

AM Philipians 1:1-11

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Date: 20 June 2021

Preacher: Rev Robert Dale

[0 : 00] Thank you.

The Reverend McLeod has a grandchild who has a very high temperature and is being tested for COVID. And until the test results are known, the Reverend McLeod is not able to travel to come and preach for us.

So I've been asked to step in in this situation. And I shall be preaching again also at this evening's service.

On Wednesday night, our prayer meeting and Bible study will be led by Jonathan Kenyon.

Next Lord's Day, 11 o'clock and 6 o'clock, the preacher will be the Reverend Phil Stogner. Now, he is American from South Carolina.

[1 : 24] But he's an associate minister at Glasgow Free Church. Glasgow City Free Church. And he's working in Scotland for five years, helping out in the Helensborough church plant.

The monthly magazine of the Free Church, The Record, is now being distributed again. It was interrupted because of lockdown.

If you would like to subscribe and receive the record on a regular basis, please let Norman know. The cost is £2 for which you will be invoiced each year.

Finally, an announcement about congregational singing. Following the easing of restrictions, we have recommenced congregational singing, but still wearing masks.

Singing along with pre-recorded singing. And we hope to resume our pre-lockdown practice of pre-center-led singing from the 11th of July.

[2 : 38] With full details of what we're singing on the notice sheet. So, let us come before our God now in prayer.

Our gracious God and our Father, we come into your holy, majestic presence on this Lord's Day. Giving you thanks and praise for all your goodness to us.

Giving you thanks especially for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that brings us together. For the Lord of glory, who humbled himself, became man, suffered on the cross, rose again, ascended into heaven, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father on high.

We thank you that he is our Redeemer and our great High Priest. and we pray that we may exalt his name this day. Lord, we are reminded of the uncertainty of life in the very fact that the Reverend Kenny MacLeod is unable to be with us today with family illness.

Lord, how quickly and easily these things come upon us. Lord, we thank you that amidst all such uncertainty, there is the great certainty of our God.

[4 : 18] You are our rock and we rest upon you. Draw near to us now and grant us blessing throughout this service and throughout this Lord's Day, for we ask it in Jesus Christ's name.

Amen. Our opening praise is from Psalm 34, verses 1 to 10, and that is on page 40, the Sing Psalms version, on page 40 of your psalm books.

And we will stand so that we can join in behind our masks as we listen to the recorded singing.

Psalm 34, at all times I will bless the Lord. I'll praise him with my voice. Because I glory in the Lord, let troubled souls rejoice.

Let's praise him with my voice.

[5 : 47] All those souls rejoice. Together let us please the Lord, exalt his name with me.

I saw the Lord, his answer came. From fear she set me free.

They look to him and shine with joy.

They are not good to shame. The suffering mankind guide to the Lord, from him deliverance came.

The angel of the Lord's name. The angel of the Lord's name. He sets his heart, He sets his people free.

[7 : 17] He sets his people free. Come taste and see the Lord, the Lord's name.

He sets his people free. He sets his people free. He sets his people free. Come taste and see the Lord, come taste and see the Lord is good.

God is good. God trusts in him, He is blessed. O fear the Lord, You saints with need.

You will not be overlaid Young lions may grow weak and faint And hunger for their food But those who wait upon the Lord Will not lack any good Just a few words to the children here.

I wonder if you know that today is a special day. Looking at me a little... Oh yes, Thomas does know.

[9 : 19] It's Father's Day, isn't it? It's a day when children are supposed to remember their fathers And show some appreciation of them.

Maybe give them a card, maybe a present. I know at least one daughter in the congregation Has been expressing her love for her father By giving him a card Because I saw it actually happen just before the service.

I had a card from my son in Jonathan I'm wondering what's happened to the card from my daughter in Hong Kong I'm sure it will come If you didn't give your dad anything Don't worry, don't feel guilty about that Because not all families follow Father's Day And I'm sure that you love your fathers anyway I asked my wife Jane To make me a card A Father's Day card Not because I'm her father Obviously I'm not But I just wanted a card that I could show to you This morning And she's started making a card here Now I think you are perhaps all too young To have even started reading yet Possibly you can recognise a few letters I'm not sure But the grown-ups will help us out, I'm sure

There we are Here is the beginning of Jane's card And a bit far away But I hope you can just about see it And the words on there say Happy Fathers And what does it say At the bottom there?

Any of the grown-ups just help me out here Help the children out What does it actually say at the bottom? It's a D It's a D, isn't it, Thomas?

[11 : 24] It ought to say Day, didn't it? There ought to be some more letters there It ought to be D-A-Y, Day But all it says is D And there it stops Don't know what happened Jane's very good at making cards But she's obviously just stopped Halfway through making this card And it isn't finished In fact, there's lots of ways In which this card isn't finished Those of you who know Jane Will know she's very good at card making And I'm sure if she finished this It would be beautiful It would be all in colour There'd be pictures And there'd at least be some words inside There's no words inside this Not finished Only just started, really Given time, I'm sure If Jane had finished this It would have been beautiful And any grammatical purists

Amongst the grown-ups here I'm sure she'd have spotted That missing apostrophe as well Why do I mention this? Well In my sermon later on I want to talk about How God Always finishes the work That he does If you look at our lives now Then we're a bit like this card We're not finished If you got that Father's Day card through the post You'd think Well, don't think much of that It's not all that attractive, is it?

There's not much to it And they haven't even bothered To finish it yet But that's the point It isn't finished That isn't the end product And that's true for all of us We look at people now And there's lots of things wrong with them You look at yourself Even at your young age And you'll realise That there's things That aren't quite right Even about you But God Hasn't Finished with you yet God hasn't finished With any of us God hasn't finished With me yet And one day When he has finished In heaven Then we will be perfect Then We will be Like Christ God is our heavenly father

The best Father's Day present Imaginable for him Will be For his children To be perfect One day It will happen Let's sing again now Our second praise Is from Psalm 138 Is from Psalm 138 And it is on page 179 Sing Psalms version And we're going to sing Verses 4 through to 8 Verse 4 begins Oh Lord Let all earth's kings Give praise When from your mouth They hear your word And in verse 8 It has the words The Lord Will certainly Fulfill For me The purpose Purpose He commands Some big words there But what it basically means is He will finish his work

In us So Psalm 138 And we stand And feel free to sing Behind your masks For praise O Lord Let all earth's kings Give praise When from your mouth They hear your word Let them extol The waves of God For praise The glory Of the Lord Although the Lord The days on high The lowly person He who takes

[16 : 13] Whereas the proud And naughty ones He knows How far off And rejects Although I hope The troubled heart Your tender care Returns my life You set your hand Against my foes Your right hand Saves me From their sight The Lord Will certainly Fulfill For me For me The power

Of speaking O man Your love Endures Forevermore Reserve The words Of your Old hands For me For me For me For me For me For me For me For me For me For me For me For me For me For me Let's turn now To the word of God And The first of all To Acts Chapter 16 I haven't Forgotten about My series In 1 John I shall be Continuing with that This evening But being Called upon At short notice For this morning This is going to be

Just a one off Sermon From a text In Philippians But by way Of background I want to read Acts 16 From verse 6 Onwards And they went Through the regions Of Phrygia And Galatia Having been forbidden By the Holy Spirit To speak the word In Asia And when they had Come up to Mysia They attempted To go Into Bithynia But the spirit Of Jesus Did not allow Them So passing By Mysia They went Down to Troas And a vision Appeared to Paul In the night A man of Macedonia Was standing there Urging him And saying Come over To Macedonia And help us And when Paul

Had seen the vision Immediately We sought To go To go On Into Macedonia Concluding That God Had called us To preach The gospel To them So Setting sail From Troas We made A direct Voyage To Samothrace And the following Day to Neapolis And from there To Philippi Which is A leading city Of the district Of Macedonia And a Roman Colony We remained In this city Some days And on the Sabbath day We went outside The gate To the riverside Where we Supposed There was A place Of prayer And we Sat down And spoke To the Women Who had Come together One who Heard us Was a woman Named Lydia From the city Of Thyatira A seller Of purple Goods Who was A worshipper Of God The Lord

Opened her Heart To pay Attention To what Was said By Paul And after She was Baptized And her Household As well She urged Us Saying If you Have judged Me Faithful To the Lord Come to My house And stay And she Prevailed Upon us As we Were going To the Place of Prayer We were Met by A slave Girl Who had A spirit Of divination And brought Her own As much Gain By fortune Telling She followed Paul And us Crying out These men Are servants Of the Most High God Who Proclaimed To you The way Of salvation And this She kept Doing for Many days Paul Having become Greatly annoyed Turned and said To the spirit I command you In the name Of Jesus Christ To come Out of her And it

[21 : 17] Came out That very Hour But when Her Owners Saw That their Hope of Gain Was gone They seized Paul and Silas And dragged Them into The marketplace Before the Rulers And when They had Brought them To the Magistrates They said These men Are Jews And they Are disturbing Our city They advocate Customs That are not Lawful for Us Romans To accept Or practice The crowd Joined In attacking Them And the Magistrates Tore the Garments Off them And gave Orders To beat Them with Rods And when They have Inflicted Many blows Upon them They threw Them into Prison Ordering The jailer To keep Them safely Having Received This order He put Them into The inner Prison And fastened Their feet In the Stocks About Midnight Paul and Silas Were praying And singing Hymns

To God And the Prisoners Were listening To them And suddenly There was A great Earthquake So that The foundations Of the Prisoner Were shaken And immediately All the Doors Were opened And everyone's Bonds Were unfastened When the Jailer woke And saw That the Prison doors Were open He drew His sword And was about To kill Himself Supposing That the Prisoners Had escaped But Paul Cried With a Loud voice Do not Harm Yourself For we Are all Here And the Jailer Called for Lights And rushed In And trembling With fear He fell Down before Paul and Silas Then he Brought them Out and Said Sirs What must I do To be Saved And they Said Believe Believe In the Lord Jesus And you Will be Saved You And your Household And they Spoke

The word Of the Lord To him And to All who Were in His House And he Took Them The same Hour of The night And washed Their wounds And he Was baptized At once He And all His Family Then he Brought them Up into His house And set Food Before them And he Rejoiced Along with His entire Household That he Had believed In God Now we Turn over To Philippians And just A few Verses From Philippians Chapter One The first Eleven Verses Paul And Timothy Servants Of Christ Jesus To all The saints In Christ Jesus Who are At Philippi With the Overseers And deacons Grace

To you And peace From God Our Father And the Lord Jesus Christ I thank My God In all My remembrance Of you Always In every Prayer Prayer of Mine For you All Making My prayer With joy Because of Your partnership In the gospel From the First day Until now And I Am sure Of this That he Who began A good Work in You Will bring It to Completion At the Day Of Jesus Christ It is It is Right It is right For me To feel This way About you All Because I Hold you In my Heart For you Are all Partakers With me Of grace Both in My imprisonment And in The defence And confirmation Of the gospel For God Is my witness How I Yearn for you All with The affection Of Christ Jesus And it Is my Prayer That your Love May abound More and

More With knowledge And all Discernment So that you May approve What is Excellent And so Be pure And blameless For the Day of Christ Filled With the Fruit of Righteousness That comes Through Jesus Christ To the Glory And praise Of God Let's Join Together Now In Prayer Heavenly Father We thank You For what We have Read In the Scriptures We thank You For the Beginnings Of that Work in Philippi And for Those Famous Conversions Of Lydia And of The Philippian Jailer Lord we Thank You For our Own Conversion We Thank You That this Is Not Merely A Historical Story Of Something That Happened Long Ago In A Far Away Place But

[26 : 20] That Similar Things Have Happened Throughout These Past 2000 Years And Have Happened Here And Have Happened In Our Own Lives And We Are Part Of That Same Story The Growth Of Your Church The Building Up Of Your Work Which Indeed You Will Bring We Are Sure To Completion At That Great Day When Your Son Returns From Heaven To Earth In Power And Great Glory We Thank You For All That You Have Done For And In Each One Of Us Here And We Ask You To Continue That Work That We May Grow And Abound In Love And In Righteousness We Pray For The Church Here And Ask That The Church Here May Grow Lord We Have Had Our Difficult Times In The Past

Couple Of Years But We Look To The Future And We Pray That You Will Build Us Up In Order That We May Serve You We Long To Serve You In This Area Of Dumfries To Proclaim The Gospel Of Jesus Christ To A Needy People Lord Our Whole Nation Is In Great Need We Look At Scotland And We Realize It's Great Christian Heritage We Know That The Gospel Has Been Preached Powerfully Over The Centuries And Yet Now The Vast Majority Of People Turn Their Backs On It And Express No Interest Lord Have Mercy Upon Us And Grant Lord Revival In This Land Likewise Throughout The United Kingdom And Throughout The Whole World We Thank You For Those Parts Of The World Where The Churches Are Flourishing And

We Pray That You Will Provide For Their Every Need Raising Up Pastors And Teachers For Your Churches In Every Place Lord We Pray For Our Country And Its Practical Needs Too We We We We Particularly Pray Concerning Covid We Are Touched Once Again With The Effects Of Covid In A Very Direct Way As The Expected Preacher Today Is Detained Because Of Family Illness That Must Be Checked That It Isn't Covid And Indeed Lord We Have Heard Of Mary's Grandson Having Covid Lord One way Or Another Each Of Us Has Probably Known Someone Who Has Suffered In Some Measure Through This Either Directly Or Indirectly We Think Of Other Countries Where It Seems To Be An Even Bigger Problem We Hear That In Brazil 500,000

People Have Now Died Of Covid Lord We Pray For Your Mercy Upon The World In This Situation We Pray For Our Government Not Only For Wisdom In This Matter But In All Matters We Pray Lord Both For Westminster And For Holy Road And Ask You To Direct Those Who Lead Us That They May Do So In A Godly And Righteous Way Always Aware That They Are Answerable To A Far Greater Ruler Above We Ask You To Draw Near To Us In Any More Personal Needs That We Have You Know All Of Our Hearts We Pray For Each Family Here We Disappointed That The Baptism Couldn't Take Place Today But Lord We Pray For The Children All The Same We Thank You For Each One Of Them And We Pray That They May Be Brought Up In The Knowledge And Love And Love

And Love Of Christ Pray Lord For All Of Our Lord Jesus Lord If Any Here Are Suffering With Illnesses Of One Kind Or Another Or Anxieties Or Any Difficulty At All Grant That They May Know That You Are Their Rock Grant That They May Rest Upon You And Find Strength In You Draw Near To Us As We Look Shortly Into Your Word And Speak To Us Through It We Pray For We Ask All With The For For For All Our Our Our Third Item Of Praise Is Psalm 119 The Final Section Of That From Verse 129 On Page 165 Beginning

[31 : 31] With The Words Your Statutes Lord Are Wonderful So I Obey Them From My Heart Your Words As They Unfold Give Light And Truth To Simple Minds Impart Your Statues Lord Are Wonderful So I Obey Them From My Heart Your Words As They Unfold In Light And Truth To Simple Minds Impart With Open Love I

Heart And Heart To Know The Loves That You Probe Show Me The Mercy You Expend
To Those Who Love And Praise Your Name My Red My Foom Steps In Your Word Let
Sin The Fool Be In His Way From Earth To Wrench God Set Me Free That Your
Commands I

May Obey Upon Your Servant Shine Your Face Teach Me The Statutes You Have Made
My Life Share Shows Of Winter Tears Because Your Love Is Not Open Best revenue 000

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at
the day of Jesus Christ.

One of the best known of all the TV quiz programs is Mastermind. Format is very simple.
The contestants sit in an intimidating black leather chair under a spotlight.

[35 : 12] They answer two minutes of questions on their chosen specialist subject and then later
two and a half minutes on general knowledge. One of the rules is that if the time runs out
while a question is being asked, the question master will still complete the question.

Hence the catchphrase introduced by Magnus Magnusson, I've started, so I'll finish. You
can take that if you wish as a title for today's sermon.

Our text here assures us that in the great work of salvation, God has started and he will
finish.

Indeed, God always finishes whatever he starts. Think about creation. You all know the
story from Genesis 1.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Day 1, he created the light. Day
2, he created the sky. And so on through to day 6 when he created man.

[36 : 31] Thus, it says, the heavens and the earth were finished. And God rested on the seventh
day. What if he'd got bored and lost interest on the third day?

We wouldn't be here, would we? Or what if he'd got distracted halfway through the sixth
day? Almost finished, but not quite.

No mankind. No mankind. But God didn't get bored or distracted. He never does. He
always finishes whatever he starts.

With us, it's different, isn't it? Many of you know that I love books. I have about 6,000
books on my shelves. And people sometimes ask me, have you read them all?

Well, no, sadly I haven't. I have read about 3,000 of them. Many of the others I started, but
I lost interest.

[37 : 46] Got distracted. And I never finished them. And some of them I've never started. Or to take
another example, we went some years ago on holiday to Spain.

And I was shocked there with the number of unfinished buildings. There was a property
boom in Spain in the 1980s.

And there were lots of hideous concrete blocks put up all around the coast. But then the
economy slumped. And all these projects were just abandoned.

We often abandon projects unfinished for all kinds of reasons. But God never does.

Well, here we're told, he will finish the work that he has started in us. Now our text reminds
us very forcibly that salvation is God's work.

[38 : 57] From start to finish. It begins with God's work for us. Sending his son to die for our sins.

It continues with God's work in us. Sending his spirit to bring us to Christ.

Changing us into the image of Christ. Ultimately bringing us to glory with Christ. The focus
here is on the second part.

God's work in us. But it is all God's work. Now that's not to say that we do nothing.

We're not just passive observers. We must believe. We must follow Christ. But God takes the initiative. God is the driving force.

[39 : 56] The delicate balance between God's work and ours is well summed up in Philippians 2 and verse 13. It is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

There is another sermon to be preached on our duty to finish whatever we start. Jesus once told a parable about a man who began to build a tower.

He counts the cost so that he's got enough to finish it. Otherwise when people see it unfinished they'll say, they'll mock him and they'll say, this man began to build and he couldn't finish.

Very important that we do finish whatever we start. But that's another sermon. The focus here is on God who can and who will finish his tower.

Christ has already finished his work for us on the cross. Remember how he said, it is finished. And the spirit will finish his work in us.

[41 : 14] Now three stages of God's work in us are described here. A beginning, a middle and an end. Or if you like alliteration, the commencement, the continuation and the completion.

The commencement is that he has begun a good work. The continuation is that he is bringing it to completion.

And the completion will of course be at the last day. The day of Jesus Christ. I want to look at each of these in turn. And to see how they apply both to the individual and to the church.

So first, the commencement of God's work in us. He who has begun a good work in you. The beginning of God's work in us is of course conversion.

Now we know something of the beginning of God's work in Philippi. From Acts 16 which we read. We read there how Paul went to Philippi in response to a vision.

[42 : 31] It wasn't his choice. God sent him there. It was his work. From the very beginning. On the Sabbath day he would normally have gone into the synagogue.

Apparently there wasn't one. So he went down to the riverside where some women were praying. And spoke to them. And at least one was converted.

Lydia. A seller of purple goods. Presumably a wealthy business woman. What happened? What happened? Quite simply.

The Lord opened Lydia's heart. To pay attention to what was said by Paul. And then she was baptized with her household.

And invited Paul and his companions to stay with her. What a day that was for Lydia. She wasn't expecting anything special that day.

[43 : 30] It was just another Sabbath day. It was just another Sabbath day. But suddenly her life was changed forever. And it was all the Lord's work.

Paul preached. Yes. She listened. Yes. But it was the Lord who opened her heart. The second conversion in Acts 16 is the Philippian jailer.

Paul and Silas had been arrested for casting a spirit out of a slave girl. The jailer had locked them in the innermost prison. Fastened their feet in the stocks.

And he was probably none too gentle about it. And then he went to sleep. Job done. Completely untroubled in his conscience.

Paul and Silas meanwhile are praying and singing hymns. And suddenly there was an earthquake. The prisoners chains are all unloosed.

[44 : 35] The jailer is terrified. He is about to commit suicide. Thinking his prisoners have escaped. Until Paul reassures him we're all here.

Then he rushes in. He falls down trembling at Paul's feet. And says, sirs, what must I do to be saved? And he receives that famous answer.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. You and your household. So he called his household together. And they all heard the gospel.

In the middle of the night. And they were all baptized. Again, what a night for the Philippian jailer. Some think that it was only the earthquake that frightened him.

But I think he knew what he was asking. That slave girl had been telling everyone. These men are servants of the Most High.

[45 : 36] Who tell us the way of salvation. And he may have heard more at the trial. And anyway, why fall down at Paul's feet rather than the other prisoners?

The point is that he would have seen that earthquake as a judgment from God. And Paul had the answer. He wanted to be saved from God's judgment.

And that night he was saved. Two very different conversions. One quiet, one dramatic.

But the Lord was at work in both. Quietly opening Lydia's heart. Very noisily opening the jailer's heart. But the result was the same.

They were born again. Now we too, if we are Christians, we can look back. And we can recall the beginning of God's work in us.

[46 : 44] The time when we came to faith. And as we look back, we realize it wasn't just us. It wasn't just our choice. It wasn't us being wise and clever in choosing to follow Jesus.

It wasn't just that we were brought up in a Christian household. No, it was God who was working in us.

You know, it's good that we do remember how we came to faith. It will strengthen our own faith to remember those early days. And it may be a blessing to others to tell them.

Look for opportunities to share your testimony. The psalmist says, come and hear what the Lord has done for my soul.

Each conversion is different. Some of you were brought up in the faith. You heard the gospel as children, both in church and at home. Some of you perhaps heard it later in life.

[47 : 52] Maybe by other means, by books or radio. For some of you, it might have been a quiet experience. Like Lydia.

Or it might have taken some traumatic event in your life to wake you up. Like the Philippian jailer.

Might have taken quite a while before you were convinced. Or it might have been sudden. But the end result was the same.

You were born again. And it was all God's work. He has brought you graciously into his kingdom.

Acts 16, however, is not just the record of two individuals coming to faith. It was also the start of a church. And what an important church it was.

[48 : 54] This was the first time that the apostles had preached in Europe. Maybe that's why it needed a vision. God wanted a church in Philippi.

The time had come for the gospel to go to Europe. And so he sent Paul and Silas. And he started that church.

At the very end of Acts 16, after being released from prison, we read how they visited the brethren who were in Lydia's house.

The brethren? Where did the brethren come from? Well, already. Even in those first few days, a few converts had been gathered. A church had been born.

There was a time long ago when God decided it was time to have a church in Scotland. And he sent his servants.

[49 : 59] And they came. They preached in this land. And people believed. And the church of God was established here, in this country. Our own little church here.

It was formed in the 19th century. But again, we believe it was God behind it. There was a need for this particular church at that particular time.

God put it in the hearts of people to form this church. The beginning, then, of God's work. Our own conversion and the planting of churches. But this was only the beginning. Which brings us on to our second point.

The continuation of the work. God will bring this work to completion, Paul says. That implies a process.

[51 : 06] He doesn't say simply that he will complete it. He will bring it to completion. Some translations say he will carry it on until the last day.

The authorised version speaks of him working until the last day. At an individual level, that means the spiritual growth of the Christian.

Conversion is only the beginning. It's the start of a new life. A newborn baby is wonderful, isn't it?

Everything is there in miniature. But how tragic if it were to remain just a newborn baby forever. We expect it to grow. And it will need help in doing so.

The parents will need to feed it and protect it. And so it is with the Christian also. We've been born again. That's a start.

[52 : 07] But we need to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. And that requires God's help. It's impossible without God. Now this ongoing work at Philippi is hinted at in verse 5.

Where he speaks of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. This wasn't just a nine day wonder with the Philippian jailer and with Lydia.

Rejoicing for a while and then going back to their old worldly ways. They had carried on. Later in the letter we learn what that partnership meant.

How they had supported Paul in his work. It was God who inspired them to do that. Paul prays that they will grow in verse 9.

That your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment. And so on. He prays. Because it is the work of God. Again in chapter 3 he speaks about pressing on toward the goal.

[53 : 16] He's doing that himself. He urges the Philippians to do the same. It is God who will give them grace to press on. Now we too I hope can look back and see spiritual growth since we were converted.

And I hope we want to see more growth. God is at work in us. Every day. Both to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

Teaching us. Sanctifying us. And using us in his service. Praise God for that. You know when Christians are asked to give their testimony.

Sometimes they stop at conversion as if that's all that had happened. But we have a continuing testimony. God is at work in us.

And once again that's true also of the church. The growth of the church in Philippi is evident in verse 1. To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and deacons.

[54 : 25] Think about that. They've grown in numbers. They're big enough now to have elders and deacons. Yes they had their problems. But they were growing as a church.

And I hope that will prove to be true of us here in Dumfries also. Yes we've had difficult times in the last couple of years. Our congregation has been diminished.

But over the years since the church was founded. There have been times of growth. And we pray that there might yet be times of growth. Certainly it's true of the church as a whole.

Jesus said on this rock I will build my church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The church worldwide is growing. God is at work.

Continuing with his plan. Finally we have the end of the work. It's completion in the day of Jesus Christ. The end will come when God has gathered in all his elect.

[55 : 31] When he has completed everything that he wants to do here in this world. Then Christ will return in power and glory. To judge the world in righteousness.

And to reign with his saints forever. Paul speaks of this in Philippians 3 and verse 20. Our citizenship is in heaven.

And from it we await the saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ. Who will transform our lowly body. To be like his glorious body. By the power that enables him to subject all things to himself.

Then all sin will fall away. And we shall be perfect. In the image of Christ. Christ. We shall be like him. How wonderful.

And if death comes first. That's no problem. We'll be safe with Christ until that day. Paul says later in this chapter. To be with Christ is far better.

[56 : 34] At the last day. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15. The trumpet will sound. And the dead will be raised imperishable. And we shall be changed. Now that obviously is a work of God.

Isn't it? It's the last great miracle. That will be a wonderful day for us all. Wonderful day individually.

And a wonderful day for the church. Church is called in scripture. The bride of Christ. Christ. On that day. Is the marriage supper. Of the lamb.

So as we close. Where are you in this process? Possible some of you may not yet be saved.

You've not yet begun. Well you know what you have to do. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And you will be saved.

[57 : 37] Perhaps there's someone here. In whom there are the first stirrings. Of a work of God. Some twinge of conscience perhaps. Some concern about your soul.

Some longing to know that you're going to heaven. Some desire for forgiveness. A desire to follow Christ. A desire to be part of the church.

Part of a loving community of Christians. Follow that desire. And if there's absolutely nothing.

Well may God begin a work in you. But most of you I'm sure can say with confidence. That God has begun a good work in you.

And if you can. Then you can be sure he will finish it. That's what Paul says. I'm sure of this. That should be a great encouragement to us.

[58 : 40] It means for a start that our salvation is secure. No Christian can ever be lost. Jesus says in John 6. This is the will of him who sent me.

That I should lose nothing of all that he has given me. But raise it up at the last day. Paul says in Romans 8.29.

Those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son. In order that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called.

And those whom he called he also justified. And those whom he justified he also glorified. A golden chain that cannot be broken. Our salvation is secure from the moment we believe.

If I could go back to my mastermind illustration. It doesn't matter how much of the question had been asked. Even if it was only the first word. Still I've started.

[59 : 42] So I'll finish. Likewise with salvation. From the moment you believe you are safe forever. Because you are in God's hands.

It means also that whatever stage you've reached. There is still more to come. You could be a new convert. One day old in the Lord.

Or you might have been a Christian for 80 years. Either way. God hasn't finished with you yet. Never imagined that becoming a Christian is all that there is.

It's only a start. Every day. As a Christian you can expect God to teach you more and more about himself. You can expect new experiences of God's love.

You can expect God to draw you closer to himself. Indeed the best is yet to come. When at last we will see God face to face.

[60 : 52] As I said to the children. What we see in ourselves at the moment. What we see in one another at the moment. Is not the finished product. It's like that card that I showed the children.

It's incomplete. God is still at work. Watch it unfold. Watch the master artist at work. See what he can do.

With you. And with the people around you. Because he can do amazing things. And likewise with the churches at whole.

Right at the beginning there were only 12 disciples weren't there? Even in Paul's day perhaps there were only a few thousand. How amazed would they be to see all the millions of Christians worldwide today?

How amazed would they be to see us here in Dumfries? And no doubt there is more still to come. We live in dark days.

[61 : 55] And sometimes we may look back nostalgically. To the days of the apostles. And the days of the reformers. And the days of the covenants. Or even of the way things used to be.

30, 40, 50 years ago. But God is still at work. The God of the reformers. The God of the covenants. The God of the apostles.

Is our God. He's still at work. He's still saving people. He's still building his church. And no one can stop him. It's like the incoming tide.

You know I live up by the river Nys. And when we have a very high tide. The water comes flooding in right up to our garden. And nothing can stop it.

It's like that with God's work. It's flooding in. Nothing can stop it. No man can stop it. Even Satan can't stop it. God will finish what he has started.

[63 : 03] Praise God then for his work in you. Praise God for his work in the church. And may God be glorified through his work in us all.

Amen. Our final praise item is the hymn. I know not... I've got the words here somewhere.

I know not how God's wondrous grace. How many of you know that hymn?

Only Jane. Oh well. Then I must find the words. Oh, Sheila knows. Betty knows it as well. And Jim. Good. Good.

Well, we may all just have to listen rather than actually joining in this then. Let me just read the opening words of it. I know not why God's wondrous grace to me has been made known.

[64 : 06] Nor why unworthy as I am he claimed me for his own. But I know whom I have believed. And I'm persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day.

We remain seated for the hymn. Amen. I know not why God's wondrous grace to me has been made known.

Nor why unworthy as I am he claimed me for his own.

But I know whom I have believed. But I know whom I have believed. And I'm persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day.

I know not how this saving faith to me he did impart.

[65 : 28] Nor how believing in his word brought peace within my heart.

But I know whom I have believed. But I know whom I have believed. And I'm persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day.

I know not other spirits who's confessing may not sin.

But I know not other spirits who's confessing may not sin. But I know not other spirits who's confessing may not sin. But I know whom I have believed. And I'm persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed. To the world of creating faith in him.

And I know not other spirits who's confessing may not sin. But I know whom I have believed. And I'm persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed. And I'm persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day.

[66 : 51] I know not other spirits who's confessing may not sin. I know not what of good or ill may be in his self for me.

Of weary ways or golden days before his face I see.

But I know whom I have believed. And I'm persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed. And I'm persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day.

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all evermore.

Amen.