

Having the mind of Christ in his determination

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[0 : 00] If you'd like to turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 1, towards the end of the New Testament, or use the index.

Philippians chapter 1, verses 12 to 30. I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel. Just to put that in context, Paul's in prison and having a tough time. What has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, so that it's become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear. Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. These proclaim Christ out of love, know that I have been put here in defence of the gospel. The others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment.

But what does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will result in my deliverance.

It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in any way, but that by speaking with all boldness, Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death.

For me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me, and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you.

[2 : 18] Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you for all of your progress and joy in the faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus, in Christ Jesus, when I come to you again. Only live your life in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that whenever I come and see you, or am absent, and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the Gospel. And you are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them, this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation.

And this is God's doing, for he has graciously granted you the privilege, not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well. Since you are having the same struggle that you saw I have had, and now hear that I still have.

It's a complex passage, that. There are three or four sermons in that. So I thought I'd do two before lunch, and then I'd do the others afterwards. It's a complex passage, isn't it? And there's stuff in there that we really need to work through, but I won't be covering it all today. I'll put that in context in a few moments. But just as a sort of opener, Paul's in prison. Paul has been locked up because of his preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And he doesn't have a good time in prison.

They're not necessarily as kind to him as they could be. And Paul is saying, it's smashing this, it's really good. I give thanks. Because as I am in prison, I tell people why I'm here.

They can't shut him up. He will preach the Gospel wherever he is. And because of that, the guards know about it. And some of the guards have accepted Jesus. And then the whole of the family, the royal family, and the leaders, and all the big cheeses have also heard the truth of Jesus Christ.

[4 : 43] And what he's saying very straightforwardly is, you know, quite a lot of me, I prefer to die. Because when I die, I'm going to heaven and being with Jesus. But I need to stay here. I need to stay here and continue my work until I have done it to completion. But it's a hard one because he also says, and I've wrestled with this a bit this week, some people preach the Gospel out of bad motives.

They say, they talk about Jesus and tell people about Jesus and tell the truth about Jesus, but they're doing it with a bad heart. They're doing it out of selfish ambition or to try in some way and cause Paul more trouble. And Paul's saying, it doesn't matter. The Gospel's being preached.

So there's stuff there that we need to wrestle with. And I'm going to leave those things for you to wrestle with because I thought that was kind. We're in a series that John started last week. We're in a series working our way through Philippians between now and Easter. And if you haven't had a chance yet to read through Philippians, can I encourage you just to find about half an hour, if you're a quick reader like Fiona, five minutes. If you're a slow reader, maybe an hour. But it's not very long. It's only three, four chapters, sorry, a couple of pages, three pages. And just read it in the context of a whole letter to a church that Paul loves. And as we go through each part of this series, what we're going to be looking at is characteristics of the mind of Christ. Characteristics of the mind of Christ.

And today we're looking at have the mind of Christ in his determination. And you can hear in the passage I read, Paul's determination, can't you? I'm going to do this. I'm going to do this, come what may. We're particularly thinking about that. And we'll be having a think about what that means. So I looked up determination in the thesaurus to see what it meant, which reminded me of the only joke I know about the thesaurus or thesauruses. A lorry with 250 thesauruses crashed and spilt its load.

People who were held up by this accident were astonished, astounded, baffled, befuddled, defounded, flabbergasted, mystified, perfect. I've got a better laugh than I thought. So what does determination mean? The determination means things like boldness, bravery, grit, persistence, doggedness, single-minded, resoluteness, independence, backbone. It's quite a strong word. It's quite a powerful word and it's a word which means all sorts of different things. But what is important that it isn't saying is determination is not willful stubbornness. It's not negative. It's not deliberate awkwardness. It's not being contrary just for the sake of it. And it's really important to understand that. That as we think about Paul's determination and having the mind of Christ, a determined mind of

[8 : 24] Christ, we don't get into this idea that that means that we have to be somehow so stubborn, so willful, so deliberately awkward that we become a bit of a pain in the neck. Now there's a balance here and this is the difficulty with this passage. There's a balance, there's a subtlety and this is where we need the Spirit to help us get it right. Because in our own humanity, we will tipple over one edge or the other. We'll be far too stubborn and far too determined to just say it without thinking of the context, without being kind.

And yet on the other hand, if we go the other way, we'll be far too timid and pull away from speaking the truth when we need to. And the truth of the matter is that as we go around our lives as Christians, it's our responsibility to be Christ, to speak the truth, to share the gospel.

And that will be hard sometimes. But we need the wisdom of the Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit to guide us each morning, each afternoon and each evening to help us know when to speak and when not to speak.

So, there's some stuff to be done here in terms of hard work. And there's stuff to be wrestled with as we go through this week and think about this passage. And I'd encourage you to have those wrestles. It's not easy, but it's fruitful.

Because as we do pray, as we do ask Christ to help us, as we ask the Spirit to fill us, He will give us the wisdom to understand more than we do at the moment.

[10 : 28] Next slide, please, Josh. I found a picture of Charles Spurgeon. He's always looked terrifying to me. Imagine him knocking at your door.

I've come to see you. Oh, no! But there we are. He's vaguely smiling in that one. But he still frightens me. A sermon without Christ is like a loaf of bread without any flour in it.

No Christ in your sermon, sir? Then go home and never preach again until you have something worth preaching. Fair point. Fair point. If we are going to be followers of Jesus, we have to point people to Jesus.

And it's not just sermons, by the way. It's interaction on our day-to-day with people in Lidl. With people as we're walking on the front. People at work. People at home.

People that we meet and spend time with. And love who we desperately want to know the truth of who Jesus is. Is Jesus in our conversation?

[11 : 34] Is he in our language? Is he in our sharing of who we are? Do people know and do people hear the truth?

Okay. So let's have the next slide, please, Josh, if we may. Paul's determination in being determined. Next click, please. Paul's motivation.

Verse 12, the beginning of this passage. I want you to know. I want you to know. My friends, I just want you to know.

If something exciting happens in our lives, we want our friends and family and everybody else to know. And from time to time, our family WhatsApp group lights up because something as good has happened for one of our family.

And sometimes what's good bewilders me because I don't know whether it's good or not, but apparently it is. But that's modernity for you. And often I understand that it is good.

[12 : 42] It might be a picture. It might be a whatever. Something's happened that's great. And they want me to know. Oh, well, just let people know. It goes on the church WhatsApp group just to let you know this really good thing has happened.

Tremendous. We can all share in the I want you to know. And Paul's determination, Paul's motivation, Paul's drive here, I want you to know Jesus.

I want you to know Jesus more than I want you to know that I'm locked up in prison and having a tough time. I want you to know Jesus more than I'm not being fed very well and being hit a lot.

I want you to know. I want you to know. And that determination, that determination that Paul has, that motivation that Paul has, is something that we need to adopt, wrestle with, be encouraged by, and encourage each other too.

because if we are going to have the determined mind of Christ, we want people to know.

[14 : 00] So, next slide please. This is from John chapter 6 and verse 38. Jesus says this, I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of him who sent me.

All of Jesus' motivation on his time on earth was to do the Father's will. Even to the point of praying, Father, take this cup away from me the night before he was going to be crucified.

Take this cup away from me, please. It's not a nice path I'm walking on, yet not my will, but yours. And he went to the cross in obedience.

So, not only do we want people to know, but we have to work from what's the will of him who sent him. What's God's will in your life?

What does God want for you as an individual? Now, let's be really clear about that. That will be different from what God wants for me. Because we are all individuals called uniquely by Christ to do a unique role and a unique service on earth.

[15 : 25] So, you need to do the will of God's will for your life is. But we need to start from a determined position of, I want to do the will of him who sent me.

I want to do the will of God's will of God's will. Do you know? Do you know? In a society in 2024 where there is such a lot of confusion about, what am I here for?

What's my purpose? What's the point? Well, for a Christian, it's very straightforward. The point is, we're here to do the will of him who sent us.

Of him who sent Jesus. Of him who calls us to his own. Of God the Father. And so, for each of us, we have a responsibility and a calling to get on our knees again and say, God, what is it that you have for me?

Because seasons come and seasons go. And for each season, there is a purpose. But none of you sitting here this morning, none of you sitting here this morning, are purposeless.

[16 : 53] There is no purposelessness. Shall I carry on? You are important in the kingdom of God.

You have value and merit and purpose in the kingdom of God. But we need to be determined to live out that purpose.

To live out that life. To live out that call. Determined to do the will of God. Next click, please. This is Paul.

This is Paul. The disciples urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. There was good reason to urge Paul not to go to Jerusalem. There were some people out there who wanted to kill him. And they said, don't go there.

It's a bad move. Go somewhere else. It's not great. It's a little bit excitable in Jerusalem. Why don't you go somewhere else? And Paul said, I'm now compelled by the Spirit. I'm going to go to Jerusalem.

[17 : 56] Not knowing what will happen to me there. That's around Acts 20 and 21. That's a quote from Acts 20 there. I'm going. I'm going because I am compelled by the Spirit.

I'm going because the Holy Spirit has said, go to Jerusalem. I don't know what's going to happen when I get there. But I'm going to go anyway.

Because I believe that I'm called so to do. And sometimes, sometimes, that is our calling. That is our determined mind.

I'm going to go and do this. And I'm not really sure how it will end up. I've certainly in my life found times where I've thought, I'm not entirely sure what the point of this is.

But I just think I ought to do it. And I've done it. And maybe immediately, or maybe three months or six years later, I thought, oh, I get it.

[19 : 04] Oh, that was clever. That was clever. Because sometimes, we just have to be led and trust God's call.

Now, let me just put a safety caveat in there. Please, as you believe that God is calling you to do something, if you believe that God is calling you to be nice to your neighbour, I don't think you need to check that out.

Just be nice to your neighbour. If God is calling you to go and do something very significant and have a very significant life change, please allow that and trust your brothers and sisters to pray with you to test that call.

Because the danger is that you get it wrong and you do something which is a pickle and you end up in a mess. And sadly, I've seen that happen to folk that I have known and loved and they've done something which really wasn't wise because they just went off on one and didn't test that.

But, we need to be determined. We need to be determined to do what we are called to do. And then finally, last click on this slide please, Josh.

[20 : 18] I was just minded as I was preparing of this, the verse in Joshua 24 and the Israelites had been doing things wrong again and Joshua was having a bit of a, well, God was having a bit of a go at them through Joshua and they were all saying, yes, okay, we'll repent and turn around and do things differently.

And Joshua says this, choose this day who you will serve. If you want to go and serve these false gods, these carved images, you crack on.

As for me and my house, I will serve the Lord. That bottom line determination is such an important part of the determined mind of Christ.

You do what you feel you need to. As for me and my house, I will serve the Lord. He is my boss.

He is the one who will guide me and lead me. And Joshua wasn't being unpleasant or stubborn or awkward there.

[21 : 38] He was just saying, there's no choice for me. I have one calling. Serve the Lord. Okay, next slide please.

So to being determined is part of our Christian lifestyle. Our Christian lifestyle which we, well, I don't know about you, you might have got it cracked.

I am working on. And I'm working on until the day that I find myself in heaven. But the Christian lifestyle of the fruit of the Spirit.

The Christian lifestyle of sharing the truth of Jesus. The Christian lifestyle of being Christ in the situations that I find myself in.

The Christian lifestyle of gathering on a Sunday and worshipping together. Of singing songs of praise. Of allowing others to know that Jesus is alive.

[22 : 37] as we see just the beginnings of the bulbs coming through. I think we have one snowdrop out of it. Oh, half a dozen.

Wahey! But as spring starts to emerge and the new creation of the gardens and the flowers and the trees and the fruit once again it points testimony to the goodness and the miracle of God.

Being determined is informed by our calling. I've talked plenty about that already. Of knowing that we're called to be people who share the truth.

Called to be people of God. It's led by the Holy Spirit. Which means that we need to give time for the Spirit to speak to us. Give time for Him to say let me just nudge you in this direction.

Let me just nudge you in that direction. Let me just help you understand why you need to turn around and go the other way. And he's single-minded as Paul I want you to know is single-minded.

[23 : 57] As Jesus himself I just want to do the will of the Father. Single-minded. And do you see where the subtlety is?

The stubbornness the unpleasant sharpness of saying I'm going to do this and I don't care about you. Or I'm going to do this because I care about you.

Because I care so much. Because you're so important. Not just to me but to the kingdom of God. I'm going to be determined and single-minded.

But as we do that in all things on all days seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And everything else will be added.

Don't ever lose sight that our determined mind first needs to be focused on Christ. Focused on the guidance of the Spirit.

[25 : 05] Focused on the goodness of God. So the determined mind of Christ is all of these things. Let's have a look at the next slide please.

Verse 12 again. What has actually happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. It's become clear through the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I'm in chains for Christ.

Because of my chains most of the brothers and sisters become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear. the most important thing is that in every way whether from fake motives or true Christ is preached.

Paul's determined purpose. I find the hope I find the good I find the truth that you know whatever my situation does with me and I can testify and shout out if needs be the truth that God is with me and God is using this situation for his purpose to further his kingdom.

because of my chains most of the brothers and sisters become confident in the Lord because I'm having a bad time others are growing in confidence to share the gospel.

[26 : 38] Amazing. Amazing. Amazing. The important thing is that Christ is preached.

Okay, next slide please. And just taking that a little bit further always Christ will be exalted. So verse 20 I eagerly expect and hope that in no way will be ashamed but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body whether by life or death.

Paul is saying I don't know whether I'll live or die I don't know whether I'm going to get out of this. Genuinely I don't know whether I'm going to get out of it because at the moment it's looking pretty bleak. But I was just looking at the Greek and looking at Strong's index here eagerly expect strained expectancy I rather like that as a phrase strained expectancy it sounds John was talking about bowels last week it's a bit bowly isn't it?

I have an earnest longing but this also automatically means turning away from what is lesser to lay hold of what is greater.

It means that sometimes we have to say no to stuff because actually something else is better. And as I was thinking about this it made me think about those rare times in my life when I got invited to a party.

[28 : 19] Yeah a bit more sympathy but we'll leave it. When I got invited to two parties and I have to choose which one to go to. Two parties and one me.

Which one? Oh I got to both. No. We have to make wise choice. It's a silly example. But there will be times where we have a choice.

And Paul here feels like he's saying you know they're both alright. I die I go to heaven I'm with Jesus fantastic. I live I preach the gospel I'm with you lot fantastic.

What do I lean towards? What do I turn towards? And what do I turn away from? I have strained expectancy earnest longing in Christ.

But then having sufficient courage how brave are we? How brave am I? I think it depends what day it is and what the situation is. It depends how I'm feeling and how other people are feeling and what's going on.

[29 : 39] Sometimes I feel pretty brave. Sometimes I feel very timid. We need to ask God through his spirit to give us courage.

Courage to do and be and say the people the things and words that we need. I pray that I have sufficient courage to be the person that God is calling me to be.

Okay. Go to the next slide please, Josh. God and so our determined mind of Christ is going to impact our behaviour.

Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. What a challenge, what a verse. There's half a dozen sermons just in that. Conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

It's going to affect our behaviour. It's going to affect our attitudes. It's going to affect our thinking, our self sacrifices, our togetherness.

[31 : 02] It's going to affect all that and it has to. If we adopt a determined mind, it's going to necessarily affect how we conduct ourselves.

And the only way that we can be affected in how we conduct ourselves is by allowing the Holy Spirit to change us day by day, more into the people that he wants us to be.

All with the purpose of preaching the gospel of Christ as we stand together firm in one spirit. And there's an interesting and important point. We stand together.

very, very few people through the centuries since Jesus walked this earth have been called to be alone.

Somehow. Somehow. But very, very few. And I'm absolutely certain for sure that I'm not called to be alone. I'm called to be with you lot.

[32 : 07] Sorry. Less good news for you than it is for me, I'm sure. That you're called to be with me and us.

We stand firm together. We are able to encourage each other. We are encouraged to be determined for each other. We are able to be the people that we need each other to be.

And there is a really, really important point of togetherness in this. And just to reiterate what I said in the notices, if you're not part of a life group and you'd like to be part of a life group, we are starting a new one up on a Tuesday night.

That's part of the togetherness. That's part of the fellowship. But so is here. So is Sunday morning. Cold though it may be. Being here is so important.

for us and for our Christian lives. So, final slide please. What about us? Having a Christ-like determined mind.

[33 : 22] Just to conclude and repeat what I've said, we need to be determined to focus on Jesus in all that we do. we need to see opportunities to share the gospel of Jesus, whatever our situation or circumstance.

We need to be attentive to the Spirit's voice prompting and directing us. We need our character, attitude and behaviour to be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Christ. Let me tell you friends, I find that real challenge. All day, every day on purpose, my character, attitude and behaviour have to be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

There's some homework for us. we need to ensure that in all things, Christ is exalted. The determined mind of Christ.

So important as we think through the message that Paul has for us and that Jesus has for us in the book of Philippians. Let's pray.