

Christ our object

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Acts 15, verse 37, And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Naphtalia, and went not with them to the world.

And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder, one from the other. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed him to Cyprus, and Paul chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

Now, chapter 16, verse 9, And a vision appeared to Paul in the night, There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

Verse 25, And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God, and the president heard them.

[00:01:05] I want you to turn to the epistle to the Philippians. The Philippian epistle, chapter 1.

First chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians, Paul, Silas, servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are in 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 on every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making requests with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that he which hath done a good work in you [00:02:04] will perform it until the day, until the day of Jesus Christ.

Even as it is meant for me to think this of you all, because I, I'd like just to correct this verse, as it ought to be, please, verse 7. Even as it is meant for me to think this of you all, because you have me in your heart, in as much as both, in my bones, and in defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bones of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment, that he may approve things that are excellent, that he may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, [00:03:01] being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

But I really should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out

rather unto the fervence 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. Some also of goodwill.

The one preached Christ with contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds. But the other with love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then?

Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is risen. And I therein do rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice.

[00:04:01] For I know that this shall come 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.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is shame.

But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour. Yet what I shall choose I will not, for I am in a strait between the two, having the 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 fervence and joy of faith.

[00:05:01] That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ, for me by my coming to you again.

O live, let your conversation be as it 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 one spirit and 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.

And the same conflict which he saw in me, and now is here to be in me.

The letter to the Philippians has been called a letter of Christian experience. [00:06:06] As you Bible students will readily recall.

Now I'd like to point out the difference between experience and activities, as we might say. An experienced man is a man who has done the trade, so to speak. He served his apprenticeship, and so we say he has now his experience.

And this, beloved saints of God, is a letter of Christian experience.

It is, we might say, Paul's, under the guidance of the Spirit of Paul, Paul's attempt to develop the life of Christ in the dear saints at Philippi.

Experience, as you know very well, is just something you can't pay for, you can't buy. It is something you have to win yourself. We shall find, I believe, in verse 10 very soon, that he looked for this very thing. [00:07:01] He expected them to be connoisseurs of Christianity, and he wanted them to go in for that which was the very best. But here at the beginning we find the desire in the heart of the great Apostle Paul to see the life of Christ developed in the lives of these Christians at Corinth.

There's no doctrine in the epistle. There's no, the term sin doesn't occur at all anywhere in the epistle. There's no path marked out. But what there is, beloved, is just this. Paul, may I remind you, was a runner.

He was in a race. He set out, and there was nothing apparently going to hold him back. He went for that which was ahead of him, and he wanted others to run with him.

And, beloved saints of God, nowhere down here in 1977, now 2,000 years after this great Apostle, he would have us run with him in this race. He wants us to be runners down here, beloved. [00:08:02] You know the old mythical story, I'm sure, from the early Greek days, the story that was told of the goddesses, you know, who ran, or the gods who ran in a race, and there was one god they didn't want to win, and so they threw gold and angels at his father. And he, stopping to pick things up, of course, he lost the race. Now this is only mythical, I admit, but it teaches us a powerful lesson, beloved saints of God. There are many attractions in this world. Many things will take us off the path. But the essence of a race, of course, is that you have an objective, and you run for it. Now you need stamina for this. You need spiritual stamina, and this is what is supplied in the epistle. In chapter 2, you have manner for the wilderness. In chapter 3, you have the old course of the land, all the good land into which God has brought you. So God doesn't care anything. If he sets you on a race for money, he'll feed you salt, and he'll provide you with the objective. [00:09:01] And this is important, because the first chapter of Philippians presents us with Christ as our object, or Christ as our life, if you like, whichever way you care to look at it.

And he opens the epistle, you'll remember, by bringing before us all kinds of people. You may wonder why we turned you to Acts. Perhaps at this point I ought just to take you there to put the epistle in the title framework, which the Spirit of God, I believe, has put it.

You may recall, then, I've read to you from the incident of Barnabas and John and Mark.

Barnabas wanted to take John, Mark, with him, you remember, and Paul objected.

Paul said, I'm not very keen on taking a man with me who has failed in the past. He let us down.

And what's worse, he lets us down again. And so Paul takes the stand that Mark is not to come with him. [00:10:01] So Barnabas disagrees, but Barnabas has his way, and he goes back. So Barnabas disagrees, but Barnabas has his way, and he goes back on. And John, Mark goes back with Uncle Barnabas to Cyprus. But Paul hadn't taken his stand. It's immediately the object of the direction of God, the Holy Spirit. I call us here with all the saints of God because this is a land of supreme importance. Unless we are in the right position, we can't expect God to carry out any of the Lord's mind or will for us or his people. We must be in the right position. I can take you back to the Old

Testament of mania position and show you how when the servant of God is put in the right position, he has the power to do what is right. I'll just mention David, if I may, because it's so simple. David, you know, had a wife, Saul's daughter, but he said nothing to her. Nothing at all.

He never heard pictures, far as I know, until... Now this is the point. [00:11:01] When he comes back to Jerusalem with the Lord, when he has established the true position, he can then turn on this wife of his and rebuke her. What I'm pointing out, beloved saints of God, is this. Take the right position and you'll have the power to carry it out. So I'll read to you from Acts. Just that simple little point. Paul takes the right position. And what's the result of Paul taking the right position? The result, beloved saints of God, is that you're sitting in that seat tonight. Because Paul brought the gospel to Jerusalem. It had to be in Jerusalem, Paul. And this was below the heart of the blessed God. This was in the mind of the Spirit. We want a man who is in the right position to carry the message to Jerusalem. And here's a man who is in the right position. He has withstood Satan's attempt to hinder the work. And having taken his position very lowly before God, because he calls himself a slave here, or a bondman, or a servant, whatever you like, [00:12:01] having taken the low position before God, he has the power of allowing to carry out that activity, that missionary journey, if you will, that first of all took him to Philippi, touched the gentle heart of Lydia, converted the heart, stony heart of the jailer, and then like a pebble in the pond, he strayed wider and wider and wider, and he was buried by Joachim here in Newcastle in 1900 and on perhaps all the war.

But there it began.

There the stones had been withdrawn into the pond. There the struggles ever lively began. It was because, beloved saints of God, there was one man, a bondman, a servant, who wasn't afraid to take his proper stand when the time came, God looking down saw this man and used him.

And if you, beloved here, or I, want to be of any use to the service of God, then make sure your position is right. [00:13:02] It's not my point to develop the question of position at all.

I'm concerned more rather than bringing before you, as God helps me, this question of the developing of the life of Christ down here in his absence. And so when I said it was running a race, this is the reason why doctrine doesn't come in. There's no warfare in this. The word strife does occur, but that's to do with the gospel. There's no warfare, there's no sin mentioned, there's no doctrine. Why? Because the man is too busy, if you see what I mean. He's the honey, he's racing homeward.

That's why he didn't have you and I, beloved. Drop all this tinsel and go into what is truly law. Drop all these things that would come in and hinder. Let them go and crash onto the mark he calls it.

It's the mark of the calling on high. It's nothing less than the person of the exalted Christ, of course, in the cross. Paul has his eye there.

Nothing will detract him from it, he's out and going after it. [00:14:02] We know he makes mistakes, we shall see in a moment. Nevertheless, fundamentally and broadly speaking, his objective was a risen Christ. And this is what marked him down here. And I may remind you, perhaps, that he says to the young Timothy, he says, remember, Timothy, remember Jesus Christ as risen from the dead.

Whenever you think of Jesus Christ, think of him as risen from the dead. This is important, beloved.

Many, many think of him as Jesus. Now, of course, he was, he was, blessed be his holy name. But Paul says, remember Jesus Christ as risen from the dead.

Why? Beloved saints of God, all power is arrested in that man who has come to death. Of course it is. All love is there, beloved saints of God. String yourself into your heart and mind. How he loves the church. He gave himself for it.

He lives on high for it, beloved. And he's coming back for it. So it is well worth having your eye on this furious man, don't you think? [00:15:03] Lift up our eyes, blessed God, we might say. Oh, lift up our eyes to that furious man who is adorning the Father's throne of disability. Well, in verse, in verse one, I did mention, I did, that there are all kinds of people mentioned.

I haven't got time really to tell you much about it. But you notice there are servants, there are saints, there are bishops and there are deacons. They're all included. There were bishops and deacons in those days. Certainly there were Philippi. And we might say, why are they all singled up? Well, he naturally singles himself up because he says he's a servant. You know when he's telling a clergyman about himself and how the light shone on him, and a voice came from heaven, and the voice said, the voice said, he was going to make Paul a servant.

I owe this to another Greek scholar I didn't meet. [00:16:02] But do you know what the word is? He says to the clergyman, he says to the clergyman, he made me a, a, lord of slaves.

He put me in the slave camp.

And he gave me a great big oar to pull. And I was chained as they are, they were in those days. And they were chained to the oar. And there was a man with a whip and a match. And they had to keep their rhythm, as you know. They rode the barge o'er both o'er.

Says the great apostle to our baptist, he made me a noble lord of slaves.

He was a servant.

He was humble. He was a bond of slaves.

Lessons for us blabbers say to God, what can it speak to itself of? It speaks to the conscience, of course. So he addresses, this is the man who speaks.

And he addresses the saints of God, all the saints of God, including ourselves, of course. And then in case we might, it might be thought [00:17:03] that the mature man, like a bishop, is not included, he makes sure he is included. And in case the busy man, the deacon, might think, he's not included, Paul says, oh yes, he is included. And so he addresses the saints and the bishops and the deacons. No excuse, so to speak.

No reason can be given as to why what he has to say shouldn't be listened to.

Neither is there, beloved, for you and I. However little we understand it, there it is before us as a sure guide, before us as we run this Christian race with our objective up there in the glory and pray God, allowing nothing to come in and tempt us to deviate one on from the path which the scripture set out

before us. Well then we have, as I've said before, Christ as our object in this, he develops it a little later down our life, [00:18:02] or Christ our motive sometimes it's been called. But in chapter two, you may recall, we have Christ as our pattern. And in chapter three, Christ as our power. And in chapter four, you have Christ as useful, we might say, in pressure.

Not because we're gone, beloved saints of God, but first of all he wants us to understand what the objective is.

And we're the energy lovers. And this is the life that is in Christ Jesus. And so we go on to verse two. He speaks of grace immediately, you know. We often pass over little words like this. But you know, sometimes it's just as well to carry a moment and ask yourselves, what do we know about grace? What is grace, beloved here? May I suggest it is love in activity.

There's action, there's function here. This is what he's after, you see, activity. All there are many activities in the world today. Don't tell me, beloved here, wherever I go I'm told I'll visit a yoke. [00:19:01] But grace, then, is a real activity, faulted, motivated by grace. The activities of the new life, the life of Christ. The energy of God, the Holy Spirit within. And so in verse two, he speaks of, he desires that they should have grace, peace, and so on, from the Lord Jesus Christ.

You notice it in verse one, as a four line expression, don't you? In Christ Jesus. I'm not stopping to explain that. I'd like to point out, you never get an if when you're in Christ Jesus. You couldn't. That means the circumference, you see, is in Christ Jesus, and all that are within. It simply means you've been taken out of heaven, and you've been put under another headship, so to speak, so you're now in Christ Jesus. So there are no ifs when it comes to Christ in you, there are all ifs. But when you're in Christ Jesus, beloved, there's no ifs. It's positive, it's finished, it's eternal, it's set. Well, he thanks God, you notice. Could I have a word on prayer? [00:20:02] It is the best time. I'm always in every prayer, it says of mine, for you. So he prayed for these people. You notice that? He prayed and made requests for them with joy. He remembered what kind of people they are. As it occurs to you, beloved saints of God, if you pray for a brother, or you pray for a sister, you'll find your eyes are being opened. There's the wants of Christ in him. The trouble with us, beloved saints of God, the reason why we criticize one another is because we don't pray for one another. If we pray for one another, our eyes will be opened, we'll see Christ in them.

And that's what we are exhorted to do. That's why it's so easy to fall to the Pauline exhortation, to think so little of oneself and so much of our brother. You can do that quite easily. Look at yourself, what sort of person are you? Look at your brother, what sort of person is he? Why? He's a man with Christ in him. What's your sister? She's a woman with Christ in her. That's it.

And this comes about by praying, beloved. You know, I wonder sometimes whether we realize [00:21:01] what tremendous power there is in this question of praying to the blessed God.

Here's the very source of power, beloved. Often weakness is to be traced to the fact that prayer is absent.

Notice the prayer meetings where you go about the Council. You will find the Gospel preaching perhaps will be little to what they're owed. When it comes to the prayer meeting, not only will you all be there when I say a psalm to you, I'm only talking about nuns. Spirit of my Savior, remember, when he was asked the secret of his ministry, why he said the secret is down there, you see those horses

there, where they often come around and pray together to the Gospel. That's the secret. He said that's the power, beloved.

Yes. Prayer, beloved, has tremendous effect, not only in securing God's answer, but in the sort of subjective work he does with it, giving you open your eyes to see that the person you're praying for, after all, [00:22:03] he belongs to Christ and Christ is in him. And then you go on to see the features of Christ coming out in that person, and you forget to criticize him. You forget to talk about him when he's not there. Isn't it marvelous how these things work out? And so he said always in every prayer of mine to you, making requests of joy, to your fellowship in the Gospel. He didn't say he's giving thanks because they were good Gospel preachers, but he touched on the question of fellowship in the Gospel. If you're really interested in this book, you will find he often makes reference to the Gospel. He talks about the Gospel. Here it is the fellowship of the Gospel. Very soon he will tell us he's set for the Gospel.

It's not another expression we may have a chance to come to, but here it's the fellowship in the Gospel. A wonderful word this is, isn't it? A wonderful term to have fellowship in the Gospel because, beloved, instead of marking off one or two, [00:23:03] you have to mark the platform. It includes it all. We can all have fellowship in the Gospel. Oh, beloved, I wonder whether in real life that in a sense the success of the Gospel is resting upon this question of fellowship in the Gospel.

So the sister and the brother join together in fellowship in the Gospel.

We see things evolving fast, don't you think? If somehow rather under the direction and guidance of God the Holy Spirit, some of these features were brought out in all lives as we wait for His coming. Well, he's a confident man in verse. See, do you notice that? He's confident. This is what he's sure of. He's quite sure, he says, that he who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

You know our Lord Jesus Christ has a day of coming, don't you? [00:24:01] You know he's got a day of triumph coming? Well, he has.

And Paul says, if God has begun a work in your soul, he says, he's going to pick it up until the day when this triumphant Christ celebrates his triumph.

Always a kingdom across, thousand years if you will. It's certainly ahead, but there it is. He's confident of this, that if God has picked somebody up, as he did in Philippi, he picked up the gentle-hearted Lydia, as we call her, he picked up the hard-hearted Jailor, and he's the elender God, of course he won't let them go.

They're going to present it one day, aren't they? In the day of Jesus Christ.

See, they will come up.

Even he says, it is in me for you to think this of you all. Well, that's a verse which has, unfortunately, been mistranslated, as I read to you.

But I'd like to link with this, if I may, [00:25:02] what we read in Luke 2.

Notice what it says.

He's confident that he which has begun a good work, that his work has been begun, and he's confident it's going to be carried on and carried on until the day of Jesus Christ.

So I tell you to look to the Lord, not because in any sense it is directly related to Philippians, but as a kind of supporting scripture, as an example of how God picks up a man and then directs him in his way and in his service.

You remember, I only read one verse, and that's quite sufficient. The Lord said to the sick and halting man, you remember, they brought him to Jesus, they let down him, you remember, through the roof, and Jesus said, I see it not forgiven, and they objected, they said, what's he talking about? They expected him to cure the man first, but of course, the Lord Jesus went to them, sinned to the malady, and he wanted to cure the sin to the malady [00:26:03] first equation of sin, and so this is what he does. And that's all very well for the moment, but now when we get to the verse I read to you, you may remember the Lord said to the man, I'm right, I'm assuming, beloved, that the right embraces all that he's done for the man. He's done a tremendous amount for the man, so much he has in your favor, he's done a tremendous amount for you, and you and I cannot care for him, we must make all our lives occupied in what he's done for us, and that's what keys one's soul, that's what trifles one's imagination. Because there's something else in you, only you and I can play a role in it. Not only has Christ done something for you, he wants to do something in you.

You see this? And if you want to minister the work of God, you want the life to do the work with you, in other words, you will meditate with him. Are you carrying a bed above you? Are you carrying about something that's hindering the coming in of God?

[00:27:02] Hindering the entry of God into the Holy Spirit? Something in your life perhaps, which if you was to give up, would be like wrapping up your bed and carrying it away.

There is hardly one of us who can really look this person in the face and say that we are guiltless.

We handle things, we handle things, especially things perhaps that characterize our life as all-inconverting.

But if we want to arise and walk as he wants in that verse, a man to do what a man does, we have to carry our bed away. The reason why some of us are not walking very fast is we've got too heavy a load on our backs. We are not carrying our bed, or if we are, we're finding too much of it. Now, the Lord said, take it away, take it off, get rid of it.

Are you carrying your bed or not? And I asked the question a second time. Are you carrying the bed? You said, what do you mean by a bed? [00:28:02] Well, are you carrying something that's hindering the work of God's Holy Spirit within you? It might be all sorts of things.

Studying, poetry, music, any sort of thing might come to you. Just one thing somehow is not between your soul and the blessing of God.

Now, he said, take it away, take it off, take it away. Arise, I've done all this for you.

Walk, I'll do the same to you.

A very good caption, of course, for a victim would be Ephesians 4, 1, where he speaks of the offering.

What's it?

Now, quote it. I mean by me, Peter Miskolc.

Therefore, the prisoner of the Lord beseeched you, he walked well into the vocation wherewith you are called. That's it.

You could very well write that over all Philippians, because this is what it's all about. It's a question for the saints of God of walking down here [00:29:02] in the unfettered energy and liberty of God the Holy Spirit. And to this end, he wants you and I to lay aside every weight and to press on, on this race, because if you're a runner at all, you know, you've got to strip for the race. I used to do a lot, I'll admit. When I was a youth, long distance racing, we wore as little as we could at once, we did. How senseless to carry a heavy weight. How the boys would have laughed if I'd have put a weight on my shoulder and joined them in the long distance race. Of course, you throw it aside, if you're one cent of a larger in a race, and you've got an objective, and you're striving to reach it, then you drop everything.

You pack your bag up and take it away.

It might be hard, it might be difficult, but it's hindering the outflow of the energy of God the Holy Spirit and the loving. If we're to be here for him, we have to get rid of him. That's the long and short of it.

[00:30:02] I must turn over to the Gospel. Time doesn't wait for us.

Now in verse 7, you notice he once again gets back to the Gospel.

He talks about the defense of the Gospel and the confirmation of the Gospel. Now the defense of the Gospel, of course, would be what Cardinal Newman called the Apologia.

You remember he wrote a large book he called the Apologia.

That is the reason why he took a particular course in his life.

Well, Paul says, I'm out for the defense of the Gospel. Let me buy words.

He defends the Gospel.

But now look, and confirmation of the Gospel. Blimey, how do you confirm the Gospel? By your life. It's all there is to be a good talker, but you've got to be a good liver, blimey.

You've probably heard from this platform rather say, we don't want Christianity in books, we want it in books.

[00:31:01] You need to be a good runner, blimey.

You need to be one whose life honors and glorifies the Gospel which you proclaim.

This is what Paul says. He said, I'm set for the defense of the Gospel. I'm quite prepared to stand and talk about the Gospel.

It happens he's prepared to argue about it.

But there's one other thing he says, the confirmation of the Gospel. You live the life, beloved, and confirm what you talk. This is a marvelous thing, but yet this is an elementary thing. This is the very ABC of Christian running, that you do that which you say.

Somebody once said, you know, my dear brother, you talk so loud that I can't hear what you say.

I think that's a quotation of somebody, but what he meant was, you all talk, and no do.

Now Paul says, I'm not like that. I'll talk when the need be, but it's imperative that I also confirm the Gospel [00:32:01] by my life.

Somebody come into your house, beloved, they see anything that doesn't confirm the Gospel that you're talking about when you're on the platform, anything at all that doesn't underline and glorify a risen Christ that the glorious died for this world altogether, died out of it, and gone back to a brother's spirit. I say, do we confirm the Gospel, beloved? It's absolutely imperative, you see, that we confirm what we say, confirming that is by our manner of living.

Now, 1st Angel, in a sense, sets the tone to the whole epistle because he says, in his record, how greatly he longed after them, that is, there was love in his heart, in his heart for these loving people in Philippi.

Now, when we get to verse 10, he sort of, so to speak, raises a standard. Verse 10.

There's the standard he brings up. He says, [00:33:01] I want you to approve things that are excellent.

I want you, he says, to approve all the things that are excellent. He says, I want you to be sincere. That's all.

Now he says, I want you to be without offense. That's then.

Until the day of Christ.

Go back again to it.

I want you, he says, to be a connoisseur of Christianity. I want you to understand and live out the best.

I want you to go in for that which is mature.

Beloved saints of God, have you made me grow spiritually, say, over the past year? This is what Paul is after. He wants us to grow spiritually. He wants us to become more and more mature as life lingers on, so to speak.

And so he says, this is what I'm after. He says, I love you.

No question at all about that. But he says, I want to see you make some progress.

[00:34:02] New Philippians. I want to see you going for what is best. I want maturity to come up among you.

And I want you to be sincere because God is dealing with you and you're dealing with God. And sincerity is demanded. And I also want you to be without offense because the public, so to speak, the world is all around you and arriving upon you. And he doesn't want you to do anything which has the appearance of evil.

I'm afraid I've left Mr. Cook without a chapter. He says, being filled with the fruits of righteousness.

I often tally in my own reading over this little expression, fruit, because, you know, we sometimes get confused in our minds between service and fruit.

Now, fruit is spontaneous.

Fruit comes off a tree, as you know.

An apple tree bears apples and a pear tree bears pears.

It's the natural, spontaneous result.

[00:35:01] When they, when Joseph gave his parable, you remember, he and they wanted a tree to reign over the tree to be a king. They went, first of all, to the olive tree woman and wanted him, the olive tree, to be king.

He said, no!

Why should I be king? Why should I lead the spontaneous production of olives which are crushed and made into oil? Give me your behalf and I'll give you the holy tree. Why, he says, should I lead the justified promotion from your hands? He says, I'm not going to. And so they went to the vine, what do you call it, fig tree, and the fig tree said, why should I lead? Why should, tell me, why should I give up serving God down here in this way on which he approached just to be promoted to a king, to be over you? Failing there, you may remember, they went to another tree. It was the vine. The vine said, why should I give up?

Why should I stop creating that vine which brings [00:36:01] joy to the heart of God and men? If God has put me here to produce wine or grapes, I'll go and produce it.

You may attack me, you may suddenly seek to take me off my path by offering me a kingship, a crown.

I'm not prepared to take it. I understand. God has put me here, first in the case of the first tree, to produce olives and olive oil, the second to produce sweetness, and the third to produce joy, and we are not prepared to live here even for a kingly throne.

They understood, beloved, the principle that if God has put you somewhere and given you the power to produce something, he expects you to do that, to be there.

And the only person that could get to be a king, you remember, was the vine. The whole thing had to be held up because it has no strength at all.

Well, the fruits, you see, I'm trying to tell you, the fruits are the spontaneous productive bodies [00:37:01] lying within. And, beloved, if the Christ, the God within, if the energy and power of that life is within and active, if the spirit of God is active and permitted to work, then the fruits that are being produced in your life are spiritual fruits and they're well pleasing to God.

I would drop down, I think, to the verses. Well, I would have you to understand, brethren, that the things which happen unto me are all about rather under the verdant of the gospel. A very simple version, doesn't mean much of it. But do you know what it means below the knee?

What he's saying is this.

I'm taking no account of any cause at all.

I'm not even saying to myself, [00:38:01] go down to Jerusalem and have my head shaved, I shouldn't be here. Here I am in this filth and dirt of prison and I needn't have been here at all. If I hadn't been so serious to go down to Jerusalem, take a vow and get into all that trouble. But he doesn't say that. He doesn't look at second causes. He looks at the first cause. But I would listen to that. Or not looking at second causes is not right. But looking at the first cause. At all first causes.

He doesn't take any account of the first. It's a good principle.

It's a good thing to bear in mind. He says, I'll read it again. I will have you understand, brethren, the things which happen to me. Unto me, therefore, that I will go unto the first things of the gospel. What are you talking about, Paul? You're down in that filthy dungeon, Roman dungeon, and you're telling me that the gospel has not been hidden thereby? But that is the truth, and I'm going to speak to God. You see, God got him in the dungeon because he was better off in the dungeon with Christ, and he would have been [00:39:01] anywhere without him.

In a sense, as Paul came out of the dungeon, they came out of the third heaven. Paul went up to the third heaven. But, beloved, all he got out of that was his sacred servant.

But Paul went into the dungeon. And what did you get out of the dungeon? All these wonderful epistles.

The results of a man being chained down there.

This is wonderful. So you see why he was not particularly concerned about second causes? He might have said, no, if I hadn't been so silly and done this and done that, I would have been this, that, and

the other. But that doesn't matter, beloved. God had him where he was.

God would smash on and take his use. And the result of his being incarcerated in prison was that you have what we call a prisoner's message.

The very cream of the news. You never would have imagined, beloved, that there had been a man chained to a corpse, perhaps, in a Roman dungeon.

This is how God works.

He wants us to understand this.

[00:40:03] It's a great principle.

Now, 13, he's glad enough to agree that the news has gone around he's not a criminal.

It's one thing to be in prison because you deserve to be there, and it's another thing to be in prison and you don't deserve to be there. And the news has gone around that man, Paul, is not a criminal.

I'll tell you why he's there, they're saying one to another in Rome. I'll tell you why he's there. He's there because he's talking about the man who was jurisdictioned between two thieves on his way back in Jerusalem, and he says he's a liar. That's why he's there.

Now we drop down to verse 19.

Again, prayer comes in.

I know this, that you'll turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Two things.

His salvation, his reckoning, [00:41:01] is depending upon two things. It's depending, firstly, he said, on your prayer, and then he says it's depending on the supply of the Spirit of Christ.

You see, he knew the supply of the Spirit of Christ.

Do you know what the Spirit of Christ is? You have to read the Gospels. The Spirit of Christ probably took him right through every difficulty, problem, and trial, and sorrow. It took him all the way to the cross. The Spirit of Christ was a victorious spirit. It was an overcoming spirit.

And so it is, all prayers, and the Spirit of Christ, that's it.

That spells what? That spells the word salvation.

Prayers of the saints, the supply of the Spirit, spells salvation for the servant of God.

He says in verse 10, that he's not ashamed. You may remember when writing to Timothy, [00:42:01] he

says to Timothy, he said, don't you be ashamed, Timothy. And then he said, I'm not ashamed. And then he said, well, then some of us are ashamed.

He said, I'm not ashamed.

Here he says, according to my own and in nothing I shall be ashamed.

But as always, I'd like you to notice this expression, always, not Lord's Day only, not the midweek only, or Sunday, but always and always.

So now also Christ shall be magnified, he says, in my heart, whether it be by life or by death.

You see how the whole map was so much food and utterly wrapped up in the ascension of Christ.

He didn't mind what happened to him. Whether it's in his body, or whatever it would be, it didn't matter at all to him as long as Christ was glorified.

You know, when I've been saying to God often, [00:43:01] we are standing on our dignity, aren't we? And more concerned about how it affects me than how it affects Christ or God.

Paul said, I don't mind what happens to me. He put me away and chopped my head off. He says, I'm not ashamed, and I've always desired that Christ shall be magnified in my body. Whether I live or whether I die, the supreme desire is, Christ might be glorified.

What a supreme objective this man had. What a one-eyed man he might say he was. How openly deposed this great apostle was to the person whom he served. We can understand this, of course, because he was picked up by the heavenly man, you remember, on the Damascus Road, and he never forgot it, and this is how he lived.

This is, of course, the next verse, 21, is the key to the whole of this. He says, for me to live, [00:44:04] he says in verse 21, is Christ, and to die is gain.

That is to say, his life, the course of his life, was Christ.

The object of his life was Christ.

And the character, that which characterized him as he walked, or ran, rather, this particular race, home on, that too was characterized by Christ.

For me, he says, to live is Christ.

He says, and to die?

Well, he says, if I die, what?

He said, well, I shall have more of Christ. What can you do with a man, beloved? What can you do with a man? For when he lives or dies, he says, it's Christ. Well, why do you chop my head off? I will have more of a man, I'm waiting to see. I'm getting Christ now.

But you chop my head off, I'll have more of Christ. So he said, I don't mind, if I live or I die.

And when he comes to the tribunal before Caesar, [00:45:02] he judges himself, and he passes it on, a sentence.

He doesn't take it down, that's his deal, or Caesar, whoever it was. He said, I'm going to stay. How did he know?

He did.

Just knew.

Well, surely, Caesar will have the last word. No, Caesar won't have the last word. The last word, beloved, will be with his Christ, his beloved Christ.

You see, then, you may recall, I put out some years ago in a book called The Supreme Orthology, which was a collection of WSW's papers, Westcott's papers.

The very first page, you may recall, is a letter by Mr. Westcott that tells what happened to him when he first landed in Africa. The cardinal said, we don't want you here. He said, we are undertaking the religious needs of the Belgian people, the Congo people, [00:46:01] and you're not wanting to be here. You have to go. Mr. Cardinal said, he referred to Mr. Pope, and Pope said, you'll have to go.

And the local, the King Leopold was referred to, when he arrived in Paris, in Belgium, the matter was brought up. These Westcott brothers, they'll have to go.

So they have to go. And she goes back, King Leopold, and the orthology say, you've got to go, Westcott.

Then the British consul took it up. He said, OK, Westcott, you rang me, you can check around, and I'll see if you stay here. Now, that was a no-shout test at all.

They didn't succumb.

They said, no, nobody's going to send us. If Christ is over the door, nobody can close it.

And so what do you do?

You entertain a native brother from the very sea, because a brother, all those years ago, simply said, no, if God does His work, [00:47:02] He will see to it.

The supreme authority in the hearts of the Westcott brothers was Christ.

Pope, Cardinal, King, Ambassador, British representative, they had nothing.

The only one who could send them all was Christ.

He said, no, we deliver Christ's dying name, says Paul.

He doesn't know.

He's his own judge, so to speak. He's his own jury. He passes his own sentence. He said, I'm going to stay with them. That's in verse 24.

But he still has confidence, you know, in verse 25, that he's going to continue with them. Again, it's a question of the advance of their faith.

He's always out to see for their making progress.

And finally, in verse 27, [00:48:02] we begin his lovely final exhortation of chapter 1.

He says, let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ. You can't get away from the gospel of Christ. Now, I point out, beloved hearing, that the gospel of Christ is something more than taking the good news for sinners. The gospel of Christ is a very expressive term, expansive term, one might say. Could I sit in a way that every little bit of news would come from that? It's all the gospel of Christ. So, he says, let your conversation be consistent with the good tidings of Christ.

That's a wonderful way.

A lovely way to talk, isn't it? To talk about everything.

This is what he taught the Philippians. Now, you know as well as I that in Philippi, Satan was there. And Satan's got a big wedge in his hand. And he was trying to get the thin edge of the wedge under the door. You get it in every chapter. Satan is desperate to work [00:49:01] at Philippi to get the thin edge under the door.

And here's the first suggestion you get in verse 27.

Stand fast in one spirit.

He says, with one mind.

This is what Satan's on.

We can only get the saints to disagree.

Then he had overcome confidence. And he had destroyed our faith. So, we're now the saints of God. Let's take the word of God. If there's any disagreement among the saints of God, let us see that Satan's eye is at the weight in between the Christians, the people of God, so that he can disrupt and possibly destroy.

Every chapter we shall find, as we go through the epistle, he has something to say about this wayside. The danger, the real very acute danger of wrecking the whole assembly. In this case, just because two sisters disagreed. Who would have thought that a disagreement between two sisters could wreck an assembly? [00:50:01] But Paul recognized this as a work of faith. And he saw the dire results of this would be that if they went on their way, then the assembly would suffer. I'm not debating that, though. I'm just pointing out that in verse 27, you get the first suggestion of what's in

his mind. And that is to be of one mind. Now he talks of striving, but he's striving for the faith of the gospel. Well-plumbing saints of God. The time has come. Whether it appeals to you as a word from the Holy Spirit. I'm talking about the chapter, of course, a word from the Holy Spirit in order to encourage you in this race, this desire to magnify Christ in your life and embrace the truth that are presented to us here and our affections captivated by the thought [00:51:01] that the supreme object for the Christian affection is the ascended Lord and Father of Christ and of all his children.