

Acts 15; Learning Church, Loving God and a labouring God

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Date: 13 September 2015

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[0 : 00] child This is the day God made it in, Will joy triumphantly.

Send now, I pray, Lord, I pray, Send now prosperity, Blessed is he in God's great name, God come and love to save.

We from the house which to the Lord, Where did you bless it, I?

God is the Lord who unto us, That bid light to arise, Thine me unto the altar's hearts, With forces sacrificed.

Thou art my God, I'll be exalted, My God, I will be exalted, Give thanks to God, for he is good, His mercy lasts all day.

[2 : 30] Amen. Amen. Okay, let's close our eyes and bow our heads, And we will draw near to God in prayer.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this sure day, We thank you for the words that we've sung. This is the day God made, And it will joy triumphantly.

And we thank you that as we gather on your day, We have so much reason to rejoice in our hearts. We thank you that you are God. We thank you that you have revealed yourself to us.

And we thank you that you are the God who is awesome, And who is powerful, our creator, The one who gives us strength day by day. We thank you that you are a holy God, Who cannot look upon sin, Who will not let evil just slide unnoticed.

But we thank you that you are the God who is gracious, And who is merciful, Whose mercy endures. We thank you that you are the God who has made it possible for us, Each one of us, To be saved.

[3 : 47] Saved from our sin, And saved into that relationship with you, Which begins here, And gives us satisfaction, And gives us peace, And gives us purpose, And gives us everything that we need.

And we thank you that that, Relationship is the relationship, Which only begins here, And never ends, But is only perfected, As we go from time, Into eternity.

So we thank you Lord, For your salvation, We thank you for Jesus, Our saviour, Who went to the cross, To take away our sin. We thank you that, Forgiveness is assured to all, Who look to him in faith, And who ask for forgiveness, For sin.

And Lord, We thank you for the Holy Spirit, Who is here, And who will remain here, Until the work on earth, Is done.

And so we pray, That he himself, Would be active, In our hearts, And in this place, As we bow before you. So we commit this, I would to you, And ask Lord, That you would meet with us, And that you would draw near to us, That you would be with those, Who are in particular need, Those who are absent, We ask that you would, Bless them where they are, Those who are with us, On holiday, Or for the first time, We thank you for them, And we ask your special, Blessing to be upon them also.

[5 : 17] So draw near to us, We pray, Unite us in Christ, And go before us, We ask all these things, In Jesus name, Amen. Boys and girls, Would you like to come forward, Please?

Amen. You're all welcome, To come forward, But I won't force anyone, To come forward, So if you'd rather, Sit in your chair, As you can.

How's everyone today? All fine? You had an interesting week? Yes? Maybe we'll, We'll leave it forward, Do you want it? And you can get a seat there.

Some of you have names, I don't know, Some of you have to get to the first time, So what's your names? Lydia, It's a lovely name. You know, We're going to read about a girl called Lydia, Not this Sunday, I don't think, But next Sunday, But we'll have a wee glance at her this Sunday, In the Bible. What's your name? Phoebe, Another great name, And, Pardon? Evie as well, And, And Grace. So that's Phoebe, Yes, That's Phoebe, That's Phoebe, And that's Evie, Yes, I was getting confused, That's Lydia, And that's Grace, And do you want to hear something confusing?

[6 : 56] That's also Grace, You know, Okay, She's your friend, Okay, It's my daughter, Right, Well, It's good, That's all sorted out, Well, What was I going to tell you about today?

At the risk of this turning into a bit of a soap opera, I have more stories about cats, And Isha and Owe had five new kittens this morning, Not him personally, But the cat in the house, Had five kittens this morning, So anybody who's looking for rat catchers, Excellent stock, Let me assure you, The rabbits are living in fear in Kylos, But anyway, I wasn't going to speak about them, I'm going to tell you about the cats, But first of all, I've got something to show you, What's this?

A gun, It's a water gun, A water gun, Yeah, And how do you work it? Pump it?

Yes, There's no water in it, How do you know there's no water in it? I can't, You don't know that at all, Get the pressure up, There's no water in it, Are you sure about that?

I feel the trigger, No, Alistair's looking a bit sleepy, There's no water in this water gun, But this, It's not actually, Well it is a water gun, But this is a secret special weapon, Do you know what this is for?

[8 : 41] Uh-huh, This, Is grace for, Yeah? Yeah, Yeah, The thing, On the big cat, In Kylos, We have come, To meet, The big, Bad, Ugly cat, Three kittens, We have three little kittens, And they're very cute, And they've stayed with us, And they're, Doing their job, Keeping the rodents at bay in Kylos, But, Last Monday it was, When I came back from Mother Pro, Uh, One of the kittens, Pop, Had a very, Very sore leg, And everywhere she went, She was just, Holding her leg up like that, And I didn't know what was wrong, If she, If she'd maybe, She'd maybe broken it, Or if something had happened, So I thought, I'll give it a couple of days, And I gave it till Thursday, And it was still looking bad, And it was looking a bit swollen, So I had to take Pop, To the vet, And the vet said to me, What's happening, And I said, I don't know,

I think she might have fallen badly, Or something, And he had a look, And he said, Wait, Wait, Wait, Oh, Yeah, Do you know what's happening? No. She has been attacked, By a big, Cat.

He says, Listen, He said, Look at this, Feel the teeth marks, And there was two, Big teeth marks, Where she'd been bitten, And shaken, So he said, This cat, Your weak kittens are learning, What it's like to be in the, In the big bad world, So, He, He, He, He helped her, And he gave her a couple of injections, And he got the swelling down, And we took her home, And then I went out visiting, In the afternoon, And I came back at five o'clock, And the cat was inside, Now the cat's not supposed to be inside, The cat's supposed to be outside, So I said to Mary, Why is the cat inside?

And you know what happened? Big, Bad, Fat, Ugly cat, Had come back, To Kylos, To our house, And Mary looked out, And she heard this, Meow, And it had got her, And bitten her again, In the same place, So you know what this is, This is a weapon, Against big, Fat, Bad, Ugly cat, I went to Akram's yesterday, He had everything I needed, Always does, And he gave me three of these, And the girls all have one of these, They're always loaded, They always have water, Apart from just now, And they're just, Pressured up, And the second we see, Big, Bad, Fat, Ugly cat, Do you know what we're going to do?

Let them have it, No mercy, Let them have it, Because when you spray cats with water, They hate it, And they run away, And they run away, Now, Boys and girls, Made me think about, What it's like to be a Christian, Because, When we are Christians, We have an enemy, Don't we?

[11 : 52] What's his name? Bethany? The devil, Yes, And just like, Big, Bad, Ugly cat, Like to get hold of the wee kittens, And try and hurt them, And do bad things to them, The devil, He is not nice, And he likes to, Hurt us, And he likes to do, Bad things, And he makes, He comes into our minds, And he makes us want to do bad things, And, He's strong, He's not as strong as Jesus, Nowhere near it, But you know what to do, Have you ever been in the playground, And, Somebody does something, And you start to feel, Yourself getting angry, And you're wanting to shout, And you know, It's not the right thing to do, And the devil is coming along, And he's saying, You're angry, Just shout,

Just say whatever's on your head, Or maybe boys, You're getting a bit wild, And somebody's annoying you, Playing football, And you see the chance, And you're going to give them a, Kick, And

you think, That's not the right thing to do, And the devil is saying, Go on, Just do it, Just do it, Just do it, You know what the devil hates?

He hates, The Bible, He hates, The Bible verses, And so, When, You don't throw the Bible at him, No, But, But, Listen just now, When you feel, That you're being tempted, When you're struggling, And you're thinking, Oh, I shouldn't do it, But I want to do it, Think about the Bible, Just say you're in a shop, And you were tempted, To go and steal a sweet, That was just there, Think about the Bible, What does the Bible say?

You must not steal, So the devil says, Look how delicious that is, These cookies that mum said, You can't have, I think I'll just have one, And you say to the devil, No, No, No, No, God said to me, In the Bible, I must not steal, And when he comes to other verses, And you start to feel afraid, And you can say, No, No, No, I can remember, In the Bible, That it says, Don't be afraid, When Jesus is the Lord, When he's my saviour, And every time you speak the Bible, The devil, It's like water, To the big bad ugly cat, And he runs away, It's about in the Bible, Where the devil is coming to Jesus, And he's trying to tempt him, With all these different things, And Jesus keeps giving him, Verses from the Bible, Says, In the word of God, It says, Man shall not live by bread alone, And the devil runs, So when you're struggling this week, And it won't just be you, It'll be me as well, And all the older ones, Let's remember,

Let's remember, To speak the Bible, To the devil, And let's remember, To ask God, Who's much stronger than the devil, To help us, So let's pray, Our heavenly Father, We thank you, We thank you, That if we're Christians, The one who is in us, Is much greater, Much stronger, Than the one, Who is in the world, We thank you, That Jesus went to the cross, To defeat the devil, Once and for all, And even though, He's making trouble, In our lives, Day by day, We thank you, That as we speak, Your word to him, He runs away, And Lord, We thank you, That as we pray, And ask for your help, And your power, You give us the power, To resist him, So we ask that you, Would help us in this week, In everything that's ahead of us, Help us to serve you, And to obey you, Help us to stay close to you, And to be on our guard, Knowing that you're always with us, To hear our prayers, [15 : 53] And continue with us, In Jesus name we pray, Amen, Okay, It used to be hard, To get all the children, To come out to the front, Now it's hard, To get them off the table, Okay, You can sit back, In your chairs now, Or you just, We're going to sing now, To God's praise, The words are on the screen, And the words are in, Mission phrase number, 987, If you would rather, Use the word, 987, Hear as love, Fast as the ocean, Love and kindness, As the flood, When the prince of life, For our ransom, Shed for us, Is precious blood, Okay, Okay boys and girls, You can go through, To the sun, Your skill now, Please, And if you'd be,

Turn in the bible, Please, To act as chapter 15, Acts chapter 15 and I suppose we're considering the sweep of the chapter although we're coming in more on the verses towards the end but just to put it in context and to remind ourselves there was a dispute that was going on in the church and there was a council called at Jerusalem and we read of that council in Acts 15 verse 1 through to verse 21 there were some who were saying that he needed more than Jesus to be saved there were some who were saying that you needed to actually become a Jew and do all these different rules and rituals in order to be saved to become a Christian and Paul and Barnabas and others as they debated this asserted correctly that we are saved by Christ alone by his grace alone through faith in him alone and so at this crisis point in the church thankfully they submitted to the word of God they listened to what God was saying and didn't go their own way and as a consequence the group is kept together and a letter then goes out to the Gentile believers and I'll just read from that point to the end of the chapter verse 22 says that then the apostles and elders with the whole church decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas they chose Judas called Marsabbas and Silas two men who were leaders among the brothers with them they sent the following letter the apostles and elders your brothers to the Gentile believers in Antioch

Syria and Cilicia greetings we have heard that some went out from us without our authorisation and disturbed you troubling your minds by what they said so we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing it seeming good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements you are to abstain from food sacrifice to idols from blood from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality you will do well to avoid these

mercies are.

[28 : 52] These two stanzas to God's face. I'm here to live as a kind, and I'm here to live as a kind. I'm here to live as a kind.

I'm here to live as a kind.

I'm here to live as a kind. I'm here to live as a kind.

I'm here to live as a kind. I'm here to live as a kind. I'm here to live as a kind.

I'm here to live as a kind.

[29 : 58] I'm here to live as a kind.

I'm here to live as, in peace.

I'm here to live as a like. shelters in Okay, thank you How willpara the dawn go?

ful. Thank you.

Thank you.

[32 : 39] Thank you.

Just before we study again, let's join you through God's prayer. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

through your word as we submit to it and as we have our hearts opened to it and so we pray now that you would open our hearts and Lord that you would open our eyes and unblock our ears and clear our minds from all that's distracting us guide us in our thoughts, guide us in our listening guide me in my words that everything that is said and done would be pleasing to you, O Lord our rock and our redeemer so be with us we pray and again we bring to you those who cannot be here we think of some in hospital, we pray on further we think of Neil Cameron, we think of Joan McCastle in particular and we ask that you would minister to them where they are and we thank you Lord for the prospect of Neil's return tomorrow and we pray that that would happen, that you would give him strength and Lord that you would prepare the way for that and we pray for Joan and we ask that you would increase her strength and that she would know that you are close to her we pray for others who are sick, some who are with us and we think especially of Lucy and we ask that you would uphold

Har and Amman and the boys at this time and that you would prepare them for all that's ahead we cannot see the future Lord, we thank you that you hold the future in your hand and so we ask that you would be with all those who are struggling with illness and with whatever it is that we are struggling with we with some who are at crossroads in terms of their lives and who are seeking your will we thank you that as we acknowledge you you promised that you will direct our parts and so we pray that you would direct those who are needing that wisdom that comes from heaven we pray for those who would love to be here but who are working who are elsewhere and we ask that you would equip them for all that they are called to in the responsibilities of life, that they would do it as unto the Lord and we pray on for those Lord who are either spiritually speaking asleep and who have no thought and no desire we ask that you would awaken their souls as we thank you that you awakened our souls in the past we acknowledge this is all of you and we pray that you would reach out to those who have no thought of you or who have drifted from you or whose love has grown cold at this time and minister to them and Lord now we pray that you would minister to us and that you would speak your word to us and Lord we pray for ourselves we pray for every other church in this area where Christ crucified is preached we pray for the children that the message of the gospel would be heard and spoken clearly and simply we thank you that we need no vast academic knowledge to be able to grasp the gospel that we come into salvation as children with that childlike faith looking to Jesus so may our minds and our eyes be focused upon Christ at this time and we pray this in Jesus name

[37 : 26] Amen My mind goes back about nine years now as I think about this opening illustration Mary and I were brand new parents of Anna at that point in time and I remember in these early months Mary used to meet every week with girls from her antenatal class which is here that's distracting I thought I could speak about her when she was in a different room so she used to meet with all these ladies in her antenatal class after they'd given birth and they'd have a coffee and a chat and basically they would show off their babies and they would boast about how wonderful their babies and their parentless skills were you know you would hear things like you know mine sleeps for 12 hours now they're in a really good routine this is three weeks in mine hasn't cried barely at all and you know eats no problem a wee bit further down the line anything I'd give them vegetables whatever no bother just eat it all

Mary would come back quite honestly traumatised I used to hate it she'd come back in the depths of depression saying what are we doing wrong you know it's the only us that has a baby that wakes up every 20 minutes and spits out every vegetable and cries and so on so these mothers and baby occasions over coffee were profoundly depressing affairs one Saturday though the dads actually got asked to take the children out for this coffee drink whilst the mothers on a Saturday morning had a long line and the dads didn't actually know the etiquette of these meetings so what we did is we had coffee and cakes and we chatted but we didn't realise that you're supposed to pretend that your child was perfect and so what we did is we told the truth to each other you know I can remember speaking to some of these guys saying what a nightmare

I feel like I haven't slept for a thousand years every two hours you're tearing your hair out and feeding is an utter trauma you're just this battle of wills day after day and all these bleak stories joyful as well but you know truth colourful proper stories of failure I suppose in parenting and when I came home and shared this with Mary there was relief for her and for me and encouragement in knowing that none of these babies and none of these mothers despite their port-and-pies were perfect and as we studied scripture and book of Acts in particular we see the church we see the baby church actually of Jesus Christ here and it's not perfect some people have this idea that the New Testament church was just absolutely blissful but we don't find that in scripture what we see here is that the church was not and still today is not the finished article what we see here the first point today is a learning church a learning church now when we think about learning my mind goes first of all to to L place on a car if you're out in the open road and the car in front of you has earthquakes on it then you make a learning because you know well they're learning so if they're driving a wee bit slow you don't blast the horn because you think well I don't want to stress them out they're just learning if they're getting a bit too close to words you don't you don't be overly critical because you realise when you're learning you make the odd mistake now what is the church week after week

I think we say this and we know this because we're living in this the church is not the building the church is people people who have been saved by Jesus people who are being sanctified day by day which means that we are learning how to follow Christ we are learning as God works in us how to be like Christ and some days we do well and some days we do badly and most days we do a bit of both and Acts 15 this chapter that we read in Acts 16 Acts 15 in particular is a chapter of contrast in the early part of the chapter which we're not really studying today we studied two weeks ago we have the Jerusalem Council and in the Jerusalem Council the church debated this huge major gospel issue the issue of how can I be saved how must I be saved and they got it right with Bibles that were open as they submitted to God as they cried out to him that he would guide them by the spirit they were able to agree that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone we are saved by his blood by his righteousness nothing more nothing less that's the first part of the chapter on the big issue on the gospel issue the church got it right and they agreed not to compromise on the truth of scripture they agreed not to dilute the grace of Jesus but on the lesser issue which we see from verse 36 through to verse 41 the issue essentially of ministry teams who should go out on mission

I believe the church got it wrong and what we see tragically as a result of that was Paul and Barnabas who were so close and who had been through so much together and who had been so effective in serving God they had such a sharp agreement verse 39 that they parted company they split big issue gospel issue they do the right thing they submit to God's word smaller issue personality issue they got it wrong they split now let's look at the details of why they actually disagree it's not a big section of scripture here the circumstances really are outlined in verses 36 to verse 38 Paul basically proposes a visit verse 36 to all these places that the church had been planted in all these places that they'd gone before to share the gospel

[45 : 03] Paul said Barnabas why don't we go and visit these churches remember all that we did there all the way the people responded let's go back and see how they're doing let's go and visit there Barnabas says that's a wonderful idea I'd love to see all these good folks again so Barnabas agrees to the visit and then in verse 37 Barnabas says why don't we take John Mark with us my cousin you can imagine Paul's face change John Mark we're not taking John Mark over my dead body are we taking John Mark NIV is actually very polite it says in verse 38 Paul did not think it wise to take him the Greek is much stronger than that it's in the Greek the tense that's used shows that Paul kept on saying no no no no no we are not taking no matter how many times you ask we are not taking

John Mark Barnabas kept on asking Paul kept saying no chance so they had a dispute and we can understand why Paul said no and it would be interesting to take a leak in a straw poll just now and ask you to put your hands up if you thought Paul was right or if you thought Barnabas was right commentators are very much divided on who's at fault here and Luke doesn't actually tell us as God inspires him from the way that he puts this forward who was right and who was wrong I think you can see both sides of the argument here depending on your personality you'll favor one or the other I could guess who would go with who can understand why Paul said no if you just flip back for a second to Acts chapter 13 and verse 13 we see exactly the reason that

Paul said no that in Pisidian Antioch this is a place where they bring the gospel it ends in a riot it's about lost their lives and it says there here's the team setting off from Paphos Paul and his companions sailed to Perida in Pamphylia where John left them to return to Jerusalem Paul deserted them says John Mark deserted them says Paul now why left we don't know maybe he was homesick maybe he was overstressed maybe he lost his courage we just don't know all we know is that from Paul's perspective when he really needed this guy he up sticks and he left he deserted them and so Paul is quite pragmatic in saying if we're heading off another mission we need to have our wits about us we need to have a strong team and that man is not dependable so he's not coming so you can understand why Paul said no certainly I can but I can also understand why Barnabas said yes

Barnabas by his very nature he is the son of encouragement that's his nickname and John Mark and Barnabas were close not just friendship wise but they were family they were cousins and Barnabas is just the type of guy who's always wanting to give somebody a second chance even more so probably if it was his own family so you can imagine Barnabas saying come on Paul this is just what John Mark needs yes he made a mistake we all make mistakes this is what he needs this is going to be the making of him just let him come you can imagine Paul saying he's not ready he's not mature he is not ready for this kind of role let him stay and steady up so we can understand the reason for their disagreement the thing is this disagreement was to do with personality and not the gospel and this disagreement should never have been allowed to ramp up to the extent that they parted company one commentator

Moody says this this was not a major issue this was not a matter of the gospel nor doctrine no one's salvation was at stake no teaching of God was being undermined there should have been a way to reach an agreement and yet there wasn't it's tragic now what do we take from this in terms of application I think we take two things at least and the first thing that we take is take the warning take the warning of this to think to some degree we've lived through a shade of this last year we were forced to make a decision on a big issue it was an issue of the gospel it was an issue of the authority of scripture it was an issue of the need to repent from sin and not relabel sin or seek to bless sin and as painful and as costly as that was there has been blessing and there is a sense of unity but let us not ever be complacent because if

[51 : 13] Paul and Barnabas could so quickly fall into disagreement and revision on the lesser issue when they were united on the big issue none of us are exempt all of us struggle myself first with the same sin that was at the centre of this dispute and so we listen to the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 2 where God says to him if you think you are standing strong be careful not to fall so we take the warning we're all sinners we're all needing to be on our guard but we also take the encouragement to it's kind of connects a little bit with the anti-natal class even Paul and Barnabas who were such great giants in the faith people who were full of the Holy

Spirit people who were full of wisdom people who risked their lives still they got it wrong sometimes things and I think God wants us to see that as we follow this tragic course to the end of this chapter I think there is peculiar encouragement in seeing the flawed reality of the church back then Acts 15 church was not the perfect church there were difficulties there were struggles there was a division here because it was a learning church sometimes they were learning even through their mistakes so we see our learning church the second point that we see here is the loving God the loving God now as we search the scriptures not just here but as we search the whole breadth of scripture one of the most powerful portrayals of the church of

Jesus Christ is that Jesus the striker as his bride Jesus views his church not as an inanimate object not as some kind of sprawling institution but he views his church as his bride the church is the bride of Christ God now I've stood in a place like this many times in the past on a wedding day and I suppose I get to see what you don't see I get to see right up close how the groom looks at his bride

as she comes up the eye and there's something powerful about the love and the joy that is captured in that moment but imagine that is how Christ looks upon his church that is how

Christ Jesus looks upon us if we know him if we have trusted him if we are part of his church not one particular denomination but part of his church if we are those who have confessed our sin if we are those who have looked in faith to Christ if we have trusted him if we are seeking to follow him as he enables us he looks at us and he loves us even though we're far from perfect even though we're still making mistakes still he loves us because God is the loving God you looking for true love today well you won't find it in Hollywood you won't find it in Bollywood and you won't find it on dating.com or whatever one of these sites you won't find it in anyone or anything in this world not true love not pure love see true love pure love is found only in

Christ love love and that relationship that we have with him bride and the groom listen to these verses that we studied a few months back ago again love the essence of true love love is patient love is kind it does not envy it does not boast it is not proud it is not rude it is not self seeking it is not easily angered it keeps no record of wrongs love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth it always protects always trusts always hopes always perseveres love never fails that love pure love true love is found only in

[56 : 44] Christ and the relationship we have with him here is love we sign vast as the ocean loving kindness as the flood when the prince of life our ransom shed for us his precious blood true love is not heart shaped true love is cross shaped and as we look to the cross again today as we must every day we see that God is a loving God why does he love us why does he want to know us because he is full of grace not because you and I are so lovable God God loves us and he wants us to come to know him not because of who we are it's because of who he is we sang it

Psalms 145 where I say the Lord is gracious and compassionate slow to anger and rich in love that's his nature that's his essence that's who he is God is love Romans 5 verse 8 God demonstrates his own love for us in this while we were still sinners Christ died for us while we were still learning while we were still hopeless while we were still grubby and ugly Christ died for us I was hearing a story this week a testimony of Stan Gowdy whose name will be familiar to many of you and I heard it second hand so bear with me if you know better but the very short version of it I got was Stan was in a place where he knew that he was a hopeless alcoholic and he knew that sense of shame and brokenness and hopelessness and somebody came up beside him and put his hand on his shoulder and said

Stan Jesus loves you and he thought me he loves me the sinner that I am he loves me and that truth changed his life that truth that Jesus loved him that Jesus died for him that Jesus would save him if he would turn to him changed his life and that's the gospel call for every one of us this morning this is the call from the one true loving God to sinners like you and I have you responded to that call yet and put your faith in him and find that love which satisfies your soul like no other love ever will sometimes you can be in a wee room like the room at the back there room around this hall and it once looked lovely but over time it gets a bit grabby and it gets a bit shabby and you think I must paint that room so you go and you get the paint out and you slap on the thing and it looks great you go back eight hours later it doesn't look quite so great isn't it quite as bright as you thought it first did you leave it for a few weeks or a month and it starts to look shabby again and all these cracks and marks are starting to come through so you need to reapply another quote and these biblical truths are truths that need to be regularly reapplied and slapped on thick week by week we need to hear you and

I need to hear yes that we are sinners yes that we are lost and without hope if we remain apart from Christ but we also need to hear time and time again that God is the gracious and loving God who will in no wise cast out anyone who comes to him in faith and he's the God who will in no wise wash his hands of those who often get it wrong and make amiss 1 John 4 dear friends let us love one another just where it gets practical just where we look each other in the eye we look at the cross now we look each other in the eye dear friends let us love one another for love comes from God everyone who loves has been born of God and knows

God whoever does not love does not know God because God is love this is how God showed his love among us he sent his one and only son into the world that we might live through him this is love not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins dear friends since God so loved us we ought also to love one another and that was a lesson that Paul and Barnabas actually needed to hear at this point in their history and it's one that we need to

hear and have regularly reapplied to our lives that we are called to love each other love is not all flowers and chocolates and romance and heart flutters love involves sacrifice it involves sometimes biting your tongue when you would rather not it involves sometimes speaking a kind word when it's not what's coming naturally it involves often times setting aside your personality and mine for the sake of the gospel so we have a learning church we have a loving

[63 : 53] God and finally very quickly we have a labouring God back in Los Caron I had a neighbour his name was Donnie Colonel and Donnie Colonel had a shed and in that shed was every conceivable type of tool it's a bit like the stores down the road there except in Donnie Colonel's shed things went sparkling and clean and present and correct sometimes Donnie put his tools to heavy use he was a grafter and one thing I noticed as I worked alongside Donnie over the years was if something broke he never threw it out never if it broke he never threw it out and probably the most powerful example of that to me was the bucket that he used to carry the table seat this bucket obviously in the past had come under huge pressure and it had broken and it was split now if I have a bucket that splits throw it away

Donnie Colonel he got the bucket drilled neatly holes around the split fishing twine and he sewed it back up no longer was it used for carrying water now it was for to taper seat and that was the thing with Donnie Colonel all those tools when he broke he didn't throw them out he didn't forsake them he just adapted them and he kept on working with them and he was the thinking in the world and he works through us actually because of who he is not because of who we are he works through us often in spite of us in spite of our brokenness and that's clear as we go from Acts 15 into Acts 16 which we're not really journeying into today we're just glancing forward as a taster what we see is even though there was a sad and sorry break between Paul and Barnabas Paul and Barnabas were still united in Christ they still came under the authority of the same word of God they still loved and wanted to preach the same gospel they were still brothers and even though there's that geographical physical split the gospel work goes on and what we see is Silas come forward and we see Timothy emerge so even though Paul and Barnabas split literally and go their separate ways the work of the gospel doesn't halt in actual fact the work of the gospel doubles and we see churches strengthened chapter 16 verse 5 we see that the church grew daily in numbers we see Christian workers emerge who who would have such a profound influence on the church back then that we're still talking about today till the work goes on God continues to work now here's the question as we just come to a conclusion does that make the Paul Barnabas split justifiable or excusable well I would say no it doesn't it's still sinful because Jesus prayer is that we would be united under the truth of scripture and not divided but even though on this occasion the disunity was sinful because it boiled down to a personality clash and not a bible gospel central issue it doesn't halt the progress of the gospel and so we have a striking illustration here of Romans 8 28 where Paul says in all things God works for the good of those who love him in all things God is working his purposes out and we see that glancing forward into the chapter as Lydia and the Philippians jailer and his family are brought to saving faith in Christ even though the church was sometimes making a mess as she was learning to follow Christ

God is still rubbing her and God is still working through her and that doesn't excuse our sin but it does magnify God's sovereignty and his grace and that's where we finish giving thanks for the fact that the God whom we bow before the God whom we worship he is sovereign he is gracious he is loving he is working he is patient with us as we seek day by day to continue to learn from him as we take time day by day to be with him let's pray our heavenly father our heavenly father we thank you that you speak to us through your word we thank you that we are we are guided we are given wisdom as we submit to the authority of scripture and Lord we thank you that you are the God who is patient with us you are the God who loves us and you are the God who works with us and through us and often times in spite of us you have told us that we are old cracked pots that we carry a great treasure of the gospel and so we pray that we would not compromise on it that we would not dilute it that we would not seek to ever step away from scripture but Lord that we would submit to it and that we would share that gospel and Lord that we would love each other as you first loved us and we pray this in Jesus name

Amen we sing to conclude for mission page 640 640 640 the words are on screen the words in the book if you'd rather the church's one foundation is Jesus Christ our Lord she is his new creation by water and the word from heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride with his own blood he bought her and for her life he died the words of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

be with us all both now and forevermore Amen thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you