Philippians

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Paul and Hymotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons, grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds and in the defense and the confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, [00:01:03] how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offense until the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. But I would, ye should understand brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places. And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, [00:02:06] and some also of goodwill. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds, but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, [00:03:05] and to die, gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour. Yet what I shall choose I want not, for I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you, and having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith, that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in [00:04:02] one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel, and in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake, having the same conflict which he saw in me, and now here to be in me. May the Lord bless to us that reading of his word. As we turn to this short epistle, it's surprising how much there is in it, isn't it? As we look over the various chapters, I have been surprised as I've been reading it, how much there is that we might

study, and in looking at this book, I'm going to say just straight away, don't think that I'm going to give [00:05:02] an exposition of the epistle to the Philippians, because I'm just not going to do that. With regard to those talks that I hope to give on it, they are maybe talks that will not take in perhaps things that you thought they might, but they are, as I feel before the Lord, the words that I've been led to study, and may he bless them as we have them before us. As we think of this epistle, what a wonderful epistle it is. Well, they're all wonderful in their way, aren't they? They all have their necessary uses, we know that each one of them are necessary for us, but I don't know whether you've ever thought of the Apostle Paul as he wrote these various epistles, and how he must have felt as he wrote them. You think of such epistles as the epistle to the Corinthians, and the epistle to the Galatians, when because of the need and the haste he had in writing the letter, he wrote it himself with those large letters. I wonder how he felt when he wrote [00:06:06] those epistles. Don't you think that his heart had been burdened a very long while before he wrote the epistle to the Corinthians, the first epistle, and no doubt the second he wrote with joy, but don't you think that with regard to those epistles he was burdened, a burdened man. Don't you think that with the Galatians, there he was writing a short epistle, and as he wrote that short epistle, how his heart must have been burdened to think that those people were not giving the Lord Jesus Christ his rightful place. And yet there were other times, weren't there, when he wrote other epistles, and how different must have been his thoughts then, when we think of him writing the epistles to the Philippians, to the Thessalonians, how wonderful must have been his thoughts, and how in turning to the Scripture that we have before us tonight, how he must have been able to sit down there, and as the amanuansis was there near at hand, [00:07:06] he was able to say words, not having a heavy heart, but having a heart filled with joy. How different, and yet, and as well, I think it in another way. When I think of the words that he wrote to the Corinthians, a long epistle, two epistles that were fairly long, and when I think of the epistle to the Galatians, how much those people missed, didn't they, because of the fact that as he wrote to them, there was so much to correct, and then therefore it left so little time, and so little space, to present Christ to them in all his fullness. And yet, in writing this letter, and some have said it's a love letter, how much time he's got to write of those things that belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. It's an epistle of joy, and as we think of it as an epistle of joy, it comes out of a prison, and you'd say, well, can anything happy come out of [00:08:03] a prison? There was a happy man in that prison, that man was happy, and we shall read later on that he could say, rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice, and how happily he must have written this letter, and how full of joy he was. Why was that? Well, I would gather that on the whole, this little assembly were going on fairly well. They were going on in a godly manner.

We see that with regard to them, there were the bishops, or the elders, and the deacons, and as well he thanks God for every thought concerning them. Well, I don't think that he could have done that with the Corinthian assembly, could he? Because when he thinks of them in their puffed-up state, how can he thank God for every remembrance of them? No, but here, as he thinks of them, he thanks the Lord, he thanks God for every remembrance of them. They were going on [00:09:03] very happily, no doubt. Yes, he'd been there, hadn't he, about 10 or 11 years ago, and you remember what had happened when he went. Many things had happened, and there at that time we see that he's put into prison, and there in that prison it was because of the joy that he had, that somebody heard this joy, and somebody was converted there, and what a joy that man must have had. I wonder whether he was in this assembly at this time. If he was, he was not only one that was in control of prisoners, but he was one that had a joy in his heart. If he belonged to that assembly, and if it was that that person whom the demons were cast out of, and if it was that Lydia was here, what a wonderful assembly it was. See, we hear about these various ones in this assembly, don't we? And as we think of them, here they are gathered together, and now after 10 or 11 years [00:10:01] Paul

writes to them. As he writes, what does he say concerning them? He writes and says concerning them that they are in Christ, and you know that's a wonderful thing to say. Now we know, every one of us tonight, that we are here, and we are in Christ. You know we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, we know him as our Saviour, and therefore yes, we say we're in Christ. I don't think that when the Apostle wrote those words, he wrote them in a casual manner, and neither did he ever think of them in a casual way. As I think of him writing to the Philippians, he knew that they were in Christ, and he knew that they were in Philippi. He knew full well that he was in Christ, and he was in that Roman jail, and he must have felt it. But what a difference it must have made to them, and to him, to know that they were in Christ. And what a different outlook he must have had [00:11:01] on his life in the jail, because he was in Christ. Now we are in Enfield, but we are in Christ, and as I think of those two things, how wonderful it is to know that just where we are, we're in Christ, and what a different outlook it should make us have on the life that we lead just in that place. I wonder whether it does. As we think of this man, we see him, this Apostle Paul, and as he's there chained in prison, no doubt to one or two soldiers, there he is. But because he's in Christ, he's filled with joy, and because he's in Christ and in that place, he sits there, not fretting because of the conditions that are his, but realising that God would have him in that place, that God had allowed it to be in his own counsels that Paul should be found in that prison there. And therefore, as he thinks of himself, he realises that he might be the slave, he might be [00:12:08] the prisoner of Nero, but on the other hand, he's the bond slave of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Did you realise when we read that he said the servants, Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ? Being in Christ is one thing, but being the bond slave of Jesus Christ is another.

As I think of him here, he realises that the Lord has him in the place that he would have him to be. I wonder whether the Lord has us in the place where he would have us to be. If we are his bond slaves, no doubt we will be in the place where he would have us to be. Now, why was he here, do you think? Why wasn't it that he was out somewhere able to preach the gospel? Because we have to realise that he was in God's hand, and it need never have been that he was placed in a prison at all. That's what I think concerning that man John, when we see him on the [00:13:06] Isle of Patmos, why was he there? It might have been, on the one hand, that he was apprehended of those that were enemies to him. It might have been here with regard to Paul. He said he preferred to go to Rome, but it was the place that the Lord would have him to be at that time, because he had a service there to do for him. That's what we must realise, because I thrilled the other evening when I looked in the end of the last chapter and saw those that belonged to Caesar's household, and I thought, Caesar's household, however would they have known anything of the truth of God, however would they have known anything of the joy that can come to them, apart from the fact that Paul was found in a prison there. Don't we read here, in this same chapter, that the truth concerning his bonds has been made known even into the palace. That means to me that this man was a bond slave, [00:14:06] and he hadn't kept his mouth closed, had he? It was that he realised that he was there, and it was necessary for him to be there, firstly because of Caesar's household, and those dear saints, no doubt that were locally found, and also for the church at large, because I think that here we would have lost so much apart from this man being found in prison. We see this epistle to the Philippians, that is an epistle of joy written for them, it's written for us, it's written for us in this day, so that we might rejoice in these things, but if we have not the position that Paul had at this time as being a bond slave of Jesus Christ, I don't think that we should be filled with joy much, do you? We may be in Christ, and we might know Christ as our saviour, but to know ourselves as being bond slaves, that's something different altogether. Do you remember when this started with the apostle [00:15:06] Paul? It started at that time on that Damascus road, when he said to the Lord, having realised who he was, Lord, what will thou have me to do? That can be something that we'll say to the Lord immediately, we come to

him, it was with the apostle Paul, but I wonder whether it is really with ourselves, whether we've been really ready and willing to say to the Lord, Lord, what will thou have me to do? See here was a man who said that, and continued going on having that before him, and whatever the circumstance might be, he was a man that was filled with joy. He was a man that circumstances made no difference to his joy, there he was in his joy because of the fact that he knew something concerning the Lordship of Christ. It was that here he was a bond slave. [00:16:01] Now we often think of a bond slave as somebody that's really ground down, but as I think of the bond slave, I see that there are so many things concerning him that are to be merited, to be pleased about. I know that the bond slave had his responsibilities, but he also had his privileges. As I would think of the slave in the 21st chapter of Exodus, I see that there, that man, his life was not his own, and neither is ours, because the scripture says, ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies, they're his, and therefore glorify him in those bodies. The man that was there with his ear bored through with an all, was a man who had said in himself, I'm not mine own, I love my wife, I love my children, I love my master, I will not go out free, and as we think of that man, so often thinking of him as the Lord Jesus [00:17:04] Christ, let's think of ourselves in that position, as being willing and ready to put ourselves in the Lord's hand and to be his bond slave. Yes, that position has its responsibilities because if we would realise the truth of this, we just can't go where we like, and we just can't go and get a position where we like, and we can't just live where we like, and certainly we can't do as we like, because we're his, and we're bought with a price, and everything that we do in our lives will be directed by his direction, won't it? On the other hand, when we think of the bond slave, and when we think of his responsibilities, let's think of his privileges. He has his privileges, and in the sixth chapter of Matthew, there it says to those that believe, take no thought.

[00:18:01] In this same epistle it says, be careful for nothing. Why? Because after all you're a bond slave of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he's going to provide for you. I feel that the master is responsible for his bond slave, and in every way he has his care, and his protection, his provision, his nourishment, he has everything. So we see that that cuts both ways. So it is if we are not willing to receive those responsibilities that are ours as bond slaves, then it will be, then it will be that we won't have those privileges and those freedoms that come through being a bond slave. Then it will be there won't be the joy in our hearts because of this, will there? Because it's a wonderful thing to look at that apostle, and see him walking, and see him enjoying that which he had of Jesus Christ, because of the fact that he was a bond slave. He not only speaks of them as bond slaves, themselves as bond slaves, but he speaks there of the fact that they were in Christ, [00:19:05] they were bond slaves, but they were also saints. I wonder whether there's somebody younger here tonight that's got a strange idea of a saint, because I was in a fellowship meeting only a few years ago, and there was one poor man, and he wasn't a young man, and he was very disturbed to think that people could be called saints that were not so good as they might be. As I think of this, I would realise that we are called saints, it matters not who the person is that trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ, that one is a saint. It doesn't depend upon their good behaviour as being one that's born of God, it depends upon what God has done with them, and he's separated them from the world, and he's separated them to himself. Yes, that's the wonderful step, that they're called saints because they're separated ones. Now in that, I don't know whether I've said [00:20:02] it before, but I think we've got to be very careful how we take that thought. Don't you think that sometimes we say, oh yes, I am a separated one, and I wouldn't do this, and I wouldn't do that. Well why wouldn't you? Because I'm separated. But I don't see that that thought is here, and neither in other places in the scripture, so much paramount. It may be there in a minor way, but the truth concerning a separated one is that he's separated unto the Lord. That's where the joy is, isn't it? Separate unto me Barnabas and Saul for the ministry, and we see that separation. So we see these saints, don't we? And Paul, as he begins to write these

wonderful words to them, his mind goes back, and he thinks of their fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. I wonder what that first act was. Was it the act of Lydia when she took him into her home?

[00:21:02] If thou hast counted me faithful, come into my house. Was it also that there was somebody there that had washed the back of Paul after he'd beaten him? Was it that they were the first act in fellowship in the gospel? But whatever it was, from that day even to this day, there had been fellowship in the gospel. And isn't that a wonderful thing? Now as we turn and go through this book, we shall find that it wasn't only the brothers, because we might think tonight, oh yes, the brothers were in with the fellowship. No, it was Lydia, wasn't it? Right at the beginning, before there were any brothers that started showing themselves, it was Lydia that said, if you count me faithful, there were those women by the seashore, and there they were. They had fellowship with him in the gospel. There they were, showing that love. So every one of us that are here tonight can be in on that fellowship in the gospel. Having thought of this, we see [00:22:04] later on, having these thoughts before him, of the dearness of these saints to him, he said, I have you on my heart. I have you in my heart. You know that's a wonderful thing, to have a person, isn't it, in your heart. Here it was that as he thought of all that they had been to him, and all that they were to him now, that's what he says concerning them, that I have you in my heart, and that's a wonderful place to have the saints. You know we can have them on our tongue, we can have them in our mind, we can have them in our thoughts, but if we have them in our hearts, how different we are toward them, aren't we? When this apostle had them here on his heart, it was that he had wonderful thoughts for them. It was that at this moment, as he had them on his heart, it was that his heart went out to them, and as he was so helpless to do anything for them at [00:23:01] this time, we see straightway he prays for them. And you know, if we don't have the saints of God on our heart, and if it is that there's somebody there, that in ourselves we feel that however can I speak to them, or however can I do anything for them, it may be that you've rubbed that person up, or they might have rubbed you up. Have you tried having them on your heart in prayer? I feel that if there's one thing that will help you, it will be that. I remember a younger brother in a meeting once years ago, and he'd been rubbed up quite a bit by an older brother, and this older brother had rubbed a lot of brethren up. He had been very, very difficult. Poor old chap, I felt sorry for him in the end. But there was this younger brother, and he felt what should he do? And he heard one brother say on an occasion in ministry, if there's anybody you can't get on with, pray for them. Pray for them, and it'll make a difference. And it did in this [00:24:02] young brother's heart. Now here, when the apostle prayed for these dear ones, and we see in these prison epistles that he has his prison prayers, he prays firstly that their love might abound. Now that's a wonderful thing to know, that he starts with the love. Yes, I feel that we as people of God living together so much as we do, that it must be that we start with this love, that your love may abound. There it is, that your love may abound. And that love, as I think of it in ourselves, that love must abound if we are going to be approved of him here. That love that we have firstly for the Lord Jesus, it might not mean it here, but I'm going to start in that way. Think of that love that we have for him. Now I can't force my love toward him, can I? But when I think of what he's done for me, and when I think of what he's going to tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ, [00:25:03] do you think that they needed their love to abound to him after he'd written that second chapter to them, and the wonderful things that the Lord Jesus Christ had done, the stoops that he had taken for them, do you think that they needed that their love should abound? Don't you think that his prayer was answered as he prayed this thing for them? And don't you think that if we spent more time thinking of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done, and what he's doing at present, and what he will do for us in our glorified state, don't you think that our love would abound more toward him? Then I feel that our love should abound toward his word. As we have this book in our hands tonight, it may be that we take it home

and we put it somewhere, or we don't need it till the next time we come to a meeting, and you know that's very, very sad, isn't it? Don't you think that it's sad that we've got a book here that is a book of rejoicing, and we can turn to it and find all [00:26:01] the encouragement and joy in it, if only we'll turn to it, and then perhaps sometimes on the Lord's Day morning we've got to dust it before we bring it to the meeting. Yes, let's have a love for the word that has been placed into our hands by the Lord Jesus. Let's have a love for it because we have the Spirit who's able to take of these things and reveal them to us.

Let's have a love for that word. And I feel that if we have a love for the Lord, and a love for his word, then it will be we shall have a love for his people, that our love may abound more and more, and that's something that's so necessary today, isn't it? What is it that is the hindrance among the Lord's people today? I'm not saying that only in our own meetings, but in Christianity as a whole. What is it that hinders so great a work that might be going on? Isn't it bitterness that comes in, and isn't it silly little things that show we haven't the love that we ought to have, [00:27:04] and he says that your love may abound. Yes, and perhaps when you come here tonight you say with regard to the brethren, yes, and my love does abound to the people of God, and how I love them because they belong to the Lord Jesus. Yes, but our love has to abound to the people round about, hasn't it? Don't you think that they need the love as well? Is it that they know us as people that go to somewhere on Sundays and during the week, and well, they wouldn't help you. After all, they're so obsessed with what they're believing that they haven't got much time otherwise to be of help. Don't you think that our neighbours and those around about us that know not the Lord Jesus as their saviour ought to know something of the love of Christ in the way that we treat them? I know that we cannot go into their homes and spend much time in there because we have not much in common, but they ought to be able to know that we will help them, whether naturally or spiritually if they want it. They ought to be able to say, well, there's so-and-so next door, [00:28:05] they are believers, and we know that we can turn to them and straightway they'll come because there's that love of Christ in their hearts that is toward them, and don't you think that if that love is there and it's manifested toward them, don't you think it will have an effect in them so that they'll be drawn and attracted to the Lord Jesus? And what next? He prayed for their minds that they might approve of that which is excellent, or they might be able to discern the things that differ. Now, with regard to that, don't you think that today we don't discern the things that differ? Is it that we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and having come to him, we are quite willing to go on just as we are, but here it says to discern the things that differ, and what does that mean? That I discern and I see things that are bad and things that are good? No, [00:29:03] I don't think it means that at all. I feel that it means that we are to discern that which is good and that which is more excellent, that which is more excellent, and isn't it that as we see those that enjoy the Lord the more, don't they discern the things that are more excellent? Don't they see the path in perhaps a different way from what we see? Aren't they able to go on, and don't they realise these things that are spiritual just a little more than we do? Yes, a prayer for the heart, the love, a prayer for the mind, and then a prayer for the character, that they might be sincere, that they might be sincere, look at that, that they might be, that you might be sincere without offence, and as I think of them being sincere without offence, that's a prayer for our character. As I think of our character, it should be that I ought to be right with myself, I ought to be right [00:30:06] with the people in the world, and I ought to be right with the people in the meeting, and I ought to be right particularly in the presence of the Lord. That's my character, and my character ought to be such. I know that we each and all are failures, and there are times when there are things that escape our lips, and there are paths that we might tread that are not according to his will, but I feel that even in these we ought to be willing to retrace our steps, we ought to be willing to retract our words, and therefore people might know that we are people of character, so that as the world see us, they see that we are right with them, in that sense, we are right with

ourselves, we are right with them, we are right with the brethren, and we are right before the Lord. And then a prayer for their lives, that they might bear fruit. How wonderful it is if we can bear [00:31:01] fruit. Now this doesn't mean, I don't think for a moment, that people might be converted by what we say and what we do. It might take that in, but I feel it is the way in which we live in our lives, so that as we live our lives in this way bearing fruit, what wonderful people we will be together with. You know, it will be that as we gather in our meetings, brethren, as a whole, we will be wonderful people, the one with another, and then in that place where it's said that we are treated the best and grumble most, in our home, what wonderful people we shall be to live with. It will make a difference if these fruits are shown in the home, won't it be? It will make all the difference. As I think of that great man Elijah, do you remember, with regard to him, how he was tested in the various ways? He was tested there by the book Cherith, and then he went into a widow's home, and that must have been one of the hardest places to stand for the Lord, and yet he [00:32:05] was found there, and he stood during that time, and that's the place where we should bear fruit, where it should be seen that we are well able to be got on with, because of the fact that we've borne fruit. And as before the Lord, shouldn't it be that we are prosperous for him? It should be that as we are bearing fruit, that he should look upon us, and we should be those that are helpful to him in what he has to do. And then Paul, he sort of digresses, and he says I want you to tell, I want to tell you of what's happened, the things that have happened to me. Now that's something that we very often hear when a person meets us in the street, isn't it? They want to tell us of the things that happen to them, and sometimes as believers we have this before us, and isn't it sometimes that we get a brother, or get a sister, and start talking about the things that have happened to us? Yes, the place where we live, yes, not only the place where we live, [00:33:08] but the people that are there, and the difficulties that we have, and there is the place that we've got to live for the Lord, and well how many woes there are when we present these things to somebody else. Have you ever thought of the place where the apostle lived at this time, when he said rejoice in the Lord always? Have you thought of the people that he lived with? Have you thought of the difficulties that he had? No doubt if you went to him now, although he might have been living in his hired house, somebody has said it might have been just as bad as where John Bunyan was in prison in Bedford, it might have been just as bad as that, but on the other hand he had those soldiers with a chain, he had his chain, we read concerning his chain, and there he was, and how difficult it must have been for him. But what did he do in these circumstances? As we think of these I want to [00:34:05] digress in this way and say for a moment where we live, and the difficult place it may be, and we might feel that it's a difficult place, we feel that the house in itself is not what we might want it to be, we feel that the neighbourhood is not where we'd like to be, we feel also that the people that are there are not people that we'd like to meet, but if we see how the apostle faced up to these circumstances, well we can make a difference in those circumstances can't we? When we see the apostle Paul here in these conditions, I revert again to what I said right at the beginning, wherever would those people have been spiritually apart from the apostle being placed there of the Lord? The place where he was, you think of that place where he was, but he didn't chafe, it might have been that he could have been placed in that place, and he chafed because of his position and [00:35:01] his condition there, but he didn't chafe, what did he do? He prayed and he worked in the position that the Lord had placed him, and where we are, where the Lord has placed us, it may be not the neighbourhood that we would desire, and not the people that we'd like to see, but if the Lord has placed us there surely he's got a work for us to do there don't you think? And don't you think that if we are willing and ready to pray and work for him in that neighbourhood, there's going to be results, and there was results here. It might have been that somebody came to the apostle Paul at the beginning and said, ah Paul, now however can you do anything? See with these soldiers they're against you, they're aggressive, you're in the wrong place at this time, and however can you get outside? But the word got outside didn't it? It says that it's known concerning his bonds in Caesar's household. Yes

that's where the word got to, right into Caesar's household, and we are [00:36:02] given to believe that in an extensive way there were those that were converted so that they formed a great part of that assembly that was at Rome. Yes the apostle now he says, well the gospel is preached and I rejoice. The things that have happened to me have happened to the furtherance of the gospel and I rejoice. Well that's wonderful, but it might not have been like that if he'd have chafed and fretted in the position that he was found. He rejoiced and now with regard to him he said, and it's my desire that I should magnify, that I should magnify the Lord Jesus Christ in my life. From now on as I go on in that jail I'm going to magnify the Lord Jesus in my life. And you say, well Paul how are you going to do that? Well for me to live is Christ. Yes but no there's no buts concerning it. For me to live is Christ and neither is this some [00:37:06] boastful talk that he gives us just at this time. It is that here is a man in all his humility who says for me to live is Christ and to die again. Now that takes some saying doesn't it? I say that very bluntly tonight. Isn't that something that we'd be very very careful before we said, for me to live is Christ and to die again. And he might, you might have thought if Paul had not gone on speaking in this same vein that he would go back on what he said. But he says you know I'm in a straight betwixt two. I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better. You have? Yes I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better. And I wonder just at that moment whether he had in mind the fact that he was a prisoner and prisoners were not thought of much then and it wouldn't be long before he was slain. [00:38:04] No doubt he had that before him at this time that he was a prisoner and there he says but I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better. When he thinks of the one that went to the cross of Calvary and there bore his heavy burden he thinks of the fact that that one now desires him to be with him and he says to be with him is far better. You know that's wonderful isn't it? When we think of him with that joy before him and yet he says well there's only one thing that will hinder me going. There's only one thing that hinders my desire in being found in that place and that is this. It's needful that I should be behind with you. Now I wonder what the thing would be if we were to ask ourselves that question tonight. What would the thing be that would hinder us saying to depart and to be with Christ which is far better? Would it be our service to [00:39:01] the Lord's people? Would it be that our position in the assembly? Would it be that what we do for him wherever we may be or would it be some other reason? There was only one reason with the Apostle Paul. Yes as we see him here his reason for departing was that he wanted to be with and like the Lord Jesus Christ. It wasn't that he was willing and ready and so ready to shake off those chains and be with the Lord Jesus because of the chains. It was the hope of being with him. It was the desire to be with him because it was far better. It was the thought of being with the one that had done so much for him. But in staying behind the thought that was before him was this. There is the need. It is that I should stay behind. I should stay here and glorify God with my body and also nourish and encourage the saints till the time that I am taken to be with himself. [00:40:03] And that he would do here because we see later on he says concerning them that they were to they were to stand fast and strive together. And as I think of those things there are things that he would encourage them in. And I see at the end of the book when I read the last chapter I see at the beginning stand fast in the Lord. And here he is speaking to them knowing that there will be opposition because he said on the behalf of Christ it's not alone that we are found here.

But we are found that we might suffer for him. He knew that there was going to be opposition and he in the circumstances in which he had found himself he'd stood fast hadn't he? He'd stood fast and now he says to those dear ones being found together I know the opposition that will come to you now stand fast. I feel that with regard to that there would be the standing fast and not [00:41:05] being willing to compromise with things that would come in. I feel with regard to the striving together there needed to be the unity the one with another in this work. And as I think of this first chapter and as I think of the way in which it ends you say well why didn't it end with the apostle Paul saying well it's far

better to be with him. Don't you think that it's as important to be found down here just at this time in testimony to him as it is for that day to come and find us down here doing nothing. Don't you think that the apostle would say to them as the Lord said on another occasion in the world ye shall have tribulation but be of good cheer I have overcome the world. It is that as you go through this world there is the time coming when you'll be with and like the Lord Jesus Christ but now you're going to be in a place of opposition [00:42:04] but hear the word be of good cheer I have overcome the world.

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