

Righteousness from God

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 2020

Preacher: Rev RJ Campbell

- [0 : 00] Welcome to our services today and as we come together in this act of worship we seek that the Lord's blessing may rest upon us.
- Let us join together in prayer. Eternal and ever blessed Lord we give thanks unto thee that we have access unto thine own presence and that we can come with boldness and with confidence seeking thy mercy and seeking thy grace to help us in our time of need.
- We give thee thanks for the demonstration of thine own love which thou hast given to us through thy Son that thou did not spare thine own Son but that thou did deliver him up for us all so that our sins could be forgiven and that we could be reconciled to our God.
- O may we see the greatness of the provision that thou hast made for us in thy grace and thy love and thy mercy.
- For sinners such as we are that we can be reconciled to our God that we can have peace with God.
- [1 : 34] We give thee thanks O Lord today for the proclamation of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ and him crucified, the good news of that provision which thou hast made for us in him.
- We give thee thanks O Lord and pray that it may be accompanied with the power and demonstration of thy spirit. That it may enlighten our hearts and our minds and our understanding.
- That we would see the beauty of the atoning work of Christ. Christ, that we would see the beauty of the provision that thou hast made for us.
- Christ, thine own Son who died and was buried and who rose again from the dead and who has ascended to thy right hand. Where he ministers on our behalf.
- Where he intercedes for us. And we give thee thanks O Lord for his continual ministry. And we pray O Lord that we would indeed be full of joy in the Lord today.
- [2 : 47] That we rejoice in the Lord. We pray O Lord that thou would bless thy word to us as we come to meditate upon it.
- O Lord we give thee thanks that although we know not what we should pray for us we owe it. That the spirit itself maketh intercession for us with glorings which cannot be uttered.
- That thou art the one who sucheth our hearts. That thou art the one who knows what we stand in need of. And we give thee thanks that out of the riches of thy grace.
- That thou art able to meet with the needs of each and every one of us. We pray O Lord for our families. For all our loved ones wherever they may be.
- That thy known everlasting arms would be around them. And that thou would meet with them at their point of need. Bless the witness of thy people. We pray O Lord that they may be faithful witnesses for thee.
- [3 : 53] And that there would be us lights that would shine out in the midst of the darkness of the world that is around us. We pray O Lord for those who are ill.

That thine healing hand may be upon them. And those who mourn. We pray O Lord that thine own comfort would be their portion today. Bless we pray thee those who may be feeling lonely today.

Those who are confined to their homes. Those who are on their own. Oh we pray that thou would speak near to them. And those of their number who need carers to come and look after them.

We pray O Lord that thou would bless them and those who do care for them. We remember our young people and our children. And we pray that thou would raise up a generation that would fear thy name.

And who would be witnesses for thee in this world. Remember our nation, our leaders. Grant to them wisdom O Lord in these days. Oh that thou would remember us with compassion.

[4 : 59] That thou would remember us in pity. Oh that thou would rend the heavens and come down O Lord and revive thy people. And quicken those who are still dead in trespasses and sin.

That we would see days of revival and days of awakening among us. Bless all nations of the earth. Bless all thy servants who have gone forth with thy word today.

We pray that they may have the unction of thine own spirit upon them. That they may know thine own presence. As they proclaim the riches of thy grace.

Through Jesus Christ. We seek O Lord that would please thee to continue with us. And all that we ask with the forgiveness of our many sins. It 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 Paul's letter to the Romans.

[6 : 00] And chapter 7 and going on to chapter 8. We'll begin our reading in Romans chapter 7 at verse 14.

1. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not.

For what I would, that do I not. But what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.

For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not that I do.

[6 : 58] Now, if I do that, I would not. It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me.

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ, O Lord. So then with a mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

For what the law could not do, and that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sin for flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

[8 : 16] For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Because a carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also weaken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Therefore, brethren, we are dead not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die. But if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

[9 : 29] For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit itself be that witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. And so on. May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word.

Let us now turn to the book of Philippians, Paul's letter to the Philippians, and chapter 3. And we shall read from verse 7.

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 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 do count them but done, that I may win Christ.

[10 : 44] And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the 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, been made conformable unto his death. If by any means I might attain it to 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, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth into those things which are before.

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And as we seek the Lord to bless his word to us, we seek his help, and as we come to meditate upon this passage this evening.

[11 : 56] Now we have been looking at this letter over some weeks, now, I think really since the beginning of lockdown, or very shortly after.

And I do hope that you have found it of benefit to be going through a letter in this way, that we see how the letter is tied up together.

And I think one of the main themes of the letter is to have this spirit of oneness and togetherness. And I think that is important for us, especially at this time when we don't meet with each other face to face, that we cultivate this spirit of oneness and togetherness in the gospel.

So I hope that our studies have been instructive to you, and also an encouragement to you. Now, up to this point in the chapter, we have seen that Paul is warning the Philippians against those who would try and add anything to their faith beyond what has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus in his life and death.

And so we find here in verse 8, Paul saying, 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.

[13 : 43] What does Paul mean here when he says, that I may win Christ and be found in him? Has he not already won or gained Christ, and therefore is he not already in Christ?

But what we have here is that the present and the future, they merge or they combine or they come together. Paul lives, as it were, every day as we have already noted in the light of the day of judgment.

And his future expectation here is to be found in Christ on that day. And that expectation rests on his present experience of being found in Christ.

And Paul here goes on, and he says that he found in Christ an infinitely better righteousness than that he had managed to produce by his own efforts.

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 the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

[14 : 56] He contrasts on the one hand a righteousness of his own that comes from the law, and on the other hand, the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ.

The righteousness from God that depends on faith. Paul here brings before us a righteousness that he achieved and a righteousness that he receives.

The righteousness that he achieved was his own righteousness. The righteousness that he receives is through faith in Christ. Paul's own righteousness comes from the law, as we have already noted, touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Now, when he's referring to there is matters of food and drink and the observance of days, and so on, and as we have already noted, nobody could surpass him.

He thought that by keeping those rituals, those things, that he was becoming better and better and better. Outwardly, he was a righteous man.

[16 : 12] But the righteousness that comes from God does not come from Paul's good, moral, outward conduct and behaviour, but from God's judicial verdict of a righteous standing of a righteous standing before God.

Paul's own righteousness could never bring him to have a righteous standing before God. And my friends, that is what is important, that we have a righteous standing before God.

And our own works and our own deeds will never bring us to that position, to that status, where we have a righteous standing before God.

Paul came to realise that he cannot approach God on the basis of his own achievements, but as one declared righteous with the righteousness that comes from God.

This righteousness from God depends on what Christ has done. Paul now rests not on his own attempts to work out a righteousness before God, but it rests on the accomplished obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

[17 : 34] Paul now looks away from Paul, away from his heritage, away from his upbringing, away from his external circumstances.

He looks away from his external circumcision and to seal, but he has come now to rest completely in Jesus Christ and to receive a right standing before God by looking in faith to Jesus Christ.

Christ. We have often quoted the shorter catechism during our study and I think it captures Paul's point here for us in the question what is justification?

And the answer to that is justification is an act of God's free grace wherein he pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous in his sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

Christ was made of a woman made under the law. He puts himself under the law and in his life here on earth he rendered a perfect obedience to the law of God.

[19 : 02] This brings us of course to Golgothan to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. What happens there? Well the prophet Isaiah in chapter 53 says and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

And so Jesus receives the curse the condemnation that Paul and every Christian deserves. God punished our sins there in Christ in his own beloved son on the cross.

In the life and death and resurrection of Christ we see the demands and the penalty of the law being satisfied. Now that is something that we can never do.

We can never hard as we try and Paul did. Nevertheless he came short of meeting with the demands and the penalty of God's law.

And that is also true of me and you. However hard we may try we will come short of meeting with the demands and penalty of God's law.

[20 : 17] But here is the good news that God has provided a righteousness in Christ that meets and satisfies the demands and the penalty of his law.

And that by faith his righteousness can be imputed or reckoned to us. And to his righteousness nothing can be added and nothing can be subtracted from it.

It is a perfect righteousness. righteousness. righteousness. What that means is that by faith we are not merely delivered from the penalty of the law but will receive all the benefits of Christ's perfect life and atoning death without our own efforts and activities.

If you are in Christ tonight you stand before God as a person that is robed with the righteousness of Christ.

And in the future as we find in John's vision in Revelation chapter 19 where we read these words let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to him for the marriage of the lamb has come and his wife hath made herself ready and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

[21 : 50] The robe of clean white fine linen symbolises the righteousness of Christ himself which belongs to his people which belongs to his bride.

Well how do you stand before God? Are you still struggling by your own efforts and activities and trying to achieve what you can never achieve?

That which will satisfy the standards of God's law and its penalty when it is already done and ready and given to you only to be received by faith.

Paul knows Christ but he wants to know Christ more and more that I may know him.

Now as we noted when we looked at verse 8 the knowledge of Christ that Paul has already obtained and that he desires here in verse 10 is not an intellectual knowledge or a head knowledge about Christ but what he desires and longs for is to have a more personal knowledge of Christ.

[23 : 28] This knowledge has to do with personal experience. He wants to have a more intimate relationship with Christ. He has already met Christ in a very particular and unique manner on the road to Damascus.

He has had fellowship with the Lord and now what he desires and longs for is to have more and more of that which she has already tasted and received.

And this is a desire and longings that belongs to the Christian. To have more intimate fellowship and coming in with Christ through the Holy Spirit.

True we have not seen Jesus as Paul did or had the kind of visions that Paul received or heard a voice like Paul did. Nevertheless it is possible by faith which is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen to know his presence and to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

At times when you are on your knees in prayer or times when you are reading the scriptures you become aware of his presence and the desire and the longing of the child of God is that he may know more and more of this fellowship and communion that's their longing that's their desire of the child of God that they may know more and more in this intimate way of having fellowship and communion with Jesus Christ.

[25 : 12] In the Song of Solomon chapter 2 we find an experience of the church when she says for I am sick of love. Now the experience was the fullness of his love.

The sickness that springs from views of Christ's persons and from discoveries of his love. For she says he brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love.

His left hand is under my head and his right hand doth embrace me. They were there the manifestation of his grace and at times that can overpower the soul and throw the soul into an absolute amazement when the person considers the greatness of Christ's person and the greatness of Christ's grace to such an unworthy object.

The Christian can be found like the Queen of Sheba. When she came and saw the riches and the glory and wisdom of King Solomon it is said of her that there was no more spirit in her.

Well that is the case here for we have a greater than Solomon here. we we have the Lord Jesus Christ and the riches of his grace and the glory of his person and the wisdom which he possesses left the church so overwhelmed and it leaves Paul here overwhelmed.

[26 : 47] On another occasion he wrote who loved me and gave himself for me. Oh he says oh that I may know him more and more that I may have that personal and intimate relationship with him more and more and more.

Now on another occasion in the psalm we read of the church when she says in chapter 5 I charge you O daughters of Jerusalem if ye find my beloved that ye tell him that I am seek of love but on that occasion it was not the fullness of his love but the conscious absence of the manifestation of his love that leaves the church there seek of love her soul was filled with love for him and she longed for the enjoyment of him but she was conscious of the absence of the manifestations of his love and so she lays a charge on the daughters of Jerusalem tell him that I love him tell him that I cannot live without him oh an eager longing after Christ's presence and the discoveries of his grace and of his love whether in fullness with large discoveries of his love or in his absence this is the desire and longing of the church of

Christ that I may know him more and more is that your own longing and desire today that I may know him more and more that I may have more discoveries of his grace that I may have more discoveries of the greatness of his person and the greatness of his sacrifice that he offered on my behalf on the cross of Golgotha that I would know the greatness of his continual ministry at the right hand of the father or that I would have more discoveries of his love of his mercy of his grace now the next thing that he does here is to describe for us the knowledge that he desires how what it consists of how will I know him more and more that

I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death now Paul knew all about the resurrection of Christ whatever his opinions was before his experience on the road to Damascus he came to know that Jesus was alive Paul here is not speaking again of an intellectual knowledge or a head knowledge but he is speaking of something that is more personal he desires a heart knowledge knowing Christ is to know the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings resurrection here Paul is wanting to experience the power of his resurrection now Paul knows all about the power of God but here in this passage he tells us that his desire his longing is to know the power of

Christ's resurrection well what is the power of his resurrection well it does not mean the power that actually raised Christ from the dead but what he means is the power that Christ possesses as the resurrected Lord it is the power that he gives by virtue of his resurrection the power that he gives by virtue of the fact that he has risen again from the dead that he has ascended to the right hand of the father it is the power that Christ possesses as the resurrected and ascended Lord in Psalm 68 we read thou has ascended on high thou has led captivity captive thou has received gifts for men yea for the rebellious also that the Lord might dwell among them a power that he sends a power that he applies into my life and your life by the

[31 : 34] Holy Spirit Paul knew this by his own experience of knowing Christ it all began with knowing the power of the resurrection in his initial encounter with Christ because salvation demonstrates to us the power of the resurrected Lord in 2nd Peter chapter 1 we read grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue what Paul decides here is that he would know Christ in his resurrected power and filling him with resurrected power through the Holy Spirit the power to love

Christ more and more we have already alluded to the songs of Solomon and the experience of the church that he would give us that power to love Christ more and more and the power to love each other and the power to love our enemies the power to have compassion on the world the power to crucify the flesh and much more that we would know the power of the resurrected Lord applied to us through the Holy Spirit God now if we are going to know the power of his resurrection we have to know the fellowship of his sufferings the two are connected we cannot have the one without the other if we come to know the power of his resurrection then we are going to share in sufferings for the sake of

Christ the ESV says and may share in his sufferings fellowship or sharing means that Paul's sufferings were in reality the sufferings of Christ he has already told them in chapter one for unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake suffering was an inevitable consequence of believing in Christ and every Christian knows that while the sufferings of believers have no atoning value they are nonetheless seen as related to Christ there was only one sufferings that had any atoning value and that was the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ our sufferings have no atoning value nevertheless they are related to

Christ on the road to Damascus when Paul encountered Christ he was on the way to persecute and probably execute Christians and the Lord spoke to him and said Saul Saul why persecute us thou me this shows how Christ was identified with his people in their suffering later on in this letter Paul is going to say I can do all things to Christ which strengthens me you see there is this relation there is union there is this marriage between Christ and his people they become one through his sufferings Paul was getting to know more and more and more of the power of the resurrected Lord and when you suffer for the sake of

Christ he gives you peace and what is that peace that he gives it is the peace of the resurrected Lord remember what he said these things I have spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace in the world you shall have tribulation but be of good cheer I have overcome the world that in me ye might have peace yes you are going to have to have sufferings yes you are going to have tribulations but in me you have peace in the midst of suffering you read his word and to gain peace the peace of the resurrected Lord that he gives to you then Paul says been made conformable unto his death now what does

[36 : 51] Paul mean here is he making reference to the possibility of his own execution just just like the sufferings of Jesus led to his death where the sufferings of Paul lead to his own death or is he thinking of an inward experience of dying to sin by being united with Christ in his death I think there is much to say about both of these interpretations however I think that within the context of the letter that Paul's reference to Christ's death at this point is a reference to Christ's obedience earlier in the letter Paul referred to the fact that Christ humbled himself and became obedient unto death so that being made conformable unto his death means to humble ourselves and to be obedient even if it means death to to live in a manner that is has become of the gospel of

Christ means to live a humble life and to live an obedient life and by living an obedient life we become conformable unto his death for he was obedient unto death you know Paul has become so Christ centred that he wanted to reflect Christ in every way possible for me to live as Christ he wants to know Christ he wants to know the power of Christ resurrection he wants to be made conformable to Christ death Christ is all to Paul and we have seen that from the beginning of our study of this letter how Christ centred Paul is and what an instruction for me and for you to have our lives so

Christ centred just like the apostle Christ is all to Paul is Christ all to me and you is our lives Christ centred as others look as others look upon us to see our lives Christ centred to see our lives as Paul says for me to live is Christ Christ then he says if by any means I might attain into the resurrection of the dead now the if here is not the if of doubt it may look as if Paul has doubts regarding his resurrection but that is not the case what is uncertain for Paul at this point is whether his certain future is to come about by a resurrection from the dead or by transformation by not seeing death in other words whether

Paul would be dead or be living when Christ returns whether he would be in the grave or whether he would be living when Christ returns and that matter is in God's hands to which Paul gladly submits if by any means that I might attain into the resurrection of the dead whatever it was to be whether he would be dead or living when Christ returned he was assured for he goes on in this chapter to say for our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the saviour the Lord Jesus Christ who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like into his glorious body according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself you will recall when Paul said work out your salvation with fear and trembling that we know today that salvation can be spoken of in the past in the present and future tenses justification past sanctification present glorification future and in the passage that we have looked at there from verse 9 to 11 the same pattern emerges verse 9 and be found in him not having mine own righteousness which is of the law but that which is the faith of Christ the righteousness which is of God by faith what do we have there justification then verse 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death what do we have there sanctification and then verse 11 if by any means

I might attain to the resurrection of the dead what do we have there glorification and Paul continues here and he says here about himself as a Christian and what he says is true of every Christian 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 you see here Paul tells us that Christ has apprehended or that Christ has got a hold of him and that he still holds him this is what happened to him on the road to Damascus Christ apprehended him for a particular purpose what was it that Paul was apprehended for by Christ well in verse 14 he says there I pressed out the mark for the price of the high calling of God in

[43 : 19] Christ Jesus here again we have that favourite imagery of a runner in a race and the runner is pressing towards the finish line Paul is telling us that he has not yet reached that finish line he has not completed the race but he is pressing or he is thriving towards it the purpose for running a race is to reach the finish line and to receive the prize Paul challenged the Corinthian believers and he says to them in 1st Corinthians chapter 9 know ye not that they which run in a race run all but one receiveth the prize so run that ye may obtain run in such a way as to get the prize in Hebrews 12 the writer says let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us and let us run with patience the race that is set before us looking into

Jesus the author and finisher of our faith the prize of high calling of God in Christ Jesus when does this high calling take place it takes place at the beginning of the race it is the caller initiates the race the caller brings us into a relationship with Christ it begins with our conversion and it continues all the way while we are running the race until we reach the finish line and receive the prize and the prize is the fulfilment of the call given at the beginning of the race the call that unites us to Christ and each other and brings us into our relationship with Christ and with each other which we at present enjoy and which we anticipate the continuation of that relationship with Christ and with each other as the fulfilment of the call the prize at the end of the race but he longs to arrive at it he longs to receive that prize he longs to be perfected in

Christ and writing to Titus Paul says who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people writing to the church at Rome Paul says that we are to be conformed to the image of his son or as John says in his first letter in chapter 3 it does not yet appear what we shall be but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is we are reminded here and we know it by our own experience that there is no such thing as perfection in this life and Paul himself knows his imperfections there in Romans chapter 7 we read for that which I do I allow not for what I would that do I not but what I hate that do I and he goes on to say for the good that I would

I do not but the evil which I would not that I do now if I do that I would not it is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me I find then a law that when I would do good evil is present with me for I delight in the law of God after the inward man but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members all wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death you see people who say I am conscious of my imperfection I am aware of my sin I know that I am not what I ought to be but I have this longing and this desire to be perfected in

Christ I have this longing to be delivered from the body of this death well people who say that are the people who have spiritual life in them the people who experience that with a heart experience is the people who have spiritual life in them and tonight if that is the way that you feel if that is your experience if that is the experience of your heart tonight then it is proof that you have spiritual life in you it may be painful it may be a struggle for you but it is a proof that you have spiritual life in you you see complete sanctification is not to be attained suddenly the whole picture we have in scripture is one of development and progress reaching forth into those things which are before

[49 : 35] I pressed out the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus this means a great activity on behalf of the Christian in matter of our righteousness and justification we can do nothing it is entirely the work of Christ but once we are saved and given a new life then the progressive work of sanctification calls me and you to activity again in 1st John chapter 3 he says when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is that is the prize that is what we're striving for but then John says and every man that hath this hope in him purify himself even as he is pure we have already spoken of the desire to know the power of

Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering well Paul says to us in Romans chapter 8 there that we read if he live after the flesh he shall die but if he through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body he shall live though as the ESV says if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live the resurrected Lord has given that power to us through the spirit he has given that power to us in the spirit with the spirit that we can put to death the deeds of the body now do you in the light of the truth feel like Paul that you have not attained that you have not arrived that you have not grasped you wish you were further forward on the road and towards that place of perfection Paul was not here saying that he is satisfied with his life you know when we have that feeling that

Paul expresses here to us that feeling that we have not yet attained that we have not yet arrived that we have not yet asked you wish you were further on the road well such is proof that you have spirit your life as we said and we can ask are we satisfied with our lives you know we can self examine ourselves are we satisfied with our lives well Paul was here not satisfied with his life he's a man who had seen Christ who had visions who had heard a voice a man who had been lifted to the heaven but he was not satisfied Paul was having the same struggles which we experience as Christian people one thing about Paul is that he did not live on his experiences he was a man as we said who had seen

Christ who had visions and so on but he is a man who is yet with the same struggles that we experience as Christian people in 2nd Corinthians chapter 12 he tells us that though he might boast about those things that he had experienced yet he did not for he says yet of myself I will not glory but in mine infirmities you know Paul does not live out his life on his past experience he moves forward forgetting those things that are behind does not mean that the Christian should forget the past experience we cannot forget our past experiences but what Paul means here in forgetting those things which are behind he means that we must not rest upon them rest upon our past experience we must not be forever looking back upon them and when we do so sometimes we do so in a very self satisfied way see a person in a race that person's business is not so much to consider how far that he has arrived or she has arrived along the track but to discover how near he or she is to the prize that is ahead of him or her see there is always the temptation just to be looking back and not progressing that far forward and the

Christian life is always a striving it's always a struggle it's always an effort it's always an endeavour to be ever moving forward to be ever moving onwards looking into Jesus the author and finisher of our faith Paul's own life was just an example of what he has told here to the Philippians and me and you in chapter 2 verse 12 and 13 work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure you know sometimes we have an image of of the apostle Paul as man who had no struggles in his Christian life but as we read his letters nothing can be further away from what was actually true of Paul he had the same problems he had the same struggles as every Christian has in their Christian life the character of the

[55 : 33] Christian life is a striving a struggle an effort an endeavour that is ever onwards that is ever pushing forward I press he says I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ and we do so through the power of the resurrected Lord that he applies to us through his spirit the power that allows us the power that grants to us that probably would be better to love Christ more and more to love each other more and more to love our enemies to crucify the flesh and so on well may that be true of me and you tonight that we press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in

Christ Jesus may the Lord bless our thoughts let us pray oh Lord we confess to thee that our life is so often a life of striving and struggle but thy word proclaims to us that that is proof that we have spiritual life in us grant to us O Lord that we would be pressing forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus that we would have that longing desire in our hearts tonight and if it be otherwise O Lord we pray that thou would revive that thou would stir up our hearts we ask O Lord that thou would continue with us 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 forever more

Amen