

# What's your attitude to Life and Death?

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Preacher: Steve Jeffrey

[ 0 : 00 ] Friends, as we were singing that last song, it's one of those moments where you'd like to just sort of frame in history and pause there. I thought it was a wonderful testimony to unity in the gospel.

This sermon will not be translated. It will, for those in Chinese who cannot understand a word I'm saying right now, it will actually be projected on the screen.

So it will be full text on the screen, except for the changes that I made this morning. So please bear with me on that one.

Let's pray. Father God, I pray that your word will come alive to us this morning. We ask, Father, that your spirit will come in a fresh way and that you will revive our souls so that we might say with the Apostle Paul, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Father, unite us in partnership around the gospel of grace, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Late in the evening of the 24th of June, 1982, British Airways Flight 9, a Boeing 747-200 was flying high, very high, over Indonesia.

[ 1 : 28 ] What the pilots couldn't see on the radar was a cloud of volcanic ash up ahead in their flight path. Earlier, Mount Gowlingung had erupted 150 kilometres north of their flight path.

And all of a sudden, smoke started to fill the cabin. And those with a window seat noticed that the engines were, and I quote, unusually bright.

Then, without warning, number four engines stopped. One minute later, number two engines stopped, followed quickly by engines one and three. The 747 was now what you call technically a glider.

For 16 minutes, this plane fell out of the sky. In the eerie silence, people knew that they were going to die. Can you imagine the sort of things that were going through their minds for 16 minutes as they gradually fell to the ground?

People started writing notes to loved ones on napkins. They started to, in fact, talk to the people that they had ignored for the rest of the flight. They prayed. And a strange feeling came across the plane.

[ 2 : 46 ] They accepted that life was over. Because of the lack of oxygen in the cabin, the pilots took the unusual step of making it quicker for everyone and put the plane in a nosedive to get to a lower level so that people could breathe again.

That manoeuvre had the added benefit of unclogging the engines of volcanic ash, and the engines were able to be restarted. Can you imagine the excitement as the engines kicked back in, the plane climbed and eventually landed at a nearby airport?

The passengers thought they were dead, but they were alive. They had a new lease on life. They ended up actually forming a survivor's club.

It is known as the Mount Galangang Gliding Club. They get together annually on the date of that flight, and they celebrate life together.

One 81-year-old passenger said that on that night, she learnt to count every day as a blessing. She'd never before had a second chance on life.

[ 4 : 01 ] And that's what you've got if you've met Jesus. If you're a Christian, you've got a second chance on life, a new lease on life, a reason to really live, and it's a life that is enjoyed with other Christians.

The Apostle Paul, the one who wrote this letter to the church in Philippi, he got a second chance when he met Jesus. He was a blasphemer, a persecutor of Christians, an opponent of the advancement of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, even to the point of giving his assent to the murder of Christians.

But make no mistake, he was religious. He was zealous. He was pious. He was devout. And he was faultless in legalistic righteousness, as we will discover in a few weeks.

Then he met Jesus. And his life was radically changed. A complete turnaround. He who was persecutor has become the persecuted.

He who trusted in himself, his religious activity, and his heritage, now trusts in Jesus and pursues God's glory no matter what. And he calls the Philippians to have the same perspective on life as him.

[ 5 : 25 ] And he calls us to have the same perspective of life. And it's right there in verse 27. Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

And this is what this commitment series is all about. We are called to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. This commitment series is about reminding us who we are in Christ and what we are called to be.

We are called to live in such a way as to show the worth of the value of the gospel. We are called to reveal to this world that we prize the Lord Jesus more than anything else in this world.

We are called to show that our treasure is not in this world. Our hope is not in money and earthly security. Our satisfaction is not in power and prestige.

Our contentment is not in the approval of others. And our happiness is not in avoiding criticism and slander. Instead, our treasure and hope and satisfaction and contentment and happiness are in Christ and his promises.

[ 6 : 45 ] Broadly speaking, I believe that what Philippians calls us to be is what he stated in our mission statement. We exist to know Jesus, to treasure Jesus, and represent Jesus for God's glory and the joy of all people.

As we go through Philippians in the coming weeks, Paul will spell out for us what it means to live a life worthy of the gospel.

And two broad themes keep popping up and are introduced here in chapter 1. Firstly, unity. And secondly, courageous sacrifice and service.

In one sense, these two things will always be a challenge for us and for God's people. They will always need to be spoken of and they will always need to be pursued. But having said that, I don't want us to lose the urgency of them for us right now as a church here.

I have spent the best part of my 18 months here working towards getting us heading in the same direction. And it's been painful for me and for some of you.

[ 7 : 56 ] There has been pain with the turnover in staff, adjustment to structures, the changing of ministry operations. Ironically, the divisions and difficulties have the goal of unity.

One of the main confronting issues has been the siloing of ministry. Many good things happening, but not necessarily heading in the same direction with the same purpose or even in reference to anyone else or anything else.

Vision 2020 was launched almost a year ago to give us a common direction and purpose as a church. The second thing that is so pertinent to us right now is the biblical teaching of radical, God-centered, wartime, risk-taking lifestyle for this is what God has called us to be as his people. It has been nearly 12 months since Vision 2020 was launched and we've had time to get used to it and now it is time to start stirring each other up to take some risks in more venturesome acts of love and evangelism and discipleship.

We need to break out of deeply ingrained habits of timidity and silence and fear. We need to be set free from long-established anxieties of ruffling feathers and being slandered because too much is at stake for people in Chatswood.

[ 9 : 27 ] My prayer is that as we go through Philippians in this commitment series, we will see our partnership in the gospel and we will courageously sacrifice and serve in order to see the gospel advance among us and beyond us.

So firstly, let's look at the issue of unity. I find it astounding that Paul would write these words at the beginning of Philippians, verse 3.

I thank my God every time I remember you in all of my prayers for all of you. I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Let us not forget that the one who writes these words is the same one who was chosen by God to take the gospel to the nations. He planted church after church.

He wrote about one third of the New Testament and suffered more for the gospel than I could ever imagine. Do you feel the impact of what Paul has written there in those verses?

[10:36] The word he chooses to describe his relationship with this church is partnership.

Partners. It's a business word that refers to a shared endeavour that holds two parties together.

Even separated by prison, Paul uses this word to describe the shared identity and purpose that they have. I find it astounding that he would use this word because if anyone has the right to talk about rights, it would be Paul.

If anyone has the credibility to elevate himself over other Christians and demand more, it would have to be Paul.

If anyone could say that he is more equal than anyone else, it would have to be Paul. Instead, he calls this church at Philippi a church that he founded his partners from the very first day.

Not after you've learned a thing or two. Not after you've been a Christian for a number of years. Not once the church has got its governance and ministry structures firmly established.

[11:58] Not once, Church of Philippi, you send out a few missionaries. From the very first day, you are my partners in the gospel. How can the great apostle Paul say that about this church at Philippi?

Verse 7 gives us the answer. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you since I have you in my heart. For whether I'm in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

Their partnership with Paul began from the very first day because it says in verse 7, all of you share in God's grace with me.

Paul doesn't demand more rights because of his longevity in the faith, because of his commitment to the church, his commitment to the gospel, or because of his effectiveness as a gospel worker. Grace means it's a level playing field. One of the clearest pictures of this in the New Testament is the parable of the workers of the vineyard in Matthew 20.

[13:10] In the parable, a farmer hires men at different times during the day. We are told that he hires them early in the morning, the third hour, the sixth hour, the ninth hour, right at the end of the day in the eleventh hour.

And those who began early in the morning agreed to do a day's work for denarius. That was a good wage for a worker and was considered to be what was needed to provide well for their family.

So don't let this point slip you past. They all, including those who started work at the beginning of the day, they all received not what they had earned, but what they needed.

They were all paid according to grace, not according to debt. And the twist comes at the end of the day when they all line up to get paid and they all get the same.

They all get a denarius. Everyone gets the same pay. No matter how long they had been out there in the paddock, they all get a denarius. Every worker got what they needed, not what they had earned.

[14:26] And, of course, those who'd been working the longest started to grumble. Hang on a bit, we've been out there all day. Shouldn't we get two? And in a sense, the workers are right, it's not fair what the boss is doing.

But I think that's the point. Since when is grace ever about being fair? It's about me getting what I don't deserve and being rescued from what I do deserve.

The truth about God's grace is not just a truth that applies when you first become a Christian. It's not just a truth that is something to say about salvation. It is an amazing truth and reality that is the very foundation of how Jesus deals with us day by day and how we are to deal with each other day by day.

None of us needs anything less than God's grace and none of us needs anything more than God's grace. We all need a denarius, so to speak.

We are all beggars at the foot of the cross. We were when we started as a Christian and we are to still be there 50, 60, 70, 80, however many years God allows you in this world.

[15:57] Nothing ever changes. The thing that unites us is not our culture, not our tradition, not our history, not our preferences, not our language.

It is our desperate, desperate need for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ from the very first day until the last.

It is this grace that unites Paul, the great apostle, with the Philippian church that he founded. It would seem that in the church at Philippi there were a few people struggling to get on with each other.

There was a bit of wrong teaching kicking around. There were some difficulties with persecution and it was getting them down. The joy of Christian discipleship wasn't so evident in this church, although Paul significantly rejoices with this church.

And so it's not surprising, therefore, that Philippians is a book that talks about the gospel more than any other New Testament book. Paul wants us to discover how much of a difference a relationship with Jesus makes to our lives.

[17:17] Paul wants to encourage them by putting them back to Jesus to help them to keep on going, to stand firm and to put all the issues and difficulties in the light of the really important news of the gospel of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. The differences that cause divisions are always, always, always, always less than which unites us, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The grace of the Lord Jesus has completely transformed Paul. It changes the way Paul sees other Christians. It wasn't long ago that Paul was persecuting Christians, putting them into jail, but now, verse 4, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, they are my partners, Paul says.

They are not my competitors. They are not my subjects. They are my partners. Is this how you see your relationship with your brothers and sisters here at St.

Paul's? Just have a look around. Is this how you view your relationship with your brothers and sisters here at St.

[18:52] Paul's? Do you see them as your partners at the foot of the cross in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, dependent upon his grace as much as they, as much as you?

Note, too, that when Paul talks about partnership, he's not merely tolerating the Christian church here at Philippi. He is also not giving a mere intellectual assent to the theological correctness of partnership.

Verse 4, in all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy. Verse 7, it is right for me to feel this way about all of you since I have you in my heart.

Verse 8, God can testify how I long for you with the affection of Jesus Christ. God for all the church, he prays for them all with joy, he has them in his heart and he longs for them in affection.

I suspect the answer to the question would want to use those verses as a test case as to whether or not you view them as your partners, your brothers and sisters here.

[20:10] I suspect those verses are a true test case as to whether we see each other as partners. So what is it that threatens our unity and partnership?

Broadly speaking, it is always the three enemies of the Christian, the world, the flesh and the devil. More specifically, there are a few things, but in one way or another, I believe they're sort of attached to a common underlying issue.

Longevity and effectiveness equals rights. In other words, those who have a history are more equal than others. It can express itself in many ways.

Those born in this country have more rights than those who moved here two years ago. The oldest members have more rights than the younger. The oldest congregation more rights than the newest congregation.

The bigger congregation more rights than the smaller congregation. Those more effective in ministry more rights than those just starting out. Those attending here the longest more rights than those who have just joined.

[21:20] Those being Christian for 70 years more equal than those who have just come to Christ. It is so easy to start in the vineyard acknowledging that I'm a one hour worker at the end of the day in the vineyard and then eventually over time start operating as if I've done a full day's work and deserve a full day's pay.

It is subtle and it happens slowly but we can stop relating to each other on the basis of grace. It is therefore crucial that we never lose sight of the gospel of grace as a church.

Grace reminds me that I am a beggar at the foot of the cross and I am therefore consistently dependent upon God and I am no different than you. Grace reminds me that I have no more rights than you, no more privileges, I am not more equal.

Grace reminds me that I need to consistently go downward in humility as I interact with you day by day. Grace ought to lead me to rejoice as more people come into the fellowship believers and get involved and open up new opportunities for us in ministry.

I ought to rejoice because that is partnership and it is the one thing that God uses to advance the gospel amongst us and beyond us.

[ 22 : 49 ] And so friends, Hope Anglican Church no longer exists. At the beginning of January this year, we were all St.

Paul's Chatswood. St. Paul's Chatswood changed on that day, the 1st of January 2010, it changed as we entered into a new partnership with new brothers and sisters who were not less than us.

Things were different from that moment and what family does not work like that? when Phoebe entered our family just over a year ago, Isabel was not more equal than Phoebe just because she was there first.

To treat her, Phoebe that is, as number two and not equally loved and adored would create enormous tensions and difficulties as our family grew.

and a lot of expensive counsellors in years to come. And so the danger in the amalgamation is to strongly affirm that hope no longer exists but then to expect nothing to change in the St.

[ 24 : 15 ] Paul's family. That is to expect those who have come to partner with us to just fit into our ongoing ministry and agenda and program.

Woohoo! You've bolstered our numbers and given us a few more dollars but just stay over there and you'll learn the ropes soon enough. Because the name and the facilities of St.

Paul's was retained in the merger doesn't mean that everything else was. And so on another note our Chinese ministries are no longer the little brothers amongst us.

There is some very significant ministry happening amongst our Chinese congregations. And in case you are unaware our country is becoming more and more ethnic.

By 2050 only 35% of our country will come from an Anglo background. And I suspect the ratio in chats would be significantly higher than say Narrabri.

[ 25 : 32 ] And therefore brothers and sisters if that is the direction of our country we need to be repositioned and aligning and resourcing our ministries accordingly. In preparation what God might do amongst us in 40 years.

And so today as Brian has said we launch a new logo for St Paul's. At the centre of this logo is the cross and it is the cross that is drawing us together in fellowship.

Lots of people, different people from different backgrounds and different places coming together in partnership and unity because of the gospel of grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The closer we get to the gospel of grace, the closer we get to the cross the greater the intensity of partnership. To live that life, a life worthy of the gospel in partnership takes fearless courage and sacrifice.

It means that I consistently lay aside myself as an individual for the sake of the advancement of the gospel and the glory of God.

[ 26 : 39 ] God and so let us allow the apostle Paul to realign us again and challenge us. Verse 14 Because of my chains most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry but others out of good will. And again in verse 17 talking about those with wrong motives he says they preach Christ out of selfish ambition not sincerely supposing they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.

So here's Paul in prison and some say we can make life even worse for Paul if we preach this message. We can get him even into more trouble if we preach the gospel.

How do you think you'd feel? You're knocked down, circumstances are against you and someone thinks he's here's a great opportunity to stick the boot in.

In fact we may even end up with his head on a platter. Don't you think you'd want revenge? Don't you think you'd be calling on God? Fix this problem God.

[ 27 : 53 ] Don't you think you'd want God to judge these people with their motives? Don't you? Not Paul verse 18 God but what does it matter?

The important thing that is in every way whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached and therefore I rejoice.

He doesn't complain, he's not angry with God about it, he doesn't curse those who are against him, he doesn't even tolerate it, he in fact rejoices that Christ is preached as he is rotting in a prison cell. What is wrong with this guy? He isn't worried about his pride, he isn't worried about his reputation, he isn't worried about his position as an apostle, he isn't concerned for his comfort, he isn't concerned for his own advancement, he doesn't logically think God, I'm an apostle to take the gospel to the nations, surely this is not part of your plan.

He is concerned only for Jesus, he is concerned with the reputation of the Lord Jesus, he is concerned that other people hear about Jesus, he is concerned that the gospel of Christ is advanced.

[ 29 : 23 ] Paul has been so gripped by God's grace to him through Jesus, so impacted by this new lease on life through Jesus, that he is prepared to sacrifice his own desires, his will, his pride, his reputation, even his own life, he lays it all on the line for the glory of the Lord Jesus.

Everything in life now revolves around Jesus, not Paul. It is all about Jesus and not Paul. His life has been reorientated to be thoroughly gospel-centered.

His primary concern is the advancement of the gospel. The advancement of the gospel means laying aside my personal glory, my comfort, so that God might become great.

But that's not all. There's more. Verse 20, Paul says that whatever happens, may the Lord Jesus Christ be exalted, whether that be in my life or whether it be in my death.

You see what he's saying there? If it means I live or it means I die, whatever it takes, that the gospel might be advanced and glory might be made to Jesus. What Paul is saying here is that it's all about life and death.

[ 30 : 59 ] This is not a trivial matter, friends. Verse 22 gives us a glimpse of how Paul is thinking. If I'm to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me, yet what shall I choose?

I do not know. I am torn between the two. I desire to depart to be with Christ, which is better by far, but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith.

And so what Paul is doing is he sits there and rots in this prison, he looks at his life and he thinks, if I live, then it means more opportunities to do what I can for the gospel to advance, more opportunities to make God look great, but if I die, I will be in heaven.

No more prison, no more chains, no more ridiculed, no more persecution. I will be with Jesus and that is clearly better by far. God. He knows in the end that it's all in God's hands, but he says, if I'm going to choose, what will I choose?

He says, I would choose more of the same. Paul says, it is more important for you that I remain. Even as he rots in prison and he faces death, he's not concerned with himself.

[ 32 : 24 ] He sees that for him to go on living is all about partnership in the advancement of the gospel. And if it means that he rots in prison so the gospel would be advanced, then so be it.

if I have the choice right now, he says, in that moment between eternal glory and more suffering and partnership for the advancement of the gospel, then right now, for your sakes, church at Philippi, you need me to suffer more.

And so therefore I will. Because it's not about him. verse 21 is Paul's grace-driven outlook on life in a nutshell.

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. When I first became a Christian, I bought this Bible. And I'm not sure what you, I think you just go and get a big Bible. I think when you first become a Christian, show your keenness. And I wrote at the beginning my very first memory verse.

[ 33 : 36 ] For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. I wanted a verse that was going to summarise my life. Something that I would proudly put on a tombstone or someone else would put on a tombstone for me.

That would be a miracle. To live is Christ, to die is gain, and under that I have written these words, engage the pain, don't run.

Communicate the gospel, protect the gospel, adorn the gospel, suffer for the gospel. The gospel of grace has so turned around Paul's life that he is now partnering with those he persecuted.

It has so turned his life around that his whole perspective on life and death is all about Jesus. For to me, to live life is all about Jesus, and to die is just to get more of Jesus.

Is it any wonder that he calls this church at Philippi, and he calls us and every generation since then to live in such a way that Jesus looks spectacular?

[ 35 : 00 ] Could you say that? Could you read those words and for them to ring true for the way that you view your life and your death? Maybe your wording is more like to me to live and to die would be really inconvenient right now.

Maybe you've got plans, you've got things you want to do with your life, lots of things to achieve, things to achieve and to advance for your own gain. Maybe Jesus doesn't fit in with some of those plans and maybe you want to do some things first and then maybe hand over to Jesus a little bit later once you've advanced yourself.

and if that is you, then death is the ultimate thing for you to avoid because this is the thing that gets in the way of you getting what you want in your life.

And therefore courage and fearlessness is not high on the agenda in advancement of the gospel. This isn't how Paul viewed his life, all because of the gospel of grace.

It isn't how any Christian should view their life. We are meant to have a commitment to Jesus that is sort of until death do us part, if you know what I mean. Paul calls us to stop dating Jesus and get committed.

[ 36 : 27 ] To live is to live for Jesus, to die is to get even more of Jesus. Such a call to the commitment of the advancement of the gospel and the glory of Christ has led many people to do extraordinary things over the centuries, to live lives worthy of the gospel.

There is a great cloud of witnesses before us, friends, and at this point in history we stand on the shoulders of significant people who have gone before us in so many ways, and they are a motivation and an encouragement and a challenge to us.

For instance, in 1800, a young 19-year-old man named Henry Martin became a Christian while studying at Cambridge University in England. He was brilliant in a variety of areas including mathematics, philosophy, and theology.

By just five years later, after becoming a Christian, in 1805, and at the age of 24, he left everything, including the love of his life, Lydia Grenfell.

He went firstly to India as a missionary and then on to other countries. The boat took ten months to get to India and in the process, he became extremely ill and almost died.

[ 37 : 47 ] He went on to take the good news about Jesus to three other countries and translated the Bible into Arabic. When he arrived in India after the ten-month trip and nearly dying, he said this, He did die on the 16th of October 1812, 12 years after becoming a Christian, at the age of 31, sharing Jesus with Muslims in Iran.

He had a vision for life and for death. If I die, I die to be happy, but if I live, I shall live to the glory of God alone. It sounds very familiar to the Apostle Paul's words, whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. The conviction that has gripped me over recent years is that courage is at the centre of what it means to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Boldness in the face of opposition is at the heart of being a Christian. It is not an upper level spirituality for super saints. It is the everyday requirement of Christian living.

And so friends, it is almost one year since I stood here and launched Vision 2020. And at its heart, it's a vision that desires to see members of St. Paul's individually and together living lives worthy of the gospel of Christ.

[ 39 : 41 ] It is a vision to see Jesus made great in this area. It's a vision that is intended to unite us for a common purpose, heading in a common direction with a common goal, and that is to make Jesus look great, for him to be our greatest treasure, and for all the world to know it.

I believe it says very clearly who we are meant to be and what we are on about. And so I want to ask you, how has Vision 2020 shaped you in the last 12 months?

How has life changed for you? What have you sacrificed? The great danger for us as a church is to hear the language of Vision 2020, even use the language of Vision 2020, and just keep on as individuals doing what we've always done and nothing changes.

and we put it all in the veneer of a Vision 2020 language. That's not what's been happening for me in the last 12 months.

I asked the senior staff a couple of weeks ago to give me a commitment, as far as they were able to, under God, to commit their lives to Vision 2020 until Vision, until 2020.

[ 41 : 16 ] I want their partnership in the gospel. I need their partnership in the gospel. But in asking for that, I also, in the process, said that I need their sacrifice in order that the gospel would be

advanced, that this vision would be advanced and realised under God.

Whatever it takes, I said, whatever it takes for the next 10 years, will you do it? Whatever new role you have to take on or to give up, an old one, we will do it together in order to not stand in the way of God growing his church and the gospel advancing in this place.

I said to them at some point, you may come to me and say, Steve, it's time to go. Steve, it's time to change your role. It's time to step down and someone else step up.

Because right now, you're not the person to take us from 1,000 to 2,000. And for the sake of the advancement of the gospel, you need to lay yourself aside. Or maybe to say to some that you can no longer preach, even though it is your gifting.

But right now, as a church, we need you over there. Will you sacrifice? Will you give up? Or to move another person from their passion in one area of ministry to another area of ministry, because that is what is beneficial for the advancement of the gospel in that moment.

[ 42 : 56 ] And the call is this. Will you give up? Will you serve? Will you sacrifice? Will you surrender your comfort, sacrifice, prestige and position and significance and recognition and preferences for the sake of partnership and the advancement of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Christ? We need the perspective of Paul that if it is best for me to be in chains and rot, then I will do so if that means it's the advancement of the gospel.

gospel. That is for all of us, that if it is best for me to be in chains and rot for the gospel to advance, then so be it, because this is the vision that God has called us to.

We need a gospel-driven perspective on life and death if we are to see Vision 2020 realized amongst us under God. There are many confronting issues and there are many things that we will be dealing with in the coming years.

I hope you realize that, that for Vision 2020 to be realized, this place will be vastly different in the future. Praise God, so that more people might come under the Lordship of Christ means that we need to sacrifice.

[ 44 : 26 ] There are already means that parish council has been stepping out of operations to focus explicitly on governance and resourcing the vision, because no other group in this church is going to work on a 10-year plan on how to resource and develop this place in order for Vision 2020 to be realized.

That is part of the painful experience of sacrificing so that the gospel might advance a group of people who have got their hands in and are actively involved in day-by-day operations are actually deliberately stepping back to look at the longer-term vision of the place.

That is sacrifice. It may mean for us redeploying financial or personal resources so that one dearly loved area of ministry and transferring it to another area of ministry which may be virtually unknown to us, but an area where we believe God is leading us to. It may mean investigating other church sites.

It may mean a turnover of staff to get the right people in the right roles. It may mean even the removal of pews for more functional seating so that this resource that we sit in can in fact be used more effectively and efficiently. It may mean a large redevelopment of this site. It may mean a radical shake-up of our congregational meeting times and places. Whatever it may mean, it will definitely need to be graced, drenched partnership in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and fearless courage in sacrifice and service for the advancement of the gospel because people's lives are at stake.

The leadership needs the freedom and the encouragement and the partnership and the prayers to leave no stone unturned as we seek to utilize our resources for maximum impact to the advancement of the gospel and the glory of God in this place.

[ 46 : 34 ] And so friends, are you prepared to say with Paul, what does it matter? So long as Christ is preached, is your vision bigger than your own preferences and your own contentment and your own comfort? In fact, I want to ask you, is your vision even bigger than Vision 2020?

Is your vision to live a life worthy of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ? So now, now is the time to start stirring each other up in partnership, to take some risks in more venturesome acts of love and evangelism and discipleship, to pray earnestly for the Spirit of God to move through us so that whatever happens in the future here at St Paul's, we will conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Amen.