

# Children No More !

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Date: 26 December 2021

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     My heart in dying is the honor in the soul.  
                  I drink the things that I have with which to the King belongs.  
                  My tongue shall be as quick His honor to enlighten.  
                  As is the pen of any strife that you shall pass to write.  
                  Thou fearest of all land, rich in thy lips does flow.
- [ 1 : 2 2 ]     And death, hopeless, chains evermore. On the earth, God is low.  
                  Thy short care on thy life, the blood that holds all mine.  
                  I fear in dread, O majesty, and in thy glory bright.  
                  For meekness, truth unright, bright prosperous, dear.  
                  And thy right hand, joy, is truly in sorrowful memory.
- [ 2 : 4 8 ]     Thy child's champion's heart, the Lord, I do like Him.  
                  With my traverse, as is done, O F that is done.  
  
                  Let us join together in prayer. Ever blessed God, help us to enter into the spirit of the  
                  worship that came from the heart of your servant, the psalmist, who had a vision of the  
                  holiness of the King and who found himself acknowledging his might and the power and  
                  the glory that alone belongs to him.  
  
                  And as we are in your presence today as the King who is King of kings and Lord over all,  
                  help us to worship you accordingly, that we may acknowledge your goodness to us and  
                  that our heart would overflow with appreciation for the many good gifts that we enjoy at  
                  your hand.  
  
                  There is no question but that we receive far more than we deserve, from the creature  
                  comforts that we enjoy, to the spiritual blessings that are ours for the asking, and that you  
                  have directed us through your word where that provision is for us, and that we have a  
                  freer access to it than we have to many of the things that this word purports to set at our  
                  disposal.
- [ 5 : 0 9 ]     And yet it is out without reach, not so the best of gifts that has been set at our disposal  
                  through Christ, and to extend the hand of faith is all we have to do and lay claim to what is  
                  ours by right through him.  
  
                  So bless us in his name today. Bless us as we gather in his name. Bless each individual  
                  and all the families represented.  
  
                  We give thanks for each one. We give thanks for each one and ask that you would make  
                  note to us that you are aware of our needs, whatever they may be.  
  
                  Some we know have needs according to their position of the present in this journey  
                  through life.  
  
                  there are times when we have to encounter and enter into trials by reason of our physical  
                  frailty, the matter who we are, however strong we may be.

[ 6 : 25 ] And many could have laid claim to that, but the fragility of the physical frame is there for all to see. And we pray that you would remember those who are dealing with that, even today, who are maybe in this place of worship, some who are denied access to it because of these frailties, some housebound, some hospitalised, many who have reached their dotage and who may never again enter into the experiences of this world other than what delimiting to them at the present because of their old age.

We pray for them where they have been cared for, some at home, some in care homes and some in hospital. We give thanks for all who's task it is to minister to their needs.

We pray that you would bless them and bless their labourers, remembering amongst us any who may have cares and concerns of varying sorts and we pray that you would strengthen them and encourage them to look to yourself that you may be their rock and their portion here in this world.

We remember in your presence those who are sorrowful and grieving. We know that at this time of the year there is much focus upon the celebrations that we enjoy together in the company of others, perhaps within our homes and families, sharing the good things of life.

But we bring before you those for whom these joys are intermingled with sorrows because at every table that may be full, there may be others that have an empty place and for such we bring a prayer and ask that you would direct their heart and mind to the one who has in life brought many good things even though at this present time these sorrows seem to fill all their horizons.

[ 8 : 47 ] So visit them in mercy and direct them to the one who is the father of lights, the God of all grace. We give thanks for the way in which he has through Christ brought much to succor us in time of need.

And we ask Lord that you would remind us that you are such a one and that we look to you to be a source of strength and comfort to the grieving.

Remember Lord all who have difficult portions in this world of ours throughout the world we would be hard hearted indeed if we were affected by countless numbers who are amongst the starving and who are suffering from want of various degrees and others who are disease ridden and the remedy for their diseases are not to be found even though they are to be found in this world but they don't have access to them because of their straitened circumstances we pray for these governments that they may allocate resources in a wise way that they may not be wasteful and wanton in the way that they must certainly give account to the God who is the provider of every good and perfect gift we pray Lord that you would open the heart of each one of us that we may be mindful of the needs of others continue to watch over us as a nation remembering those who govern us grant wisdom to them that they may know to look to yourself in the first instance remember the royal family we pray for our queen and we ask that you too would be her king and her portion as she inevitably knows all the trappings of wealth and what it is to be by way of status and stature looked to by many within our own nation and yet that she may understand if she has not already done so that there is one who is the lord of glory and one who is whose kingdom knows no end our reign as queen has gone on for many decades and yet it will soon come to an end and that kingdom will pass to another even though it may be a paper exercise as far as the reign of our monarch is concerned and we know that there is no paper exercise as far as the reign and the rule of the

Christ of God the one who is the Messiah anointed prince with power over all in this world and we give thanks that the day will come when that will be acknowledged by all so watch over us each one bless our service and bless the time we've spent and the teaching of the word cleansing from sin in Jesus name amen we're going to read now from the New Testament scriptures from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians chapter 4 Ephesians chapter 4 we can read from the beginning I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called with all lowliness and meekness with long suffering forbearing one another to love forbearing one another in love endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace there is one body and one spirit even as ye are called in one hope of your calling one

Lord one faith one baptism one God and father of all who is above all and through all and in you all but unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ wherefore he saith when he ascended up on high he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men now that he ascended what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth he that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things and he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the

[ 14 : 04 ] Son of God and to a perfect man to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the slight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in way to deceive but speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things which is the head even Christ from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies according to the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body into the edifying of itself in love this I say therefore and testify in the Lord that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind having the understanding darkened being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart who being past feeling have given themselves to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness but ye have not so learned

Christ if so be ye have heard him and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus that ye put off concerning a former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts and be renewed in the spirit of your mind and ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness wherefore putting away line speak every man truth with his neighbor for we are members one of another such so the thing which is good, that ye may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers, and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Amen, and may the Lord add his blessing to a reading of his word. To his name be the praise. Now just a word to the boys and girls. I'm sure you've all enjoyed receiving many gifts at this time of the year. I wonder if you've appreciated them all, and appreciated them with the same measure with which you were expected to appreciate them. Maybe mums and dads thought that one gift might have been the one that you would probably be expected to appreciate the most. But sometimes we can't enter into the way our mums and dads think. We get it all wrong, and they get it all wrong. Maybe there's a present that you would prefer one over against another. Sometimes the present that gives us most pleasure gives us most pleasure in a way that we don't understand. I often remember our own children when we gave a present which we thought was going to be very precious. It was a tricycle I think. It was in a box, a big box, a big box, and the tricycle was duly taken out of the box. And it sat in the corner while someone very dear to us sat in the box and had great fun playing with the box, while what was in the box was totally ignored. Now I think that's the way we are very often with the Gospel.

We get it all wrong. We focus on something perhaps that is not really what the Gospel is all about.

Something that is incidental. Something that may be coincidental. Something that is quite different to what is important. And when we get that wrong, when we lose sight of what God means us to appreciate by the Gospel, or what the Gospel is telling us about, the good news about Jesus Christ, then we really need to think about what the Gospel means to us. What is it saying to us? What does it, what is it, what is it, what is it, what it means to us that he did do it, or if it means anything at all to us?

And there are a lot of people, and they are more interested in the gospel than what the Gospel means to us. And that's it, what it means to us that he did do it, or if it means anything at all to us.

[ 19 : 57 ] And there are a lot of people, and they are more interested in the paraphernalia, the boxes, all perhaps all being empty boxes, while the real precious matter of the Gospel is forgotten.

I hope that when you think about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you'll remember, as the same passage, that Jesus is the reason for the season.

And if we don't have Jesus at the heart of our thinking, when we think about all the good things that we enjoy, good, there's no doubt, then we've lost sight of what's precious.

And I hope that you haven't done that. We're going to sing now to God's praise from Psalm 18. Psalm 18 at verse 28.

Verse 28, singing down to verse 35. The Lord will light my candle so, that it shall shine full bright. The Lord my God will also make my darkness to be light.

[ 21 : 08 ] By thee through troops of men I break, and then discomfort all. And by my God assisting me I overleap a wall.

As for God, perfect is his way. The Lord, his word is tried. He is a buckler to all those who do in him confide. Who but the Lord is God?

But he who is a rock and stay. It is God that girdeth me with strength, and perfect makes my way. He made my feet swift as the hinds, set me on my high places.

My hands to war he taught. My arms break both of steel in pieces. The shield of thy salvation thou didst on me bestow.

Thy right hand held me up, and great thy kindness made me grow. And so on. These verses, Psalm 18, singing from verse 28.

[ 22 : 08 ] The Lord will light my candle so, that it shall shine full bright. The Lord will light my candle so, that it shall shine full bright.

The Lord will light my candle so, that it shall shine full bright.

the Lord upon yon will light my light. The Lord upon yon will always obey My light can■ry like.

Thank you.

I owe the ring of all. As for God ever finishes with, the Lord's word is mine.

[ 23 : 47 ] He is a heart to all those who live in the night.

Who but the Lord is all of you, who is the broken stake?

His gold, the earth, and he will bend. I'm perfect, made my way.

He made my peace with us of mind. Take me on thy high list.

My hand to war is all for my hands. Pray for us, O Jesus.

[ 25 : 17 ] The shield of the light. Thy light.

Thy light. Thy light. Thy light. I'll help me. Thy light. I'll help me.

I'll help me. Thy light. I'll help me. Thy light.

We are going to turn now to the passage that we read. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians chapter 4. And we can read from verse 11.

And he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

[ 26 : 27 ] And we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man and to the measure of the structure of the fullness of Christ.

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they line wait to deceive.

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body into the edifying of itself in love." And so on.

As I said to the children, many today have no idea about the true reason for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What did Jesus expect to accomplish by his coming? And I'm sure if we gave that question out as a question that anybody who is anybody, they don't have to be theologians, they don't have to be practicing Christians, they don't have to be schooled in the Bible.

[ 28 : 09 ] And so, we all, we all are aware of Christmas, and we have some idea of what Christmas means. It means something to us, surely.

So if it means something to us, or we have some idea of what it means, then we can answer the question, what do you think is the whole purpose for it?

And I think in a nutshell, the Apostle Paul here describes to us the whole purpose for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We may not think of it in these terms, but I think at the heart of the message that Paul has for us here in this passage, is the reason for the Church of Christ, the reason for Christ's coming into the world, or to expect it to accomplish by it.

Now you all appreciate, I'm sure, in today's modern world, the importance of having the right address.

[ 29 : 30 ] If we're sending a letter or a package, we're expected to have the postcode on that letter.

But the postman are very kind, and they'll deliver it even if it doesn't have the postcode. It might not get it as quickly as it would with it, or without it.

With it, you know what I'm saying. But when it comes to sending an electronic letter, an email, or a gift, as I did, by way of email, you know how important it is to have the right address.

So if we're sending an email to somebody, we need to have the address not just written with the right name.

It's got to be in the right case. If you have a capital where a small case is supposed to be, then the letter is not going to be delivered.

[ 30 : 45 ] If you have a gift, if you have a gift, I sent a gift to a family member. And instead, I misread the address, and instead of putting a hyphen, I put a dot.

It's just a small mistake. Everything else was right. But instead of the hyphen, I had put a dot. And I think that still somewhere out in cyberspace, I had to amend it because the recipient didn't get the gift.

But we checked and we found out that that was the way it was. Now what has that got to do with the passage before us? Well, it has got something to do with it because when we look at the Scriptures of the New Testament, indeed the Old Testament, those who translated the Scriptures are translating it from one language to another.

And in the original language, some of, if not all of the parts of it that we need for understanding it may not appear there.

So that when we read a passage, there are dots and commas and semicolons and exclamation marks that belong to our language that you may not find in the original language.

[ 32 : 23 ] Now if you read this passage from verse 11, you'll notice there are a number of these commas there.

And he gave some, apostles, semicolon, and some, prophets, semicolon, and some, evangelists, semicolon, and some, pastors and teachers, semicolon.

And then when it comes to verse 12, for the perfecting of the saints, comma, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Now notice in verse 12 there that a comma appears after saints and after ministry. And some of the other ones, if you read the Bible, the older version of the Bible, may not have or will have a comma where the newer versions do not have.

So that it reads like this, for the perfecting of the saints, comma, for the perfecting of the saints, comma, for the work of the ministry, comma, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

[ 33 : 54 ] And you might think it's just a comma. It doesn't make all that difference to a reading of what's there. But in actual fact it does. It makes you think that what we have here is describing to us the role of a minister rather than the role of the minister.

The role of the ministry. And the role of the minister is often thought to be all-encompassing.

So that the things that we find described to us in this passage, you would allocate to the minister and believe this is the job of the minister.

The job of the minister is to perfect the saints. The job of the minister is to equip the saints.

The job of the minister is to edify the body of Christ and so on. But it's not talking about the job of the minister. But it's not talking about the job of a minister.

[ 35 : 08 ] It's talking about the ministry of the body of believers. And the apostle Paul here speaks of things that are essential to the body of believers.

There is the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. There is the aim of arriving at the perfection of the man.

The perfection, the sanctification that results in the perfect man. And to achieve fullness in Christ Jesus.

Now if you go back, I'm sure some of you will be familiar with what Paul is emphasizing here in this epistle.

But the way he begins writing the epistle, he says the following. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

[ 36 : 19 ] According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. And then he tells us the purpose of that choice that he has made.

That we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself.

According to the good pleasure of his will. To the praise of the glory of his grace. Wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved and so on.

It's a long sentence and those of you who have read this and heard it. Heard it explained before. We'll know that. The sentence begins there. Verse 3 or 4 continues right down to very close to the end of the chapter.

But if we just use this as a launchpad if you like. What we need to understand is that the church of Christ on earth exists for one end.

[ 37 : 28 ] And that one end. And that one end is to glorify God and enjoy him. And to bring that church that belongs to him to the place where they will fulfill their calling in glorifying God and enjoy him.

And they can only do so by arriving at this state of perfection and Christ likeness which is the end for which the church exists.

So for example. Some of you will know the writings of James Montgomery Boyce. Now he in one of his commentaries describes to us. He was a minister of 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.

And he describes how at one point in his ministry, I don't know if it was at the beginning of his ministry or not. He sat down with the office bearers in the congregation.

And they began to do something that we as a congregation have done. And all the congregations within our denomination are encouraged to do.

[ 38 : 42 ] He sat down and tried to work out how to structure the work of the congregation so that they would have a plan.

A plan and a plan that they would action as to the progress or the development or the ethos or the end view that the congregation possessed.

What we do, we don't just exist for the reason of existing as a congregation. We are meant to exist as a congregation fulfilling that calling that Paul has described here.

And the question for every congregation is how are we going to actually achieve this? What must we do in order to come to this point? What is it that we need to address that we are not doing?

What is it that we can do better? What is it that we should avoid doing? And so on. Now, according to Montgomery Boyce, there were several main things that they wanted to do.

[ 39 : 56 ] And some of them that they were already doing and they wanted to do better. But one thing that they were afraid of, and I'm sure we're afraid of, is that when you listen to what many who are wanting to adopt such a structured way of doing things, that inevitably you look at the way businesses accomplish their own ends.

And you draw from the way that they structure their business and try to take from their structures what can be adopted within the structure of the church.

Now, some people are averse to doing that. Now, some people are averse to doing that, as if you can't learn from anyone or anything that is not a Bible-based organisation.

Now, what Montgomery Boyce said was this. When we came to our conclusions, and I'm not going to go into what they decided, but when we came to what it was, the main points, we discovered that really what we wanted to do was already written for us in the Bible.

The Apostle Paul had actually listed these things that we should be aiming for. And you'll find most of these things, he said, in Ephesians 4.

[ 41 : 29 ] The main things that the church should be doing, and the reason for them doing that, is already set out for us in the Scripture and in the writings of the Apostle Paul.

Paul states God's purpose for the church and mentions goals and objectives. Now, when you hear that, mentioned goals and objectives, you think, that's modern, that's business, that's planning that belongs not in the sphere of ecclesiology, but business.

And we have nothing to do with that. But no, that's not true. Paul had these strategies and plans and visions and aims and aspirations, and they were all based upon what Christ was teaching and the reason why these teachings had to be brought to the attention of those who were hearers of the Word of God.

And the emphasis being on the implementation of what they were hearing. So the question for ourselves is, why do we preach what we preach?

And what do we expect to gain by such preaching? Is it simply to preserve the status quo?

[ 43 : 00 ] Is it simply to continue as we are, or as we were, or as we think we are, or as we think we were? And some people, you know, if you ask them to interpret where they're at, if you ask them to interpret where the church is coming from, their conclusions might be quite different to the reality.

Nevertheless, they have arrived at these conclusions. Now there are four or five things that we can look at very briefly arising from the words of the apostle here.

He is, first of all, wanting the congregation, the believer. You can't have a congregation without believers.

Believers are individuals, but collectively they form congregations. And together, as believers, they are striving for the same thing.

And in this, when we're coming to the end of the year, with Christmas out of the way, we have ideas about Christmas and what Christ is in the world to do that he was born.

[ 44 : 21 ] But really, we've got to understand, whatever it is that we think of Christmas today, or Christmas celebration, or Christmas, whatever it means to us.



At the heart of this is the thought that Christ was born into the world in order to accomplish something. And we need to get to grips with something that he came into the world to do, and the part that we play in it, if any.

What is it that we expect to gain by what Christ came to do? Are we part of it? Is he working in us? Is he achieving by us, or through us, or in us even the things that are spoken of by the apostle?

So there are five things here, very briefly. There's maturity, stability, discernment, evangelical spirit, and union and communion.

Five things, and I'll speak of them very briefly. So there's maturity. He is saying to them that we be no more children.

[ 45 : 41 ] Henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of darkness by the sleight of men and so on.

Now I think we all understand basically what the apostle is saying. It is only natural that newborn children behave like newborn children.

And as they develop into infancy, we understand the progress that is necessary for development to be seen.

We understand that. And it is not natural for a babe to remain a babe.

It's not natural. It's unnatural. There has to be growth. There has to be progress. And the alarm bells begin to ring when that progress is not seen.

[ 46 : 48 ] I think in the real world, where the development of children is closely monitored, those who are responsible for delivering care within the community and watching the development of children.

There are indicators that they are looking at constantly to see, well, this is the age of the child. This is where we expect the child to be at, at this age.

There is a physical development. There is a mental development. All of these things are considered by the person responsible for following that care.

Now, within the spiritual realm, the same is true. There are many things that a new believer does not and cannot understand.

But as they progress, as they grow, there are things that they begin to discover for themselves. And they become sensitive to and aware of in the spiritual life.

[ 47 : 59 ] There are some things that we can never learn simply by the process of the passage of time.

There are things within the spiritual realm which can only be discovered by way of experience. I can tell you how to think. I can tell you what you should be thinking.

But if that is not reinforced with the experience of that for yourself, it will always be something that is shallow and something that you will not fully appreciate.

Now, let me give you an example. Sam Gordon, our preacher, teacher, writes, A young believer's theology embraces little beyond the bare bones of his salvation.

Most likely his views on the passion and work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, Scripture, and many important matters are what he has picked up from other people.

[ 49 : 13 ] Well, you understand what he is saying. You may not appreciate the reality of what he is saying. But in truth, that is the way it is.

You can be taught many things from the Scripture. But the Scripture is reinforced with the Spirit of God applying that Scripture to your own particular development and progress as a Christian.

It is reinforced with the experience of others as they introduce that into your experience. And you learn from them. You can learn a lot from others.

But some experience must be your own. Otherwise, you will struggle to understand them. Now, the thing is that there are many who are content with the way they are.

They may think, well, initially there was progress, but they plateaued. And they thought, well, there is no need for me to progress any further.

[ 50 : 25 ] And unfortunately, within the body of Christ, there could be Christians who are immature. And their immaturity does not correspond with the years that they have as Christians.

It is as if they have decided, well, I know all there is to be known. I am safe in the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the saviour of sinners.

I am a sinner. I am a sinner. He is my saviour. And that is all there is to it. Now, that is a bit of knowledge, but it is not the whole of knowledge.

And there are many things that the Christian needs to discover about themselves and about Christ and about God and his word that is progressive, that needs to be reinforced by way of experience.

And if you go back to chapter 3, you will find Paul there. He is encouraging the believer to pray for power through the Holy Spirit.

[ 51 : 32 ] Pray for it. Now, you would think the way some people teach that the moment a person is a Christian, he is already endowed with power. And in a sense, that is true.

The Spirit of God indwells the Christian, but not immiserably. And there is always the potential for growth and development.

And that will not happen if you are not applying yourself to the teachings of God's word and implementing them in your life as a Christian. Christ encourages us, as it were, his spirit to be cautioned through our veins so that it touches every area of our life as Christians.

Christ is a Christian, but it is maturity, we read, in faith and knowledge. Many people want all the gifts and the graces of the most renowned saints.

But they are not prepared to take the flack, as it were, that goes with it. Sometimes we want these.

[ 52 : 49 ] We want to be an Elijah. We want to be a Moses. We want to be a Peter. But we don't want the trials that come with the reputation that these people possess.

And if you remember, they gained that reputation through the furnace of adversity, through discovering the fragility of their own humanity and the failings of their Christianity.

Or the failings of their faith. They discovered the need there was to rely more on God, not on their own abilities. And the Christian needs to do that.

There is a need for maturity. Secondly, there is a need for stability. The second thing we find here is that the Apostle Paul expresses a desire for that.

Again, in verse 14, he says that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine. The picture, there is a two-fold picture there.

[ 54 : 04 ] There is a picture of the child and there is a picture of, if you like, a boat sitting on the water. And the wind is blowing and the boat is being tossed this way and that.

Or if you look at the bay in the summer, where there is a boat or a small ship perhaps sitting and it is tanker or sitting and it is being kept secure at its moorings.

But you'll notice the boat is not, it's not, it's not stopped, it's not immobile.

It's tossing, it's moving, it's being, the waves are constantly moving it. Now the picture that the Apostle wants us to understand is this.

A picture of someone who is experiencing that. And who needs to be resistant to that.

[ 55 : 15 ] Who needs to understand that these tossings and turnings are natural conditions of the world in which we live. And when we are not fixed to our moorings, when our moorings are something from which we derive no strength, then we run into difficulties.

Principal William Cunningham made a point which I think is necessarily important for the believer to remember.

When men or women are brought to the knowledge and belief of the truth. They are in a word roused from the complete and unbroken subjection to the authority of him who leads the great body of mankind captive at his will.

And they are brought into a state of irreconcilable opposition to him. In other words, Cunningham is describing there what was once true of a believer.

In other words, Cunningham, they were under the supervision, the control of the enemy of their souls. But having moved from that position into the position where they are now different to what they are.

[ 56 : 43 ] Their position is one of opposition to him. And that position of opposition requires that they are resistant to whatever it is that he would have them do, which is opposed to the will of God.

The more you yield to the will of the enemy of your soul, the more you are opposed to the will of God. The more you yield to the will of God, as he reveals it in his truth, the more you are opposed to this will that once kept you subject.

That's what he is saying. That opposition is connected, a concentrated, a concerted resistance to the enemy that is the enemy of our soul.

God informs us, God instructs us, God enlightens us, God reveals to us bit by bit more and more what it is that we are exposed to and what that kind of opposition entails.

We don't recognize it instantly. We don't recognize it. We don't recognize it. Without the word in the hand of the spirit, that instability would continue.

[ 58 : 06 ] But what Paul is seeking for the believer is that there is stability by more and more reliance upon the word of God and an understanding of what it is that this world will introduce us to.

The more we live for God or Christ in the world, the more we will experience such challenges to our lives. That's where the third thing comes in.

Discernment. We are instructed as to the truth that is most helpful to our condition. We are given a sense of what is good for us.

We are given an understanding and a knowledge of what is not. And you know, this is part of the progress that the Christian makes.

When I was preparing this, I was reminding, well I was reminded, just reminiscing. I remember as a young Christian, not very old in the faith.

[ 59 : 12 ] And I don't know if I had professed faith. I probably had, but only recently. And I was at a communion in our own congregation. And on a Friday night, we had an old minister who was getting to the end of his ministry.

And on the Friday night, he gave out a text from the Song of Solomon, chapter 2. And we read through the chapter, and you know, I was feeling, I was so glad, because this was a chapter that was so full of the love of Christ.

And you know, this was something I felt I could appreciate and handle and be happy with. But the minister went to preach on this.

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes. And he preached a sermon on the need that there was to deal with the sin that was in your life.

The little sins. The big sins that you were ignoring. The things that you were not doing, that you should be doing. And I was so disappointed.

[ 60 : 28 ] What on earth was he wanting to preach to Christians about these things for? What does he want to teach Christians about sin for? And I was robbed.

I was robbed. And that's the way I felt about this sermon, which I did not appreciate, which I did not understand.

I did not recognize the need that I had to discover that that was the kind of person that I was. Because at the time I was so full of Christ, and I was so full of the love of Christ, and so desirous of discovering more about the love of Christ.

What need did I have to discover about sin? What need did I have to discover about sin? I had already discovered about sin. But I tell you, I know. If I was to hear that sermon, I would say to you, that's the kind of sermon I need to hear.

That's the kind of need that I have. The thing that I'm wanting to say is that I lacked at that moment the discernment, the understanding, the appreciation of where I stood in relation to Christ at that moment.

[ 61 : 42 ] That there was a whole host of things that I needed to learn that I was ignorant of. And the Christian is in a journey through life where he makes these discoveries, but only with God's help.

Only with God's help. It's part of the role of the preacher, teacher to instruct.

But it is also part of those who are part of that body, who form that body, to help others understand these things that they need to discover.

These things that they need to... And I think, I've said it too often, I suppose for some of you, I think that's sadly something that we're lacking. It's all very well to have the preaching of the gospel.

I hope that you're hearing preaching that will not do you any harm spiritually. But I believe with all my heart that what you hear needs to be reinforced within the body of believers, in your discussions, in your sharing of experiences, in bringing experience to bear upon the world.

[ 63 : 01 ] So that you help others understand, this is what is meant. This is how it works. This is how it worked for me. This is where I was and this is how I came to be somewhere different.

The fourth thing we have here is the evangelical spirit. The evangelical spirit, I think.

What I mean by that is this, we speak the truth in love. We speak the truth in love. John Stott writes that the sign of Christian maturity is conviction about God's revealed truth.

The ability to hold it and speak the truth in love. The ability to hold the truth.

That is, you know the word of God to be true. And because you know the word of God to be true, you adhere to the word of God to the best of your ability.

[ 64 : 03 ] And you help others come to the same place that you're at. I know, I've said it often, but the most influential people in my Christian life were those who administered our rebuke, not with that relish, but with the tenderness that love commands and commands.

What do I mean by that? When we speak to others about their errors, we're not dealing with them as those who are glad that that error is not our own.

In the sense that we're smug and we're happy with being where we are, and in a certain way we're happy that it's somebody else and not us.

We take no pleasure in the error of those who have been wronged, but we must, and it is our duty, to be careful and loving towards those who have erred.

Christ-like, Christ-likeness requires it, and Christ-likeness forbids us from being anything other than tender-hearted towards those who have wronged.

[ 65 : 35 ] Because the end of that love is restoration, returning to the body of Christ, to the fullness of the experience of what that means, what it means for a person to be part of the body.

The final thing, very briefly, is this, and I'm going to quote William Cunningham again in conclusion. Our relationship is with Christ and his people.

There is a relationship with Christ as our Saviour. There is a relationship with his people who have the same relationship with him.

If, Professor Cunningham says, if we would grow up into him in all things, we must keep his example before our eyes, constantly.

And we must strive daily to attain a closer resemblance to it, both in principle and in practice, both in motive and in action.

[ 66 : 47 ] And this resemblance must extend to the whole of our character and the whole of our conduct.

The whole of our character and the whole of our conduct. In other words, there is not one facet of our humanity that Christ does not have something to say to us about.

Nothing that we do, nothing that we say, how we conduct ourselves, how we conduct ourselves within the body and so on.

All of these things are within the orbit of the influence of Christ through the Spirit. The body of Christ.

The body of Christ on the world is the Church. He means the Church to be like him. He wants the Church to be like him. He will not stop with his Church and every believer within it until they are like him.

[ 67 : 52 ] And the day will come when that will be true. That will be realised. However much we think, it seems unlikely as far as we are concerned. May God bless us and bless his word to us.

Let us pray. Lord, our God, help us to appreciate your word as a word that is for our good, for our strengthening, for our confirmation that we are yours and that you are ours.

Hear us and pardon us in Jesus' name. Amen. We will conclude singing the words of Psalm 27. Psalm 27 and at verse 11.

O Lord, instruct me in thy way. To me I'll either be in a plain path because of those that hatred bear to me. Give me not to my enemies' will, for witnesses that lie against me risen are, and such as breathe out cruelty.

I fainted had, unless that I believed had to see the Lord's own goodness in the land of them that living be. Wait on the Lord and be thou strong, and he shall strength afford unto thine heart.

[ 69 : 05 ] Here do thou wait, I say, upon the Lord. O Lord, instruct me in thy way. O Lord, instruct me in thy way.

He'll be my venues, and I'll harvest all those thatüreeng ■did NAT h■tDown elles filled.

Ha! The Quigal GraPS That all our children best in the land of heaven and glory be.

With all the Lord of Jesus come, and he shall shed the poor.

And to thine heart, in to the wind, I shall shed the light of the Lord.

[ 71 : 38 ] May grace, and mercy, and peace be with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rest and abide with you all, never and always. Amen.