

Conduct Yourselves In A Manner Worthy Of The Gospel Of Christ

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 April 2021

Preacher: Rev. Malcolm Macdonald

- [0 : 00] Welcome to our service this morning. I shall welcome to those who are joining by live stream.
- This is all new to me as much as it is to yourselves, so hopefully there won't be too many glitches.
- The opening Sam of Praise is Sam 107 and that's from the Scottish Salter and Sam 107 at Wersh 23.
- I believe that Junus Lochbrunn who go to sea and ships and in great waters trading bee within the deep, these men God's works and his great wonder sea.
- For he commands and forth in his the stormy tempest flies which makes the sea with rolling waves aloft to swell and rise.
- [1 : 09] They mount to heaven then to the depths they do go down again, their soul doth faint and melt away with trouble and with pain. They reel and stagger like one drunk out there which end the bee, then they to God in trouble cry who them from straits doth free.
- The storm has changed into a calm that is command and will so that the waves which raged before now quite out still. Then are they glad because at rest and quiet now they be so to the heaven he then brings which they desire to see.
- All that men to the Lord would give praise for his goodness then and for his works of wonder done unto the sons of men who go to sea and ships and in great waters trading bee.
- To go to sea ships and in great waters trading bee within the deep, these men God's works and their strength over seas.
- For he commands and forth in his the stormy tempest flies which makes the sea with rolling waves aloft to swell and rise.
- [3 : 09] He mount to heaven then to the depths they do go down again, their soul doth faint and melt away with trouble and with pain.
- Their soul doth faint and melt away with trouble and with pain.
- In the earth serve your life, O Lord, not there with certainty when they draw up in trouble cry O air from safe away.
- The storm is taking to the ground that whizz so far but can live so that the wrens which raged before look by their door and see.
- Nerag leapEST share, BornYU i trained friends, be!!!

[5 : 31] Also walenswe I'm going to hear God's word and we're reading from the New Testament scripture Paul's epistle to the Philippians and chapter 1 and taking up the reading at verse 12 and reading through to the end of the chapter. Paul's epistle to the Philippians chapter 1 verse 12. I want you to know brother that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ and most of the brothers having become confident in the

Lord by my imprisonment are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry but others from good will. The latter do it out of love knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then?

Only that in every way whether in pretense or in truth Christ is proclaimed and in that I rejoice. Yes and I will rejoice for I know that through your prayers and the help of the spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured in my body whether by life or by death for to me to live as Christ and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh that means fruitful labour for me yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in

Christ Jesus because of my coming to you again. Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or I am absent I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction but of your salvation and that from God for it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake. Engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and know here that I still have and so on may God be pleased to utter his blessing to this reading of his word. Let us bow our heads in prayer. Let us pray. All order God we bless you that the words of the psalmist are words that we can look to to correspond with our spiritual state, our emotional state, our physical state. We find within the pages of scripture verses that are inspired by you as the Holy Spirit and that are drawn forth from the heart and the experience of the children of men even such as bear your name in this world and that we find there words that correspond to our experience from time to time. Sometimes when we are in the grip of despair we find your servant the psalmist speak in terms that so truly correspond with our experience that we are crying out out of the depths to the God who is a ready hearer to the please and the cries of the children of men in particular your own people.

There are other occasions when the words are words of celebration and instead of the depths we are in the heights and we are able even as we heard spoken of at the very outset of this service we are able to marvel at the beauty of creation such as there is so much to our mind at this time when we see the snow clothing the ground and no matter the way it so affects us and causes us to struggle at times and to find movement difficult we can still pause and look upon this blanket that it covers so many things from sight and gives nature a beauty that it might not otherwise have and we might be stirred within our heart to turn our eyes heavenwards and praise you that you are the God who has brought these things about and there are many occasions in our experience when even nature itself is the stimulus to the praise of God and we are thankful to our God that you are responsible for that in our lives.

[13 : 01] We pray that you would remind us afresh today of the privilege that we have to meet together in public in this way something that has been denied so many in recent days.

We cannot overlook the fact that whatever it is that we see in this pandemic and in the way that it has affected our lives we must not and we dare not believe that the God of heaven is responsible for this plague that has affected the world and that you are the one who has brought it into being as you are the one who will bring it to a conclusion if that is your will.

We know that you have dealt with many in this world through the medium of the pandemic. You have spoken to them about their lives and about the direction their lives was taking.

You have spoken to them about the value that they have placed upon this world and all that the world has to offer when these things were so quickly taken from their grasp.

Lord, you are able to speak to us in many ways not just through your word. You speak to us through experience, you speak to us through the testimony of your sense.

[14 : 34] You speak to us even directly from your own mouth if we were to understand that you are addressing us in a personal way through our providence and through those who are near to us.

We give thanks for that dealing that is personal and intimate and purposeful. We pray Lord that you would remember this congregation at this time or just in this act of worship and all who join with them remotely.

We pray that you would drive us to your food stall and that collectively we may know that we are before you as our God.

We pray that you would open eyes of our understanding to realise that there are many who are with us at this moment whether we know them or not.

Some who in their own homes are calling upon the name of God by the fireside. Some who are in the role of the workplace, whatever it is that is their duty to perform on our behalf to ensure the peace and the safety of those who are in the world that they too can reflect momentarily upon the things of God and that they are able to do so.

[16 : 00] And that we are in unison at that moment that we are joined together at your food stall to worship and to praise your name, the God who is God alone, the God who is God eternal, the God who is the triumphant God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

We pray that you would remember us in your worship and that this worship would be blessed to us. We pray that you would remember the reasons that we have to bring occasion concerns to you as a people.

There may be many for whom we are concerned, we may have illness to deal with, many forms of illness continue in the world even though for a time we were so preoccupied and taken up with the thought of the effects of Covid.

That is still a threat and we give thanks that although the threat appears to be abating, thankful for the reason for that, those who have provided remedy for the virus and we pray that that may go on a pace.

But we know that in the world there are many other illnesses, there are many other situations that are distinct from Covid and others. Within the world are suffering at this time, some because of these illnesses, some terminate, some less severe.

[17 : 27] So we pray for those in hospital, those being cared for by others in the hospital, we pray for care homes for the frail elderly and those who throw the test to minister to them.

We remember in your presence those who work within the community and visit those who are housebound and in need of attention within their own homes.

There are many things that we can bring to you and we do so. Thankful that you are able to alleviate suffering and to carry our burdens on our behalf.

We remember those who are grieving at the present and we pray for any within our communities who may have sorrows and who have sadnesses.

We are also aware of sorrow of our nation at this time when you have taken from our queen, our consort, a lifelong partner and support who has now, despite longevity, entered into a long home.

[18 : 32] We pray that you would bless this visitation to a grieving family, for children and grandchildren, great-grandchildren who are grieving and sorrowful.

We bring their burdens to you and thankful that we can leave them in your gracious hands as we do with all the griefs and the sorrows and the sadnesses that are in the world.

We remember those who are impoverished, those who are sleeping on our streets, those who are in the grip of any vice and there are many within our villages, our towns, our cities.

We pray for the nations of the earth. We have many material blessings in our nation and yet there are nations that know much poverty in the midst of wealth when we hear of nations and it is said of them that in these nations there are the most rich of this world.

There are countless billionaires in these countries and yet in these very countries there are the most poor, there are the most neglected and the most forgotten of peoples.

[19 : 59] There are many injustices in this world and we are thankful that we can plead the merits of one who is at your right hand and ask that in mercy that you would intrude into this darkness with your light and bring to yourself those who would hear your voice in the midst of all the voices that are raised in pursuit of selfish ends.

So cleanse from sin we pray, continue to watch over us and all we entrust to your care, our homes, our families, our children, our children's children, go before us we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. I would like us now to read another short passage from the Old Testament this time and we are reading from the book of Psalms and Psalm 84.

The book of Psalms and Psalm 84. Read the whole Psalm how lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts, my soul longs ye yes fins for the courts of the Lord, my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God, even a sparrow finds a home and the swallow an nest for herself, where she may lay her young at your altar, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God, blessed are those who dwell in your house ever singing your praise, Sila, blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion, as they go through the valley of Baker they make it a place of springs, the early rain also covers it with pools, they go from strength to strength, each one appears before God in Zion, O Lord of hosts, hear my prayer, give hear O God of

Jacob and Sila, behold our shield O God, look on the face of your anointed, for a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness, for the Lord God is our Son and shield, the Lord bestows favour and honour, no good thing to see with hold from those who walk uprightly, O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you.

[22 : 50] Amen, O Lord, art his blessing to this reading of his word, to his name be the praise.

Would like us now for a short time to return to the passage that we first read, Paul's epistle to the Philippians chapter 1 and we can read at verse 27. Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so whether I come and see you or am absent I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel. Like us first of all to consider just a few general thoughts by way of background to these words and then consider the words of the text itself, there to behave themselves in a manner worthy of their calling and they are to secondly do so collectively. When we think of the church what do we think of? I'm sure if a person who's not familiar with the Christian faith, if they listen to somebody talking of the church they immediately go to the physical building that is the church. I would imagine that's the first and instinctive thought that they may have concerning the church. But the reality is that the church is a remarkable organisation as well as an organism. It's an organisation because it's structured, it's made up of different tiers of responsibility and membership and it exercises itself in different ways within the community where the church exists. But it's also an organism in the sense that those who are of the church are part of the church, they are living members of that church. They are part of the body of Christ. That's how the Bible describes the church. It's made up of people, men and women, young and old, of all descriptions. And the introductory words of the Apostle in his writing of this epistle, I suppose in many of his epistles, reminds us of servants, who speaks of sins, overseers and decals. The servant could be a decal, he could be an overseer, he could be somebody who's clearly part of this body, servant and ascent. Now that's true, wherever you see Paul writing he's conscious of the fact that when he writes a letter to the church, whether it's the church in Philippi, the church in Colossi, the church in Corinth, whatever the church is, it's made up of different members, different individuals who have come together to form part of a recognisable body which is the church of Christ. There are people who, of whom it can be said, that God has begun a good work in them. Now many people are disparaging about the church. There are people who don't like

the church. There are people who are enemies of the church. There are people who find the church to be an easy target because they say about the church, well they do this, or they do that, or they didn't do this or that. And in many respects we're all guilty of identifying bodies, identifying structures, identifying groups that are denominated in a certain way and being critical of them en masse. It's an easy thing to do. For example, we're right in the middle just now of an election process and I don't know where your allegiances lie.

You may be Scottish national, you might be Labour, you might be Conservative, you might be Green, whatever it is. And whichever position you occupy within the political arena, you may be critical of the other lot. You'll say of them, oh, what do they believe? This is what they're saying, this is what their politics is all about. And en masse the criticism is focused on this entity that is identifiable by its denomination, whether it's whatever.

And sometimes that criticism is deserved, sometimes it is not. Sometimes it's just an easy thing for us to do, to be critical without really analysing the nature of the criticism or what is behind it being uttered. Now when it comes to the church, the church is an easy target in that sense. Some people expect the church to behave in a certain way and very often they have very high standards for the church. They expect the church to behave in a way where the standard that is given to the church is very high. It is exceedingly high. Of course they're not prepared to live up to these standards themselves but they expect the church to do it because the church have declared that they are God's people and they live according to God's law and they behave according to the norms that the church are expected to behave and to follow. Now when we think of that we can understand why such criticisms are made. But sometimes the criticism comes from within the church and those who are within the church say well they're not behaving the way they should as Christians who belong to this church and sometimes that criticism is quite in order. Sometimes we don't behave the way we should and those who are with us in this organisation and within this organism can see that we're not behaving as we should and criticism is rightly levied against us. But we should always remember that when we're talking about the church and this is why I went down this road that what we're seeing here is somebody who is a preacher called to preach to the church of which he himself is a member and who himself was called into fellowship with that church. That we are reminded that this organism is a living organism and an organisation that is made up of so many different kinds of people, so many sorts of people who are on a trajectory in their Christian experience that may differ to those who are on the same journey as themselves. Some may be beginners, some may be coming to the end of their Christian experience. Some may have been called from the depths as far as their former life experience was concerned. Some may have been in very privileged positions and all you have to do is read this epistle and what you find here is somebody who is the preacher, a former Jew, a militant persecutor of the church who is directed mysteriously by God to Philippi and when he goes to Philippi there he meets somebody called Lydia, there he meets somebody who is a jailer, there he meets somebody who is demon possessed and through the preaching of this former militant opponent of the Christian church these three

[32 : 53] just for one example are brought into this organism, brought into this organisation and they are united in the sense that the same person that met with Paul and translated him from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's marvellous light is responsible for bringing under Paul's preaching the same people to the knowledge of that Christ who is at the heart and centre of their life from then on. The saving grace of God is in their experience. Now, doubtless, every one of these, they are individuals in their own right, they are the product of their own environment. When you think about the Philippian jailer it's often said about this passion that he was probably somebody who was brutalised by the kind of work that he did. He wouldn't be in the kind of job he was doing if he wasn't somebody he was prepared to dish it out in the most horrible ways and you can't become somebody like that without it affecting your mind, your heart and the way you engage with others. And the same could be said of anyone who is a member of this church that you can look at them as a collective, as an organisation and say that's what they are, they're all the same, but they are and they aren't. Because every person who is a Christian is somebody who has a past and who has a present and who has a future. And in the process of being made Christians and in the process of concluding the work of Christ in them, they may be on a separate point in their trajectory which means maybe anything to them. You know, you would want people to prefer to live uniformly, you would want people to be on the same page always, you would want them to be resenting a face that recognises them to be Christian.

But sometimes you see, we're not like that. Sometimes what we once were may come through in ways that we would not want to acknowledge. The way we thought is not something that we can readily and easily suppress without God's help. And sometimes there are blemishes to our character that are not easily resolved in a moment and God has his work to do before we become what he wants us to become. First of all, perhaps one of the most obvious passages that I often go to when I think of a person, especially a person within the church being critical of his fellow Christians. When you hear Paul say, and he's addressing the church in Corinth and he's saying to those who are members of that church, he says, you know, he says, some of you were sexually immoral, some of you were idolaters, some of you were adulterers, some of you were thieves and swindlers. That's what you were but you are not that anymore. You are now somebody who has a new life in Christ. But you cannot forget what you once were. You cannot overlook what you once were. You cannot stand on a pedestal and say, when you look at others, that you're better than them in any meaningful sense other than the way that God has dealt with you. Because although they wear that, Paul goes on to say, now he says, you are washed. Now your sins are forgiven. Now you are sanctified.

Now you are justified. You are no longer what you once were and you can't excuse your behaviour totally by saying that this is what was true of you. But we have to remember and always we have to bear this in mind when we're dealing with the instructions that we are given as the body of Christ by God's grace. Those who are part of this organization, part of the body of Christ, part of the Church of Christ have become new creatures in him. They have commenced, as we said, a new trajectory in their lives, but not for one moment do they believe that everybody is like them. You know, very often the mistake is made that the Church should be uniform, that everybody who is in it should behave as if they are just everybody's the same, everybody's alike, everybody's got to be in the one shape or the one form.

And if they're not, then they can't belong. That can't be right. Paul doesn't say it's right. And the wonder is, and I think it is more wonderful the longer lived I am that God can take all kinds of people, any kind of person, and he can bring them to himself and he can use them as those who would serve him and glorify him by the life that they lead from the time that they have come to knowledge of. I was listening to the garlic service in the morning and the preacher there spoke about John Newhater. And this was somebody who was a gross sinner, somebody who was a slave trader, somebody who abused his power as a captain of a ship and all that went with it. And yet he came to a knowledge of God and he regretted and grieved over the past life that almost goes without saying. God takes all sorts and he brings them into the body that is his, that bearish name. Now, why have I had such a long 15 minute preamble to these words? Because it is to these people, it is to you if you're a part of this church. However different you are to everybody else that is part of this church, however different you are to them. Paul is saying here, only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or I'm absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel. Now he's saying there something, if you overemphasise I suppose which I have been in danger of doing, the differences that exist between those who are part of this body that when Paul is addressing them, that they are to work together, that they are to strive together because they are no longer the individuals they once were following the path that they chose for themselves, living the kind of life that they chose to satisfy their own sensuality and lusts. Now they have been taken from that life to live not for themselves but for someone else and they are not by themselves in living that life for someone else. They are with others who have been taken in the same way from these kind of lives and lives that were no different to their own or completely different to their own and now they live their lives for Christ.

Different translations give different light on the meaning of the words that we have here. The A.B. uses the word conversation and obviously the word conversation for us means the usual use of it is the way we speak but the same word in Gaelic is Kayebehe which conforms is very like the word that you have used in the NIV to translate this word. It speaks of mode of existence, mode of life. Conversation is slightly misleading. The way you live, the life you now lead, that is what he is talking about. Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. Paul is not saying forget what you once were but he is saying I can't forget what you now are and what you now are means that the life that you live now should speak of what you are now not what you once were. Your behaviour as a Christian should say something about you and what you now believe and who you believe more than anything. I read recently that Christianity is not a spectator sport. Christianity is not a spectator sport. It means that you are actively engaged in the life of the Christian. I shall say that a sense in which Christianity is a spectator sport for some because some look at the Christian and they look at them as if they are saying to themselves well that guy says he is a Christian. I have seen him do this or heard him say this or I have watched how they behave and their behaviour is not what I would expect of that. In that sense there are spectators there who are looking at the Christian and the Christian life and saying no I don't agree that these people are any different to me. But then there are always opponents to the church. There are always opponents to what the church believes but always remember that there are others who desperately wanting to find something worth living for. And the church is there before them. This group of self-confessed believers in Christ and their people looking at them and saying looking at you if you are a believer and saying is what that person believes shining through in their life. Is their life any different to mine? What is it that I would gain by being one with them, by becoming a Christian? And there are spectators in that sense. They want to see you live your life as a Christian in a way that suggests to them there is more to this life that I am leading than what I am actually experiencing today. There is more to it and surely there is if you are a Christian.

[46 : 14] We know that Paul wants the church, wants the believers to behave in a way that is in keeping with the profession that they have made, that they know Christ, that they love Christ, that they are followers of Christ, that his word is a word that is precious to them, that their conduct is regulated by that word as far as they are able to apply it.

Policy, let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel. What you are doing, what you are saying, where you are going, let it speak to people about who you are as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever sees what you are doing, it seems that Paul is afraid that they will let things slip because he is not going to be able to see them in person.

He writes this letter, he does not know if he is going to be able to come to them, but he does not want their behaviour to slide because he is not going to be there to supervise.

In the near future you are going to have a new minister or an old minister, whichever you want to. I wonder if Thomas, when he went away from here, did he think for one moment that he would be back in a couple of years' time? Did the thought enter into his mind?

I wonder how they would behave till I come back. I wonder who will be here when I come back. I wonder if they will have grown in grace when I am away. I wonder if there will be anything like they were when I went to what I expect them to be.

[48 : 01] If you have got a child, when I was a child, I do not know if I can remember that far back, but when our children were wee, we would stand them against the wall and put a measuring stick on the wall there and measure a line across there and you would see an inch to scroll through, a centimetre to scroll through, whatever. They were so impressed, they were growing.

It was there, the measurement was on the wall. I wonder if you have grown. I wonder if Thomas has a conscience, he has got something in his head. This is what they were like when I left. I wonder if there will be any better. I wonder if there are any Christians here who have come to faith since the Minister left.

While Paul was afraid, you see, that in his absence, that people would not live according to the Gospel that they had professed to believe in.

When I was looking at this, I was reminded of, I do not know, it was just something that came to mind when I was walking in the school corridor. In my mind, when I went back to this, you went along the corridor and the doors of the classrooms, some of them were open. You went past one door and there was a deathly silence in that room, full of children, but silence. Maybe the teacher was speaking. One or two steps along, there was a door open and there was a door. There was chaos, no sign of the teacher. The teacher was somewhere.

The room was without supervision. It was obvious. Now, children can behave like that, but so can Christians. They should not because they are not dependent on a Minister to supervise that behaviour. But there is one to whom they are accountable and answerable and that is the Lord himself. Paul wants them to remember this, let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or I am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit. Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones says this, the first principle is that Christian conduct and behaviour is only possible on the basis of Christian truth, Christian doctrine. And where such doctrine exists as a role of life and because it corresponds to life within, that conduct becomes natural, that behaviour becomes the behaviour that we live out. We don't do it because somebody is standing over us with a big stick. Christians do not behave like Christians because somebody is threatening them, because somebody is watching them. Well, they know somebody is watching them. God is.

[51 : 23] The time is passing. The second thing that we have here is that what Paul longs to hear about them is that their fellowship is marked not just by unity, but unity of purpose. Unity of purpose. When Mr Campbell, your intermoderator, came to the Presbytery and gave a report about a meeting that you had to call a minister, he tried to convince us that you were united, that you had the same desire. I don't doubt that for one minute. But it's important that when we as a body are doing anything in Christ's name that our function, our performance, our behaviour should be united because we are working together for Christ's glory.

Now, coming back to the election, one thing you'll find just now is that every party there is united. Conservatives, there's no divisions, Labour, no divisions. They're all got one purpose, all one end, all desires of one product, one future. And they're all of one mind. Well, if you believe that, you believe anything. Because once the election is over and done with, you'll find like any other human organisation, there are fissures, schisms, fractures. And if they're allowed to work through to a natural conclusion, then there'll be division that cannot be repaired. Now, Paul is saying this because he is dealing with people. He is dealing with human beings. He is dealing with Christians who came from all kinds of backgrounds. He has people before him who are part of the intelligentsia, people who have university degrees, people who are learned, people who are well educated. He's also got people who've never opened a book in their lives, people who have not studied the scripture, people who have not been taught in the way that others have, people who come from different moral behaviours. And there's always a danger when you bring this collective together that these things can't be the means by which division will occur. But he says,

I want to hear this. I want this to be true of you, that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel. Every place, every time, every occasion that I have seen division within the church, and it's not unusual, people honing on one point in particular and they'll say, well, there's no way I'm going to give this up. This is what I believe and I'm not going to back down. And if you ask the question, where is the glory of Christ in that? Where is this Christ appear in your thinking at that moment? And very often it would be an impossibility for them to do that, to say that. It's important for yourselves, as you prepare to enter into the next phase of your congregational life, that you assess what Christ's will for you is. And that in your congregational life that you are contending for the faith of the Gospel as it was delivered to you. That you're all on the same page, pursuing not your own agendas, but the glory of Christ. In the prophecy of Zechariah, the prophet there says this, they love the truth and peace. This is what God's people are. They love the truth and peace. Now if you divide that and separate the truth from peace, what do you have? You'll have schism, you'll have discord, you'll have fractured. It's not peace at any price, it's peace on the basis of truth. It is not the truth alone, it is the truth with a view to the unity of the Gospel being preserved on the basis of what the truth is. In the book of Acts, the

New Testament Church emerged. And we often go to this and we say this is an ideal but it's not really what's possible for us. Why is it not possible? They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers, and all came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were to be done through the apostles.

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. They were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need. And day by day attending the temple together, breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. There was a unity, a unanimity, a purpose that Christ had instilled within their heart that had his glory in view. There's always diversity. There are always different opinions. But the churches meet up of people who have these opinions and who listen to the opinions of others and who work together as Paul says here. He wants to hear this of you, that you are standing firm in one spirit and with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel and not frightened, he says, in anything by your opponents. Well, may God encourage every one of us to have this spirit that gathers us together in the name of Christ with a view to securing his purposes for ourselves and for others. Let's pray. Lord be merciful to us for every way in which we fail. We come to you as articles that are needing to be polished. You take us from all kinds of backgrounds and all kinds of situations in this world.

[59 : 13] But you have purpose for us that you make us to be like yourself and impossibility as far as our human reason is concerned. But it is what you have decreed that the day will come when we will see Christ as he is, for we will be like him. We marvel at that thought and we pray that you would encourage us by it. Plans from sin go before us in Jesus' name.

Amen. Now, the closing item of praise is Psalm 73. And again, it's taken from the Scottish soldier. Psalm 73, at verse 23, Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee, though doth me hold by my right hand, and still upholdest me. Thou with thy counsel while I live wilt me conduct and guide, and to thy glory after would receive me to abide. Whom have I in the heaven side but thee, O Lord, alone, and in the earth and my desire beside thee? There is none. So on to the end of the Psalm. I think the tune must wilt shy. Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee, though doth me hold by my right hand, and still upholdest me. Thou with thy counsel while I live wilt me conduct and guide, and to thy glory after would receive me to abide. Whom have I in the heaven side but thee, O Lord, alone, and in the earth and my desire beside thee? There is none. My nation hath no reason to live, but all the fear we ever put out by our own. What is the strength that wards our own■hm credibility, O Lord, from behind us lies the heaven side but I am way from

Let us be so yellow. But sure it is a party that I don't need to know.

We are the stars that all our hearts are living in the Lord.

I will make grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. With your name and always in it.