all the greater need for the gospel to be presented and presented in all its truth even in the midst of discouragements even in the midst of challenges later on in 2nd

Corinthians in chapter 11 Paul speaks of Satan disguising himself as an angel of light how he's able to twist the truth and to make what is good seem evil and what is evil seem good like we see in our own day and age again and again discouragements come and there are discouragements all around us but that's why we need the gospel all the more to be together for the gospel John Knox just going back to him for a moment one of his mottos was this one man with God is always in the majority isn't that a wonderful way of thinking about it one man with God is always in the majority we feel we're in the minority we feel that maybe the world the tide has turned against the Christian faith but we are in the majority because the Lord is on our side there is discouragements but having this ministry by the mercy of

[ 35 : 41 ] God we do not lose heart God is with us and God is for us and so Paul here is always challenging people to be a people who know the word of God and who are thinking about the word of God and who are learning together around the word of God I read this quote just last week and said we are drowning in information but we're starving for wisdom we are drowning in information but starving for wisdom because we have information at our fingertips and plenty of it we just have to look up a word online and we've got information there pouring out upon us you ask a question there's information pouring out but we lack wisdom we lack wisdom we're a generation where so much of what we look at is online where truth is seen as what we read online whether it's



Facebook or Twitter or Instagram or the news that's presented online we think there is truth it must be true if it's online information is there but the wisdom is lacking to discern what truth is and so what we need is to be a people in the midst of discouragements in the midst of all kinds of challenges that we see it's not to believe everything that we read online and even at times it's to back off from engaging with some of these debates as well the best way to engage on these things is to be face to face and that begins by ourselves meeting together by being together here as a body encouraging one another learning from one another meeting together around the word of God in our Bible studies in our prayer meetings individually together when we come just two or three of us together that we are meeting together in that way of being face to face and the more we learn like that the more we can go out and meet others face to face as well and to talk to them of the wonder of the gospel to guard the gospel not by going back in our shells not by just engaging in we know it all kind of attitude but in a gracious way of being there for people coming of discouragement and what can we take away from that we do not lose heart and so let us meet together let us meet together as a people together around the word of

God but then as we go from here we go to meet with others and speak with others and share with others in a gracious way presenting the gospel to them the third thing that we see here!

in all of these things the dangers the discouragements behind it all is the delights the delighting in God the delighting in the power of the gospel in verse six it says for God who said let light shine out of darkness has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ all here takes us back to the power and the wonder of creation for God who said let light shine out of darkness to the very coming into being of the world and the universe and a people such as we are it was the word of God that spoke it into existence that brought light into darkness well he says let that light shine let that light shine that has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of

God in the face of Jesus Christ we have this gospel this treasure in jars of clay as it goes on to say in verse 7 to show the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us and we can delight in God God has spoken and God is powerful glory and you see Paul himself here is one who has persecuted the church but who has come to know the power of this word of this glory of opening his eyes to see Christ Jesus and now to present Christ Jesus in all his glory his vision has been transformed and just as he has been encouraged he's now encouraging others to come and know and see this beauty of Christ.

[ 40 : 42 ] Do we have this vision as we go on in this year? This vision of Jesus and this vision for Jesus to present him in all his glory.

We have a great God. We are in the majority because God is with us. And Paul himself was encouraged by the Lord as he was going on in his missionary journeys.

In Acts chapter 18, the Lord spoke to Paul one night in a vision, it says, and it said, Do not be afraid, but go on speaking. Do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.

The Lord was building his church then, and he's still building his church today. He has his people. Do not be afraid. Do not lose heart.

The Lord is with us. And let us delight in the Lord. Let us rejoice in the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, who has shone in our hearts.

[ 41 : 51 ] And when he has shone in our hearts, we cannot but reflect that glory. If you look on the back of your bulletin sheet, you see the New Year's resolutions that Mordor Martin was speaking about.

Number four, it says, That our lamps shine more brightly. Isn't that a great way to go into the New Year? That our light, our lamps would shine more brightly.

That the reflection of that would be the face of Jesus Christ in us, who has shone into our hearts. Many years ago, there were men panning for gold in America and Montana.

And one of them found an unusual stone. And he broke it open. And around him, there was a sense of joy as they saw this gold glistening in this stone.

And they started to work where they were there and discovered an abundance of gold in the stones there. And there was a shout of delight.

[ 42 : 55 ] There was a shout of rejoicing. We found the treasure we'd been looking for. And they decided to keep it to themselves. But they had to go back into the town for stores before they could continue just digging the gold out.

And so they went, these men went back to the town and they bought their stores. And as they were leaving, all of a sudden, there was hundreds of people coming behind them.

And they realized, these people know. And they thought someone has told them something. And so one man turned to the crowd and said, who said that we'd found gold?

And they said, no one did. But your faces shone and showed it. The excitement they couldn't contain. The joy in what they found, they couldn't hide it.

It was there for all to see without a word being said. So wouldn't it be wonderful ourselves to go into this year with our lamps shining more brightly.

[ 43 : 58 ] With the beauty of Christ in our hearts being seen by others without a word being said. but just by the way that we behave, the way that we act, the way that we speak, that people would know that we have been with Jesus.

The church in Corinth grew in the midst of all kinds of dangers and all kinds of discouragements. Why? Because the people were delighting in the Lord.

There was a sense of delight and rejoicing in the Lord. So let us know the word of God. Let us meet together around the word of God.

And let us, let Christ shine through us the glory that is His. The one who has come to save us from our sins. That we would have a sense of belonging.

Not just as a congregation and a people here where we encourage one another. But that we're encouraged throughout our presbytery, throughout our denomination, throughout the world that the church of Christ is being built upon the foundation of Christ Himself.

[ 45 : 10 ] And His glory is being seen to all ends of the earth. And may that glory be ours within us and coming through us and being shared with others.

The knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. may we be encouraged to show it and to share it with others and to live in the light of it going on in this year ahead, whatever it entails.

There's always dangers. There's always discouragements. But don't forget that with God on our side we are in a majority and that we can delight in Him.

Let us pray. Our Father in Heaven we do rejoice in the Gospel and all the hope that it gives. We thank You for the delight that there is in knowing Christ and in making Him known.

And we do pray, Lord, that the lamps of our hearts would shine all the more brightly that others would see and know the wonder of the Saviour we love and serve.

[ 46 : 17 ] So hear our prayers and continue with us, Lord, today and in all the days ahead as we ask all in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen. We're going to conclude by singing in Psalm 86 again, the Scottish Psalter version.

The tune is Evan, page 341. We'll sing the last three stanzas. Verse 15, But thou art full of pity, Lord, a God most gracious, longsuffering and in thy truth and mercy plenteous.

We'll sing from verse 15 down to the end of the psalm to God's praise. Amen. But thou art full of pity, Lord, a God most gracious, and mercy plentiful.

Longsuffering and in thy truth and mercy plentiful.

O come to me, my condemnation, and mercy on thee, God.

[ 47 : 47 ] I serve the strength, The Lord has strengthened and the Son of Thy own hand is saved.

Go ye aside for good than me, which to thee it may see.

And ye ashamed because the Lord is held and fought for thee.

After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my left. We'll close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen.