

A Godly Outlook on the World

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our Bibles and our reading this morning, which you'll find in Paul's first letter to Timothy at chapter 2. We're going to begin and read from chapter 1, verse 18.

So that's page 991, if you have one of our visitor's Bibles. And we're back again in this very important letter for the church that we are studying over this term.

A church in Ephesus or churches, house churches in that great city of Ephesus, which are being led astray by bad leadership and false teaching. And heading for what Paul calls so vividly shipwreck of the faith.

So in chapter 1, verse 18, Paul says to Timothy, First of all, then, first of all, Therefore, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, and for kings and for all who are in high places, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

[2 : 06] For this, I was appointed a preacher and an apostle. I'm telling the truth. I'm not lying. A teacher of the Gentiles, better, of the nations, in faith and truth.

Amen. Well, may God bless to us his word. Well, let's turn to 1 Timothy and the passage we read together in chapter 2, page 991.

A great ship can be in danger of shipwreck long before it actually hits the rocks. If it's not urgently made to steer a very different course, it'll reach that point of no return, won't it?

And then ultimate ruin is unavoidable. And so it is with the Christian church. Paul's letter to Timothy is an urgent call to take charge of the church's tiller because he can see that disaster is looming.

The churches are under the influence of bad and dangerous leaders, and they'd lost grip on the real purpose of their Bibles, which is above all to convey God's saving message to the world.

[3 : 25] And so they'd lost grip on the power of the gospel message to transform outsiders, even the greatest sinners, into some of the greatest servants of the gospel. And when that happens in a church, that is the road to ruin.

And those churches need to be rescued, protected. And so Paul says to Timothy, he needs to stop the teaching of different doctrine.

Chapter 1, verse 3. It's unhealthy. It must be got rid of. And some of those leaders, like Hymenaeus and Alexander, spoken of in verse 20 there, he needed to remove them from the church so that they could learn to repent of their wrong and un-Christian thinking.

And if that wasn't done, Paul is saying that the whole church is going to end up on the rocks just as they have done. Shipwreck of the faith. But of course, it's not enough just for Timothy to stop the rot.

He's got to steer the church back into safety, away from that course that was leading to more and more exclusivism in the church, elitism in the church, and lead them back to the church's primary priority.

- [4 : 39] Expansive gospel prayer and extensive gospel proclamation to the whole world so that instead of ending up as a wreck on the rocks, the church will again be what it's called to be, like a lighthouse to steer others off the rocks.

What in chapter 3, verse 15, he says of the church, a pillar and buttress of the truth so that the world will see and hear the knowledge of the only God, God our Savior.

The truth which alone is going to lead to salvation. So in the light of all of this and everything that Paul has expressed so clearly in chapter 1 as we've seen, he begins chapter 2 by telling Timothy, first of all, therefore, in the light of all of these things that lead to shipwreck and these false teachers, first of all, I urge you to change course urgently, to challenge the church to real godliness on its lips, but also in its life and live in a way that will not condemn the gospel in the world, but commend the gospel to the world.

And that's the urgent context of everything that Paul writes here in chapter 2 and it makes his concern very clear. This passage, therefore, cannot possibly be about the things that so many scholars have thought they were about.

Just liturgical instruction about church services and verse 2 being the important thing, whether you should have prayers for kings and leaders in the church's service book or not. No. Nor can it be just a dispassionate political instruction about the relationship between the church and the state, although, of course, it does reflect the New Testament's consistent teaching that the church is to pray for the state and so on.

- [6 : 22] Now, in the context of everything that Paul is dealing with here and the failing of the church in Ephesus, it ought to be absolutely clear to us that what he's giving us here in these verses is evangelistic instruction.

You might call it evangelistic ethics, that is, the church living always with an eye to the outsider in order to commend the gospel to those outside the church.

And so that the world sees in the church what verse 2 describes, people who are dignified in every way and sees in its leaders as chapter 3 describes, people who are above reproach, people who are well thought of by outsiders, people who, as Paul says to Titus, adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in their life together.

That's the overriding issue to Paul in these letters. And that's what he's telling the church to do. Vis-a-vis the world, the church has got to be a people of constant prayer, not a people of constant protest.

And Christian leaders are to be people who bring dignity to the church, not disgrace on the church. And in regards to their humanity and their relationships with one another, Christians are to be seen to be those who gladly accept and who submit to the Creator's order about male and female sexuality, not angrily striving against it and subverting what is proper.

- [7 : 47] That's what chapter 2 and 3 in 1 Timothy are all about, you can see. And these are the things that the church needs to be in order to be a beacon of saving light and truth in the world.

First of all, he says in verse 1, above all, I urge prayer for all people. What he's saying is that if the church is going to be kept from shipwreck, then it must have a truly godly outlook on the world, on the pagan world around about, on the lost world, on a dark and ignorant world.

But, Paul says, that is the world that God so loved that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him would not perish, but have everlasting life.

And Paul's charge all through this letter, as we know, is guard the deposit, guard the true faith of the gospel that is entrusted to you. That's how he ends the letter in chapter 6, verse 20.

But crucially, and we absolutely must understand this, the truth of God is guarded not by burying the truth privately inside the church or inside a monastery or something, but by bringing the truth out publicly into the whole world.

[9 : 06] Gospel truth can only be protected if it is continually being proclaimed. To guard the truth, the church must be going out into the world, must be sharing the truth with the world, not just going into itself.

That is what causes the church to swerve from the truth. That's what the devil and his demons want, Paul says. They want to have the Christian church on their rocks because it's becoming more and more elitist, more and more exclusive, more and more escapist from the world, inward looking.

That's what excludes people from coming to the knowledge of the truth. But no, God wants the church to be outward looking in every direction, ever more into the world with evangelism.

It's false spirituality that Paul is exposing, false knowledge, false sound doctrine that has a church ever more concerned with just the few who are inside it, inside its doors, thinking they're very sound and Christian and elite and elect and all of that.

No, true spirituality, true godliness leads to evangelism, not departing from the world, but in dialogue with the world, declaring to the world the truth of Jesus Christ, the Savior, and making sure that there is opportunity for every person to hear that saving gospel, not just inside among a few, but outside among all.

[10 : 39] And that's what God wants. Look at verse 4. He makes it absolutely plain. He wants all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. And verses 1-7 here show us that a truly godly outlook on the world is the only thing that is going to keep the church safe.

And it gives us a picture, doesn't it, of a church in urgent prayer, which is shaped by the Savior's universal passion and which therefore demands an unrestricted proclamation of the gospel.

First of all, look at verses 1 and 2. It's all about the urgent prayer of the church. Paul is saying that a church that is ship-shape and not heading for shipwreck will be a church whose prayers are truly serving the saving purpose of God the Savior.

First of all, therefore, I urge that all kinds of prayers, he uses four different words for prayer, all kinds of prayers be made for all people, including kings and people in high position, he says.

Why? Because, verse 3, this is good and pleasing in the sight of God our Savior. What's the overriding issue here? It's the saving purpose of God in all the world, among all people.

[12 : 00] And so, right prayer for the Christian church can never just be parochial, can never just be private piety. It's got to be about the public progress of the mission of the kingdom of Christ, of the one God, verse 5, notice, whose desire is that all people be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

And without that saving truth, he's saying, not one can be saved. Because look at verse 5, there is one mediator, do you see, between man and God, the man, Christ Jesus.

You see, that is what a godly outlook on the world is focused on. And that's what a godly church will grasp about its purpose in this world.

It's urgently at prayer for the gospel spreading and being extended to all. If you read through the New Testament, if you read Paul's letters, you will find every one of his requests for prayer are exactly for that, for the advance of the gospel.

So Colossians 4, verse 3, pray for us that God may open to us a door for the word to declare the mystery of Christ, that I might make it clear. 2 Thessalonians 3, verse 1, pray for us that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored that is believed in and accepted as it was with you.

[13 : 18] And pray against those who would stop us doing that. Or Ephesians 6, a letter he wrote to these churches just a few years before. He says, be praying at all times with all prayer and supplication, with all perseverance for all the saints.

Notice all the alls again. And for me, for what? That words may be given me and opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel. That is Paul's concern always for the church.

And it must be the principal concern of any church that is going to keep afloat in truth and not sink on the rocks of error. And that's at least one reason why Paul says we've got to pray as well for rulers and authorities in verse 2.

that our lives might be peaceful and quiet. He is not asking us to pray here so that Christians can have a sort of bourgeois tranquility and sit back in their deck chairs and relax and just do nothing.

Absolutely not. He is praying so that there will be peace for Christians to get out of their deck chairs and get out into the world and in a hindered way be able to proclaim the gospel of Christ.

[14 : 29] And of course, the Roman peace was a great factor in the early spread of the gospel because travel and visas and all of that sort of thing was relatively easy. And of course, in our world today that is still the case, isn't it?

Not in every place but in many places. So it's good to pray for good government, for peace. We don't want wars and chaos so that we can't spread the gospel to others. We need to be able to speak freely as well.

That's why free speech is such an important issue for Christians to be praying for and working for today. Some folk are awfully naive and just want to turn their eyes completely away from what's going on in the world of government and so on.

No, no, no. Paul says we must be prayerful about public policy and all of these matters so that they are shaped in such a way that the gospel is not stopped from being proclaimed, that it's not hindered.

So that's one reason he tells us to pray for leaders but it's not the only reason. He's saying much more than that because it's not just prayers for rulers and governments' behavior towards the church that he has in mind so that that doesn't harm the gospel.

[15 : 39] It's also the church's behavior and thinking towards ruler and authority so that the church doesn't harm or hinder the gospel by its behavior and by its bad witness because that is exactly what was going on in these churches in Ephesus.

What Paul is saying in verse 2 is this. Pray for us. Even pray for the rulers and authorities so that we will be and so that we will be seen to be in the world people who are not warlike people but peaceful.

Not noisy and loud people notice but quiet people. Not lawless people but godly people. Not people who are behaving disgracefully but people who are behaving in a dignified way in every aspect of our lives.

You see that the problem in these churches in Ephesus and it was the same in Crete where Titus was was that they didn't have a good reputation in the community and the gospel was not being commended by their behavior.

It was being condemned by their behavior. That's evident by what Paul instructs them all the way through these three pastoral letters. But it's very plain even in 1 Timothy right here. You see they were clearly people who are not known for being peaceful and quiet but for being noisome and quarrelsome.

[16:56] That's why he says in verse 8 that the men were not to be angry and quarreling. That the women were not to be what they seemed to be in verse 9 immodest and uncontrolled noisy and unsubmitive very opposite of quiet.

That's why all the way through chapter 2 he contrasts quiet with quarrelsome. Titus chapter 3 is just as revealing. It tells the Christians what they ought to be because it's clearly what they were not being.

Be submissive to rulers and authorities he says. Be obedient. Be ready for every good work. Clearly instead there were people who were known for actually speaking evil of all sorts of people.

For being utterly discourteous and quarrelsome. And that is the wrong behavior for the Christian church. And here it was wrong behavior that comes from wrong theology as it nearly always does.

Men like Hymenaeus says chap in verse 20 that Paul had had to remove from the church. We know that he and other people were teaching quite wrong things. They were teaching that the Christians perhaps didn't have to listen anymore to world leaders and authorities.

[18:07] They taught perhaps that they were free from all of those laws maybe from any laws. Why were they teaching that? Well Paul tells us in 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 17 that they were teaching that the resurrection had already happened.

That is they were teaching that the kingdom of God was now fully here. And so that means as the Christian church you can ignore this world's order. In fact you might even work to kick it out in a sort of Christian revolution of a very very wrong and dangerous kind.

That's what lay behind this kind of thinking. But it's a total misunderstanding isn't it of what it means to be the Christian church living in these last days in the gospel age while we await the coming of the Lord Jesus and while we await the resurrection that will come only then.

The Lord Jesus himself was very clear about these sorts of matters. Have a look later on in Matthew's gospel chapter 17 where there's a discussion between Peter and others about whether it was right for them to pay the half shekel tax.

And Jesus says well is it the sons of the king who have to pay the taxes or is it others? Peter says well of course it's not the sons of the kings it's others. And Jesus says that's right and he's implying you my followers are sons of the king of heaven but says Jesus so as not to give offense so as not to cause scandal in this world take that coin and pay the tax for you and for me.

[19:35] Why? Because we're still part of this world order. That's why Jesus said those famous words what is Caesar's rendered to Caesar and what is God rendered to God.

He's saying that because this created order still exists and the church of Jesus Christ coexists in these last days with this world and with the world to come.

That means that we as Christians are still citizens of this world even though as Paul tells us our true citizenship is in heaven. But that glory of that kingdom will only be revealed as Paul says in chapter 6 verse 14 of this very letter at the appearing of our Lord Jesus.

And until then he says we the church are to keep the command keep the gospel unstained and free from reproach in this world.

That kind of radical overhaul of all this world's powers it is coming says Paul when Jesus comes at the proper time he says in chapter 6 verse 15.

[20 : 42] Note that language it's the same word used here in verse 6 at the proper time now is the proper time says Paul for sharing the gospel sharing the gospel of the one who will be revealed to all the world at the last sharing him now among all the nations.

And so ours is not a gospel of sedition to overthrow rulers and authorities it's a gospel of salvation even for those who are kings and rulers and authorities in high places.

because our goal is not revolution among the nations but redemption among all the nations. Now that is such a critical thing isn't it?

Because throughout the history of the church sometimes Christian revolutionary movements have totally forgotten that and become dangerously confused and dangerously enmeshed with the political order looking for that social revolution and forgetting all about true gospel spiritual revelation.

Sometimes it's even been violently done. But it's wrong because all of that is not yet. And we are not to look for what God has promised only when Jesus comes.

[21 : 56] Because all the way back in church history you can read about the Montanists a group in the second century who had a dazzling view of all of that with their prophets thinking that the kingdom had come. Even during the reformation there were radical groups.

Some of the Anabaptists and others totally opposed by the mainstream reformers but they wanted to overthrow the state ignore all the state laws and so on. You had it much more recently in the Marxist liberation theology that came in certain parts of the world where they thought the church was there to bring down governments and foment revolution.

And in a different way we've seen it over this last century in the West in the liberal theology that has so blighted the church making the church forget its gospel of redemption and being taken up constantly just with political bleating and social revolution and reformation.

No, no, no says Paul. A truly gospel church has a right outlook on the world. And it urgently prays for all in this world even for rulers.

And the rulers by the way at that time almost certainly over the Roman Empire was Nero one of the greatest persecutors that there ever was. Surely none of our world leaders today can even quite keep up with him.

[23 : 10] No matter what you think of Mr. Putin in Russia or Mr. Trump for that matter in America or the little drunk fellow in Brussels or even our own dancing queen as Theresa May seems to think she is now.

But we're to be people wherever we are. We're to be people who are marked by humble peaceable prayer not by hostile protest.

That's not what we're on this world for. And our prayer above everything else is to serve the kingdom of Christ not to be serving our own interests our own proclivities our own politics but we're seen to be by everybody quiet dignified productive helpful citizens not loud and warlike but quiet and peaceable not lawless and disgraceful people but godly and dignified people responsible citizens not rebellious people you see that is what Paul is saying he's saying our world needs to see that the gospel does not foment the wrong kind of social revolution but the right kind of spiritual revolution in people's lives that turns people from lives of wickedness and darkness into lives of light and goodness that takes people who were once harmful and provocative people and turns them into helpful and peaceable people if Christians are just known in the world to be people who have enormous political chips on their shoulder people who are endlessly protesting complaining about this that and the next thing seeking for themselves instead of offering the gospel of Christ then that will not commend the gospel of Christ will it if church leaders are known endlessly for their political protest and their lobbying and so on or indeed for their scandalous activities that will not commend the gospel to all people and that is Paul's concern here and all through the New Testament if you read 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 you'll see him using exactly the same sort of language asking questions and saying to him you must live quietly mind your own business don't be busy bodies so that you may live properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one don't be seen as freeloaders it says the same in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 he tells him to work quietly earn your own living you see he's concerned with the reputation of Christian people in the world and in Ephesus in these churches that reputation was being damaged among outsiders maybe even among the authorities themselves and so the gospel cause was being harmed and leaders were not well thought of by outsiders that's why he has to say that in chapter 3 the behavior of some of the widows that he speaks of in chapter 5 was worse than many of the pagans and workers were rebelling against their masters he said dishonoring them and so on and the result of all of that was that the word of God the gospel of salvation was being reviled among the pagans and Paul says that is a church that is heading for the rocks and that's why he issues this urgent call for prayer to have a proper outlook on the world as God's mission field and as the church's mission field

God is sovereign he's saying over all people yes over kings and rulers and so you can pray with great confidence even for all of these but he's saying there's a big challenge for the Christian church because the sovereign God has chosen his church on earth to be the pillar and the buttress of his saving truth for the world and in the world and so the church has to be seen to be that both in its words but also in its deeds and so we're to pray of course yes for peace for freedom so that we can spread the gospel that rulers and governments won't hinder the gospel's progress but we're also to pray for ourselves that we as the church don't hinder or harm the gospel mission and progress by our actions or by our lack of actions that might stir up the community against us might even stir up the government against us a church that's ship shape and not heading for ship wreck will be one whose prayers are truly serving the life giving purposes of God our savior and whose lifestyle therefore shows that and secondly our urgent prayers in the church will be shaped says Paul by the universal passion of our savior a church that's ship shape not heading for ship wreck will be a church whose passion is shaped by the loving heart of God the savior himself that's what verses three to six make so very clear the reason for this urgent prayer for all that will help and not hinder the gospel the reason it pleases God is verse four because God desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth not that they should be turned away and put off the very message of Christ by his church

God our savior desires all people to be saved now be clear what Paul is not saying here he's not denying is he that God is truly sovereign that God just desires all people to be saved but not all people are saved because he can't do it that's ridiculous he's just said God is the only sovereign he's the king of the ages he's the one who's over all rulers and authorities of course he's sovereign but he's just not talking about sovereign election in these verses any more than in verse six he's at all interested in discussing the so-called extent of the atonement Paul's sole concern here is to remind this inward looking church that the God who is sovereign is sovereign to save not just for them but for the whole wide world John Calvin himself saw that so clearly when he said the whole issue of election or universalism or anything like that is just not relevant to the present context what is relevant he says is that the church's prayers should be shaped by this decree of God that God has at heart the salvation of all men for he calls all men to acknowledge the truth so let's be very clear these verses are not a pointless discussion about election or the extent of the atonement these verses are a powerful driver for the task of mission because that church was not being shaped by the universal passion of the

[30 : 13] Savior and it must be again if it's going to be saved for the gospel it must be shaped by the Savior's passion in both senses really of that word passion both by his universally saving desire and by his universally sufficient death God Paul points to both of those things here and to make it clear that if we are being shaped by that truth then there are some things that the church just cannot be and will never be some attitudes that the church just cannot have his universally saving desire means that the God who is our Savior inside the church verse 3 our Savior also wants those outside the church to be saved as well that's verse 4 look it's not enough he's saying that some people are saved he wants more all the world remember Jesus parable it's not enough that even 99 of the hundred are gathered into the fold safely he's going out to that one lost sheep and this world is full of millions and millions of lost sheep

God our Savior verse 5 look is the one and only God who must save all who are ever to be saved who are still outside and Paul's point here is not so much therefore because there is one God there must be no polytheism lots of different gods his big point is that there can be no possible possessiveness of our God inside the church in Ephesus you see the churches were turning in on themselves he's our God and Savior they were becoming exclusivist they were seeking knowledge and historical connections with the past insider traditions things to do perhaps with Jewish history and culture and all the rest of it but as Paul said in another place to the Roman church so sharply is God the God of Jews only no he's the God also of all the nations because God is one you can't have it both ways you see can you can't say well your

God is the only God and then say but he's our God he's not for you you can't possess the one God of heaven and earth he's God of all and therefore he's the savior of all and what pleases God is not an attitude that closes the doors and says we'll keep possession of that one God to ourselves he wants us to open the doors and proclaim the one God to the whole world the salvation of God our savior is an inclusive salvation it's for the whole but don't misunderstand don't mistake that universal passion for an utterly inclusive mission don't mistake that for any sort of universalism as though all are automatically saved absolutely not Paul's utterly clear all through the new testament he's utterly clear in this letter that you must believe in the Lord Jesus for eternal life we saw that last time in chapter 1 verse 16 but you see it here in this very passage a church that shares the passion of

God our Savior for lost sinners also is a church that can never have anything to do with pluralism with saying that there are many ways ultimately to the one God look at verse five there is one God and one mediator between God and man the man the human being Christ Jesus there is only one road to the salvation of the one God and it's through the Lord Jesus Christ the one who became man in order to be an effectual savior a mediator we all know this a mediator to be effective he must properly represent both parties mustn't he to truly represent God to man that mediator must be God to truly mediate man to God that mediator must be truly human and so the one God himself became incarnate in man in order to be the mediator in the person of the son and he is the exclusive mediator of salvation to all he is the only way to the only

God that's what Paul's so clear on here so important today was vital then because of course the Jews great mantra was there is one God and it still is today Muslims there is one God there are other groups only one God but Paul says the truth that saves knows that there is only one way to that one God the universal inclusive salvation is God is through one mediator one exclusive savior Jesus Christ no one comes to the father but by me said Jesus I'm the way I am the truth I am the life there is no other and so a church that is really truly motivated by the universal passion of our savior must reject all kind of pluralism otherwise it is opposing it is obstructing people to come on the only road there is to that God who wants all to be saved and of course we have to reject any other kind of ideas of any sorts of mediators between

[35 : 43] God and man whether it's the saints in heaven or Mary in heaven or priests on earth or any other such things there is one mediator the man Christ Jesus and a church that is shaped by the savior's passion will hold dearly to that exclusive gospel and a church that is shaped by the savior's universally saving desire can never ever have truck with those who want to point to another way and in the same way a church that is shaped by the savior's universally sufficient death verse 6 his ransom for all that is a church that knows at the same time it can have no truck whatsoever with pride because everyone needs a mediator a mediator brings two sides together in a dispute and we're all in dispute with God or have been not everybody admits that although it's interesting when you get talking to people and ask them really why they don't have faith or trust in

God so often it does end up doesn't it with well I can't believe in a God who did that or who didn't do that or I prayed for this and he didn't answer my prayers there's a lot of anger with God deep down in people's hearts even though they don't admit it but far more important even than that is the fact that God himself is in dispute with every human being and we are under his just and right anger because all of our sins not one of us is righteous every one of us needs a mediator every one of us needs a savior to ransom us that word means to rescue to set free to liberate at great price from captivity from bondage to slavery to sin to satan himself that's what the bible says is our predicament and that's very humbling but that is what Jesus rescues us from he was a ransom this word means he was a ransom for us on behalf of us every one of us and in our place substitution is embedded in that very word that

Paul uses there he both took our place your place and my place and that of every single person who calls himself a Christian not just the recent convert from paganism the one who knows very little who's very rough around the edges yet but the oldest and wisest and godliest and cleverest and soundest Christian you can ever think of every one of us only has the place that we have in the household of God on the basis of the Romans justified by his grace as a gift through that redemption that rescue that is in Christ Jesus and through the propitiation of his anger against us by his own blood only his mediating blood allows any one of us here you or me to call God our father and Christ our Lord and so any church that's shaped by that true universal passion of the Savior it can never ever be tainted by pride as though we have something different and better because we know we all need a mediator we all have been rescued but we also know that the rescuer came

God our Savior made himself man and gave his life as a ransom for all so that that grace can be offered to all the world that's what pleases God our Savior when we see that and when we live that the only limitation that Paul is interested in in this whole passage is the potential limitation of people from hearing the saving message of Jesus Christ because his church is not doing what it should be doing how can they believe in the one whom they have never heard calling them that's what Paul says to the Romans that's his point here because there is one God and Savior mediator then there is one overriding call on the church of Jesus Christ and that is to the unrestricted proclamation of the gospel that's the last half of verse six and verse seven any church

Paul saying that is ship shape that's not heading for shipwreck will be a church whose proclamation is spurred on by the lasting promise of God our Savior which from the very beginning remember God's words to Abraham was to bring blessing to all the nations of the world and that is now being made manifest through our Lord Jesus Christ and the testimony to his saving work look at verse six which is now made at the proper time chapter six he says the Lord Jesus will return again at the proper time that's not yet but what is the proper time now verse six what's it for it's for that testimony of Jesus Christ to go to all the world look at verse seven that's why I was made a preacher and an apostle a teacher of the nations all the nations now is the time for proclaiming Jesus Christ to all the world to pagan outsiders because God our

[41 : 18] Savior desires for all these people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth and so a church that is shaped truly by the Savior's passion can never be a church that is passive the church is not just called to pray for all people but to proclaim the gospel to all people there must be gospel proclamation do you know there are good well-meaning Christian people who are great advocates of prayer and yet their churches a little holy huddled turn in on themselves just praying praying praying for the Lord to somehow send revival Paul says no no no there is to be no prayer without proclamation justice is to be no proclamation without prayer God is sovereign God alone can save but but he has made his church responsible to bring people salvation as they come verse 4 to a knowledge of the truth through our gospel message the gospel has given us to proclaim to all the world and it is the power of salvation to all who believe so

Christian churches cannot just be passive we can't just be little holy huddles praying for revival we're to be holy heralds in Paul's words proclaiming prayerfully like Paul does the gospel of Christ to all the nations in faith trusting that God will save people but in truth proclaiming that gospel of sovereign power that's what Paul wrote to them about before in Ephesians 6 that's how you take the sword of the spirit he says which is the proclaim it to all people not passivity prayer for all and proclamation to all and finally not pessimism either in our task how can we be pessimistic when Paul says at last this is the proper time this is what the whole story of history has been working towards this is the age of fulfillment this is the day of salvation God our Savior has come in order to be the mediator who ransoms us and this is the day of that salvation to be proclaimed to all the nations it's no lie he says

I'm telling you the truth I think he means that it might not look like that always to people but it is that he says so don't give up don't be pessimistic God our Savior is at work all over the world today he uses that same language doesn't he in Romans chapter 9 where people were clearly finding it hard to believe because so many Jews were rejecting their own Messiah and Paul says is it that God's word has failed of course not might look like failure but in God's extraordinary and mysterious providence their very rejection is what is bringing what reconciliation for the whole world and that's what he's saying here that's why I'm taking the gospel to all nations that's why I'm taking it to these pagan outsiders the people I spoke of in chapter one the lawless the ungodly the unholy the profane the gospel is for them it's for the world it's for all the nations there can be no possible cause for pessimism because

God our savior desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth that is your calling he's saying to the church that is got to be your outlook if you are to be a church that will survive and not sink on the rocks of shipwreck that's the message for every single church in every age until the Lord Jesus comes and that means it must be the message for our church here in Glasgow today what a good message for today when we're having a little bit of the church and my favorite seat or what about me and my bus or what about me and this that and the next thing God our Savior wants a church looking out to the whole wide world and sharing his heart of love to be the Savior of the world a church that will keep off the danger of the rocks is a church that will be urgently in prayer for all that will be shaped by the love of

God our Savior for all and therefore will be proclaiming the saving gospel to all and knowing that God's sovereign purpose cannot fail and friends our job every one of us here is to be constantly like the lookout in the crow's nest looking to see if this church is wavering in any way from that course and shouting a warning and putting us back on course with a right outlook on this world that our God so loved let's pray heavenly father we're conscious that so easily and so quickly the desires of our own selfish hearts take over in our own lives and thoughts and yes also in our thinking and church and all that we think and do help us we pray turn our prayers back outwards turn our hearts back outwards and keep us as people of your saving gospel love for this world we ask it in

[47 : 11] Jesus name Amen Amen Amen