

Called By God

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Date: 02 March 2014

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[0:00] Turn in your Bibles to Acts 26. Acts 26, and we'll read verse 1b-18. Paul has just been given permission to speak, This is the word of the Lord.

O King, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

I too was convinced that I ought to do all things possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests, I put many of the saints in prison.

And when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time, I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme.

In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them. On one of these journeys, I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.

[2:22] About noon, O King, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.

Then I asked, Who are you, Lord? I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting, the Lord replied. Now get up and stand on your feet.

I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles.

I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Christian, do you ever wonder what you're supposed to be doing in the church? Pastors are pastoring, deacons are being deacons. What am I supposed to be doing?

[3:41] Maybe you aren't sure. And not knowing what you're supposed to be doing can be rather difficult. It's not a very good place to be, is it?

You probably have been there. I think we've all been in similar situations, like the first week or two on a new job. And you remember that feeling of not knowing exactly if you're in the right place at the right time, doing the right thing or not.

Maybe it's that first day of the new school. You're not sure. Are you going to the right classroom? Are you going to the right place? Are you doing the right thing? I think that's how a lot of Christians feel about their life in the church.

They know they're supposed to be serving. They know they're supposed to be doing something. They know they have a unique place. They have some part in the body of Christ. They know that not everyone is the same, but that's where they are.

They're not sure how they fit in. They don't know their place. And it's a real question. And it can be very troubling for them. It's hard to have confidence.

[4:52] Confidence in what you're about, what you're supposed to be doing, when you don't know what you are or how you fit into things. One thing that really comes out as you seriously read the epistles of Paul and as you read the book of Acts, you read what the Bible says about Paul, is that he was always, it seemed like he was always supremely confident.

He knew what he was about. And he had no problem entering into situations and speaking into them. So tonight we're going to begin, we're going to have our second sermon on the book of Colossians.

So there's the church in Colossae. He's never been there. And yet he feels that he can come in and write a letter explaining to them what they need to do and what they need to believe and how they

need to be treating each other.

All sorts of things. He's a confident person. He's not self-confident. I don't mean that, but he's confident. He has a voice. He's not asking for permission. He wasn't questioning what he was supposed to be doing.

He didn't know if he was in the right place or not. He knew his role. He knew his calling. And he did it. Well, as I said, tonight we're going to go back to that opening of Colossians.

[6 : 11] And last time we said that it's surprising that Paul, of all people, wrote the book of Colossians. Because if you read the book of Colossians, the theme is very clear. That Christ Jesus is all that you need.

Christ Jesus is everything that you need. There's fullness in Christ Jesus. And we said it's surprising that Saul of Tarsus, that self-righteous, that very gifted man, ever came to the place where he said, None of that, I don't boast in any of that.

I only boast in the cross of Jesus Christ. As for me to live is Christ. So it's very surprising that Paul, of all people, wrote the book of Colossians. Colossians. But on the other hand, we just read in Acts 26, Christ met him, didn't he?

And Christ changed him, and Christ saved him. Christ made him a new creation. And so it is surprising. But on the other hand, it's not surprising at all that when Paul begins to write to some people he's never met, he's taken up with this grand theme of who Jesus Christ is.

Well, that's what we saw last time. Tonight we're going to look at the next part of the introduction.

And I'm not asking you to turn to Colossians, because the part that we're going to cover is not very long, and we're going to spend most of our time in Acts 26.

[7 : 33] And so in Colossians 1, the introduction is this. It says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

And that's as far as we're going to go. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Paul doesn't write to the Colossians as an ordinary, private Christian.

He writes as an apostle, and he expects to be heard. This is why he is so confident as he enters into this situation. So tonight we're going to see what it meant for Paul to be an apostle, and then some lessons about finding our place, finding confidence in what Christ has called you to, called us to, just as Paul had such confidence in his calling.

So we're going to have two questions and then two lessons. Two questions, two lessons, and here's the question, the first question. What did it mean, or what does it mean that Paul was an apostle?

What is an apostle? Well, we read in Acts 26, the account of Paul's conversion and his calling to the apostleship.

[8 : 46] So if you aren't there, please turn to Acts 26 and look at what it says in verse 16. In verse 16, what is an apostle?

It's someone who's with their own eyes seeing the risen Christ. Verse 16, now get up and stand on your feet. Those are words of commissioning.

Those are words of, I have a job for you to do. Get up, stand on your feet. I have appeared to you. So remember when the disciples were replacing Judas in those very first days of the early church. This is what they said. It is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.

So what is an apostle? It's a witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now, an apostle lived by faith.

[9 : 52] But in another sense, in a sense different than anyone else like us, an apostle lived by sight. They had seen the resurrected Christ.

They had seen the resurrected Christ. The fact of the resurrection wasn't a matter for confession or faith of something they had not seen. It was a fact of reality.

It was a fact of sight. They had seen the risen Christ. And so they didn't say Christ was resurrected because that's what they heard or that's what they were taught. That's what they figured out.

No, they said Christ was risen because with their own eyes they had seen him. And so they were witnesses. So you go into any court of law.

And what are you looking for in an eyewitness? You're looking for someone with first-hand knowledge. If you go into a court, a judge or the lawyers aren't looking for a witness to come

forward and say, Well, I've been reading in the newspaper or I heard on the news or I've been doing some research on Google and I've looked at all the blogs and this is what I think happened in this case.

[11:07] No, eyewitness is someone who has seen, has heard with their own ears. So the Apostle John says, We tell you what we've seen, what we've heard, what we've handled with our own hands.

There's a immediacy. There's a sense of he was there with us. It was not a matter of faith for the Apostles that Jesus Christ was risen. It was a matter of sight.

So what's an Apostle? It's an eyewitness of the resurrection. But that's not all. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says 500 people also witnessed in one time the resurrected Christ.

And not all of them were apostles. So in theory, if Christ appeared to have this body, that wouldn't make us apostles.

They weren't all apostles. To be a witness of the resurrection wasn't enough. It was necessary, but it wasn't sufficient. It was what was absolutely essential, but it still wasn't all that was required.

[12:15] So look again at Acts 26 and verse 16. The rest of the answer is there. I have appeared to you to appoint you, to appoint you as a servant and a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.

Christ appointed Paul as an apostle. He was Christ's appointed personal emissary, a personal delegate on behalf of Jesus Christ.

Paul didn't decide to be an apostle. Christ chose him for that, appointed him to that. To be a witness.

And this witnessing wasn't just for the sake of witnessing. The point of the witnessing was salvation. Christ came into the world not to condemn it, but to save it.

Look again at verse 17. What is the reason why Paul is appointed as a witness, as an apostle?

[13:26] He says, I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Paul was going to witness. The point of Paul's witness was salvation. Was so that people would hear and believe in Jesus Christ and then in so doing pass from darkness to light, from Satan to God, from guilt to forgiveness, from unholiness to sanctification.

So that's what Paul's mission was. That was the goal of his mission. He's going to witness Christ, what he had seen, what he had heard, what he knew about Christ, in order that men might be saved.

And so what was Paul's message? In Colossians 1, at the end of the first chapter, he says this, We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy which so powerfully works in me. So we proclaim Christ. An apostle was an appointed personal emissary of Jesus Christ to proclaim Jesus Christ to the salvation of sinners, for the salvation of sinners.

[14:47] So that's what the first, the answer to the first question, what is an apostle? The second question, why was Paul an apostle?

Why Paul? Back in Colossians, Paul says he's an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

By the will of God. So Paul, why you? Why you? Well, it's the sovereign, gracious will of God.

Whatever reasonings we use, whatever other thoughts, the lines must be drawn back to this point. That God chose me for this.

So why are any of us called? Why are any of us chosen? Why are any of us gifted? Why are any of us brought from death to life?

[15:46] Why are any of us put into the church of God and given gifts that exercise and a calling to fulfill? Well, Paul won't let us get away with any answer except it's the will of God.

So God has mercy on whom he has mercy. His mercy on whom he has mercy. There's no room for boasting in our salvation. And there's no room for boasting for our place in the church.

Paul knew one thing. It wasn't because he was worthy that he was called to be an apostle. What did he say? Last of all, he appeared to me.

As to one abnormally born. Paul's saying, I was the exception even among the apostles. I was nothing.

I am the least of the apostles. And do not even deserve to be called an apostle. Because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am.

[16 : 52] And his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them. Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. So brothers and sisters, Paul's attitude must be our attitude.

It must be our attitude. There's simply no room for you to boast in your hearts about who you are, about who we are in the church.

Are you something in the church? Do you have a position? Do you have some respect, some authority? Do you have graces that make you unique? Well, what do you have that's not been given to you?

What makes you to differ except for the grace of God? Who were you when you were called? Paul was a persecutor. We read about it.

He was a persecutor. And what about you? What about me? Did God save you because he saw someone who deserved to be saved? Did he save you because he saw someone who was loving him and who was worthwhile?

[17 : 52] Did he see someone who loved him? Did he see someone who was worthy? Did he see someone who came into the church with all their gifts and all these magnificent abilities and he just had to save them, had to use them?

No. The answer is, by the grace of God, I am what I am. So can you say that from your heart? By the grace of God, I am what I am.

If you can't say that, if that's not the refrain of your heart, if that doesn't echo down in the deep places of your heart where you resonate with that, then, in all respect, I would have to ask, I would have to say I doubt that you are of real use in the church.

If you are a Christian who thinks you are something special, or if you are a Christian who thinks, well, I'm a nobody, so we've got these two extremes. If you're proud, or if you're saying, I'm a nobody, I don't have anything to offer anyone.

Either way, what are you focusing on? You're focusing on you. You're not, you're focusing on you, not the grace of God.

[19 : 04] Useful Christians aren't looking at their accomplishments, and useful Christians aren't also just fascinated with their inadequacies. They're not looking at their accomplishments or their inadequacies, they're looking at Christ.

They have two eyes focused on Christ, they have two eyes focused on the mercy of God to them in Jesus Christ, and so when you can say with John, now we know and rely on the love of God for us, then you're ready to be useful.

Then you are ready to serve. Until then, you have the entirely, the wrong focus. So grace makes all the difference.

Jesus Christ makes all the difference. So in Romans 1, Paul says, Through Christ, and for his name's sake, we receive grace and apostleship to call people from among the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.

So how did the apostleship come to Paul? How did he become an apostle? Well, it was through Christ, and for his name's sake.

[20 : 11] God, in mercy, in mercy, gave Paul the apostleship, this ministry.

It was for Christ's sake. So behind Paul's call to the ministry, there was a bloody cross.

Behind Paul's gifts, there was a dying but now risen Savior. Behind Paul's success, his usefulness, there was a Savior who died in agony.

Paul's gifts came from Jesus dying love to him. They were purchased for him at the expense of Christ's life.

So are you any different? Are you any different? You are what you are because of Christ's life and his death. Because of him.

[21 : 12] And so next time you're tempted to think that you are something, or next time you're tempted to think, well, I'm nothing, I'm no use to anyone, look where the gifts and the graces of the church come from.

They come from a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins. The gifts and the graces to serve Christ in any way are blood-covered gifts that he's giving to you.

The gifts of a crucified Savior who's now risen and reigning. So next time you're tempted to think, I'm of no use, I can't do anything, I'm too sinful, I'm too inadequate, I am nothing, God hasn't given me anything to work with, look at me, look at how it is, look at my past, whatever you're saying, look at where all those gifts and those graces come from.

They come from Jesus Christ. They come, they flow from the foot of the cross. They don't flow out of who you are. They don't flow out of your past. They flow out of who Christ is.

And so when you say, I'm useless, I'm nothing, I can't do anything, that has the look of humility to it. It looks like humility, but really it is nothing but unbelief.

[22 : 34] It is self-righteousness. It is self-reliance. It is pride that hasn't submitted itself to Jesus Christ, to the blood of the cross.

And so Paul says, I am what I am by the grace of God. Now he doesn't say that boasting, but he doesn't say it in despair either.

He says it in triumph. He says it in triumphing faith. He is seen, he is experienced, he now knows the grace of God that is in Christ Jesus for the worst of sinners, for the least of the apostles.

And so in triumphing faith, he lays a hold of what Jesus Christ is for him. And so what was Paul? He was an appointed apostle for the salvation of sinners.

Why? Because God had mercy on him. It was the will of God. It was God's powerful grace at work in his life. And what about you?

[23 : 36] The same thing is true in your life. You have a place in the church. You have gifts and graces that are unique to you, and they're blood covered. They're from Jesus Christ.

So now two lessons. Lesson number one, there are no generic Christians. There are no generic Christians. by the grace of God, you have a calling.

You have a place. You have a role. You have a work. You have gifts, and you have graces that are uniquely yours. They're uniquely yours.

There are no generic Christians. Christ's grace was uniquely at work in Paul's life. Paul had a story. It's not our story. It's completely different from our story. There's a lot of similarities, but it was uniquely his. And I have a story, and you have a story, and we have past, and we have futures that are uniquely ours, and Christ deals with us individually.

[24 : 44] And Christ's grace was uniquely at work in Paul's life to call him to be an apostle. Christ's gifts and graces are uniquely at work in your life. So Paul was an apostle. None of us are.

I'm a pastor. Most of you aren't. Some of you are deacons. Most of you are not. Does that mean, then, that if you don't fit into one of those categories, that you're a nothing?

Sort of a generic Christian? Well, we are a body. And so let me ask you, doesn't every single part of your body have a name and a use and a purpose?

Is there some sort of generic part of you that doesn't fit any role, any specific, it's nothing? Well, there are no generic body parts.

There's hearts. There's lungs. And there's skin. And there's nerve cells. And there's heads. And there's bodies and arms. There's no generic body parts. And we're each called to be something.

[25 : 45] Ephesians 4, 7. But to each one of us, grace has been given as Christ has apportioned it. So not all of God's grace has been given to me.

Most of Christ's grace to me actually lives in you. It's come to you. It's in you. And so we need each other.

And we need each other to be doing what God has called us to do. The body can't afford to have useless parts. The body can't afford to have a sort of a generic thing that's just not doing anything. The brain needs the mouth to eat. To eat. The mouth needs the hands to give it food. The hands need the eyes to see. We're all dependent on each other.

There aren't any generic parts doing generic jobs. Generic parts are not useful parts.

[26 : 48] Think of a hospital. You go to a hospital and everyone is doing something and everyone is doing something different. There's surgeons. There's nurses.

There's doctors. There's radiologists. There's janitors. There's cafeteria workers. There's all sorts of people doing all sorts of things. There are no just generic workers.

There's a unique job and a unique task for each person in that place. And so that's the church. It's a body of Christ. It's organized. It's structured as we saw this morning.

And so you are unique. You are gifted. You have graces that only you have. And God has a plan of usefulness just for you just as he had a plan of usefulness just for Paul.

And it's all of grace. Whatever it might be, it's grace. Whether it's great or small, whether it's hidden or seen by everyone, it's grace that Christ is giving to you.

[27 : 50] And so there's the Savior's blood on all the graces and all the gifts and all the callings that you have. And so take joy in your place. I think that's one of the greatest things that I just learned as I was thinking about this is what a gift my ministry is.

What a gift it is to have my calling because it was especially thought out. It was especially paid for. It was especially given to me. And so that makes me want to work hard.

And so I want to say take joy in what you've been given. It has the marks. It has the fingerprints of Christ's love on it. And so don't despair.

The grace of God is not without effect. So work hard at it. Put it to use. If Christ has given you these things, if Christ has given you a ministry, if he's given you strengths, then exercise them.

Don't hide them. Use them. Because he loved you and he gave it to you. So work hard not because you'll be seen, not work hard because you need to be saved, work hard not because if you don't, God won't love you.

[28 : 57] Work hard because you have a place, you have a calling, you have a task, and it's from Jesus Christ. And he loves you and he's given it to you. He died to give it to you.

So that's lesson number one is there's no generic Christians. You have a part, you have a place, and it's uniquely yours. Paul was an apostle. We are other things.

That's lesson one. There's a unique place in the body just for you, so work joyfully at it. Lesson number two is when you find your place, when you find your place, you can have great confidence in serving.

When you find your place, when you find your calling, you find your role in the church, then you can have great confidence in serving. And so we're going back to where we started.

Why was Paul so confident? Well, just let's think about some of the things that we've just been talking about. Paul knew his place.

[29 : 59] He had been personally appointed by Jesus Christ as an apostle. And it wasn't because of something in him. If his place was dependent on his goodness or his badness or his worthiness, well, he's not going to have a lot of confidence because each day is a new day and he has to prove himself again and again that he's worthy to be an apostle or else he's going to lose it.

But if that gift of an apostleship was by the grace of Jesus Christ, then it wasn't dependent on him. Then he could go forward and say, it's by the grace of God that I'm here and so let me carry it out. He wasn't an apostle because he was a good boy. He was an apostle when he was having a good day and not an apostle on a bad day. He was an apostle because of the grace of our Lord Jesus.

And so did Paul sin? Yes, he did. It's not recorded or at least I don't think there's any places where Paul is said to have sinned, but I'm sure he did. And when he sinned, what did he do?

Well, he did exactly what you do. He confessed his sin. He repented of his sin. He ran to Jesus for fresh forgiveness. He rested in the grace of Christ.

[31 : 12] He lived in fellowship with his father and when he strayed out of that fellowship, he got back. He thought of himself as in Christ and he lived on the riches of Jesus Christ.

I think that's something that just strikes you as he's writing his letters. He is writing, not in theory, but in this is the worked out practice of my life and my heart. This is what I've seen and known and felt and experienced in my own life.

This is what Christ has taught me. And so he wasn't always questioning himself. He wasn't always questioning whether this was the place for him, where Christ calling on his life or the will of God for him in this situation.

He stood in the grace of God and so despite of his sin, despite of his weakness, and he had weakness, he had frailty, despite the trials, despite the opposition, he didn't think that any of those things would disqualify him for the apostleship because his apostleship was, he was thinking, that's because of Jesus Christ.

It's dependent on him and not on me and so he didn't despair. He had confidence in Jesus Christ. So what about you? Can you have the same confidence that Paul did?

[32 : 25] Can you have the same confidence and assurance in your calling, whatever that might be, in the church? The answer is yes because Christ is everything for you that he was for Paul.

He's everything for you that he was for Paul. Christ hasn't changed and so Hebrews 13, remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and

imitate their faith.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Why can we do what Paul did? Why can we have that same confidence and that same assurance? It's because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And when we're living on faith on him, then we can do exactly what Paul did. Now, so where does confidence and assurance about your place in the church come from?

It comes from living by faith in Jesus Christ who doesn't change. But there is another side to it. Paul knew his place. And Paul here, this is where, obviously, there's a big difference.

[33 : 31] None of us receive a vision from Jesus Christ to say, this is what I want you to do in the church. There's other means, and that would be a whole other sermon.

But when you, Paul knew his place. He didn't wonder about it. He didn't think, is this what I should be doing? How can I be useful?

He knew. And when you know, when you know, then that gives you great confidence. Why did Paul just keep going despite opposition, despite men talking bad about him, despite other so-called Christians speaking against him?

Why did he keep going despite his own personal sin, his own personal weakness and failure? Well, he had this confidence that he was exactly where God wanted him to be.

He was doing what God wanted him to do. And so, when you're in that place, then you can keep going. You don't need men to talk good about you.

[34 : 39] You don't need the whole world cheering you on. Because when you're, when you have God saying, well done, good and faithful servant, you keep going. And that's what Paul did.

And so, my word to you is to find your place. And maybe you have. I think a lot of you have found your unique place.

You're exercising your gifts and your graces. I don't think this is a major problem here. But there are some that I think need to find your place. How do you find your place?

Perhaps the best place to start of all is to serve wherever you can. And find a need and fulfill it. Put yourself out there.

And then, see what happens. Are people blessed? Are people growing? Are people thanking Jesus Christ when you get done ministering to them?

[35 : 42] I think that's how you can tell that your ministry is going in the right direction if you're in the right place. when people's hearts are drawn to Jesus Christ and when they're thanking God for what you have done for them, then you can know, yes, I'm in the right place.

So are people growing? If people aren't growing, if people aren't blessed, if they aren't encouraged in Christ Jesus, if you're more of a stumbling block, if you're more of a difficulty for them, then you probably aren't in the right place.

So serve however you can, find the place where you can do the most good, and then work at it with all of your heart. And this would be my encouragement to all of you who have, you've found your place, you know your area of giftedness and your area of calling, so if you have found your place, rejoice in it, thank Jesus Christ for it, it's a gift of his love, of his dying love for you, he sacrificed himself in order to give you this gift.

And so work at it, rejoice in it, it's the mercy of the risen Christ. That's what the church is, we're all living on Jesus Christ, we're all living on his mercy, and we're all flourishing in his power and his grace.

And if you're outside of Christ, you're getting a peek into the way Christ is working in the church. You're getting an insight into the new humanity that Christ is making.

[37 : 08] It's a place where grace and mercy and love and faithfulness and joy and service flourish. It flourishes because it's the overflow, it's the extension of Christ's heart and the Holy Spirit's power in people's lives.

And so this is what this new humanity is, and I would challenge you, look out into the world, is there any place like that? Where people are loving and serving and they're gracious and they're merciful, they're not backbiting and talking and belittling, they're loving and building each other up.

This world is empty, and you're invited to this party, this feast of grace, and you can come in through Jesus Christ, he's the door.

What does it mean to go through the door of Jesus Christ? What does it mean to believe? It means that you believe everything that he has said about you.

If you're going to believe the gospel, you first begin with what he says about you. He says that you are so far gone, you are so guilty, you are so undone, you are so ruined that you cannot save yourself.

[38 : 25] You're a hopeless case. You believe what he says about you. Jesus Christ says, you're too far gone to save yourself. Child, I must do it all.

I have to do it all. You're dead, but I am alive. So you must believe what he says about you, you must believe what he says about himself, that he can and that he will save you.

That his life, his death, is all that you need, it's everything that you need, and you need nothing else. So you believe what he says about you, you believe what he says about himself, and you believe what he says about God.

That God justifies. He doesn't condemn the wicked who trust in him. Who trust in him. God doesn't want your works.

He wants you to believe that he'll give you what you need. He doesn't want your works. He wants your hope. He wants your heart.

[39 : 33] And until you give him your hope and your heart, all of your works are no avail. Because everything that you're saying is, I don't think you're enough. I don't think you're telling the truth.

You're calling God a liar even while you're trying to become righteous in his sight. He doesn't want your works. He wants your hope and he wants your heart. He wants you to believe that he's just that good.

That he'll give it to you if you'll trust him for it. So the door is Christ and you can come in today and trust yourself to him and be saved today. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your great love. thank you for this plan of salvation that you have given through Jesus Christ. Thank you for sending him and thank you for giving apostles and prophets to be the foundation of the church.

And it's on that foundation that we stand. So we thank you. We pray that you would help us and give us understanding of our place and our calling.

[40 : 41] And that you would lead us as we think about you, as we lean on you, as we work. Will you please lead us into the place that you want us to be and then give us grace to work at it with all of our hearts.

Thank you that your grace is powerfully at work in those who believe. Thank you that Paul could say, I'm struggling with all the strength that he gives. Thank you that that strength is still available for each one of us who are in Christ.

and I pray for the lost and they're trying to go in on their own. I pray that you would bring them to the end of the line and put the mirror before them of their failure and their emptiness and their need.

Break them down that you might build them up in Jesus Christ as new creations. Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.