

The hardest thing about being a Christian

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

Date: 19 July 2026

Preacher: Martin Shadwick

[0:00] Good morning church family, my name's Bec if I haven't met you yet and this morning I'm going to bring the Bible reading. So we're going to open up to Romans chapter 5. So we're going to read a short passage from there and then chapter 8 for a bit of context for Romans 9 later in the sermon.

So Romans chapter 5 starting at verse 6 if you've got your Bibles open or your devices. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. And then now if you turn over to chapter 8 and we're going to start from verse 31.

[1:20] What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died.

More than that, who was raised. Who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all the day long.

We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

[2:30] For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is the word of the Lord. That was a blast from the past. I don't know when I last sang that song. Thanks, music team. My name's Martin. I'm one of the pastors here. And thank you for that introduction, Alan.

But I... Where's Alan? Where are you saying? Yeah, yeah, just so you know, we have allocated the hardest parts of Romans 9 to 11 to Dave.

So, yeah, that was good planning on my part. Well, as Catherine shared in the kids' talk, there is nothing better than Jesus.

[3:40] There is nothing better than the grace and love of God that are found in Jesus Christ. If it came down to a choice between any of the other things I love or Jesus, it really is no choice.

It would always be Jesus. Running or Jesus. Music or the love of God.

Reading history books or eternal life. My job. Or the grace of God. A house with a serene, leafy outlook.

Or peace with God. My family. Or being a child of God. Jesus is better than all of those things, other things.

Mostly, though, it doesn't come down to a choice, does it? Jesus doesn't take away the good gifts of creation which we enjoy.

[4:50] He enriches them. He transforms how we engage with them. He gives us a greater appreciation for those things. He makes us more thankful. But there are times when Jesus will call on me or call on you to say no to one of those other things we love.

So that we, to remind us that he comes first and he's always worth it. I'm speaking about myself. I'm speaking about all of us. If you love Jesus, this is, I'm sure, your experience too.

You know he, he and the blessings that are found in Jesus are better than anything else. And if you're looking for anywhere in the Bible to bathe in and savour and marvel at, at Jesus and the love of God, I doubt you could do better than Romans chapters 1 to 8.

I wrote down a list of verses that I could read out at this point to show you. But there's probably about a dozen verses there and it would tire you if I read through all of them, which is why I asked Beck to read some parts of chapters 5 and chapter 8 for us this morning.

But let me just read a few. Romans 3, 23 and 24. Romans 5 verse 1.

[6:20] Therefore, since we've been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 6 verse 23.

Romans 8 verse 13.

Romans 8 and 39. I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If you've never taken the time to memorize any parts of Scripture and you want to start, why not pick some verses from Romans chapters 1 to 8?

You couldn't do better than these chapters. I mean, you couldn't do better than these chapters. To bathe in Jesus and his grace and the goodness and love of God. You want to remind yourself of how good it is to be saved by Christ?

[7:48] Go back to this part of God's Word. There's nothing better than Jesus. There's nothing better than Jesus. But there is one thing that is hard about faith in Jesus.

I might even venture to suggest that it is the only thing that is hard about faith in Jesus. Is it repentance?

Repentance? I mean, repentance is difficult. Turning away from sin is difficult. But it's not hard in the sense I'm talking about.

I mean, when you turn from some cherished sin, some long practiced habit to which you've been enslaved, you turn from that sin, you'll discover actually that godliness is better.

That there's more joy in turning from sin than in indulging in sin. That there's more joy in selflessness than in selfishness.

[9:01] That as Jesus said, it is more blessed to give than to receive. Repentance is difficult, but it's not hard. Is it suffering?

Is it persecution? Persecution. Paul writes elsewhere, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Now, I've got to admit, I haven't faced much persecution, so I'm not speaking so much from my own personal experience.

But I do note that in the New Testament, persecution is not simply endured. Persecution is actually celebrated, if I might use that word.

Jesus said, rejoice when people persecute you, for your reward in heaven is great. James said, count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, all kinds of suffering, not just persecution that's confined to, but any suffering.

Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, he says, the God of all comfort comforts us in all our affliction. So persecution and suffering may be difficult, but they're not hard.

[10:15] There's only one thing that's hard. If it's bothering you that I'm kind of distinguishing between synonyms here, difficult and hard, let me say this another way.

Repentance, you might say, is hard, but good. Suffering and persecution are hard, but good. There's one thing that's just hard. And it's this.

Not everyone will be saved. Not everyone will be saved.

Or to put it in the words of Romans 2, there are people who, instead of receiving glory and honour and immortality and peace, are facing wrath and fury and tribulation and distress.

And not just a few people. Many. Many people. Remember Jesus said, enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate that leads to destruction.

[11:32] How do we, who believe in Jesus, and there may be some here who aren't believers in Jesus, I'm glad you're here this morning.

But I'm speaking to those who already believe in Jesus. How do we, as Christians, deal with the fact that not everyone will be saved? That's one of the questions addressed in this part of the Bible, Romans chapters 9 to 11, that we're embarking on this morning.

We're going to have six talks in Romans 9 to 11, then a short break for a three-week series and something else, and then we're going to come and finish off the book of Romans in chapters 12 to 16.

And chapters 12 to 16, Paul will unpack the implications of the gospel of grace for our life, each of our lives and for our life together. That's what we're coming to later in Romans.

But the question we're starting with today is, how do we, as Christians, deal with what is, in my view, the hardest thing about being a Christian, which is the fact that not everyone will be saved? We find two answers to that question in Romans 9, verses 1 to 13.

[12:43] The first answer in Romans 1 to 5 is this, not all are saved and we should weep. Look at verses 1 and 2 with me, Romans chapter 9, verses 1 and 2.

Paul writes, These are verses of lament.

What Paul pours out here, and it's clear from the verses that follow, what he's lamenting is he's lamenting the lost. In verse 1, notice how emphatic Paul is that he's telling the truth.

I mean, he drives it home. He's not lying. He's telling the truth. This is part of his experience of being a follower of Christ. Verse 2, notice the two adjectives he uses to describe his grief.

He says, His sorrow is great and his anguish is unceasing. The first speaks of its magnitude. The second of its extent, that it's ever-present, that it's constant, that it is anguish without reprieve or relief.

[14:09] When I became a Christian at age 12, I was convicted of my sin. I was excited.

I was relieved, thankful, overjoyed at God's grace. I don't think at the time I became a Christian, I was aware that I was opting into, along with those things, which are real, but I don't think I was aware at the time that I was opting into also sorrow, great sorrow, and unceasing anguish. That those were things that I would then carry with me for the rest of my life. Now, I don't think it's any wonder that one of the biggest objections to Christianity is that, simply that, that not all are saved.

Some will be lost, eternally. Our society balks against this. We balk against it.

A faith that might result in you feeling that way is offensive to us. Our society teaches, only do what makes you feel happy.

[15:37] Actually, in the 21st century, we've perfected that saying and turned it into, only believe what makes you feel happy. And so people force themselves to believe all sorts of irrational and illogical and unscientific things just because they find it comforting to believe those things.

If our society lives by the creed, only do and believe what makes you happy, then they can't grasp how anyone could believe that some people are eternally damned.

Christians find it hard too. The belief that not all are saved is a heavy load to bear. What do we do with it? I'm taking my car to the mechanic tomorrow.

Now, I have no idea whether the mechanic at my car, Green Hills Shopping Centre, is a Christian or not. I kind of just want him to be the guy who fixes my car.

Not the guy who fixes my car, who may also be facing eternal damnation if he doesn't believe in Jesus. What do I do with that? Well, there are two things I mustn't do.

[17:03] There are two errors that these verses absolutely rule out. The first error I'd call sentimental universalism. Universalism is the belief that everyone is saved in the end.

Maybe because God accepts all different religions as equally valid paths, just pick the one that suits you, that's fine. Or maybe it's because God wants to give everyone a second chance after death. Whatever the mechanism, universalism teaches that everyone is saved in the end. It's the kind of sentimentality we encounter at funerals of people who never gave a second thought to God when someone says, I know that somewhere up there Bill's looking down with us and he's having a beer with his mates.

You know, based on nothing. No basis in reality, just wishful thinking. If all were saved in the end, Paul wouldn't weep like this.

Paul wouldn't lament like this. The true doctrine of salvation leads to grief over the lost, not sentimental complacency.

[18:14] So that's the first error these verses rule out. There's a second error these verses rule out and that's what I'd call callous Calvinism. Calvinism teaches, yes, only some are saved.

But God's sovereign in salvation. He'll save whomever he wants. So don't worry about the lost. Don't worry about those who aren't saved. I mean, just enjoy your salvation. If some people are lost eternally, don't worry.

That'll all work out for God's glory in the end. It's for the best in the end. That's what I'd call callous Calvinism. Now, of course, these two errors are different. They're different in nature.

The problem with the first error is in the noun. The problem with the second error is in the adjective. The problem with sentimental universalism is the universalism. The problem with callous Calvinism is not the Calvinism, it's the callousness.

But either way, if your understanding of the gospel doesn't lead you to have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in your heart, then something is out of place.

[19:26] Not all are saved and that ought to prompt us to weep. Jesus wept. The apostle Paul wept.

We should weep. Now, just to clarify, we all, we vary, you know, we range in the level of our outward emotional display.

We even vary in the intensity with which we experience emotions generally. Some people will cry at a TV commercial.

Others are a bit more like Mr. Spock. Understand, the real issue here is not how overt our emotional display is, but, I mean, this has to, this truth has to move you somehow.

It must affect you. How could it not? Now, hold that thought. We're going to come back to that soon.

[20:38] But first, there's something else you need to see here as what's going on for Paul as he poured out his lament. Look at verses 3 to 5. Verses 3 to 5.

Paul says, For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel.

Theirs is the adoption of sons. Theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ.

Who is God over all, forever praised. Amen. Can you see that Paul's grief had both personal and theological dimensions?

Personal. Personal. He says, for the sake of my brothers. My kinsmen according to the flesh. Now, mostly when Paul speaks of his brothers about 139 times in his letters, he means Christians.

[21:52] But here he clarifies whom he means by brothers by adding, my kinsmen according to the flesh. He's speaking about his fellow Jews. See, it's just natural.

Natural for Paul. Natural for us. It's just natural that our grief is especially pronounced when you consider those who are closest to you. Family members, friends, colleagues.

It's just natural that those for whom we feel strong bonds and affection, that our grief is more pronounced there.

I mean, even parasocial relationships can trigger this, you know, a more intense grief. You know what I mean by parasocial relationships? Like with a celebrity or something. I remember a friend of mine who was an avid In Excess fan crying when Michael Hutchence died because it just hit her in that moment, right, that the realisation that in all likelihood he died outside of Christ.

So there's this personal dimension to Paul's grief as he grieves over his fellow Jews. But there's also a theological dimension. Paul's grief was amplified by the privileges his fellow Jews enjoyed as God's Old Testament people.

[23:17] And so he gives us this list in verse 4. They're Israelites. They're of the nation of Israel. Adoption. They're the ones of whom God had said in the Old Testament, Israel is my firstborn son.

Glory. God's presence had been with them. This visible manifestation of God's glory in the tabernacle, in the temple. Covenants. The covenants with Abraham and with Israel at Mount Sinai and with David.

These were all part of Israel's heritage. The giving of the law through Moses at Sinai. Worship. The temple. The sacrificial system. The promises. All of God's promises sort of brought to us through the nation of Israel.

Verse 5. There's are the patriarchs. And Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. We've been hearing about in the book of Genesis.

There's are the patriarchs and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ. Notice how in verse 5 Paul brings together the beginning of God's plan of salvation, the patriarchs, and its end. The coming of Christ.

[24 : 19] The one who fulfills the promises, who brings blessing. And notice what's said about Christ. Christ who is God over all. Forever praised.

Amen. I mean, how could they have all these things? How could they have all these privileges that pointed to and promised and foreshadowed and led up to Christ and yet not have Jesus Christ himself?

Now, Paul was writing from around about the year AD 56. He's writing from Corinth to the Christians in Rome. He hasn't visited Rome yet. He knows some of them from other things, but he hasn't been there personally yet to visit them.

He's writing around 56 AD. We know from the book of Acts that the first and the gospels, the first believers in Jesus were all Jews. By the time Paul wrote to Rome, he's writing to this group.

It's a mixed church in Rome. There are Jews, Jewish Christians. There are Gentile Christians. But by this stage, by AD 56, it was clear that the majority of Jews had not believed in Jesus.

[25 : 34] And that raised some specific questions which will come through as we step through Romans chapters 9 to 11. But leaving aside the particular question of Israel and the Jewish people, realise that there can be both personal and theological reasons for grief over the lost.

Israel had its particular privileges which amplified Paul's grief. But it's also true that every single human being is made in the image of God.

Every single human being created in God's image. Created for a relationship with God. Created to rule over the world he's made. Created for life. Created for glory.

Every single human being in God's image. Created for life. Created for life. Created for life. Created for life. When you recognise the image of God in people, you will value them. You'll feel a sense of connection with them.

And you'll cherish them. No matter how different they may be to you on the surface. Now we've all had the experience of seeing something precious, damaged or destroyed.

[26 : 46] The more precious the object, the greater the grief at its loss. You know, losing a wedding ring.

My wife and I, we lost the negatives of our wedding photos. Maybe it was watching in 2019 as Notre Dame Cathedral burned in a fire.

It caused so much destruction. Or reading about an animal that's become extinct, a species that's become extinct. I mean, when something precious is destroyed, there is grief associated with it. But none of those things is remotely comparable to a single human being. A single human being. It's tough.

It's gruelling. Watching the steady decay, erasure of humanity or disintegration of humanity in someone who's suffering from dementia or motor neurone disease or Parkinson's or a similar degenerative disease.

[28 : 00] To watch that steady undoing of their humanity. The image of God being defaced in that way.

It's tough. It's hard. But to be eternally cast out from God, from Christ, to face the wrath and fury of the Lord.

That's not what people are made for. What do we do with all this? How do we live with this?

How do we live it out? How do we live with this?

From verse 6. But it's not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel. And not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring.

[29 : 28] But through Isaac shall your offspring be named. This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

But this is what the promise said. About this time next year I will return and Sarah will have a son. And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls, she was told the older will serve the younger.

As it's written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. Now the point Paul is making is this. The fact that at present many Jews do not believe in Jesus is not contrary to God's word, but is consistent with God's word.

This is just the beginning of his argument. There's two and a half more chapters to go, chapters 9 to 11. In chapter 9 Paul begins a sort of fly through, fly over of the Old Testament to make his point. He kind of starts at the beginning in Genesis and quotes bits on the way through to make this point. In fact, Romans chapters 9 to 11 as a whole contain almost one third of Paul's total number of Old Testament quotations in all of his writings.

[30 : 59] So this is a big part of what he's doing in these chapters. He's showing that God hasn't failed, that the present state of things is in line with the word of God, not contrary to it.

But he starts in the book of Genesis. And now that's handy for us because we've just been reading, studying Genesis as a church. And so the parts of Genesis he quotes in verses 6 to 9 are likely fresh in our minds.

Genesis tells the story of four generations of Abraham's father. There's Abraham's family. There's Abraham and Sarah, generation one. Then Isaac and his wife Rebecca. Then Jacob and his brother Esau.

And then the twelve sons of Jacob, Joseph and his brothers. Now, God gave the name Israel to Jacob so that the twelve sons of Jacob are the twelve tribes of Israel.

Collectively, they are the sons of Israel, the Israelites. The point Paul is making, as he states in verse 6, is that not all who are descended from Israel, not every physical descendant of Jacob, of Israel, not all the sons of Israel actually belong to Israel.

[32 : 09] That is, he's distinguishing between physical Israel and spiritual Israel, between physical descent and spiritual belonging. It's possible to be physically descended from Israel and yet not truly belong.

And he supports that argument initially by pointing to the pattern from the generations before the sons of Israel. So, for example, initially Abraham's offspring, he says, Abraham's offspring were named through Isaac.

In verse 7. Ishmael was Abraham's son according to the flesh. But Isaac was Abraham's son according to the promise.

And it was the children of God's promise who were counted as Abraham's offspring. Likewise, with the next generation, Jacob and Esau were twins born to Isaac.

With Esau born, the first of the two twins. But God said the line of promise would continue through Jacob, not through Esau. The older will serve the younger.

[33 : 20] The second quote he gives there, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. That comes from the late Old Testament book of Malachi, which contains at its beginning a discussion about God's electing love.

But Paul's point is that even at the beginning, in these early chapters of Genesis, with the patriarchs, God establishes a pattern from the very beginning of the plan of salvation.

A pattern of choosing some and not others. He'll go on to show throughout the rest of this chapter that that pattern continued to apply throughout Israel's generation.

So down at Romans 9 verse 27. When Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, though the number of the sons of Israel will be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved.

Physical descent does not guarantee spiritual belonging. Verse 6 again. Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel. I mean, you could push this back even further to Noah and the flood, where we see that God's pattern in salvation is of saving some, but not all.

[34 : 37] That's God's consistent way of working. Saving some, but not all. Now, on what basis did God choose to save some and not others?

Well, that's what the example from Jacob and Esau shows clearly. Verses 10 to 13 again in Romans 9. When Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, verse 11. See what Paul's saying here?

The reason why some are saved and others are not ultimately lies with God himself. And not with anything about the people God chooses to save.

Those he saves are not better than the ones he doesn't save, and those he doesn't save are not worse than the ones he does save. It's not because of works. Not because of works, but because of him who calls.

[35:50] It's in order that God's purpose of election might continue. So you can't point to anyone and say, I know why God saved this person, or I know why God didn't save that person.

He doesn't need any of us. He doesn't need to save any of us. He freely and of his own will, his own sovereign love, chooses to save some.

But he's not chosen to save all. And that is the consistent pattern of scripture. From the book of Genesis all the way through. In God's plan of salvation, the fact that not all are saved is a feature, not a bug.

Why? Why doesn't God save all? Well, I don't think we can say much more than Paul says in verse 11. It's in order that God's purpose of election might remain.

Now, if you're feeling what I've said so far raises more questions, that's probably a good sign. If what I've said so far is, you know, you've got more questions buzzing around in your head.

[37:15] Hang on, what about this? What about that? That's probably a good sign because the very next thing Paul does in verse 14 is ask a question. But we're not going to read it and I'm not going to answer it because that's next week. And then again in verse 19, there are more questions.

So what Paul is saying, he should raise questions. There are questions that naturally arise from what we've been seeing this morning. But what we've seen this morning is the fact that not all are saved is ultimately not an objection to Christianity.

It is consistent with Christianity. It is consistent with the word of God. Not all are saved, but God has not failed. But where does that leave us?

How do we actually live this out? This sense of grief over the lost, while at the same time not abandoning our confidence in God.

You know, grief, but retaining confidence in God. How do we live this out? Let me offer three suggestions, and this is by way of closing my remarks this morning.

[38:26] Let me offer three suggestions. First suggestion, don't try to evade the reality of eternity. Don't try to evade the reality of eternity.

You see, you can attempt to evade the reality of eternity by burying yourself in things that are temporary. By becoming consumed with the day-to-day, with the material, with the fleeting worries and pursuits of this life.

I mean, there is more than enough in the day-to-day to absorb our attention. And you can become so consumed in that, that you just kind of push off any thought of the eternal. But the result of that is just a more superficial life.

Don't do that. There's a superb treatment of this in an essay by C.S. Lewis called The Weight of Glory. A weight in the sense of something substantial, heavy.

The weight of glory. Recognise the weight of glory. Let me quote a few words from C.S. Lewis. I'm tempted to give a longer quotation, but that doesn't make for good preaching, so I've had to limit myself.

[39:37] But you can go and read more of it later if you want to. All right. Here's what Lewis writes. It's in the light of these overwhelming possibilities. It's with the awe and the circumspection proper to them that we should conduct all our dealings with one another.

All friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.

Nations, cultures, arts, civilisations, these are mortal and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit.

Immortal horrors or everlasting splendours. There's a seriousness to life. Don't try to evade it.

Second suggestion. Realise that God has designed us for emotional complexity. Realise that God has actually designed us.

[40:55] He's wired us for emotional complexity. The same Paul who says here, I have unceasing anguish in my heart, also says multiple times, rejoice always. Rejoice continually.

Our emotional lives are complex because reality is complex. We're designed to be able to hold within ourselves grief and rejoicing at the same time.

Sometimes it's true one will dominate. But it'll never entirely eclipse the other. For a moment, the clouds will obscure the sun, bringing darkness into your life.

But the sun's still there behind the clouds. Or the sun will come out in full brightness of day. But there are still shadows.

The last tear will only be wiped away on the final day. And so the Christian lives now at this point of emotional tension.

[42:07] This is how we exist. But, and C.S. Lewis is also brilliant on this point, not only in *The Weight of Glory*, but also in his book, *The Great Divorce*.

The darkness will not eclipse the light. Hell will not hold heaven to ransom. In glory, sorrow will be no more. And the misery of the lost will not dim the joy of the redeemed.

Now, how this will be, I do not know. In fact, how that will be, I don't think I'm supposed to know.

Because now, before the last day, I am supposed to live at a point of emotional tension. Now, I am supposed to weep and laugh.

Then, there will be only laughter. But even now, our tears must not extinguish our joy in Christ.

[43:15] Let me quote Lewis again from *The Weight of Glory*. He says, We do not need to be perpetually solemn. But our merriment must be of the kind, and it is in fact the merriest kind, which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously.

No flippancy. No superiority. No presumption. And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner.

No mere tolerance or indulgence, which parodies love, as flippancy parodies merriment. So, don't avoid eternity.

Recognise God has designed you for emotional complexity to exist at this, we can exist at this point of tension. Third thing I want to say, in terms of what we do with this, is let grief for the lost spur us to action.

Let's let grief for the lost ought to spur us to action. Verse 3, Paul says, For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.

[44:34] Now, Paul, the desire he's expressing here, and it's, you know, I could wish, there's something hyperbolic about this, but, I mean, he's following the example of Moses.

Moses, when he interceded for Israel after the incident, the sin with the golden calf, you know, Moses prayed that prayer that God would cast him off instead of Israel.

He's following the example of Christ, isn't he, who was cut off for our sake. I mean, Paul's desire here is a very Christ-like desire.

So great is Paul's grief that he says, if it were possible, he would offer himself in the place of those he calls his brothers. He would forfeit his own salvation so that they might be saved.

See, really, there's nothing that wouldn't be worth sacrificing for the sake of the lost. Have you seen the movie *Schindler's List*?

[45:39] I mean, it's a bit old now, but maybe, some of you will have seen it, many of you will have seen it. It tells the story of Oscar Schindler, who was an industrialist during World War II, who protected Jews from being deported to concentration camps by employing them in his factory as essential workers.

Whether or not they were actually competent, he just found excuses to employ Jews in his factory to bring them under his wing so they'd be protected, so they couldn't be discarded. And then eventually bribing officials to overlook what he was doing.

There's a scene towards the end of the movie *Schindler's List* when the war is over. The Allies have come in and defeated the Nazis and liberated the oppressed.

The war is over. The war is over. And it's a scene in the factory floor of one of his factory. And the Jews are gathered around him, this crowd of Jews that he had saved from being killed by the Nazis. And he looks around at those he saved and he says, he says, I threw so much money away.

[47:03] I could have done more. And then he sees his car and he says, this car. Why did I keep this car? That's 10 people.

And then he sees this car. and then he sees this gold lapel pin and he says, this pin, it's gold. That's two people, two people, at least one.

One more person. I could have saved more. More. When you consider the value of just one human life and the magnitude of eternity, is there any sacrifice that's not worth making to save one more?

God gives us our grief to spur us to prayer and to spur us to action. Because among those who do not yet believe in Jesus, there are many who will believe in Jesus if only someone tells them.

The end has not yet come. What we see now is not yet what will be. This is not the time to enjoy eternity.

[48:31] This is the time to prepare people for eternity. So don't try to evade the reality. Embrace the emotional complexity of the present time and let grief over the lost spur us to action.

Will you join with me in prayer? Heavenly Father, we thank you for our saviour, Jesus Christ.

We do rejoice in our Lord. There is nothing better than knowing Jesus and your grace and your love and all the blessings found in him.

And we thank you. This morning, Lord, our hearts are also heavy as we remember that there are so many who are outside of Christ and facing an eternity separated from your love.

a future not of blessing and glory but of wrath and fury. Father, we pray that that weight, that grief would always be present in our hearts somewhere.

[50:05] Save us from callousness, Lord. And spur us on that we might make every effort and use everything at our disposal, whatever you've given us, to bring Christ to the lost.

We pray for this city, this nation, the world, the 1.8 billion people in the world who are lost in Islam. Billions in other false ideologies and beliefs. People made in your image. Give us compassion for them, Lord.

Drive us out to share the gospel with them. Send us to those who are close to us, near to us, our family, our friends, our neighbours. Keep us from being distracted by good things but temporary things.

We want to be used by you, Lord, for eternity and we pray that for each one of us here. We pray that for us as a church and we pray for an outpouring of your mercy in this place.

[51:27] In Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.