

The Church Needs the Gospel

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we're going to turn to our Bibles now for our reading this evening, and you'll find it in the book of Acts, and Acts chapter 11.

Paul is returning to the book of Acts, which we've been in back and forwards a little bit over the last while. And we're going to read this evening chapter 11 and this section in the first half of the chapter up to verse 18.

That's page 919 if you have one of the visitor's Bibles. So Acts chapter 11 at verse 1.

Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, And you went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.

But Peter began and explained it to them in order. I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. Something like a great sheep descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me.

[1 : 1 8] Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles, birds of the air. And I heard a voice saying to me, Rise, Peter, kill and eat.

But I said, By no means, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth. But the voice answered a second time from heaven. What God has made clean, do not call uncommon.

And it's happened three times. And all was drawn up again into heaven. And behold, at that very moment, three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea.

And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. And these six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, Send to Joppa.

And bring Simon, who is called Peter. He will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household. As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning.

[2 : 3 9] And I remembered the word of the Lord. How he had said, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?

When they heard these things, they fell silent. And they glorified God. Saying then to the Gentiles also, God has granted repentance that leads to life.

Amen. And may God bless us his word. Well, please do turn up Acts chapter 11, page 919.

Now, what makes a family?

How do you determine who is in a family? Depends a little what you mean by family. If you're talking about your immediate family, it's pretty obvious, isn't it?

[4 : 01] It's your parents, your brothers, your sisters. And there's often an unambiguous family likeness, isn't there? Some will sometimes say to me when they talk about one of my kids, oh, they're such a Brennan.

Is that because of their devastating good looks and impeccable behavior? Not likely. More likely is because they've seen them here after the morning service stuffing their face with food. It's a pretty good sign they're one of my children.

But if you're talking about a corporate family, the criteria for membership are a little different. It's not blood ties. It's something else.

You might talk about the Starbucks family or the Apple family or the KPMG family, whatever it is. Certain criteria must be met if you're to be invited into that particular family.

But what about the Christian family? What about the family of God, the church? What requirements are there for entry?

[4 : 58] How do you know if you're a part or not? Is it folk who look and talk like you do? What is it?

What is required for membership to the people of God? And that is a key question that our passage answers this evening. Before we delve in, a quick recap to get our bearings.

It's been some time since we were back here in the book of Acts. But a quick recap. The book of Acts is an orderly account. It's part two of Luke's volume. Part one was his gospel.

Part two is the book of Acts. It's an orderly account which provides clarity and certainty about the works of the risen and ascended Lord Jesus. It recounts for us the unstoppable spread of the gospel, just as Jesus promised.

There's that key verse back in chapter one, which sets out the pattern and the program for the advance of the gospel. Jesus, apostles, were to be his witnesses.

[6 : 04] It says in chapter one, verse eight, in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. A threefold expansion of the gospel, starting in Jerusalem, but then on to Judea and Samaria and then beyond, to the very ends of the earth.

And here, by the start of chapter 11, the gospel has exploded into Gentile territory. And from this point on, the gospel literally explodes across the world.

There can be no stopping it. And it is at this gospel explosion that Luke, the writer, draws major attention. If he had the ability to do bold type and underlining and highlighting, this he would do across these foundational chapters here in 8, 9, 10, 11 of Acts.

Because two major events are recorded in Acts over and over and over. Again and again, they're repeated. You might think that Luke was just being a bit forgetful or he was just a poor storyteller.

But it's no accident that Saul's conversion story is told three times in the book. No accident that the conversion of Cornelius, which we saw in our last outing in Acts chapter 10.

[7 : 25] No accident that that particular event is repeated again in our passage this afternoon, this evening, and again in chapter 15. It's no accident because these two conversions are of immense, immense significance.

For it is with these two events that the gospel breaks out into Gentile territory. Sinclair Ferguson suggests that these might be the two most significant events in all of church history.

These two conversions and the implications that flow from them. And the large amount of airtime that Luke gives them would certainly suggest that might be the case. Both of them are repeated again and again.

Great moments of gospel advance. God's heart, as we've been hearing about and singing already, God's heart is for the whole world. And he desires all people in all places to be saved.

And it's thrilling as you read through this account. Thrilling to see the gospel going to the lost. Thrilling to see at the end of chapter 10, Peter's proclamation to Cornelius' household.

[8 : 33] Just look back. Chapter 10, verse 42. This is what Peter says. Jesus commanded us to preach to the people. And to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead.

To him, all the peoples bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. Everyone who believes receives forgiveness.

Thrilling to read that. Thrilling to see the response in verse 45. To see the Lord at work. Just look down to verse 45. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed.

Because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. Thrilling then to see here in chapter 11, verse 1.

Thrilling to hear that the apostles and brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. How thrilling for them to witness. To be alive at the time when the promises of Jesus that he promised in chapter 1, verse 8 were being fulfilled in their very eyes.

[9 : 41] This great gospel advance. Thrilling. But how jarring. How shocking. To read verse 2 of chapter 11.

So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him. Saying, you went to uncircumcised men and ate with them?

You don't quite expect that, do you? As you're reading through. As you read chapter 10, you're thinking, this is amazing. It's astonishing. And then you read chapter 11, verse 2.

We don't expect this response from the Jerusalem church. Or perhaps we're not that surprised. It's been clear as you read through these opening chapters that every turn, at every moment of gospel advance, there is opposition to the gospel.

Even from within the church. And that's just what we see here in chapter 11. And so we see the need for the Jerusalem church to hear in its fullness the gospel message again.

[10 : 49] And so the content of chapter 11 here is largely a repetition of the events in chapter 10. Those foundational events as the gospel went to Cornelius and to the Gentiles.

And it's repeated here again for the benefit of the existing church there in Jerusalem. The church then, the believing Jews, they needed to hear the gospel and not oppose the gospel.

And not stand in God's way. And so if the church then needed it, then no doubt the church today does too. You and I, perhaps we've been called to examine ourselves.

Do we marvel at the extent of the gospel advance we see now across the whole world? Or do we respond as the church in Jerusalem here do?

Do we share God's concern for the lost? Do we really grasp the shocking reality of the gospel of grace? Or do we oppose it?

[11 : 52] Do we stand in God's way? Well, let's look at this chapter in three sections this evening. First then, verses 1 to 3, we see the challenge of the universal gospel.

And we see here that the gospel of grace is a real threat to religious pride. As we've seen, the start of chapter 11 is really quite jarring, isn't it?

Shocking. How could these folk in Jerusalem oppose and criticize Peter? And as readers, we've just lived through the extended narrative of chapter 10.

And in a sense, we've seen two conversions there, haven't we? The conversion of the Gentile centurion Cornelius. But Peter too has had a seismic shift in his thinking.

He's now come to realize that the gospel is for all. Look at what he confesses there back in chapter 10, verse 34. So Peter opened his mouth and said, Truly I understand that God shows no partiality.

[13 : 04] But in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. And look on again to the end of verse 43, which we read earlier.

Everyone who believes in him, everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. It's grace alone, in Christ alone, by faith alone, isn't it?

That is the very essence of the gospel. No distinction. Any nation, anyone who responds and fears him and submits to him is forgiven.

That's the very essence of the gospel. None of us here are here by merit. It's just what we heard this morning in Matthew's gospel. It's not what we do.

It's Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our sins. We couldn't do it ourselves. He's done it. None of us are included in the family of God because of any particular traits or pedigree or anything like that.

[14 : 13] But it can be so easy once you are part of the family of God. It's so very easy for religious pride to creep in. It's so easy to start believing the lie that I'm here because of this or that.

It's tempting to think. You know what? God is actually quite lucky to have me on his side. I'm so glad he found me. But that is devastating.

That sort of thinking. Thinking it's something to do with me or some attribute I possess. That's why God has chosen me. That's so dangerous. Dangerous and devastating to the unity within a church.

Because you can start to look down on others thinking they've not got quite what I have. Devastating to unity within. But also devastating to mission beyond the church as well.

Because you're going to start to look for people who are like you. Or people who meet your mark. We can be prone to erecting barriers to the gospel.

[15 : 16] Certain categories of people are perhaps unwittingly excluding. Certain groups you'd rather not want to see come to my church. Certain people within the church who we regard as second class.

And that sort of attitude seems to be at the root of this opposition to the gospel going to the Gentiles here. At the start of chapter 11. You see there in verse 1 that word had reached the whole area of Judea.

That the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And by receive the word. Luke is meaning that they have come to faith. Real conversions amongst the Gentiles.

Use the very same language in chapter 8 verse 14 to describe the conversions in Samaria. They received the word. They heard it. They responded in faith. And the reports from Peter's work is that the gospel's broken new ground.

The Gentiles have also received the word of God. And the response that they give is criticism. When Peter went to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him.

[16 : 29] I don't think this was just some smaller grouping within the Jewish believers. Because, I think as John Stott points out, it's likely a reference to all those of Jewish birth. In other words, the whole Christian community in Jerusalem.

And what bothers them, what gets their attention, is not that Gentiles have come to living faith. They are not at this point joining their voices to the heavenly choirs that are rejoicing at Cornelius and his household's profession of faith.

No, they're not doing that. They can't believe that Peter would eat with uncircumcised men. For them, there was something more important than the gospel.

They couldn't bring themselves to rejoice because they were distracted by ritual. Here was a group of genuine believers in Jerusalem.

They were Jewish believers, real Christians. But they were so steeped in ceremony and ritual and their own privilege that they couldn't see the wood for the trees. They couldn't see what God was really doing in pouring his spirit out on these Gentiles.

[17 : 39] They had compartmentalized the almighty God of creation. They had boxed him in, limited him. And so they had boxed the gospel in two.

They couldn't get their minds around the fact that the gospel could be for the Gentiles too. Even though it's what all the scriptures pointed forward to.

And they needed, didn't they, to see what was really going on. They needed to be brought face to face with their own prejudice, their own religious pride. They needed to realize that they weren't upset by God because of their Jewish heritage, of anything like that.

And that was only by his grace. God shows no partiality. And so they needed, didn't they, they needed their false thinking radically challenged.

They needed to see the big gospel picture, to be reminded of God's expansive purposes for the gospel. That in Acts chapter 1 verse 8, it was to go to the ends of the earth, even to uncircumcised men and women, even to Gentiles.

[18 : 52] And only seeing and grasping that would save them from prejudice and distinction making. Only seeing the gospel in all its clarity would expose their religious pride on ours.

Something mattered more to these Jewish believers than the salvation of Gentiles. Something mattered more than the gospel.

And it begs the question for us, for you, what matters more to you than the gospel? What barriers have we erected in our own thinking to the progress of the gospel?

It can be very challenging for a church when surprising sorts of people start getting saved. It can be uncomfortable, can't it? I've been serving here in the Tron for about seven years now, I think.

And when I first arrived as an apprentice, we had maybe one or two Iranian believers in the church. And within a few years, there was exponential growth amongst our Iranian membership.

[19 : 59] Now, it would have been very easy for this church, without a clear gospel mindset, to almost push against this, to criticize.

Why pour so much resource into that ministry? They absorb so much time from some of our best people. They're not like us. Shouldn't our existing ministries take priority over Iranian ones?

We've been here longer. Their ministries inconvenience my particular ministry. Easier for that sort of thinking, that sort of grumbling to seep in.

Do we delight to see the Gentiles saved? Or do our hearts grumble and criticize? Do we long to see this building bursting at the seams?

Or would we quite like to keep it nice and comfortable with people just like me? It's very humbling, isn't it, to be reminded of the gospel.

[21 : 09] Because it makes no distinction. Anyone, anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is saved. Receives forgiveness for sins. Your background, my background, counts for nothing.

Your abilities, my abilities count for nothing when it comes to our salvation. And the early church there in Jerusalem, they needed the gospel. And the church today needs the gospel.

Those seeds of pride and resistance to what God is really doing, those seeds of resistance to God's generous gospel of grace, they're always there. They can always creep in.

And they always need challenged. So that's what we see here in the very start. The challenge of the universal gospel. We see that the gospel of grace is a real threat to religious pride.

Well, it's clear, isn't it, that the church needed here to get clear on the gospel and to understand the implications of the gospel. And that's what we see unpacked in the next section.

[22 : 19] So verses 4 to 17, the claim of the universal gospel. We see here that there's only one way of salvation for Jew and Gentile.

So Peter, he's been challenged by the church there in Jerusalem. They criticize him. And so Peter now recounts the events that took place in Caesarea with Cornelius.

And it is essentially a repeat of chapter 10, but slightly briefer and narrated from his perspective. And it's through these events that he describes that Peter himself came to understand the fullness of the gospel.

His understanding at the outset of chapter 10 is that there is a clear distinction between Jew and Gentile. That it's not permissible for Jews to mix with Gentiles.

And so he perceives a very significant barrier in terms of who he's able to bring the gospel to. But by the end of chapter 10, he's come to understand that that barrier has now been removed permanently.

[23 : 28] And here he is in chapter 11. He was recounting his personal experience in order to persuade the Jewish believers there in Jerusalem that the gospel really is for the Gentiles.

And it begins with this rather unusual vision of this sheet being lowered from heaven with all sorts of animals contained within it. Look at verse 7. So he sees the sheet coming down and I heard a voice saying to me, rise, Peter, kill and eat.

But I said, by no means, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth. But the voice answered a second time from heaven, what God has made clean, do not call common.

Now this was a pretty seismic shift in thinking for Peter. God was declaring all foods clean.

And if God had cancelled the prohibitions on food and pronounced all foods clean, then Gentiles were no longer unclean because they ate certain foods.

[24 : 37] If God was now doing away with Israel's special privilege, destroying that wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, then Gentiles were no longer common by definition, nor Israelites holy by definition.

What he's understanding is that Jew and Gentile alike, they stood on the same platform. It has all slowly but surely clicked into place for Peter.

He now knows, after this vision from the Lord, he now knows and is able to say that he should not regard any category of person as common or unclean.

And he was therefore free to go and visit with Cornelius and eat with him and ultimately share the gospel with him. You see, what makes someone holy or clean isn't what food they eat, but it's their attitude to the living God.

Do they listen to him, submit to him, and by faith walk with him, whether Jew or Gentile? And this, as we've seen, is a major moment of breakthrough.

[25 : 46] To grasp that the barriers have now been permanently removed. To know that there's now no distinction between Jew and Gentile. To then take the gospel to the Gentiles.

That is a huge moment in the book of Acts. And Peter's understanding is then confirmed by what follows as he goes to Cornelius' home from verse 11.

Turns out, an angel has spoken to Cornelius, verse 13, and told him to send a jopper to bring Peter, and he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved.

And then when Peter arrives and starts to preach, the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentile Cornelius and all his household, just as it had done on Jewish believers at Pentecost.

And he recounts the words of Jesus, how he said, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. And so in light of everything that Peter's seen and heard and witnessed with his own eyes, he declares the conclusion that he's now come to.

[26 : 54] In light of all he's seen in verse 17, If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?

It was abundantly clear to Peter that God had now welcomed believing Gentiles into his family on equal terms with believing Jews.

No distinction. The very same Spirit had descended upon them. The very same sign of baptism is given to them. The very same salvation is theirs, just as it was at Pentecost.

The same salvation. And so witnessing all of this, Peter's absolutely right, isn't he, to conclude as he does. Who am I that I could stand in God's way?

And the implication, as he's here in Jerusalem, speaking to these folk in Jerusalem, the implication to his audience is, don't you stand in God's way either? Here all that's happened, what I've seen, what I've observed.

[28 : 02] This is what God is doing. Don't stand in his way. God is taking his unstoppable gospel to the ends of the earth. And don't think that your standing in the way is going to go well for you.

This is just what God said he would do, isn't it? The whole world has always been in view. The whole purpose of God setting apart for himself a people.

The whole purpose of the people of Israel. Was that they would be a light to the nations. A living witness to the living God. That is why those regulations on what food they could eat and who they could eat with were ever there in the first place.

They were there to keep God's people holy and serving him. And not going off following other gods. So that they could be a light to the nations. It's worth reading again.

Those words to Abraham back in Genesis 12. This is what he said. Now the Lord said to Abraham. Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

[29 : 12] And I will make of you a great nation. And I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you. And him who dishonors you I will curse.

And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. In the people of God all the families of the earth were to be blessed.

Or listen to the words from the prophet Isaiah speaking to the Old Testament people of God. I will make you as a light for the nations. That my salvation may reach the end of the earth.

Those are not New Testament texts. That is from the Old Testament scriptures. It's always God's plan. Always the whole world was in view.

They were always in view in terms of God's salvation purposes. The inclusion of the Gentiles as we see here in Acts. That was always the end goal.

[30 : 14] That was always the destination. As God's salvation was to go out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. The whole world is in view. And that remains so today.

What a privilege to know. Christians from all over the world gathering here in this church. A privilege to know that across the world today. Christians are gathering. In every nation.

And what a privilege it is to live. When the nations are on our doorstep here in Glasgow. So let's pray. That he would continue to bring many, many people through our doors.

From all nations. That the church across this city. Would have more people than they can handle. And as they come. Let's ensure.

That we welcome them as we would anyone else. That we place no barrier in front of them. No barrier to the gospel. That we'd expect no credentials. Other than faith alone and Christ alone.

[31 : 18] Who are we. To stand in God's way. Anyone. Anyone. Who stands. In the way of full. Incorporation of others into the church.

When they genuinely trust in Christ. For their salvation. They stand in opposition to the Lord himself. And we do need to hear that warning. Don't we. Do you and your hearts.

Resent. This person. Or that person. Being admitted into the membership of the church. Well. They're just not my type of Christian. Are they? You may think to yourself.

I really hope. They don't get put in my small group. Their background's pretty shady. They've got a past. I don't really want that sort of person in my church.

Their life is a bit of a mess. If they join. It's going to take up lots of our time. They're going to need lots of help. Who are you. To stand in God's way.

[32 : 19] He is the one. Who is sovereign in salvation. Not us. And he is a lot more gracious than we are. Aren't you glad of that? Listen again to the apostle Peter.

Truly. I understand that God shows no partiality. But in every nation. Anyone who fears him. And does what is right.

Is acceptable to him. And he. Commanded us to preach to the people. And to testify that he is the one. Appointed by God. To be the judge of the living and the dead.

To him all the prophets bear witness. That everyone. Who believes in him. Receives forgiveness of sins. Through his name. That's the claim.

Of the universal gospel. It's for everyone. Who believes in him. So we see there's only one way of salvation. For Jew and Gentile.

[33 : 17] That is what Paul. The apostle Peter here. Unpacks for the Jerusalem church. And lastly then. As we look at the last verse. We see the response.

From the Jewish believers. The response to the universal gospel. Verse 18. When they heard these things.

They fell silent. I bet they did. Peter has just laid out it. For them. You are standing in God's way. Are you going to stand in God's way?

Or are you going to welcome rejoice. In these Gentile believers. And their response. Is one that shows that beneath it all.

There's was I think a real genuine faith. Their initial criticism evaporates. And they glorified God. Saying then to the Gentiles also.

[34 : 16] God has granted repentance. That leads to life. They see. And acknowledge. What Peter himself. Has come to understand. The gospel really is.

For the nations. Life. Eternal life. Forgiveness of sins. Is available for all who repent. And so.

For anyone. Here tonight. This offer of life. It is for you. It's just as they say. To the Gentiles also.

God has granted repentance. That leads. To life. God makes. No distinction. For all who believe in him.

For all. Who trust in Jesus. Who repent. There is forgiveness. Nothing you've done in life. Disqualifies you. No matter what others may say. No matter. What Christians have said to you.

[35 : 13] God calls you. The only barrier. Is a refusal to do. What Peter commanded Cornelius to do. The only barrier. Is a refusal to believe.

A refusal to repent. That is the only barrier. So will you. If you haven't. Already. Will you repent.

And believe. You need. Your sins. To be forgiven. And that's possible. Only. Through faith.

In Christ alone. So will you come. Jesus. Died. For you. No matter what you've done. Where you're from.

Repentance. That leads unto life. But there's also. I think. As well as a personal. Implication.

[36 : 14] There's one. Implicit warning here. For the wider church. Luke. Includes. This. Section here. In his account.

He takes up. Precious space. Almost repeating himself. To drive home a message. That the church. Needed to hear. And it's a warning. That we must. He too. Don't stand.

In the way. Of what God is doing. Don't. Hinder the progress. Of the gospel. Don't. Think of yourself. As somehow. Being on. A superior level.

Of Christian living. You need the gospel. As much as anyone. You see. This issue. Of the Gentiles. The issue.

That's raised. In verse 3. That never really. Goes away. It crops up again. In chapter 15. It persists. Through the whole. New Testament. And clearly.

[37 : 10] Some. Of the Jewish believers. Weren't really. Wholly persuaded. By Peter. It grumbled on. As one. Commentator. Points out. In the very next.

Section of Acts. The whole initiative. In the ongoing. Spread of the gospel. Shifts away. From Jerusalem. And to Antioch. In Gentile. Territory. And so.

It's not clear. How far. The church. At Jerusalem. Was really prepared. To follow. Peter's lead. Yes. There was. Some initial. Recognition. Here. In chapter 11. But it seems.

As if it never. Really. Took. Root. Fully. So let's heed. Luke's warning. All of us. Together. Here at the Tron Church.

And individually. Don't get left behind. In God's. Gospel purposes. It seems. That the focus. Does shift. From Jerusalem.

[38 : 04] Here. I wonder. If in part. That was because. Of their resistance. Here. The initiative. Now moves. To Antioch. And from then. To the ends.

Of the earth. The gospel. Of the Lord. Jesus Christ. Is a wonderful. Truly. Inclusive. Gospel. It's for anyone.

Who will repent. And believe. Anyone at all. So let's guard. Our own attitudes. Examine again. How we look out for.

And look after. New believers. No matter where they come from. No matter their background. Make no distinction. But rather welcome all. Who call upon the name of the Lord.

For salvation. And to return. To our original question. Who. Can be part of the family of God. Well we've seen it's anyone.

[38 : 59] Anyone is welcome. The only requirement. The only way by which you become a member. Is by responding to the message of salvation. With repentance and faith. That's what the apostle Peter says.

Isn't it? Repentance and faith. Add nothing else. There is no and. In the gospel. It's not repentance and faith and. Simply repentance and faith.

So will you come. If you never have before. Will you come and join. God's family. Will you repent of your sin. Believe in Jesus.

For the forgiveness of your sin. Life. In all its fullness. Is yours. As you trust in him. Anyone. Can become part of God's family.

And will you. And will you. And will you Tron Church. Welcome all that do. I pray that we will. Let's pray shall we. Before we finish. Would you.

[40 : 01] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our father God.

We do thank you. For the great gospel. Of our Lord and Savior. It is a gospel. That does truly humble us. For it depends.

On nothing in ourselves. but only on the Lord Jesus Christ and his grace. So Lord, keep us from looking down on others.

Keep us from unwittingly excluding folk because they don't quite match up to our standards. Lord, help us to be a church that delights, as you do, to see sinners come to repentance.

Lord, keep us from being an exclusive church, but rather one that welcomes all that call upon the name of the Lord. So help us.

[41 : 04] In Christ's name. Amen.