

Losing it for Christ

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- [0 : 0 0] As we remain standing, let's pray. Father God, we thank you for your great love for us in Christ. Please teach us more about what it means to live in that love this morning.
- We ask it in his name. Amen. Please be seated. Well, for the most part, I had a happy childhood.
- Loving parents, food, clothing, shelter, a bionic man doll, Superman cape, all the essential things in life. But there were some tragic things about my childhood. See, I was never much good at sport, and this was very significant because I went to a boys' school right through from prep to 12s.
- It was very important to be good at sport at a boys' school, but I was never very good at it. And athletics days were very traumatic for me, that big day once in a year, that big competition. They were my worst nightmare.
- If you came first, you got a blue ribbon. If you came second, you got a red ribbon. If you came third, you got a white ribbon. And everybody else, even if you just turned up on the day, you got a green ribbon. That was the competitor's ribbon.
- [1 : 0 4] They gave it to you so you wouldn't feel left out, something to take home and show mum. But I knew what it meant, and everybody else knew what it meant. You didn't come first. You didn't come second. You didn't even come third or fourth. Or maybe you came fourth.
- You came last. That's what it meant. You lost. Needless to say, there's lots of room in my sporting trophy cabinet. I didn't actually have one. And I guess that may be all the more determined, to gather up other trophies in life, to prove that I was good at something, that I had something to contribute, that I was acceptable, whether it was getting good marks or being good at music or being the only guy to wear a velvet caftain on free dress day.
- Whatever it was, I wanted to be acceptable. And maybe that wasn't such a good idea, actually, when I think about it. But whether in the sporting field or some other arena, we all have trophy cabinets, don't we?
- I wonder, what did you, what do you put in yours? The things that say to yourself, people who are important to you, your family, maybe the world around you, I've achieved something.
- I contribute something. I am acceptable. But now you say, hold it, Andy. I used to think like that. But see, I'm a Christian now. I've left that kind of empty confidence behind.
- [2 : 1 1] The only acceptance that matters to me now is the acceptance I have with God through Christ alone. And I do hope and pray this morning that that is where He is where your hope is placed.
- And this is the way we begin the Christian life, isn't it? In fact, it's the way we're meant to go on living the Christian life. But subtly, what often begins to happen is that we begin to fill our trophy cabinets again, but this time with religious trophies.
- I wonder what's in your religious trophy cabinet. What gives you confidence at the end of the day that you are the real deal, that you're a fair-income, growing Christian, or maybe you come from a family that's been Christian for generations.

That's just how it is. Maybe your father was a minister. Maybe your parents are missionaries. Maybe you go to church every week. Maybe you go twice or three or four times a week. Not only do you go to church, we go to a really good church that teaches the Bible faithfully.

You go to Holy Trinity Doncaster. That's a good thing. Maybe you've sworn an oath never to drink alcohol or listen to secular music and you look at these things and they tell you, don't they?

[3 : 16] Well, I'm a Christian. I'm acceptable to God. I'm living for God. I belong to Him. Look at all of these things. What's in your trophy cabinet? What's in your religious trophy cabinet?

Now, I spoke about my insecurity before regarding sport and making up for it in other ways. Well, the pastoral issue that Paul is writing into in Philippi is one of spiritual insecurity.

This church is made to feel insecure about their standing, their right relationship and their growth in that relationship with God. It's being shaken by teachers who are coming in perhaps from a Jewish background or maybe a Judaized version of Christianity.

And these teachers look positively religious. They look very spiritual. They are zealous, disciplined, holy people. And they are insisting amongst this church that their religion, living by the Old Testament law, is how to be right with God and is how to live out a right relationship with God.

And this Gentile church, these Philippians, are feeling a little bit insecure. Maybe we're not the real deal after. Or maybe there's something else that we should do. Maybe we should be coming under all of those Old Testament laws again.

[4 : 32] Maybe we should be more religious. And what the Philippians get from Paul is a strong reminder of where our true confidence as Christians lies in Christ and Christ alone.

The one who fulfills the law. And Paul also wants them to be clear about this so that they'll know how to live in a way that truly pleases God as they trust in Christ.

But this is also one of those passages of Scripture you read and you think, well, gee, Paul might have a point. But isn't he sinking the booty in a little bit too hard? I mean, this is pretty tough language, isn't it?

Verse 2, Beware of the dogs. Beware of the evil workers. Beware of those who mutilate the flesh. No doubt about it, Paul is passionate, even angry, at these teachers who are coming into Philippi.

Well, to understand where he's coming from, let's have a look at the start. Have a look with me first at Paul's pastoral heart. Verse 1 of chapter 3 of Philippians. This is on page 954 of your pew Bibles if you'd like to read along with me.

[5 : 40] And we're looking at Philippians chapter 3, verse 1. He says, Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard.

Paul in this letter is constantly encouraging the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord. And those who are in the Lord, united to Christ by faith, Christians, we have a lot to rejoice about, don't we?

In Christ we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms as Paul puts it in another place. At the end of Philippians 1, from verse 27, Paul says to the Philippians that he wants them to live lives in a manner that is worthy of the gospel.

And one of the ways of doing that is not by being, is by not being intimidated by your opponents, he says in verse 28, opponents that Paul himself had faced, ultimately opponents of the gospel whose teaching threatens their joy in the Lord, their confidence in the Lord Jesus.

That's why Paul says in verse 1 here that he doesn't mind repeating himself. Or later in chapter 3, verse 18, he writes, For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ, I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears.

[6 : 56] You see, if you really love someone, you want them to be safe. Sometimes you'll repeat yourself, sometimes you'll sound like a bit of a nagger. It's a bit like when I first learned to drive and every time I went out my mum would constantly warn me about head checks.

Now have you done the head check anything? Now when you're turning into a blind spot, you've got to do a head check. Remember to do the head check. Every time I went out driving, always the head check. And to this day I've got a quick neck because I'm always doing the head check. But now I do it with my kids, not with driving because they're too young, but I nag them about other things because I realise that.

It's because I love them, I want them to be safe. You see, Paul wants the Philippians to be safe in their relationship with God. He wants them to live lives that are worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Hence, these strong words in this section. I wonder, do we love our Christian friends to the point where we are prepared to say the hard word from time to time, to give the strong warning?

Or are we scared of the position that might put us in, the reputation that might give us? On the flip side though, do we sometimes relish conflict a little bit too much?

[8 : 01] Are we people who are on about the truth but not on about people? You don't mind losing the person so long as you win the argument. Well, Paul's not like that either, is he?

In verse 18 of this chapter, he says these hard words with tears. He's not afraid to say the hard word, but he's not just on about the truth but about making God's truth and people connect, speaking the truth in love.

And we need to remember this as we hear these strong words again. Let's hear them again. Verse 2, Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh, for it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

Beware, beware, beware. If your Bible had lights, these words would be in bright red flashing lights. It's a strong warning.

Paul describes these teachers coming to the Philippian church in three ways. Dogs, evil workers, mutilators of the flesh. It's actually an even more pointed attack than you might think because he's chosen three ways that these people would have defined themselves positively and he's turned the gun back on them as it were and is using them negatively.

[9 : 23] So for example, dogs. I don't know what you think of when you hear the word dog. I know what Paul Barker thinks of when he used the word dog. But I think cuddly puppy. I think loyal companion, a loyal friend.

We've got a loyal companion at home. But that's not what Paul's hearers would have heard. You see, this time dogs were wild scavengers. They were disease ridden. They were dangerous. He didn't go up to a strange dog in the street.

And most importantly here, for a Jew, they were ritually unclean. In fact, the Jews had a term for Gentiles at one point. They called them those uncircumcised dogs.

See what Paul's doing? He's turning the gun back on them. They, these religious people, have turned out to be the dogs, have turned out to be the ones who are actually spiritually unclean.

Evil workers. These people are busy being religious and trying to make others religious, but their good works have turned out to be evil. How can that be? Well, it's because their teaching actually does harm to their own spiritual well-being and that of others.

[10 : 27] Because it distracts from having our confidence in Christ alone. The only one who can give us a right relationship with God, as we saw in the drama this morning.

And mutilators of the flesh. This is a play on the fact that they insisted, of course, on physical circumcision as a mark that you belong to God. But Paul doesn't use the actual word for circumcision here.

He saves that for the true circumcision that he talks about in verse 3. That is, those who trust in Christ rather than in themselves. Instead, he uses a word that speaks of pagan rituals where people would cut themselves in their sort of ritual.

A bit like the prophets of Baal you read about in 1 Kings 18. Mutilators of the flesh. Very strong language. The very mark that these people thought guaranteed they were part of God's people, Paul says, has become no better than something you might find in a pagan ritual.

It all adds up to one stinging critique of people whose confidence in their standing before God and in living for him is not in Christ but in their own abilities to keep the law.

[11 : 38] Paul's basically saying the very things they think have made them clean actually make them unclean. Their religion that they view as a healing medicine has turned out to be poison and if you Philippians aren't careful you too will be poisoned by it.

And that's why the Philippians shouldn't be intimidated by them, made to feel that they're not the real deal, that they're not accepted by God. Verse 3 encourages them for it is we who are the circumcision who worship in the spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

Paul has three things to say about the Philippians, about all Christians actually, they are the circumcision, not that done through a physical procedure, but the putting off of the sinful nature through Christ.

Christ. This is of course what physical circumcision in the Old Testament was meant to represent and anticipate. God would circumcise the heart as Moses taught in Deuteronomy so that his people worshipped him with their whole lives.

Their relationship is all of grace. It's about a gift that God has given rather than a wage that they can earn. And so the second thing, they worship, that is they live for God, serving him daily in every part of their lives by the power of his spirit.

[13 : 02] And that's of course thirdly why their boast is not in themselves and in their own ability. Their confidence is not in the flesh, Paul says, but only in Christ Jesus. He is their boast because he is their saviour.

He alone makes them right and keeps them right with God and by the power of his spirit that dwells within them enables them to live in ways that please God whereby they actually feel fulfil the law in their lives as they obey their saviour.

Anyone can look religious if they really try hard enough and people will do the most amazing things, the most demanding things to try to deal with their sin, that which separates us from God.

History is full of people going on pilgrimages, crawling for miles on their knees to go to a sacred site. You see it today in other religions and even in some forms of Christianity, people fasting for weeks or even months at a time thinking that somehow, a bit like Matt was showing today, somehow God will be impressed by this.

But the key mark of genuine Christian faith is not a particular religious practice, rather it's seen in the person who, like a stubborn piece of corrugated iron, was bent in and focused on themselves in their sin but has been bent out to see Christ, to see that their only hope, their only strength is found in him and in the forgiveness and the new life he offers.

[14 : 34] A Christian is confident in what God has done for them in Christ, not in what they can do for God. But maybe this is just a bit of a case of professional jealousy on Paul's part, a bit of sour grapes that people, that he's not having the same effect on people.

So maybe he's feeling a bit insecure himself and so he's just lashing out with strong words. Well, we see actually in verse four and five that this is not what's happening at all, even though I too, he says, have reason for confidence in the flesh.

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Think back, if you will, to my athletics career for a moment. Just imagine I stood up at the opening ceremony of the next Olympic Games and grabbed the microphone and said, you've got it all wrong.

It's not about gold medals and glorious victories. There's more to life than sport. What are you doing here? It's a waste of time. Let's call it all off and give the money away to something else. The competing athletes would say, how would you know, a green ribbon man?

[15 : 49] You don't know what it's like to win. You don't know what it's like to get a gold medal. You don't know what you're talking about. They'd be right, wouldn't they? And then I'd get arrested. That would be what would happen.

But Paul is saying, I do. I know what it's like to have a religious trophy cabinet full to overflowing. If you have a look at this verse, it's a very impressive resume from a Jewish point of view.

Verse 5, circumcised on the eighth day. That is, he's not one of these Johnny-come-lately converted-later-in-life Jews. He was a member of the people of Israel, a Jew from birth. And not just from any tribe either, but the tribe of Benjamin.

The tribe that with Judah had alone held to the Davidic royal house when the others had broken away. 1 Kings 12 tells us about that. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews, not one of these Hellenistic Jews.

He was taught and trained in Jerusalem. And more than that, he was a Pharisee, the pure of the pure. That group within Judaism who took the law seriously, they weren't sort of compromising with Rome.

[16 : 46] They were the purists. To the point he was prepared to go to any lengths to stamp out what he then saw as a great threat to true religion, even if that meant violence.

As to zeal, he says, a persecutor of the church. As to righteousness under the law, blameless. Paul lists seven advantages that he had, seven trophies in his cabinet, seven credits on his balance sheet before God.

He got so far that human judgment found nothing left to poke a finger at. As to righteousness under the law, he says, blameless. Yet, he says, and this is the shocking part, verse seven, yet he says, whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss.

All those things he once thought sat on the credit side of his balance sheet before God. He's saying, actually, they belong in the debit side. He viewed himself, he would have been viewed by others as a spiritual millionaire.

Now he says, that was all about as valuable as monopoly money. But why? What led to that change? How does someone like this change so dramatically? Well, he didn't change himself, that's for sure.

[17 : 57] Verse seven, whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, verse eight, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and I regard them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ. Paul had been living his life, doing his best to be good enough for God, working out a righteousness that was all about his works, his religion.

But on the Damascus road, as we read in Acts 9 and other places in Acts, he was confronted by the reality of Christ. The brilliant light of Christ's holiness exposed his sin and made his best efforts seem about as effective as using a candle to light up the sky in the middle of the day.

More than that, he came to see that his religion had actually kept him at a distance from God. And this is important. It's not that Paul now just saw his religion as neutral.

No, he saw it as loss. It actually counted against him. It was not something that he could hold on to to maybe enhance what Christ had done. And maybe that's what the teachers are saying to this church in Philippi.

[19 : 18] Yes, yes, Jesus is a good place to start. Yes, trusting in Jesus. But do you realise you need to do this and this and this and follow these things and abstain from those foods or God's not going to really accept you?

On the contrary, these things get in the way of our relationship with God because they focus us back in on ourselves, trusting in ourselves. It's all about human pride, human achievement rather than in Christ.

And so Paul says, his testimony is, when he turned to Christ, he left it all behind. Now we see why Paul was so tough on these teachers, why he has such strong things to say there.

Because by preaching righteousness by works, that is, acceptance before God as a human achievement, they were undermining the gospel of Christ.

They were in effect denying dying people of the only medicine that could really deliver them from death and judgment. No wonder Paul has hard things, such hard warnings to give about such people.

[20 : 26] Please understand that human-centered religion is not a helpful first step towards God. It is the religion of rebels.

What people need is not for their religion to be reformed, but to make a 180 degree turn away from it to trust in Christ alone. These verses remind us you either have Christ alone or you don't have him at all.

And this was Paul's own testimony that he shared with the Philippians. Well, Paul even goes further than the issue of religious confidence.

He says there in verse 8 that he regards everything as lost. That is, all that he had once put his confidence in and derived security from other than Jesus Christ. That may have included things such as wealth or his position in society or his possessions or his Roman citizenship, whatever it happened to be.

Indeed, he says two things that he has lost all things and he regards them as loss. You may know that Paul, this is one of the letters that Paul writes from prison under Roman guard.

[21 : 34] Saul the persecutor became Paul the persecuted. You see, the surpassing worth of knowing Christ not only meant a shift in his confidence from self to Christ, but that he was prepared to lose all things, to suffer with Christ.

Remember Paul's motto in Philippians 1 verse 21, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. Now all this might seem a bit heavy, but Paul uses a very earthy image to drive his point home.

The NRSV very politely translates the Greek word in verse 8, skubala, as rubbish. It's actually the word for dung or for poo, if that's all right to say this morning.

And generally what you do with poo, what I'm trying to teach my young children, is you flush it away. You don't want this sort of stuff hanging around. I don't want to paint the picture too vividly, but I think you know what I mean.

Paul, as it were, has flushed his past confidence away, and even though it's the middle of a drought, he's used the full flush. That's what this verse is talking about. That's the strength of what he's saying here.

[22 : 42] Enough of the toilet humor. I told you I went to a boys' school. I can't help it. I'm sorry about that. Paul's come to know Christ as his saviour and Lord. This is the point. He'd come to see that Christ alone could be his saviour and Lord.

He alone could deal with his sin and make him right with God. And that's what verse 9 there is talking about. That is the righteousness that he has that he's talking about there is not his own personal moral achievement.

It comes from outside of himself, what the reformers call an alien righteousness. Through Christ's faithfulness, Jesus does the work for us. He is obedient to his father, even to death on a cross, so that our sin, our debt is paid for through his death.

He dies our death so that his righteousness, right relationship with God can now be ours through faith. Righteousness through the faith of Christ, the righteousness not from ourselves but from God based on faith.

But what is faith? Is it another word perhaps? Here's finally we've found a way to earn God's love. It's my faith. No, faith is empty hands.

[23 : 57] Faith is not something we bring to God and say on this basis please accept me. Faith is when a person says I have nothing. You have everything to give me in Christ. Thank you for that gift.

Faith is empty hands. And may I say that if you've never thanked God for the gift of his son, that God holds that gift out to you this morning.

And today would be a good day to thank him for that gift. I encourage you to do that. I encourage you to talk to someone about that if that's what you're doing today. But now we're going to hear what a difference this new relationship made to Paul's life.

Verse 9 is talking about being found in Christ and he goes on not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ.

The righteousness from God based on faith. Verse 10. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death.

[24 : 56] If somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Do you see how Paul's life changed once he accepted that gift?

Once God had grabbed hold of him in Christ. Now the most important thing for Paul was knowing Christ, was that he knew Christ, that he was known by him.

And the only thing he wanted to do from then on in was to deepen that relationship. The only thing he looked forward to, the big thing on the horizon was that relationship being perfected at Christ's return. I don't know if you hear that in his words, he knows Christ.

He's in Christ now, but he presses forward wanting to gain Christ to be found in him, knowing him, sharing in his suffering and his resurrection power. And finally in the end, attaining to the bodily resurrection of the dead.

That is, we are God's children now. Ephesians 2 we read that we are seated now in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. But this reality is not yet, of course, fully revealed in us.

[25 : 59] And so, like Paul here, we press on towards the goal of heaven. Think of it this way, it's a bit like being married. Ness and I were married on the 6th of December 1997, almost 10 years ago now.

But I'm no more married now than I was at the moment on that afternoon that we exchanged those vows. In fact, in 50 years, if we're both still alive, I'll be no more married than I was on that day at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, whenever it was, on December the 6th, 1997.

But of course, we spend every day from that moment on growing into the reality of what that relationship means, living out that reality. Of course, I want to know Ness.

I want to love her more deeply. I want to work at the relationship. That's the whole point of being married in the first place. That's what Paul's saying here about being a Christian. He has Christ now.

He has fullness in Christ, as he says in another place. But he presses on to know him more fully, to actually experience the fullness of all that Christ is achieving him when he died on the cross and rose again from the dead.

[27 : 07] But he also knows that he'll only experience this in all its fullness when he, together with all God's people, are raised on the last day when Christ returns. But practically, what does that look like in the meantime?

Well, Paul talks about a couple of things there in verse 10. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death.

If somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. We're hearing about what Paul wants. In short, he wants to know Christ.

And what does that look like? What does it look like? A trouble-free life full of blessing and joy? All your prayers answered in the way you want them to be answered all of the time? A long and prosperous life culminating in a pain-free death in your sleep?

No. Actually, it looks like sharing in Christ's suffering. As Jesus himself promised to Paul at the moment of his conversion, and indeed to anyone who would follow him, we share in his suffering before we share in his glory.

[28 : 14] It's a package deal. But why? Why does Paul want this? To share in Christ's life? I mean, is he some kind of masochist? No. He just understands that being a follower of Jesus isn't about having your very own magic journey to grant you your heart's desire.

No, it's about being caught up in God's plan to bring glory to his son, and that sharing Christ in this way necessarily includes suffering for his name.

We read in this very letter that until Christ returns, there are many who live as enemies of Christ, of his gospel, of his people. And we know, of course, that this is still true in the world today.

But please also notice, he wants to know the power of his resurrection. Jesus doesn't take us out of the world and place us in cotton wool-filled containers, all nice and warm.

He leaves us in the world, but neither does he leave us without his power. And it is his resurrection power, Paul says, at work in us by his spirit that enables us to persevere in our struggle to keep trusting in Christ, to keep living for him in a world that hates him.

[29 : 29] And as we do this, we become more like him. Literally, he says, being conformed to his death. That's a strange phrase, isn't it?

Isn't it? Being conformed to his death. What does it mean? Well, I think it means that when Christ died on the cross, sin was dealt with once and for all. And so when a person puts their trust in his death, no longer is sin held against them.

In that sense, we have died to sin. Jesus died by trusting in him. I have died to sin. And I begin a new life now. We begin a new life where God, rather than sin, is our master.

But that victory needs to be continually applied. As Paul says in Colossians chapter 3, you died to sin. Therefore, go on putting sin to death in your life.

This is who you are. This is the way of life you now live that is born out of that. And as we do that, Paul says here, we are increasingly being conformed to Jesus' death.

[30 : 38] Well, we hear in these verses what Paul wants. But how about you? What do you want? What do you hope and plan and dream for your life?

Why are you working? Why do you relate to people in the way that you do? Why do you come to this church? Why do you study? And who do you think Jesus is?

Do you think deep down that Jesus is a kind of magic journey there to help you realise your own dreams of health and wealth and wisdom, whatever? Or is he your Lord who saves us so that we are caught up into God's plan to bring glory to his name?

Paul is not uncertain about the glorious future that is his, that is all believers. If we share in Christ's suffering and death, we will also on the last day share in resurrection glory in the fullest sense.

We will be raised, completely transformed with spiritual bodies. The somehow, I think, of verse 11 is not that he's uncertain about that future, but probably refers to uncertainty about his mode of death.

[31 : 49] How will he die? Will he die in prison where he is? Will he be stoned to death as people have attempted before? Will he die in a shipwreck? Paul says, who knows? And none of us knows how or when we will die. And even if we did, the reality, the sad reality of death remains.

But what we can know, you see, what we can be certain of, what we can live our lives day by day in the light of, is our certain future beyond death. We can be certain of our resurrection life in Christ.

Not because of the great things that we do, because I can be so confident in myself, but because Jesus died and rose again. That is the Christian hope.

That is the gospel. I don't know about you, but I read these passages of Paul and I read publications like Voice of the Martyrs and I hear about other Christians who today are in prison for their faith in China and other countries.

It's separated from their families who are even tortured for their faith. And I'm tempted to think these guys are super Christians because they're prepared to lose all things for the sake of gaining Christ.

[32 : 56] They're kind of an elite group of Christians. But when you actually read their testimonies, they don't think so. When you read Paul's testimony in the New Testament, he doesn't think so.

No, they're people who believe the gospel. And they're people who live by the gospel. The same gospel that we have received, that we've heard again this morning, maybe for a long time now, maybe for a short while, maybe for the first time this morning.

The question is, do we believe the gospel? Are we confident in Christ? And are we living like it's the truth? It's my prayer for all of us that as we've been taught from God's word this morning, that our confidence, our boast, our assurance would be in Christ alone and that our lives would be lived in the power of Christ alone.

Let me pray that it would be so. Let's pray. Our great heavenly father, we thank you for passages like this in your word that remind us of your great love and power at work in Christ and his death and resurrection for us.

And we thank you that we can be confident of the future of an eternal future because of Christ and all that he has done for us. Father God, help our trust, our confidence to be in him alone.

[34 : 22] And Lord, as we live to please him, help us to trust in your power at work in us, enabling us to live with you as our Lord and Savior. Father, we pray these things for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.