

So we'll stand to sing this item of praise. Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee. Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee. Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee. [16 : 58] Take my hope and set my days. Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee. My life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee. Take my hands and let them move By the impulse of thy love Take my feet and let them be Swift and beautiful for thee Take my voice and let me sing Always only for my King Take my lips and let them be Filled with messages from thee

Take my silver and my gold Not a life would I withhold Take my intellect and use Every power as thou shalt choose Take my will and make it thine It shall be no longer mine Take my heart, it is thy Lord It shall be thy royal throne Take my love, my Lord, I pour

At thy feet is treasured store Take myself and I will be Evermore, my Lord, I pour thee I will read now from Scripture We'll take our reading from Paul's letter to Philemon If you have our Bible with you It's open at the letter of Philemon The words appear on the screen I'm reading from the ESV version On the screen's ESV now There should be no difference in the words now Paul's letter to Philemon

We'll read through the whole of this letter It's just before the book of Hebrews New Testament So let's hear God's word Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus And Timothy, our brother To Philemon, our beloved fellow worker And Aphia, our sister And Archippus, our fellow soldier And the church in your house Grace to you and peace from God, our Father And the Lord Jesus Christ I thank my God always When I remember you in my prayer Because I hear of your love And of the faith that you have Towards the Lord Jesus And for all the saints And I pray that the sharing of your faith May become effective For the full knowledge Of every good thing

[21 : 24] That is in us For the sake of Christ For I have derived much joy and comfort From your love, my brother Because the hearts of the saints Have been refreshed through you Accordingly though, I am bold enough in Christ To command you to do what is required Yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you I, Paul, an old man Are now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus I appeal to you for my child Onesimus Whose father I became in my imprisonment Formerly he was useless to you But now he is indeed useful to you and to me I am sending him back to you Sending my very heart I would have been glad to keep him with me In order that he might serve me on your behalf

During my imprisonment for the gospel But I prefer to do nothing without your consent In order that your goodness might not be by compulsion But of your own accord For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while That you might have him back forever No longer as a bond servant But more than a bond servant As a beloved brother Especially to me And how much more to you Both in the flesh and in the Lord So if you consider me your partner Receive him as you would receive me If he has wronged you at all Or owes you anything Charge that to my account I, Paul, write this with my own hand I will repay it To say nothing of you Owing me Even your own self Yes, brother I want some benefit from you in the Lord Refresh my heart in Christ Confident of your obedience I write to you Knowing that you will do even more than I say At the same time Prepare a guest room for me For I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus Sends greetings to you And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke My fellow workers The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ Be with your spirit Amen In the reading of God's word Be a blessing to all who have heard it And before we come back To look at the beginning of that letter We'll sing once more And we'll sing in Psalm 119

From the beginning Psalm 119 We'll sing from verse 1 to verse 8 And this speaks about those Who follow the Lord in their life What their life will look like Blessed are they that undefiled And straight are in the way Who in the Lord's most holy law Do walk and do not stray Blessed are those who observe His statutes are inclined And who do seek the living God With their whole heart and mind Such in His ways do walk And they do no iniquity Thou hast commanded us To keep thy precepts carefully For that thy statutes to observe Thou wouldst my ways direct Then shall I not be shamed When I thy precepts all respect Then with integrity of heart At thee will I praise and bless When I the judgments all have learned Of thy pure righteousness That I will keep thy statutes all Firmly resolved have I O do not then most gracious God Forsake me utterly So we'll sing these words to God's praise Blessed are they that undefiled And straight are in the way And we'll stand to sing Blessed are they that undefiled And straight are in the way Who in the Lord's most holy Lord Do walk and do not stray Blessed are they that undefiled

[26 : 34] Blessed are they good to observe His statutes are inclined And who do seek the living God With them all heart and mind Search in His ways To walk and play To know iniquity Thou hast commanded us to keep Thy peace and carefully O Lord, my statutes to observe

Thy works my ways Thy debt Then shall I not be shamed When I Thy free steps All respect Then with integrity Thy purity of heart Thy will thy grace unbles When I the judgments All have led Of thy pure righteousness That I will keep

Thy statutes All Thy statutes All For me Resolve Have I O do not My god Then, most gracious God, forsake me utterly.

So we'll turn back to that passage that we read Paul's letter to Philemon. I want to read again at verse 7.

For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

[29 : 44] Now, we don't really write personal letters to one another, maybe like we used to.

I'm not 100% sure if I would want to receive one, even if we did, because then I'd have to stop and craft this letter in response. Times have changed.

Technology's moved on. Communications are far easier than they used to be. That doesn't always mean that you get a speedy reply back, does it?

Sometimes you can be weeks waiting for a reply. But then, when you compare the messages that we send on text or platforms on our phones, they don't carry the same gravity as a handwritten letter would have.

We don't treasure these messages. We don't save them like we would a letter and go back to them and read them. It's almost that if the handwritten letter had more meaning to it, it had more of the person's heart instilled in it.

[30 : 57] It's because we knew there was going to be a long delay before we got a reply. Now, Paul was a great letter writer in the Bible.

Paul wrote many letters and through the New Testament we have them recorded for us. That was the technology of the day. That was how he would communicate with the people, with the churches that he had met with.

And he would write back to them with letters. And these letters are rich. And they're things for us to treasure as we read them. Things for us to hold and value.

Paul taught the churches great things about God. Doctrines. He challenged the people as well in these letters. And as the letter here tells us, he prays for them and he thinks about them.

He's very pastoral in the letters when he writes them. And if you know your Bible, maybe you have a favourite letter of Paul's. And maybe you have a favourite passage within one of the letters that Paul has written.

[32 : 10] But I'd be quite surprised if you responded by saying your favourite one was Philemon. It's a small letter. Because of it, maybe because it's so small, it's maybe one of the letters that we neglect and we don't really come and stop at it.

So if you do know anything of it, it's really about a runaway slave. A slave that's run away from the master Philemon. He's not been loyal to his master.

He's likely that he's stolen something. Run away to where we think it's Rome. And funnily enough, he bumps into Paul when he's there.

And the links then made. And Paul writes back to Philemon. He's also called the letter to have the slave back. Not to punish him, but to receive him with love.

And if we know the letter, maybe we just don't look at it because we know that's what it's about. We know it's about a slave that's run away.

[33 : 18] Paul's pleading with Philemon to restore him. And maybe we just leave it at that. But over the next three weeks, God willing, I want to just stop and look at this letter and see what Paul says in it.

So today we're just going to look at the tonight. We're going to look at this first section from verse one down to verse seven, where we see Paul being refreshed by Philemon.

So we'll break it up into three sections. Firstly, we'll think about, we'll set the letter in context.

We'll look at the background of the letter, and we'll look at verses one to three to begin with. And just our first point will be Paul's letter. And then what we'll look at is we'll just work our way down through this next section, and we'll look at what Paul's expression of prayer is in that section from

verse four.

And then, so it's Paul's prayer. And then we'll look at the joy that Paul has in verse seven. So that'll be Paul's joy.

[34 : 31] So of Paul's letter, Paul's prayer and Paul's joy. So what do we say about Paul's letter first of all, in the context of this letter?

And if you have a Bible, it'll say the greeting there from verses one to three. Now it says in verse one, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus and Timothy, our brother.

And I think I'm right in saying that this letter begins like none of Paul's other letters. Normally, Paul begins by saying Paul an apostle.

Sometimes he'll begin by saying Paul a servant. And that servant means slave. Slavery is something that we'll come to in this letter. Slavery is not to the extent that we might imagine in our minds.

Slavery that was taught in the Bible was more of having someone within the family. I would you would care for and you would provide for them.

[35 : 34] Slavery is not someone that you would abuse like we might have in our minds of slavery. So. So we have Paul here, not describing himself as an apostle, not describing himself as a slave.

But he's saying he's a he's a prisoner. A prisoner for Christ Jesus. Likely he was a prisoner of Rome.

But importantly, he was a prisoner for Christ, for Christ Jesus. And you might think that's strange. You know, someone going to prison for for Christ Jesus. For he would have been preaching Christ Jesus.

Well, that's why and you know why. What what changed in his life that he would become a prisoner? But Paul Paul was named Saul before.

And Paul or Saul persecuted the church. Paul sought to kill Christians to begin with. To silence the name of Jesus Christ.

[36 : 43] To eradicate it. To do away with it. But he met with Jesus on the road to Damascus. There was a radical change in his life.

And the radical change was such to the extent that no matter what he was following Jesus Christ. And he would preach Jesus Christ with boldness.

Wherever he went. Be it Rome or wherever. And even if it meant him going to prison. It didn't matter. I'm preaching Jesus Christ because I've met with him.

And if you're maybe questioning Jesus and who he is. I think one of the most persuasive things. You go to the. You go through the gospels and you read about the disciples.

You see how real they were. They were full of errors. They made lots of mistakes. They doubted. But when she after Jesus had died.

[37 : 41] And he appeared to them as a risen Lord Jesus. It changed their lives. It was radical. These disciples were so scared that they ran away.

When they took Jesus. They left him. They were scared. They were fearful for their own lives. They left Jesus. They ran away. But after meeting with Jesus.

They became the boldest people. They were. They knew nothing else mattered. They themselves. Most of the majority of them were put to death.

For following Jesus. So. So. Jesus has a radical. Can bring a radical change in our lives. If we don't know.

But Paul's a prisoner here. And. Other letters that Paul writes. He is. He records that he's chained. But here it seems in this letter.

[38 : 44] That it's almost more of a house arrest. He's got a bit of freedom. And it seems like. Visitors can come. And interact with him. Because. He mentions. Timothy is with him.

Actually. When you go to the end of the letter. He. He. He. He gives us another few names. Verse 23. He says. Epaphras. My fellow prisoner. So. Epaphras is with him. And then there's fellow workers.

They are. Sending greetings to. That he's obviously interacting with. Mark. Aristocris. Demas. Luke. My fellow workers. So. He's not isolated.

He's not. Isolated in prison. Seems like he's got a bit of freedom. He can interact with people. But. And of course. Timothy is with him. Timonese. Timothy.

Was like Paul's right hand man. He wrote letters to Timothy. Timothy is also mentioned. In the letters. That he sends. To the Philippines.

[39 : 41] And Colossians. And it seems like these letters. Were written within. About a two or three. Year. Year time period. But the letter.

Is about. Philemon. But. Philemon's. Not on his own either. It says in verse 2.

To Philemon. And. Aphia. Our sister. To Archippus. Our fellow soldier. And the church. In your home. So. It's to them all.

It's to be read to them all. But it's specifically addressed to Philemon. And it's going to be about the slave. And the problem with the slave. But everyone's going to hear about the problem.

It's going to be read. Amongst the people. It's. We think that. Aphia.

[40 : 39] As maybe his wife. Archippus. Describes. A fellow soldier. Might be a son. Or it might be a fellow minister. In the gospel. Someone who's.

Preaching. But Philemon. Has the church. In his house. Philemon. Had a slave as well. So we say that.

Philemon. Maybe wealthier than most. But he loved the Lord. And he welcomed the people. Into his house.

As the church. But when you go through these names here. It was. It was interesting. Kind of having a look at this. And one of the Bible dictionaries. That I looked at. Says that.

Well Philemon. Is almost considered. Like a bishop. And Colossae. Because these names. They'll come up in the letter. To the Colossians as well. So there's a bit of overlap. If you have time. To have a look. But the dictionary said that.

[41 : 39] Philemon. was historically records. Show that he was killed for his faith. By stoning. Along with Aphaia. along with Archippus and along with Onesimus the slave under the reign of Nero.

Their lives were radically changed by the gospel. Even to the point of death, giving their lives fully for Jesus Christ.

And when it says in verse 3, grace to you, that's a plural you, so it's like the American y'all, you know, y'all, plural, more than one.

The beginning of the letter begins like that, speaking to the church. The end of the letter finishes like that, be with your spirit. That's again plural, it's to them all.

But in between, it's all a singular you. Because it's all for Philemon. It's all addressing Philemon. But the church are there to hear it.

[42 : 53] So the group hear this letter, the group hear this problem together. And that's going to be important when we come to think about the slave and how he would respond to Onesimus when he would come with this letter.

He himself would come and deliver this letter. It's as if he'd be standing right in front of him and hearing this. So there's an accountability between one another straight away within the church. And it's likelihood is that, well, all these people would have suffered because of this slave running away. The slave maybe stole Onesimus, maybe stole something from or departed from them. But you know what, it would have caused hurt amongst the church, amongst the people, amongst this home. Everyone's sort of included in it.

When he writes this letter, Paul, he calls Philemon a fellow worker. When he writes to the others mentioned there, sister, fellow soldiers, they're together.

[44 : 01] They're all together in this issue and in this problem. Accountable to one another as a church. And you know when someone's hurt in the church, someone's been hurt in the church, it affects us all.

If someone hurts the church itself, it affects us all. We all feel the pain of it. It doesn't go without effect within the whole body.

Sometimes if you hit your thumb. It almost affects everything you do. And even though we can be so distanced from other people in the church, we hear about persecutions, whatever country it is. It appears about people being killed for their faith. It almost has a hurting effect. It has an effect on us. To the effect that we pray for one another.

We're concerned for one another. We hear about these things. And that brings us to our next point. We've had Paul's letter, we've had the background. But then we hear about Paul's prayer.

[45 : 24] You'll see that he thanks God always for me. I remember you in my prayers. So this is now addressed to Philemon himself. Thanking God when I hear about your love and the faith that

you have towards the Lord Jesus Christ and all the saints.

Paul's praying. Always. I give thanks to God always for you. For his faith, for his love, for his concern to his brothers and sisters in the church.

You know, it's changed from being just the church to Philemon. And what a compliment, what a compliment for him. That Paul's always remembering him in his prayer.

That Paul's acknowledging his witness amongst the people. But I would hazard a guess and say that he would have hated to hear these words being read out in front of everyone.

Not thinking of himself any better than anyone else. Not thinking of himself with these qualities. But as Paul writes to him.

[46 : 50] And writes of his prayers to him. He's not elevating Philemon. He's thanking God. First of all, verse 4.

That's what he said. I thank God always when I remember you. First and foremost, he thanks God. Because God has done a work in him.

Philemon wouldn't say there's anything of himself. Far from it. And far from the temptation of pride entering his heart. He himself, I'm sure, would acknowledge it as all of the Lord Jesus.

It is all the work of God. And Paul acknowledges that. Paul says, I hear of your love and your faith that you have towards the Lord Jesus firstly.

And then towards the saints. It's as if meeting with Jesus, the gospel, that's the thing that will change us.

[48 : 04] And that's the thing that will spark the fire in our hearts. Meeting with Jesus sets us on fire for everything else to go on fire.

To change everything else in our lives. How we interact with one another. How we speak to one another. How we love one another. It all comes down to Jesus and meeting with him.

But Philemon's almost a strong Christian. Philemon's been a good example. Philemon's at a distance. Philemon's at a distance. Philemon's at a distance.

They're not close by. But they're remembering each other in their prayer. Do you pray for Christians that have set an example for you?

That have been strong Christians? Many Christians, many others in our churches that we pray for, they're in need of prayer. There's difficulties, situations that we pray for and rightly so.

[49 : 18] But are you remembering to give thanks to God for all those who are working in the background? Are you giving thanks to God for all those who have been strong Christians in your experience, in your life?

As you think back of people that have helped you, people that have taught you the Bible, people that have even done something for you. Are you giving thanks to God for their example?

Maybe it's someone sitting beside you. Maybe it's someone that's just been constantly with you in the ups and the downs of life. You've seen forgiveness in action.

You've seen love in action. You've seen faithfulness in action. It's because God has given it to him as a believer. And when you see that quality, when you see these beauties in the person, we don't elevate the person.

We thank God. We thank God for having made such a change in their lives. We put God first. And it almost seems as if there's a corresponding level of outpouring by the love that we have for Jesus Christ.

[50 : 38] Philemon had a great love for Jesus in his life. And there was a great outpouring in all that he did. Great love for Jesus and a great love for the saints.

But Paul goes on praying again in verse 6. And I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.

Commentators will say this bit's a wee bit hard to understand. A wee bit difficult to find the true meaning of it. It can be unclear.

But I think the best way to understand it is to think of it, whatever you do as a Christian, wherever you go, whoever you speak to, that you would be faithful in your actions, faithful in your example, faithful in all that you do, that you would build one another up in knowledge, that you would show people who Jesus is in your own life if they don't know him already.

It's what they would have understanding, that they would have knowledge, that they would know about Christ, that our living would be faithful to him and effective as witnesses for him.

[52 : 15] And there's a challenge, isn't it? For the Christian, what a challenge. To love people that are hard to love, to help people that have never helped us.

And what the Bible tells us is that we only love because Jesus first loved us. There's nothing in us. It's meeting with Jesus that makes all the difference. The gospel makes all the difference. In our relationships, in our interactions with one another, in our daily living. It's not about me. It's about Jesus. It's about the gospel. So we should be praying for one another like Paul does. Praying for each other in our workplaces.

Praying for each other in our families. Praying for each other in the school classrooms. Praying for each other. Praying for each other. Thanking each other. For who each person is here.

[53 : 27] The qualities that they have. The gifts that God has given to them. It's all of God. It's all of God.

And we thank God. This evening for everyone that is here. It's not to lift ourselves up. But Paul, when he thinks and prays about Philemon.

When he considers this faith in action. It causes him to rejoice. In our last point. Paul's joy. Verse 7. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother.

Because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. Paul's adding his own personal note here. I have derived.

I have gotten much joy and comfort from your love, my brother. You have given me joy. You have given me comfort.

[54 : 37] Even when these chains will be on me. Even when I'm in prison. Even in such circumstances. When I think of the work that you are doing, Philemon.

In the words. When I think of the chains that the Lord Jesus brought in your life. And I think of the work that you are doing. And the example that you are.

I find joy in that, you say. I praise and thank God for all that he has done. In your life. You refresh my heart.

Is what he would go on to say. Philemon's like this spiritual tonic. Philemon's this character that you bump into on the street.

And you come away thinking, wow, it's good to meet him. I needed to meet him. He has an encouragement to me today. Wouldn't it be good.

[55 : 40] To be that refreshing. To each other. What is it that refreshes us as Christians?

Is it our own words? Is it our own attitudes? It's what I've been saying. It's a gospel. It's putting Jesus Christ first.

It's loving Jesus like Philemon loves Jesus. It's faithfully trusting Jesus' words. Like Philemon.

And you'll find that living like that. It's a refreshing thing for each other. So it's a refreshing thing for yourself.

And more so when we come together. Maybe you sit down together. And you talk about the gospel. Maybe it's in Bible study. Maybe it's just interacting with questions with one another about the gospel.

[56 : 55] About Jesus. Maybe it's in fellowship. Maybe it's in praying. Maybe it's in singing. But the effect that you have is to refresh us. And to be thankful to God for everyone that joins together.

So if you need to be refreshed tonight. You're in the right place. where we come together and we look at Jesus.

We think about what he has done, maybe in our lives, and what he has done for each other. But he's our Savior. He's the one that died on the cross for us.

And as we think about what has been done for us, and we stand in awe of it that he would do it for me, it should refresh each other. It's refreshing to see the church full.

It's refreshing to see the same numbers come out in the evening as it is in the morning. We refresh each other when we're together.

[58 : 13] That's not to say if you can't make it out to make you feel guilty, no. There's many people that can't make it out. But if we have a love for Jesus and a love for the saints, we'll be praying for those that aren't with us just now.

And we'll be mindful of them. The gospel changes us to do so. It takes all that selfishness away from us. When we come together, we pray together, we look at Jesus together.

It refreshes us. I found a quote by Fred Catherwood. He says, the church should be a community of encouragement.

The church should be a community of encouragement. But that's not to say that we fabricate it ourselves. And we can try and fabricate it all we want. But the most lasting and effective encouragement that we'll have for each other, the most lasting influence that we can leave on one another, it's going to be purely rooted in our love of God and our love towards our Savior and what he has done for us.

[59 : 40] It's not rooted in ourselves. You think of, you know, Pilgrim's Progress. You think of Christian walking on the way.

He struggles on his own. But when faith falls with him, when hope falls with him, they encourage one another. They speak about Jesus.

They speak about what he has done in their lives. and they refresh each other. It's almost like they strengthen one another. There's a psalm that says that they walk through the Becas Valley, a dry valley.

Psalm 84. But they're refreshed with one another as they travel. They water one another. And they go on from, they don't get weaker.

In this dry place. They get stronger and stronger, is what the psalm says. And so being together is so important. Being together and setting our mind upon what has been done for us is so important.

[60 : 54] It's a refreshing thing for us all. So as we begin this, we study in Philemon, we have Paul's letter to this group and specifically directed to Philemon.

we are hearing of Paul's prayer. As he considers this Philemon's witness, what he has done, how he lives.

And we see that he is full of joy as he thinks about how God has worked in his life. We need each other.

We need each other. We need to encourage one another and strengthen one another. To be with each other is important.

But the most important thing of all is to be looking at our Savior. And we're looking at the Lord Jesus Christ. Because that's the only thing that's going to radically change our lives.

[61 : 59] That's the only thing that's going to radically change our relationships. That's the only thing that's going to radically change our witness. And when we look at him and when we put him first with all our love and all our trust, we look at Jesus, I pretty much guarantee you will be refreshing to the saints.

So let us look at Jesus. And I pray these thoughts be a blessing to us all. So we'll conclude with an item of praise.

And afterwards I'll pray. So we're going to sing in hymn number 457. Fill thou our life.

In every part with praise that our whole being make or proclaim thy being and thy way.

So you'll notice that the last line is but all our life in every step be fellowship with thee. Look into him and fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

[63 : 20] So we'll stand that I'm not meant to sing. My name is that I have that I have that I have . .

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[65 : 00] is from us so so so O part of day or night, from sacredness be free.

Adore our life in every step, with fellowship with thee.

A great prayer. Our Father in heaven, we pray that you would fill our lives, that we would be constantly in fellowship with you, that we will be looking to you every day and every step.

So be with us as we part what you are over us, we pray in Jesus name. Amen.