

3. The Church's Fruitful Partnership: Pray for the Gospel Means

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Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 00] Well, if you would turn with me to the passage that we read there in 1st Timothy chapter 2, it will be a help as we look at it shortly.

Pray for the gospel means. The reason that we have a mission as a Christian church is absolutely clear in the Bible.

It's because there is only one God and only one way to know that God, through the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, as we read there in 1st Timothy chapter 2.

And therefore, all the world must be made to hear of him. For, as verse 4 of 1st Timothy 2 says, God desires all to come to a knowledge of the truth and to be saved.

And God has given this task to the church, not just a part of it, but to the whole church. And therefore, everybody has a part to play in that mission of the gospel.

[1 : 22] Not just some, not just those with special roles as full-time missionaries or ministers or speakers or any other full-time role, but everybody.

Remember last week we looked at the passage in Philippians where Paul says to the whole church there that they are to be with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

That is a team effort, isn't it? Every single believer playing their part in the church. And we saw last time that that means that we must all together, therefore, prioritize a gospel mindset.

Unless our own life, unless our church's life is doing that, then there will never be any fruitful partnership in gospel mission at all. Unless we see that in everything that we do, we are to be doing all for the glory of God, not seeking to please ourselves, but seeking to please others, living sacrificially so that others might be saved.

Unless we're doing that, then there'll be no real mission at all. So you shouldn't think ever, well look, if only we just got a really great preacher for our church, if only we just got a really great evangelist to serve with us, then everything would be wonderful.

[2 : 42] And it wouldn't, of course not. Not unless there is a whole congregation of people in partnership prioritizing that gospel mindset together.

So I want to think about today something else that we are all called to do, every one of us, as part of that fruitful gospel mission. And it is to pray.

To pray together for the gospel means. Now not all of us are called to be apostles. In fact, actually none of us today is called to be an apostle like Paul.

Apostles were unique. Nor are all of us called to a full-time role in Christian service, as we call it. But we are all called to prayer.

We're all called to prioritize prayer, both in our individual lives, but especially, and much more importantly, in our corporate life as the church. Just read again these verses that we read earlier.

- [3 : 43] First of all, says Paul, Verse 8, I desire then that in every place the men should pray.
- Do you see? What is Paul saying is the first priority for the household of God, the church of the living God, as he calls it, the pillar and buttress of truth in the world.
- Well, first of all, he says, I urge prayer. Now that, when you think about it, it ought to be very obvious to us. Because it is God's mission.
- He is the sovereign Lord. And therefore, only God can open eyes and open hearts and change lives. I can't do that and neither can you. Well, if that's true, then above all else, what we need is God to be at work in our midst, doing just that.
- And so it's very simple. We need to ask God to be in our midst doing that. First of all, prayer. And yet I think, in many ways, we've almost forgotten that today.
- [5 : 13] Even in evangelical churches, in gospel churches. There's a very great focus, isn't there, on action and on methods and on training and all of these things.
- Now don't get me wrong, all of these things are very important and they're very necessary. As long as they're truly action and training and all of these things for real gospel ministry.
- As long as they're really biblical methods. They're all necessary. But unless we're all very clear that above and beyond all of this, it is God alone, by his spirit alone, who changes lives, who works salvation, who transforms people.
- And if we forget that, we are in terrible danger. Because the Bible is clear, God will not yield his glory to another.
- God won't be at work in great grace and power unless it's clear to all that it is God at work and it's his power that's at work. Unless we're absolutely clear that the great things that are done are done by God, then God will not be at work because he will not let us think that somehow we are to have the credit for these things.
- [6 : 25] And so you see, a praying church, a church that is conscious of the sovereign work of God alone in salvation, that's the only safe church, if you like, where God knows that he can be at work without Christians and without churches becoming full of pride and self-congratulation, thinking it's all by their own efforts.
- And that's why the New Testament is so clear about the priority of prayer in any fruitful partnership in Christian ministry. Prayer for the real means of mission, which is the work of the Holy Spirit of God through his church reaching the world.
- Now, time is short, so I just want to highlight some important things that we are called to, very specifically, specifically in the New Testament to be part of in prayer.
- Three specific things that the New Testament teaches us as the church that we are to pray for. First, pray for the world, for the people who need the gospel. Then second, pray for workers, for those who will go out and proclaim the gospel.
- And thirdly, pray for the word itself, for the actual proclamation and sharing of the gospel as it is spoken. Those are three key things that the New Testament focuses our attention on as the church to be praying for.
- [7 : 48] So first then, pray for the world. Well, we read that right in front of us in 1 Timothy chapter 2. And we see, don't we, how expansive Paul's desire for prayer is.
- Just look briefly there at these first few verses of chapter 2 and see what he urges. I think there's two distinct aspects there of this general prayer for the world. First of all, he asks us, verse 1, to pray for all people.
- All kinds of prayer, he says, for all kinds of people. And the reason for that is given clearly in verse 4 where that little phrase, all people, is repeated.
- Because our expansive God, says verse 4, desires for all people to be saved, to come to a knowledge of the truth. We sang it in the hymn, didn't we?

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but find eternal life.

[8 : 51] God so loved the world. In John's Gospel, whenever he uses that word, he means the world that hated him and rejected him. It's an astonishing thing that God should love this world that abuses and ignores him.

That he should give his only Son that whoever believes should find that eternal life. That is the heart's desire of our God and therefore, it pleases God, our Savior.

Verse 3, this is good. It pleases him when we also so love the world that we cry to God constantly to show his love and mercy to the people of this world.

Prayer for people to come to a knowledge of the truth and to be saved. If you're praying for that, you can be sure that you're praying in line with the heart of our God, our Savior God.

That's what God wants us to be praying for. It's good to have that confidence to know that, isn't it? Sometimes it's hard when we're praying. We don't know what to pray for. Well, with this kind of prayer, you can be confident you're praying the mind of God, our Savior.

[10 : 03] That means you can pray joyfully and confidently for your friends, for your loved ones, for your workmates. Pray that God would open their eyes, that they would come to a knowledge of the truth.

Pray for all kinds of ancillary things to do with that. Pray that they would accept that invitation that you give them to come to church with you or to come to some special event, to come to our Wednesday lunchtime service, to come anywhere where they'd have opportunity to engage with the message of the gospel.

That's the kind of prayer that we know is pleasing to God our Savior. And what are we saying? Come, my soul, your plea, prepare. Jesus loves to answer prayer.

Especially that kind of prayer. It's much wider, isn't it, than just prayer for our own friends and family. It's really here's zeal for worldwide prayer.

It's a zeal for mission all over the world for all people. And if that seems too grandiose, remember Newton's words. You're coming to a king. Large petitions to him bring.

[11 : 08] Big vision in prayer is something surely that ought to mark our church prayer meetings. I'm not sure that's always true, is it, in church prayer meetings?

We don't just mean our own, but generally. It's so easy, isn't it, to spend all our focus on ourselves, on personal things, on things that involve us, our needs, especially illnesses and things like that.

Personal struggles, things in the fellowship. But, of course there's a place for that. Of course there's a place for bringing all our cares and concerns to our Heavenly Father. But if that's, if that's all that marks our corporate prayer as Christian people when we're together, there's something badly wrong.

Pray, says Paul, for all people all over the world. For our God desires that all people should come to our knowledge of the truth and be saved.

Is that the kind of spirit that marks your prayers personally and our prayers together? Well, first of all, says Paul, that's the kind of thing that should mark us.

[12 : 17] But there's a second aspect to this general prayer too, isn't there, for the world. He's asking us specifically, verse 2, to pray for those who are in authority, for kings, for rulers, for those in high positions.

And the aim of that prayer is exactly the same thing in the end. That there should be, he says, peace and stability in society so that the church can have the conditions possible for its mission.

So that the church, wherever possible, can go about its task in a godly and dignified way, he says, verse 2. Enjoying the freedom, the protection of the powers that be.

Now, of course, God will be at work regardless. He's at work everywhere in the world, even when there's much adversity. But it stands to reason, doesn't it? It's far better, it's easier, if the state gives stability, if there are the conditions of peace, not opposition and conflict.

again, it's so practical, isn't it? It's hard for us often to know specifically what we're to pray for, for our government, for our nation, for the nations of the world.

[13 : 26] But, you see, if we've got a gospel mindset, then we will naturally want to pray instinctively for conditions to prevail through which the gospel and its mission will flourish.

So for many years, Christians in the West prayed, didn't they, for the downfall of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union so that the church would have more freedom to witness and to proclaim the gospel.

Likewise, today, I think we as Christian people should be engaged in praying for our own government and for the European Commission and all of these people that they should not be passing more laws to restrict the freedom that we enjoy in this country to proclaim the gospel of Jesus.

There are so-called anti-discrimination laws that are before our parliament in the coming weeks and months and they present a real and present danger to the freedom and the liberty of people to proclaim the true gospel of Christ from the scriptures.

Well, I think it's obvious here that Paul would have us pray that our governments and those in authority would not pass legislation of that nature but they should enable us to freely proclaim the gospel of Jesus in a dignified way.

[14 : 45] Nothing will stop us proclaiming the gospel of Jesus but it's so much better if it's not against the law to do it. And that's our priority for all of our prayers for our nation for politics for economics and all of these things.

Important, isn't it? We're in a worldwide recession. Our prayers, I don't think according to scripture should necessarily be focused on asking that our economy would improve, that our finances would improve, that the job market would necessarily improve or that things would get better for us personally.

Our prayer primarily should be for the situation to prevail that will best serve the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now that might make us think that might be a challenge, wouldn't it, to our own personal politics.

Some of us incline more to the left, some of us incline to the right. Whether that's got anything to do with the proverb that says a fool inclines to the left and a wise man to the right, let's not go into that at the moment.

You can decide for yourself. Some of us in this building will be greatly Eurosceptic. Some of us will be Europhiles. Now maybe it's economic considerations that cause you to think that way.

[15 : 59] Maybe it's social. Maybe it's philosophical. Well, the Bible, I think, challenges us to say let us be praying and supporting the situation that will most advance the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Not just in our own land, but in Europe as well. That's a lot to think about, isn't it? A lot of careful thinking. But that is the kind of pattern that should be in our thoughts as we pray for leaders, for kings, for those in high positions.

That we might live a peaceful and a godly life in a dignified way, sharing and spreading the message of Jesus. By the way, notice also the priority of this prayer.

Paul does say first of all, and notice also in verse 8 a particular challenge that he gives to men. Have you noticed that? I don't think Paul's for a minute suggesting that women don't need to pray, but I think perhaps he is suggesting that women perhaps don't need such a strong nudge to pray.

It seems that Paul knows what we also know in the 21st century, that men seem often much more reluctant to pray and certainly to be involved in the prayer life of the congregation than women. And by the way, it is corporate prayer, primarily congregational prayer that Paul's speaking about here, because he says men have got to pray without anger or quarreling.

[17 : 28] Well, you can't really be angry and quarrel with yourself. He's implying there that you're praying with others in church prayer meetings. I think that is a challenge, isn't it, to our modern day evangelical churches.

If in most places we're not seeing the kind of growth in churches that we long for, perhaps we need to ask, well, is it something to do with the fact that these two factors are often very absent?

Commitment to corporate prayer life together in the church and also particularly for the leading involvement of men in that.

I suspect if you were to do a survey of all the prayer meetings in the churches in this country, you'd find two things. One, they're very small and two, they're very female.

Well, Paul, if we take you seriously, we'll listen to that. God makes these things a first priority. Now, church history testifies, doesn't it, so clearly to the importance of the priority of prayer.

[18 : 34] If you read any of the history of the great times of spiritual awakening in this country or any others, the great 18th century revivals and so on, Cambuslang, the famous revival right here near Glasgow and Kilmacoy and so on, you will see what a massive commitment there was to serious corporate prayer.

And that's something we need to remember and we need to learn. It's also true, isn't it, on an individual level. Almost always when I'm talking to somebody who's wanting to come and profess faith and join the church, I ask them about how they came to faith and so often in the story there somewhere is that they say to me, well, you know, I had a relative who once I was converted and became a Christian, they said to me, do you know, I've been praying for you every day for years and years and years, sometimes for the whole of their lives.

First of all, prayer, because it is God's work. And God wants us to be ever conscious that it is his work and therefore he calls us, first of all, to pray.

And God won't answer prayer if we don't ask him. It stands to reason. Jesus himself says that you don't have because you don't ask. Prayer for the world.

That's the first thing. A church really in partnership and mission will be a church that is marked by constant prayer. Prayer for the world. Corporate prayer together. Expansive and informed prayer.

[20 : 14] and prayer not just by women but notably and led by men, says Paul. Secondly, prayer for all the workers.

That's another great emphasis in the New Testament. Perhaps you'd turn back with me to Matthew's Gospel chapter 9 and just to these words at the very end of that chapter where Jesus speaks to his disciples.

This is page 814 if you have one of our church Bibles. and you'll know the passage very well. When Jesus saw the crowds he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

Then he said to his disciples the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

One of the real encouragements I think in many places today in our country is the renewed interest in people wanting to become gospel workers of various kinds and in real training for that mission and ministry and I mean real training for mission not just dry academic theology.

[21 : 29] One of the disasters in past generations and currently is that our training for mission is in our colleges so hopeless and so many of them it's just liberal and skeptical but even in many where there is a real evangelical witness it's so academic so removed from the reality of the mission that is the pulse of the church's life and there's a movement that's been going for several years in our country now called 938 after these verses and it exists to encourage more workers into the harvest field and I'm all for it.

However I want you to notice actually what Jesus does actually say here in verse 38 doesn't say to his disciples send out workers what does he say pray earnestly to the lord of the harvest for him to send out laborers into his harvest field it's God's harvest Jesus says he's prepared it and verse 37 it's plentiful by the way isn't that a marvelous encouragement to us there are multitudes prepared by God to be called into the glory of his kingdom that's why we can have a mission confidently it's because of the sovereignty of God that we can have zeal and evangelism we can have confidence because God has said the harvest is plentiful but because it is God's mission it is he who calls out and gifts the workers who are needed to participate in that mission and that's what we're to ask him for remember in Acts chapter 13 when we studied that how it was while the whole church at Antioch was in prayer that God said and no doubt they were praying according to

Jesus' command here to send out laborers it was while the light prayer that God said set apart Saul and Barnabas for the work that I have called them to well they were praying in line with Jesus' command for his harvest field and God answered and he raised up and he gifted workers to be sent out now we're not all called in that specific way to what I would call specialist ministries of evangelism or teaching or church planting or whatever but every one of us does have a part to play in that mission especially in that united prayer to God that he will choose and give and send out people into his harvest field notice the motivation verse 36 the deep compassion of our Lord Jesus for lost sinners that's what drives him to call us to pray he sees the helplessness of a world without Christ even if many in the world don't see that he sees that they're sheep without a shepherd they have no leader to show them the way they've got no guardian to care for them they've got no savior to deliver them and he had compassion now do you want to be a compassionate

Christian like our Lord Jesus Christ well of course you do well says Jesus pray pray for gospel workers pray for those who will be sent out to proclaim the good news and that God's great harvest may be gathered in I'd like every congregation really to have committed members of their own 938 movement a movement of people praying earnestly for the Lord to send out workers into his harvest field and I think there'd be something terribly wrong wouldn't there with a church like ours here with so many people so many young people if there weren't many workers being sent out constantly into the harvest field but if we want that says Jesus we should be praying for that now why don't some of you resolve to do that get together get together over coffee regularly and call it your 938 day and pray together after your coffee and you've shared time together pray that

Jesus would send out laborers to his harvest field from among us here Jesus loves to answer prayer he himself has bid you pray therefore will not turn away now if nobody else will join you to do that well do it yourself you can hear that kind of prayer and that's the great thing isn't it about prayer you can pray when you can do virtually nothing else even if your whole body is immobile even if you can't get out even if you can't any longer join with other Christians there was an old lady in the church in Edinburgh where I grew up called Miss Campbell she was one of the greatest prayer warriors I've ever known she lived till she was 100 we had a great birthday party for her and her telegram from the queen and all of that but she'd been a missionary in China from her youth for decades in fact until all the missionaries were thrown out of China as you know then she went to serve in

[26 : 36] Africa and in other places and yet in a way she said and would testify herself that her chief ministry in her life only began after she was retired from active service 45 years she served she became a great prayer warrior she had a particular interest in the young people in our congregation two things the young people and especially those who were already in training for ministry and her prayer list never got shorter it just got longer and as she became more and more immobilized and unable to be out she just literally used to spend hours and hours and hours and hours every day praying she was a marvelous woman she wrote to me every single week that I was at university until she died she died at the end of my fourth year got a big file at home full of all her letters some of which bore many rebukes some of which bore many encouragement but always there was a five pound note and two first class stamps in the letter don't reply to me she said but do write to your parents I think I used about two of them in five years

I suppose it's fair to say that she had two perhaps particular favorites one of whom was myself the other of whom was a boy a few years younger than me called Robin Sid Serf and now after all these years having both of us serve one after the other with the Proclamation Trust in London I'm the minister here in Glasgow he's the minister of St.

Catherine's Argyle Church in Edinburgh where we're having our Cornhill Day next week and I think that the day of the Lord Jesus Christ will show that very probably both of us and many others like us have ended up where we are doing what we're doing in the harvest field of the Lord because of the prayers of that old lady who sat in her chair by her fire for many years immobilized but praying praying that the Lord would send out laborers into his harvest field and God answers prayers for workers when we pray and not anything to do with some great special quality of our prayers God answers even the most fitful prayers but he does answer you see we can all join in that kind of Matthew 9 38 prayer can't we but maybe some of us as I've said could make a special commitment to that maybe meet with people specifically to pray that the

Lord would raise up from among us and from our young people laborers for the Lord's harvest field but it's not just a ministry for older folk who can't do anything else don't get me wrong there's nothing in the Bible to say young people can't come to prayer meetings and it would encourage a lot of us I suppose I'm counting myself in the not so young people anymore but it would encourage us there were more and more of our younger folk joining with us in our congregational prayer you're not realizing what you're missing when you're not part of that very heart of the pulse of our church's ministry but by the way if you are young and you're praying these kind of things it is a challenge you've got to watch out because if you're praying for the Lord to send out workers he might choose you so be ready for that possibly a bit safer to pray for those things when you are retired and older but don't actually take that for granted either because the Lord can send out plenty of old people to the mission field too and I've known many of them you need to read John

Piper's book *Don't Waste Your Life* he says there's never such a thing as retirement in the Christian life so remember that but still for our older members there is a special ministry for some of you isn't there there to be praying that the Lord would raise up from our young folk workers for his harvest field pray for that and take a special interest in some of them and encourage them and befriend them and inspire them and mentor them you don't know do you one of them could be the next Billy Graham or Hudson Taylor pray for the world says Paul pray for workers says Jesus for gospel preachers and evangelists and church planters and thirdly in the New Testament there's a great emphasis telling us also to pray for the word itself for the actual proclamation and progress of the word of the gospel when you read the New Testament letters you'll find that what Paul asks the church to be praying for more than anything else is actually his proclamation of the gospel and that's also what the church itself asks prayer for

[31 : 28] Acts chapter 4 do you remember in the midst of all that persecution and hardship what are they praying look upon their threats Lord and grant your servants to go on speaking your word with great boldness well listen to what Paul says to the Colossians in Colossians 4 continue steadfastly in prayer he says pray for us that God may open a door for the word to declare the mystery of Christ that I might make it clear which is how I ought to speak are you praying like that steadfastly for all of those who proclaim and teach the word of God here on Sundays and on Wednesdays and every other day when we have opportunities I thank God I tell you I thank God every time I have to get up and speak here because I know that there are people who have been praying before the service and during the service and after the service that the word would go forth and penetrate hearts and minds as

God's spirit inhabits it Paul asks exactly the same from the Thessalonian church in 2 Thessalonians 3 brothers he says pray for us that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honoured as happened among you in other words that the words would be received as it was among the Thessalonians when they first heard it not as the mere words of men but as the word of God itself pray for the word says Paul why does Paul so crave prayer for his gospel preaching well because he understands that without prayer it isn't real gospel proclamation at all that might sound strange to you but if you have your Bible turn with me to Ephesians chapter 6 and just listen to what he says there in Ephesians 6 at verse 17 again very famous take the sword of the spirit he says which is the word of

God praying at all times in the spirit with all prayers and perseverance to that end keep alert with all perseverance making supplication prayer for all the saints and also for me that words may be given to me to open my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel pray that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak and you see how closely connected there is prayer with the proclamation of the word take the sword of the spirit the word of God praying the ESV bible that we're using here translates that very helpfully more helpfully than some of the others take the sword of the spirit which is the word of God praying what he's saying is you wield the sword of the spirit when there is prayer backed proclamation prayer for the preacher that he would have the words and prayer for the hearers for all the saints that they would hear it let me read something to you in the new testament prayer and especially corporate prayer is so intimately linked to the ministry of the word as to be inseparable from it the ESV rendering of

Ephesians 6:17 and 18 makes this exceptionally clear take the sword of the spirit which is the word of God praying at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication you see the logic the sword the word of God which is living and active able to pierce the soul and spirit to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart is wielded and put to work through prayer the prayer in view is the corporate prayer of the whole church in one place for the worldwide church all the saints and focused on the proclamation of the word of God by the preacher in particular situations utterance may be given to me and opening my mouth boldly says Paul this means that we must recognize that the prayers are as important as the preachers it's not within the power of the preacher alone to preach with a power all his efforts alone including his own prayers cannot wield the sword of the spirit there must be the prayers of the saints

I wonder if we take this nearly as seriously as the new testament does well I wonder if we do so important you see to grasp that and understand that if we're going to be clear on the part every one of us has to play as a fruitful partner in the mission of the gospel means that when we come to church for example or when we're in any place at all where there's opportunity for the gospel to be shared that everybody there is involved everyone everyone is actively taking and playing a part in the proclamation of the gospel of God it's absolutely not ever a matter of the speaker or the preacher standing up and speaking and everybody else just listening and spectating not at all listen again in the new testament prayer and sorry there's a three way partnership in the new testament in effective gospel proclamation the preacher is involved struggling with all his own weakness to faithfully discharge the task of the scriptures those wrestling in prayer have a vital part crying out together for the presence of the living God their prayers focus on the proclamation of the word seeking clear and bold preaching to open doors to spread rapidly the message to honor the reception of the word of

[37:16] God by the hearers and above all God himself is at work his mighty spirit moving in the midst as his voice is heard with power you see we are to pray for the word of the gospel in whatever situation it is that it should go forth and in doing so we all of us are in partnership with that word being proclaimed not just with the speaker but we're in partnership with the sovereign Lord God himself that's what the Bible teaches us one more quote the scriptures are so practical people they recognize the work of preaching the work of prayer and the work of God they point to the corporate context in which God has chosen to encounter his people through the supernatural gifts that he has given to his church for that purpose and they call us to take our own part seriously whether as teachers or intercessors or both whether the right understanding among God's people of these things we should find the whole church involved together in prayer for the proclamation of the word of the gospel and sharing the eager expectation of

God himself to speak with power not just locally but worldwide we should find pastor teachers devoted to the public reading of scripture to preaching and teaching and we should expect to see evidence of the power of God at work see what Paul is teaching us is that prayerless preaching isn't preaching at all without the prayers of the saints the sword of the spirit stays in its scabbard it's not wielded there's no real spiritual power there can't be because human eloquence can't cause anybody to be born again by the spirit of God only God can do that himself there's no spiritual power in prayerless proclamation of the gospel and I wonder if that is a key reason in our churches today for the lack of power that we so often see we're not all called to be preachers evangelists especially speaking in a particular role in that way but we are all called to a ministry of proclamation through our prayers

I wonder if you've ever thought of it that way our prayers together focused on the proclamation of the gospel will open doors through which the gospel of grace comes home to people's hearts and they're changed and transformed and born again and that's why we're all called says Paul to pray for the word and you know friends when that happens God loves to be at work he loves to answer those prayers and he answers those prayers in such a way as we know that it is undoubtedly all God's work and not ours I remember once hearing Martin Allen speaking about this to a minister's conference he'd been asked to speak about their evangelism strategy and things that they've been doing in the church where he was then in Christon and he told us of a period when they were just engaged in so many different things praying earnestly for God to be at work they had special events they had new things they had this and that and the other and he said you know the extraordinary thing was

God greatly blessed us people came to know him and the church was swelling in numbers but he said you know not one of those special things we did seemed to yield any fruit at all every person who was converted was just converted either outside the church or in an ordinary bog standard church service or something we've been doing for years anyway he said at first we thought perhaps we should be discouraged by that none of our efforts were being blessed and then he said I realized God was blessing us but he was just reminding us that he is the sovereign Lord he was doing the work he was blessing our desire and our activity and our energy and our evangelism and our imagination salvation and he was answering our prayers but he wasn't letting us for a minute think that these special things that we had concocted were actually what did the work no he was reminding us that God alone is the sovereign

Lord and so that's the way you see the fruitful partnership in gospel mission to a mission in which God always receives all the glory we are to pray for the gospel means that's the way God has taught us to pray to pray for the world for the people who need the Lord Jesus Christ to pray for the workers who will go out and share the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and to pray for the word that doors may be opened in people's hearts and lives that that gospel may be heard and received pray together for the gospel means well let's pray Lord you are the sovereign God and yet you have called us to be fruitful partners in this great mission of your grace to the world drive us we pray to prayer to rejoice to ask great things from your king and to rejoice all the more as we see your great glory being manifested in answer to these prayers may we see more great marvels through your work among us in the days to come and to your name be all the glory through

[43 : 31] Jesus Christ our Lord Amen