

A Gospel-Centred Church

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[0 : 00] Well, if I could, this evening, with the Lord's help, the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, Paul's letter to Titus, chapter 1.

Titus, chapter 1, and if we read again at verse 4, verses 4 and 5. Titus 1 and verse 4, where Paul writes, To Titus, my true child in a common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you. In the day and age that we live in, we all have information that we need and we have it right at our fingertips.

If we have any questions about any area or interest in our lives, well, we can find it almost instantly. With just the click of a mouse or the touch of an iPad or an iPhone, we have all the information we need in seconds.

If we want to know today's news, if we want to know a certain period of history, if we want to find a poem, if we want to know about maths, or if we want to discover something scientific, all we have to do is just ask Google.

[1 : 31] And you know what's crazy about all the information that's at our fingertips, is that the other day, David and Finlay, they were asking me something about dinosaurs.

And I didn't have a clue. So Finlay just says to me, well, Daddy, just ask Google. Google will tell you all about dinosaurs. And he was right, because the material was there and it was ready to be found in seconds.

And you know, the same is true if we want information about the church. If we want information about church life, church organisation, church planting, church revitalisation. If we want the material, it's all there, ready to be found and utilised.

We can find all the information, all the articles, all the blogs, all the materials. We can find everything we need in order to have this blueprint for establishing a good church.

But you know, even though we have all these things and all the information at the touch of a button, you know, there's nothing like someone speaking from their own personal experience.

[2 : 36] There's nothing like it. Because there's nothing like someone sharing from their own experience and speaking from their own incidents and situations of the things that they have learned from.

And I've always found that beneficial. I mean, you can read scrolls about different people, but it's always more beneficial sitting down with somebody and hearing their experience personally.

You know, I think it's safe to say that the personal approach is far more pastoral. Which is why I believe that Paul personally wrote these pastoral epistles to both Timothy and also to Titus.

He didn't send the same letter to both of them. He wrote them personally to Timothy and to Titus. And of course, as we said last week, Paul was a pastor. And he was a pastor to these two young pastors who were starting out in the ministry.

Paul knew that his ministry was drawing to a close. He says at the end of his second letter to Timothy that he's fought the good fight. He's finished the course. He's kept the faith. But Paul, he didn't want to leave this world without, first of all, personally passing on his pastoral experience and wisdom to these two young men, Timothy and Titus.

[3 : 51] And Paul wrote these pastoral epistles. He wrote them in order to instruct and to guide and to exhort and even to encourage Timothy and Titus in their ministries. And as we said, Timothy, he was laboring in the city of Ephesus, while Titus, as we just read there in verse 5, he had his hands full on the Greek island of Crete.

And as you would expect, both places and people, they were very different. But the problems, the problems are always the same. But here in this letter to Titus, Paul is giving, you could say, personal and pastoral advice to this young island minister in an island church.

And Paul's greatest concern for the island congregations to whom Titus was ministering, Paul's greatest concern was that they were self-centered. They were a self-centered island church.

And in this letter, Paul reminds Titus, he reminds them that as a church, they need to be gospel-centered, not self-centered. And, you know, we ought, as we mentioned last week, we ought to notice Paul's emphasis upon the need to be gospel-centered.

And we ought to notice it because of the structure of Paul's letter to Titus. Because we looked last week at the first four verses. And in those opening verses, Paul reminds Titus that he has a gospel-centered calling.

[5 : 19] And his gospel-centered calling is a call to preach to people. It's to pastor to people. And to prepare his people for eternity. And so as an island minister in an island church, Titus, Paul says, has a gospel-centered calling.

But then in the second half of chapter 1, which we're looking at this evening, Paul teaches what it is, or what it is, to have a gospel-centered church. And then in chapter 2, Paul gives directions on how to be a gospel-centered Christian.

And then in the last chapter of this short letter, Paul reminds us that as a church, we have a gospel-centered commission. And that's the structure of this short letter.

A gospel-centered calling, a gospel-centered church, a gospel-centered Christian, and a gospel-centered commission. And Paul's greatest concern for the island church, to whom Titus was the minister, was that they would be a gospel-centered, not a self-centered church.

And so having considered this gospel-centered calling, we're going to consider this evening what it is to be a gospel-centered church. And you know, what Paul reminds us here in verses 5 to the end of the chapter, what Paul reminds us is that a church is defined and directed by its leadership.

[6 : 44] A church is defined and directed by its leadership. Because if the church leaders are self-centered, then the church will be a self-centered church.

But if the church leaders are gospel-centered, then the church will be a gospel-centered church. And in this section, Paul teaches Titus what it is to have a gospel-centered church.

Because Paul says that a gospel-centered church will have leaders with a gospel-centered character, a gospel-centered conduct, and a gospel-centered conversation.

Paul teaches Titus that a gospel-centered church will have leaders with a gospel-centered character, a gospel-centered conduct, and a gospel-centered conversation.

And so there are three headings this evening. A gospel-centered character, conduct, and conversation. So if we look first of all at a gospel-centered character, what does Paul say about a gospel-centered character?

[7 : 50] Look at verse 4. He says, To Titus, my true child, in a common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

So having reminded Titus in the opening verses of this letter that Titus has received this gospel-centered calling. He's to preach, pastor, and prepare his people for eternity.

But now Paul reminds Titus that the reason he's serving the Lord on the island of Crete is to finish the work that Paul had started. Titus was to put what was lacking in order.

And what was lacking in the church in Crete was leadership. What was lacking was leadership. And so Titus was to ordain elders in every town, as it says there.

[8 : 59] He was to ordain elders in every town on the island of Crete so that they would be an established church and seek to be a gospel-centered church. And with this, Paul reminds Titus what the credentials are for a gospel-centered leader, to lead in a gospel-centered church.

And as we said, the first qualification for a gospel-centered leader is for him to have a gospel-centered character. Now, when Paul talks about leadership and ordaining elders, he's not just referring to ruling elders.

He's also referring to teaching elders, meaning ministers. And I say that because the Bible, it uses the terms elder, bishop, presbyter, and overseer.

The Bible uses all these terms interchangeably. Of course, the Bible, it does distinguish between a teaching elder and a ruling elder. And Paul makes that clear in his letters, that there are two kinds.

You could say two kinds of elder. There are those who are called and trained and ordained to the office of teaching elder. And there are those who are ordained to the office of ruling elder.

[10 : 16] And this biblical teaching, it's exemplified in the practice of our own denomination. Because the church, our denomination, it examines the call of a teaching elder.

But the church doesn't examine the call of a ruling elder. The church performs the laying on of hands for the ordination of a teaching elder, a minister. But the church doesn't perform the laying on of hands for a ruling elder.

Therefore, as a minister, I'm an elder. I'm a teaching elder. Because I've been called, trained to some extent, if I remember most of it.

And I've been ordained to teach. And according to the teaching of the Bible and the practice of the church, I've received the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Now that doesn't mean I'm above any of the elders, although I stand in a pulpit.

It doesn't mean that I'm more important than any of the elders. Certainly not. It doesn't mean I'm more important than any of you here tonight. Or anyone in the congregation. No, a teaching elder.

[11 : 21] My title is minister. Servant. I'm to serve alongside all the other elders. Who are ruling elders. And so what Paul is saying here to Titus, it applies both to the minister, the teaching elder, and to the elders, the ruling elders.

And as we said, Paul is reminding Titus what the credentials are for a gospel-centered leader to lead a gospel-centered church. And a gospel-centered leader, he says, needs to have a gospel-centered character.

And as Paul says, a gospel-centered character must be above reproach. That's what he says in verse 6. That's the first thing he says.

A gospel-centered character must be above reproach. Now that doesn't mean that an elder is perfect. Certainly not. Doesn't mean that he's faultless. But what Paul does mean here is that a church leader must have a blameless reputation.

There should be nothing in his character that should cause concern or criticism. There should be nothing in his character that should cause concern or criticism.

[12 : 32] But if there is, well that will inevitably bring down the cause of Christ and bring it into disrepute. And needless to say, although this applies to the qualification for elders, all of this should apply to us as Christians.

It should apply to all of us. There should be nothing in our character as Christians that should cause concern or criticism. Because it will bring down the name of Jesus and bring the cause of Christ into disrepute.

We're to be above reproach. We're to be above reproach within the church community. And we're to be above reproach outwith the church community. And so what Paul is emphasizing here is the need to have a gospel-centered character.

And our need to have this character is that that person, us, basically what we are in public, must be also what we are in private.

What we are in public must be also what we are in private. And you know, this was certainly the view of Robert Murray McShane. As you know, Robert Murray McShane, he was the minister of, well, what is now Dundee Free Church.

[13 : 46] He was a minister there during the 19th century. And as many of you know, McShane, he died at the age of only 29. But he was a godly young man who emphasized the importance of the minister's personal life.

And he said, He said, My people's greatest need is my personal holiness. My people's greatest need is my personal holiness.

And what McShane meant was that his personal life as a minister was meant to be an example to other Christians. His gospel-centered character was to be a model.

A model to the people in his congregation so that they could imitate it and that they could follow him. Of course, every Christian we're called to follow the example of Christ.

That goes without saying. That's the basic truth of discipleship. We're to deny ourselves. We're to take up our cross. We're to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. But you know, when it comes to the life and conduct of a minister or an elder, they've not only been called to be a disciple of Jesus, they're also called to be an example to their congregation.

[15 : 00] And this is so that others who follow them will follow Jesus Christ better. And you know, this is actually what Paul taught the Philippians.

When Paul was bringing his letter to the Philippians to a conclusion, Paul, he says, And then Paul says, He says, Paul knew that as a pastor and as an elder, his gospel-centered character was as important as the gospel he preached.

But more than that, Paul knew that his gospel-centered character was to be an example to others, both in public and in private. And you know, Paul, he actually draws attention to the private life of a church leader when he says that they must be the husband of one wife.

They must be the husband of one wife. It doesn't mean that a minister or an elder has to be married. But what Paul is saying is that if he is married, he must stay married.

He's to be faithful to his wife. He's to love his wife. He's to care for his wife. He's to be committed to his wife. He's not to flirt with other women or put himself into any difficult position with other women.

[16 : 43] He's to be the husband of one wife. And by being an example in his marriage, he will be an example also to his young children. And that's what Paul talks about next.

And his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. And now that doesn't mean that the elder's children have to be Christians for him to be an elder.

But it does mean that his children have to be brought up in a way that they believe in God and they see the importance of Christianity and the need to live according to the Bible.

Of course, we can't convert our children. Of course, we can't convert our children. But we can teach our children. And they have to see the example in our own lives. What we are in public must also be what we are in private.

Therefore, it's not only the congregation, but also our wife and our children that must be presented with the example of a gospel-centered character.

[17 : 45] Because, you know, as Paul emphasizes here, an elder, whether he's a teaching elder or a ruling elder, he says we're not to be open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

We're not to be unruly and rebellious in public or in private. Now, in his commentary, Tim Chester, he makes a sobering point about church leaders.

And I found studying this passage very, very challenging. Because it's, well, the finger is pointed right at me. But he makes a sobering point about church leadership.

In many ways, I see it as very relevant to our own denomination. He writes, We have a generation of men who want to live and are encouraged to live as perpetual children.

It's easy to aim to avoid responsibility rather than bearing it. To follow instead of leading in our homes. To want the benefits of married life while retaining the benefits of singleness.

[18 : 50] If we are men, he says, we need to tell ourselves to grow up. And encourage each other to grow up.

You know, it's a sobering point. But it's exactly what Paul is emphasizing here. What he's saying to Titus. That a gospel-centered church must have leaders with a gospel-centered character.

But then secondly, and more than that, Paul says that a gospel-centered church will have leaders with a gospel-centered conduct. They will have a gospel-centered conduct.

Look at verses 7 and 8. He says, For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain.

But hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. Now, when we think of a church leader, what should we look for?

[19 : 56] What criteria would we be looking for in our church leaders? Is it that the teaching elder or the minister, is it that he's a good preacher? Are we looking for that? Is it that the elders, both the teaching elder and the ruling elder, are they good pastors?

Are they good at visiting those who are housebound? Those who are sick? Those who are in hospital? Or should we look for elders that are good administrators? Elders that have open minds about change?

Elders that have good strategies for moving the congregation forward? When we think of a church leader, what should we look for? And of course, all these things that we've mentioned, they're important.

But you know, when Paul advises this young island minister about church leadership, he doesn't talk about preaching or pastoring or progression. Paul just asks, how do they conduct themselves?

Do they have a gospel-centered conduct? And do they lead with a gospel-centered conduct? How do they conduct themselves? And that's what Paul emphasizes here.

[21 : 03] Because he not only says that the character of an elder must be above reproach. But he also says that the conduct of an elder must be above reproach. He repeats this emphasis of being above reproach.

And as we said, it doesn't mean that he's perfect or that he's blameless. But you know, there should be nothing in an elder's character or his conduct that should cause concern or criticism.

And again, this is applied to us as Christians. Whether we hold office or not, there should be nothing in our character or our conduct that should cause concern or criticism.

But you know, Paul explains the reason for being above reproach. And he says the reason for this is that as an elder, he says at the beginning of verse 7, or as an overseer, the same word, we are God's steward.

An elder is God's steward. The word steward literally means housekeeper. So an elder, whether he's a teaching or a ruling elder, he's God's housekeeper.

[22 : 12] He's to guard and to keep watch over God's house by his gospel-centered conduct. And you know, this is just what Paul said to Timothy. When Paul was writing to Timothy and giving Timothy in Ephesus the criteria for elders, Paul said to Timothy, If a man doesn't know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?

If an elder can't keep his own house, his own personal self, if he can't live by a gospel-centered conduct, then how is he going to keep God's house and be a steward in God's house by his gospel-centered conduct?

And you know, Paul is highlighting to Titus and to us what a gospel-centered conduct actually looks like. He says, An overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach.

He must not be arrogant, or quick-tempered, or a drunkard, or violent, or greedy for gain. But he must be hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.

And you know, it's challenging. Very solemn in what he's saying. But what we ought to take from these verses is that Paul doesn't say that an elder has to have academic qualifications in order to be a leader in the church.

[23 : 40] He says it's not education that's required. It's an example that's required. And of course, these qualities should be found, as we say, in every professing Christian.

These qualities that Paul is drawing attention to, they should be found in all of us who present the name of Jesus. But the minister and the elders, they ought to be an example to the congregation of these qualities.

One commentator on this topic, he states, the people of God ought to be able to look at their spiritual leaders and say, that's the kind of Christian I ought to be.

I find that very challenging. The people of God ought to be able to look at their spiritual leaders and say, that's the kind of Christian I ought to be. And you know, Paul is reminding Titus of the solemn responsibility of church leadership.

That a church leader must be in private what he is in public. He must practice what he preaches. Because if he's to be a gospel-centered leader, then he must live a gospel-centered life.

[24 : 48] If he's to lead in a gospel-centered church, he must cherish and cultivate a gospel-centered character and conduct. You know, I often read a magazine called the Expositor Magazine.

And it's a great magazine. Maybe you've never heard of it. But it's compiled by many church leaders, mainly in the United States. And they pass on all their advice and all their guidance on how to preach, how to prepare sermons, how to practice godliness.

It's a brilliant magazine. But there's one article that I read recently and it's always stuck with me. It's an article by Steve Lawson on the costly discipline of a godly pastor.

The costly discipline of a godly pastor. And in the passage, or in the article, Steve Lawson, he writes, he says, in this letter, Paul is saying to every spiritual leader today that what we are is more important than what we do.

Our godliness is more important than our giftedness. What we are before God takes precedence over what we do before men. Our private life takes priority over our public life.

[26 : 00] How we live is more important than where we labour. Our walk with God is more important than our work for God. The size of our hearts is more important than the size of our church.

Our maturity is more important than our platforms. Our purity is more important than our programmes. Our integrity is more important than our ministry. Our soul is more important than our success.

This is the character required, he says. Every man who preaches the gospel must discipline himself for the purpose of godliness. If not, our knowledge, our books, and our theology are worth little to nothing.

The costly discipline of a godly pastor. But you know, you could also call it the costly discipline. of a disciple of Jesus. Because it applies to all of us.

Not only to the minister. Not only to the elder. But to every member in our congregation. That if we're to be a gospel-centred church, it requires dedication and it requires discipline.

[27 : 08] We are to be dedicated and disciplined disciples. And you know, that's what Paul emphasises to Titus in the rest of the chapter. He says that a gospel-centred church will have leaders with a gospel-centred character, a gospel-centred conduct, and lastly, a gospel-centred conversation.

A gospel-centred conversation. Look at verse 9. He says, He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine, and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers, and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they're upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

So as Paul continues to emphasise that a church is defined and directed by its leadership, and therefore a gospel-centred church must have gospel-centred leaders.

You know, Paul makes the point here that gospel-centred leaders, they must be gospel-centred in both their doctrine and their duty. They must be gospel-centred in both their doctrine and their duty.

[28 : 28] And we touched on this a wee bit last week. And we noted that when Paul gives instructions on discipleship, which he does throughout this entire letter, Paul stresses throughout the letter that discipleship is effective when the church is gospel-centred in both its doctrine and its duty.

Discipleship is effective when the church is gospel-centred in both its doctrine and its duty. And you know, that's what Paul is actually talking about in verse 9 when he says that an elder must know his doctrine.

He says he must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Paul says that the role of an elder, whether a teaching elder or a ruling elder, is that he's to know his doctrine. He's to know his confession. He's to know his catechism.

Why? So that, as Paul says, he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also carry out his duty of rebuking those who contradict it.

[29 : 39] And with this, Paul, he went on to describe the leaders who are currently serving the church in Crete. And what we ought to notice is that the leaders of the church in Crete, they weren't gospel-centred, either in their doctrine nor in their duty.

They weren't gospel-centred. He says in verse 10, there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced since they're upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. Paul describes the leaders of the church in Crete as unruly.

They're full of gossip. They're liars. They're deceitful. They're lazy. Lazy gluttons, he calls them. They were everything but what a gospel-centred leader ought to be.

And Paul says to Titus, they must be silenced. They're to be silenced because they're upsetting the whole church family. They're upsetting them by their character and their conduct.

[30 : 51] But more than silencing them, Paul goes on to say in verse 13, he says that they must be rebuked. He says, this testimony is true, therefore rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.

To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works.

They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. And you know, Paul's instruction to Titus to silence, rebuke, and in some ways even remove the leaders already serving the church in Crete, it wouldn't have made for an easy task to carry out.

But Paul says it's necessary, it's certainly necessary, but it wouldn't have been easy. But fulfilling Paul's instruction would have distinguished Titus as a gospel-centered leader.

A gospel-centered leader who not only possessed a gospel-centered character and a gospel-centered conduct, but also had a gospel-centered conversation.

[32 : 12] Because Paul's instruction to Titus to silence, rebuke, and in many ways remove the leaders who were already serving the church in Crete, you know, it was a conversation that other church leaders would have been unwilling and reluctant to have.

And why is that? No one likes confrontation. No one likes dealing with cases of discipline. No one likes having conversations that are difficult.

But you know, this is the thing about gospel-centered leadership. There are times where you have to have these difficult conversations. But they have to be gospel-centered conversations.

Because the ultimate aim of a gospel-centered church is the glory of God, the preeminence of Christ, and the glory of his cause, the extension of his kingdom.

And you know, without doubt, there are dangers and difficulties when dealing with discipline. There are dangers and difficulties because church leaders can often have a gospel-centered conversation like an ogre or an ostrich.

[33 : 26] Church leaders can often have a gospel-centered conversation like an ogre or an ostrich. If they have a gospel-centered conversation like an ogre, well, they'll come down heavy-handed.

They'll maybe even be legalistic. They'll throw the book at them for what they've done. They throw the book at someone who needs discipline. But you know, we must always remember that discipline is a tool of discipleship.

It's to bring someone on in their faith. Discipline is a tool of discipleship. My friend, discipline, it's one of the key marks of the church. It was John Knox who said that the three marks of the church are the word, sacraments, and discipline.

And you know, it must be given so that those who have drifted and strayed and even erred in their ways will be taught to live gospel-centered lives to the glory of God. But as we said, church leaders can often have a gospel-centered conversation like an ogre or an ostrich.

If they're an ogre, they'll come down heavy-handed. If they're an ostrich, well, they'll stick their head in the sand and pretend that there's no issue there at all.

[34 : 42] And, well, if a gospel-centered leader is an ostrich, there will be no gospel-centered conversation at all. They want to avoid any confrontation because they fear the rejection of people.

They want the approval of others. And they want to be liked by everyone. But, my friend, and you know, we see it so often in the church today. Discipline fails in the church when it's not carried out with a gospel-centered conversation.

Discipline fails when there is no gospel-centered conversation. And discipline fails in the church when church leaders try to have a gospel-centered conversation like an ogre or an ostrich.

So what do we do? What was Titus to do? What is every island minister and every church leader to do? And needless to say, we're to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

It goes without saying, doesn't it? Because, you know, when you read the gospels, and when you see Jesus moving about in the gospels, we see a man who always moved with compassion.

[35 : 58] A man who always moved with compassion. And you know the beautiful thing about Jesus? He dealt with sin compassionately. The woman of Samaria, the woman caught in adultery, he dealt with him compassionately.

He didn't deal with them like an ogre or an ostrich. He dealt with them compassionately. Jesus addressed the corrupt leaders of the day. He addressed them compassionately.

He spoke to them directly, but he addressed them compassionately. Jesus, how did he deal with Peter, his own disciple, one of the leading churchmen of the day?

How did he deal with them when he denied them? Do you love me? He dealt with them compassionately. He dealt with them compassionately. And that's the way Jesus always dealt with people.

He didn't deal with them like an ogre or an ostrich. He moved with compassion. And you know, as church leaders, as church members, if we're to possess a gospel centered conversation, then it must be a compassionate conversation.

[37 : 08] And so as Paul writes this letter to Titus, a challenging, very challenging letter, especially when he comes to chapter 2, he talks about the Christian life. But you know, it's a challenging letter, and as he writes this letter to an island minister serving in an island church, he says that in order for the island church to be a gospel centered church, it needs leaders and members to have a gospel centered character, a gospel centered conduct, and a gospel centered conversation.

you know, my friend, I can't help but apply it to us as an island church on the Isle of Lewis.

We need to be a gospel centered church, and Paul is reminding us this evening, through the spirit, that the only way to be a gospel centered church is to possess a gospel centered character, a gospel centered conduct, and live lives with a gospel centered conversation, so that those out there will see our example, that they will see Christ in us, the hope of glory.

That's our longing, that Christ's name would be exalted, and that sinners would be drawn to him, and to him alone. So may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee not only for the gospel, but even for instruction on how we are to conduct ourselves as thy people.

[38 : 46] We bless thee for the good news, but we bless thee, Lord, for the guidance that thou dost give in thy word, and we pray that we would take it to heart, that we would see the responsibility that we have to live Christ centered lives for the glory of God and the extension of his kingdom.

Help us, Lord, as leaders in the congregation. Help us to serve thee aright. Help us to be examples, even as members, Lord, to be living epistles, seen and read of men, that we would bring glory to thy name, that those around us would see in us Christ in us the hope of glory, and that they would ask, even like the Philippian jailer, what must I do to be saved?

Lord, our longing is that more and more would come, that they would know this Jesus, this Jesus that saves to the uttermost. Bless, Lord, thy church, not only in this parish, but to the ends of the earth, that thy glory, Lord, that it would be made known to those who are in darkness.

Oh, bless us, Lord, and we pray, bind us together, keep us, we ask, take away our iniquity, receive us graciously, for Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 91.

Psalm 91, it's on page 352. Psalm 91, we're singing from verse 9 down to the verse marked, 14.

[40 : 28] 14. 14. 14. 14. 14. 14. 14. 14. 14. 14. 14. 14. 14. 15. 14. 14.
14. 14. 15. 15. 16.

We'll sing on down to the verse marked 14 of Psalm 91 to God's praise. Is made by thee thy habitation.

No way shall near thy welling heart.

No way shall thee befall. For thee to keep in all thy ways.

[42 : 06] His angels charge thee shall. They in their heart shall bear thee up.

Still waiting thee upon. Tres thou at any time shouldst touch thy foot against the stone.

Upon the other blood shall bear. And on the lions' throne.

Thy teeth on rankles from who shall. And on the lions' throne.

Because on me he set his love.

[43 : 36] I'll save and set him free. Because my great name he hath known.

I will be set on high. Amen. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The love of God the Father. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Be with you all. Now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.