

# Philippians 6

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Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[ 0 : 00 ] We come into this third chapter to the Philippians. It may seem a little surprising, perhaps, given there's four chapters in Philippians, and we've only done two of them, that Paul is already using the word finally.

But it can mean different things in different contexts. It can mean, for example, either the closing off of the previous subject matter that he was talking about, or perhaps more likely, it means that he was going to begin this kind of final run into the end of the letter, but now he's opened up a new subject without really realising it, and now he feels he has to expand upon.

I'm more inclined to that suggestion, because if you look at chapter 4, verse 4, it's as though he returns to that, rejoice in the Lord, O way, and again I say rejoice, and then he does kind of close in towards the end of the letter.

But he obviously intends that it should be so. I don't know if you've ever been in a plane sometimes, where, you know, the voice comes over the tannoy of the captain saying that the air host says, you know, prepare the cabin for landing, and she tells everybody to do their seatbelts, and then you might go round and round the airport for ages before you finally land, and the winds might be a bit rough or stormy, and you just can't get down for ages.

But the fact is, the pilot intends to make his final descent. He intends to come down. That's why he's getting everything prepared for it. So here we have this, finally, my brethren.

[ 1 : 29 ] He intends probably to close off this letter, but then he realises that he's kind of opened up another subject that he has to deal with before he finishes.

And the subject that he is dealing with is that of rejoicing in the Lord. Now, we mustn't get this wrong here. We mustn't just think it's not a superficial get out. Well, don't worry.

Be happy, you know. Be happy in the Lord and rejoice in him. It's not like that at all. It is actually tied in with the faith which a born-again Christian ought to have.

And we'll come to that in just a second. But two things we need to recognise. First of all, it is never wrong to rejoice in the Lord, provided it is the Lord that we are rejoicing in.

If we look in the Old Testament, for example, you know, in Nehemiah chapter 8 verse 10, A time to celebrate and party in that sense and to feast and remember those who are poor and in need.

[ 2 : 44 ] The joy of the Lord is your strength. It is never wrong to rejoice in the Lord. So it is perfectly right to rejoice, for example, in the birth of our Lord, just as long as that is what we are rejoicing in, as long as that is our focus.

You know, remember that we read in Colossians in chapter 2 verse 16, Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of an holy day or of the new moon or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.

Now, I know that traditionally our own branch of the church didn't make a big deal, for example, of Christmas, because there's no scriptural basis or justification for making it a particular Christian festival.

But then you could say the same about communion seasons. We don't have an explicit scriptural warrant for going from Thursday through to Monday on a communion season, but it's not a problem because the Lord is our focus at that time.

And the Lord is our joy and what we celebrate with solemnity and with preparation and so on. And that's perfectly right. So it is never wrong to rejoice in the Lord, even with or without an explicit scriptural warrant, provided we are rejoicing in the Lord and not just indulging ourselves.

[ 4 : 12 ] It is never wrong to rejoice in the Lord. Indeed, if we love the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot help but joy in Him. Remember what Jesus said to His disciples.

John 16, verse 22. Ye now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takeeth from you.

In other words, the context here is He's talking about, you know, when a woman, when she's in travail, a sorrow because I have come, but as soon as she's delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish for joy than a man.

A baby's born into the world, and ye now therefore have sorrow. In other words, my parting from you causes you sorrow, but it's as much a necessary part of the joy that you will have as the labor pains when somebody's having a baby are a necessary part of the joy of having a baby in their arms afterwards.

He is taking it as read that His being with the disciples is a cause for joy, and for those who love the Lord, to be with Him is their delight, to be fulfilled in Him, to be present with Him, to have Jesus right there in their lives is the joy of their heart, the delight of their lives.

[ 5 : 32 ] So it's never wrong to rejoice in the Lord. Indeed, it's a necessary part of our born-again faith. But Paul's exhortation is going deeper than that, and it is inextricably bound up with what he has to say next.

If you think about it, the time for rejoicing in anything is when a triumph or an event is complete. If we take the example we've just been looking at, you know, childbirth, the time that you rejoice is when the baby's safely delivered and you've got it in your arms and it's all healthy and the mother's fine and everything, that's a time to rejoice.

You wouldn't exactly start partying when you're in the middle of a difficult labor and everything's still painful and difficult and you don't know how it's going to work out and anything might happen.

The baby might suffer, the mother might suffer, and then about halfway through, you don't rejoice then because that's not time to rejoice. It's still to be done.

It's not you saying, oh, well, we've waited all this time and now we're finally there and the delivery's sweet, so let's just start rejoicing. No, you rejoice when it's done, when it's complete. Likewise, a general may rejoice at the end of a battle when he has won a great victory, but he's not going to start rejoicing when he's still halfway through and the fighting is hot and taking heavy casualties and so is the other side and you don't know which way it's going to go.

[ 6 : 57 ] You don't rejoice then. You rejoice when it's over and done, even if the cost has been high, if the victory is complete, that's when you rejoice. Do you think of a sporting metaphor?

The manager and the players don't rejoice in the dressing room at halftime, even if they're 2-1 up, if there's still another half to play for. They rejoice when the final whistle goes and they get the silverware in their hands and that's the time in a cup final or something like that when they do rejoice, when it's over and it's safely done.

You don't rejoice when there's still an element of uncertainty, an element of doubt. And you see, this is what Paul is getting at here. In the previous letters to Philippi, it says, you know, if there has been previous letters, to write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you to save.

What's the danger here? The danger as he's going on is those who seek to be legalizers or judyizers, to say, well, if you're going to be saved, then you've got to have the law of Moses, you've got to have circumcision, you've got to have the Passover, and basically you've got to be Jews.

You've got to be Israelites according to the flesh before you can be Israelites according to salvation. Now they've had this discussion and they've had this debate and this argument various times throughout the New Testament, that this is the danger that Paul is saying, look, if that's the case, then it's only half time in the dressing room.

[ 8 : 29 ] If that is the case, you're only halfway through the labor in the delivery room. If that is the case, the battle is still raging on. You haven't got your victory yet.

If you're still to keep the law, if you're still to walk this way to earn favor with God, going to go through various outward things, then, you know, you might still fall.

In fact, you're going to fall. James tells us, chapter 2, verse 10, and remember, James is the letter which sometimes people set or try to set in contrast to Paul because Paul says it's all about grace, you know, works and the law is nothing, but James himself is saying here, the one who focuses so often about putting faith into practice and the need for good works, outworking our faith, he says in chapter 2, verse 10, whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

Take the sporting metaphor, you might play a blinder for 89 minutes and then in the 90th minute, you give away an hour and the game is lost. So, if you're going to offend in one point in the law, then it's all lost.

You've had it. And this is why Paul is saying, look, you don't go with these legalizers, you don't go with these Judaizers, you don't need the circumcision and the law and all the rest of it like they're saying because Christ has secured your victory.

[ 10 : 01 ] That is what it's all about. That is the good news of the gospel. That is why when he says, rejoice in the Lord, he's not just saying, I'll be happy on the next time.

What he means is, it's almost like a political statement, you rejoice in Christ for what Christ has done because it's all done. It's finished. It's complete.

The trophy is in your hand. The baby is in your arms. The battlefield is secure because of what Christ has done. Never mind the legalizers. Never mind those that say, oh yeah, you've got to keep the law, you've got to do this, you've got to do that, you've got to do the next thing.

No. Christ has done it all. So when he says, rejoice in the Lord, it's not just a little superficial statement. It's a political claim of the supremacy of Christ's sacrifice upon the cross.

This is what Christians believe. Christ has done it all. Now, as he says, I'm writing this to you, they write the same things to you to me, for you to save.

[ 11 : 10 ] Some people take that to me, well, there must be other letters to the Philippines which we don't have and they've got lost. That's possible. Some people point to the fact that, you know, Paul's time in ministry is something between 16 to 20 years and in that, say, 16 years, at least, you know, we've only got 13 of his letters, 14 if you count the Hebrews, if Paul's the one that wrote that, and they say, well, that's not very many, is it?

That's only like less than one a year. But if you think about it, writing letters, look at the length of these letters for the most part. How often do you write a letter that long?

Nowadays, how often do you write letters full stop? People say, you know, two-line texts or Facebook or emails or they pick up the phone. In those days, you're sitting down to write a letter.

You need your parchment, you need your quill, you need your ink, you need time and a settled environment in which to do it. Now, most of the time, Paul is on the road.

He is traveling. He's by ship. He's getting shipwrecked. He's getting stoned in this town. He's getting whipped in the other one. He's getting put in prison here. He's getting hassled. He's preaching. He's busy. He does not have time most of the time to sit down and write letters, I would suggest to you.

[ 12 : 32 ] And the vast majority of the letters that he writes, including Philippians, are written what? They are written from Rome. Now, what is happening in Rome?

Paul is in prison. And in prison, he has a considerable amount of time. There is, not to put it too bluntly, not a great deal else to do.

He has a stable, settled environment. He will have access to his parchment and quills and ink and everything else that he wants. He's not on the road, no. He's not traveling from place to place.

He's not getting hostile crowds, arguing with him and so on. He's in a stable, settled environment. He is able to write a considerable length.

He has, at last, the time and the opportunity in front of him, which most of the time on his missionary journeys, he doesn't have.

[ 13 : 31 ] So I would suggest to you that it doesn't necessarily mean there are other Philippine letters that we don't have. There might be. But I would suggest that it's probably to write now the things to you which I said to you verbally and orally before.

It's not grievous but for you it is safe. In other words, I'm reiterating by written word what I've already said by verbal speech. And for you it is safe.

This is what's best for you. To beware of the dogs. Now, the Jews regarded those who were Gentiles as dogs. It's gone, in other words. You've got to remember that the idea of dogs is not like ours.

We think of the dogs sitting by the fireside with a stroke and it's loyal and it's faithful. You look at it and it dumps its tail and it's a pet. In the East and in the ancient world dogs were not pets.

They were scavengers. They went in packs. They snarled. They attacked passers-by. They fed on carrying or whatever was thrown away in the streets. You know, if it says about Lazarus, you know, the dogs came and licked his soaks.

[ 14 : 38 ] They'd be coming like in a pack threateningly like licking the salt of a sort of meaty flesh and the ooze off his sores and they would be licking that up probably.

He's, you know, it's not a friendly, nice little pet thing to do. Dogs were threatening. They were unclean. They were scavengers. They were feeding off literally the scum of the earth.

This is what the Jews called the Gentiles. And Paul is turning around and saying, those who try to rob you of your faith in Christ are like dogs. Beware of evil workers.

Now, that doesn't just mean people doing bad things. But properly speaking, it translates as evil workmen. Now, when we think of workmen, think of the contrast with 2 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 15.

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Now, what do we understand in this context of workmen?

[ 15 : 38 ] Well, if Timothy is a workman, what's he working at? He's working at representing the gospel. He is working at, whether being an evangelist or a servant of the church of Jesus Christ, spreading the word, spreading the faith, he is a workman.

He's part of the gospel side. He's on the side of the Lord. Now, if there are evil workers or evil workmen, that implies these are people who are outwardly on the side of the Lord.

They are outwardly on the same side as the Christian church. Remember what Paul wrote in chapter 1, verses 15 and 16. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of good will.

The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds. In other words, there are false brethren amongst the Christians, amongst those who claim to form Christ.

Remember what he writes to the Galatians, chapter 2, verse 4. There are false brethren, unawares brought in, who came in brotherly to aspire our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.

[ 16 : 54 ] That is the sense here, that the Old Testament requirements must still be applied in full to secure a table with God, as though what Christ has done is in itself incomplete or insufficient, but must be supplemented by our own efforts and obedience to the law, as though there is all still to do.

It's only half time in the dressing room, as it were. There is nothing to rejoice in, yet, apparently. And this is why he says, you know, for we are the circumcision, the true circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus.

You see, rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ is part of the opposition to these legalists. We can rejoice in the Lord because it is all done.

It's full time. We've got our hands in the cup. We have secured the victory. It is all ours in that sense. Now, this is the point he's making.

Evil workers beware of the concision. Evil workers. They pretend they're on our side, on the side of Christ, but actually they're not. They're trying to subvert the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

[ 18 : 11 ] It sounds like they're on the same side, but they're not, actually. Now, in verses 2 and 3, the concision over and against the circumcision, there's a play on words.

Scripture, both in the Old Testament and the New, often makes use of puns, of a play on words. And the New Testament and them are being written in Greek. The word for concision is katatemne, and for circumcision is peritemne.

So two-thirds of each word is identical. Katatemne, a word for concision, it means literally mutilation, the cutting of oneself just gratuitously or for whatever reason.

The circumcision, the Old Testament sacrament, this holy thing is peritemne. And he says, now, they're just those who are mutilating themselves because it's no outward use.

Now, it's no spiritual use, it's purely an outward thing. And you think, as if they were saying, well, you know, that's all very well, but you're coming up with a novelty now, Paul, you're suggesting we don't need to do these things as though these outward things don't matter.

[ 19 : 16 ] What he's actually doing is bringing alive again that which was already the case in the law and in the prophets, where God repeatedly emphasized or alluded to the fact that the outward formality is not enough.

You've got to have the inward reality of what is symbolized. That's the nature of a sacrament. In one sense, it's perfectly possible for somebody who is not a believer in their hearts to say the words outwardly, to sit at the Lord's table, to take the bread and the wine, or to be baptized with water, but there's nothing in their hearts.

You know, they can talk the talk, maybe they can outwardly walk the walk, but their hearts are not touched by the Lord. So, likewise, it was perfectly possible to outwardly go through the motions of Old Testament Judaism.

But not to be changed in their heart. But the law and the prophets themselves, never mind the New Testament, the law and the prophets tell of the need for spiritual circumcision and not mere outward performance.

Leviticus 26, verse 41, talks about their uncircumcised hearts. In Exodus 6, Moses talks about his uncircumcised lips.

[ 20 : 36 ] In Deuteronomy 10, verse 16, it says, Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart and be no more stiff-necked. And in Jeremiah 6, verse 10, we read, To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear?

Behold, their ear is uncircumcised and they cannot hearken. Behold, the word of the Lord is said to them a reproach. They have no delight in it.

And yet, those to whom Jeremiah was speaking would have been physically circumcised, but their hearts were uncircumcised. Their ears, their minds are not sanctified to the Lord.

Believers in the finished work of Christ are the true circumcision. That's what he's saying in verse 3. We are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

Like he wrote to the Romans, chapter 2, the last two verses of chapter 2, For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.

[ 21 : 58 ] Now, what do we understand by the three things, well, outward ordinances, they don't matter, they don't mean a thing. Now, yes, they do matter, and they do mean a thing, but they don't give any salvation in and of themselves.

They do not make somebody a better person unless they are an outward symbol of an inward reality. Unless what is going on in the Spirit, in the heart, is that which is symbolized by that which is on the outside.

You see, I could, for example, I could stick a cover on my bookshelf that says Holy Bible on it, and it might just have a totally worldly book inside it so that I could sit reading it in my lap and somebody out there, oh, there's a minister, he's reading his Bible, what a good minister he is, and in fact, I'm reading something completely worldly.

It's just the outward cover. Looks like it's holy, looks like it's good, and in fact, the inward reality isn't the case. So, this is the thing that Paul is saying, we are the true circumcision which worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

Then he just wanted to say, well, look, you know, the reason I'm saying this is not just because I'm a Christian now. People can't point the finger and say, well, you would say that. You're a Christian. What possible reason would you have to have any sort of confidence in Israel?

[ 23 : 17 ] He says, look, I know. Well, I might have confidence in the flesh if any other man thinketh he hath with all he might trust in the flesh. I know. Circumcised the eighth day with it.

Well, that's no big deal. That's what the law says. Yeah, but not everyone has done the eighth day. If you remember in Genesis when Abraham was given the covenant of circumcision, Ishmael, whom he circumcised at the same time as himself, was 13 years old.

And the Arabians and others who claim their descent to be from Ishmael and to an extent, certainly at one time in history, the Muslims who claim themselves to be descendants of Ishmael as opposed to Isaac and Jacob, they circumcised their male children at that point, about 13 years old or thereabouts.

It was meant to be the transition from boyhood to maddening. And Paul says, no, I'm not an Ishmael. I'm circumcised the eighth day. I'm not a proselyte. I'm not a convert, a Gentile who's become a Jewish believer.

I'm born and bred an Israelite of the stock of Israel, not just descending from Esau, Isaac's other son, or Ishmael, Abram's other son, but of Israel, Jacob, of the tribe of Benjamin.

[ 24 : 31 ] Now, the Benjamites were a privileged tribe because Benjamin was the only one of the patriarchs who was actually born in the promised land. He was the son of the beloved wife, Rachel.

He was the son of Jacob's old age, his favourite in the absence of Joseph in Egypt. So Benjamin is a privileged son.

He's a privileged tribe because it was in their tribal territory that Jerusalem, and then the after the temple, was situated. It was from their tribe that the first king of Israel, Saul, was taken, after whom almost certainly Saul of Tarsus is named.

It is them who alone adhered to Judah and thereby to the temple, to Jerusalem or to the house of David, when all the other ten tribes went with Jeroboam the son of Nebat to set up the breakaway kingdom of northern Israel and then started worshipping the golden calves in Dan and Bethel.

So Benjamin stayed loyal. Benjamin is like the elite aristocracy of the nations of Israel. And although even in countries where, you know, these things don't matter that much, it is as though if you were saying in the English aristocracy you don't really have an equivalent ancient thing in Scotland like that unless you were to say well my family went with Kenneth McAlpin when he became King of Scots or came over with the original Irish Scots or whatever.

[ 25 : 59 ] If English peerages or something were to say my people came over with the Normans in the conquest and William the Conqueror or if Americans although they're all meant to be you know democratically equal if they were able to say well I can trace my family back exactly to people who came on the Mayflower then that would make you sort of elite nearest thing to aristocracy in American kind of public life because you can trace your people all the way back you're sort of an aristocracy of the nation and that's what Paul is saying here I am from the best of the best I have got elites status in Israel not only that my privileges of birth I'm a Hebrew of the Hebrews that's not just a reference to his parentage this is a reference to the fact that many of the Jews were in exile Alexandria Egypt and Syria and Greece and other places and when they settled in these places many of them became culturized they blended in a bit but they kept their own identity as Jews but they learned the language of those nations specifically

Greek became their spoken language they translated the Old Testament into Greek those who continued to dwell in the Holy Land spoke Hebrew not only was it the language of the Scriptures which they would have to learn for reading the Scriptures but it was the spoken language in the Holy Land and certainly the language of devotion now for Paul who was from Tarsus in Cilicia part of the outline areas he would have been if you like a Greek background you know the Acts of the Apostles makes reference to this you know in Acts 6 where the Christians are beginning to do things themselves and we read of how you know there's a dispute between the widows of the Grecians and the Hebrews and that means those Christians who were Hebrew Jews and those Christians who were Greek Jews from outlying parts of the Empire and likewise we read in Acts 22 that Paul speaks to the assembled crowds the mob in the Hebrew tongue what this means a Hebrew of the Hebrews is that he has worked at it to learn the language of his fathers it has been maintained in his family and he has laboured with great pains to become fluent in the Hebrew language the language of scripture the language of his ancestral homeland such that he can speak to the crowds in their native language and we read in Acts 22 that when he begins to speak to the mob when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew tongue they gave them more silence so he has worked at it he has put in the effort he is a Hebrew of the Hebrews as touching the law a Pharisee we're like okay that just means he was strict no it's more than that the Pharisees were an elite of comparatively few in number elite there was never more than say 6,000 of them in the entire country remember Israel is a small country

Palestine is a tiny area of those in Palestinian culture and Israelite culture the number of those who would be of the wealth or the resources to separate themselves from ordinary work and give themselves completely to the study of the law was few comparatively few they were layman they weren't priests they were comparatively rich but they were devoted to the law they made it they made the law their own lives and they were comparatively few that means that he is of the elite of the religious elite in Israel as touching the law a Pharisee but he didn't just sit in his hands he wasn't just sort of an intellectual in his thought he was zealous for this religion he was persecuting the church because he thought it was heresy he thought it was against the God and his fathers so this is what he did as touching zeal persecuting the church touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless now the word that is translated blameless is not just meaning oh well he didn't put a foot wrong he never actually broke any of it but it's a word that translates incapable of blame even by omission now what that means is that even if you're to keep yourself from actively breaking any of God's laws most of us you know would fall down on all the things that we haven't done that we should have done but what Paul is saying here is that even in that regard such was his devotion to the law nobody could have found fault with him not only for not breaking the law but for not fulfilling it in every detail of what was there blameless as touching the law you guys think you've been glory in the flesh this is what I got this is what I have whatever you've got



I've got it better that's what he's saying but what things were gained to me those I counted loss for Christ it is as though he had suddenly become worthless to me yea doubtless and I count now notice the little detail there between verse 7 and verse 8 counted past tense and that's as though you might be saying okay well you counted the loss in the past but you know you're wiser now now you realise what you have no I still count the loss past tense and now present tense yea doubtless and I count present tense all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord it is as though let's say you've been away travelling in a foreign country and you've got stacks of foreign currency and whilst you're in that country you're comparatively rich you can unload a purchasing power but you forget to go to the Bureau des Changes or whatever it is and so you come back you get on the plane and you come back and land in this country and your pockets and your wallets are stuffed full of foreign currency which the minute you hit the tarmac becomes useless in fact it's not only useless it's just junk to you now yes we've got means by which you can change it at banks or whatever but that's the nearest equivalent when you were in that other country it made you wealthy but now you have come home it's of no earthly use to you whatsoever in fact you're in danger of inadvertently using these coins or these notes or whatever what you don't mean to and end up having them rejected in return saying sorry so that's no use this is fake money you've given me so it becomes worse than useless now Paul is effectively saying this is the foreign land

I used to be in legalism the law my Israelite inheritance now I have come home I have come to where I was born to be intended to be fulfilled in Christ all these things they're like foreign currency like refuse offscary gum stuff you would chuck to the dogs the scavenging pack in the streets they are worthless and the word gum of course we know what that would normally translate into in modern terms and that's what he counts it as the loss of all things in order that he may win Christ this is what he desires and be found in him not having my own righteousness which is of the law but the righteousness which is of faith through Christ of God by faith now to be found in him there's different ways we can understand this it is as though fleeing from wrath like in Numbers chapter 35 you know where the manslayer the one who inadvertently killed someone there were cities of refuge he could flee to so that when the avenger of blood came and he was looking for him everywhere and he finally finds him but he finds him in the city of refuge where he cannot be touched and there's no policy and I have the walls around about me

[ 34 : 19 ] I am found here and I am found safe it's like the devil is tracking down every one of your sins and you're guilty of them all and I'm guilty of them all and we know what we are and finally he catches up with you and he's confronting us with all the things that we are guilty of but we are found in the city of refuge surrounded by the walls of salvation covered by the blood of Christ there's also the sense in which we are found in the sense that Christ finds us like in Luke 15 with the parable you know the lost sheep with the lost coin we read that when he hath found it he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing and when he cometh home he calleth together his friends and neighbours saying unto them rejoice with me for I have found my sheep which was lost or the parable of the prodigal son likewise where the father says it was meet that we should make merry and be glad for this thy brother was dead and is alive again he was lost and is found now this is another sense in which he says that I may be found in him found of Christ brought home and able to be fulfilled in him as I ought to be finally there's also the sense in which sorry I don't mean finally in terms of self but on this point it's to be found as to be found in one's element and yeah we know if we say oh someone is in his element it means he's having a good time no that's not what it means it means like the elements for us is oxygen we walk about on the land we breathe air a fish its element is water if it is found in water it's found in the element for which it is designed it is found there now what Paul is saying is to be found in him

Christ is the element in which he lives take him out of Christ and he can't breathe he is like a fish out of water he is like us if we're plunged under the water we cannot breathe we cannot live but if he is found in Christ like bring the living man out of the water he can breathe again put the fish back in the water it can swim away give Christ back again to Paul he can breathe he can live he desires to be found in him not having my own righteousness which is of the law remember what we said about James chapter 2 verse 10 if you fulfill all the law but offend in one point you're guilty of the whole lot when the police pull you over for speeding or when they catch you or break in a short window whatever the case may be they don't talk up and say oh but you've kept it all these other years all these 30, 40, 50 years of your life you've been a good law abiding citizen so that cancels out this no it doesn't you break the law in one point you're up in court as a law breaker and it goes on your record and any time there's any question they press the computer buttons they'll call up your file and there it is your record because of when you have broken the law in the past and they will not add up oh how old is he how old is she well look at all the years that they didn't break the law no as far as they're concerned you're an offender you're a law breaker and that is what we would be in the sight of God if it's down to us and our righteousness but that which is through the faith of Christ the righteousness which is of God by faith the perfect righteousness of God that I may know him and the power of his resurrection to know Christ himself what's that doing?

well the power of his resurrection the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable to his death well why would we want to be made conformable to his death? why would we want the sufferings well because if we want to be in Christ then we want to share every aspect of his life now we think well surely Christ has done all the sufferings on the cross that's the whole thing about it isn't it?

that's the whole rejoicing so I want to say to you so nothing goes wrong in your life then you never have any heartbreak you never have any sufferings nothing ever goes wrong you never get any regrets it's just one long moment of joy from when you open your eyes in the morning to when you fall asleep at night year after year just unalloyed beauty loveliness and everything's fine no you've got suffering you've got problems you've got difficulties you've got pain you've got all these things in life and you have that even if you're a believer what do we say about these sufferings?

well remember that Christ has yes paid for our sin upon the cross but the church his people they are the body of Christ and that body of Christ has to go through this fallen world and in this fallen world there is going to be suffering and difficulty because of the presence of sin and failure in it and in us if you are going to wander in shorts through knee high nettles you are going to get stung you will come out the other side with lots of white lumps all over your legs and it will not be enough to say oh I didn't think it would harm me I didn't think it would sting me because I have nothing against the nettles it's going to harm you it's going to damage you you stick your hand in the fire you're going to get burned you pass through this life you are going to suffer heartbreak failure difficulty suffering that's the nature of this world Colossians chapter 1 verse 24 we read who now rejoice in my sufferings for you

[ 40 : 07 ] Paul writes to the Colossians and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake which is the church the body of Christ is the church there is still affliction and suffering which that body is going to have to go through and when it talks about that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ it doesn't mean that what Christ endured on the cross somehow isn't enough it means that that has purchased it all but what's left to us we have to go through ourselves that still has to be filled up and it's as though Paul is saying to the Colossians look there's so much suffering still to be endured if I can suffer more on your behalf and I can reduce what is left for you to have to suffer well I'll be happy there our sufferings will not necessarily make sense to us and we might say to the Lord why am I going through this Lord why is this happening to me

I'm trying to be faithful I'm trying to do my best I'm trying to go on with you why is this happening to me why don't you protect me from this suffering faithfully faithfully born becomes to us part of our sacrifice part of the offering up of our lives Lord Christ Peter talks about this you know not that you suffer as an evil doer or a murderer or a busy body but if any of you suffer as a Christian that is acceptable with God because it proves that we truly are his that's why the world hates us that's why the devil hates us that's why they attack us it proves that we really were his even in the eyes of the devil and so we suffer for it and we offer up that suffering as part of the offering the sacrifice of our lives to him remember in chapter 1 of the Philippians we read in verse 29 for unto you it is given on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him but also to suffer for his sake to know Christ himself and the fellowship of his sufferings the power of his resurrection being made conformable unto his death if by any means

I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead now the resurrection there the resurrection of the dead that underlines various things for us I know that our time is going but I want us to understand these points first of all there is the importance of this life we may be inclined to think well you know this life has gone in a flash what really matters is eternity and it does but this life matters this humanity which we talked about this morning Christ takes on human flesh therefore human flesh is given that honour that ennoblement which it wouldn't have unless Christ became flesh this underlines the importance of the human body sacred to God it underlines the importance of this life however many decades or years we are given this life matters and therefore it is important it is worth living this life to the full you will not have lived this life to the full unless you are enabled by grace to live it in Christ and all the years which have gone before will be as years which the locusts have eaten now Christ is able to make good those years to restore those years but it is all as water down the drain it is all as loss

I count all these things loss for Christ said Paul because if this life matters and it does then it is worth living it is worth living to the full and you will only live it to the full when you have experienced and known Christ Jesus as your saviour everything else is just of a passing vanity of this world live it to the full because it is worth living this life is important secondly the immortality of the body because Christ lives because he lives we shall live also and thirdly the fact of the presence of Christ always with us in life in death and beyond death because of his resurrection death is not the end nothing in life or in death can separate us from Christ Paul's desire is to be so united with Christ that day by day we come more and more to share in his death so that finally we share in his resurrection to become so much one with him that we share every experience

Jesus told us to take up our cross and follow him Jesus suffered on our behalf if we're going to be faithful to him then something is going to come our way not as part of some kind of crude or sadistic initiation right but the minute the devil spots on his radar that somebody else is in danger of coming to Christ he will be in there and he will be attacking that soul and he will be undermining that soul and he will be trying to hurt and to harm and to make life difficult for that soul so they will say oh this isn't worth it let's go back to unbelief it was safer then it was easier then it wasn't actually but that will be the temptation and he will want you to give up on Christ Paul's desire is to share so much of life with Christ that we share every experience life death and resurrection for I am persuaded as he wrote to the Romans that neither life nor death nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in

[ 46 : 21 ] Christ Jesus our Lord let us pray