

WE Need the Prayers of Others to GROW!

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[0:00] Good morning. Thank you. Thank you, Michael. Turn with me back in your Bibles to the book of Philippians. As we pick up where we left off last Sunday, someone said this morning, you left us with a cliffhanger ending.

The scripture so often does to us, it captivates our thoughts and draws us back in for more. I'm grateful for you, grateful to be here with you this morning. I do bring you greetings from the elders and the saints at Canyon Bible Church of Prescott. It's such a joy to be able to send someone from our church to hear to serve you. And we know that we're often praying for you as elders, as saints, and we're grateful. We know you're praying for us as well. And we're going to see this morning in our text that that is far more precious than we often realize.

Let me read the passage for us this morning. And we will begin. We're in Philippians chapter one, beginning in verse 19.

Yes, and I will rejoice for I know that through your prayers and the help of the spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance. As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to live on in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose, I cannot tell. I'm hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and to be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus because of my coming to you again. Father, thank you for the rich truths that we've sung this morning and for the rich truths in this passage. Let it all minister to us. Lord, even as we sing, we're reminded of Colossians 3.16, how we are teaching and admonishing one another with hymns and songs and spiritual songs. Grateful for the ways that we not only sing to you on a Sunday morning, but we teach one another with our words. We admonish one another with our songs.

We sing to one another, O fearful saints, fresh courage take. The clouds that you now dread are rich with mercies and will break with blessings on your head.

[3:06] Father, we know that that's true. And even as we sing it to each other, we're reminded that oftentimes, Lord, we look at the future ahead, we see a frowning providence.

So grateful as we sing this morning, we remind one another that you often hide behind that a smiling love and care. That you are our father in heaven. And that like any good father, you care for us, your children. You bring us through the highs and the lows of this life. You walk with us.

You strengthen us. We have confidence that you who began a good work in us will see it through to completion at the day of Christ Jesus. And so as we look at this passage this morning, Lord, we're asking for your help. I'm asking for your help. Lord, you know how weak and frail I am, just a man. And yet, Lord, your word, so powerful, so marvelous and wonderful. So we humble ourselves before you this morning, humble ourselves before your word and ask that you teach us and ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

We're reading our kids The Hobbit at bedtime right now. We're working through that. We're just beginning the adventure. We've just barely left the Shire and encountered the three trolls. And they've just been turned to stone by Gandalf. And now we've headed off to Rivendell. And it's really fun because so many of us are so familiar with the story, The Hobbit. My kids have never read it before. This is our first time. And so it's really fun as we read through it to, in a sense, see it through their eyes for the first time, not knowing, not having any clue what this adventure Bilbo Baggins has embarked on will hold.

[5:18] Not knowing how it will continue or how it will end. And of course, it's the beginning of the story that everyone knows so well. But like any good book turned into a movie, the movie left out

some really important things from the book. And if you've read the book, you know this to be true. Personally, I think the most important part of the entire story is left out of the movie altogether. And it is the very last paragraph of the book. I told my kids before church this morning, I'm going to read you some of The Hobbit this morning. You want to know how it ends? And they're like, yeah. And so at the end of the book, Bilbo is in his Hobbit hole back in the hill at Bag End. And he and Gandalf are discussing the adventure, reminiscing on what took place. And Gandalf shares with him the reality comes to light that some of the very things that happened in Bilbo's adventure have gone on to set a domino effect on other events in history that have fulfilled prophecies from long ago. And Bilbo is baffled by that because he realizes this was not just his adventure, but was part of a grander story managed by a higher power, God, as it were.

Bilbo's surprised to hear that because he had only thought about the entire adventure from his own perspective. He'd only seen things from his own eyes and experienced it chronologically as it unfolded.

And then the book closes with these words from Gandalf. And this is the last paragraph of the book as Tolkien wrote it. Gandalf to Bilbo, you don't really suppose, do you, that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck just for your sole benefit? You're a very fine person, Mr. Baggins, and I am very fond of you, but you are only quite a little fellow in a wide world after all. And Bilbo's response, thank goodness. Same is true for us, isn't it? We are desperately stuck in our own perspective as we walk through this life, and yet we are in fact part of something much bigger, much larger than our own adventure. The difference is that we, unlike Bilbo, have not yet reached the end of our adventure.

We're stuck right in the middle of it, aren't we? And we don't know how it will all unfold. In fact, we're deeply concerned about the many threats that we see around us in a changing world.

[8:10] The orcs and dragons of our lives, as it were. But people's values and lifestyles, even as we look around, are radically different from what we're used to, and it only seems to be continuing to come unglued as we watch history unfold. It's like that train wreck that you can't take your eyes off of, or that YouTube video of the car crash that you can't stop playing for your friends, even though you just don't want to see the car crash again. The very fabric of our society that once seemed so certain and stable seems to be coming undone faster every day. Like someone who walks through the door and snags their sweater on the doorframe, and it begins to unravel, and instead of turning to fix the problem, the world seems to just continue running faster as the sweater unravels, as they get further away from the truth. And we as Christians are left wondering, what in the world is ahead for us? I mean, what is happening? There's so much that's uncertain about the future of our society, our churches, our families, our very lives, our freedoms. So when we look out on the future of our adventure, as it were, it's really good to know the end from the beginning. That we are all part of something much bigger than ourselves. That it is not all by mere luck. And that is the very thing that gives Paul comfort in the midst of such horrible uncertainty in his life circumstances as he writes this very letter back to the Philippians. You'll remember Paul's writing from prison in Rome. Last week, we looked at Paul's perspective of those circumstances that he was in.

We talked about how we can live life through the challenges that we are currently facing, both from unbelievers and from believers. Now this week, we look to the future. As Paul looks to his future, what about the unknown future? Sure, I can see the circumstances I'm facing right now as something the Lord is doing.

I can see and understand how somehow, some way, the Lord is using this for good and for the advance of his gospel. What if it gets worse? That's what we're always asking ourselves, isn't it? What if it gets worse? What if my worst fears come true? What if your worst fears come true? How will I walk through that?

And it could very well get a lot worse for Christians in the days ahead. We don't know. They could take away our rights. They could throw us in prison. They could kill us. And from the trajectory that we seem to be watching take place, it doesn't seem like it's that unlikely.

Paul had to face a lot of those things too. And in his letter to the Philippians, having described the advance of the gospel in this trial he's in, in the verses that we looked at last week, he ends saying, in that I rejoice. In his circumstances, he says, I rejoice. And he then transitions to begin looking at the future by saying, in verse, so you get the end of verse 18 there, in that I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice. Now this is not just basic repetition. There's very intentional statement being made here. He

says, I rejoice. Present tense. Having described his present tense circumstances, I rejoice.

[11:53] And he says, and I will rejoice. Future tense. And now he's going to go on to say, what about the future? Paul is rejoicing currently in his difficult circumstances, but he also looks out at an uncertain future ahead.

And he has confidence that he will rejoice in the future as well. And that is really remarkable. And that is a uniquely Christian hope. So the gospel is advanced in their past circumstances. Now he looks ahead to the future without fear and has confidence that what is ahead will also result in the advance of the gospel, the glory of Christ, and the joy of Paul and the Philippians. He says, yes, and I will rejoice.

For. Here's how Paul can be so sure that he will rejoice in the future. He says, for I know. Paul says, no matter what the future holds, whether it's life or death, he will rejoice because there's something he knows. Something he knows changes the way that he thinks about the future.

That's a good reminder. What we know changes how we think, how we live, how we feel. What we know to be true ought to be the driving decision maker of our lives. What we know.

This really is how it works, right? What we know impacts and changes how we live day to day. The decisions that we make are informed by what we know. What we know informs how we live, what we choose, all the decisions we make. And that in turn affects how we feel. What we know informs what we decide to do in any given circumstance and how we live and how we live the decisions of our lives then begin to affect how we feel. Railroad trains.

[14:00] There are different types of train cars, each with its own purpose. Of course, there's the engine up front, right? It pulls all the other cars down the track. That's where the power is.

The engine, the locomotive, as they call it, is what pulls the train cars down the track. And there's freight cars, passenger cars, maintenance cars for carrying cargo or people.

There's actually, you know, there's 26 different types of maintenance cars that you could put on a train. 26. I can't even think of 26, like, tools in my shed right now. There's 26 different kinds of cars, things that tamp the aggregate, things that straighten the tracks.

I mean, there's all kinds of... I digress. Of course, we all know about the caboose, right? The caboose goes at the end of the train and carries the railway crew.

The workers who are responsible for switching the tracks, after the train has gone over it, they switch the tracks for whatever the next train is going to be that's coming along. The engine always goes in the front to pull.

[15:05] The freight and passenger cars always go in the middle to carry the whole purpose of why this thing is moving down the tracks. And then the caboose always gets pulled along in the back. And it's helpful to use that analogy to think about our lives.

What we know really is the engine of our train of thought or train of our lives. The engine pulls our lives down the track.

What we know drives everything that we do. How we live, the decisions that we make are like the passenger cars. They're all being pulled down the track by the engine, what we know.

How we feel as a result of all of that is like the caboose. It's always in the back. It's always the result of the decisions that we've made, which are the result of what we know to be true.

What if train cars all started trying to do each other's job? The passenger cars wanted to go up front ahead of the engine because they thought they were more important. We're the ones that carry the people, after all.

[16:08] Let us go first. They all end up in the wrong place because they're not being pulled by the engine. Or they just stop dead on the tracks because there's no power. Or if the caboose started trying to push the train from the back and all the cars just kind of crumple and derail off the tracks, right?

Too often, we try to live our lives like that. We make decisions for our life without considering what we know to be true. Or worse yet, we try to let the caboose of our emotions push the decisions that we make.

It's a good reminder to allow the truth of the scripture to drive the train of our lives and the decisions that we make so that the emotions that we feel as a result will be the emotions that we should be feeling.

The kind of joy that Paul is talking about in these passages. It's a good reminder just to know the Bible. You say, great, is this another sermon about knowing the Bible and how important it is?

Yes. They're all about that. Because they're all about knowing the Lord and how great He is. The way that we do that is in the pages of His Word. It's a good reminder to know the Bible, to know the truth, and to allow biblical truth to inform our decision-making process.

[17 : 27] Because the biblical truths that Paul knows here are the cause for his unshakable, fearless rejoicing as he looks to a future that's full of question marks.

So, what did Paul know? He says, yes, and I will rejoice, verse 19, for I know. So, what does he know? Let's see. He says, for I know that through your prayers, Philippians, and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance.

Let's just take that first phrase. Through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Notice how dependent Paul makes himself on the prayers of the Philippians. Now, he had just got done talking with them about how he was praying for them.

Now, he's saying, I know that part of the way I'm going to get out of this is because I know you're praying for me. And he could have said, I will rejoice because I know that the Spirit will help me. That's true. But he says, through your prayers and the help of the Holy Spirit. You see, in some mysterious way, the Lord has ordained that the prayers of his people are a means by which he brings about his good and sovereign purposes in our lives.

[18 : 46] Because, you know, it's warmer during the day and cooler at night. You know why? Because that's how God designed the world to work.

The reason that happens is because the sun comes up in the morning and it begins to warm the day, the earth. And so it gets warmer. And then the sun goes down in the evening and it begins to cool off.

Because that's how God ordained that it would be. And every day it's the same. But God could have just as easily said, it's going to be warmer by day and it's going to be cooler at night.

Let it be so. No sun necessary. God could have done it however he wanted to. He didn't need the sun to rise and set. He could have just set.

That's how it's going to be. Air warms up during the day and it cools off at night because I said so and I made it. But instead he determined that it would be the sunrise and the sunset that warm and cool the earth.

[19 : 54] You see, he determined that it would be that way. He used the sun as the means by which the earth is warmed and cool as it goes down.

And in the same way, the Lord designed it. That it would be the sunrise and sunset of the prayers of the saints that bring God's warm purposes into the lives of their brothers and sisters.

This is remarkably impossible to understand. How is it that a sovereign God ruling and reigning over every detail of the world and unfolding of history somehow uses our prayers for Cottonwood Bible Church to bring about what he's doing here?

And how is it that a sovereign God in control of every speck of dust in Prescott? How is it that he uses your prayers for our church to bring about some of his sovereign good purposes?

I don't know. He does it because he can and because he's more amazing than we can fathom. The fact that we can't understand how it works doesn't change the fact that we can know that that is how it works.

[21 : 07] God uses the prayers of the saints to bring about his good and sovereign purposes in our brothers and sisters' lives. Paul understands that to be true and he says it here.

I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance. It's amazing because as it relates to your salvation, yes, you stand on faith before the Lord.

You stand in grace and have been forgiven individually. This is not a community salvation. You've been saved by God yourself. You stand alone, justified before him, holy and blameless.

But then he takes you after saving you, places you into a family called the church and makes you completely dependent on other people for your sanctification and for your spiritual growth.

He makes you dependent on things like their prayer for you. Paul understands that what the future holds for him is somehow in the sovereignty of God being shaped by the prayers of his brothers and sisters.

[22 : 12] So we need to understand when we think about this, how crucial it is for our brothers and sisters to be praying for us. I don't know if you've ever felt needy for prayer.

We need to understand how much we need people praying for us. So let me ask you, do your brothers and sisters in Christ, perhaps the other people in this room, other Christians that you know, do they know how to pray for you?

Do they know what's going on in your life right now? Do they know what sins you're battling against lately? Do they know who you've been trying to share the gospel with so that they can uphold you in prayer in that?

Do they know your failures and your sins? How else will they pray for you? Paul says, yes, and I will rejoice. He says, the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The Spirit of Jesus Christ. We can talk about the Trinity here. The Spirit is not a standalone. He is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This is Jesus Christ himself helping Paul.

[23:26] Jesus' Spirit. The Spirit of Jesus. We'll digress into a doctrinal dissertation on the Trinity here because it's not the main point of the passage, except to say that this is one of the many places that we see where the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, while three persons, are indeed one God.

More importantly, though, in this text, notice that what we know, again, is seen to impact how we think about the future.

In fact, what Paul knows, the doctrine of the Trinity and Paul's understanding of prayer and the church shows up in a thousand little ways as we think about the future, right?

It's like Paul's just talking about his certainty about the future, and boom, up pops the doctrine of the Trinity. Where did that come from? What does that have to do with anything? This is just how it is. What we know molds and shapes the decisions that we make, and even how we think about the future. You could say, are you worried about the future? Maybe you should read a book on the Trinity.

[24:35] Concerned about your finances? You should study the sovereignty of Jesus Christ in Colossians 1. See the doctrines that we know, the truths taught in Scripture mold and shape who we are, the decisions that we make, how we think about our lives and our futures.

Sometimes we try to get so practical. We think we need to get a detailed step-by-step guide on every topic, right? Like, we're having marriage problems, so we'll start reading through a book on marriage.

Like, we'll get some biblical advice on marriage. That's not a bad thing to do, but have you ever thought, maybe if you're having marriage problems, what your marriage needs is for the two of you to study through Exodus together. Think, what in the world does Exodus have to do with my marriage?

Everything. Because Exodus is about the Lord. Every verse in the Bible is a marriage verse. Every verse in the Bible affects how you think about parenting.

Every verse in the Bible affects how you think about caring for your aging parents. Affects how you think about work and money and everything else.

[25:47] Because every verse in the Bible is given to us so that we might know how to live our lives before a God who created all things and has given us this book so that we can know.

So Paul continues in verse 19, I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance.

This isn't like a prophetic statement. Paul's like, I know because I'm prophesying that I'm going to be delivered. This is, he's not saying he's definitely going to get out of prison.

This is a statement that either way, whether he's executed or released, he will be delivered. The word deliverance here in the original is *soteria*.

It's literally the word salvation. He literally says, this will turn out for my salvation. We know he's not just prophesying about getting out of prison because he's going to say in verse 20 that this happens whether by life or death.

[26:52] It's translated deliverance here to show Paul's broad use of the term, which is exactly what he describes in verse 20. Look at it. He says, this will turn out for my deliverance as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not at all be ashamed but that with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored in my body whether by life or by death.

Paul's looking at life and death here as the two options for his future. That's about as serious as it gets, right? We worry about the future because we don't know who will win the election. We worry about the future because we don't know what will happen to my investments.

We worry about the future because we don't know how our kids will turn out. Paul is saying, I don't know if I'm going to be released or executed. You think about the argument from the greater to the lesser, right?

If Paul can say that he's confident he won't be ashamed but that Christ will be glorified and he will have joy and continue to rejoice whether he is executed or released, whether by life or by death, then we could take everything that we worry about and put it somewhere in the middle of those or it's one of those things.

And he says, my eager expectation and hope is that no matter what happens, Christ will be honored. How he knows? The Greek word here for eager expectation is so good.

[28 : 27] Josephus, the Jewish historian used this word in AD 38 to describe the moment when Roman soldiers were invading the Galilean city known as Jatapata which is really fun just to say.

I don't know if you knew there was a city called Jatapata but just try saying that later, Jatapata. It's just really fun. You just throw that around, Jatapata. The Roman soldiers are invading this city, Jatapata and they pull back and launch their arrows, hundreds of them, into the air and the Galileans in Jatapata are waiting for this hailstorm of arrows to come down on them and the word that Josephus uses is the same word here, eager expectation.

It's translated, Josephus says, the Galileans breathlessly awaited the rain of arrows down on them. The arrows are up. Nothing's stopping this now.

The ship has sailed. Those arrows are up and they are coming down and the Galileans are waiting for it. It's an eager expectation. It's not like I'm wondering if it'll happen.

It is definitely going to happen and I'm just waiting for the moment. That's what Paul says here. His eager expectation and hope is that he will not at all be ashamed but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in his body whether by life or by death.

[29 : 58] This is an expectation of something that will certainly happen. That's Paul's point. While we, and this is interesting, in a passage where Paul is talking about what he doesn't know, he's pointing very clearly here to what he does know.

I don't know what the future holds but I do know some things that completely change the way that I think about the future. We don't know what the future holds but we can know for certain our eager expectation and hope that Jesus Christ will be exalted through your life, through mine.

The gospel will be advanced. God's kingdom will win the battle and the Lord will rule and reign forever. There are things that we do know even in the midst of things that we don't know.

Because of that we can look forward, look ahead to the future, whatever it may hold with eager expectation. We know how the adventure ends. I mean, we've quite literally read the end of the book if you've read Revelation which I'm guessing you have.

We know how the adventure ends. So, when we think about the future it almost seems silly in comparison with Paul saying whether I live or whether I die I know, I have confidence and eager expectation and hope that Christ will be exalted and we worry about financial stability and health problems and our reputation and relationships and our employment and our circumstances and our country and our voting and there's so many things that we worry about.

[31 : 43] None of those things are unimportant. But, they all come under the umbrella of something that is in the middle between either life or death.

And all of them, in all of those things we can know for certain Christ will be exalted. Well, what's going to happen? I don't know but I do know that Christ will be exalted. What about this with my finances?

I don't know but I know that no matter what happens if we get rich or we live under a bridge Christ is going to be exalted. And since that's my greatest desire I can't wait to see what the Lord does.

If we're honest though I think one of our greatest fears in life is just that our lives will not turn out the way that we wanted them to and we'll look on that with shame.

I'm like this just isn't what I wanted for my life. Paul's saying no matter what the future holds I know I won't have to be ashamed.

[32 : 50] That's exactly what he says. I will not be at all ashamed. Instead with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body whether by life or by death.

Paul is actually quoting from Psalm 25 here. Probably did his quiet time in the Psalms that morning maybe. He's just a godly man. He knew the Bible really well. But Psalm 25 1-3 listen to this.

I mean it's almost a literal quotation here in Philippians 1. Psalm 25 1-3 says this To you O Lord I lift up my soul. O my God in you I trust let me not be put to shame.

Indeed none who wait for you will be put to shame. We think about our uncertain future let's allow how we feel and what we think to be shaped by what we know to be true.

We will not at all be put to shame because our greatest desire is that Jesus Christ gets glory and that is gonna happen. It's like no matter what happens Jesus gets glory.

[33 : 58] I can't wait to see it. I can't wait to watch it unfold. Jesus is gonna get glory. How? I don't know yet but it's gonna be great. Again this is Paul allowing what he knows to be true shaping how he decides thinks how he feels and how can he say that he's confident this will turn out for good?

Well because his definition of good is a biblical definition he says in verse 21 look at it for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain that's the bottom line for Paul that's the bottom line for all of us to live is Christ it is defined by Christ it is centered on Christ it is driven by what Christ has done for me on the cross I mean it is all about Jesus Christ so that if I live it's all about him my life is all about him Paul goes on to say that if he continues to live he will continue to help the Philippians for their progress and joy in the faith and that word progress there in verse 25 is exactly the same word over in verse 12 when he says I want you to know brothers that what has happened to me has really served to advance progress the gospel so he started this thought with the progress and advance of the gospel and he is concluding it he thought through all of his circumstances and now he's looking at the future and he's saying it's all about the advance and progress of the gospel he says for to me to live is

Christ and to die is gain the two options for Paul life or death both of them will be good he says if I live I live for Christ for the advance of the gospel for the salvation of the people of the world and if I die when I die I get Jesus himself and so to die is gain and he unpacks those two options a bit more as he continues look at verse 22 he says if I am to live on in the flesh this means fruitful is to depart and to be with Christ for that's far better but to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account so Paul says if I die I get to be with Jesus and that's a really good option that's a better option but if I live God's going to continue to use my life to advance his gospel Jesus is going to get glory that's a pretty awesome option too Paul views his entire life through the lens of Jesus Christ and the advance of his gospel and that really makes a lot of sense if you think about it I mean if this is true and it is all true everything that we sang this morning all that we are reading the prayers that we pray the God that we are talking to it is all true and if it is true that God really created this world and created us in his image to be satisfied in an intimate relationship with him but we turned our backs on our creator we snubbed our noses at him didn't want to have anything to do with him I'll be my own God I want to decide for myself how my life goes and in so doing we brought the wrath of God down upon ourselves yet while there was nothing that we could do to fix it to remedy it to make ourselves right with God again he stepped down out of heaven came to earth lived the perfect life that we were supposed to live and can't died on the cross and in that moment God the son dying on the cross God the father in heaven pouring out his wrath against your sin and mine on his son so that as Jesus Christ died it is as though he took our sin the wrath that we deserve it like he took it to the grave and when he rose again three days later it like he left it there good riddance and him raising again to new life he's just the first fruits we get the same thing born again to spiritual life raised from the dead as it been changed and then God gives us his word so that we can know him intimately so that we can walk with him so that we can live this life the way that we were designed to and if all of that is true and it is that changes everything if all of that is true then to live is Christ and to die is gain look over at

[38 : 42] Philippians 3 with me just verses 7 and 8 Philippians 3 verses 7 and 8 Paul says whatever gain I had I counted as loss for the sake of Christ indeed I count everything everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord if the gospel is true then it changes how we view everything ourselves this world our trials our mission our finances our marriage our parenting our lives our death so Paul says in verse 25 convinced of this he didn't have to throw that phrase in there convinced of this I know there it is again you see the interplay back and forth as Paul walks through this passage looking at the future there is I know and I don't know I know and I don't know there are some things

I don't know about the future that's true for all of us lots that we don't know about the future but convinced of this truth of the gospel convinced that to live is Christ and to die is gain there are some things that we do know he says convinced of this I know I know that I will remain and continue with

you all for your progress and you again it really is interesting the way Paul uses the phrase I know and I don't know several times in this passage he is highlighting the idea that even when there are things we don't know about the future there are also things that we do know about the future he doesn't know whether he will live or die he does know that Christ will be honored either way he does know that if he dies he gets Jesus himself he doesn't know if he'll be released from prison or executed he does know that no matter what happens

God will use it for good he knows that if he lives he gets to live for Jesus and he knows that if he dies he gets to be with Jesus I think it's honestly really hard for us to take this seriously like just honestly right Paul like seriously oh Paul you're so so you're so righteous Paul wow you're so godly no you can't choose because you have such a biblical view of death Paul wow I think it's really hard for us to take this seriously but I really do think that Paul means this seriously I think part of it is if we're honest that in western society we fear death so much we are prone to be deeply afraid of dying and I think so if this appears to us to be a bit stilted or staged from

Paul it's only because we've allowed so much of the American fear of death to permeate our thinking and invade our understanding of what life and death really are what they really mean listen all of this is true for us just as much as it was for Paul to live is Christ to die is gain if we're really thinking rightly about what it means to die and to be with the Lord face to face how could we not see that as a better option if we're honest it's because we love our stuff so much we like our houses and we like reading the hobbit with my kids there's so much that we love about our lives we have it so good that it's really hard for us to really see this and I think we really need to fight for this kind of a perspective that we really understand what it would mean to stand before the

Lord to see his face to hear his voice talking to us to be with him I think we need to read more of the passages in scripture about what heaven is like so that we'll long for it more so that we could say with Paul to live as Christ but to die as gain we live in an era of change we find ourselves longing for surroundings that are less tumultuous more predictable things familiar and comfortable to us seem to be slipping away replaced by wildly different lifestyles and values all around us so we look ahead to an uncertain future in a radically changing world and if we're honest the changes that we see in the world are deeply concerning to us we live in an era of change between the age of reason and whatever is going to come after everybody abandons reason but that is what is actually happening right now many ways our whole world is changing there's a new epic beginning a new season of the world and in many ways our days now are not altogether different from the shifting times of late antiquity when the classic age was collapsing the modern ages were just beginning right you think about the city of Rome which many believed would stand forever

[44:30] Rome will never fall where the comfortable society that had provided stability and ease for a thousand years can you imagine a city that stood for a thousand years was all beginning to come unraveled and the new state religion Christianity was being blamed as society was unraveling the future for Christians was really bleak then Rome was sacked by Germanic barbarians in the year 410 and all of her classic monuments lay in burning ruins just a heap of rubble in many cases the future was bleak what we look back on now though we look back on those days we see what appeared to be a horrible threat to Christians and to the advance of the gospel and it turned out to be some of the church's greatest years of growth and flourishing

I mean it literally wouldn't be too long before those same Germanic hordes that invaded and sacked Rome would themselves become Christians our elders just finished reading a book titled The Care of Souls the last chapter contains this quote and I just put it in my notes so that I could read it to you it says church historians tell us that these eras between the collapse of one world view and the dawn of another are frequently epics of great opportunity so rather than shrinking in fear for what is coming on the world in this new post-Christian era it's time for us to rise to the challenge we move confidently into an uncertain future emboldened by our Lord who gives us his word of hope and life to bring to a world lost in despair and death so friends if we watch Rome burn down around us let us do it saying you don't really suppose do you that all of your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck just for your own soul benefit you're a fine person

I'm very fond of you but you're only quite a little fellow in a wide world after all let us do it saying with Paul I will rejoice because I know father that's that's our greatest desire is to know to know you to know your word to know with confidence father that what you have promised will come true lord you have always been faithful to your promises throughout the ages decade after decade century after century lord we can look back and see how all of the good promises that you've made to your

people you have been faithful to lord by faith the prophets saw a day when the long for messiah would appear with the power to break the chains of sin and death that he would rise triumphant from the grave and now lord we look back and we see that those promises you made through the prophets you were faithful to and so father we look ahead to a future filled with question marks so many things that we are tempted to worry about lord don't let satan have his way with us don't let him distract us with our circumstances don't let him distract us with all of the worries about what will happen instead father help us to fix our eyes on jesus christ the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before him endured the cross despising the shame and now is seated at the right hand of the father help us to set our eyes on you to remember your promises to know that for all of the uncertainty that the future holds lord we know plenty enough about the future to have great confidence eager expectation and hope so father as we leave here today we leave in just that way confident grateful you have called us your children you have seated us at your table and you have sent us out to the world we've been called to go so lord send us out from here today use us in the lives of people who are lost and dying and hopeless in this world to point them back to the only true source of hope and enduring confidence in the future jesus christ and his cross and we pray in jesus name amen now as we do have just a few moments to reflect on the things that the lord has taught us from his word we'll just sit in silence talking with him and reflecting on the things that he's taught us this morning meantime here there are który we ■ to to