

Whatever happens, stand firm

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[0 : 0 0] Let me please to Philippians chapter 1, Philippians chapter 1. Many thanks to all who have taken part for Karen's well thought out intercessory prayer to the musicians, to the singers, to the techie folk, and to Paul for leading us in our worship this morning, and for making us feel that we live in the Bahamas, Paul. I'm always impressed.

He lives in a different climate from me. He's got flip-flops and I've got boots on. I mean, we live in two completely different worlds, it would appear. So thanks for making us feel tropical, if nothing else. That was great. That was very good. A couple of things. Am I right in saying the Vacancy Committee meet this Friday? Yeah, can you remember them when they meet this Friday? It's important that we pray for that. If you don't pray, you get the pastor you deserve, shall we say. So it's important that you pray, that the Lord very much leads and guides the church through this time, whether it's a youth worker or whether it's for a pastor as well.

And something else very important, as was just for me, England are playing football. If you find out the score, please don't tell us. Don't look my way. Don't say anything. I'm glad to get beat three nothing. I don't want to hear anything of that nature. So just keep it to yourself. Don't look me in the eye. If you know, I'll read into your whole body language. So sorry to be so carnally minded, but I've watched every single match and I thought of kind of finding out, falling at the last hurdle.

So I'm going to try and sneak away and try and get to see that. Anyway, let's come before God. Let's ask for his help as we come to his word. Our loving Heavenly Father, in a moment we will read your word and we thank you that your word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. We thank you, Lord, for the authority of your word, that we do not stand on the authority of the church, but on the authority of your word. And Father, we pray as we come to this passage, we pray that you'll help us understand this passage. And we pray, Lord, that we might order our lives according to your word. So Father, as all things are laid bare before your eyes this morning, we pray, Father, that you would speak into each one of our lives and into our situations. Help us to be those better disciples of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And we ask these things in his name, for his glory.

Amen. Amen. Turn with me, please, to Philippians chapter 1. And you remember that Paul, in Philippians chapter 1, is writing to a good church that he established in basically over a short period of time. It's a church that really knit their heart to Paul. And in this passage, he's away from them, he's in prison. They're wondering how the gospel has been affected. Their hero has been banged up in prison. What's happening to the gospel? And others are saying, well, Paul's a failure. Other Christians are saying, well, he's not a great ambassador for Christ. And he's in prison. He's writing this letter to encourage them, and he wants them to shine like stars in the universe, as it mentions in chapter 2, 15, and 16. Shine like stars as you hold out the word of life. That's the main thrust of this whole letter. And he's writing to them from prison in chapter 1. You remember, recently we discovered that he's thinking, am I going to die? Am I going to depart? Would that be something I want? And he's beginning to think of his life and his ministry. So, let's read from verse 18, the second half of 18. He says,

[3 : 34] Yes, I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now, as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know. I am torn between the two. I desire to depart and 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 you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you, again, your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me. That's what we read the last time. Paul saying, to be with Christ is better, but it's good that I remain with you. So, let's read from 27 through to the end. That's our passage for this morning. So, he says, whatever happens, whatever. He doesn't know what's going to happen, but whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Then whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel, without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved, and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have. And this is God's Word to us. During the time that I was ministering London, I knew when I left I would miss certain things. There was an FIEC fraternal that was held in Westminster Chapel. If you know anything about that, it's where Lloyd-Jones used to minister. And to get there, I had to get the tube to Green Park, and then from there, if you know London, you cut through Green Park. When you walk by the front of Buckingham Palace, and you go into Westminster Chapel, and you have a great time of fellowship, and I knew I would miss that, just that whole scenario. Also, you got invited to

Westminster, the Palace of Westminster. Once a year, Christians in Parliament invite local ministers to come and meet the Prime Minister and all these other MPs, anybody of any importance is there.

The only provision is you have to take along your MP, kicking and screaming. So, you drag him along, and that's such a good time. The other thing is sometimes your MP invites you. And in one occasion, he invited the local ministers. He, it was Mike Freer, who's a pastor for East Finchley in Golders Green. And he invited, and in my naivety, I expected just evangelicals to be there. And it was an image a bit like this, minus the Pope and a few of these other dignitaries. They weren't there. But as a minister of the gospel, wherever I've been, and you preach the good news, and you want to reach out to the community, especially the religious community, and to be part of them. The problem is, when it becomes to an ecumenical gathering, what do you do as a pastor? What do you do as a church in those scenarios?

Do you just embrace all faiths and say, doesn't matter who they are, we're all going on the same road, let's have a big hug fest? Is that what we do? As a pastor, you tread a fine line in this. And I remember at Nidre, we needed to be part of the regeneration project, and there was a church is together, not for worship, but to plan what the developers were going to do. And I wanted to be part of that. So I remember going along, and there was the Catholics, and there was nuns, and we were all sitting there, and so forth. And then as things develop, it begins to, well, will we worship together? Why don't we have a big festival? And I'm thinking, really? Will my conscience let me do this? How serious is that? I remember at the time saying, this is great, it's great we can discuss the area and what's happening. But when it comes to sharing the pulpit, or whatever, I'm happy to preach in your place, but you're not preaching in mine. And I don't know how you feel about that, but I remember one of the nuns saying, that's fine. After all, Father so-and-so wouldn't let John take the Mass. And I went, that's it exactly. You guard the Mass, the only certain people do that.

[8 : 54] We guard our pulpit, and what's said from here. Why is this so important? Where do we stand? Where do you stand in this? About mixing with other churches? And this is what this passage deals with.

And that's what we're going to look at this morning. We're looking at shining like stars, how we are to be different in the community, or principles for growth, how do we grow? And that's what we're looking at just now, as we look at this passage together. The Bible warns much about false teachers. Who are these false teachers? What does that look like? And Paul here tells us, and he wants to impress us upon them. Look at verse 27. And that is the key verse in this passage.

Whatever happens, he says, I don't know whether I'm staying, whether I'm going, whether you're doing what you're doing. But whatever happens, conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then whether I come and see or only hear about you in my absence, I know that you stand firm in one spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel. And that is the thing.

I've preached this sermon a few times, and I've just latched onto the wee phrase, live a life worthy of the gospel, thinking we have to be holy, we have not to tell lies. It's a moral thing. But that's not what Paul's speaking about here. He's talking about the faith, not just your personal faith, but the faith, the gospel, standing firm on that and not being moved away. And the gathering of people in Westminster, we don't all agree on the same things. People rocked up to that thing with their whole garb on. I remember seeing us just turning around, wow, Greek Orthodox, and just turning around and thinking, well, you want some fairy lights for that? It just looked, I was so underdressed. I didn't even have a collar on. At least evangelical guys had a tie. I had a collar, but I didn't have a tie. It was 30 degrees, I think. Really, guys, it's pretty hot out there.

And you can go into the houses of commons, dressed, whatever, but you can't go into the house of lords unless you've got a tie. And so I hastily, with a piece of white paper, made myself a dull collar, and was ushered in. You can become a minister fairly easy.

[11 : 20] But how important are these things? How important are these things for us? It's not easy to swim against the tide. It's not easy to stand against folk who say, well, we all have different traditions, but we're all heading the right way. The \$64,000 question is, is that the case? Does it matter what we believe? Does it matter what we stand firm on? And that's what Paul wants to impress upon them.

If you're using the ESV, it will say, only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel. In other words, the emphasis in this, Paul says, whatever happens, if I die and go away, remember this one thing. If you do only one thing, do this thing. Stand firm for the faith, for the gospel of faith.

That is quite a statement. That is something that should really, if you're a Christian here, really grab you by the lapels and say, if you only do one thing in life as a Christian, stand firm on what you believe as it relates to the gospel. And Paul wants them to remember this.

I don't know what's going to happen to me, but make sure you stand firm on this. And that's what it means to conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel. We have to conduct ourself. We have to steer ourself. We have to behave in a particular way. And that relates to the gospel. Standing firm in one spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel. That's the key thing. So, let's look at this. And we'll look at the, I've got five things I want to say. The first one's the longest. The rest of them are fairly short. Whatever happens, stand firm. That's what Paul wants to emphasize. If you're going to still be here and I'm not here, stand firm and on the gospel.

So, the first thing then, stand firm for the faith of the gospel. And it's not just any faith. It's not just your personal faith. It's the faith of the gospel. A specific doctrine, a specific biblical teaching, a historical teaching, stand firm on this. Now, what is the faith that we are to stand firm on? That's the \$64,000 question. Ephesians 4, if you're taking notes, that's one to take down.

[13 : 45] Ephesians 4, you might want to look at it because we'll be in it for a minute or two. Ephesians 4, 4 and 6. There is one body, one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. There's a lot of ones in there. There's seven of them in those two verses.

Let's just look at them very briefly. There is one Lord and one Savior. And Matthew, I think we read this recently, Matthew 16, Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi. He asked his disciples, who do people say the Son of Man is? Who do they say I am? That's the \$64,000 question.

That's what divides us from other religions. It's Jesus. It's not our practice, whether it's infant baptism, other baptism, or whatever. It's the person and work of Jesus that divides us. He asked them this question, and they say, well, some say you're John the Baptist. Others say you're Elijah, and still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. And then Jesus says, but who do you say I am?

Peter answered, you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. You are the Messiah, the chosen of God, God's anointed, God's Savior, the Savior of the world. The Bible makes it plain. There is only one Savior of mankind. 1 Timothy 2.5, there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, not just man and Baptists, would-be Baptists, one between God and the whole of mankind, humankind, if you will, the man Christ Jesus, one mediator between us and God. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. He is the Son of God. He is God the Son, equal with the Father. He is the Messiah, God's chosen Savior for the world. He's not chosen others. He alone is King of kings and Lord of lords. And that's what Paul teaches. That's what

[16 : 07] Paul reminds us of. There is only one Lord, one Savior. There is only one faith, if you're looking at the Ephesians 4 passage. There is one faith, and that is the truth of the gospel. And that is the truth that is undermined. And that's why we defend this. Jude, the book of Jude. Dear friends, although I am very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write to you and urge you to contend for the faith that was once entrusted to all the saints. This is the faith that we have to defend. This is the faith we stand on. There is one God. There is one Savior. There is one way to the Father. That is our faith. For God so loved the world, He gave His one and only Son. Whoever goes to church, whoever does worships the best way they can, whoever's sincere, no, whoever believes in Him shall not perish and have eternal life. We are saved through our faith and our trust in Jesus.

Acts 2.42, when the early church were preaching. Salvation is found in no one else. There is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which they must be saved. It's not Muhammad or Buddha or Krishna or any of these other well-meaning good people religions. There is only one name. Salvation of mankind is in Jesus Christ. There is one faith. That is what we hold to. If you're a Christian, you know exactly what that means. Christianity is an exclusive religion. It cannot live with other religions by the claims that it makes. It stands alone. One faith, one God, one Savior, one Spirit.

Ephesians 4. The Holy Spirit takes the things of Jesus. What's His role? Jesus says when He comes, He will necessarily get you speaking in tongues or doing loads of things, perhaps. When He comes, He will testify of me. That is the Holy Spirit's primary role. He comes, He takes the things of Jesus, and He makes them real to sinners. And you know that He is the Savior of the world.

1 Corinthians 12, Paul says this, I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, Jesus is cursed. And no one can say, Jesus is Lord, except through the Holy Spirit. If you can say that with all your heart, Jesus is the Messiah, Savior, and Lord, that is the Holy Spirit who has made you alive, who has caused you to see what others cannot see. There is one Spirit, and that is His role.

There is no confusion over other spirits saying different things. One Spirit, and He will always testify to Jesus. I remember going to Canada as an engineer before I went into ministry, and there was only two of us went. There was me and an elder in the Church of Scotland, and he was the hardest person to witness to. He was an elder in the Church of Scotland, but he was no more saved than the man in the moon was saved.

[19 : 31] And he gave me such a hard time. But I remember in Canada on Sunday morning going to a church and hearing the Word, preaching, singing, and after the church, just the sense that you were part of it. It was the furthest I'd been from home, that you were part of the family of God. Your heart was knit to the Christians there. You just knew. You spoke the same language. You loved the same Lord, and you could communicate this. And they all invited us for dinner. You come for dinner. You're from Scotland. You're a brother in the Lord. And he couldn't wait to get away. He goes, these folk are weird. Let's get out of here. And I'm thinking, these folk are great. They're my brothers and sisters in the Lord. That is what it means to be of one spirit. Your spirit testifies to your spirit that you know this. Nothing will convince you otherwise. But you're also, your heart goes out to another Christian. You just know. You can communicate. There's something about your love for the Lord, your love for the gospel. You just know this is a Christian, 16 ounces to the pound. You're not, it's not some weird and wacky thing that's trying to get you to hug a tree, and you think, whoa, I'm not going down that route. That's just bonkers. But your spirit test, and you just know it. This is a brother or sister in the Lord. I'll pray with them. I'm concerned for them, and so forth. There is one spirit. There is also one baptism. That's basically the gospel.

It's a drama in many ways that's acted out when somebody's being baptized. You're not made a Christian when you're baptized. You're identifying with Jesus, his life, his death, his burial, his resurrection. When you become a Christian, you want to identify with him. You want to publicly testify, so you're baptized. And when you're baptized, you symbolically die. You don't physically die.

Nobody's died, as far as I know, in a baptism tank. You symbolically die. You're buried. You're out of sight. Where is John? You come back to life. Resurrection. Jesus was raised. You are a new creature in Christ. There is one baptism. Jesus says, go into all the world, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We do it in obedience. One baptism. Baptized into the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That excludes us from many other religions. Jehovah Witnesses, various cults, who acknowledge Jesus exists, but he was not the Son of God. You part company with such. That is not the faith we hold to. There is one body, one true church in Ephesians 4. For all, we were all baptized by one Spirit, so as to form one body, whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free. We were all given the one Spirit to drink. There is no Scots and Irish and Welsh or whatever. We are all one in Christ, one body. And that is what knits us together. This church here is part of FIC. If you're part of an

FIC church, they did produce a document not very long ago on ecumenism. And if you were part of FIC, see, you had to sign up to that. We have—this church here will have signed up to that. And let me remind you of part of this, talking about spiritual unity, when you're wondering about, can we have fellowship with this one and that? This spiritual unity, I quote here, is to be expressed among all who confess the truth of the gospel. It is through the gospel that we are saved and built up in the faith. Jesus' prayer for unity was for those who would believe in him through the message preached by the apostles. Our basis of faith affirms that, quote, true fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel.

The gospel of salvation by grace is so precious to us that we desire to stand together with all who believe and preach it. For the same reason, we cannot express Christian fellowship with those who reject it.

[23 : 34] The New Testament warns us repeatedly to guard the church against the influence of false teaching who deny the truth. Therefore, we cannot join in partnership in evangelism or activities of Christian fellowship with those who are unable to affirm the essential doctrines of the faith.

I don't know if you agree with that. I agree with it. You cannot have—you don't have fellowship when you share different things. The word fellowship is just sharing. But where you meet other Christians who preach the gospel, and they are around here, and there are many in Edinburgh, we can have fellowship with them. We are one. Whereas to share a platform with people who believe different things, and to give the impression that we all believe the same thing to a watching audience, is very confusing.

It sends out the wrong signal. Well, does it matter? There's the Baptist minister. He seems to say the same as the Krishna people or whatever. And so, it doesn't really matter, because he's giving that impression. That is why the gospel is at stake, and that is why we stand firm, even though it might be difficult. And this results in one hope. Ephesians 4, one body, one spirit, just as you are called to one hope. If you're a Christian, you have the hope of heaven. You know the ground upon which that hope rests, not in you, but in what Christ has done. In other words, the Reformers, you remember, fought, for we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And where other churches that appear to appear to be Christian, bolt things on? Well, Jesus has done as much as he can do, and we like Jesus, and he died on the cross, and he's the Savior, but you have to bolt these things on. And suddenly, it's no longer by grace alone. It's no longer just by faith alone. It's no longer just in Christ alone. And anything that does away with those things, we need to stand against and stand for. Does this make sense? Am I just going on a rant here? This is worth fighting for.

This is what Paul says, whatever happens, only do this. If you do nothing else, stand firm for the faith of the gospel. And that is everything. Secondly, that was only the first point, Phil.

Secondly, we'll go through the rest of them like a machine gun. One spirit, I've already mentioned this, whatever happens, conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel, that I may know you stand firm in one spirit. And as I said, even amongst Christians, there is a knowing. You meet another Christian, very soon you know this is a sincere brother in the Lord. They're not just religious.

[26 : 28] They're not just wearing a crucifix. This is a Christian. They have experienced the same God as me. My spirit testifies to their spirit. We are one in Christ. That is very special. That is brothers and sisters coming together under God and the Lord, introducing us together and say, you two are brothers in the Lord. There are many churches in Edinburgh you could go to and immediately fit in. You could join the church tomorrow, and you would be perfectly happy there working with other Christians. There is one spirit. The danger is we can—we are told to walk in the spirit, but we—and we are told to be filled in the spirit, but we can quench the spirit, and we can sometimes not stand firm in the spirit. But this is what we have to do. There is one spirit.

We seek his leading and guiding, and he will always point us to Christ and cause us to preach the gospel. That's what Westerhales is all about. Thirdly—thank you, Phil—thirdly, striving together. Stand firm, striving together. If you don't have unity, you don't have anything. Unity is everything.

In the gospel. I've just been coming here since about February or so. It's the one thing I try and establish is unity. Not just a frothy unity, let's just love each other and whatever. Unity in the gospel. Unity for the gospel, for evangelism, for a love for the Lord. Striving together. It really is something to really persevere in. And one of the—I think one of the versions talks about contending.

Does your version have that? Contending for the faith? Striving together. Contending together. Contending's good. Contending is a kind of boxing term. I could have been a contender. It's kind of, you're contending. There's a battle going on. Paul is basically saying, fight for this. Fight together.

Stand firm. Don't be blown away. Take the blows. But stand firm. Contend for the gospel. And that really isn't easy. It's not easy to contend. You come across as weird. The world doesn't like us when we say that there is one God. There is one Bible. There is one Savior. There is one way to heaven.

[28 : 49] It really gets up people's noses. They really don't like it. But we contend for this. We hold out the word of life. We stand firm in one spirit. We strive together for the gospel. We witness together.

We serve together. We pray together for the faith of the gospel. Do not be ashamed, brothers and sisters, for that which you stand. Believe you me, I've been a pastor for many years, and the pressure to join together, we're working together, and to say to them, I'm sorry, I can't. We just don't believe the same things. And my faith won't allow me to give the impression that we say and believe the same things. We don't. You might say, God, but it's not the same God. Idolatry is the God of our imagination. This is who the true God is, and Jesus is how we know him. Fourthly, stand firm without fear. Look at verse 28. Without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. That's quite a statement, isn't it? Paul writing to a church and telling them, don't be frightened. They're quite something. It says an awful lot. There they were fed to the lions and really persecuted. In some churches today, it's the same. But it's very difficult. And then you come to verse 29. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe. I remember as a young Christian coming across that verse, when I went back to Motherwell, went back to my workplace, and started to tell everybody I was a Christian. And once they got over the shock and said I would last two weeks, they start to give you a bit of grief. They start to bend your ear. You believe this. And oh, you don't drink with us now. You don't do this, that, and the other. You just come across as an oddball. And then you start to get a bit of persecution by people who know you or who don't know you. And I came across that verse.

It's been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe but also to suffer. And I thought, great, that's, that's, this is normal. What's happening is normal. I'm suffering for the Lord.

But it was many years afterwards I noticed the word granted. It has been granted to you. We talk about people applying for a grant. A grant's usually a good thing. You get a grant. I've applied for a grant, and I got the grant. You've been granted something. You've been granted an OBE or an NBE.

And we rejoice. We've been granted to believe. And we're here, and we're singing the songs, and, oh, I've been granted, I've been chosen, granted to believe. And we see that as a privilege, saved by grace. But I wonder if we see persecution as something to be granted something. I'd rather not be granted that, Lord. I don't mind the salvation. But if you can keep the other stuff, the persecution, that would be just nice. It's been granted to you to suffer. What a privilege. What a privilege to suffer for Jesus, to stand with Him, to be identified with Him, to be proud to say, Jesus is not only my Savior, He is the only Savior of the world. Do you thrill at the gospel? Do you love the gospel? Do you want to preach the gospel above all else? Well, the gospel is good news.

[32 : 04] I think as Christians, we're frightened to say what the good news is. If we had a pile of cash here, and it was just stacked to the ceiling, and our job was to go out and tell these folk in Westerhales, there's bundles of money in there. You want to go in there, just fill your bags, take it away.

We wouldn't be reluctant, would we? We would be going to say, you'll never believe it. You want to get in good news, free money, free cash. But when it comes to the gospel, where the good news is hushed tones, and it's going to be difficult for us. Is it really, it's good news for me, but it's no good for empty, so I bet I know, share it. The good news is good news. That is what the gospel is. There are so many facets to it. Adoption, reconciliation, redemption, atonement, propitiation, inheritance.

Wow, what a gospel. Good news hardly does it justice. Great news, terrific news. That is the faith, that is the gospel that we preach. And it is a privilege to do this. The list in Hebrews 11, remember Moses, he chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God, rather to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. I'd rather suffer, he says, with these people than enjoy sin. And then Paul, remember when a prophet says to him, the man who owns this belt is going to Jerusalem, and he's going to be bound. Don't go, Paul. And Paul says, why are you crying and giving me grief? He says, no, I'm not only prepared to be bound, I'm prepared to die. I'm prepared to die for Jesus Christ, for the name of Jesus. And that is what makes suffering an honor. You stand with him. I remember in school, one class, there was a—we had a big gentle giant in the class, and in math school anyway, there were guys who played football, and there were guys who did music. The two of them couldn't meet.

He was like oil and water. The guys who played music were kind of girlfriends playing away with music. Guys who played football were just kind of rough and ready. And this was one of the musician guys.

He was a gentle giant. And these thugs, there were three thugs, and they just decided to pick on him. And as usually the case, they says, right, playground afterwards. Half the school, as happens in these cases, off to the playground, big fight, it's going to happen, these two guys. And I thought, he's going to make mints for me to this guy. He's a guitarist with Hanson, Hanson Segal. Anyway, so anyway, he was a way to—and this guy, it was—he just stood there, and he just kind of sidestepped this guy. And the guy was swinging away. And I don't know, he managed to defeat him, and without doing anything, it was such an impressive thing. For—I'll tell you, for weeks, I wanted to be that guy. I was walking like him and everything, praying the guitar, I'm this guy. Just so impressed. And I remember when the fight was over and everybody dispersed, those of us in the class said, he's in our team. He's in our side. We were so proud to stand by him. I remember thinking as we're walking down, well, all the best don't know him. And that's what it means to be a Christian, to stand with Jesus, the Savior of the world, who loves the world, who's fierce, who in bravery. And it's just what an honor to suffer. And suffering is the pathway to glory. Remember Jesus, for the joy that was set before him endured the shame. We endure the shame because of the glory that awaits us. So, what have we said up to this point? How do we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel? Stand firm in the faith, and one spirit striving together without fear. And then lastly, stand firm because you're saved. He says it's a sign. It's a sign to others that they are either condemned or they are saved.

[36 : 03] And that's why it's confusing when you share a platform with people who preach a different message. It's too confusing. There's no distinction. God, in that verse, makes a distinction. There are people who are saved. This is very sobering. In the world, there are people who are saved and people doomed to destruction, to everlasting punishment. That's another topic for another day. But that is the reality of the thing. You're either saved or you're not saved. There's nothing in between. Your good deeds don't get you to heaven. Your sincerity doesn't get you to heaven. But only your faith and trust in Jesus is your Lord and Savior. We stand on it. We would go to the cross for that. We would fight for that.

And Paul says here it's a sign. It's a sign to them that they will be destroyed. It's a sign to others. How does this work? It's basically people's reaction to God, to His Word, to the gospel, to the faith.

How do they react to this? If they reject Jesus—he's not the Son of God. He's not the Savior. He's not the only Savior. And they preach another gospel. Paul writes to the church at Galatians. And he says, who has bewitched you? He begins this way, have you lost your mind? You used to hold to the gospel as Jesus the only way. Now you're preaching another gospel, which is no gospel at all. It's not good news. And when people reject Him, it's a sign to them. Well, if you take that to the grave with you, your lust and without hope. It's a sign to them. There's a clear line of demarcation.

But for those of us who are saved, it's a sign that we're saved. We all—but I mean, if I have to do funerals here, it's nice when you do a funeral of somebody who believes.

You can speak with confidence. The Lord knows those who are His. Ultimately, we never know what people go through. But it's a sign that you're saved. It's the other side of the coin as we affirm these truths. So, as I close, Paul says, whatever happens, Westerhailes, whatever happens, if you only do one thing in this church, stand firm for the faith of the gospel. And may the Lord help us to do that as we strive together in one spirit without fear, knowing that we are saved, convinced that what we preach is the Word of God, and the only way to heaven and to glory. Is that what you fancy doing over the coming weeks and months and years? Or are you going to say to me, John, I think you're a bit extreme. There's more than one way you should be having fellowship with whoever the wackiest cult down the road. Well, you'll have a job trying to convince me of that. But I hope you can stand with your head held high, not ashamed, not frightened, standing on the only good news that Jesus is indeed the Savior of the world, the Lord's anointed, the Messiah. Let's close by singing together. I think we know this one in this church, O Church, Arise, do you know this? And Put Your Armour On. It's a good militant song.

[39 : 13] I must confess, as a young Christian, I used to love the kind of militant type song, grab your armour, and off we go. I didn't really like the hug me, squeeze me, hold me type songs. But these, and if you're a bloke or otherwise, don the gear, get the helmet on, just kind of ready to march, firm in the faith, strong in the faith of Jesus Christ. Let's stand and we'll sing this together.

Let's do it.

Let's do it.

Let's do it. Let's do it. Let's do it. Let's do it. Let's do it. Let's do it.

Let's do it. Let's do it. Let's do it. See the cross, his fear of mercy made, as the son of God is stricken.

[41 : 02] Then see his foes, then crush pain in his feet, where the conqueror has risen. And as the stone is rolled away, and Christ emerges from the grave, This victory march continues till today, and the eye of heart shall see him.

See the Spirit come, his strength in every stride, give grace for every hurdle. And we may run with faith to win the prize of a servant good and faithful.

As saints who go, it's the land of the way, his dwelling triumphs of his grace. We hear their woes and hunger for a day, for the grace we stand in glory.

We hear their woes and hunger for a day, for the grace we stand in glory. One day, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that he is Lord.

We do it willingly. Others will do so only when they recognize us. Let me close with a benediction from that mighty apostle Paul in Romans. Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaimed about Jesus Christ in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith to the only wise God.

[42 : 49] be glory forever through Jesus Christ and all God's people said, Amen. Amen. Please be seated. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[45 : 19] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[47 : 49] Thank you.

Thank you.