

Philippians 1

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 November 2015

Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 00] As some of you will remember, we began last Lord's Day evening to look at the letter to the Philippians, and we looked partly at the geography of Paul's trip to Philippi, and his situation there and all that he suffered, as was recounted there in Acts chapter 16 principally, and his encounter with Lydia, with the Philippian jailer, with the girl who was demon-possessed, and her masters who were so incensed against Paul and Silas when they cast out the demon and they lost their hope of gain.

How that Paul and his companions then were flogged by the Philippian magistrates, and then released the next day, no doubt to abate the bloodlust of the mob once they were whipped up, and that Paul had kept quiet about his Roman citizenship until they had done their worst.

And then the next day made them aware of what they had done. By which time, of course, the Philippian jailer had already been converted, and his family, the magistrates, now knew that they had more than crossed the line by flogging publicly uncondemned Roman citizens, they who prided themselves on their status as a Roman colony, and how it suggested to you that it is very likely that this may have been one of the means whereby the Philippian church was in all probability allowed to grow and develop in peace without interference from the authorities because they knew they were already in a weakened state and on the back foot because of what they had done.

This fledgling church was led by apostles who were Roman citizens against whom the Philippian authorities had enacted violation and abuse.

So Philippi was, I would suggest you, protected to an extent. Having witnessed what Paul and Silas were prepared to suffer on their behalf, perhaps this was a factor in the great love that they showed to Paul, the consistent help and support that they sent to him time and again, whether he was nearby in Thessalonica or whether he was far away in Rome.

[2 : 16] They never ceased to show and to convey their love and concern for him. Any gift that is given is not so much impressive by its size or its lavish extent.

A gift that is given is special because it indicates that the giver has remembered and thought of the person to whom they are giving it.

And this is Paul's great joy. Not, oh, look at the amount of money you've given to me, but rather, you have remembered me. Far away and in prison in Rome, you continue to remember me.

You continue to uphold me in prayer. You continue to sustain me with your gifts of love. This, as we mentioned last week, is a letter from a friend to friends.

The Philippians are a church beloved in Christ by Paul. We look at chapter 4, verse 1. Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

[3 : 21] He couldn't have spelled it out more clearly, no matter what words he has used here. They may indeed be Paul's favourite church, as we suggested last Lord's day evening.

But despite his great love for them, they are not Paul's great obsession. His great obsession, the thing which he is so concerned with, is Christ.

Christ is the thing, the person with whom the Apostle Paul could be reasonably said to be obsessed. He is constantly filled with the knowledge and the words and the descriptions of Christ. In chapter 1 alone, which is our subject for tonight. Chapter 1 alone. The name Christ Jesus or Jesus Christ appears 8 times in these 30 verses.

The name Christ in isolation appears 10 times. The name God appears 5 times. And in this first chapter, Paul is almost incapable of stringing two verses together without mentioning Christ in some way.

[4 : 29] Not quite absolutely, because we see, for example, verses 3 to 5. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making requests with joy for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.

But the next verse, he mentions Christ, and the previous verse, he mentions Christ. And even in these verses 3 to 5, three verses in a row, he still mentions God, but he doesn't mention Christ. That's the only time that he puts three verses together without mentioning Christ. There's also verses 24 and 25. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith. Doesn't mention Christ. Amazing. The next verse, he does. The previous verse, he does. He is almost incapable of stringing two or three verses together without mentioning Christ somewhere. He is overflowing with his love and obsession for Jesus Christ. And his work, and especially his name, is woven through this chapter like threads of luminous gold lighting up a tapestry.

[5 : 38] Indeed, the apostles' delight at the Philippians' growth and fruitfulness in Christ is the great theme of this letter.

Now one commentator has calculated, or counted, that in the entire letter to the Philippians, the phrase, the phrase, in Christ, occurs no less than 34 times.

The phrase, in Christ Jesus, occurs 48 times. Over and above, just the name in Christ. And in the Lord occurs 50 times.

This is the great theme of the letter, his desire that they go in the Lord, in Christ, in Christ Jesus. It has been said that the Christian lives in Christ in the same way as the fish lives in the sea. The bird lives in the air. And the roots of a tree live in the soil. In other words, it is their natural habitat.

[6 : 40] It is their definitive environment, out of which their very identity, indeed their very life, will not long survive.

A Christian must live in Christ, or he or she will not really live at all. The fish out of water will suffocate. Oh yes, it may flap and splatter about in the land for a few minutes, but eventually it gets weaker and weaker and it dies.

Yes, the tree, once you uproot it out of the soil, the roots are all there sticking up into mid-air. Initially, everything will be fine. If you have the strength to plonk it back in the soil and pat it round again, it might survive again.

But, if it's left above ground, the tree will gradually dry out and wither and perish. And it's good for nothing but to be chopped up and burnt. And the bird of the air may, yes, hop along the ground and live for a while if he cannot fly.

But, how will he find food? How will he know where to soar and swoop with his fellow birds to see where food is to be found? How will he escape from predators?

[7 : 53] How, in reality, can his spirit, his life force adjust to such a loss of flight, of freedom, of natural interaction with others of his kind?

He will die because his spirit knows there is no longer anything for him to live for. The air, the sky, is his home.

As the sea for the fish, as the soil for the roots of a tree. They cannot live outside their habitat. So, likewise, the Christian, designed and created to glorify God and enjoy him forever, cannot do so if he or she be not continuously in Christ.

As Paul wrote to the Colossians, chapter 3, verse 3, For ye are dead, and your life is fed with Christ in God. Paul loves the Philippians so much, precisely because they, like him, love Christ so much. They live in Christ. They live, breathe, eat, sleep Christ. He is their very life. He is their very existence.

[9 : 16] And they desire to move, as every true Christian would do, simply from this state where we know Christ a little, to glory where we shall know Christ perfectly.

They live in Christ. And because they love Christ so much, Paul delights so much in them. So we have, we might say in this first chapter, a subdivision that we might divide into three sections. The first section we touched on, verses 1 to 11, last Lord's Day evening. And that is a section that we might entitle, remembrance and gratitude. Verse 3, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.

He's thanking the Lord while he remembers the Philippians, because they remember him. Why do they love him so much? Not simply for what he endured to safeguard their growth, but also because

they can see that he is being mightily used of the Lord to further the precious gospel of Christ, to expand the kingdom of God, to plant new churches all over the Greek and Roman world. He is being used of the Lord as few other apostles are used. Now, if we love Christ, then all of us will have, let's be honest, all of us will have other fellow Christians with whom we do not really get on, and with whom we do not really agree.

[10:44] We don't like the way they do something, or we don't like their style, or we don't like their particular approach, and really we'd rather not, you know, have too much to do with them. But it may be the case that even if we think that, we may recognize that the Lord uses them, perhaps mightily, in some situation or other.

Perhaps in an environment to which their particular gifts are ideally suited. And so the Lord grows and expands his kingdom through that individual, through that person, that Christian man or woman, and he uses them for the furtherance of his kingdom.

If we love Christ, we cannot help but love those who serve Christ and who further his kingdom and who serve the king himself. Because if we love the Lord, we will love those who love the Lord. We will love the brethren, brothers and sisters, in that sense. So we have this remembrance and gratitude. And as we, you know, which looks, as we touched on last week, to the promised completion of the work which Christ has begun.

We look at verse 6 briefly. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Now who has begun the good work in him?

[12:04] Not Paul. But Christ has begun his good work in him. He has begun to convert them from the world to the faith of himself. He has begun to change their heart.

He has begun to renew their lives. And having begun to do it, he is going to carry it on to completion. Now if, let's think of a worldly example.

Let's say, for example, that a businessman wanted to take a site of wasteland and so buy it and invest in it. And he was going to clear the ground. He was going to sink down foundations and he was going to get a huge, big, glamorous office block on it where all the companies and all the people were going to come and make their headquarters there.

And it was going to make him a phenomenal amount of money. But to do that, he had to build. He had to sink down his foundations. He had to build up his concrete, his girders, his glass. All the facilities had to be put into there.

And you see that the diggers are in there. They've begun. The foundations have gone up. The girders have started. But that's where we walk in. And we see this half-finished job. We see the girders going up.

[13:06] We see the foundations. We see all the equipment lying there and the diggers and all the vehicles and the workmen with their hard hats banging away about whatever it is they're doing. And we think, yeah, yeah, but come on.

This isn't done. This is a half-finished job. What's the use of that? The businessman might just walk away and say, nah, I think I'll just pour down the drain the money I've invested in that so much. And I think I'll start somewhere else fresh.

No, if he does that, he's going to lose his investment. He's never going to complete the job. He's never going to see a return on his labor. He is going to be a laughingstock. And he's going to lose thousands, if not millions.

If, in a worldly context, somebody who has made such an investment is not going to walk away from it until it is completed and until he begins to see some kind of a permanent, how much more is God who has invested literally the lifeblood of his Son and the outpouring of his Spirit upon those whom he has converted from darkness to light, from death to life itself, from the world to himself and to the kingdom of light.

He has begun that good work in them. He has sunk the foundations. He has begun the building process. They are not yet complete. Let's not pretend they are.

[14:27] None of us is complete yet in this world as a finished article. If we were fully ripe for heaven, we'd be there. If we were the finished product, we'd already be in the throne room of glory.

There is yet a work to do. We are, as our American friends love to use the phrase, a work in progress. Now, if that is the case, it doesn't mean God has said, oh, well, I'll stop halfway. I'll just walk away. No. He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Jesus does not begin that which he is not going to complete.

He does not start that which he is not going to finish. Apart from anything else, it is a waste of his time and resources to do so. And God does not waste anything.

We read in Psalm 56, one of my favorite psalms, you know, put down my tears into thy bottle. Are they not in my book? If every teardrop is bottled, if every sigh and expression of sorrow is recorded in God's book, then nothing, no single breath, no single teardrop, no single beat of our heart is for nothing.

[15:46] It is all part of the building, the work, the glory that the Lord intends, his workmanship, his children, to glorify him at the last.

It is all utilized, part of his wonderful work. It is only if we be out of Christ, it is only if we do not lay hold upon the invitation and the blessing and the offer of the forgiveness of sin that all that the Lord has given us ends up being wasted.

I remember once, many years ago, speaking to a lady whose husband and her had been abroad in Africa and in the country they had been in, they'd been working alongside some kind of, you know, project or a farm and wells and things that dug.

And then they had to come home and they built up quite a sort of project there. It was going reasonably well and then when they came home they were in touch with some of the people there and they subsequently learned that rather than take on their work as a going concern, some of those who had been left on the ground there, they thought, oh, well, here's all the wire for the fence itself.

Let's roll that up and flog that. Let's take the lead off the roof and we can flog that off as the water pump. Well, that's no use to us. Just leave it there. Life stop, sell them off and just assets took the place.

[17:07] And all that could have been made, such a good going project and had been for its time there, was simply wasted, disappeared. Yes, they'd have got money for the individual things, but collectively they could have made so much more of it.

And she told us, not with bitterness, but just with a sense of sorrow and the waste of all that had been expended and now all that had been poured away.

Now, the Lord has given us our lives. He has given us access to his word, which, as we mentioned in prayer, he has not done to any other creatures of his creation.

It is only to man that he has given the gift of language and articulation and of the opportunity of communication with the Almighty. It is only to man he has given the ability to write down his language, to record God's word before him, that it may be read, that it may be understood, that it may be digested, that we may understand who God is and what he is like.

If that be the case, if he has given us all these things, he intends these assets to be utilized for the purpose for which we are created, to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

[18:25] If we simply take all these things and expend them for the short-term gain that we may undoubtedly acquire in this world, you strip the lead off the roof, you can flog it.

You get some money in your pocket, but the money will be spent. And what will you do then?

You've taken the roof off the building, it's no use now. You sell off the livestock, okay, little money in your pocket, but it will be spent.

What will you do now? You can't now gender those calves and make more livestock. You can't breed and build up your herd. If you let the well just fill up and you don't keep the water flowing, nothing is going to grow.

Everything that was done will eventually be dissipated and lost. All that we have been given, all the years, the days, the lives, the health, the strength that we have been given will be, as it were, dissipated, poured down the drain.

It will be for nothing if we continue outside of Christ. It is only in Christ when he begins a good work in us that we are enabled to know that because he has begun, he will complete.

[19:32] Now, if you think back to the example he gave a few minutes ago of the building project, this great big construction work, let's say that a smaller businessman has begun the work and he said, well, I've invested so much of my own shares and fortune, but I don't know if there's enough money to complete.

The girders are up and the foundations are down. You know, I'm about to run out of money and he might run out of money, but let's say that investor comes along and he's a multi-billionaire. He says, it's all right, I'll bankroll that.

I'll invest. I'll do whatever you need. It'll be finished. What enables it to be done? Because the major investor has come along and sunk his fortune into it. We can do nothing of ourselves.

Whatever we might do, we might fool the world and we might make them think, oh yeah, they're a good person. James, they go to church, they can read their Bible, they can be outwardly good and moral, but they cannot be changed in their heart in and of themselves.

For that, we need the outside investment of the Lord Jesus Christ, the work which he has begun, which he will complete until the day that he comes again.

[20 : 42] Being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. And so what even is meet for me to think this of you all because I have you in my heart.

How greatly I long after you. And then verses 9 and 10. This I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment that ye may approve the things that are excellent, ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

That the good things that you have, you work on them. Many years ago I read about a young girl who had a great talent for singing. And because she had a great talent for singing, she didn't just say, I can already sing better than anybody in my class, I'm going to look good no matter what.

Instead, what happened was her parents then got her a voice coach and a singing teacher who trained her to utilise the gift and the natural talent that she'd been given to hone that gift and that ability so that she's able to sing to bass crowds and make CDs and goodness knows all what.

But she wouldn't have been able to do that. The best coach and the best voice teacher in the world can't do something with somebody who doesn't already have the gift in them.

[22 : 05] You could be watching a field of young boys playing football and a talent scout might be there. And he may see, oh this wee boy, he's trying really hard and he's running really hard and he's puffing himself up to death but he just doesn't have it in him.

And some other cocky young so-and-so that he is doing, he's keeping up, he's in his headers and his goodness knows all what, weaving in and out of all the others and he may not be a very nice guy but boy, he's got the talent.

And because he's got the talent, then the coach and trainers can take him and can hone those gifts and those skills and make something out of him. Because he's got that talent in him.

Now the Lord gives to his children that essence, that talent within. He gives them the gift of himself. But we are taught to be able to to work on that gift, to utilize the gift, to exercise that which we have been given so that it may grow and increase layer upon layer, year after year, until we are finally completed, ripened, perfected, for glory.

Being filled, verse 11, with the fruit of righteousness, which are, the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. Now the thing about fruits is that the more they produce, the greater is their potential.

[23 : 24] If you think, for example, you've got a wee patch of ground, let's say you turn over a wee patch of ground, you dig out the stones and you dig it out and you put in one potato, a single seed potato, you plonk it in the ground, you cover it over and water it if you need to without the rain and it grows there for however long the season is.

Comes to the end of the season, there's your potato plant with all its leaves and everything and you very carefully pull up your potato plant and there you've got a whole stash of potatoes in the roots of the bottom and from that you take off, I don't know how many is normally on a potato plant, is it half a dozen, is it eight, I don't know, however many, but you've got more than you started with.

So you take your one potato out that you had to begin with and from all the other ones that are left now you put two potatoes in the ground and next year you've got two potato plants and however many dozen or whatever there are in those ones and from those you then plant three or four.

You see what I mean? That the little that we take, we plant it, we utilise it, and the Lord will prosper it if it is used for his kingdom, if it is exercised.

The fruits of righteousness are intended not only to bear fruit for our consumption and to share with others but also to be reinvested that they may bring forth more.

[24 : 43] That is God's intention, that the layers be built up, the ground be expanded, the crop be increased more and more. God does not go backwards.

The only thing that should be diminishing in the Christian's life is the knowledge and desire for sin. That should be reducing, that should be withering gradually as it is starved of the oxygen of desire. That ye may approve things that are excellent, ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

God. Then this next section, verses 12 to 20 here, we see here what we might call the irresistible victory of the gospel. Paul is one of the most active apostles in the first century and yet the Romans have got it.

They've arrested him, they've stuck him under arrest. When it talks about Caesar's palace here, rather, verse 13, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places.

[25 : 48] The word that is translated palace is literally praetorium. Now the praetorium is the place where the praetorian guards were based. It's unlikely Paul was actually in the barracks.

But wherever he was being contained, he was being guarded by the praetorian guard. And the praetorian guard were those who were the bodyguards of the emperor. So he's a high-ranking prisoner.

Clearly, he's getting praetorian guards to be his jailkeepers in that sense. Wherever he's being kept, the word that is used in the Greek to indicate his captivity is a word that translates as a short chain. A short chain which would be attached to one wrist, and that short chain, the other end of it, would be attached to the wrist of a soldier, a praetorian guard. That wherever he went, and whatever he did, that guard, is going with him.

If he goes off to this room, the guard has to go with him. If he goes upstairs, the guard has to go with him. Wherever he goes, the guard is with him. Now, that means that whatever he does, whatever he speaks, whatever he writes and does, the guard cannot help but hear.

[26 : 58] Now, if Paul has been arrested in order to be silenced, to take him out of the running, out of circulation, he's now in a situation in the very heart of the Roman establishment, where the Praetorian guard, that is those who guard the Praetor, that's a word for Caesar, as in commander in chief of the guards there, they are now guarding him.

You know, you can't have the same soldier 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so they'll be on shifts. And after they've done their particular shift, they'll take off one of the manacles, tie it onto another soldier, he goes off home, next one starts his shift.

Every single person that Paul is speaking to, he will be speaking to about the Lord. Paul, remember, is obsessed with Christ.

When he speaks, he speaks about Christ. When he writes, he writes about Christ. But usually, as we know, Paul didn't write his letters by hand, I hope in the last wee bit at the end, he usually dictated them to a scribe, and amanuensis, is the big posh word.

Basically, a second thing, he wrote it down. Which means that everywhere Paul is going, he is speaking out loud what he wants to say. So the Praetorian guard who is chained to him, doesn't need to be sort of looking over his shoulder reading what he's written.

[28 : 19] He is having to walk up and down with Paul, sit down, and Paul sits down, stand up, and Paul stands up, if he paces up and down, a poor soldier has to go with him, all the time that he's speaking, and every word he is dictating to his secretary, the guard cannot help but hear.

Guard comes off his shift, next one comes on, it goes back to back. Did you hear what that guy was on about? He was writing to some people on the other side of the empire, he was talking about this, oh yeah, I remember, he was speaking about that when I was there.

He wouldn't stop talking to me, I wasn't allowed to speak back to him, but he kept speaking to me about this Jesus that Pontius Pilate put to death in Judea, and so on, and so it becomes the talk of the barracks, it becomes the gossip of the praetorian barracks, it becomes the gospel of Caesar's palace, and so the word spreads, my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palaces, all the praetorian, and in all other places, and so the word of the gospel, far from being silent, precisely because he is under such close guard, he's not thrown in the inner dungeon like in Philippi, he is being guarded by a soldier, given a certain amount of liberty, the soldiers have to retain their shifts, more and more of the individual soldiers are being exposed to the news of the gospel, and whether they actually believe it, or are converted or not, they are soaking it up, they are drinking it in it, they are speaking it out, they are gossiping it around in the barracks and elsewhere, it becomes the talk of the town, this Roman citizen who is now in prison in the praetorian, is spreading this word in a way that he never could before, when he was having to meet secretly in homes or speaking in

marketplaces, he wasn't being able to penetrate the barracks or the palace, but now there he is right in the midst of it, and it's all oozing out, and the message is spreading, and because of this, many of the brethren in the

Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, they are taking courage, well if Paul can deal with it, they are taking courage to speak the word without fear, the guards are already speaking about it, if this is the talk of the town, then this is something that we can stand up on a soapbox and a streetcar and say, well listen guys, you've all heard about this, that Paul who's in prison is talking about, this is what I want to talk to you about, ooh, suddenly everybody's listening, because this is topical, this is news, this is what everybody's chatting about, so here's somebody who knows about it, let's listen to them, and so it spreads, some indeed, preach Christ even of envy and strife, now there's two ways of understanding this, it might be that because Paul's word is now the buzz of the town, they want to cash in on that, say, well listen to me, I know about this that Paul's talking about, I can tell you about this gospel, and actually it would be even better if you just added a wee bit of the law into it, if you added in a wee bit of the Judaising influence, perhaps that's what they're saying, or perhaps it's to draw attention to themselves, look at me, everybody,

I can tell you about this message, Paul's in prison, but I'm out here, everybody listen to me, as though it is to draw attention to themselves, and to detract from Paul, thinking that he'll be jealous of him, thinking that he'll be, oh no, I can't get out there, and spread my personality around, he's not bothered at all, some however preach him of sincerity and truth, they just want to get Christ out there, into Rome, and into the city, and into the streets, some preach Christ of envy and strife, and some of good will, the one preach Christ of contention, seeking to make more trouble for Paul, supposing to add affliction to my bonds, but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel, what then?

[32 : 10] notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense and in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. Now notice it doesn't say that those who are preaching of strife and contention are preaching a false gospel, it doesn't say that it's not orthodoxy, it doesn't say it's not the truth, but it is from a wrong motive perhaps, so either way, Paul is happy, it's getting out there, it doesn't matter, it's perhaps an early understanding of the phrase, no such thing as bad publicity, as some would say, he's quite happy, the gospel is out there, for I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death, this imprisonment of Paul, far from silencing the message of the gospel, is causing it to spread in places where it could never have penetrated before.

Now I've mentioned to you in the past, I'm sure, examples of the most vicious persecuting country in the world at the moment is almost certainly North Korea, and one of the groups of people whom they persecute most viciously are of course the Christians, who they see as a political threat, so that Christians are appallingly treated in those concentration camps in North Korea.

But they're not the only people who are there. Sometimes there are people there who are petty criminals or for some minor political misdemeanor, and it is a matter of record that some who have been there for other crimes having seen the way that Christians are abused and ill-treated, and the way that they endure it and take it, and the way that they continue to maintain their faith out of sheer curiosity.

When these other petty criminals are then released, they go away and say, what on earth is motivating those? They've been put in here for what they believe. Why don't they just say they don't believe it anymore? Why don't they just say, yeah, okay, you accept that Kim Young-Hill or Kim Young-Hun or whatever the current dictator is, we accept that he's like God.

Yep, no bother. Because they would do it to save their skins, they can't understand why the Christians don't do it. So they are piqued in way and they find out about this Jesus and they end up being converted because they witnessed Christ in action in a North Korean concentration camp.

[34 : 45] You cannot stop this message getting out. As Paul writes out of spirit to Timothy, the word of God is not bad. And whether it is by his life or by his death, the word of God and the message of the gospel will go out.

When somebody is a martyr for this cause, it will have an effect on others. It was said at the beginning of the Reformation in Scotland that the first martyr that was burned, Patrick Hamilton, was said that the reek or the stench of the smoke of Master Patrick Hamilton affected as many as it

blew upon.

Those who witnessed his execution, his martyrdom, went away thinking, why was such a good man burned? Why was this man burned at the stake? What on earth were the beliefs that he stood for? Why was the then church so much against him? And all that it meant was that the reformed truth of the gospel spread in Scotland. You cannot keep this down.

You cannot keep this away. This story used to be told about a little child who said to their mother, you know, is God everywhere? No. And she said, well, yes, yes, God feels everywhere.

[36 : 01] Is he in this room with us? Well, yes, yes, God is in this room with us. Is he around us now? Yes. He picked up a teacup. Is he in this teacup?

Suppose you could say he's in this teacup. He looked into it. Got him. You can't keep God in like this. You cannot restrain the Lord. It's like standing or sitting in a little hut when a flood comes down the hillside thinking, it's okay, I've shut the door and I've locked the windows, so I'll be okay here. That water will come pouring through the cracks in the planks. It will come in through the roof. It will sweep away that hut. Such is the gospel with all which will resist it.

There is no restraining of this news. There is no stopping of this message. The only question then for us is like Jesus said, he that is not with me is against me.

He that gathereth not with me scattereth God. Are we with Christ or against him? Are we for him or do we oppose him? Are we prepared to enter into that for which we were designed and created or do we just pour the assets down the drain for short-term gain?

[37 : 18] This is the irresistible victory of the gospel despite all weaknesses and setbacks. And finally we have what we might call the wonderful dilemma.

That Paul says he doesn't care if he gets martyred. He wants to go and be with Christ which is far better. He desires to be with the Lord. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

I live in the flesh. This is the fruit of my labour. Yet what I shall choose I want not for I am in a strait betwixt two. Have I a desire to depart to be with Christ which is far better.

What a wonderful dilemma to be in. If I live the church benefits from my experience and ability to help them. If I die my blood testifies to the faithfulness and the glory of God by my martyrdom.

I don't know which I would choose said Paul. Really I want to be with Jesus in heaven which is far better but time enough for that. There will be time for that.

[38 : 18] To abide in the flesh is more needful for you. Verse 25 having this confidence I know I shall abide and continue with you. It's like what Jesus said to the apostles in John 4 at verse 34 he says my need is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work and to finish his work.

Now we mentioned this morning how eventually all of us will leave this world one way or another unless Christ comes back and glory we're all going to die but our timing will only be such as the Lord has himself directed.

We will be gone from here when we have finished the number of the days the Lord has given us. And every servant of Christ man woman or child whatever situation they may be in they will be gathered to their Lord when they have finished the work that the Lord has given them to do.

Finished the witness. Finished the testimony that the Lord has appointed for them. Now we might think come on Lord I'd rather live on to be a hundred and then go to my grave in my old age and secure my bed.

That might be how you go. But it might not be. It might be very sudden. We don't know at this hour how many of those poor souls in France may have been in a state of grace, may have been ready to meet their maker, may have been reconciled to Christ and how many may not.

[39 : 48] I suspect a large number were not. And there they were snatched from time into eternity. And if somebody had said you go to that restaurant tonight you'll never come out of it.

They might have wanted to make their peace with the Lord. But their days were numbered and filled. And if we are in Christ then we will have completed the task that he gives us to do when he has appointed.

And we don't know when that will be. There will come a day here, much as I may love this church and congregation, there will come a day when maybe years from now or maybe very soon none of us knows I might drop dead before the end of the service, there will come a time when I will preach my last sermon in this program.

I don't know when that will be. I don't know when any of us will have finished our course. But what Paul is saying here is that despite his desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better, he has

this confidence, verse 25, that he shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance of joy and faith that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by me by my coming to you again.

If I am spared in other words to give more time to you Philippians, to the Romans, to the Corinthians, whoever it might be, the Lord will grant that. If my time here is drawing to an end, then I'm delighted, he says.

[41 : 13] This is the wonderful dilemma that by staying here on this earth, we have the opportunity to serve Christ more.

We have the opportunity to do more, to make more of the days that he has given us, to be able to say to Christ at the end, Lord, this is how I use my days. You gave me five talents, I tried to make five others.

You gave me two, I tried to make two others. Maybe at the moment, that business is not yet complete. Maybe at the moment, there's still no to do. Maybe it is nearer completion than we realized.

But this is, for the Christian, the wonderful dilemma. You cannot lose with Christ. You don't know how much further you've got to go. You don't know how much longer you may have to suffer. There's a wonderful poem by a Christian woman that basically says, if the cross from which you long to be delivered, I haven't got the poem in my head, but the gist of it is that here we are moaning and groaning about all the things we have to do and the crosses we have to bear and it's so hard and sometimes we think the Lord doesn't know.

[42 : 24] And supposing the Lord were to appear, that very hour and say, it's okay, it's finished, lay it down, you come up to me now. And you may think, oh, well, great. And then we think, well, Lord, I'm sorry that I moan so much.

I shouldn't be. If I'd known it was only going to be such a short time that I was going to have to carry this burden for, well, I'd have carried it better. I'd have done it with a better grace. I would have served you better. I'd have praised you more with my suffering.

I'd only known that it was only going to be for a wee bit longer. And that's the gist of it. Here and here alone we have the privilege in this world as we read here in verse 29.

Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake. His suffering is inescapable. The question is not whether or not we will meet with trouble in this world.

The question is how we will do it and how we will respond when it comes. That is part and parcel of the witness, the testimony.

[43 : 24] That is the kind of witness that causes people in the concentration camps of North Korea to yet shine with such a love of Christ that others are converted without those poor souls even ever knowing that their witness had that effect.

That is the effect that causes people to be used of the Lord when they think they are such a failure. When they think their life is ending in complete hopelessness, others are seeing and knowing that this life offered up so completely to Christ is that which has now planted his seed, has cleared a little piece of earth, has stuck down a potato of grace which yet in the fullness of time will bring forth a harvest which will increase and multiply year by year and day by day.

And to you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe in him but also to suffer for his sake having the same conflict which he saw in me and now here to be in me.

In Christ. Remember this is the great theme of the entire book. In Christ occurs 34 times. In Christ Jesus 48 times. In the Lord 50 times.

The Christian cannot live out of his or her natural habitat which is in Christ. If we are in Christ you cannot lose because no matter what happens Christ will have the victory because he has already won it.

[44 : 54] And because Christ has the victory and you are in Christ that victory is yours also. Let us pray.