

Islands Study Conference (am)

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Date: 24 April 2017

Preacher: Rev. James MacIver

[0 : 00] It's a great pleasure and privilege to be back here again. I was here not so long ago and thoroughly blessed through that experience.

And we're going to worship God together now, firstly singing in Psalm 71. Psalm number 71, that's from the Scottish Psalter. And we'll sing verses 1 to 8 and it will come up on the screen.

O Lord, my hope and confidence is placed in thee alone. Then let thy servant never be put to confusion. And let me in thy righteousness from thee deliverance have.

Cause me escape and climb thine ear unto me and me save. And so on through to verse 8. Psalm 71, O Lord, my hope and confidence is placed in thee alone.

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[1 : 09] Then let thy servant never be put to confusion.

And let me in thy righteousness from thee deliverance have.

God, my hope and confidence is placed in thee alone. God, my hope and confidence is placed in thee alone. God, my hope and confidence is placed in thee alone. You are in the world. God, my hope and confidence is placed in thee alone. And so on through the earth that you are in thee alone.

He vowed my dwelling rock to which I ever may restore.

The grace of God led me to sin, for Thine my walk and forth.

[2 : 37] Free me, my God, from wicked hands, but true and unjust.

For Thine, O Lord, Thine art my hope, and brought my youth, my trust.

Thou from the wounded Sonia, Thou art the same at me.

Thou taught my mother's foes too, I ever will praise Thee.

To many I have wondered how, but Thou find refuge strong.

[4 : 08] Thee, O Lord, Thine art my hope, and with Thy grace. And honor all day long.

Now we're going to call upon the Lord in prayer. Let's all join together in prayer. Lord, our gracious God, our Father in heaven, we come into your presence to worship you at this time.

And to worship you not only in the thoughts of our hearts individually, the expression of our lips in praise, but also collectively as we join together and come together with seeking a unity of mind and purpose in our worship here this morning.

Lord, we thank you for the reminder in these words of praise we have sung. Not only that it is becoming of us to worship you and to praise you, but also the challenge that you set before us, that our mouth may be filled with your praise even all the day long.

We give thanks, O Lord, for all that makes you worthy of our praise, for the beauty and perfection that belongs to you as our God. And for the way in which you have revealed this to us in your word, this written word that we have.

[5 : 41] Lord, we thank you for the word that you have breathed out for us, where you have given us so much about yourself and about ourselves, about our relationship with you, with the world around us and with things eternal.

We thank you, Lord, that in giving us your word that you have had such a regard for us and for our well-being that we acknowledge now in praise.

We bless you, O Lord, that you have sent your word to us in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ, who was made flesh, the eternal word who came in the process of time in this world to bring God to us in his own person.

We thank you that your written word reveals to us that he is the substance of the gospel. And we bless you today as we come to worship you and as we come in recognition of that gospel and its provision for us, that you are indeed its foundation and its very heart.

We praise you, O Lord, today that you have given us this further opportunity, that you have given us the means by which we can praise you, that you have given us the conditions by which we are able to gather together here, free from interruption and persecution, and so much that affects our fellow believers in the world today.

[7 : 14] And yet, O Lord, we recognize that even in those conditions, that you give to them the resolve to maintain their witness to you and to maintain their conviction that you alone are God and that your wisdom has planned all the things that take place in our lives and in the course of history.

We thank you today, Lord, that you are risen from the dead, having accomplished that atoning death which you came into this world to accomplish and by which we know that you have provided for our sins that provision that you alone could give, so that our sin could be covered and forgiven, that we could be before you righteous and acceptable to you, that we could have, O Lord, a life that lives in hope of better things in a better country than we have in this world.

We thank you for the reality of those things that are yet to be revealed and that because we know we can depend on your word, they are as sure for us in believing as the things that we can see with our natural eyes.

And we thank you, Lord, that they are actually more lasting for the things of this present order, this present world, and even of our own lives in it will ultimately give way and will be replaced by that which is lasting and which is eternal.

And so we pray that you would even at this time, Lord, during this hour of worship, help us, we pray, to focus on those things which are unseen, on those things which are spiritual, on those things that belong to the kingdom and the rule of Christ and the promises that he has given to his beloved people.

[9 : 02] Bless this congregation, we pray, continue to provide for them in every way that they need that provision in the Gospel, help them, Lord, to be encouraged in your ways in serving you.

And grant to the ministry of the Gospel as it is proclaimed here by your servant, as it is witnessed to by your people in these communities. Bless it, we pray, and bless all the service that they give to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grant your blessing today to all gatherings of your church throughout the world. Help us, Lord, to know that your church is united by one Spirit, under one Father, and under the Lordship of the one Christ.

And enable us to rejoice in that. And help us, we pray, to constantly seek to maintain in our own station, in our own sphere of activity and service, whatever we are, wherever we are in serving you, whatever denomination or congregation we may belong to, Lord, enable us, we pray, to carry through what you require of us through your word, to maintain the unity of your Spirit in the bonds of peace.

We ask that your blessing will be today with those who need you in illness, in bereavement, in sorrow, in loss, in loneliness, under persecution or trial or affliction.

[10 : 27] Always, Lord, affliction of human lives. We are so conscious that this world is filled with pain, and so many things that cause us distress. And we ask that you be with your people especially, and that you would grant to them today the sense of your presence and the reassurance of your love.

Continue with us, Lord, we pray now. Go before us and help us in this service and through this day to present it to you in our activities in it as a day that we regard and find precious as holy unto the Lord.

We ask these things, seeking pardon of all our sin, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, this is a word to the children at this point.

I think they're all probably gathered at the front of you. Go over here. Come right in front. Come right in front. Come right.

Come right in front of us. Come right in front of us. Now, this is the first thing. Come right in front of us. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Here, let's go. That's great.

[11 : 41] Fantastic. I wish I could be dealing with that with me, I saw it. Hey, hey. Does anybody like birds?

Or one sheep birds, or they birds? That's what we do. What's your favourite bird? What's a bird's palace? What's your favourite bird?

A parrot. That's wonderful. That's a pet bird, is it? Do you have a pet parrot? Or do you just like them? Okay, parrots are pretty great.

Parrots are a match. But they're wonderful birds. They're really colourful. And they also can't talk about it. They teach them how to do it.

What's your favourite bird? A pet. A pet. I like pet. Why do you like pet? They do look nice, aren't they? They're very cute. And especially when everyone's seen them.

[12 : 40] All these wee fish in their mouths. They go to keep their animals. A wood pet. A wood pet. A wood pet. It has a big weakness.

It's a fetch. It's a taco weed as well. How does it do? A zoo. A poo. You keep that mostly light. I think a lot of people who are favourite it. Papa is removes the ■us. What would you like that one? A nice red dress. It's a boggle of red.

Okay, lots of different. I'm sure if I asked the folks there, they were all different. I guess it's one of my favourite birds for us. Well, I think it's probably one of my favourite, not the favourite. You'll find it down on the shore.

It's got a black ring around its neck. It's not a very big bird, it's a small bird. And it's called a ringed plough. And it makes its nest in gravel. Or little stones down the shore. And you know, it's really, really hard to find its nest.

[13 : 44] Because its eggs are almost the same as little stones in their back. It's really hard to find it. But if you're still looking for them, you can probably find a really nice sweet bird.

And I like the fact that when you go near to where its nest is, you know what it does? You know what it does? It actually walks away and pretends it's got a broken leg. And it gets you to follow it. Because it pretends, yeah I am, you can catch me. And all the time it's taking you away from the nest with the chicks over the eggs. Clever isn't it? See if you can find a ringed plough. Next time you're on the shore, you'll see if you can find your nest well.

One day I was out fishing. And I was fishing on a loft way out in the wood.

In Lewis, the blocks, after all the area. In Lewis, the halfway from the wood. So because I had a loft, a long way from the road, probably about 45 minutes or so. It was really, really quiet.

[14 : 46] Really, really still and quiet. And I was fishing away there. There was a little island just a little bit out from where I was standing at the edge of the lot. And that little island had lots and lots of big, big bushes and small trees on it.

Absolutely covered with the stuff. Then I was enjoying the silence. Then all of a sudden I heard this shonch. And a big flash into the branches of the woods.

Anybody guess what it was? That was a bird. It was a bird. It was a kind of bird. There was actually two birds. First of all, a tiny little spout and went flying into these bushes.

and then the noise was really made by this hawk that was chasing it and just made it into the bushes before the hawk crashed into the bushes. You know, hawks can't do anything in the bushes.

They're great up in the sky, in the open sky, because they can move very fast, fly very fast. When they get into the trees, they can't catch the birds and they're not made for enough.

[15 : 49] That's why the little bird really made it into the trees. It knew if I get into these trees, I'm safe. And the hawk won't catch me. And the Bible tells us that God in Jesus Christ is a refuge for us.

We're safe when we have Jesus as our Savior. The devil cannot catch us. Our sins will not be held against us. Because we're safe in Jesus, he is our refuge.

Just let that little sparrow find safety in all of these bushes and the hawk could not catch it. So we are safe in Jesus. You know, I see a hawk up in the sky, and we find other birds flying around. Even beach birds like crows. Sometimes you'll find crows even trying to attack the hawk.

They'll begin to give you where they're nesting. But you will never find them above. You will never find them below the hawk. They'll always try to stay above. Why such a hawk? Why do you think they always try to stay above the level of the hawk?

Because if they go down underneath, where the hawk is, the hawk will catch them with its head claws. And Jesus is our safety. Not only are we safe, but we're really so well and rooted after that Jesus is our refuge.

[17 : 16] Okay, so remember when you're safe as I am, God is our refuge. We're thinking about Jesus, and how safe we are, and how well and rooted after we are, in Jesus.

Okay, see if you can find other birds in the Bible, other birds in Harris that teach you something about Jesus. We pray together.

Lord, we ask that you bless the children, and as they grow up under the gospel, and have taught the things of God, that you would help them to apply that in their lives, and that you would enable them even today to go on further to consider the wonderful truth of life in Jesus Christ.

Here is now a lesson we pray for Jesus' sake. Amen. Thank you. Well, our next singing is going to be in Gaelic. We're singing from Psalm 71.

The same psalm we had in English this time. We're singing in Gaelic, verses 15 to 17. These three verses from 15, verses which speak about, His tongue speaking of the righteousness of God and of His salvation all the day long.

[18 : 47] Lauri mo' veile l'artirantokst, the lanch, the lanch, the lanch, the lanch, the lanch, the lanch, the lanch, the lanch.

The lanch, the lanch, the lanch. The lanch. Pong I-m Battle h number Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[21 : 35] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

[23 : 53] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[26 : 37] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[27 : 37] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

These verses from 13.

for you O Lord created me you woke me on your gloom for you O Lord created me you woke me on your gloom by Ayam was■t you have born within my father's home he caused thy wonderful name with All your praise I tell

Your work on ship Is marvelous On this thy hopeful land When in the secret place My grave was there Before my earth You saw my body And the Lord Within the depths of earth And o'er the days That I should live Which you are paying for me Where risen in your work O Lord Before it came to me O God How precious Fire Your thoughts I stand and roam afar And thus I seek To trust them all How numberless they are

[31 : 31] Where I took count Than they would be More than the great capsule When I awake I am And with you still stay within your hand.

Will you turn with me now please to the passage in 1 Corinthians. We read together from 1 Corinthians 16 and we'll read again at verse 13.

I'd like to just give some thought to verses 13 and 14. This morning. Reading here from the authorised version, which is here on the stand.

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong, let all your things be done with charity. Or you could say, be watchful, stand fast in the faith, act like men, be strong, let all your things be done with love.

Or do everything in love. Now those of you at the conference, we looked at, during my particular topic, at two lectures, on what was fairly weighty theological issues.

[33 : 14] We were looking at the last things, for the benefit of those of you who were not at the conference, we were looking at the last things, which Signs of the Times was the title, and it included such things as the return of the Lord, the resurrection, and the final judgment.

These are all important and weighty doctrines, and there are some important doctrinal, as well as practical issues, attached to them. And we did say, in the course of these studies, as indeed with Hector Morrison as well, that whatever doctrines you have, whether it's expounding them, or just looking at them in the Scriptures, they always have a direct relationship to our practical Christian living.

They're not there just for our intellectual satisfaction, they're there for our practical daily lives. And so I want to, this morning, just look at how the doctrines that Paul is dealing with, and especially in the previous chapter there, it's a very sustained treatment of the doctrine of the resurrection. But here in this chapter, he comes to apply all that he's been saying, not just there, but elsewhere in the epistle, in a practical way. And these two verses are really one of the ways in which he applies this.

Be watchful, stand fast in the faith, act like men, be strong, let all things, your things, be done in love, or with love.

[34 : 49] And I hope it's also, although it's a follow-on in a sense, in the practical sense of what we looked at in these studies on the conference, I hope it's a stand-alone study, if you like, for those of you who are not at the conference and belong to this congregation or wherever.

So we're looking at it as study in itself of these two verses and what Paul is saying. Now Paul, interestingly, does this all the time, doesn't he? He takes the great doctrines that he's dealing with and then he applies them practically.

Usually after dealing with them in the likes of Romans, you have a lot of chapters there dealing with doctrine, then he comes to the practicalities of it and applies them to a practical Christian life.

And it's the thing here, when he's finished dealing with the doctrine of the resurrection, he doesn't just say, therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast and move, of the Lord was abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

That's a very practical application of everything he's been saying. The word, therefore, shows you that he's drawing from everything he's said and now he's saying, this is really the practical result of it in your lives.

[35 : 56] And he doesn't even leave it at that. He immediately goes on to say, now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do you also on the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him.

Now there's no sense of embarrassment, no sense of it being out of keeping with what he's been saying about the resurrection and other doctrinal issues, that he's now coming to talk about a collection.

How often do we see our collection, our contribution, our giving to the Lord connected to some doctrine or other? Is it just an isolated event for us?

Is it something that we just do as a practicality? Or do we see it in relation to very important teaching in the way that these doctrines impinge upon our practical lives and responsibilities as Christians, including, as Paul says, the collection?

Well, what is he saying here? There are five points altogether that he's making. I hope it won't take too long over each of those. We'll need to just try and look at the five. First of all, he's saying, be watchful.

[37 : 07] Secondly, he's saying, stand fast or be steadfast. Thirdly, we could say, he's saying, be courageous. Act like men or could you like men?

Fourthly, he's saying, be made strong. Because we'll see, it's not just be strong, be made strong. And finally, be loving. Let everything you do be done with love.

Be watchful. And along with that, you could say, live by the word of Christ. Be watchful. Live by the word of Christ. Here's a church that's got problems.

Here's a church that's filled with doctrinal aberrations and heresies indeed. Here's a church that has problems in terms of the ethical standards that apply to their lives.

They have not actually been through to the way the gospel as pronounced by Paul and others have set that out for them. Here's a church as you read through these epistles of Paul to the Corinthians that have social problems.

[38 : 09] It's a church that's got real serious problems with competitions and factions and little cliques here and there following different leaders. Yet it's very, very interesting and important that when Paul writes to them, he writes to them as the saints of God, as those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus.

Right at the beginning of the letter, that's how he does it. He's not saying, you're not really saints, you're not living a very holy life, therefore I can't call you saints. He is saying, I'm writing this to you saints, because saints, in the way the Bible uses it there, in Paul's writings especially, it's not primarily those who live an eminently holy life practically.

Saints are those that God has set apart for himself. Those who belong to the church, who worship God in this world, who are singled out apart from the world as a people of God.

And you know, when he's trying to address the problems that they have, he's not saying, the way to do it is to think of yourselves as no longer saints. It's the very opposite. He's saying, you are saints. You are set apart by the grace of God. Therefore live accordingly. You see, you begin with what you are in Christ. If you want to ask, how should I live?

[39 : 28] You don't look at the practicalities of us first of all. You look at the doctrinal part of it. You're standing in Christ. You're righteousness in Christ. What God has done by his grace in Christ.

That's your starting point. What I am in Christ. And then, you ask, well, what must I now be like in my life? How must I live?

How must I speak? How must I relate to my fellow Christians? How must I relate to the world around me, to my neighbours, to my workmates? That's how he's dealing with it.

And on the basis of that, he's now saying, be watchful, live by the word of Christ. Because these people were actually tolerating things that they were actually proud of. Behaviour that they were coming to really take a pride in, that were very, very offensive, that was very, very offensive to God. They had not been on guard. They had stopped being watchful. They had left their posts.

[40 : 34] Paul is very often using military terms, and he's using that in these verses as well. We'll see that later with the courageous part of it. But he's saying here, be watchful.

Remember, Peter, when he was so strongly counseled by the Lord to watch and pray, along with the fellow disciples, that you do not enter into temptation, that you don't fall into temptation.

He'd been warned by the Lord that Satan was out to get them, and he had asked for them, and Jesus had prayed for them. But he singled out Peter as one to whom he specifically told this, because the Lord knew Peter's proneness not to be watchful.

And you know, Peter didn't listen. And because he didn't listen, he wasn't watchful. And because he wasn't watchful, he denied his Lord three times.

All goes back to be watchful, live by the word of Christ. Aren't we today? I'm not just talking about what we are here in this service, but I'm addressing myself, primarily, but yourselves through the gospel, through the word, to ask the question, am I alert spiritually?

[41 : 55] Am I dozing spiritually? In my personal life, as I live my life, do I read and do I pray every day? Do I consult the Lord? Do I make that one of my primary things in my Christian life, in my daily business of Christian living?

am I watchful? Do I realize just what sort of enemy we have? And you're all immediately thinking of Satan, I'm sure.

Well, you don't have to cross the threshold of your own heart to come across a source of temptation and enmity. You have it in the indwelling sin that's in your heart.

am I watchful against that? Am I aware today that the Bible calls sin deceitful? Am I watching against being taken in by the deceitfulness of sin?

We all know about the strength of sin and other aspects of sin and the offensiveness of sin, but are we watchful against its deceitfulness, against how easy sin sometimes find us?

[43 : 08] As in dwelling sin in ourselves, how easy it actually takes us aside, and even in our thoughts about other people, we've come sometimes very close to committing thoughtful murder by denigrating their name, by hatred, by spite, by jealousy, the things that characterize some of those people in Corinth.

Be watchful, live by the word of Christ. Secondly, be steadfast, because he's going on to say stand fast in the faith.

Be steadfast, maintain the gospel of Christ, because he's not talking here about the faith in terms of our faith personally as we believe, as we practice faith.

It's the faith, by which Paul means the doctrines of the gospel, the foundational things of the gospel, the things which we really stand upon as Christians, that are foundational truths that God has revealed to us.

Today we have the faith, very clearly specified for us in the Bible. We don't have any fundamental, foundationally important doctrines in the Bible that are unclear.

[44 : 25] You don't have to search and really find it difficult to have evidence in the Bible that Christ goes from the dead physically. We've been looking at that in the conference as one of the main points.

You don't have to go very far to realise that we are justified by faith in Christ, that we need to be holy without which we will not see the Lord. There are so many of these doctrines and all of these foundational doctrines like that, the grace of God, the judgment of God, that we have been dealing with and focusing on the things that we have been dealing with at the conference, but of course there are so many other foundational things.

As they are foundational, we are charged by God to actually maintain them, not to actually bury them or adapt them as we find so often done in Downsville.

The age is no different. This was a church that really had what you can call nowadays pluralism. They had imported other practices, borrowing from what was around them and Greek culture and attaching that just as Israel had done in the Old Testament all the years they were actually going along in the wilderness and out of Egypt and then into Canaan, importing all of these practices from the Canaan, adding it to their own.

You would never find them saying, we no longer believe in God. But it was God as they had then defined him. And you would never find them saying, we no longer believe in the relevance of worshipping God.

[46 : 02] But it was God as they had come to adapt the worship and the belief of God as they saw fit to their own generation. Isn't that what you're facing? Isn't that what something like Paul is saying here about the resistance that he and his fellow workers are actually facing as they go out with the gospel?

There is much, much opposition. opposition. And there is much opposition, even within the organized church, to a maintaining of the gospel fundamentals, the foundational doctrines of the gospel.

God is saying to you and to me as Christians, this is not just something for ministers, this is not something of an academic or just theological study or something for theologians, something for those who teach in our colleges or seminaries.

This is the ordinary Christian life, the everyday Christian life. Be watchful, live by the word of Christ, be steadfast, maintain the gospel of Christ.

Christ. So when people see us as Christians, they're not going to ask the question, well, do they believe that Jesus is alive or not? Of course they do.

[47 : 15] They should be able to say that about it because they see us coming together regularly to worship, to speak to, to pray to, and in our lives as well as we go about them.

So that's the second thing, be steadfast, maintain the gospel of Christ. Christ. We're skimming over them fairly quickly. Thirdly, he's saying, be courageous, stand for the honor of Christ.

He's saying, quit you like men, or you could translate it, act like men. Now this is not in any way denigrating women. People would actually say that that's one of the problems with Paul.

He had such a low view of women. That's actually rubbish. He didn't, neither did Jesus, neither does the Bible. In fact, the New Testament the gospel actually elevated women above the status and what they had in society at the time, where they were looked down on, where they were seen as objects just to be possessed, and used, and abused.

It's not the Bible that denigrates womanhood. It actually elevates it, especially when you go back to the account of the creation and so on. Well, the creation in Christ, the new creation in Christ, is very much about giving dignity to womanhood that God himself almost intended by his creation.

[48 : 36] Well, that's just a side. What he's saying here is actually a military term, because in Paul's day, of course, you would find mostly, if not always, men going to war. war.

And what he's got in mind here is, act like men. If the cause needs you, in terms of military activity in those days, you would never find any Roman soldier, any group of soldiers, counseled in any way, to suggest that when they were needed, whenever they would be needed to engage in a campaign, they didn't really have to go immediately, or they didn't have to think too seriously about it, or if they chose, well, you can stay at home, just let somebody else do it.

Act like men, is what they would have been told. Go and do your bit. Go to the front line if that's where you're needed. And act like men, act like soldiers.

We're told that in some cases, at least, that those of you who know culture things will know this better than I do, but I understand that in those days, a mother sending off a son to fight in a campaign would actually traditionally give him his shield.

And in giving him his shield, she would say, come back victorious with it, or come back on it. Come back victorious with it, or come back on it.

[50 : 08] In other words, don't duck the fight. Don't leave it to someone else to do the front line work that you should be there. And Paul, when he wrote to Timothy, one of the things he said to him, among many other things, was, take your own share of the afflictions of the gospel.

Act like men. Be courageous. Because the courage of faith is a courage that depends not on itself, but on the one who created that faith, the one who has promised to be with you, never to leave you or forsake you, as we heard so much from Hector's studies during the conference.

He's never going to leave you. He's true to his promise. And even if you feel all alone at the front line, and feel intimidated by everything around you, of the world, and of the opposition that you're facing in the world, if you are where Christ intends you to be, and he's with you, you can't be courageous.

You can't act like soldiers on the front line. You can't say, I can't do this, because Christ has put me here.

And I know that's where I'm meant to be. Indeed, one of the things that Paul was accusing the Corinthians of back in chapter 3, is they were really acting not like men, but like children.

[51 : 41] Is it not the case, he's saying, I wish I could write to you as more mature than you are, but I can't, because you're still acting like children. All of these disputes, all of these wranglings, all of these aberrations, all of these doctrinal defections, and especially the rivalries, the tension between the various groupings and columns, the way they were saying, well, no, my favorite is Paul, no, no, my favorite is Peter, and others would say, absolutely not, that's no use for me, my favorite is Jesus, and I'm following Jesus, and you have all of these cliques and factions going on, the rivalries, the jealousies, what is it all about, is that maturity?

No, he's saying, you're acting like children, you're not being courageous, you're not facing the world and the need that's there for the gospel to advance, you've gone in on yourselves, you're preoccupied with yourself, that's what the Corinthians were really like, and now he's saying to them, act like men, take your share of the fight, be where the Lord would have you to be, don't stand back from committing yourself courageously, in the courage of faith and dependence on Jesus.

You see, some people will say to you, especially those of a more atheistic or secularist mindset, they'll say to you, you Christians really aren't bold at all, you don't have the courage of just leaving your own minds as they're made up already, that's just something you've been taught to believe, why don't you actually have the courage of stepping out of that and thinking things secularly, thinking through things in a more open-minded way?

actually, what the Bible tells you is the very opposite of that. It's not really courage at all just to act in terms of the way as sinners we've been born into this world.

The courage is actually going in the opposite direction and saying, no, I really need to live by the standard of Jesus, I need to stand for the honour of Christ, I have a Lord who demands that I'm like the world.

[54 : 00] But I don't actually take on myself to say, well, these Christians have no courage at all, if they did, they'd step out, they'd become like us atheists. The atheist doesn't have courage, doesn't have the courage to face up to the possibility that he's a sinner in need of Christ, lost if he doesn't have Jesus, if they don't have Christ.

No, God gives us the courage, faith comes with courage, the courage that really stands up and says, I don't want to go back to the old life. I know that's not for me, because God has taught me that the way is to follow Jesus and stand for his honour.

There's also the third thing, be watchful, live by the word of Christ, be steadfast, maintain the gospel of Christ, be courageous, stand for the honour of Christ. Fourthly, be made strong, depend on the power of Christ.

Be strong, really, be strengthened, need. Because when we're strong, when we're thinking of courage, or when we're now thinking of strength, or being strengthened, what Paul has in mind is not make yourself strong.

It's not like you go to the gym regularly, and you start dealing with the weights, pounding the weights, or the treadmills, whatever other. You can tell I don't go to the gym, because I'm not really familiar with these, but our son's got a kind of mini gym at home, which he works at very faithfully, applies himself to it, and of course, you get the strengthening from that, the bulking up from that. [55 : 36] But it's not really like that in a Christian sense. Paul is not saying, if you carry out all of these activities, you make yourself strong. What he's saying is, yes, there are means of grace, there are exercises, there are activities, such as prayer, communion with Christ, fellowship, worship, all of these things.

They are there, but it's so that God will make you strong. You're not depending, at the end of the day, on having made yourself strong. If you are, you're pretty weak. Because if you're going to face the Lord, or face the devil, or face the sin in your own heart, with the idea, well, I've made myself strong against this.

You're not strong at all. What did Paul say when he wrote to the Philippian church, in chapter 4, where he was talking about an incredible thing.

He was saying, I have learned to be content in whatever state I am. He had learned that. It's something that he had come to learn through the course of his experiences.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. He didn't say, I can do all things in my strength because I'm in Christ.

[56 : 56] I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Who are we depending on today? Where's our strength from? Well, surely, it's from Jesus himself.

And daily we have to go out into whatever it is we're doing in the world and the church. We have to begin that day with the thought, now, I must today let Christ make me strong.

I must depend upon his strength. And, of course, in 2 Corinthians, Paul has that famous passage in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, where he talks there about being strengthened or having strength, where he's saying that this thorn in the flesh was given him, and he prayed for that.

He pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. No, he said, my grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Paul went on to say, well, then, when I am weak, then I am strong, because it's then that the power of Christ may rest upon me. And Paul is saying something quite wonderful thing there.

[58 : 13] He's saying, here's something that we don't have, the strength of God, instead of that we have a weakness. And here's something that God doesn't have, weakness.

And they're both brought together, the strength of God and our weakness, when his strength is made perfect in our weakness. Isn't that wonderful?

It's almost as if God is saying, well, here's this person, here's this saint, here's this Christian, and I see their weakness, and I'm going to shape my strength, my almighty, to their weakness, so that they will be made strong.

love. Be strengthened. Depend on the power of Christ. And finally, be loving. Look to the example of Christ.

Let all your things be done with charity, if you see in the A.V., but it's a good love, which is the word, really, that we associate with.

[59 : 22] Let everything be done in love or with love. When Paul wrote to the Colossians in chapter 3, as he was doing a list for them there of various things that they needed to take account of and live out in their lives, in chapter 3 and verse 14, what he was saying here, put on, therefore, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, whilness, forbade one another, forgiving one another, even as Christ forgave you, and above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.

In other words, he's got a picture there of love being the outer covering, if you like, that really holds all the rest together. Forgiveness, kindness, mercies, compassion, all things he's mentioning there as characteristics of a Christian life.

How are they held together? What is it that holds them together? What do you put over them so that they are really kept together in time? Love. In all your doings, he said, let it be done in love.

Because that's ultimately the example that Christ has set. when he washed it aside his feet, he asked the question, do you know what I have done to you? Later in the chapter of John 13, he says, as I have done to you, so you must do to one another.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. It's not any kind of love. It's not just mere human love that we have as our example. It's the love of Christ.

[61 : 10] The love that Jesus showed to us, the love that makes us beloved by God. We return to him in being loving.

And, of course, that means Christ likeness. That's one of the most challenging words in our whole vocabulary. Christ like.

Takes you completely out of yourself. because the more you are Christ-like, it means the less proud you are. The less you have of feuding or resisting forgiveness, selfishness, of apathy, of malice, of jealousy.

Christ-likeness is the answer to all our situations. situations. I'm not saying Christ-likeness is the answer to all of the problems.

The problems won't necessarily go away. Indeed, there might be more intensive, like intensification of problems, if you want to use the word, the more Christ-like a person.

[62 : 28] But Christ-likeness is the answer to all our situations. That's what he's saying there. in everything, let all your things be done with love.

Whether I'm in my home, in my study, in my sitting room, with my children, with my grandchildren, with my neighbors, with the church, my place of work, interacting with people of the world, he says, in all your things, let it be done in love.

And in love, we shall indeed be more like Christ than in any other. So these five points then, be watchful, live by the word of Christ, be steadfast, maintain the gospel of Christ, be courageous, stand for the honor of Christ, be made strong, depend on the power of Christ, be loving, look to the example of Christ.

And may God bless us today, and may he give us by his grace to know these things practically in our lives. We're going to conclude our worship singing in Psalm 56.

Psalm 56. Again, we're singing from the same Psalms verse. We're singing verses 9 to 13. When I call on you to help me, then my foes will turn aside.

[64 : 02] This is how I will be certain that my God is on my side. Verses 9 through to 13. When I call on you to help me. when I call on you to help me, then my thoughts will turn aside.

This is how I will be certain that my God is on my side.

In the Lord's word I honor, in my God I praise this word.

I will trust and not be fearful what can man do to me, Lord.

I have taken down before you, through my God I will be true.

[65 : 24] sacrifices of thanksgiving I will gladly give to you.

For you get my thing from stumbling and from death you set me free so that I may walk before you and the light of life may see.

Lord our God we seek your blessing to follow all that we have engaged in in your worship here today. We pray that you bless all that you provide for our bodily needs.

We pray that your grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit will be our portion now and always. Amen.