

# Whitby Gospel Music Convention Morning Service

## Sermon

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Date: 19 May 2019

Preacher: Roger Carswell

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Let us turn together in our Bibles to read from God's Word. Lamentations and Chapter 3. If you have one of the Red Church Bibles, then that's page 826.

Page 826 in one of the Red Church Bibles. Lamentations, Chapter 3. If you're not exactly sure what that is, find the middle. The Bible, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah.

Lamentations. I'd be in real trouble if I didn't know that, wouldn't I? So Lamentations, Chapter 3. We're actually going to begin from verse 13, reading through to verse 26.

The author is talking about his own struggles. Verse 13 of Lamentations, Chapter 3. Here is God's faithful word.

He pierced my heart with arrows from his quiver. I became the laughingstock of all my people. They mock me in song all day long.

[ 1 : 1 5 ] He has filled me with bitter herbs and given me gall to drink. He has broken my teeth with gravel. He has trampled me in the dust. I've been deprived of peace.

I've forgotten what prosperity is. So I say, my splendor is gone and all that I'd hoped from the Lord.

I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I remember my heart. I remember them. And my soul is downcast within me.

Yet this I call to mind. And therefore I have hope. Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed. For his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, the Lord is my portion. Therefore I will wait for him.

[ 2 : 1 7 ] The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him. To the one who seeks him. It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

Amen. We are going to pray together. Now we are going to lead in prayer for matters concerning our own nation. Church is represented here. And for the ongoing work of the gospel.

Let us pray together. It is because your faithfulness is so great, O Lord our God, that we can come to you with prayer and faith.

Knowing that you hear us. Knowing that you answer us. Knowing that you are the God who is pleased and delighted when his people pray.

We come, O Lord, to bring to you the great needs of our heart, the burdens and concerns. We bring to you our nation, the United Kingdom. We pray, O Lord, that in the midst of turmoil and confusion and unrest, that, O Lord, your gospel and your truth may go forth powerfully and clearly.

- [ 3 : 26 ] We know that as a nation we need you. We have no answer in politics. We have no answer in finance. We have no answer in education. It is only when you, O Lord, visit us as a nation that we prosper and are blessed.
- And so we pray. We pray for our government and our prime minister. We pray, O Lord, that they may come to know you. That they may turn to your goodness and your good and faithful laws.
- That as a nation we would turn away from this downward slide into greater wickedness. And that we might give you the glory and the first place that you deserve. We pray for our own communities from which we come.
- Whether that be the Faroe Islands or other parts of the United Kingdom. We pray, O Lord, that we may know your blessing in our churches. Each church that's represented here.
- May we as a church be faithful to your word. To live it out and proclaim it and to stand up for it. We pray for those who preach in our churches.
- [ 4 : 31 ] That they might be men of God. That they might be men who love you. And who proclaim your word faithfully in the power of your spirit. We pray that, Lord, each church may know, Lord, the great ingathering of men and women to Christ as Savior.
- We pray for the ongoing work of the gospel music convention. For Paul that you would uphold and strengthen him. And bless him in the rest of this weekend. We pray for all those who come along.
- That, O Lord, those who are performers. Those who are listeners. That all may know you. All may glorify and honor you. And all may be done to the praise of Jesus.
- We pray for this coming three days of mission. Here in this church too. We pray for this community of Whitby. A lovely place to live. But many thousands still in darkness.
- We pray that you would bless Roger. As he preaches to us now. And through this week. We pray again, O Lord, that you would draw in men and women. And boys and girls.
- [ 5 : 34 ] Not only to hear the gospel. But to feel the power of the gospel in their lives. Bringing repentance and faith in Christ. Speak to us now then. Especially, we pray.
- And use your word. To hone us. To shape us. To save us. For we ask it all. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.
- Amen. Amen. We're going to sing our next hymn. And then Roger will come and bring to us God's word. Jesus, the name. High over all.
- In hell. Or earth. Or sky. In heaven. O earth. O y■■■■. Amen. Chao. George. Amen. Amen.
- Shall we pray?
- [ 7 : 47 ] Father, beyond the sacred page, we seek thee. And we do ask that now as we look together into your word, that you would speak to us and we would see Jesus.
- That you would give us a fresh glimpse of him. Indeed, that we might gaze on him and find salvation full and free. We ask in his name. Amen. Amen.
- Well, it is good to be here. I was thinking a few moments ago. I don't think I've ever spoken to such a talented group of musicians. So this is somebody who's not got a clue about music.
- I always get embarrassed when you're in a situation and they start clapping. Because if I try and clap, I find that very shortly, everybody else has changed the rhythm. I'm clapping the right rhythm.
- But everybody else has gone wrong and they stare at me. And I have no sense of rhythm at all. But there we are. So it's great to hear the Faroese folks sing. But there are lots of others who could sing as well.

- [ 8 : 44 ] But anyway, this afternoon and evening we've got more of that. And you'd be very welcome. And if Paul's not listening today, if you're a Yorkshireman, he's very good. Because there's no charge. And he's a very big-hearted man, is Paul.
- So do join us there in the afternoon at least. Let me just mention these next three days. Night by night, we're going to have a gospel meeting.
- But it is a little bit different. As you've heard, it'll be around tables. It'll be cafe style. And I, each evening, will be interviewing somebody at length. It'll be a 35-minute interview. We'll draw out their story.
- But they are fascinating stories, all three of them. And after the interview, then, I'll be explaining the gospel from the Bible in a way that ties in with what we've just heard. It's a wonderful opportunity to not only come along, but if you can bring friends as well, do.
- Now, I know many of you are going to be scattering after this evening and going back home. But some of you live not that far away. So, you know, a trip from Leeds or Sheffield isn't that far to come across for the evening.
- [ 9 : 47 ] And, you know, even if you're from Lancashire, you would be welcome. No, no. I'm very sincere there. We don't mind. And we'd love to see you night by night.
- Now, tomorrow evening, I'm going to be interviewing Tony Brown, ex-Jehovah's Witness. And we'll get insights as to why he joined them and what it was like to belong to them. And what motivates them to go out on the streets or go on the doors knocking.
- And then what was it that brought him to faith in Christ and the transformation and the new life that he found. He's a great communicator, is Tony. He spends his life now witnessing and working with Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons.
- And he's a fascinating character. Then on Tuesday night, Maureen Greaves. Now, I don't suppose most of you know her name. But you will remember that six years ago on Christmas Eve, a man was going to play the church organ in Sheffield and was murdered.
- Now, that was her husband. And she's going to tell the story of what happened, about how they both came to Christ, how they married, how they served the Lord together.
- [ 10 : 53 ] And then what happened and the impact that that made on her. And indeed, how she sought to reach out to those who took her husband's life. It's a very powerful story. And then on Wednesday, David Hamilton.
- He's Northern Irish. So you do need to sort of tune your hearing aid to quite follow all that he says. A UVF terrorist. He's never said to me, I've interviewed him many, many times, but he's never said to me how many people he murdered.
- But it's certainly a number, more than one. And a tough guy, I think a bit crazy if I'm going to be honest, he recently had a leg amputated and he said to the surgeons, I want to have this done without anesthetic.
- Now, I think that's crazy. But there we are. And he did, you know. So he's a tough sort of guy. But how he was converted in the Mays prison is remarkable.
- And I would love you to bring along an atheist, sit next to him or her and say, now, when you listen to this, if there is no God, you explain what happened. Because it is the most remarkable story.
- [ 12 : 01 ] So three great nights, followed by going into the word for the gospel. If you can't bring anybody, you're welcome. If you can bring somebody, you're especially welcome. And wouldn't it be wonderful if God did an amazing work and we saw people not only coming in and hearing the gospel, but coming to saving faith in Jesus Christ.
- And if you live beyond Yorkshire and Lancashire, I don't know what life is like beyond Yorkshire. But if you do, well, you'd be welcome to move north. But if you do, do pray for these three nights.

We are looking to God to do a great work. And then if I may, this is a more personal thing. I'm involved personally. I'm a trustee of this group. I would love you to pray for Yorkshire camps. I've been a Christian for many years.

And I think some of the most remarkable, dramatic, really, answers to prayer that I've ever witnessed in my life concerning Yorkshire camps and the way it was provided and the things that have happened.

Ask me afterwards if you want, and I'll tell you some of the stories. They are amazing. And they run camps in this gorgeous hall near Grassington, 30 acres of land.

[ 13 : 07 ] It's just idyllic. And if ever you're passing by, just pop in. And if there isn't a camp, they'd love to show you around. They say, just get people to see it. And then they fall in love with it. And it's true.

Now, Yorkshire camps is doing a great work of having camps all year round. And weekends, there's probably one this weekend, during the week, et cetera, for schools, for churches, for young people, teenagers, et cetera.

But they have desperate needs, urgent needs at the moment for a cook, a groundsman, and some administration help. Now, if you know anybody who can help, you know, get in touch.

But please pray that the Lord will send out laborers, these particular laborers, into this harvest field. Well, I've mentioned to one or two of you that after 31 years of living in the same home, my wife and I are downsizing.

We've got four children. Three of them live overseas. I don't know why. Can you imagine going to New Zealand? What were they saying to us? But there we are. And just one lives, well, works at Yorkshire camps.

[ 14 : 13 ] And we came to the conclusion, you know, this is not right for us to grow old, maybe die, and leave poor old Hannah to declutter 31 years of clutter in our house.

So we're in the process of downsizing and decluttering. My wife is particularly good at decluttering my stuff. I've got to be careful because she's sitting at the back and I don't want to give away too many clues.

But I have hidden away somewhere. I'm not telling her where. I have hidden away a big box of things I'm retrieving before they're stolen when I'm out and about.

And one of the things, it's not in the box but it's hidden, is a very precious picture of mine. I don't think it's an original, but who knows?

It's Rembrandt's portrait of, no, it's not original in case you're, of Jeremiah weeping over Jerusalem.

[ 15 : 15 ] If you've never seen that painting, oh, wow. It's powerful. And I have a large copy like this. It's just beautiful. But Jeremiah, what a character.

I love the honesty of the Bible. And I admire the Lord, if that's not too weak a word, who included the book of Jeremiah and Lamentations in his revelation to humanity.

God has given us his word and in his word he's included this deeply melancholic book, Lamentations. But who was Jeremiah?

Well, he was a prophet. He was called by God to speak against the people who were sinning and rebelling against the Lord. He was a sensitive young man.

But I don't know there was a boldness about him that you have to say, do you know, I admire the strength that you utilize from God himself to then go and proclaim?

[ 16 : 17 ] Because everybody was against him. The priests. So this was the religious hierarchy. The priests were against him. The prophets, the people who said that they were preaching God's word, they were not at all.

They were opposed to Jeremiah. Jeremiah, the princes, so it was the political elite, were opposed to Jeremiah. And the masses of the people were against him.

And this man throughout his life suffered intensely. He was imprisoned. And this wasn't some cozy, comfortable western prison. He was imprisoned. He was put in stocks and they threw things at him.

He was lowered by ropes into a deep, miry pit. And there in this dungeon he was left. He was accused of treachery.

He was eventually carried against his will to Egypt as a prisoner. This was a man who knew an intensity of suffering that is hard for us to imagine. But if we were trying to imagine what it would be like, can you imagine a law case which is the crown against you?

[ 17 : 29 ] You put your name. The crown against... And this is how Jeremiah must have felt. That all the authorities, all the powers that be, everybody that everybody else would respect and look up to, was against Jeremiah.

But God had called him to speak to the nation. In fact, in Lamentations chapter 1, he says, you know, I feel as though... I feel like a widow who's lost her husband and her child and no one goes mourning for me.

The deep pathos that he felt. The heavy emotion that burdened him day by day. But I don't know if you've noticed, but when we go to Genesis chapter 1 where God tells us how he created the world.

He created birds. So there was music before he created the first man and the first woman.

Now isn't that interesting? It's almost as if music was a creation ordinance and God wanted there always to be music. And here is Jeremiah in the deepest of sorrows reflecting over all that has happened and what's come upon his city and his nation and his people.

[ 18 : 46 ] Oh, he feels it deeply. And yet the book of Lamentations is a group of poems or songs. He turns his sorrow into music.

Now if you want to know what people are like, listen to their music. But if you listen to the music that people are listening to in Britain today, it will leave you deeply disturbed. Music is a sort of expression of the innermost feelings and emotions of men and women.

And here is Jeremiah writing poetry, writing music to express all that's going on in his mind. Mahalia Jackson famously said, blues are the songs of despair, gospel are the songs of hope.

Now I understand that, but the book of Lamentations brings the two together. There's despair and there is hope. And I find this very, very encouraging that in the midst of the darkest situation, nevertheless there is prayer, there's even praise and there's song.

So five poems, five songs. And they're written, I don't understand music, but I understand they're written in the quinar meter, which is basically the death march.

[ 20 : 03 ] So the rhythm of the book of Lamentations is da, da. You know it and this is how it's written.

Jeremiah had been called by God to speak to his nation and after faithfully preaching throughout the reign of five different monarchs, eventually, just as Jeremiah had warned, the Babylonians invaded, first of all in 597 BC and then later in 589 BC.

They pillaged and burnt and destroyed Jerusalem. And the temple and the town and all that was precious he saw just wrecked and ruined and he saw his people taken into captivity.

He'd warned about this, but it broke his heart. He didn't sort of feel vindicated. Ah, right, I warned you. So no, he was deeply disturbed. Now, the people taken captive in Babylon, the captured Israelites, they were asked to sing the songs of Zion.

But they responded and said, how can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land? But Jeremiah knew that music is to be used both in season and out of season, both in grief and in joy.

[ 21 : 31 ] And so we have this book. If you read through it, it's not an easy book because it is so sort of dismal. But nevertheless, he says, this is what I see.

Chapter 1, verse 1, he talks about Jerusalem being in ruins. Verse 11, he says, do you know, there's no bread. Everybody's sold their possessions just to get any crumbs together.

In chapter 2, verse 6, he says, the temple has been broken down and the palace is just in ruins. In chapter 2, verse 20, the women are eating their own offspring.

How desperate is that? And the prophets and the priests, the people who spoke against him, they've been killed, but he grieves for them. Chapter 4, verse 9, he says, do you know, I think it would be better to be killed by the sword than pierced by hunger.

Verse 10, compassionate women, he says, boiled their own children. Chapter 5, verse 2, the nation's inheritance, it's just gone, it's evaporated.

[ 22 : 37 ] He says that the people have become orphans. Chapter 5, verse 11, the women have been raped. And verse 12, the princes have been tortured.

And verse 13, the young men have been taken and forced into labour. Verse 14, do you know, all the dancing has been turned into mourning.

This is a very melancholic, very sad sort of book. And Jeremiah himself says, in chapter 3, verse 17, he says, you know, I've forgotten what happiness is.

It's so long since gone. Verse 14, he says, physically I am wrecked. He says, I've become the laughing stock of the people. I warned them, I love them, but now they just laugh and mock me.

Chapter 1, verse 14, he says, emotionally I am broken. And Prince William yesterday was saying that he's never experienced pain like when his mother, Princess Diana, died in that crash.

[ 23 : 41 ] It's interesting, I remember when my mother died, I had an intensity of pain that I've never experienced in any other way. And Jeremiah felt this.

Not so much now the pain of his mother, but the pain of the people he loved and wanted to bring back in repentance. Well, okay, this is written two and a half thousand years ago and it's an old book and it's very easily neglected, isn't it?

But what is its relevance to us? Here we are in 2019. What's the point of reading this? Why has God given us this word, his revelation for this day and age?

Now, we're not in the situation that Jeremiah was in by any means. But we are in a situation in the UK today where we sort of think, what is happening?

Trust at every level seems to have been destroyed. I love the Mac cartoon that was in the Daily Telegraph some years ago. It's a gorgeous one.

[ 24 : 41 ] It was a bespoke tailor measuring up a politician for a new suit. And the tailor just said, does sir want to line his own pockets? Yeah.

He had another one where he had the BBC newsman reading the news. He said, this is 10 o'clock. No, it is really. We don't believe anything anybody says anymore, do we?

We've got to a stage where trust has gone. But I have to say as well, I spend a lot of my time travelling around. I meet with Christians in all sorts of backgrounds, different churches, different parts of the UK.

There is one common conversation now that I seem to have over and over and over again. And that's basically how hard things seem to be in church work, in spiritual life, and the sort of despair over all that's going on in the government and the legislation they've brought in over the last few years.

It seems to me that since 1964, Sir Alec Douglas Hume was Prime Minister, but he's long since forgotten.

[ 25 : 47 ] Every government since then, of whatever colour, whatever flavour, has legislated against the Ten Commandments. Every one of them. And an interesting thing seems to happen.

That Christians are horrified about the proposed legislation and oppose it vehemently. And then eventually the bill is passed, it becomes an act of parliament and it becomes law.

And what happens? The Christians go along with it. And then even advocate it. We seem to have forgotten the authority of the Bible and its parliament and legislation that is dictating our agenda.

And some people feel this isn't right. What has happened to our nation? What happened to a God-fearing nation of some decades ago? Our last two prime ministers, David Cameron and Theresa May, have not only legislated against the Ten Commandments, but paid for civil servants to take that legislation and persuade other nations to follow suit.

What a state we've got into. When 200 years ago we were the great missionary-sending nation, and now. So Theresa May goes to Africa and gives them £220 million to set up abortion clinics.

[ 27 : 06 ] What a nation we have become. And it's very easy for us to, as it were, mimic the sort of feelings that Jeremiah had.

And we sort of pour them all out, one after the other. This has happened, and this has happened, and this, and this. And we despair. And yet, though these things hurt God's people, we love the Lord, we love the Word, and we believe this is our Father's world and we want Him to be honoured.

Nevertheless, in the book of Lamentations, and I'm convinced in our hearts too, there should be, and there is in Lamentations, a note of hope, of glorious optimism, despite the darkness and the bleakness that we seem to see around us.

So, in Lamentations, yes, there's this dismay, and yet, Jeremiah remembers that God still reigns, chapter 3, verse 22, through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.

They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says myself. Therefore I hope in Him. The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.

[ 28 : 19 ] Amazing! Whatever's going on around about us, it is possible for us to enjoy a relationship with God that is real, that is intimate, that's precious. We can spend time with Him in His Word, and praying, communing with Him, praising Him, being together with other believers, and the joy that there is.

Yes, there may be bleakness outside, but inwardly, we can know that God is in control. Nothing's ever taking Him by surprise. He still is on the throne. God has never uttered the words, oh, I didn't expect this.

There's never been an emergency cabinet meeting in heaven. God has never, as it were, scratched His head and said, oh, what do we do now? He is in control. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows all things.

Chapter 5, verse 19, we get the same sort of theme. You, O Lord, remain forever. Your throne from generation to generation. We're going to sing shortly the hymn, Great is Thy Faithfulness.

And of course, it's based on chapter 3, verse 23. It was written by Thomas Chisholm. He was a pastor, a young man who trained for the pastorate, a godly man, and was a very effective preacher.

[ 29 : 35 ] And yet he had to stand down from the pastorate after just one year because of ill health. But it was he who wrote the hymn, Great is Thy Faithfulness.

Whatever is going on, God is still working out His purposes. God still knows what He's doing.

And that is true not only nationally, it is true individually. You know down at the Gospel Music Convention, I have my bookstall and I have all sorts of banter and chatter with numerous individuals that I catch up and so many have shared over the last two days there that the burdens that they've had, their daughter dying, the wife having a stroke, everything collapsing around them, their church in the point of closure, and one after another.

And yet, God is still working out His purposes. Secondly, throughout this bleak book, Jeremiah recalls that God has redeemed him.

Chapter 3, verse 58. O Lord, You have pleaded the case for my soul. You have redeemed my life. Verse 22. Through the Lord's mercies, we are not consumed.

[ 31 : 00 ] His compassions fail not. Interesting that Jeremiah, as it were, could see, how clearly, I don't know, but he could see through the centuries to come that eventually there was going to be a way whereby he could be reconciled to God and redeemed.

He was experiencing it now, but we can look back on what he looked forward to and think, oh, God has done something amazing. God Himself has come into our world.

This vast, infinite God, big enough to become small, born and laid in a manger, clothed in humanity, the God-man. Born to go to a cross and die to shed His blood that lost humanity might be bought back and brought into a relationship with Himself.

Redemption. Jeremiah knew something of it. We know much more clearly that the Lord Jesus Christ has come. And yes, He was attacked.

He was vilified. He was mocked. He was plotted against by the religious leaders, by the civic authorities, by the masses, by the people who should have known better.

[ 32 : 17 ] He was taken and crucified. And yet, hanging on that cross, He was to take on Himself the sin of the world, the rebellion of this world laid on Jesus.

There are sins which hit the headlines, aren't there? And sometimes we're horrified by them. But there are other sins which just harden our hearts.

Do you ever feel horrified by what you've just said? Or thought? Or done? I do.

Once in a while, I don't know just the fact that, and I'm a Christian, you know, I love the Lord, and I think, oh, Roger Carlswell, have you just done that? Have you just said so? Have you just ignored this and just walked on?

Do you ever feel like that, God? Why would you love me? God has given us ten commandments. Jesus summarized them, didn't he? You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

[ 33 : 25 ] Have I loved God with everything I have and am, all my being? No. Have I loved others as I love my... No. And that sin, which cuts me off from God, would keep me out of heaven, would condemn me to hell.

Jesus carried on the cross every last bit of it laid on him and hanging there, dying out of love for us.

He paid the penalty that it would take us all eternity to pay. Oh, Jeremiah, yes, the situation is gloomy, but you still know that God's in control and you know that you are redeemed.

I wonder if you know that. You know there's come that moment in your life when turning from your sin in repentance, you trusted Jesus Christ by faith and the crucified, risen Christ became the one who not only had bought you, but brought you into this close relationship with God that is eternal.

Jeremiah knew it. But Jeremiah as well recognised the need to repent. Chapter 3, verse 40.

[ 34 : 43 ] Let us search out and examine our ways and turn back to the Lord. When John the Baptist began his ministry, he began, and he was very direct, he spoke specifically to individuals, groups of people, and he said, you need to repent.

You soldiers, you tax collectors, you, to repent. Jesus began his ministry in exactly the same way, repent. Peter, when he preached that first great Christian sermon on the day of Pentecost, what did he say?

Repent. The Apostle Paul, all the way through the book of Acts, every sermon of Paul which is given to us, usually in pray C4, it's almost as if we've got his sermon notes only, but every one, he talks about the need to repent.

How does a person come to Christ? Well, they come in repentance and faith, but as Christians, don't we need to repent? Lord, forgive me for the way I was yesterday. Lord, just help me to keep more close to you and to learn to hate sin and love you.

And Jeremiah had called the people to repent. He said, just acknowledge that you've gone the wrong way, turn from it, and you'll find forgiveness. forgiveness, but they refused. On one occasion, the Apostle Paul was preaching in Athens and he said this, God commands all men, all women, everywhere, to repent.

[ 36 : 06 ] So God's given us ten commandments which actually, in thought and word and deed, we've broken, but he gives us one more commandment, doesn't he? Repent and receive forgiveness. And one last theme that comes through this melancholic book.

Jeremiah reminds himself as he writes these poems, these songs, that God restores and saves. Chapter 3, verse 26, it is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

Chapter 5, verse 21, you get the same idea. Turn us back to you, Lord, and we will be restored. Renew our days as of old.

It can happen to a nation and I pray that God will turn again this nation back to himself. It can happen to a nation. It happens to individuals too.

The Bible puts it in a very quaint sort of way. He'll restore to us the years that the locusts have eaten. Although it's wasted and maybe wicked. He's not only willing to forgive but make up for.

[ 37 : 25 ] On Wednesday night we have David Hamilton and what a character he is. So he's imprisoned, life imprisonment in the maze prison. And there he is, this tough sort of guy.

And on one occasion, I don't want to spoil all the story, he was led through some very unusual circumstances to start reading his Bible.

He had to start halfway through the book of Acts because there was a little Gideon Bible that he had in his prison cell. But the trouble is Gideon Bibles are made of very thin paper which when you're a prisoner are ideal for making cigarettes.

So he'd smoked his way through Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and a half of Acts. So he starts reading. And it led to his remarkable conversion. What do you do in prison all day?

Well David's a voracious reader. He still reads about four hours every day. So he read a lot but he also tattooed himself. So with a needle and ink. He covered his body with tattoos.

[ 38 : 28 ] But then he was converted. Down his left arm he tattooed a naked woman. And then he'd become a Christian. What do you do with that?

Well he tattooed a bikini on her. He made he made her respectable. Eventually you can see it now he turned her into a dragon but that's a different story. But do you know I love this.

Tattooed on his the palm of his right hand were the letters S-E-X. But then he became a Christian. And every time he put his hand out to shake hands it just felt embarrassed.

So he prayed God what do I do with this tattoo? Do I just turn it into a big blue splurge? A day or two later there he was with all the other guys at a row of sinks washing, shaving.

He filled his sink with hot water. He put his hands in and those three letters S-E-X just floated to the surface. He pulled the plug and down the plug hole went his tattoo.

[ 39 : 31 ] It didn't happen to any of the other tattoos but that one just went away. Now whether you believe that or not is up to you but at least believe the metaphor of it.

When a person comes to that moment in his or her life when they turn from their sin and trust Jesus Christ all the past is washed away.

There are many promises in the Bible that say exactly the same thing. God will separate our sins from us as far as the east is from the west. He'll cast them all behind his back. He'll cast them into the deepest ocean.

He'll blot them out. He'll wash them, cleanse them away. God promises forgiveness. And I want to say on the authority of what God himself has said and what Jesus has done whoever you are however you've lived whatever state you're in no matter how much you despair about the state of the nation or your own condition.

The Lord Jesus Christ has loved us. He's given himself for us. He's died. He's been buried. He's risen. And he's the one who says look come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I'll give you rest.

[ 40 : 41 ] Not only will he forgive but by his spirit he comes to live within us and he takes us through life's journey. He'll take us one day through the valley of the shadow of death and he'll take us home to be with him in heaven.

Heaven is not a reward for doing good. Heaven is a gift which Jesus purchased and he offers to us. People say how can a God of love send people to hell?

How can a holy God not send people to hell? Well there is an answer. It's because the penalty has been paid. Jesus has died.

Jesus has risen. And today today his desire for you is that you turn from all that is wrong and trust Jesus Christ and whatever chaos there might be around us you can know peace with God.

You can know him with you step by step through life's journey and into eternity. I would urge you this very morning if you've never been converted if you've never truly trusted Christ ask him to become your Lord and Saviour.

[ 41 : 52 ] Call on the name of the Lord and be saved. That's how the Bible puts it. We're going to sing that great hymn Great Is Thy Faithfulness but afterwards I'm going to pray a prayer that you could pray if you would ask Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Saviour.

And while you sing this hymn would you consider that the most urgent need you have if you've never trusted Christ is to call on the name of the Lord with me and ask him to forgive you.

But let's first of all stand and sing Great Is Thy Faithfulness. Praise is Thy faithfulness O God, my Mother There is no shadow of turning within Thou takeest not my compassion save me not save me not Thou takeest not my compassion save me not Thou takeest not my compassion save me not Christ, thou hast been Thou forever will be Thou forever will be Great is Thy faithfulness Great is Thy faithfulness

Great is Thy faithfulness For in Thy glory new mercies I see All I have needed Thy hand hath provided Great is Thy faithfulness Lord, unto Thee God, and for sin And the peace And the peace And the endurance Thine O'er Presence To cheer And to die Strengthful To gain And prideful For tomorrow blessings blessings

All my good and thousand beside Great is Thy faithfulness Great is Thy faithfulness Glory My morning New mercies I see All I have I have Thou provided Great is Thy faithfulness Glory to me Please be seated Let me just say I note I've got the order of the people sharing their story the wrong way round happens I so on Tuesday it's David Hamilton on Wednesday it's Maureen Greaves so sorry about that on the way out

[ 45 : 25 ] I'd like to give you all a little you know I'm a great believer in he who doesn't use propaganda is a proper goose so I'd like to give you all a little little leaflet on the way out which has a picture of Rembrandt's picture of Jeremiah weeping over Jerusalem in it it's a little gospel tract based on the theme of art so you'll see it I'd like to give you all one and I have information about Yorkshire camps if you'd like one of those do ask but if you know that you've never truly trusted Christ it really is the most important thing to make sure you're right with God in a hundred years from now all of us will be in eternity and to be honest looking around but it's so vital we make sure that we're right with God and that we're going to be with him and not to be lost and whatever is happening in the world and whatever we see in our daily newspapers or on television look your greatest need is to be right with

God and I would urge you to simply cry out to God with a sincere heart and ask him to save you and by his spirit to come and live within you and to make you his and he will if you genuinely pray he will I'm going to pray a prayer I'm going to pray it slowly and deliberately and I just encourage you to not out loud but in your heart and mind echo personalize these words and make them your own and if you pray with me at the end I'll be in the foyer and imagine Paul will be there as well we both will have this little booklet called Trust in Christ in our hand say to Paul or to me I prayed that prayer or I need that booklet and we'll gladly give you one it's got the prayer printed in it but it's also got some sort of tips about how we can mature and grow in our Christian faith in it and I think you'd find it very helpful so just say to Paul or me I need that booklet I prayed that prayer this morning wouldn't it be wonderful if all of us left knowing our sins were forgiven because of all that Jesus accomplished for us in his death and resurrection so I'm going to pray this prayer

I encourage you to echo these words and then I'll pray for the Lord's blessing on us as we go into this new week dear God you know everything there is to know about me therefore I want to say I am sorry for all my sin and with your help I want to turn from it I do believe Jesus died for me and rose from the dead please forgive me by your spirit come and live within me become my Lord and Saviour please make me yours and help me to follow you for I pray in Jesus name Amen and Father we thank you for this weekend a very special one in Whitby we thank you Father for the gospel music we've enjoyed but thank you for the gospel thank you that

Jesus loved us and gave himself for us and as we go out now into the town and into our daily course of life in this coming week may we do so with a sense of your presence wanting to live and speak for the Lord Jesus in all that we say and do bless us yes but make us a blessing to many others we pray in Jesus name Amen