

Striving Together For The Faith of The Gospel

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Date: 26 September 2021

[0 : 00] Let me again firstly welcome everyone to the service this evening. Welcome too to those who are joining us online. And as always we trust that God will guide us and bless us through this time of worship.

Before we begin the worship just let me mention a few things from the news sheet today. And you'll see the different activities and services throughout the week mentioned there. The Youth Club meets also on Tuesday evening.

That's from 7.30 to 9 o'clock. That'll be here in the MA Hall just beside us. And after a very excellent mission meeting last Wednesday. If anybody wishes to contribute to the work of Asia Link. You can follow the directions there in the intimation. Just leave an envelope with Asia Link marked on it in the collection plate. And if you are putting in a check then make the checks payable to Stornway Free Church.

And then the amount will be processed onto Asia Link by the Treasurer. Also if you can see the intimation there for a thanks to yourselves as a congregation from the deacon's court.

[1 : 04] And certainly that includes myself too. For the support that you have shown to the gospel. And to our ministry here over the past while. And especially during these difficult times in the last year and a half or so.

And do notice also at the end of the intimation there. Anyone who wishes to contribute by regular standing order. Speak to Murdoch MacPhail or to any of the office bearers.

And if you do wish to actually include gift aid in that. Which we always emphasize. The church gets back a substantial amount from the taxman.

From the United Revenue in gift aid. It doesn't involve giving anything extra to the church. It's just the recovery of a certain amount by the church.

So again if you want to discuss any of that. Please just again mention it to Murdoch MacPhail. And one final thing. There is a fundraising takeaway in the MA Hall. On Saturday the 2nd of October.

[2 : 04] That's in aid of God is Good Africa. And the funds from that will go to Kenny John McKenzie's work with Light Hill Christian School in Uganda. And the Trinity College in Congo as well.

So I'll leave you to just read that through for yourselves as well. Let's begin our worship of God this evening singing in Psalm 31. That's in the Sing Psalms version. Psalm 31.

And page 37. We're singing verses 19 to 24. Your goodness Lord is very great. Prepared for those who fear your name.

You show your goodness openly to all who your protection claim. Your presence hides and shelters them from those who plot to take their life. And in your tent you keep them safe from evil tongues that stir up strife.

That's Psalm 31 and verses 19 to 24. Your goodness Lord is very great. Prepared for those who fear your name. And we're standing to sing. Your goodness Lord is very great.

[3 : 19] You show your goodness openly to all who your protection claim.

Your presence hides and sheltered from those who plot to take their life.

And in your tent you keep them safe from evil tongues that stir up strife.

The Lord he prays me because he showed the wonder of his love to be.

When in the city I was proud. In my alarm I was scared.

[4 : 57] In my alarm I was scared.

That I was scared. That I was scared. That I was scared. From your eyes. But when I called to you for help.

In grace you listen to my Christ. I will hang on to you for help.

The faithful will be cared by God, but he will live the ground there too.

Be strong, take heart, open the door. Let's now call upon the Lord in prayer. Let's engage in prayer together.

[6 : 32] O Lord our God, we give thanks for these great reassuring words that we have been singing in your praise. Words that assure us as we place our trust and confidence in you, so you will be true to your promise to look after your people.

We thank you that that remains true through all their circumstances in life, even when they are being most opposed by the world and the hatred of the world. And we thank you tonight for this privilege once again, O Lord, that we gather in your name, that we gather around your word. We gather in fellowship together and with our God. Lord, we thank you for the promise that you will be there, that you have placed your own name where your people meet together. And Lord, that you are there in the midst of them.

And we thank you that that is an experience that your people have, not just a matter of statement. And we pray that tonight we may know that for ourselves, that your Holy Spirit will manifest to us the very presence of God in our midst.

That your Holy Spirit will come and take the things of Christ and make them clear and cogent to us. We thank you, O Lord, for all that you are to your people, for the way that you prove yourself faithful down through each and every age of history.

[7 : 51] And especially, Lord, in our times, too, that you prove yourself to your people day by day to be a God who is faithful. We pray, O Lord, that these things will encourage us tonight as we come into your presence.

We have much to bring before you, Lord, that could discourage us greatly. We have much even to confess, O Lord, that we find within ourselves, within our own inconsistencies and our failures, that could make us disconsolate.

And indeed, at times, O Lord, do so. We give thanks that tonight we can bring them to you and lay them out before you. We pray that you would assure us, O Lord, however serious we may see our sin, and it is always more serious than we ourselves imagine.

Yet you have made provision against it. Our sin is never greater than our Savior and the salvation that is in him. And we pray, O Lord, tonight that as we confess our sin before you, as each one of us comes with our own personal burden, as we bring before you needs of the church as well that we belong to.

Glacious Lord, we pray that you would come to us in your forgiveness, that you would lift away our sin from us in your own pardon and in cleansing us from our sin.

[9 : 11] And assure us again, Lord, that when you forgive our sin, they are truly forgiven. And that your cleansing of sin is through that work of your Holy Spirit brought towards its final perfection in the cleanness of heaven itself.

We thank you tonight for every way in which you support your people, for the way that you uphold them in difficulties and trials, for the way that you make even their trials to work towards their good ultimately.

And, O Lord, we thank you that the sufferings of your people, as we read in your word, have always been part of your program for your people as you bring them further onwards in that life and journey of faith.

And even though we know, O Lord, that our sufferings are themselves directly related to our sin, to our fallenness, yet we thank you that it pleased you to make provision for us so that even the very difficulties and trials and sufferings in the lives of your people are themselves contributors towards your sanctification of them.

We pray tonight for thankful hearts as we realize that our sufferings, though at times we may feel them greater than ourselves or greater than we are able to bear, yet they are never greater than your capacity and strength and greater than your ability to minister grace to us.

[10 : 40] We thank you, Lord, for your word. Once again, we come to you and give thanks for your word and give thanks for the ways in which we know your word to be effective.

In our own lives, we pray that each of us here tonight, Lord, will know the power of your truth in our hearts. We pray for any tonight, Lord, who may find themselves disconsolate, lacking assurance. We pray that you would bring on your people towards greater assurance. And we ask, O Lord, that where we lack assurance as your people, that you would minister to us from your truth.

Lord, help us tonight, Lord, we pray if we have not yet come to make our peace with God. We have not yet come to fully embrace the claim of Christ and his call in the gospel to come to you and to lay down our rebelliousness and receive you as you offer yourself to us in the gospel.

Lord, help us tonight to do so. And help us if we have come, O Lord, tonight to this place that we're watching online and know that in our hearts we have departed from your ways, that we have grown cold in our love and affection for you, that we have stepped aside from committed service to you.

[11 : 55] O Lord, our God, we pray that you would bless us in our recovery. We ask for any tonight who are backslidden and gone back to the ways of the world. Lord, we pray that you would send forth your light and your truth to their recovery.

Lord, help us, we pray, as we pray for each other and as we pray for your church at large to do so, realizing that we are constantly dependent upon your Holy Spirit for every step that we take through life.

We pray that you would also shield us, O Lord, from the works of the devil. Lord, we pray that as we know of his attacks and his attempts through the very many agents that he uses in the world and the very means that are open to him to use, help us to discern his ways.

Help us, Lord, to look to you and to look to the temptation of Jesus himself and to the teaching of your word in regard to that and that of the apostles and the church in these days.

Lord, help us, we pray, to learn from how they faced that temptation and these attacks. Grant to us the grace, we pray, to withstand in the evil day and to take the whole armor of God to us and having done all to stand.

[13 : 13] We pray, Lord, tonight too for all whom we commit to you who are ill at this time of our number. We think of those who are seriously ill, those even approaching death as it seems.

We pray that you would grant your blessing, Lord, to prepare them for eternity. We ask that they may be ready to be taken into the presence of the Lord. We pray that whatever their life has been up to now, that you would give them the grace to place their confidence in you and to receive you even at this time.

We ask for those who mourn the passing of loved ones, whether recently or in times gone by. O Lord, we ask that you would be with them to comfort and to uphold and to strengthen them.

Help us never to forget them in our prayers. Remember them, Lord, tonight as they continue to grieve and as they continue to at times feel bewildered and lost with regard to such sore providences.

Lord, we do commit them to you. And we ask that you would bless all who help us in our community at large. Bless tonight those who teach our young in the schools around us and throughout our land.

[14 : 23] Lord, we pray that you would grant to us a proper response to all the attempts that are being made and indeed have been made successfully to introduce teaching that is contrary to your word, to the standards of your word, to the ethic of your word.

Lord, help us, we pray as we pray for the protection of our young people. We thank you for those who teach them sincerely and especially for those who have a regard to your truth and to the values and principles of your truth.

We pray that you would continue to bless and protect them. We ask that you bless those in the various forms of medical provision that you make for us in our hospice, in our hospitals, in our care homes, in our surgeries.

We thank you for all the assistance we receive. We pray that you would bless them, that you would bless our local authority, that you would bless our local education authority too.

Oh Lord, our God, in all of these things we look to you for your guidance, for your help towards steering us away from that which would be harmful further to ourselves or to our children.

[15 : 33] And so we pray for all such throughout our land. We pray for those in the judiciary, those who look after law and order in our land. Bless them. Keep them, Lord, we pray, from being tempted by bribery or corruption.

And grant that you would give to us continually to set them before you also. We ask for those who work with street pastors locally and elsewhere. We thank you for the team locally that go out each week and seek to help those who have fallen upon specific needs relating to addictions, to alcohol, to drug abuse.

We thank you for the safety that these people can look forward to as they are helped by the street pastors. And we pray for all who go out, oh Lord, and meet with cases of need.

We ask that you would give them wisdom. We pray that you would protect them and guide them in all that they do. And continue with us now, Lord, as we turn to your word. And hear us in this prayer and accept us and pardon our sins for Jesus' sake.

Amen. We're reading tonight now from the New Testament Scriptures in the second letter of Paul to the Thessalonians. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1.

[16:50] And then we'll turn back again to Philippians, where we've been looking for some weeks at the teaching of the Apostle there. So first of all, 2 Thessalonians and chapter 1.

We'll read through the whole of that chapter, just a short chapter. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians. In God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right. Because your faith is growing abundantly.

And the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God. For your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions.

And in the afflictions that you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God. That you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are also suffering.

[17:47] Since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you. And to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us. When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.

In flaming fire. Inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God. And on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction.

Away from the presence of the Lord. And from the glory of his might. When he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints. And to be marveled at among all who have believed.

Because our testimony to you was believed. To this end we always pray for you. That our God may make you worthy of his calling. And may fulfill every resolve for good.

And every work of faith by his power. So that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you.

And you in him. According to the grace of our God.

[18:49] And the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we turn back to Philippians as well. We'll read verses at the end of chapter 1. From verse 27.

Philippians 1 at verse 27. Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. So that whether I come and see you or am absent.

I may hear of you. That you are standing firm in one spirit. With one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel. And not frightened in anything by your opponents.

This is a clear sign to them of their destruction. But of your salvation. And that from God. For it has been granted to you. That for the sake of Christ.

You should not only believe in him. But also suffer for his sake. Engaged in the same conflict. That you saw I had. And now hear that I still have.

[19:47] And as we follow on from last time. Where we saw Paul's concern to glorify Christ. Whether it was by death.

Or in his continued life of service in this world. And then there in the previous few verses. Saying he was convinced that he would actually remain.

And continue with them for their progress. And joy in the faith. And he turns now to say. That whether it is the case that he's released.

Or otherwise. As far as this is concerned. It really doesn't matter. Because there's one thing he wants to hear. About these Philippians. Whether he's hearing it shortly before he's going out to die.

Or in his continued life as a servant of Christ. Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. So that whether I come and see you.

[20:44] Or else I'm absent. I may hear this of you. That is his primary concern. In this point for the Philippian people.

For the Philippian Christians. And there are two images that Paul frequently uses. Or fairly frequently. In conveying to the churches.

He was writing to the various truths. That he wanted to set out. As the truths of the gospel. The first image is that of citizenship. Citizenship. Citizenship was something that Paul obviously took careful note of.

And that will be very familiar to the Philippian people. To the Philippian church. Because Philippi was a very important Roman colony. More important than many other parts of the Roman Empire. Just apart from Rome itself. And because Philippi itself was an important Roman colony. It had specific citizenship privileges.

[21 : 42] Which were granted to many of the citizens of Philippi. More than other parts were through in other parts of the Empire. So citizenship for the people of Philippi.

For the people in the church in Philippi. Was something they understood. And so to convey the truth of the gospel. Through the imagery of citizenship. Would be understood.

Even on the surface. By the people in the church in Philippi. The other imagery. Is an imagery from the world of the military. You'll find Paul.

Frequently presenting. That imagery of the Roman soldier. In the likes of Ephesians chapter 6. And here in fact we find evidence of military phraseology.

In order to convey what he wants the Philippians to remember. In terms of their lifestyle. Because not only was Philippi an important colony of Rome.

[22 : 42] It was also a very important military town. If you were living in Paul's day in Philippi. You'd be very familiar with active soldiers. Soldiers on active duty.

Living in the town. Going through the town. Or you'd be also very familiar. At times with retired military soldiers. Retired Roman soldiers. It may very well have been.

That the guardian of the prison in Philippi. Into which Paul and Silas were thrown at first. The Philippian jailer who was converted. In all likelihood was a retired Roman soldier.

Though we can't be sure of course. But it was very often the case. So the Philippians would be very familiar with. The Roman military setup. And soldiers. And other military activities.

As well as with the issue of citizenship. Now the reason I'm mentioning that. Is because in this passage itself. You find both of these elements combined. He was talking here about.

[23 : 41] The manner of life. The manner of life. Which as we'll see. Contains the idea of citizenship. And the behavior that's expected. Of citizens of any particular place.

But it also contains the imagery of a military kind. Where he talks there about. Be striving side by side. Standing firm in one spirit against the enemy.

Not frightened in anything. By your opponents. So the two things we can bring from the passage tonight. And that's not by any means going into all of the detail in it.

But the two things we want to have a look at particularly. Are first of all. What he calls a lifestyle. Worthy of the gospel. Only let your manner of life. Be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

So that's the first thing. A lifestyle worthy of the gospel. And the second thing. Is what we can call steadfastness under fire. Steadfastness under fire.

[24 : 38] Turning to the imagery of the military. They're under fire. They're facing their opponents. Their opponents are powerful. Obviously they have opponents within.

Within the political system. In Rome. In Philippi as well. But he's saying to them. Not frightened in anything. By your opponents. So they have to remain steadfast.

Under fire. Facing this hostility. Facing the opposition that they're facing. Because they're Christians. Because of what they're living for. That I may hear he says of you.

That you're standing firm in one spirit. With one mind. Striving side by side. For the faith of the gospel. So the first thing then. Is a lifestyle worthy of the gospel.

He's saying it only. And that word only. Goes back to the point we made at the beginning. This is really a burden for the apostle. This is a chief concern of the apostle. Whatever happens to me.

[25 : 37] He's saying. This is what I want to be true of you. I want to hear that. Your manner of life. Is worthy of the gospel of Christ. And the word is used there. Translated manner of life.

Is a word that really contains within it. The idea of citizenship. It's a word that carries with it.

The matter of citizenship. In other words. Just as you would say. In the ordinary political sense. The citizens of any particular place. Such as Philippi. The reputation of that place.

Would be tied to their way of life. To how they behaved. But it's not really Philippi. In the highest sense. That Paul has in mind. When he's talking about citizenship. He's talking about spiritual citizenship.

And he's talking about the city of heaven. You go forward to chapter 3 there. And you can see clearly. Chapter 3 verse 20. Our citizenship. Our citizenship. He says. But our citizenship.

Contrasting it with those that are walking as enemies.

[26 : 37] Of the cross of Christ. But our citizenship. Or our place of citizenship. Is in heaven. This is the city. That he's calling upon the Philippian. And Christians.

To actually. Live worthily of. Let your citizenship. Let your manner of life. Let your spiritual citizenship. Be worthy of the gospel.

Let the fact that you belong. To the city of heaven. Be seen in how you live. In how these people around you. See you. Even as you face them. And deal with their opposition.

And citizenship. Of course. In that spiritual sense. Is conferred on every believer. It wasn't the case. With every single person. Living in the city of Philippi.

That they were actually citizens of Rome. Rome conferred. Citizenship. Upon people that. They themselves. Were felt. Were felt worthy of it. But it wasn't something.

[27 : 34] For everyone. Paul himself. Was a citizen of Rome. Because he had an ancestry. That had citizenship. Of Rome. It wasn't something. That he bought.

It was something. That he inherited. But here. Not everybody in Philippi. Would have been. A citizen of Rome. But everybody. That's in Christ. Is a citizen of heaven. You have that citizenship.

The moment you have Jesus. And that citizenship. Confers upon you. Privileges. That abound. Beyond anything. This world. Will actually give you.

And so he's calling these Philippians. To think of. Their spiritual citizenship. What it means to be. A citizen of heaven. And the kind of lifestyle. Therefore. That corresponds to that. And commends.

What they're saying. About themselves. As Christians. In other words. They're really. They're really being called. By the apostle here. To remember that. Their way of life.

[28 : 29] Is tied. To the reputation. Of their king. To the reputation. Of Jesus. And to the gospel. That they themselves. As the apostles. Are preaching.

And that these Philippians. Are seeking to live out. In their lives. The reputation. Of the gospel. The reputation. Of Jesus. The reputation. Of God. Everything. Indeed.

That has been taught. By the apostle. To the Philippians. Already. He is saying. This is what I want to hear. About you. It doesn't matter. Whether it's my death. Or my continuing life.

This is what I want to hear. That you. Are living worthy. That your citizenship. Your way of life. As citizens of heaven. Is worthy. Of the gospel. Of Christ.

Adorns. The gospel. Of Christ. But why does he say. The gospel. He doesn't say. It's worthy. Of Christ. He says. Worthy. Of the gospel. Of Christ.

[29 : 23] Because. It's because he. Wants to emphasize. For the Philippian church. And it's emphasizing it. For ourselves. Of course. Too. That the terms. Of the gospel. The content.

Of the gospel. The teaching. Of the gospel. Where the teaching. Of all the things. That are important. To us. As far as our life. Is concerned. The ethics. Of the Christian life.

Everything that enters. Into a relationship. With God. And with one another. And with the world. In which we're living. The gospel. As it defines. And as it delineates. These for us. Is that.

That we are actually seeking. As Christians. To live in accordance with. Worthy of that gospel. In accord with that gospel.

In conformity. To that gospel. All of that is. Included in what Paul means. By living. In a manner. Worthy of the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. Christ. A lifestyle.

[30 : 18] A lifestyle. That's in keeping with. And indeed. Conditioned by. That gospel. Let me just refer to. Someone who.

I'm going to read from. This table talk magazine. Which is. Something I receive regularly. I commend it to you. If you don't have it. It's produced in America. By Ligonier Ministries. And.

It has. Daily readings in it. Following. Usually some book. Some book of the Bible. But also. Little articles. By various people. And this is why. Rosaria Butterfield.

Rosaria Butterfield. Is now a well-known. Christian author. But. She was at one time. Very virulently. Against the gospel. Lived in an openly. Lesbian lifestyle. Along with others.

Who were professors. In the. University of Syracuse. In New York. But. She came to be invited. To a certain pastor's house. Called Ken Smith. Who was the.

[31 : 15] The father of one of her colleagues. In university. And. The son of this pastor. Invited Rosaria. To a meal. In his. Father's house. In the family home.

And she went there. She accepted the invitation. And it was a. Moment of. Really. Critical importance. In her life. Life. And in this little article.

She talks about. How they. Sat down. At a long table. With many people at it. Young and old. Mingling together. Discussing. The bible. And. Obviously. Very happy. In Christ. And all of these things. That come with. Living the Christian life. We. Ate for a long time. She said. And then we sang. Psalm 23. And this is what she says. Voices in all four parts. To the tune of Crimin. Rang strong. And right. As rain. And when we sang. A table thou hast furnished me. In presence of my foes. I started to lose my sense. [32 : 11] Of which way was up. I started to get all turned around. As if I had absentmindedly taken the wrong path. On a well walked trail. I was trained to play the part of the victim.

And to perceive myself. As a sexual minority. Voiceless among the voiced. As we sang. I said to myself. Yes. Dear victim. Here you are. In the presence of your foes. These awful. Hateful people. Who want to trample. On your rights. But even though victimhood. Served as my catechism. I couldn't make myself. Believe this. While singing. Psalm 23. Something. Wasn't. Right. And that's when it dawned on me. That I. The English professor. Was misreading the text. I wasn't the one dining. In the presence of my enemies. I was the enemy. [33 : 15] That's. When the light really went on. In her soul. And she goes on. And this is a point I really wanted to get to as well. That I was the enemy at this table.

Made little matter to Pastor Ken. For he knew that Christ was not done with me. That I had mocked Christians. Written university policy. That extolled hatred for God. Taught classes that enlisted others. Into a world view. That walks only to hell. And sinned against others. Was not the main thing. For this godly pastor. And the church that he pastored. The main thing. Was Christ. Crucified. And risen. The Christian life. Goes on. Regardless of how many enemies. Are at the table. Because enemies. Cannot mar. Or perjure. The main thing. Of the Christian life. [34 : 11] Which is. That I may know him. And the power of his resurrection. And may share in his sufferings. Becoming like him. In his death. Philippians 3.

10. And then she goes on. Further. But she comes to. A point where she says this. And we'll leave off. The quotation here. She is saying here. Our faith. Is meant. To flourish. In the presence. Of our enemies. Our faith. Is meant. To flourish. In the presence. Of our enemies. That's exactly. What the apostle. Is saying here. I want to hear. About you. Whether I live or die. That you are living. Worthy. Of the gospel. Of Christ. So that whether I come. And see you're absent. I may hear. That this is true. Concerning you. That you're standing. In one spirit. That you're not. Frightened in anything. By your opponents. And so on. [35 : 06] Fighting side by side. For the faith. Of the gospel. That's the one thing. Especially. That he has in mind. So just like. Rosaria Butterfield. Came to see.

In her life. She wasn't sitting. As she said. Surrounded by enemies. Who were Christians. She came to see. That she was the enemy. Of God. The enemy. Of his truth. The enemy. Of his standards. And the enemy. Of his people. And she has a wonderful. Testimony. Since then. And has authored. A number of books. And I commend these. To you as well. But this is coming back. To the text. Whether I come. And see you or not. That you live. Worthy of the gospel. Of Christ. And so that steadfastness. Under fire. Is what. What he next takes up. In verse 30. The Philippians. Are obviously in a battle. [35 : 58] You are engaged. He said. In the same conflict. That you saw. I had. And now here. That I still have. In other words. He's saying. Cast your minds. Back to. When I first met you.

What happened to me. In Philippi. Thrown into that. Terrible. Dungeon. And mistreated. And then sent on my way. Afterwards. Having been abused. Having been persecuted. You saw. He's saying. That conflict. That I was engaged in. And you're still hearing. About me. That I'm engaged. In the same conflict. But he's saying. That's the one. You're engaged in as well. And because you're engaged. In that same conflict. As I am. He's saying. This is what I want to hear about you. That you are standing firm.

With one. In one spirit. With one mind. Striving side by side. For the faith of the gospel. Now friends. It's all too easy for us.

[36 : 57] To detach. Holiness of life. From the front line. Of the battle. We mustn't actually. Have it in mind. That holiness of life.

Means. You don't really go near. The front line. You stay safely behind it. You let others actually go. The elite troops. If you like. To the front line. And you stay safely behind it.

And you. To that extent. Don't really commit yourself. To displaying. Your life for Christ. The way. That others do. There's nothing of that. In these terms. That Paul is laying out.

For the Philippians. Or elsewhere. In the Bible. Our holiness. Is for the front line. Our following of Christ. Is for the battlefield. Our following of Jesus.

Is to actually face. The opposition. That the world. Throws at the gospel. And throws at the church. Whatever generation. We belong to. And so. That's why.

[37 : 50] Tonight. God is making his appeal. Through this passage itself. I'm sure. That if you have not yet. Committed your life. To Jesus. Or if you have. But you have not. Made that really plain.

And known. Tonight. He's saying to you. You know. Your life. As a Christian. Is side by side. With those who are on the front line.

Of the battle. And who are facing an enemy. That's determined. If it were possible. To wipe out the gospel. The you here. Of course.

Is plural. That you. That I may hear. That you. Are standing firm. In one spirit. Together. Together. Standing firm. Together. Which then follows.

Into the following verses. Because the enemy strategy. Is always to divide. And conquer. Isn't it? The enemy strategy. Is always to fracture. The unity. Fracture the unit.

[38 : 45] Of God's people. As they face the world. You only have to go back. To. What Jesus said to Peter. In Luke chapter 22. Simon. Simon. Satan.

Has desired you. So that he might sift you. As wheat. In other words. He's really saying to Peter. This is Satan's desire. This is Satan's aim.

This is the purpose. That he has. In his attack on you. He wants to get in among you. To scatter you. And why does he want to scatter you? Well. To discredit the gospel. To discredit the truth. Of the gospel. And that's sadly. What you see. Down to the ages. That's what he's intent on doing. Even within this building tonight. Because where the gospel. Is set.

And where the gospel. Is witnessed to. By God's people. And where the gospel. Is preached from this pulpit. You can be absolutely sure. That there is. A dark power. At work. To some extent.

[39 : 40] Or other. That will always try. And divide. And conquer. That will always come. And discredit the gospel. By a disunity. Among the Lord's people. He says.

I want to hear you. That you are. Side by side. That you're standing firm. In one spirit. With one mind. Striving side by side.

For the faith. Of the gospel. Striving side by side. For the faith. Of the gospel. And.

It's interesting. He puts it that way. Just reinforcing. The need for that. Unity of purpose. And action. On the part of God's people. In this world. To be standing firm.

In one spirit. And to be. Standing side by side. Striving side by side. Engaged in conflict. Side by side.

[40 : 37] For the faith. Of the gospel. God. Now God. Can bless. By little. By few. Or by many. By little.

Or by great. But nevertheless. It's an imperative. That he's setting before us. That if we have the interest. Of the gospel. At heart. As we all surely do. Then it's our place.

To be beside. All the others. Who are striving together. For the faith. Of the gospel. By the faith. Of the gospel. He actually means.

The body of truth. That is the gospel itself. The content. Of this gospel. As it presents. All the various. Doctrines. And teachings.

That it sets before us. In God's word. And that gospel. The good news. About Jesus Christ. As that. Good news. About Christ. Is filtered through.

[41 : 33] If you like. These other teachings. Of how we relate to God. How we come to be right. With God. Our justification. Our sanctification. Our holiness of life. Our service for Christ.

Everything really. That's contained. In the gospel. He's saying here. That's the faith. Of the gospel. And he's saying. I may hear of you. That you are doing this.

Standing firm. With one spirit. With one mind. Striving. Side by side. For the faith. Of the gospel. Friends. This. This. This is our battle now. This is not something. Just telling us. This is how it was. In the apostle Paul's day. This is the battle. That's raging now. A battle over the faith. Of the gospel. A battle over. Gospel standards. Gospel truths. State imposed. Anti. Gospel measures. [42 : 30] That we as Christians. Have to take on. And stand against. And have to actually. Come out. If we need to come out. To engage. With that kind of teaching. With that kind of. Attempt to. To overthrow the gospel. And the standards of the gospel. That's really what we're facing. This anti-gospel coalition. On the part of the state. And its agents. That are trying. Through various means. Not only to discredit. The gospel. But to dispose of it. Altogether. Or at least dispose of it. In public life. Even if it continues. On an individual basis. And sadly. The issue is made. Much more difficult. Because. The visible church. The church. In the widest sense. And this is not in any way. To present ourselves. As better than others. Or anything like that. [43 : 23] But as you look out. Over the wider church. In our land. And indeed throughout the world. It is very obvious. That the faith of the gospel. The content of the gospel. Is regarded by many. As old hat. And that's why. The teaching of the gospel. Is adjusted. And manipulated. And turned. Or even abandoned. In some cases. When it has to do. With certain issues. That are current. In the society. And in the culture. Of the day. The gospel. Is being turned. To accord. With the culture. Rather than the other way about. And as part of the battle. That we face. It makes it all the more difficult. When all who profess the Lord. Are not fully engaged. In the faith of the gospel. And are convinced. Of this. As the truth of God. Given to us. So as to govern. [44 : 16] Human life. You know. One of the. Most brilliant. Chapters in the Bible. I think. Is the third chapter. In the book of Nehemiah. And if you go to. The book of Nehemiah. And you look at the third chapter. You might wonder. Why I've said that. Because the book of. The third chapter. In the book of Nehemiah. Consists largely. Of a list of names. A list of names. Of the people. Who are seeking to. Help rebuild. The walls of Jerusalem. After that long. Captivity in Babylon. Having returned. Under the direction of. Nehemiah. As it was at that point. To actually rebuild. The walls. And when you read. Through that chapter. It's a chapter. Of profound. Importance. For unity. In the imagery. It presents of us. It goes through. All of these families. And all of these. Different people. That are mentioned. [45 : 11] It's a brilliant narrative. And at least. Twenty-nine times. In that chapter. You have the words. Next to. Or. After him. It tells you. Next to so and so. Stood so and so. Talking about. The. As I said. The repair. Of the walls. And. As it goes through. Speaking about. Those who actually. Help with that. Let me just give you. A couple of examples. From it. In the third chapter. There. Where it says. That. Eliash. The high priest. Stores with his brothers. They built the sheep. Gate. They consecrated it. So on and so on. And next to him. The men of Jericho. And next to them. Zachar. The son of Imri. The sons of. Hassanab. Built the fish gate. Next to them. Or so and so. [46 : 08] Next to them. Next to them. Beside them. After them. All the way through the chapter. And you realize. When you come to the end. Of the description. That you're back. Where you began. On the starting point. Of the wall. You've gone all the way. Around the wall. And there isn't a gap. To be seen. Among those. Who are helping. To rebuild it. There is not. A single gap there. It's always next to him. Next to him. Next to them. Apart from one group. The nobles. Of the Techoites. Who are singled out. For special mention. Because they refused. To submit. And to bend. To this requirement. And they're singled out. For special notice. Because of.

Their lack of cooperation. In the building of the wall. Now there is. A chapter that. Really tells us. In that wonderful imagery. In that physical activity.

[47 : 02] You translate that. Into what Paul is saying. To the Philippians. I want to hear of you. That you are standing. That you are standing. Striving. Side by side. For the faith of the gospel. There should be no gaps.

In the activities of God's people. When they're standing. Firm in the gospel. Firm in one spirit. When they're striving. For the faith of the gospel.

Striving. Side by side. It's probably again. An imagery of. Taken from Roman. Military. Activity. In the army. If the. If you found.

A group of. Soldiers coming to approach. For example. A walled city. Or a. Fortified. Fortified. Building. Occupied.

By their enemies. They would actually. Use their shields. And put the shields. Over their heads. So whatever's. Thrown at them. Would bounce off it. And they would be covered. Entirely by the shields.

[47 : 59] Over their heads. And down the sides. But you had to actually. Stand close to each other. In order to be effective. And really that's something. Like what Paul has in mind. Striving.

Side by side. Tonight friends. Are we. Are we committed to this? Are we committed to striving. Side by side. Are we committed to striving.

But striving side by side. Don't let anybody else. Outdo you. In your work for Christ. Don't let it be said.

Of anyone else. That they are actually. More committed than you are. However much. Or however little you do. That's not the point. It's the level of your commitment. It's the way in which. You stand side by side.

With others. In seeking to. Actually have. This. Striving for the faith. Of the gospel. Our day. Needs it. This town needs it.

[48 : 54] Our localities need it. Striving. Together. And then finally. Not frightened.

In anything. By your opponents. The word frightened. There is. Is also a very strong word. It's the kind of thing that. You associate with. Horses that bolt. After being given a fright.

By something. A sense of panic. He says. Don't. Instead of. Instead of. Being frightened. By your opponents. Keep on striving. Side by side. Not.

Frightened. In anything. By your opponents. And that's. Such a difficult thing. Sometimes. There's a lot of intimidation.

Out there. Whether you're writing blogs. Or preaching the gospel. Or witnessing to your neighbor. Or have a place. At work. Where you're. Engaged with a lot of people.

[49 : 50] Who are hostile to the gospel. There's a lot of intimidation. Going on. And it'd be very easy. To just capitulate. And draw back. And. Just keep things private.

No he says. Don't be frightened. Don't be intimidated. By. Your opponents. In anything. Because he says. This is a clear sign. To them. Of their destruction.

But of your salvation. And that from God. What is he saying? Is a sign. Your unity. You're standing firm. You're being side by side. In the gospel. And for the faith of the gospel. It's a sign.

To those who are opponents. That there's something going on. In your life. That they don't have. And it's a sign. Of their destruction. As that gospel. Itself. Sets that out. You see.

If we want to. Present to the world. The reality of God's truth. With regard to what. Eternity is like. For those who are not in Christ. For those who die without Christ. Then we do it.

[50 : 46] By. Striving side by side. For the faith of the gospel. Because that will actually. Be noticed. By. Those who oppose the gospel. And. You'll find people saying.

Well. These people must have. Just like Rosaria Butterfield. Butterfield there. At that table. With all these Christians. Around her. It suddenly dawned on her. There's something wrong here.

There's something here. I need to try and understand. These Christians are actually right. And I'm wrong. I'm the one who's been in the wrong. I'm the enemy. And that.

As we witness to the world. That's what we pray for. That God will bring to them. A sure sign of their own destruction. If they keep clinging to. Ungodliness.

But on the other hand. It's for you. He says. A sign of your salvation. And that from God. Because when we're standing. Side by side. For the faith of the gospel. We realize that.

[51 : 43] I wouldn't be doing this. Along with my fellow Christians. If it was simply left to my own choice. It's a sign of my salvation. And of our salvation. When that is done willingly by us.

When we share in that. In that striving for the faith of the gospel. When we're not diverted from that. Or frightened. Or intimidated by our opponents. Then we say to ourselves.

Lord this is your doing. And I must be part of. That great number. That can say that. We are your people. It's a sign of.

Our salvation. And that. Of God. Or from God. But then he says something remarkable. And I need to. Wind it. Wind our study up with this.

For he says. It has been granted to you. That for the sake of Christ. You should not only believe in him. But also suffer for his sake. And it's remarkable.

[52 : 39] Because the words he's using there. The word granted. Is really. Very much. To do with grace. Grace. Now we easily associate. Grace with faith. With believing on Christ.

And that's what he's saying. It has been granted to you. It has been graced to you. The grace of God. Has actually given you this gift. This gift. Of believing in Christ.

Faith comes. By hearing. And hearing the word of God. Or. In Ephesians chapter 2. Where you have the emphasis there. That it's. Of grace. That we are saved through faith.

That not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. We don't create. Or manufacture the faith. Though we are required. To exercise faith in Christ. But he says.

So too. Is your suffering. As surely as faith. Is a gift of God. Paul is saying. So is. Your suffering. As a Christian.

[53 : 37] Suffering for the sake. Of Christ. Suffering in his name. And for his sake. Now we have to be careful. Because. This doesn't encourage us at all. To ask God for suffering.

As if it was right. To pray. Lord bring suffering. Into my life. So that I can. Be tested. And serve you. And so on. It's not what he's saying. But he is saying. Where suffering is.

In the life of a Christian. Where the providence of God. Has brought. Suffering. Such as the Philippians. And the apostle. Or wherever it is. Small or great. It is a gift of God.

It is a grant of his grace. And you might think. Well that's surely strange. How can it be. A grant of his grace. To suffer for the sake of Christ. Well because it's part.

Of God's program. Of redemption. It's part of God's program. For our sanctification. And ultimately. For our glorification.

[54 : 34] It works towards that. Remember how. Job long ago. In the Old Testament. And his complaint. Against God. And in saying many things.

That he afterwards. Had to retract. But in chapter 23. As he's there. Speaking to God himself. And speaking out. His agony of soul. And his suffering.

He comes to the point. Where he says. He knows the way. That I take. And after he has tried me. After he has refined me. Like gold.

I shall come forth. See. He's saying. And at least in a glimpse of it there. He's saying. Well this affliction. This difficulty. This trial. Is in God's hands. Going to result.

In my purification. And you go from there. To Psalm 119. Verse 71. Psalmist is saying. It has been good for me. That I was afflicted.

[55 : 28] That I might learn. Your statutes. Your precepts. Or go to that classic verse. In the New Testament. In 2nd Corinthians.

Chapter 4. And verses 16 to 18. So he says. We do not lose heart. Having been speaking. About all the troubles. That he had gone through.

And he knew. This church was going through as well. So he says. We do not lose heart. Though our outer nature. Is wasting away. Our inner nature. Is being renewed.

Day by day. For this. Slight. Momentary. Affliction. Just imagine. What he's saying. You look at the descriptions.

Paul is giving. In this letter itself. Even in this chapter itself. Afflicted in every way. Perplexed. Persecuted. Forsaken.

[56 : 25] Always carrying in the body. The death of Jesus. Although he is saying. Along with that. Not crushed. Not driven to despair. Not destroyed.

But he's saying. Our slight affliction. Why can he say. Our slight affliction. What kind of view. Does this man have. Of affliction. That he can say. Of such things. They are slight affliction. Because he's balancing it.

With the weight. Of glory. In eternity. That's why he's saying. This slight momentary affliction. Is working for us.

An eternal weight of glory. Beyond all comparison. As we look not to the things that are seen. But to the things that are unseen. For the things which are seen.

Are transient. But the things that are unseen. Are eternal. Friends. We live. In a society. That largely lives.

[57 : 24] For the seen. For the present. What we have to show us Christians. Is that we're living. For the unseen. Although our time in this world.

Is important too. And this is what Paul is saying. A lifestyle worthy of the gospel. And steadfastness. Under fire. God is looking for no more.

But he's not looking. For anything less. May he bless to us. His word. Let's conclude. This evening service.

By singing. In Psalm 68. Psalm 68. From the Scottish Psalter. That's on page 305.

Singing verses 32. To 35. Oh all ye kingdoms of the earth. Sing praises to this king.

[58 : 21] For he is Lord. That ruleth all. And to him. Praises sing. To him that rides on heaven. Of heavens. Which you of old had found. Lo he sends out his voice.

A voice in might. That doth abound. And the psalm finishes. As you see. From Israel's own God. Is he who gives his people. Strength and power.

Oh let God. Blessed be. These verses. So all ye kingdoms. Of the earth. Sing praises to this king.

Sing praises to this king. Sing praises to this king.

For he is Lord. That rule of the earth. That rule of the earth. And to him.

[59 : 23] To him. To him. In praises sing. To him.

That rides. The hands of earth. Which he.

To him. He sends out.

His voice avails in might that doth abound.

Strengthen to go through ye a stride, For His excellency is over His triumph, His strength is in thy light most high.

[60 : 49] That from thy temple dreadful heart, His trust on God is thee, Who gives His people strength and power, O let our blessed be.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit, Be with you now and evermore. Amen.