

# Persecutor Turned Preacher

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] Let us bow in prayer. O Lord, our gracious God, as we bow in your presence this evening, we pray for your grace to enable us to worship in a right way.

At one level we find it difficult as we gather together to worship when we're not able to sing, though we can sing in our hearts, because our praise is such an integral part of our worship.

But we give thanks, Lord, that we are able to sing in our hearts as we listen to the words being sung, and we give thanks for every provision that is made for us.

We pray that you will enable us tonight to have you in our mind, in our focus, because we have to confess that sometimes when we come to your house that we can have wandering minds and that we do not focus upon your truth in the way that we should.

We long when we'll be able to be sitting closer together and long when all the restrictions will be removed and that we will be back to how it used to be.

[ 1 : 13 ] But help us, Lord, to be patient as we wait for restrictions to open further. And we ask, O Lord, that you will continue to be gracious and good to us, because you have been, even despite everything.

And we have to confess, Lord, that we are not worthy of the least of your mercies. Sometimes we have a much higher view of ourselves and our own importance and our own worth.

And we are often reminded just through your word of what we really are. And so we give thanks, Lord, for your mercy towards us, your goodness towards us, your graciousness towards us.

And we pray that we may see you as a God who is over all things, the God who rules and reigns, who is exalted and triumphant, who is the King immortal and eternal and glorious, the God of very God, the God who by the word of his power has brought into being, the God who will bring to an end all that as we know it here in this world.

And we give thanks that you are in charge, that you are in control, and that you are sovereign in all your dealings, because even at our best, we do not know how to go.

[ 2 : 35 ] And even sometimes the best decisions that we make or we think are the best decisions often turn out not to be. And so we pray that we may lean upon you and trust in you with all our heart and hear your word which speaks to us and says that I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you will go.

I will guide you with mine eye. And the warning is not to be like the horse or the mule, which need to bit and bridle in order to be directed.

And sometimes we have to confess, Lord, that that's how we are, because we can be stubborn and set in our own ways and often not willing to listen to what your word says and that we are determined at times to put your word aside and to follow our own ways.

And so, Lord, we confess our sin and we ask that you will be merciful to us and to forgive us all our sin and that we might have tender consciences and that we might have willing hearts to comply with your word.

We ask that you will be then with each and every one of us tonight here and those who gather with us online and pray that we might all be fed by yourself, that the Holy Spirit may apply your truth to our souls.

[ 3 : 58 ] We give thanks, O Lord, for the personal, intimate way that you work in us and with us. We give thanks, O Lord, that you have a purpose for all your people.

And we pray that even tonight that there will be more ingathered into the fold and that it will be a night where souls will come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not just with regard to this town, but all throughout our land.

We pray, Lord, for our land. We ask that you will turn us again to yourself. We are, as it says, elsewhere in your word that we have hewn out for ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water and that each has turned everyone to his own way.

Help us then, Lord, to refocus upon you and we ask that you will open the windows of heaven and pour down blessing upon us, not according to our deserving, because there is no deserving on our part, but according to thy tender mercies.

Lord, bless our leaders and those who have authority and rule over us. O Lord, please do not allow us to be led astray down the paths that would lead us further and further away from you, but that we will be brought more and more to you.

[ 5 : 15 ] And we give thanks, Lord, that sometimes it is in ways that we do not expect that you work your purposes and your plans out. And so grant us the faith to believe and grant us, Lord, the grace to wait upon you.

We pray for those who mourn, those who are sad, those who find life heavy and broken. We remember Donald MacLeod, whose niece died so suddenly over in the west side.

And we commit that family into your care and keeping as they pick up the broken pieces. And we ask for each member of the family as their hearts are so sore and so broken at this time.

We pray, Lord, for all who are going through painful, difficult times, who find that their world has been turned upside down. They're meeting today disappointed hopes, shattered dreams.

These things are often very difficult to bear. Pray, Lord, for those who are struggling with all the various issues in life, filled with anxieties and fears and doubts and uncertainties.

[ 6 : 27 ] Lord, this lockdown has brought a lot of issues into people's lives. It has thrown people so much into disarray.

And we ask, O Lord, that you will bring peace to reign within every troubled heart and every anxious soul. We pray, Lord, your blessing upon those who are going through difficult times.

Remember all those in hospital. We commit them to your care and ask for recovery and healing and help and strength and grace. We pray, Lord, that you will watch over us then as we wait upon you and that we will hear what God the Lord will speak.

We pray for Muriel in Cambodia. We pray for all the missionaries of the cross. We give thanks for them and pray at times when they may be battling homesickness.

There might be times where they feel at a low ebb and maybe they're missing all that they were familiar with at home. Lord, we pray that you'll draw very close to them.

[ 7 : 29 ] Bless your persecuted church worldwide. And in so many areas of this world where your people are really, really suffering. And where they are being imprisoned, where they are losing their rights, losing their homes, losing their work, losing even their family, and some are losing their life.

O Lord, our God, we pray that you will be merciful and gracious to them. Lift the oppressor's hand off them and deliver them, we pray. Watch over us then and do us good.

Grant us your grace and take away from us our every sin. In Jesus' name, amen. I'm just going to say a wee word to the young folk.

Remember about probably 20 years or more, there was a song that was often on the radio. And it was a song, I think, that often found sort of a sympathetic ear with us as we live up here.

Why does it always rain on me? Last Friday, I was going to go out for a walk. And the day was just, there was one thing after another. And I said, well, after tea in the evening, I'm going to go out for a walk.

[ 8 : 42 ] And it was lovely for about two hours. But there was one thing after another coming my way. And I couldn't get out. And I was looking out. And I said, ah, it's a lovely, lovely evening. And I can't tell you whether it was about eight or there, about whatever, round about that time or back eight, I went off.

I was only about two minutes away when I saw this kind of heavy mist coming in my direction. And I said, I don't believe it. That's rain. Now, it wasn't a lot of rain.

It wasn't heavy rain. But there was about five minutes of rain. And there hadn't been anything for hours. And that song came back into my head, thinking, why does it always rain on me?

And I was really annoyed about it. But, you know, I stopped. And then I thought to myself, you know, actually, I shouldn't be annoyed. Because I thought, you know, there's lots of places in this world that would right now give anything for this shower of rain.

Because some of the places in this world, the ground is so dry and hard that no grass will grow. The cows and the sheep don't have any grass to eat from.

[ 9 : 56 ] And they can't grow their corn or wheat or barley or their vegetables or their fruit. And they're crying out for rain. And I was thinking, oh, my word.

We complain about the rain. And right enough, we do get, in the West Coast, we tend to get maybe more rain than other parts of the country. But at the end of the day, quite often we do complain about the weather.

We shouldn't really. Because we have what we would term a very moderate climate. Yes, it can be very windy at times. And it can be wet.

But, you know, when you go to the Bible, we find that rain actually is mentioned a lot of times and often with regard to God's blessing. That when God was blessing, he gave rain.

When he was withholding blessing, he withheld rain. And the more I began to think about it, I thought, oh, I actually shouldn't be complaining about this rain at all.

[ 11 : 04 ] But we do. I do anyway at times. But we should always remember that rain actually is one of the great blessings that God gives us. And just as he rains down the rain from heaven, which we need for the ground, we need for so many things, the Bible also talks about God raining down spiritual blessings.

And there have been times where God has come in a wonderful way, where he's come into communities. It's happened in this island, where lots of people have been converted, boys and girls and men and women, where whole communities have been touched by the gospel.

And I would say to, not just to the young people, but to all of us, that's a great prayer to, if you've never prayed it, start praying it. Lord, would you open the windows of heaven and pour rain down blessing on us so that the boys and girls in school with me, that they'll be converted, that they'll start following Jesus.

Praying that people of all ages will come to turn to, begin to follow the Lord Jesus. And God's able to do that.

So every time you see the rain or feel the rain, and remember that rain actually is a blessing, and that we should thank God for it. But also ask him that he would rain down his power, his spirit upon us too.

[ 12 : 45 ] We're going to read, we'll say the Lord's Prayer. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. Amen. We're going to read from the Gospel of, in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 9, and we're going to read verses 1 to 22.

Acts 9. Acts 9. Acts 9. Acts 9.

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

[ 14 : 16 ] Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

And he said, Who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.

The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one. Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing.

So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias.

The Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias, and he said, Here I am, Lord. The Lord said to him, Rise and go to the street called Straight. And at the house of Judas, look for a man of Tarsish named Saul.

[ 15 : 24 ] For behold, he is praying. And he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight. But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem.

And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name. But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name. So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him, he said, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized and taking food he was strengthened.

For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus and immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogue saying, He is the Son of God. And all who heard him were amazed and said, Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name?

[ 16 : 57 ] And has he not come here for this purpose to bring them bound before the chief priests? But Saul increased all the more in strength and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

Amen. And may God bless to us this reading of his own holy word. I want us to turn to 1 Timothy. 1 Timothy we looked at this last week.

1 Timothy chapter 1. I want us to look at verse 13. We saw last week there how Paul was thanking the Lord who had given him strength.

And then he says, verse 13, Though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent, but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief.

And the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

[ 18 : 32 ] Last week, as I said, we looked at how Paul had been entrusted with the gospel and we saw that how we too have been entrusted with the gospel.

And we have to be faithful to the gospel and we are faithful to the gospel when we are faithful to what the word of God says. In other words, when we tell people about Jesus, when we tell people what the Bible says, we need to tell them exactly what the Bible says.

We aren't to put our own slant on it or make it up ourselves or leave bits out or add bits to it. We are to be faithful to the word.

So, we have to be faithful by what we say but we've also to be faithful by what we do. And of course, what that means is that we are to seek by God's grace to live according to God's word.

That God's word has to rule our lives and regulate our lives and so that in our day-to-day living, not just on God's day but on every day.

[ 19 : 44 ] And as we work and interact with people, that it's God's word that we are seeking to promote and to live by so that it touches everything about our lives and all our dealings and all our relationships and all areas of society.

And it is through this living and through this witnessing that the gospel of Jesus Christ is promoted and it is spread.

And so, we are entrusted, every Christian is entrusted with God's word to promote the word, to live the word and to witness to that word every single day.

And I'm sure every one of us having said that feel that we let the Lord down so often. At the end of a day, so often we say, you know this, I haven't lived in the way that I should.

I haven't taken the opportunities to witness when I had them. I haven't, what I did there or on these different occasions, how I reacted with people, what I said, that wasn't in keeping with God's word.

[ 20 : 57 ] And so, of course, we so often are having to go to the Lord and ask for forgiveness. But it is essential that by His grace, that we are faithful to the Lord and to His word.

But as we say, we know that by ourselves it is impossible for us to be faithful to it. We do not have the ability or the strength. And that is why the apostle showed, we saw that last week, that it was by the Lord His enabling, I thank Him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus, our Lord.

and it is only through the Lord's enabling, the Lord's strength that we also are able to do this. Now, it's interesting that Paul talks about faithfulness.

There he says where the Lord had judged him and at the end of verse 12 He judged me faithful appointing me to His service. because it was one thing that the early church did not have towards Paul or Saul as he was then was trust.

The early church were terrified of Saul. They didn't believe initially that he was on their side. They didn't believe he was a Christian. So when it talks about faithfulness and trust, these are things that the early church initially could not accept of the apostle Paul.

[ 22 : 29 ] And the reason of course is that he says in verse 13 formerly I was a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent opponent. Paul was, as we know, was one of the most bitter enemies that the church ever had.

And we remember how we read about that, how he was converted on the Damascus road and the Lord told Ananias and he said, I want you to go and see Saul.

And Ananias was almost in a state of disbelief. Lord, not that man. Whoever else you ask me to go and see, not Saul. We all know who he is and what he's about.

Remember how the Lord said to Ananias, behold, he's praying. He's a changed man. And we find that not only did Ananias struggle with it because when Paul actually came to Jerusalem, we find that and when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he went to join himself to the disciples but they were all afraid of him and did not believe that he was a disciple.

So you see, straight away, Paul was facing a real battle to be accepted by the church and of course we can understand why. And, you know, sometimes we can be a wee bit sceptical or we can, maybe it's not sceptical, we sometimes might find it difficult to believe certain people have been converted.

[ 24 : 03 ] I would imagine that most people in this island for instance who are converted are people who have been brought up within what we term the visible church, the church that we can see and that their parents, that they were part of, maybe went to Sunday school and maybe had stopped going but were eventually converted and so on.

The vast majority of people who come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are people who have been or are part of what we would term the visible church. But every so often there are people converted outwith and sometimes you would say to her, you know, he's the last person I ever imagined would become a Christian.

And throughout the history of the church some of the brightest Christians are people who many in the community found it hard initially to believe that they had actually been converted because Christianity was not only nowhere on the horizon but it was something that they had nothing to do with.

They were bitterly opposed to. But you see God is always showing us that his grace is amazing grace. And remember how Jesus says I have other sheep that are not of this fold.

I must go and bring them in as well. And the Lord is always doing that. And so we ought not to be surprised when we sometimes see people who we didn't expect to become Christians being converted.

[ 25 : 41 ] And that certainly is what the case here and that's one of the things that the early church had to learn was God's amazing grace. Because Paul had been as we said he was a blasphemer.

He hated the very name of Christ and he wanted to cause as much havoc and as much damage and as much confusion hurt to the church as possible.

He was an insolent opponent. He was like a fully paid up aggressor of the church to cause maximum damage. And these attacks that he had upon the church they were violent.

In fact in what we read in Acts chapter 9 there we saw that he was that he was somebody that his very breath was murder and slaughter.

Can you imagine somebody like that? His very breath is in other words everything that Saul was about. When he got up in the morning he thought what can I do today to cause maximum damage to this growing church of Christ?

[ 26 : 51 ] That was his main thought. He was he was out his daily work his mind was there his every action was against the cause of Christ.

And you know I'm sure that along the along over the years Paul often reflected on that. Because he the tables turned in his life.

It's funny how often tables turn in people's lives. Well the tables really turned in Paul's life. And I would well imagine that there were times say for instance when he was in Philippi and he got absolutely beaten up and he was thrust into the deepest dungeon in the prison with his feet fast in stalks and his back open and bleeding.

He would have had time there. Yes we know that he was singing praise to God but he was bound to have been reflecting and he was saying you know this is what I was like once. This is what I was doing to Christians.

And now the tables had been completely turned. So I'm sure there was many a time that Paul reflected in these moments as to what he had been and now where he was.

[ 28 : 07 ] But you know the perversion and twistedness of sin is such that Saul actually thought he was doing God a service doing God a favor. He thought that by putting Christians to death and by persecuting the church that he was serving God.

And that's the twistedness and perverseness of sin and it's still happening to this day. There are many Christians being martyred throughout the nations of this world and those who are martyring there are some of them there are some areas of this world where there is no sense of God or belief in God and where Christians are put to death.

There it is not trying to do God a service but there are areas in this world where Christians are being put to death and those who put them to death think that they are doing God or the God that is in their mind a service.

And Jesus said these days are coming. Jesus actually told his disciples that the day was coming when those who would kill you, when those who kill you will actually think that they are doing God a service.

And that shows the utter twistedness and perverseness of sin. It shows the fearsome grip that Satan has upon people's lives.

[ 29 : 28 ] The power of darkness and of how Satan parades himself and twists the truth so that so many people in this world believe the lie rather than the truth.

And so Paul at one stage was one of these. But of course that all changed on the road to Damascus. And through that blinding light he was brought to see that the Jesus who he thought was an imposter, that Jesus Christ was co-equal with the Father, that he was the actual Son of God, equal in power and glory and majesty to the Father in heaven.

It was an awesome moment. You know, it's going to become an incredible moment when Jesus returns to this world. I can't even begin to imagine.

You know, there are certain things you try and imagine and you think, I wonder what it will be like. Well, nothing will prepare us for the return of Jesus. Because while he has retained the human nature that he had in this world, he won't come back the way he was in this world, but he'll come back in the display of his full glory.

And as we've often said, the moments where he displayed some of that glory, as he did to Saul on the Damascus road, and as he did to John in Patmos, they both just fell down.

[ 30 : 59 ] Fell down as if they were dead. That's what it tells us in the book of Revelation. John said, I fell down as one dead. And that's what it will be like when Jesus returns and we see him in his awesome glory.

There won't be one agnostic or atheist or mocker or doubter on that day. In fact, it tells us what the reaction is going to be of those who see Jesus in his return, those who have rejected him and refused him, that they will call on the rocks and the mountains to fall on and to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb.

But the church will say, even so come Lord Jesus. It's going to be an amazing moment. And it's one I'm sure we often try and figure it out and think, but it's beyond our thinking, beyond our understanding.

Well, Saul on the Damascus road was given a glimpse of the resurrected glory of Jesus. He saw this. And remember he says, who are you?

Who are you, Lord? And Jesus said, I am. He said, I am Jesus whom you persecute. And you know, any time that you are laughed at or mocked or ridiculed because of your faith, any time that you're called upon to compromise with the world but you don't and people make fun of you, remember it's Christ they're actually getting at.

[ 32 : 30 ] when we stand for our love of the Lord, when we stand for our faith and we're ridiculed and mocked, it's not ultimately you or me that people are getting at.

They're getting at Jesus. Because the union between Christ and his people is so powerful that when anybody persecutes a Christian, they're actually persecuting Christ. And that's what Paul discovered.

Who are you, Lord? I am Jesus whom you persecute. Every Christian that you hurt, every Christian you tormented, every Christian you were involved in the putting to death of, you were actually persecuting me.

And so Paul, when he saw what he had done, he says, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, an insolent person, he tells us that he received mercy.

Paul sinned grievously. Paul sinned like few others. But there was an element of ignorance in what Paul was doing. Now, actually, there shouldn't have been. At one level, it's inexcusable.

[ 33 : 47 ] Because Paul was somebody who grew up a soul. He studied at the best of the schools. And he knew the scripture. But it was because of that blinded prejudice with regard to the scripture that they failed to understand and to see who Jesus really was.

Jesus didn't come the way they had expected. And so he wouldn't believe that Jesus was who he actually is. But of course, he came to see that.

But Paul said it was through ignorance. And so it was because of that that although his sin was grievous beyond anything, at the end of the day, it wasn't the unpardonable sin.

It wasn't that sin against the Holy Ghost. You know, there's a lot of people in the church and they fear that they've committed the unpardonable sin. They say, what if I've committed the unpardonable sin?

Well, I don't believe that anybody who fears that they've committed the unpardonable sin has ever committed it. And any person who has a tender conscience, any person who is, who thinks in that way, hasn't.

[ 35 : 02 ] Any person, if a person is committing the unpardonable sin, it is somebody who has, the thought of having committed it is not even on the radar.

If there is a tender conscience, most certainly you have not. But you know, the important thing that we must always lay hold upon is the fact that God's Spirit, God says that, that the Spirit will not always thrive with us.

You know, it's a, it's a, it's a, it's a very dangerous thing to do when God's Spirit is touching our heart, when we're, when we're maybe being softened.

And I'm speaking particularly because God's Spirit works whether a person is saved or unsaved, but when God is, there are so many operations of, of God's Spirit.

But when, when God's Word is being preached, and God's Word is being read, God, God will often through that Word touch a person's heart.



[ 36 : 07 ] and there have been many times, I'm sure, and I'm sure there are Christians here who will remember over the years before they became Christians, the number of times that they went very close to, to asking the Lord to be, to save them.

But they stopped short. And you know, there would be maybe times you say, what if, what if the Lord never comes back to me like He did there? What if that's the last opportunity that I have?

because, but the Lord is gracious, but He does say, my Spirit will not always thrive. So don't resist the strivings of God's Spirit.

If God's Spirit is inclining you to the things of God, yield to Him. Ask for the grace to yield. Say to Him, Lord, please come into my heart.

I'm not sure of all that's involved in it, but this one thing I need, I need to have you so please, please come in, come into my heart, into my life. But we see that Paul found mercy.

[ 37 : 13 ] He received mercy. And the, the, there is no greater thing that a person can receive than mercy.

I wonder tonight if we were to do a survey in Storn and we had to say to people, right, pick your top ten things of things that, of anything that you could receive in life, anything at all.

I wonder how many people would, in their top ten, have God's mercy as one of the things that they would really count important to have in their life.

Well, I'm quite sure that you tonight as a believer, you would put that up there at the very top because there is nothing that is really of greater value and greater importance in our lives than to be the recipients of God's mercy.

It's a cry that we make from the very beginning, God be merciful to me, a sinner. And there's these beautiful words in Psalm 23 where the psalmist is so, so conscious of the encircling of God's goodness and mercy following him all the days of his life.

[ 38 : 25 ] Is there anything greater that you would want as a believer than that? And I think that that tells us very clearly where we are. And so, Paul saw that this mercy coming to him was the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

And we see here the transforming power of God's grace because Paul, it couldn't have been more extreme. You see, Paul, he was the blasphemer.

He was the persecutor. He was the insolent passion. And all that evil and hatred and cruelty and all that anger gave way to grace and to mercy and to love.

God's love was overflowing in his heart. And this is what happens when a person comes to faith. There's this great change takes place. It's radical.

from darkness to light from death to life from despair to hope from unbelief. Paul's unbelief was unbelievable was incredible because when he talks here about being a blasphemer if you see a blasphemer somebody who is just a really noted blasphemer whose language is just it just makes you want to put your fingers in your ears because it is so blasphemous.

[ 39 : 52 ] You say to yourself that person hasn't one solitary ounce of the fear of God in his heart or life. In fact, you would say to yourself that person cannot believe in God at all.

Well, Paul saw himself with regard to Jesus Christ the Son of God in that way. He was the ultimate blasphemer. And it's an awful thing. But here's this great change and as Paul will say where sin abounded grace doth much more abound.

It's overflowing. And so there's this faith and then Paul states in verse 15 there's so much to say but just with this in conclusion and then Paul goes on to say this saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

You know, supposing a person never heard anything else ever from the Bible there's enough in that for them to be saved. What does it tell us here? Very simply who came?

The Lord Jesus. Where did he come to? He came into this world here. What did he come to do? He came to save sinners. What am I?

[ 41 : 07 ] I'm a sinner. So that means I'm qualified to be saved. So the whole gospel is in this particular verse. It's amazing. It's wonderful. And then Paul adds at the end he says of whom I am the foremost.

It's where we have in the A.V. it says I am the chief of sinners. I'm the foremost. I was the worst. And you know the funny thing is so often we say no Paul I'm the worst.

because at our times that's exactly how we feel. We look around and we say to ourselves you know this I don't think there's another another Christian who's quite as bad as I am.

Sometimes that is the way that we feel. But as when Paul said that he was able to see it at a level probably that few are able to because when he looked at the carnage and the chaos that he caused the church and the hatred that he had for the Lord Jesus Christ and yet he says I found mercy.

If you're without Christ tonight does that not give you hope? Because I don't believe any one of you could be where the Apostle Paul once had been and yet he found mercy.

[ 42 : 25 ] So I would urge you tonight whoever you are wherever you are whatever you've been whatever you've done go to the God who loves to give.

That's one of the wonderful things. It's overflowing. God is not a grudging giver. He's the most liberal giver in the world. He bestows lavishly and that's what he does with his grace.

Ask him tonight Lord may that amazing grace become real in my life. Let us pray. Lord our God we pray to help us to bless us to guide us and to keep us.

We need you every single step of the way. Forgive us our every sin we pray in Jesus name we ask it. Amen. Our final singing is from Psalm 92 again from the Scottish Psalter Psalm 92 from verse 12 and that's on page 353 but like the palm tree flourishing shall be the righteous one he shall like to the seed or grow that is in Lebanon those that within the house of God are planted by his grace they shall grow up and flourish all in our God's holy place and in old age when others fade they fruit still forth shall bring they shall be fat and full of sap and they be flourishing to show that upright is the Lord he is a rock to me and he from all unrighteousness is altogether free psalm 92 from verse 12 to the end but like the palm tree flourishing shall be the righteous one he shall like to the seed seed grow he shall like to the seed grow that is in Lebanon and those that within the arms of God are planted by his grace they shall grow up and flourish up they shall grow up and flourish all in our

God's holy place and in old days when others fade they fruit still forth shall rain they shall be fat and all of star they shall be fat and all of star and they are in our vision to show show that all right is the Lord he is our rock to thee and he from all unrighteousness and he from unrighteousness is all to ever free now may the grace mercy and peace of God the Father

[ 46 : 52 ] Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore Amen