

Unashamed Confidence

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[0 : 00] And we're going to turn to our reading this morning, and you'll find that in Psalm 48. We sang a version of that a moment ago. We're going to read together this psalm, which you'll find, I think, on page 472, if you have one of the church visitors' Bibles.

And we're going to be spending a few weeks looking at this psalm, and we're thinking this morning particularly really just of the first three verses, but of course we'll read the whole psalm together. And we're told it's a psalm. It's a psalm of the sons of Korah. So this is something that is not only read and meditated on, but the people of God sung to one another so they could learn it, meditate, understand it, and make it part of their lives.

And this is what it says. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God. His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of the whole earth.

Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great king, within her citadels, God has made himself known as a fortress. For behold, the kings assembled, they came on together.

[1 : 21] As soon as they saw it, they were astounded. They were in panic. They took flight.

Trembling took hold of them there, anguish as of a woman in labor. By the east wind you shattered the ships of Tarshish.

As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God, which God will establish forever. We have thought, we have meditated on your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple.

As your name, O God, so shall your praise reach to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled with righteousness. Let Mount Zion be glad.

Let the daughters of Judah rejoice because of your judgments. Walk about Zion. Go around her. Number her towers. Consider well her ramparts.

Go through her citadels, that you may tell the next generation that this is God, our God, forever and ever. He will guide us forever.

[2 : 32] Amen. And may God bless us. His word. Well, now, perhaps you would turn with me back to the passage we read together, Psalm 48.

And we're going to spend the next few weeks looking at this psalm under the title, Safety and Security? Question Mark. It's found only in the city of God.

I think it's been very refreshing. I've certainly been refreshed on these recent Sundays, as we've looked with Edward at parts of the long psalm, Psalm 119. And let me say that if you've been away, if you've missed some of those studies, I do hope you'll catch up with them and listen in online, because there's so much there that has been of such great help, I think, in daily life.

As we meditate on that psalm, and it gives us such insight into the place and indeed the power of God's word in our lives, that repeated plea all the way through the psalm, Lord, teach me.

Lord, give me life. And those two things are so closely bound up together, aren't they? As we've been seeing, it's God's living word that brings us to life. It's God's living word that sustains us in life.

[3 : 54] It's his word that revives our weary souls. And of course, the psalms are a very particularly wonderful source of God's revelation to us, because I think they're so personal.

They touch on every aspect of our human experience, don't they? And so in a way, they're almost unique in helping us not just to assimilate, to understand God's revelation, but to respond to it.

They reveal to us great truths about God. They reveal truths about ourselves, of course, also. But they help us to respond to God from our own hearts, in real faith, in reverent faith, faith that strengthens and sustains us.

And so as we listen to the message of the psalms, as we learn the truth, we respond in the way that they encourage us to respond.

And that happens as we sing the psalms together to one another. As we meditate on them in our hearts, and as we think about them before the Lord.

[5 : 07] And of course, Psalm 119, as you'll remember, encourages us, doesn't it, to meditate upon God's word. That does not mean, of course, let me be very clear, that does not mean the kind of meditation that people so often think about today, which is that you empty your mind of all conscious thought.

No, no, no. For the Bible, it is the very opposite of that. Meditation in the Bible means filling your minds with God's thoughts, with God's truth. And so thinking over and over the implications of that truth and what it has for our lives and for the whole world.

And so sometimes it's a good thing for us, I think, to slow down and just to meditate on a portion of scripture, just like a portion of the psalms, like we've been looking at in Psalm 119, or indeed one whole psalm, like this psalm, number 46.

And so what we're going to do is, we're going to try to do that, digest all of its truth, what it means for us, what it means for us to take it seriously, what it means for us to respond in the way that God wants us to respond in our lives.

So we're going to do that for these four Sundays in August, God willing. We're going to take it slowly. We're going to savor just one key message every week. And perhaps we'll make that our real focus for our own private prayers, for our reflections and discussions with one another.

[6 : 41] maybe trying to memorize these verses for ourselves so that the Lord can use them in our lives to help us, to call to mind a particular word of truth that we might need to help us in some situation or other.

I think memorizing scripture is something that perhaps we've lost in the modern church. Those of you who are even older than me probably were brought up memorizing parts of the Bible, weren't you, in the old version, the King James Version, the authorized version, everybody used the same version.

And it was quite distinctive and different, wasn't it? It was actually, because of the language being slightly different to what we usually use, it was quite easy, made it easier to memorize. I think I've used three or four different Bible versions through my life now.

And so all the verses I first memorized are all jumbled up because they've got all different versions and it's much more difficult. But I do wonder whether memorizing and having on our hearts some of the key truths of scripture is an important thing for us to think about.

As we get older, as our memories begin to fail us, as we begin to forget things, sometimes it's those key things that we've learned earlier in our lives that remain with us, isn't it?

[7 : 55] And so much the better if the things that remain imprinted on our memory are the powerful words of God. So maybe we can be trying to memorize some of the words in Psalm 48.

Because I think these are words that the Lord will use to help us in our lives, particularly perhaps at times when we feel exposed, when we're under pressure, when we feel we need a sense of safety, when we are seeking some sort of security in our situation in life.

Because that is the overwhelming theme, isn't it, of this Psalm? I'm sure we saw that as we read it. It's overwhelmingly all about safety and security. Real safety and security.

Indeed, ultimate safety and security. The middle part there is full of images of panic, anguish, trembling among human beings. But it also points us, doesn't it, to a picture of something that is rock solid and safe and secure.

And of something that can be found and can be experienced both now but also forever. Look at the very last word of the Psalm, verse 14. Forever. He will guide us forever.

[9 : 07] That's so important. And the message of the Psalm is exceptionally clear, I think. That if human beings want that safety and security in life and forever, then they're going to find it in one place alone.

And that is inside the city of God. So I want to begin this week focusing particularly on verses 1 to 3, which display for us, don't they, so clearly, the unashamed confidence of those who find their safety and security there.

Verse 1, in the city of God. Verse 2, in the city of the great king. Verse 3, in the citadels within which alone we're told God has made himself known as a fortress, as safety and security.

It's that absolute claim that leads us to have such unashamed confidence. Now, of course, immediately that does pose us with a problem today, doesn't it?

Let me take a few moments to explain why. It's because, as we all know, in our culture today we live with an increasingly pluralistic mindset, don't we? Our media, our government, our institutions increasingly are obsessed with this mantra of relativistic tolerance.

[10:32] That means everything must be tolerated. Except, of course, the one thing that can't ever be tolerated and that is the view that there is, in fact, one single absolute morality, that there is one definite, clear and permanent set of values which are right and wrong.

To think that is to be bigoted and intolerant, we're told. And that we cannot tolerate. You can't tolerate somebody, for example, who says, well, look, there is.

There is only one true religion. Therefore, there is only one morality. There is only one true truth by which everything else must be measured. Our society, almost universally now, has rejected that. No, no, it says there is no such thing as universal truth. All truth, all values, they are just culture-bound. And so, no one set of values can be seen as superior to any other set of values or certainly not superior to my set of values.

That's what it's really about, of course. And it's very convenient, isn't it, for people to think like that. So, for example, take the matter of sexual practice. You can't possibly say, especially if you're a Christian, that your values are universal.

[11:47] So, if I want to be promiscuous sexually, who on earth are you to say that that's wrong? Or if I want to call myself a woman and I want to dress up as a woman, in fact, if I want to have surgery and drugs to make me look more like a woman, who is anybody else to say that that is wrong?

In fact, even my chromosomes have no right to assert their biological truth over me anymore. That's just their truth. It's not my truth. And in fact, now in our society, we need to go even further, don't we?

Because although we absolutely deny others the right to impose their truth on us, in fact, what we find is that some truths are more equal than others in this new cultural Marxism.

Just as in the old political and social Marxism, there were always some people who were more equal than others, weren't they? And so my version of tolerance must demand that not only you tolerate my choice, but you celebrate my choice as well.

And if you don't, I and my very, very tolerant community will force you to. Absolutely. And that's what we see, isn't it, all around us just now.

[12:56] When I was in Australia last month, all over the news was the business of Israel Folau, you know, the rugby player who's been sacked because he dared to just express his Christian views in social media.

And it's many, many cases are similar here and in most Western countries. And so in fact, what we see is that this sea of relativistic tolerance is in fact becoming quite absolutely terrifying.

And yet it's ironic, isn't it? Because at the same time, as we have all this tolerance, the press and their tolerance police have never been more self-righteous in their frenzies against all sorts of public figures, particularly if they're the wrong kind of liberal.

So a public figure who, although we're told we're allowed to do anything we like and our truth is for us and it's for nobody else to criticize, a public figure like Mr. Johnson is pilloried by the press if he so much as has an argument with his girlfriend in his flat.

Or others in public life are immediately squashed by a hail of abuse on Twitter and Facebook should they dare to say something that is against the public consensus.

[14:08] Isn't it funny how we can be so supposedly tolerant and yet so absolutely intolerant right at the same time? But you see, our society can only pretend to be tolerant because it's completely redefined what that word tolerant means.

In the past everybody knew tolerance means well it means a willingness to put up with something and tolerate something or someone a point of view with which we significantly disagreed.

Something you thought was wrong and that is a mark of a civilized society. You don't murder your next door neighbor do you just because you think his religion is absolutely wrong? Of course not.

You tolerate him. You don't give up the belief that he's absolutely wrong but you tolerate the difference. In fact, to be tolerant presupposes a belief in absolute truth doesn't it?

Because you don't need to tolerate something unless you believe it's wrong in the first place. But now tolerance has come to mean something so very different. It means in our society a refusal to accept that there's a right for anyone to hold a strong and absolute view or even that there can be

such a thing as absolute truth at all.

[15 : 34] And so what that so-called tolerance has actually come to mean is complete intolerance of anybody who has unashamed convictions if they go against the current mood of society which is clearly deemed to be the way that everybody ought to think and indeed now must be made to think and act.

And we're seeing that all around us aren't we in the political sphere today where disagreement has now descended into warfare. You can't tolerate somebody else's political point of view about Brexit or about anything else.

You've got to attack them and destroy them. And we're seeing it everywhere in public life. And this new tolerance is not tolerant at all. In fact, it is moving us inexorably towards totalitarianism. And friends, this is something that we as Christians in the Christian church have to be very aware of and not naive about because it affects us very, very greatly and it's going to affect us more and more. Anybody who reads the material from the Christian Institute week by week will know just how many Christians already have fallen foul of these attitudes because these things are being progressively enshrined in our laws and even things that are not yet in our laws are being mistaken and misapplied by our police.

Often against Christians who are simply seeking to articulate the Christian faith in the orthodox way. So of the elderly couples who have been arrested and put into their cells because they wrote a letter to their council criticizing the fact so much money from their own taxes was being poured into things like Stonewall and their propaganda in schools.

[17 : 14] The branded people who are committing hate crimes. We've seen people arrested in the streets for just wearing a sandwich board that has a text from the Bible on it. Often just reading from the Bible.

We've seen university Christian unions kicked out of university property buildings simply because in their statement of faith they hold to the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ or they stand for the biblical teaching on marriage and hosts of other things.

And this prevailing attitude in our Western society is something that is constantly pressing in upon the Christian church. It's inevitable isn't it?

It's the air that we breathe. It's the world that we live in. It's the media that constantly bombards us. Of course that's going to be true. And so we have many many within the professing Christian church saying well if we're going to relate to the world that we live in we need to change our views on some of these things to remain relevant to be able to get a hearing for what we're saying.

Well of course we have to relate to the world that we live in. Of course that's true but not if it means that we so change and water down that we ultimately reject altogether the finality and the uniqueness of God's revelation to us in Jesus Christ.

[18 : 44] Not if it means that the truth of the gospel has to give away to this relativism this so-called tolerance of multi-faith and interfaith thinking. Not if we must yield anything of the unique glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Friends the same issues were there right from the very beginning of the Christian church. That's why we read these letters written to the churches in the first century. Read the letter of Jude. He says he has to write to the believers to tell them to contend for the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints. Why would he have to do that if the uniqueness of that faith was not under threat from a pagan world, from a hostile world.

And we too must keep fearlessly to the truth that our message is an exclusive message. It's a message of final truth, absolute truth.

It is not just one of many options. But that means of course that in our world our message, if we're going to be true to it, is going to be an offensive message.

[19 : 58] But we've got to be unashamed and confident in that message, however offensive it might seem. Because that message, the true biblical gospel, is the only answer to all the needs of the people of this world.

And it's the only answer to the planet that people are increasingly getting worried about in our world. This world and this world's people can find security and safety and satisfaction.

And salvation only, only in the city of our God, as this psalm puts it. That is only by being in right relationship with this God, the Lord, the only God.

Only that way is true help to be found. I think as we look at this psalm over the next few weeks, we're going to find that it could not have a more contemporary message for the church today. But today I want to focus just on verses 1 to 3, which are all about this unashamed confidence that is to be ours in the God that we know. Let's read them again. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God.

[21 : 11] His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of the whole earth. Mount Zion in the far north, the city of the great king. Within her citadels, God has made himself known as a fortress.

See, we can have and we must have unashamed confidence in our one great king and in his one unique city. Because this psalm, and indeed the whole Bible, makes that absolute claim about our God.

There is only one God, one church, one faith, one way of salvation. salvation. So here then, first of all, is an absolute claim.

And it's this, that the city of God, which is now fulfilled forever in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, that it is, look at verse two, it's the joy of the whole earth. That is, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is for every tribe and language and people and nation.

It's for every culture. It's for every background. It's for every intellect. It is for the whole earth. It's very easy for us today to lose confidence in that gospel, isn't it?

[22 : 33] And that, friends, you see, is what is at the root of so much of the failure of the church in our western world to be what it ought to be and to achieve what it ought to achieve. Because when we lose confidence in the gospel, well, of course, we lose confidence in ourselves, in our mission.

But this psalm reminds us that our confidence lies in one place alone. It's an absolute claim. What is it that makes Jerusalem of the psalmist day so great?

Well, it's obvious, isn't it? It's the presence of the Lord himself. Just like in Psalm 46, verse 5, the verse I quoted at the beginning of the service, God is in the midst of her Jerusalem, the holy city. Same in here in verse 3, it's within her citadels that God has made himself known as a fortress. God was really present in the midst of Jerusalem, in his temple.

His covenant presence was represented there, wasn't it? By the ark of the covenant, right at the heart of the holy of holies. that's why when you read 1 Samuel, the story we looked at a while ago of the ark being stolen by the Philistines, that's why when the ark was taken away out of Jerusalem, out of the presence of God's people, the people shouted, the glory has departed.

[23 : 58] Because God's presence had gone. And when it last came back, there was great, great joy. And that, you see, is an abiding principle. It's an eternal principle. It's telling us about the uniqueness of the one place that the true God chooses himself to dwell.

You probably remember when we studied in the book of Deuteronomy, we saw that was such a great emphasis, wasn't it? That you can only seek God, the Lord, where he can be found. So remember in Deuteronomy chapter 12, Moses tells the people from God, you are not to worship the Lord, your God, in the way that these pagans worship.

They just build a temple or a shrine, wherever they feel like it. They make an idol or an image and they bow down to that. No, you're not to do that, says God. You're to seek the place that the Lord, your God, will choose to put his name and make his dwelling there.

That's the only place you can go to find God because your God is actually real, unlike all these pagan gods. It doesn't matter where you build a pagan temple, there's never going to be a God in it. But if you're dealing with a true and living God, you better build your temple where he actually is. You better go and seek him where he actually is in the midst. God tells man where he will be found, not the other way around.

[25 : 25] And it was only in his tent, his tabernacle. Ultimately, when that tabernacle became a fixture in the temple in Jerusalem, it was only there. And for the psalmist here in the Old Testament, it was real enough.

God was present there and there alone. And yet always that tabernacle, that temple pointed to something greater still, to a fulfillment still to come. And when the Lord Jesus himself came to earth, he said that, didn't he?

He said he himself was the temple. Because in him, God is incarnate. He is Emmanuel. He is God with us forever. forever. That's why Paul tells us in the church, in the New Testament, that the church now is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God, where he dwells even now in the midst of his people.

He's right here with us today. That's why at the end of the Bible, the whole story climaxes in that great vision and revelation of ultimate fulfillment. And what do we see? The heavenly city of God and the perfect redeemed church of Jesus Christ where God dwells in the midst of them forever and ever.

the city of God, the unique place where God chooses to dwell, is in the midst of his people, a people now defined by the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[26 : 47] And that place and that place alone is the fortress that will never be shaken, the kingdom that will never be shaken. The New Testament tells us that again and again, doesn't it, so plainly?

that that fulfillment has begun now in Jesus. So in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul also says that in every believer in Jesus Christ, we, our bodies, are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Peter says in 1 Peter 2 that we as Christians are living stones, like in that hymn that we just sang, who are being built into the dwelling place of Christ himself.

that is those who are being called into the holy city of God, his true church, into his kingdom through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we need to grasp, don't we, what an absolute claim that really is from the beginning of the Bible right to the end. And we need to hold that, friends, with an unashamed confidence.

[27 : 50] Just turn with me to one reference in the New Testament to Hebrews chapter 12, where we'll see this, page 1009 I think in the church Bibles. Because it makes so clear to us the unashamed confidence that we must have because of that absolute claim, because of the claim that the city of God, the everlasting city of Zion is ours because of Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 22 and following. Through this great fulfillment you see in the Lord Jesus, the apostle says, we've come not just to an earthly city, but we've come to the city that that earthly city of Jerusalem and its temple always pointed to, always foreshadowed, and to the place that the saints of old always longed for.

We have come to the heavenly city. Verse 22, but you have come, you have drawn near to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the word of Abel, and see to it that you do not refuse him who is speaking.

For they didn't escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns us from heaven. You see, we must have, in that absolute claim of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we must have unashamed confidence in that unique word, in that heavenly word.

We cannot ignore that heavenly word. And the gospel of Jesus Christ, friends, is an absolute claim. It is a unique claim. It is a word from heaven that is eternal.

[29 : 44] eternal. It is not like the confusion of spiritualities all around us today that this guru or that guru follows, or this guru celebrity tries to sell us with their latest fashions.

It is not like the kind of things that if you go into the self-help sections in Waterstones, you find people pouring all of the mumbo-jumbo over these books. It is not like Eastern animism, or mysticism, or Hinduism.

Where it is good luck and karma that you get by going to shrines, by daily meditation, by mantras, and all of these things which put you in bondage and never give you assurance.

It is not about learning from all the great faiths of the world and taking this and that from Islam or Buddhism or whatever it is. No. It is unashamedly confident in the absolute assertion that this God. Look back at the Psalm verse 2. This God is the God of all the earth. And his city is to be the joy of all the earth. That is such a common refrain all through the Psalms, isn't it?

[30 : 57] He is the one who created the heavens and the earth. He is all powerful. He is the only God and Lord. And that is made so clear, so provocative, so pointed in verse 2, isn't it?

It is a little hard to see the full force of that, I think, in our ESV version. It says, his holy mountain, Mount Zion, in the far north. If you have an NIV, I think it puts it better here.

It says, the utmost heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion. You think, what does that mean? That is why the ESV gives you a translation. But Zaphon is the Hebrew word for north.

But often, actually, Mount Zaphon referred to a particular mountain, a mountain up in the north in Lebanon. And it was the mountain where in that whole ancient Canaanite culture, everybody

thought, that's where all the gods live, like Mount Olympus for the Greeks.

You'll find a reference to it if you want to look at it later in Isaiah chapter 14, verse 13, where it's called the Mount of Assembly. That is, the mount where all the gods live on that mountain up in the far north.

[32 : 02] And what the psalmist here is doing, you see, he's taking that pagan notion and he is tackling it head on. And he's saying, no! All that pagan mumbo-jumbo is utterly wrong.

It's Mount Zion. It's the city of our God alone that is the utmost height where God dwells. Mount Zion alone is the seat of the only God.

And his city is the city of the only true and great king of kings. It's within her citadels, verse 3. And it's here alone that you will find any divine revelation.

It's here where God has made himself known. Our God is unique. He's the only God overall. That's the message here and all through our Bibles.

And his city, his church, is to be the joy of the whole earth. I think it's remarkable, isn't it? Many people find it surprising that here we are way, way back in the middle of the Old Testament.

[33 : 08] And there's such a clear recognition, isn't there, that the God of Israel is the only hope for all the peoples of the whole world. For Jew and Gentile. For slave and free.

For male and female. Just as the New Testament gospel tells us. There's just no room, is there, here for pluralism. There is no possibility of there being just one mountain and all lots of different paths up to the same top where God is found to be the same, really, in all religions.

No. There's one place. And there is one way alone to this God. And that is by coming to the place that he himself has chosen to make himself known.

That's why it's so disastrous, isn't it, today, when there are even well-meaning Christians within the Christian church who say we shouldn't evangelize and are reluctant to evangelize people of other faiths, Muslims and Jews and Hindus and others, and so we don't offend people.

I heard of a hospital chaplain who refused to speak to a Hindu in hospital about the Christian gospel, even though the Hindu man asked him to tell him about it. And then he was outraged when another Christian tried to go and do that and speak to him and he tried to stop him doing it.

[34 : 31] Friends, no, no, no. This psalm and the whole Bible tells us we're to be unashamed, we're to be confident in our unique God and in his unique way of salvation, which is a salvation that is to be made known to all the earth, to become the joy of all the peoples of the earth.

That's why the apostle says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of God. It's the power of God for salvation for all who believe, the Jew and the pagan, everybody else in the whole world.

The city of our God is to be the joy of the whole earth. Of course, the clear implication of that is that you must either be for this city of God or you'll be against the city and God and his people and with his enemies.

It just won't do. It's impossible, isn't it, in the light of the sun to say that, well, all religions really are the same in the end. It's for or against. That's one reason why these books, by people like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens and others are such weak pieces of work because their basic assumption is that there's rational science and then there's all religion.

It's really all just a different version of the same thing. What a lot of nonsense that is. Is a religion that says, well, beggars in the street deserve their fate because of their bad karma in previous life, so it's perfectly all right to abuse them.

[36 : 02] Is that just the same as the Lord Jesus and faith in him when he says, love your neighbor, whoever he is and whatever it costs you. I've told you before, I think, of my first visit to India when I was so shocked to see a beggar with no legs dragging himself across one of the wide roads in New Delhi and being beaten relentlessly by a policeman with a great big stick.

Nobody paying any attention and, in fact, people approving. I was so shocked and when I spoke to Isaac Shaw about it later, he said, well, that's Hinduism. That man deserves everything that's coming to him because of bad karma in his previous life.

And he said, all of you folk in the West who think there's so much enlightenment and Eastern mysticism and Hinduism, you need to come to a country like India and see what that does in a culture.

Are these things the same? Is there no difference between a fanatical martyr who's willing to die so that he can kill as many people as he can? Is there no difference between that and the Christian who's willing to lose his life in order to save somebody else and bring life to somebody else and not

destroy them?

Are those two the same thing? You only have to say these things, don't you, to see how ridiculous is this idea that really all religion leads to the same place in the end.

[37 : 21] So, friends, that's the first clear message of this psalm. Something for us to meditate on and ponder and discuss with one another and remember.

It's a call to boldness. It's a call to unashamed confidence. Because the gospel of Jesus Christ is an absolute claim. And to be safe in the city of God, to be a citizen of God's city, is to know the truth that's revealed only to those who will inhabit his dwelling place and come to him.

that great is the Lord, the one true God, made known to us now and forever in Jesus Christ. That he alone is the unique and great king of all the earth.

And that in him alone is to be found the joy, the true joy that all the peoples of this earth are deeply seeking. But, friends, our so-called tolerant society will tolerate almost anything else apart from that truth and will become increasingly hostile to us if that is the truth that we proclaim.

But we must be unashamed of it. And we must be confident in it because this gospel alone is the power of God for salvation for all who will believe.

[38 : 50] Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God. His holy mantle, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of the whole earth. Mount Zion in the far north, the city of our great king.

Within her citadels, God has made himself known as a fortress. Amen. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we praise you that you and you alone are God of all the earth and God of all heaven.

And how we marvel that you have revealed yourself to us. You have opened the gates of your city, not only to your ancient people Israel, but to all from every tribe and language and people and nation who will come and seek you through buying the need of Jesus Christ your Son in whom you came to this world that all might come to know you, who will obey you and love you and follow you.

So Lord, may this great truth indeed be the meditation of our hearts. May it be the song also of our lips and of our lives in this coming week as we seek to point others to this great city that they with us might rejoice in you as King and Lord forever to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.