

Life and Death

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[0 : 00] Welcome to our services today. We seek God's blessing to rest and to be upon all that we endeavour to do in his name.

Let us join together in prayer. Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, we pray that as we come together today in this act of worship, that thou would be pleased to grant to us the help of thine own spirit, to enable us to worship thee in a way that would be acceptable to thee.

And, O Lord, as we come together, we come confessing our sins, acknowledging our sinnership, for we sin in thought, in word, and in deed.

But blessed be thy name for that revelation that thou hast given of thyself through thy Son, and for the promises that are contained in thy word, that if we confess our sins, that thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We give thanks to thee today for the efficacy of the finished work of Christ. We give thanks, O Lord, that thou art the one to whom we come and seek, O Lord, that thou would grant to us to draw from the fountain of the riches of thy grace in Jesus Christ.

[1 : 54] We give thanks, O Lord, that thou art the God who pardoneth iniquity, that thou art a God who delighteth in mercy, that thou art the God who will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

O Lord, may that be an encouragement for us today to come to thy throne of grace, and to seek that mercy, and that grace to help us in our time of need.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless our homes and our families, wherever they may be, that thine everlasting arms would be around them, that thou would meet with each one of them at their point of need.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless thy people, those who are thine, those who have been bought with the precious blood of thy Son, Jesus Christ, those who have been redeemed from the bondage and slavery of sin.

And we pray, O Lord, that they may be faithful witnesses for thee in this world. We pray, O Lord, for those who are ill, those who are under the hand of physicians.

[3 : 23] We pray, O Lord, that thou wouldst be near to them and bring healing, if that be in accordance with thine own sovereign will. Bless, we pray thee, those who mourn.

We are reminded so often that we are sojourners in this world, that we are passing through the realm of time into the great eternity.

And we pray, O Lord, that as that is evidenced so often before us, that it would turn our hearts to consider our own relationship with our God.

We seek, O Lord, that thou would bless thy gospel today, as it has been proclaimed throughout our islands and throughout our land, even unto the ends of the earth, that it may go forth in the power and demonstration of thy Spirit.

Bless thy servants who proclaim thy word today. Grant unto them the unction of thine own Spirit, that they may be conscious of the leading of thy Spirit as they come around thy word and as they proclaim thy truths.

[4 : 48] We acknowledge, O Lord, that we are dependent upon thee, that we are dependent upon thy Spirit to take thy word and to apply it to the hearts of our people.

For we know, O Lord, that without thee we can do nothing. Thou art the one who can truly touch the hearts of our people through thy word, by thy Spirit, bringing them to see themselves as they truly are, as sinners before a holy God, and who can enlighten their understanding, to see the sufficiency of Jesus Christ, to meet with their needs as sinners, to enable them, O Lord, to trust and to commit themselves unto him.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless us as a nation, O that we would turn once again in repentance, that we would turn to thine own word, and be mindful and remember that righteousness alone exalteth a nation.

O Lord, we pray that thou would continue with us as we come to read thy word and to meditate upon it. Remember us, we pray thee, in our various needs, and all that we ask with the forgiveness of our many sins is in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen. We shall now read the word of God as we find it in the New Testament, in the epistle of Paul to the Philippians and chapter 1.

[6 : 45] Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, for the bishops and deacons, grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making requests with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.

Been confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart and as much as both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ into the glory and praise of God.

But I would you should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather into the fatherance of the gospel, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places.

[8 : 27] And many of the brethren in the Lord walks in confidence by my bonds are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ, even of envy and strife, and some also of goodwill.

The one preached Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds, but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.

For to me is to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour, yet what I shall choose I would not.

[9 : 40] For I am in straight between two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith, that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see you or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel, and in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation and that of God.

For unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake, having the same conflict which he saw in me and now here to be in me.

May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word. Now, seeking the Lord's blessing, let us turn to Philippians chapter 1 and we'll read at verse 21.

[11 : 02] For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour, yet what I shall choose, I want not.

For I am in a state between two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

And so on. Last week we saw how Paul answered through this letter the concerns of the church at Philippi in regard to the future of Paul himself and also in regard to the future of the gospel.

His imprisonment at Rome, instead of being a hindrance to the gospel, only advanced the gospel and strengthened the church that was at Rome.

For Paul himself, his hope and expectation were that Christ would be magnified in his body, whether it be by life or by death.

[12 : 15] And then he continues in his letter and he says, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour.

Yet what I should choose, I want not, for I am in a state between two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

Now, we have already noted in our study of this letter how Paul leads a Christ-centred life.

He truly can say, for to me, to live is Christ. The person and work of Jesus Christ is the foundation, it is the rock upon which our faith is built.

It is to the person and work of Jesus Christ that the Old Testament church looked forward through promise and through types and through prophecy.

[13 : 25] And it is to the person and work of Jesus Christ accomplished that the New Testament church builds upon. This is the rock upon which the Old and New Testament church is built upon.

If we take Christ away, there is nothing left. Our faith is not simply about a person.

Our faith is a person. The Lord Jesus Christ. Our faith can only be rightly understood when there is faith in Christ in a personal relationship with him.

So that Paul could truly say, for me to live is Christ. I think that what we have here in verse 21 can be truly matched with Paul's words to the church at Galatia when he wrote these words, I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live, yet not I. But Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

[14 : 51] These two verses summarises the life of the Apostle Paul. together they give what was undoubtedly the heart drop of Paul's life and ministry.

Paul considered himself always as identified with the Lord Jesus Christ. Since he met Christ on the road to Damascus, since he embraced Christ by faith, he always identified himself with the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we noted last week, Paul's union with Christ defines who Paul is. He looks upon all his life and his ministry.

He looks upon all his trials and sufferings and upon all his successes from a Christ-focused point of view. He can do all things through Christ who strengthens him.

He could honestly say, for me to live is Christ. Paul could say, Christ liveth in me.

[16 : 15] His spirit indwells in me. And his spirit indwelling in me animates me, it stirs me, it rouses me, it enlivens me.

His spirit indwelling in me. His spirit indwelling in me inspires, excites, and motivates me. The influences under which I live are the influences under which he lives.

Christ's views are my views. Christ's feelings are my feelings. The influences under which I live are the influences under which he lives.

Jesus Christ, who loved me and who gave himself for me. Paul could say, I live a life devoted to him who loved me and gave himself for me.

Who was so devoted for me that he died for me. I live devoted to him who died devoted to me.

[17 : 33] For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. How can that be true?

Surely death is a loss. For the unbeliever, death is a loss. But for the person with faith in Christ, death is gain.

There are those who look upon people who are suffering perhaps more pain in life than others or who are going through some trials in life that when they die that it is a blessed release for them from life.

They believe that suffering and pain is now over. But that is not necessarily true. Only the Bible can speak with authority about death.

Death is not natural. It is an invasion into the way that things intended to be. Recently we spoke of this when we study part of Romans chapter 5.

[18 : 47] The Bible clearly tells us that man was created good and perfect. Man was created in God's image. However, as Romans chapter 5 verse 12 reminds us, sin entered in.

Our shorter catechism asks the question, did our first parents continue in the state wherein they were created? and it answers like this, our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will fell from the estate wherein they were created by sinning against God.

Now what we noted was that sin not only brought rebellion against God and many other ills, tribulations and problems into the experience of mankind, but also as a consequence of sin, that death has come into the experience of mankind and death has come to be universal.

There is physical death, the dissolution of body and soul. There is spiritual death, the loss of communion and fellowship with God.

We are dead in trespasses and sin. And there is eternal death, the separation of body and soul from communion with God. And you may ask, well, where did death come from?

[20 : 09] And as we have already noted, the Bible gives the answer, it came by sin. But for many, sadly, the separation of body and soul is all they think of.

and there are many who think that that is the end. But death is not the end. At the very moment of death, the soul or spirit passes to its eternal home.

Physical death, as we have already noted, is the separation of body and soul or body and spirit. And once that soul is gone, the body is no longer alive.

It returns to the dust from which it was made. But that is not the end of the person. In the spirit side of you, that is the real you.

And that does not go out of existence at all. A death. The body decomposes and decays and eventually all trace of it disappears.

[21 : 27] And that is through both of believers and unbelievers. But the spirit continues without the body. And that is also true for both believers and unbelievers.

At the moment of death, the spirit of believers passes at once into the perfect enjoying of God while unbelievers, it only begins their torment.

Listen to how our confession puts it in regard to the spirit or the soul of believers. It asks the question, what benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?

And it answers in this way, the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory.

And their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection. At the moment of death, the body is dead and corruption begins.

[22 : 35] But the real you continues to be conscious and either found in unspoiled enjoyment of Christ or else in endless agony.

So we can understand that death for the believer, death for Paul would be a gain. But it is not gain for everyone.

Paul at this time has had many blessings. His work at Philippi had prospered and he was aware of the spread of the gospel at Rome and he was confident that whether he was released from prison or executed that as always, oh now also Christ shall be magnified in my body whether it be by life or by death.

And it's against that background that Paul says, for I am in a strait between two. Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.

Here he tells us that to depart or to die meant to be with Christ. And he says, that is far better.

[24 : 02] The Bible sometimes speaks of death as sleep. For instance, it is written of Stephen there in Acts 7. And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.

And when he had said this, he fell asleep. Jesus spoke of Lazarus in the gospel of John chapter 11 as fallen asleep.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, Paul writes, And you know, there are some who have taken these references literally and have invented the idea of soul sleep, teaching that the believer sleeps in an unconscious state between the moment of their death and the resurrection of their body at Jesus' return.

But you know, that is absolute nonsense. How could soul sleep be again? Paul makes it quite clear, as our confession makes it quite clear, that at the point of death, that the soul or the spirit goes immediately into glory.

The soul or spirit of believers go immediately into the presence of Jesus Christ. There is no delay it goes immediately into the presence of Jesus Christ.

[26 : 05] You know, that is a very solemn thought, that immediately the soul leaves the body, that it is made perfect and passes into glory.

death for the believer is an improvement on the best. In the second letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes in chapter 5, therefore, we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight.

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Paul notes that here at present, we are absent from the Lord.

we walk by faith, but at death, we are present with the Lord, we are seeing the Lord, we are there by sight.

For the unbeliever, death is the separation of the body and spirit from God, but for the believer, death is the separation of the spirit from the body.

[27 : 33] there is no separation from God. So that brings us immediately into the difference that there is between the death of a believer and the death of the unbeliever.

For the unbeliever, death is the separation of the body and soul from God. But for the believer, death is separation of the spirit or soul from the body.

And you know, there is a sense in which death is no separation at all for those who trust in Christ, because there is no separation from him.

You see, for Paul, it was not a dilemma between Christ and not Christ. It was a dilemma between Christ and Christ.

It was the dilemma of Christ by faith or Christ by sight. Christ. And the thing is, there is no point where there is any separation between the believer and Christ.

[28 : 58] There is no separation at all for those who trust in Christ, because it is in one realm, in the present, it is Christ by faith.

And at the point of death, it is Christ by sight. No separation. Now you may ask, well, is it right for Paul, or is it rather presumptuous or arrogant for him to assume that it is up to him to decide whether he be released or executed, it?

Surely that is up to the Roman code. Well, in the higher senses it is not even up to the Roman code, for the Lord only has authority over life and death.

Paul's future is not strictly speaking in the hands of Caesar, not even in Paul's own hands, but in the hands of the Lord. In verses 22 and 24, Paul explores the benefit that would result if God's plan is for Paul to honour Christ through ongoing life on earth.

He says, but if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. In some way, which is not explained, Paul reaches his conclusion, and having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith, that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

[30 : 49] Paul concludes that it is more necessary for the church at Philippi that he remains in the flesh. He expects not only to stay alive on earth, but also to be released from custody to return to Philippi and to continue for the furtherance and joy of their faith.

How different this is from an imprisonment later on where Paul would express a different assessment of where God's providence was about to lead him for in 2 Timothy chapter 4 we read there for I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. But here he is expecting to be released from his imprisonment.

Later on he says to the church here at Philippi but I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state.

And regarding his own visit to them he says but I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly. We all make plans but they must be subject to the Lord Jesus.

[32 : 18] They must be subject to the Lord's revision. Paul's own plan to come to Rome was totally different to the way that he arrived at Rome.

He arrived not as a free man but as a chained and imprisoned person. So when we make our plan we always make them subject to the Lord's revision.

Paul already of course enjoys a very profound presence of Christ. He enjoys in a profound way the presence of Christ.

He writes yet doubtless and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and to count them but done that I may win Christ and be found in him not having mine own righteousness which is of the law but that which is through faith of Christ the righteousness which is of God by faith that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings be made conformable unto his death if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead not as though I had already attained either were already perfect but I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus brethren he says I could not myself to apprehend it but one thing I do forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before

I pressed out the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus oh until the day we reach the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus there is this tension as Paul told the Corinthians to be at home in the body is to be absent from the Lord here we walk by faith and not by sight Christ's presence with his people on earth through the Holy Spirit is real but it is not visible at death even as we await the resurrection of our bodies those who belong to Christ enjoy his presence in a more intimate way than we do on this earth so Paul wrote to the Corinthians as we have already noted willing rather to be absent from the body and to present with the Lord what makes death again well it is not the earthly misery that it puts behind us but the heavenly delight into which he shall usher us the delight of being with the Saviour who loved us and gave himself for us

[35 : 25] Paul's desire to depart from life on this earth is his longing to be as near to Christ as it is possible however as we have noted in some unexplained way it was made evident to Paul that he was to be released from his imprisonment and the possibility was that he would come and visit Philippi again now no sooner has Paul answered their concerns and told them that he had confidence that he would be reason tells them his plans then he shifts away from himself and he turns his focus back once more to the church at Philippi now now this part of his letter from verse 27 onwards is an appeal from

Paul for their steadfastness and unity in the face of opposition and he says to them only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ that whether I come and see you or else be absent I may hear of your affairs that ye stand fast in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel he is saying to them whatever the outcome of my case may be whether I return to see you or it be otherwise with me yet the focus be on Christ he is saying to them that whether he returns to see them and be with them or whether he remains at a distance and hears reports concern them that their focus must be to conduct themselves as becometh the gospel of Christ in other words he is saying to them do not focus too much on me but let your focus be on the gospel of

Christ or let your focus be on Christ the writer to the Hebrews whether it was Paul or not lays out the same emphasis he says let us run with patience the race Jesus the author and finisher of our faith now we and you have to agree that too easily our focus can be sidetracked to other things whether they be people or institutions or whatever but here Paul is saying to them and to us to me and to you let our focus be on Christ alone this word that we have in verse 27 translated let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ this word conversation comes from a Greek word that has citizenship at its core when

Paul speaks of the pattern of behaviour as believers he generally uses the walking metaphor for instance later on in this letter itself he writes brethren be followers together of me and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example Romans 8 verse 4 that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit stay home he has good the church who were

Whether there were any members with Roman citizenship status in the church or not, we know that all those in Philippi understood what Roman citizenship entailed.

[40 : 12] There were certain privileges conferred on those who held citizenship status. Like, for example, they were exempt from certain forms of taxation. But along with the privileges came responsibility.

They would be expected to uphold the dignity of the empire and the dignity of the emperor. However, Paul's idea of citizenship is vastly different to the Roman citizenship that the people of Philippi knew so well.

Later on in this chapter, a little later rather, in chapter 3, he says, he defines what he means by citizenship.

Where he says, for our conversation, our citizenship is in heaven. From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And this is a citizenship that confers privilege and responsibility on every believer in Philippi. And on me and you, today we are believers.

[41 : 21] Now, some believers and others may have been very proud at Philippi of their status in having Roman citizenship.

But Paul is reminding the believers that they are citizens of a far greater and infinitely more glorious kingdom than Rome. They are citizens of heaven.

Where Christ, their Lord and Saviour, reigns at God's right hand. And as their Roman citizenship had privileges and responsibilities, they would be expected to uphold the dignity of the city, the empire, and the emperor, as we have already noted.

Although the emperor was at some distance from them, was miles away from them, still they would be expected to uphold the dignity of the emperor.

But Paul reminds the church at Philippi, and me and you today, that our citizenship of heaven carries far greater privileges, but it also carries responsibilities.

[42 : 32] And so, we are to conduct ourselves as become the gospel of Christ. So, what he is saying to them is, let your life be the life of a good citizen worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Now, why does Paul feel that he needs to exalt them in this manner? Well, during our study, we noted how the witness of the gospel is always under threat, not only from without, but also from within.

This is why we must always guard our fellowship in the gospel. And Paul was aware that this unity or fellowship in the gospel was under threat and could cause divisions.

Many of the divisions and disharmony within the church is caused by jealousy, by selfish ambition, by vain conceit, by grumbling, by disputing.

It always, these things always, destroys Christian witness. It destroys the oneness and the togetherness that ought to be in the body of believers. That is not things that are in keeping with heavenly citizenship.

[43 : 44] It does not reflect the character of the gospel of Christ. In the following chapter here, he writes that, ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves. I don't think here that he is so much concerned about false teaching as he was with the church at Galatia, but he is aware that there are some tensions in the church at Philippi.

For later on in his letter he exhorts, I beseech, he says, odious, and beseech syndicate, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

Something has come in between these two women that have caused disharmony in the church. And very often things like that is not easy to contain, but it affects others, and before you know it, there are divisions.

The oneness and togetherness is gone. So Paul is here exhorting them to watch those things that will result in that they walk not worthy of the gospel, that they mar, they damage, they spoil their citizenship.

[45 : 08] And then he goes on, and he says to them that they were to stand fast in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

If our conversation, if our citizenship is worthy of the gospel, then we will be able to stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

Two practical expressions of proper Christian conduct. First, we are told to stand firm in one spirit. Secondly, we are told with one mind that we are to strive for the faith of the gospel.

The faith of the gospel here stands for what we believe. The image that Paul here conveys of what a person who walks worthy of the gospel looks like is a military image.

There were two important things that had to be true of soldiers in the battle, and that was unity and striving or determination. Out on the battlefield, where both were important.

[46 : 19] Again, we can see how this imagery is so appropriate, as we have already noted, there were many retired soldiers with Roman citizenship, and possibly the church at Philippi were made up of many of them.

And so he says, stand firm, hold your ground, and do not let it go. Stand firm for the faith of the gospel. Stand firm for what you believe, and do not let it go.

The imagery is of soldiers who have been given a command from their captain to hold on to a piece of land, and not to draw back from it. There is to be no surrender in this battle.

You have to stand firm. Later on, before closing this letter, in chapter 4, Paul says, so stand fast in the Lord.

In second letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 15, Paul writes, Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle.

[47 : 21] In 1 Corinthians 16, he says, Watch ye, stand fast in the faith. Quit you like men. Be strong. Let all your things be done with love. Strive together, he says.

Contend together for the truth of what you believe. Have the same determination as the soldier on the battlefield for the faith of the gospel, for the truth that you believe.

We must be open at all times to strive for the gospel when it comes under attack. And he wants them to do this without fear. And in nothing terrified by adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

Your lack of fear in the face of the enemy is a sign from God to you and to them. It is a sign to them of their destruction, that they are the judgment and wrath of God.

It does not mean that they understand that sign, but it is a sign to them. They ought to see that God is speaking to them through the fearlessness and the courage of Christian people who are enduring their persecution against them.

[48 : 35] But he says, to you, it is of salvation. And then he says, for unto you, it is given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake, having the same conflict which he saw in me, and now here to be in me.

There are two gifts he had brought before us that is given to us by the grace of God, and that is faith, or to believe on him, and to suffer for his sake.

The first gift is to believe on him, or to have faith in him. Again, if we turn to the Westminster Confession, it says this to us about faith.

It says, it is the principal acts of saving faith and accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life.

And that faith is a gift by grace from God. But it also, here says to us, that we have a second gift, and that is to suffer for his sake.

[49 : 50] Paul gives himself as an example for us. There he is, imprisoned. But he knows that his imprisonment brings more glory to Jesus, and therefore he rejoices.

And we see how the early church, who suffered much, and yet they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his name.

Oh, may you find that joy of serving in, and the great cause of Christ, and that you may have this as a theme of your life, for me to live is Christ, to die is gain.

that you may behave in ways befitting the citizenship of heaven. That we may come to fully understand these gifts that is given to us by the grace of God, to believe in Jesus Christ, accept, receive, and resting upon him alone for our justification, for our sanctification, for eternal life.

And that in suffering for his sake, that we would also be brought to where the apostles were, and where Paul is here, rejoicing that we have been counted worthy to suffer for his name.

[51 : 29] May the Lord bless our thoughts. Let us pray. Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, we seek that, in the present, that we may live a Christ-centred life.

That we would be unable to say, as thy servant of old, upon which we have been meditating today, for me to live is Christ.

And if we have Christ indwelling in us, then our death will begin. again. We pray, O Lord, that we may have that living hope in Jesus Christ.

For outside of Christ, there is no hope. We pray, O Lord, that we may behave ourselves in ways that would be fitting the citizenship of heaven.

We are aware, O Lord, of how the enemy tries to sow the seeds of discord and disharmony.

[52 : 36] But we pray, O Lord, that we may recognize these things and that we would be able, through thy grace, to overcome those things and to live lives that would be befitting our citizenship of heaven.

We ask, O Lord, that thou would continue with us during the day. and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore.

Amen.