

Guest Preacher - Mr Gordon Macleod

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Preacher: Mr. Gordon Macleod

[0 : 00] Just before we turn to the passage that we read, I just want to read a few verses in Galatians 6. You don't need to go there. Galatians 6, verses 6 to 10.

Let the one who has taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. Whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption. But the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up.

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Paul wrote a letter from his prison cell to the church in Philippi.

What I want you to think about this morning is, would Paul have written a similar letter to the church in Barvis?

[1 : 16] The church in Philippi, as we know, you can read in Acts 16, was a church that came about following a vision that Paul had been given.

Paul, as you remember, had set out on a missionary journey along with Silas and Timothy. And they tried to go into various different places around the Mediterranean Sea.

But each time they tried to preach the gospel, each time they tried to enter into one of these places, the Spirit blocked them. And then, one night, Paul had a vision, a vision of a man from Macedonia, saying, come over and help us.

And they got up in the morning, and they set sail for Macedonia. And their passage was uninterrupted, and they reached the town of Philippi.

And as we read in Acts 16, Philippi was obviously a very successful place. It was known as a Roman colony. It was a large enough place to host a prison.

[2 : 35] But one of the sad things that we find out about Philippi is there was no synagogue. Commentators tell us that for there to have been a synagogue in Philippi, there needed to be ten men worshipping.

There, worshipping God in the place for a synagogue to have been in place. But despite that, Paul went there, and Paul preached God's Word.

And we read in Acts 16 of three conversions. Three very different people. Three people from very different social backgrounds. One, Lydia, a successful businesswoman.

A slave girl that we don't have a name for. And then the man that we come to know as the Philippian jailer. Each one of them came to know Christ in very different ways.

One, because they were at the place of prayer. And their heart was opened. I don't know many of you here this morning.

[3 : 47] I don't know how many of you have been coming here for years, for weeks. Or this might be a first occasion here. But if that's the case, that you're here and you don't know Jesus, the prayer is that your heart would be opened.

Lydia's heart was opened because she was at the place of prayer. If God is speaking to you this morning, don't turn away. Answer the call. The slave girl.

She knew why Paul and Silas and Timothy were there. She shouted about it each and every day. But while she knew what they were there for, she didn't know them. She didn't know Jesus, sorry. But only when the demon was taken from her did she then follow Christ as opposed to railing against him. And then the Philippian jailer.

A man who was obviously accomplished in what he did. He'd been put in charge of the prison. A man that was obviously quite complacent in what he did. We read in Acts 16 that while he had been charged with looking after the prisoners, he put them in the centre of the prison, put them in the

stocks.

[5 : 04] As far as he was concerned, his job was done and he went to sleep. And he missed all the singing and praying that Paul and Silas did during that night.

But then what we hear is that his world was indeed shaken. The prayers of Paul and Silas were answered in a way that they maybe never imagined they were going to be answered.

There was an earthquake. The prison doors flew open. The chains, the stocks were released from them. And during that, the Philippian jailer woke up.

And what do we find? He was going to kill himself. And only in Paul shouting to him, don't harm yourself, we're all still here. Does he then come through?

And we have that very important statement, what must I do to be saved? Is that where you are this morning? That you've come here because your world has indeed been shaken and you're looking for an answer as to what must I do to be saved?

[6 : 15] The answer was simple. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. There's a bit that sometimes we forget that's added to that.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ coming to Christ can have an impact not just on you but on your own whole household.

Are you prepared to come to Christ and see not only your own life changed but the life of your household? The Philippian jailer made that commitment.

So there we had a church that was planted in Philippi with three people. Three people from very different social backgrounds as we've said but three people that Paul now writes to as part of a church.

A church that has indeed been blessed and been guided and grown despite everything that they've been through.

[7 : 34] How would you feel about receiving a letter if that was the first time this morning when that letter was read to you if it wasn't written to the church in Philippi but written to the church in Barvis can you say there is a body of people that you are standing side by side for the sake of Christ?

The people of Philippi obviously were. They were there committed to working together for Christ.

We live in 2023 in Scotland in a country that at this particular time is facing so much confusion. People aren't happy with the laws of the land so they want to get them changed and we've seen that happen with the gender reform bill that's been going through it's currently been blocked we don't know where that's going to be taken.

We're now in the position when I was here three weeks ago Murda was praying for the first minister we're now in a position where we're now going to have to or wait until a new first minister is appointed and many of you will have seen the different articles that are written about who's going to be that first minister.

Every situation that comes up is an opportunity. I read an article yesterday where it now makes you think that previously while it not wouldn't have been the right thing to do in public to actually proclaim your faith and stand up for Christ that even in secular newspapers statements that have been made and I'm not at any token professing any kind of political allegiances to anybody but in terms of a Christian sister the faith of Kate Forbes is one that's under scrutiny but a statement that she made about her own faith is one that is now being used actually to promote the fact that she might be the right person to be the first minister for Scotland.

[9 : 57] For somebody who actually knows who Christ is is prepared to stand and defend Christ and that politics is not the main focus in her life that Christ is that one writer states that maybe this is the right person to lead Scotland and we can think if we go into the Old Testament in relation to Esther that Mordecai said to her maybe at such a time as this that God has placed you there we don't know what's happening in our world at this time we have very little control over it but the one thing that we can do as a people is to pray and not to give up praying I said earlier on that commentators tell us that for there to have been a synagogue in Philippi there needed to be ten men worshipping

God how many men that are here this morning are in the prayer meeting midweek holding up the different challenges that we have in our society before God praying for this community to see God move amongst it the people of Philippi stood side by side why did I read the passage in Galatians I read the passage in Galatians because it says so then as we have opportunity let us do good to everyone especially to those who are of the household of faith we live in a community that we are

blessed to be able to come together and to worship God we live in a nation that in its desire to be progressive in its own eyes is turning away from what scripture actually teaches we don't know where that's going to lead us what that's going to do for us we recognise and we're trying to challenge as a denomination what's happening within schools in relation to what children are being taught we can't ignore these things but the other thing that we can't ignore is that as society changes and moves further and further away from God depending on who the leaders in our communities are and across our nation are will we still have the opportunity to come together to read our Bibles together and to preach and evangelise within our communities as we have opportunity let us sow to the spirit and not to the flesh what do I mean by that are we going to sow for ourselves or are we going to sow for the glory of God if you're sitting here this morning and your thoughts are actually thinking about what you're going to be doing the rest of this week what deals you might be doing how much money you're going to make from selling whatever or buying whatever are you storing up treasures for here on earth or are you actually thinking about what opportunities is God going to give me this week to be able to share Christ with my neighbour with my work colleague with anybody that I come into contact with what opportunities do you pray for what opportunities do you let pass you by we read that the people in Philippi stood side by side do we support one another do we share with one another who we're praying for do we share with one another who we want to reach out to and make it a point for prayer I'm going to go and see my neighbour I want you to pray for me so I can actually get an opportunity to share a word with them are we upholding upholding one another and we're and recognising that we have a responsibility to be able to share God's word together we're not in this on our own we're in it as a body of God's people as I said are you sitting here this morning thinking about what gains you're going to get if that is you here this morning thinking about the next job that you're going to get the next opportunity you're going to get to make some money how much money you've got in the bank how much interest or little interest it's getting at this time think of the parable and the story that was told of the rich fool in Luke chapter 12 and at verse 16 to 21 as Jesus said saying the land of a rich man produced plentifully and he thought to himself what shall I do for I have nowhere to store my crops and he said I will do this I will tear down my barns and build larger ones and there I will store all my grain and my goods and I will say to my soul soul you have ample goods laid up for many years relax eat drink and be merry but God said to him fool this night your soul is required of you and the things you have prepared whose will they be so is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God and we were speaking to the children this morning we looked at what Psalm 1 teaches us we spoke about the shorter catechism what is man's chief end how many of you have said what's this all about what is life all about I ask you are you walking with God or are you walking away from God are you recognizing that there is a lot of darkness in life in your own life because you're walking away from God as opposed to walking with God and to God in the North Harris congregation when we went into lockdown obviously one of the real drawbacks was we weren't able to come together as congregations right across the island and one or two of the kids that we had in the Sunday school were saying to their mum we don't get a chance to speak to the minister anymore normal practice would have been that on a Sunday morning the kids would have come down to the front of the church and David the minister would have spoken directly to the children and there would have been some interaction as he asked questions and to-ing and fro-ing so there was a decision made that what we would do is that we would have kids prayer meeting everything was online at that time so prayer meeting was opened instead of at half past seven for the main prayer meeting prayer meeting was opened at five to seven and for twenty minutes the primary school kids came in and met with David and myself that continues it's been going on going on now for two and a half years young folks coming on giving us prayer points praying for people in Afghanistan praying for people in [18:08] Turkey praying for people in the community that are sick um they had one woman there that the kids knew very well every week they would come and pray for her and she went through her cancer treatment that woman has actually written and thanked the kids for their prayers because her cancer is currently in remission and that's an encouragement to our young ones but can I share with you two prayers that were said over Christmas and New Year as a challenge to you and a challenge to me two young people that were in one night we opened the meeting up for prayer ten year old boy this prayer went something like this Lord I pray for David and Gordon and those who are

Christians that they would be bold in sharing the gospel a week later there's two young girls in the prayer meeting and neither of them had prayed in the prayer meeting before and I didn't know whether they were going to pray and I said do you want me to pray or do any of you want to pray and this girl said I'll pray and she started praying Lord I pray for those that are not Christians yet that seeds would be sown into their lives and they would come to know Jesus as Lord and as Saviour that can I say to you if you don't know Jesus as Lord and Saviour this morning the young people not just in Harris I'm sure but in our communities know what it is to come to Christ and know Christ as Saviour and they're praying for each and every one of you that aren't Christians as you come to church as you maybe listen online that you know and that you hear God's word and that seeds are sown into your hearts and that these seeds according to God's will and God's purpose will indeed in due season bear fruit if you are a Christian here this morning I'm sure as I was when I heard my own name mentioned in a prayer are we bold in sharing Christ do we recognise the importance of when it says go into all the world and make disciples and if you're here as a Christian this morning that that message is for you and that if a ten year old boy can recognise the importance of the

Christians in society today being bold to share Christ how does that challenge us and what does that mean for us in the communities in which we're living in the free church has a vision many of you have probably heard about it before the vision is for a healthy gospel church church in every community in Scotland I recognise there are two churches here in Barvis both preaching the gospel but there are empty seats there are probably many houses within the community that this church serves that there's nobody represented here this morning one of the underpinning statements of that healthy gospel church vision is that we would be intentional about sharing

Christ locally and around the world can I challenge you this morning as I'm challenged are we sharing Christ sometimes not even in terms of what we say but just by how we live our lives because the other two statements that come in relation to a healthy gospel church is that we're committed to the worship of God and obedience to the Bible and that we make disciples and that we're characterized by loving relationships Paul commended the Philippian church for their ability to stand side by side in the work of the gospel are you here this morning sitting together as a body of [23 : 19] God's people standing side by side in the work of God within the community there is far more chance of each and every one of you are here that are Christians to meet a non-Christian person tomorrow than there is for your minister and the reason I say that is because you are out working in places where people that work alongside you are not Christians you are coming into contact with far more people as a body of people than your minister will whose responsibility is to be that first line of attack against the work of the devil each and every one of you here Paul commended the church I don't come here this morning to say that none of you are not doing this but there is a battle that each and every one of us is engaged in we're told that

Paul wouldn't have given us a gospel armor for us to think about each and every day to prayerfully put it on as we go out into the world if he didn't recognize that we weren't in a battle are you sitting back thinking that it's somebody else's responsibility or are you actually engaged in that battle every single one of us has a responsibility now you might be sitting here this morning and say well I'm no longer fit to be out and about I absolutely get that pick up the phone write a letter or pray for your neighbor who may be looking to go out and witness today if you're sitting here this morning and you're not a Christian and you're sitting there going well okay I hear what he's saying but it's not really for me messages for each and every one of us we're either sowing for our own gain or we're sowing for Christ we spoke about the rich fool who was storing up treasures thinking everything was great in his life we can think of the Philippian jailer who was so confident in his own ability as a jailer that he went to sleep and while he was asleep the very foundations of his own life were shaken my prayer is that if you're sitting here this morning and you're not a

Christian and you're sitting here this morning and thinking oh I'm alright I've got my own house it's almost paid off I've got a job it's a great job it's paying well what else do I need to worry about my prayer is that you don't wait until the foundations of your life are shaken to come to Christ come now while there is opportunity because that opportunity will not always be there let us pray dear heavenly father we pray that as we come before you that we would recognize our responsibility in going out with your word that heavenly father that we would recognize our responsibility in sharing you each and every day that we would recognize heavenly father as Paul did for me to love as Christ that we would walk in your love that we would share your love and that heavenly father that

we would be a people in this community that shine for you we recognize that there's so much darkness around about us when we read of what's happening across the world when we see what is happening even within our own nation heavenly father a nation that once was regarded as a nation of the book that heavenly father now seeks to move so far from it making up laws and legislation that seeks to appease the needs and the wants and desires of man heavenly father you have given us your word to direct us on how we may love and glorify you and enjoy you forever we pray that we would use it in that way and that we would share it with those round about us and that we would not come here this morning complacent in our own stand but that we would recognize heavenly father that you are in control of all things and that you have taken each one of us here for a purpose and that purpose is to see you and we pray that in seeing you that we would call upon you and that we would indeed heavenly father taste and see that you are indeed good and that in seeing that you are indeed good that we would trust in you and that we would know what it is to be blessed and go out and be a blessing to others in Jesus name amen i'm going to conclude singing to god's praise in psalm sing psalms sing psalms 51 and verses 7 to 15 the psalmist cries out to god as he comes asking for forgiveness cleanse me with hyssop purify me i'll be whiter than the snow let the bones you crust be joyful may i may i joy and gladness know from my failure hide your face blot out all my iniquities sorry blot out all my wickedness lord create a pure heart in me and a steadfast mind renew do not take your spirit from me cast me not away from you give me back the joy i had keep my willing spirit glad then i'll teach your way to sinners rebels will turn back to you free me from blood guilt my savior god most merciful and true then i'll praise your righteousness teach my lips to bless your name and may we indeed know what it is to bless god's name this morning but may we also know what it is to joy in the lord and keep a willing and glad spirit for him let's stand and sing cleanse

with his purify me i'll be whiter than the snow let the bones you crushed be joyful may i joy and gladness know from my failure hide your face blot out all my wickedness lord create a pure heart in me and a steadfast mind renew do not take your spirit from me cast me not away from you give me back the joy i had keep my will in spirit glad then i'll teach her ways to sinners rebels will turn back to you free me from blood guilt my savior god most merciful and true then i'll praise your righteousness teach my lips your name to bless to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only god our savior be glory majesty power and authority through jesus christ our lord before all ages now and ever more amen

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