

The Summons of the Gospel

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if you'd like to take up your Bibles, we're going to read together now. And as we've been in for the last two or three Sunday evenings, we're in chapter one of Paul's letter to the Romans.

We're going to read the first six verses of the letter. And then we're going to read also the very last paragraph of Romans, chapter 16, from verse 25 to the end.

And we spent three Sunday evenings just looking at the very basic question, asking what's the gospel all about, the gospel of God, as Paul calls it here in this introduction to the letter.

So we're going to read again verses one to seven, and then we'll flick over and read the last paragraph to Paul, a servant, a bond slave of Christ Jesus.

Jesus called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets and the Holy Scriptures. Concerning his son, who was descended from David, according to the flesh and declared to be the son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.

[1 : 1 9] Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom we've received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints. Grace to you and peace from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Romans 16 at verse 25. Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages, but has now been disclosed through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God to bring about the obedience of faith.

To the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen.

Now may God bless to us his word. Well, perhaps you turn with me to the beginning of Paul's letter to the Romans, where for the last couple of weeks we've been asking the question, what is the Christian gospel all about?

[2 : 5 4] I've released the word, some at least have I released the word, students and young workers are studying Romans, this term and next. And we're taking this opportunity really to ask that question and to just dip in to this great letter.

Because in fact, these few verses at the very beginning of Paul's letter to the Romans contain a lot of answers, which are then unpacked all the way through the rest of the letter.

It's rather like when you read the abstract of a scientific paper or something in a journal, and there are several key words in there. And they tell you really what's going to be found inside.

It gives you a sort of summary, a precis of what's going on as you then read the whole of the article. And it's rather like that here in this first paragraph of Romans. And we've seen already that this gospel that Paul is talking about, it has an unequivocal source.

So we ask, where does it come from? When verse 1 says, well, it's the gospel of God. And it comes, verse 2, from God. It comes from his prophets, not just any old prophets.

[4 : 03] In his scriptures, that is the holy scriptures, not just any old scriptures, but the scriptures of the Old Testament. This is a gospel that is rooted in history. And it's a gospel with a unique subject.

We ask, who is it about? Well, verse 3 tells us it concerns God's Son, who is a descendant of David. That is, he's a real historical man in David's line, as promised by those prophets.

But, of course, no mere man. He is a unique God-man, we can put it. He is declared to the whole world to be the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead.

So this is a unique gospel, all about a unique salvation through a unique Savior. And through him alone. Salvation is from the very beginning to the very end, all through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Remember last time we traced that phrase all the way through the letter, again and again. That's why the apostle Peter, in Acts chapter 4, proclaimed so clearly that there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

[5 : 18] Notice that word he uses, by the way, must. Because the gospel is not just an offer to the world, the gospel is a demand. And that really brings us to our final focus on these verses this evening.

What does this gospel demand? Well, this gospel has a universal summons, according to the apostle Paul here.

It demands that all people must bow the knee to Jesus Christ. It demands of everyone, regardless of their tribe, of their tongue, of their nation, of their background.

It demands obedience and loyalty to Jesus Christ and to Jesus Christ alone. Look at verse 5. Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.

Including you, he says. Just as Paul himself was possessed, was a bond slave, was owned, he says in verse 1.

[6 : 24] A slave of Jesus Christ. So, verse 5 says, this gospel summons all people. It commands all people everywhere to submit to that same ownership of the one sovereign God through Jesus Christ.

Now, there are two sides to this. As a duty and an obligation here, both for all the people of the world, to whom he's addressing this gospel, but also, very clearly, for all the people of the church.

So, let me deal, first of all, with the obligation that the gospel has for all people. The gospel is a universal summons for all the world to submit.

It's a command to obey the sovereign Lord, Jesus Christ. The gospel calls for what Paul speaks of in verse 5, the obedience of faith.

Do you see that phrase? Of course, it means faith in Jesus Christ. But notice it carefully, the obedience of faith. He repeats that in the very last paragraph of the letter that we read.

[7 : 38] And it's crucial to understanding what the Bible is talking about, what the Bible means when it talks about faith. Because faith in the Bible's language is not at all what an old school friend said to me it was recently.

We were discussing things. He said, faith is just conjuring up belief in something out there that isn't out there. No, no, no. In the Bible, faith is not just a vague hope like that or an idea.

Far, far less is faith a leap into the dark about something that is unprovable. Absolutely not. Biblical faith is something totally different.

It's something entirely concrete. Something visible. Indeed, something rational. Faith, according to Paul here, and according to the whole Bible, is obedient submission to Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

It's obedience to Jesus Christ as the judge of the living and the dead. It's obedience to Jesus Christ as the only God of time and eternity. Faith in Jesus and obedience to Jesus are just two ways of saying the same thing for the Bible.

[8 : 54] It's obedient trust or it's trusting obedience. It's submissive faith or it's faithful submission. The two are the same. That's vital for us to grasp because very often a lot of Christians are very confused about this whole issue.

Obedience to God is not at all the same thing as legalism. As though somehow obedience was in opposition to faith.

No, no, no. Obedience is simply what expresses ownership. And so the key question being posed by the gospel is always the same, isn't it?

To whom do you and I belong? Is it to God and Jesus Christ? Or, as Paul puts it in Romans, is it the only alternative which is, do you belong to the power of sin?

Because we're all owned by somebody, by some power, that power that controls us. Even Bob Dylan knew that, didn't he? He sang that. You've got to serve somebody.

[10 : 02] Well, that's true. And we express that ownership by obeying some master. Often people think that they're free, they're very liberated.

But nobody's free. We're all looking for meaning. We're all looking for purpose, for identity. We're all looking for fulfillment somewhere. Might be in our career.

Might be in our sense of education. Might be in a relationship. One that we have or one that we long to have. Or might be in success or in power or money.

Or a whole range of things. Things that human beings seek and want. But whatever it is that we seek, that has a power over us.

And that has a hold over us. And that has our devotion. That has our obedience. And these are the things which then dictate what we do and what we say.

[11 : 03] Even what you'll wear. What you'll eat for some people. A few years ago, I think it was after New Year.

Richard Henry will remind me. But we had a Tron staff team competition diet after New Year. So every Wednesday before our staff meeting, we used to have a weigh-in.

And out would come the scales. Everybody had to get on. And there was a spreadsheet for everybody's weight. And it was all very serious and official. But I'll tell you what it meant. It meant that those who were really competing in that became slaves to those scales.

Actually, they became slaves to their egos. But that was the truth of it. Because we didn't want to be outdone by one another. And that's, you see, that's the issue, isn't it?

We become slaves to some desire, some thing that we want to achieve. In my case, it didn't last particularly long. And I didn't win the weigh-in. But when we think about our egos and what we want to do to impress other people or to impress ourselves or to find meaning or whatever, that helps us get to the heart of it.

[12 : 13] Those are the things that enslave us. And ultimately, Paul says that there are only two things. We are slaves, ultimately, to whom we obey.

And there are only two ultimate masters in this world. Look over to chapter 6 of Romans. Chapter 6, verse 16.

See, he says there, You are slaves of the one whom you obey. Either sin, which leads to death, or obedience, that's the obedience of faith, to Jesus Christ, which leads to righteousness and to eternal life.

There's the same thing again down in verse 22 there. Now that you've become set free from sin as your master, and have become slaves instead of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end.

Eternal life. The wage of sin is death. The free gift of God is eternal life. It's God or sin. So that's the \$64,000 question always being asked by the New Testament Gospel.

[13 : 28] Is our obedience the obedience of faith? That is, is it willing surrender to Jesus Christ? Or is it, as Paul describes in Romans chapter 2, is it disobedience to the truth?

Is it obedience to unrighteousness instead? And those are the only two possibilities that there are in God's eyes. There are only two ways really to live as a human being.

Either in surrender to him, that's the obedience of faith, or in scorn of his rule, and that's the disobedience of unbelief.

It's the same stark contrast all the way through Romans. You'll find it if you turn to chapter 10 and 11 of Romans. Turn to page 946 and have a look there in Romans chapter 10.

Just to be absolutely clear, we have to be clear because this is of eternal significance. In chapter 10, he's talking about Israel, and he's talking about Israel's problem.

[14 : 34] He's talking about why in the main, Jews, Israelites have not responded. It's a great mystery to him that Jews rejected en masse their Messiah. Chapter 10, verse 3 tells us the reason.

Israel's problem is that she did not pursue the Old Testament gospel revelation that God gave them in Scripture, did not pursue it by faith. Chapter 10, verse 3.

They did not submit to God's righteousness in Christ. Instead, they sought to establish their own. Chapter 10, look down to verse 16.

They did not obey the gospel. Wouldn't submit. For Isaiah, that's the Old Testament prophet says, Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?

You see that? They did not obey means they did not believe. So, verse 21. They're a disobedient and contrary people.

[15 : 37] And it carries on in that same vein all the way down. Look down to chapter 11, verse 23. They did not continue in their unbelief. If they don't continue in unbelief, they can be grafted back in, but not otherwise.

Not as long as they're disobedient in unbelief. They're disbelieving. They're disobedient. It's the same thing. The opposite of the obedience of faith.

The disobedience of unbelief. That's what we've been seeing in the morning, isn't it? In Hebrews chapter 3 and 4. Exactly the same thing. Disobedience to God's command, His rule, refusal to submit to Him, is the very heart of unbelief.

And you see what that means? It's really, really important. What it means is that unbelief, not having faith in Jesus Christ, that is not a neutral, forgivable aspect of your makeup.

Sometimes people say that, don't they? They may say to you as a Christian, well, it's great for you. You've got faith. I wish I could have faith like you, but I can't. But it's not my fault.

[16 : 47] It's just the way I am. No, no, no. That's not what the Bible is saying. The Bible is saying unbelief is culpable disobedience. Unbelief is rejection of the rule of Jesus Christ, the King, who is Lord of all, who is the sovereign ruler, the maker, the judge of the whole wide world.

He demands your loyalty. He demands the devotion of your heart. He demands the love of your heart. Faith, said the great reformer John Calvin, faith is properly that by which we obey the gospel.

Obey the gospel. Because the gospel is not just an offer of God's grace and peace through Jesus Christ. It is that. But it's a summons. It's a command, says Paul, to all nations, including you that he's writing to.

It's a call to all the world to be subject, to obey Jesus Christ as Lord, Lord of all. And the only right response, in fact, the only rational response, is to bow the knee to him, the one whom God has declared to be, the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead.

And friends, if you're here tonight and you're not a Christian believer, if you don't believe, let me say to you, you need to take that really seriously.

[18 : 17] Because faith is not just some kind of a lifestyle choice that's made by some people, a lot of the people in this room this evening. Faith is a summons to obedience.

And it's leveled upon all. The very last verse that we read in Romans 16, verse 26, tells us that unequivocally the Christian gospel is the command of the eternal God to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations.

And that command comes to every one of us when we hear the word of the gospel, when it's put to us. It's a call to belong. And therefore to bow the knee to Jesus Christ, to submit, to submit to reality, and to flee from the fantasy of thinking that you are in charge of your own life, and actually it is your own to do with what you please.

Yes, the Christian gospel is a momentous offer. It's a gracious offer. It's a merciful offer. An offer of peace now with your judge, with the one who will determine not only your earthly future, but your eternal future.

It's a wonderful offer. But just because it is that, it's not something that can be trifled with. It is an unequivocal summons.

[19 : 41] It's a sovereign command to every single person in this world to repent and to believe, to obey Jesus Christ.

And we have to take that seriously. Because if what the Christian message teaches is true, then careless ignorance will not be a mitigating factor.

It will not be an excuse at the bar of God's justice. Because ignorance of the law is not a defense, is it, in a court of law.

If you've got a parking ticket because you've parked in a restricted area this evening, it's no good to stand up in the court and just say, well, I didn't see the sign. Because the sheriff will say to you, well, it's your responsibility to check for the sign, and the sign is there.

It's the same if you're booked for speeding, isn't it? It just doesn't wash to the traffic policeman to say, well, look, I was so busy talking to the person in the car beside me, I never noticed the sign. I never noticed we'd come out of a 60 into a 30.

[20 : 47] Honestly, officer, I thought we were still in a 60. Well, you try it. I'll tell you what he'll say. It's your responsibility to look at the signs.

The signs are visible. The signs are frequent. The signs are clear enough for you to respond. None of us thinks that's true when it happens to us. But it doesn't wash, does it?

And you see, friends, that's in a much, much more serious way. That's what it will be like for every human being on the day of God's judgment. He will say to us, the signs were there.

The signs were clear. They were legible. They were frequent. And the signs were completely sufficient for you to read them and to obey them.

You chose to ignore them. And that ignorance, that ignorance was very foolish. But it's more than that.

[21 : 48] It's wholly culpable. That's exactly what the Apostle Paul himself said, by the way, to the intelligentsia of the great city of Athens in his address to the Areopagus, that great place of discourse and argument and exchange of ideas.

He exposed their culpable ignorance despite all their extraordinary learning, all their religious inquiry. Remember, Paul said to them, how on earth could the God who made heaven and earth possibly live in temples made by man, as you seem to imply by your whole practice of religion?

And how could it possibly be that he who created absolutely everything could possibly rely or need anything at all from human beings? How absurd with all your intelligence for you to think that.

In other words, what Paul was saying to them was, your whole framework for seeking any understanding about God is totally upside down. So how do you think your method of inquiry is ever going to come up with any proper answers about God?

A real God. A God who actually is God, who is the creator and the ruler of all things. How can you do that? Your presuppositions are ruling out the very possibility of the thing that you're talking about being discovered before you start.

[23 : 14] Well, that's the same today. That's just as true of many, many people in our western world, in our culture today. Because what they're saying is, well, I can't believe in God, the God that you believe in, because I haven't seen the signs that I looked for.

Well, that's just like saying to the judge, well, I looked where I thought a sign would be and it wasn't there, so I assumed I could park here. And the judge will just say, well, you looked in the wrong place.

Sorry. Because the sign was there. In fact, here's a photo of the sign. But the signs don't go where you think you might like to have the signs. The signs go where the authorities decide the signs should be.

And you're responsible to seek them out and to abide by them. That's how it works, isn't it? Well, Paul, you see, says to the philosophers in Athens, he says, God made every nation of the world marking out their territories on the face of the earth so that they would seek God in the hope that they might feel they were towards him and find him.

Yet he's not far from any one of us. God hasn't hidden himself away. God hasn't made himself obscure and hard to find.

[24 : 34] And certainly not now when he has sent the wonders of his great salvation in the Son, Lord Jesus Christ, and proclaimed his gospel throughout the world and given the sign of all signs to the world by raising him up from the dead.

That's why Paul went on to those Athenians and said, look, those past times of ignorance God was willing to overlook. But not anymore. He calls all people everywhere to repent because he's fixed the day now on which he's going to judge this whole world in righteousness by the man whom he's appointed and he's given assurance to everybody by raising him up from the dead.

That is, there's a sign for the whole wide world to take notice of. It's a sign that cannot be ignored. It's a sign that to ignore makes you irredeemably culpable in God's eyes.

You see, that's what the Christian message centers on. And therefore, that's what it stands and falls on, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's a message that's rooted in human history.

It's a message that bears historical scrutiny. And therefore, it's a message that we want to say to you as Christians, it really does demand serious inquiry from you.

[26 : 06] If you've never, if you're never in your life given serious attention to that inquiry, I really want to urge you to do that. Don't wait until you're, well, don't wait until you're faced with the judge to have to admit to him you didn't even look to see if there was a warning sign.

That's why we're here as the Christian church. We're here to help people do that, to read the evidence because we believe the evidence will speak for itself and stand up for itself. The Gospels tell you the story of the life and the words, the ministry, the works of Jesus Christ.

They bear witness to his resurrection. You could read one of the Gospels. You can read John's Gospel with a friend. We've got this new edition of it called the Word One-to-One that you've probably heard us speaking about.

It's just a nice version of it that's specially presented to read it with a friend one-to-one. We do a thing called Christianity Explored, just the same.

We read Mark's Gospel but it's in a group because we believe that the Gospels bear historical scrutiny. We're not ashamed, we're not scared of people engaging with them.

[27 : 21] And of course, we believe the whole Bible is a source, perhaps the only source for contemporary sanity in our world today. Like G.K. Chesterton put it, Christianity is sanity in a world of lunacy.

Well, in our current cultural obsession with identity politics, with increasingly bizarre and extraordinary claims which just divorce completely people's perceived self-identity, from all the observable realities of biology, of psychology, of anatomy, of every other empirical science.

Friends, we want to say it's the Bible's worldview. It's the Bible's worldview that makes sense, that actually gives us sanity, gives us security, that is able to talk reality about human life in this earth as well as the only hope for the future of this world.

And that too is important, isn't it? Because we live amid the shriller and shriller hysterics of the Extinction Rebellion and so on. So if you're not a committed Christian believer, if you're not someone who's persuaded of the Christian message, let me encourage you as warmly as I can not to acquiesce in ignorance.

don't be satisfied with agnosticism. Because if the gospel is a summons to submit to one true God who is made known uniquely in Jesus Christ, you have to take that seriously.

[29 : 00] You need to examine those claims. I would say you need to make it a real priority in your life to do that. A real challenge to all the world to submit to Jesus Christ.

Of course, there's also a very big challenge in that truth to the Christian church not to be on the back foot with this message. Our gospel is the gospel of a sovereign God.

Of what he has purposed in his eternal counsels. What he's promised in his holy scriptures. And these things, friends, if you're a Christian, you need to be sure he will accomplish.

And that means that our message as the Christian church can never, ever be a message of defeatism. Regardless of how it may sometimes seem, regardless of how many contemporary church institutions might shrivel and fail, which they will, and they're doing all around us in the Western world today, that's because they're ashamed of the gospel.

That's because they've abandoned the gospel. But we can't become, as the Christian church, people who are on our knees, begging for people to, oh, give church a second chance.

[30 : 13] We'll put a helter-skelter in our church. Maybe that'll bring you in. Or what about crazy golf? No, no, no, no. We're not ashamed of our message.

What we are doing, as someone has put it, in the Christian gospel is storming the resistant citadels of people's hearts to bring them into submission to Christ, the Lord of glory.

And so, you see, the summons to the church is a universal summons for us to speak. The gospel is a command to us to proclaim the sovereign Lord, Jesus Christ.

And obedience to the gospel for us who are Christians means that there's a call on our lives now just the same way as there was a call on Paul's life. Look at verse one of Romans, chapter one again.

Paul is called to be an apostle. But look at verse six. The church also is called to belong to Jesus Christ, called, verse seven, to be saints.

[31 : 17] That means there's a universal call to all of us to be partners in that mission of proclaiming the sovereign Lord to the world. Sometimes people talk, don't they, about a call to the ministry.

As though that was a call to some very special thing, something just for the very few. Oh, he's got a call. Well, that's all right if by that we mean that there are some people who perhaps have particular gifts of teaching or evangelism or whatever and the church wants to recognize those people and put them to work full time for the church, stopping other things so they can do those things without any distraction.

Fair enough. But the problem is when we use that word call to the ministry, it can make it as though that call to speak the gospel and proclaim the gospel and serve the gospel is just a call to the very few.

Not so. What Paul makes so very clear here is that every Christian is a called person. Every Christian is called to belong to Jesus Christ and to be a willing bond slave for Jesus Christ along with Paul and every other one.

And when the gospel really does call somebody out of darkness into light, when it grips them, it will provoke real passion, real eagerness in them to throw themselves at the feet of the Lord Jesus, to want to serve him, to serve his people and to serve all of those who will yet become his people.

[32 : 49] Look how passionate the burden for that was in Paul's life. Look down to verse 9. He says, I serve God with my spirit in the gospel of his son. Verse 15, I'm eager to preach the gospel to you also.

See, to serve God is to serve his gospel and to serve his gospel is to love and serve his people. It's to be passionate for God's purpose to be fulfilled in all his people, as those already in Christ and those who are yet to be brought into his household.

That's why Paul tells us here in verse 10. He's always praying for the church in Rome. He longs to encourage them in the faith because, well, look at verse 13.

He wants them together to be fruitful for the gospel, to reap a harvest for the gospel of Jesus among unreached people, Gentiles, Greeks, barbarians, all of those who have yet to hear.

You see his passion. But he's considering that not as something special just for him, but something normal for all of these Christian believers in Rome to be involved with.

[34 : 01] He's experienced God's wonderful grace. He's received grace and apostleship. Verse 5. That's the special thing for him. He's an apostle. But to belong to Jesus Christ as the Roman Christians, that's for all.

And when the gospel of God lifts the burden of sin from our hearts, surely it lays another burden on our hearts at the same time, the burden for this lost world.

That's why Paul says in verse 14, I'm under obligation to proclaim the gospel of salvation to all the world as much as in me is. If you've got the old authorized version, that's how it translates.

I am eager to preach the gospel as much as in me is. And that's a real challenge, I think, to the whole church, to every Christian.

If that's true, you see, it means if there's not a burden on our hearts as Christians for a lost world, for a world of sin, to see that burden lifted from other people, it makes us ask if we ourselves have really been mastered by that gospel.

[35 : 18] It's a good question, isn't it? It's a necessary question for us as Christians. Has my personal experience of the grace of the gospel in Jesus Christ, has it brought about any eagerness in me?

Has it brought about anything that resembles the same eagerness and desire that you see here in the Apostle Paul? What are the things that really fill my prayers?

Are they the things that fill Paul's prayers here in verse 10? What are the things that fulfill my longings? For studying, why do I do that?

For traveling, why do I do that? For spending, why do I do that? Why do I do all the things that I do in life? Is there a desire for a great part in all of that to see Christ's church strengthened, to see his gospel grow, to see people saved, to see a harvest for the lost people of this city, of our nation, for the whole world?

See, the gospel is a universal summons to the whole church of Jesus Christ, to speak, to proclaim the Lord Jesus. It's a summons to all of us.

[36 : 38] For some, of course, that will be particular things. Speaking specially and frequently, proclaiming the gospel in pulpits, in mission fields, in evangelistic settings, and so on.

But for all of us, surely it is a call to participate. It's a call to be a sharer of the gospel as much as in me is. And all of us to be partakers in the service of the gospel as Paul was wanting from the Roman church to help him on his way and his mission to Rome.

He urged their prayers. He urged their provision. He wanted their giving, didn't they? Substantial giving, sacrificial giving, so that the gospel would be heard in regions where people as yet had never heard.

That gospel summons all through this letter is universal. gospel. It's a call to the whole world, yes, to submit, to obey Jesus Christ as Lord alone above all others.

But how can that ever be unless the church grasps it? It's a call to the whole church to speak, to proclaim that gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[37 : 54] Christ. So friends, let me, just as I close, let me read some verses from Romans 10. Paul says this in Romans 10 verse 11.

With the heart one believes and is justified. And with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the scripture says everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.

But there's no distinction between Jew and Greek. The same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

It's a summons to all the world to obey. But, verse 14, how are they to call on him whom they have not believed?

And how are they to believe in him whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone proclaiming? And how are they to proclaim unless they're sent?

[38 : 57] As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach, who proclaim the good news? It's a summons, isn't it, to the whole church to speak for the Lord Jesus.

So let's be praying, friends, for beautiful feet among us and among all believers in our city and in our nation more and more. let's be paying for beautiful feet to be equipped, to be sent to proclaim the gospel here in our city and throughout our nation and throughout all the world.

And let's be polishing our own feet more and more so that we learn to be eager goers, eager speakers, eager sharers of the gospel of Christ as much as in us is.

Because we also have received grace. We also have received a calling to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations. That's why we're on this earth.

That's why we're gathered together and bound together as people in this city, in this church. That's our commission and that's our calling. Well, may God help us to answer that call.

[40 : 19] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the universal scope of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that he is the Lord of all, the ruler of this world and every nation, the judge of every man.

And we pray, Father, that you would help us as your people to live for the day of his coming and as we wait with eager expectation and longing to be those who confidently proclaim him, preach him to others, make his name known and rejoice never more greatly than when men and women and boys and girls turn to him and find in him the grace and the life and the hope that we already have shared through the gospel of your Son.

Help us, Lord, as much as there is in us to live for Jesus Christ. And we ask it in his name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[41 : 49] Amen. Amen.