

Yateley Baptist Church, Sunday 4 July 2021

Opening Prayer

Hymn: Praise! 399

I have a friend whose faithful love
is more than all the world to me;
it's higher than the heights above,
and deeper than the deepest sea;
so old, so new, so strong, so true;
before the earth received its frame,
he loved me – blessèd be his name!

2 He held the highest place above,
adored by all the sons of flame,
yet, such his self-denying love,
he laid aside his crown and came
to seek the lost, and at the cost
of heavenly rank and earthly fame,
he sought me – blessèd be his name!

3 It was a lonely path he trod,
from every human soul apart;
known only to himself and God
was all the grief that filled his heart:
yet from his track he turned not back
till where I lay in want and shame
he found me – blessèd be his name!

4 Then dawned at last that day of dread
when, desolate but undismayed,
with wearied frame and thorn-crowned head
he, now forsaken and betrayed,
went up for me to Calvary,
and dying there in grief and shame
he saved me – blessèd be his name!

5 Long as I live my song shall tell
the wonders of his matchless love:
and when at last I rise to dwell
in that bright home prepared above,
my joy shall be his face to see,
and bowing then with loud acclaim,
I'll praise him – blessèd be his name!

E A Tydeman (1842-1914)

Reading: Acts 25:13-26:32, ESV

¹³ Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus. ¹⁴ And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man left prisoner by Felix, ¹⁵ and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews laid out their case against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. ¹⁶ I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone before the accused met the accusers face to face and had opportunity to make his defence concerning the charge laid against him. ¹⁷ So when they came together here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought. ¹⁸ When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed. ¹⁹ Rather they had certain points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive. ²⁰ Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wanted to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them. ²¹ But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to Caesar." ²² Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow", said he, "you will hear him."

²³ So on the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. ²⁴ And Festus said, "King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. ²⁵ But I found that he had done nothing deserving death. And as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to go ahead and send him. ²⁶ But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write. ²⁷ For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him."

²⁶ So Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defence:

² "I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defence today against all the accusations of the Jews, ³ especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

⁴ "My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. ⁵ They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee. ⁶ And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, ⁷ to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! ⁸ Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?"

Continues on next page →

⁹ “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.
¹⁰ And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

¹² “In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.
¹³ At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. ¹⁴ And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ ¹⁵ And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.
¹⁶ But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,
¹⁷ delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸ to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

¹⁹ “Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰ but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. ²¹ For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. ²² To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³ that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

²⁴ And as he was saying these things in his defence, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.” ²⁵ But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. ²⁶ For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. ²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.” ²⁸ And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?”
²⁹ And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.”

³⁰ Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them. ³¹ And when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, “This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.” ³² And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

Hymn: Praise 2! 7

In Christ alone my hope is found,
he is my light, my strength, my song;
this cornerstone, this solid ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all-in-all,
here in the love of Christ I stand.

2 In Christ alone!—who took on flesh,
fulness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
scorned by the ones he came to save:
till on that cross as Jesus died,
the wrath of God was satisfied—
for every sin on him was laid;
here in the death of Christ I live.

3 There in the ground his body lay,
light of the world by darkness slain:
then bursting forth in glorious day
up from the grave he rose again!
And as he stands in victory
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
for I am his and he is mine—
bought with the precious blood of Christ.

4 No guilt in life, no fear in death,
this is the power of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
can ever pluck me from his hand;
till he returns or calls me home,
here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Stuart Townend & Keith Getty

Sermon: Acts 25:13-26:32 – Fools for Christ's Sake

"We are fools for Christ's sake." (1 Corinthians 4:10a)

1. The Wisdom of the World

2. The Foolishness of Preaching

3. The Courage to be Fools

Hymn: Praise! 618 (adap)

Facing a task unfinished,
that drives us to our knees,
a need that, undiminished,
rebukes our slothful ease,
we, who rejoice to know you,
renew before your throne
the solemn pledge we owe you
to go and make you known.

2 Where other lords beside you
hold their unhindered sway,
where forces that defied you
defy you still today,
with none to heed their crying
for life, and love, and light,
unnumbered souls are dying,
and pass into the night.

*We go to all the world,
with Kingdom hope unfurled;
no other name has power to save
but Jesus Christ the Lord.*

Frank Houghton (1894-1972); Keith & Kristyn Getty

3 We bear the torch that flaming
fell from the hands of those
who gave their lives proclaiming
that Jesus died and rose.
Ours is the same commission,
the same glad message ours,
fired by the same ambition,
to you we yield our powers.

We go to all the world...

4 O Father who sustained them,
O Spirit who inspired,
Saviour, whose love constrained them
to toil with zeal untired,
from cowardice defend us,
from lethargy awake!
Forth on your mission send us
to labour for your sake.

We go to all the world...

We go to all the world...

Prayer

Hymn: Praise! 779

My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
no merit of my own I claim,
but wholly trust in Jesus' name.

*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
all other ground is sinking sand.*

2 When darkness veils his lovely face,
I rest on his unchanging grace;
in every high and stormy gale,
my anchor holds and will not fail.

Edward Mote (1797-1874)

3 His oath, his covenant and his blood
support me in the rising flood;
when all around my soul gives way,
he then is all my hope and stay.

4 When the last trumpet's voice shall sound,
O may I then in him be found,
clothed in his righteousness alone,
faultless to stand before the throne!

Closing Prayer