

1 Corinthians Chapter 9 v 19 - 27

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] to Psalm 89 in your Bibles. As we do, we read a psalm from time to time. I don't read all the psalm, it's a long psalm, but the first eight verses, I hope, are appropriate to us, and particularly as we come to worship this evening and to think upon that part of God's Word, which will be 1 Corinthians chapter 9.

So Psalm 89, page 597. Psalm 87. We're told rather than being a psalm of David or a psalm of the sons of Korah, this is a psalm of Ethan the Ezraite.

We don't know much about him, but he was a man who loved the Lord and who sang his praise.

Just listen to these words then from Psalm 89. I will sing of the Lord's great love, forever.

With my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.

You said, I have made a covenant with my chosen one. I have sworn to David, my servant. I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.

[1 : 20] The heavens praise your wonders, Lord, your faithfulness too in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies above can compare with the Lord?

Who is like the Lord among the heavenly beings? In the council of the holy ones, God is greatly feared. He is more awesome than all who surround him. Who is like you, Lord God almighty?

You, Lord, are mighty. And your faithfulness surrounds you. It's as the psalmist thought about the Lord his God, his greatness, his covenant promises to David, that there'd always be one to sit upon his throne, that he said, I will sing of the Lord's great faithfulness.

We're going to come to a time of prayer, a time of open prayer. It's good for us to sing, and it's good for us to talk of, and it's good for us to pray as well. So, as we do again from time to time, just going to lead in a time of prayer, those who feel able, lead us as well, particularly in praise, particularly in thanksgiving, particularly in worship, particularly rejoicing in what Christ has done for us.

So, I'll lead, and a few others, please come and lead us in prayer as well. There are times, O Lord, our God, when we do not feel like praising you.

[2 : 52] There are times when we have to speak to our own hearts and souls in that sense, and say, rise up and bless the Lord. Lord, stop feeling sorry for yourself. Stop being selfish or self-concerned or anxious, but praise the Lord.

Thank you that your dear servant David had to speak to himself in that way as well. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Put your trust in God. And Lord, whether we feel like worshiping you here this evening, or whether we've come out of a sense of duty, or come because we've had our arms twisted, or because we've come, because we feel greatly in need, O Lord, we ask that even now, you would put within us a spirit of praise, a spirit of worship and adoration, that you'd put within us a desire to glory in you and all that you've done for us.

O Lord, move us, we pray, and receive from us that sacrifice of thanksgiving, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.

Richard, could you bring just the brief notices for the weekend? Thank you. One of our elders, Barry, is away preaching this evening at, I think it's Cannon Park, isn't it, in Middlesbrough.

So we'll remember him in prayer in a little moment or two. And we'll be remembering in prayer. Also, the mission, as I mentioned this morning, concerning the members meeting we had in the week, much of our time has taken up talking about praying for the evangelistic mission that will be taking place at the end of May this year.

[4 : 40] But let's stand once more and worship God as we sing a hymn from our books, number 14, I'll praise my maker while I've breath, echoing perhaps something of the words that we sang just a few moments ago as well.

Number 14. I'll praise my maker, and I'll praise my maker, and when my voice is lost in death, we shall endure my noble past.

My days of praise shall there be past, a knife and thought, and being must, for immortality endures. I'm going to read from Acts chapter 21. The passage you're looking at will be 1 Corinthians 9. We'll read that later.

But I'm going to read just now from Acts 21. That's page 1118. 1,118. And from verse 17.

[6 : 32] So Acts chapter 1, verse 17, if you have the international version, it's got the subtitle, Paul's arrival at Jerusalem.

When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters received us warmly. The next day, Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present.

Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul, You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law.

They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs.

What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come. So do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. Take these men, join in their purification rites, and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved.

[7 : 49] Then everyone will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality.

The next day, Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.

When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, shouting, Fellow Israelites, help us! This is the man who teaches everyone, everywhere, against our people and our law and this place. Besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place.

They had previously seen Trophimus, the Ephesian, in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple. The whole city was aroused and the people came running from all directions.

[8 : 56] Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple and immediately the gates were shut. While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in uproar.

He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains.

Then he asked who he was and what he had done. Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another. And since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks.

When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great, he had to be carried by the soldiers. The crowd that followed kept shouting, get rid of him! As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, may I say something to you?

Do you speak Greek? He replied. Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led 4,000 terrorists out into the wilderness some time ago? Paul answered, I am a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city.

[10 : 05] Please let me speak to the people. After receiving the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they all were silent, he said to them in Aramaic, Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.

When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. So we're in 1 Corinthians and chapter 9.

We return to 1 Corinthians after the break of Christmas. And we looked at the first 18 verses last week. And we're going to pick up there from verse 19 and read through to the end of the chapter.

So 1 Corinthians and chapter 9, verse 19, page 1151. Page 1151 in the church Bible. Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible. To the Jews, I became like a Jew to win the Jews. To those under the law, I became like one under the law, though I myself am not under the law.

[11:24] So as to win those under the law. To those not having the law, I became like one not having the law. Though I am not free from God's law, but I'm under Christ's law.

So as to win those not having the law. To the weak, I became weak to win the weak. I've become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.

I do this for the sake of the gospel. that I may share in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize?

Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Therefore, I do not run like someone running aimlessly. I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.

No. I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

[12:40] How far would you be willing to go to get what you want? Have you risked or sacrificed something important to you just that you might gain something greater?

in 1732, a long time ago, two German Moravian Christians traveled to the West Indies to take the gospel to the many thousands of African slaves who lived there.

John Dober and David Nitschman are names you may not readily recognize. John was a potter. David was a carpenter. But what makes their missionary journey all the more extraordinary is that they sold themselves to the slave owner of a particular island because it was the only way to take the gospel to those who enslaved on it.

They had taken the very words of Paul here in 1 Corinthians 9 to their furthest conclusion. Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible. Were they just fanatics? Surely no one in their right mind would think that their behavior was rational or to be imitated or followed.

[14:14] Well as we saw last week, the biggest problem with the church in Corinth which is reflected in the church in Whitby and reflected in the lives of all people is this, the growing demand for each person to exercise their rights.

Just a few chapters earlier in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul quotes a famous phrase of the church, I have the right to do anything. Personal rights.

The exercise of my rights was their motto. They had taken the very grace of God in the gospel, the grace of God that forgives and accepts us just as we are with all of our sins, with all of our baggage, with all of our faults, with all of our problems.

They had taken that all-encompassing grace and they had moved away from the love and the generosity of spirit that that grace imparts to people to mean that they could fulfill their own sinful lusts and desires without fear of recompense.

I have the right to do anything. And so for the first part of chapter 9 as we saw last week, Paul counters this attitude by speaking about his own Christ-like living, reminding them that though he was an apostle and though there were certain rights that he could have claimed for himself, he gave them up and he did not call them into account for the sake of one thing, one thing that ruled his life, one thing that was the very passion of his life above everything else, one thing that he saw as the greatest, most blessed, most important, most vital truth in the whole of the world, the gospel of Christ.

[16:15] As he says here, we did not use this right, chapter 9 verse 12, on the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

Paul was so consumed by his love for the unsaved and for the glory of the Lord Jesus that he would rather give up his rights as a gospel preacher than put a stumbling block in the way of anyone who needed to receive the message of Christ.

He says there at the end of verse 18, what then is my reward? Just this, that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

Now the example of the apostle Paul is a huge challenge to us, isn't it? he gave up his rights for the gospel.

Why is it that people today reject the gospel? Why is it that the gospel in our land has had so little influence and impact? Why has the church had so little impact and influence or has so little impact and influence in the world around about us today?

[17 : 38] We can look at all sorts of reasons, all sorts of philosophies, all sorts of possibilities. Why is it that those that we work with, why is it that those that we live amongst, why are those who are within our families continue to refuse to trust in the gospel that we love?

We have to seriously ask ourselves a very painful and searching question. am I the hindrance? Paul says I would do anything rather than hinder the gospel.

He recognized it was possible for him to be a hindrance to the gospel, to people hearing and receiving it. And dear friends, we have to ask ourselves is that true of us? Is there something about the way that I live and behave and act and speak that puts a stumbling block in the way of others? is the stumbling block not the gospel but me? It's a painful question to ask, isn't it?

Yet I would encourage you not to shy away from it. But that's not all that Paul says, is it? Because here we come to verse 19.

[19 : 02] it's not enough to be willing to let go of my rights for the gospel. There's something beyond our rights that we have to die to if we really long to be instrumental in the salvation of the lost.

There's something beyond and above just putting aside our rights. What does Paul say? You have to become a slave for their sake.

Wow, Paul, Paul, that's just a step too far. Come on, Paul, let's be serious. Let's be serious.

You're telling us that we need to become a slave, the lowest, the most discredited, the most dishonorable, the most despised, the most valueless people in society.

society. We have to become like them. We have to sink so low like them if we really want to see the lost saved and men and women changed and Christ glorified.

[20 : 15] See, Paul, like every single one of us, rightly takes the position that he is free. That's the wonder of the gospel, isn't it? That's the wonder of the good news of Jesus Christ. He came to set us free.

set us free from the slavery of sin and its mastery and dominion over us. Set us free from the fear of the law by which we seek to please and earn God's favor and feel that we fail again and again.

Yes, Romans 6, 22, now you've been set free from sin. Paul, like every believer, knew that he was free and belonged to no one.

but how am I to use that freedom? What is the freedom that Jesus has given me for? Is it a license, as these people thought, simply to do whatever I like and to please my lust and to entertain myself and to make myself free?

Is the freedom that Christ bought with his own precious blood to be used for such menial, such despised, such worthless things? Romans 6, 22, now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God.

[21 : 30] The chains that make us slaves of God are chains that are made of love and the work of the Holy Spirit. They're not the chains of fear that were before, they're not the chains of shame, they are the chains of passion.

Yes, dear friends, you and I have been set free, but we have not been set free to squander the freedom that God has brought us, we have been set free to be slaves of God.

You and I, if you're a Christian this evening, you are a slave of God. God's word says so. But again, how does this slavery work out in our practical lives?

In what way are we to be slaves? How is that slavery to take visible form? What about Paul? How was he a slave to the gospel and for the gospel's sake?

Well, he tells us he willingly sacrificed not just his rights but certain freedoms that he had to bring the gospel to those who needed it.

[22 : 41] And so he speaks here in verse 20, to the Jews I became like a Jew to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law. To those not having the law like one not having the law.

To the weak I became weak. Whatever was required of him, whatever the cost was, whatever the sacrifice was to win people in their particular needful situations, he was willing to give up his freedom and to be as they were.

And we have the evidence of this throughout the book of Acts. Turn with me if you want to. We read from there in Acts 21 just a few moments ago where Paul we're told for the sake of the legalistic Jew was willing to undergo ceremonial purification along with several others and to pay the expense of their ritual out of his own money.

We read there as I say about that. Why would Paul, who knew that his purification before God was not about a ceremony that he performed but because of the blood of Christ shed for him, why would he go through such a practice, such a humiliating practice?

Why would he please these people, these legalizers so that he might not cause a hindrance to the gospel of Christ? So that he might remove any stumbling block that prevents them from hearing the good news.

[24 : 17] Now as we see, though he did those things, they still accused him of being one who taught to throw out the law of Moses and they still tried to kill him. It wasn't because he did those things, it was because the gospel was a stumbling block to them.

He didn't have to do it. He could have quite easily said, no, I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to kowtow to them. I'm not going to do these things that they want me to do. I'm free from those rituals. But he went through them. He went through them because he wanted to take the gospel to those under the law. If you turn with me please to Acts 17, we didn't have time to read this but I'm going to just look at it for a moment here.

We see how Paul relates to those who were not under the law. He says to those not under the law I became like one not under the law though I'm not free of God's law but under the Christ's law.

In Athens chapter 17 verse 16 of course those not under the law he means those not under the Old Testament law, God's law, the Gentiles, the Greeks of his day who had no interest in the law of God.

[25 : 46] They came to their conclusions about life and about the world through debate, discussion, and reason. So how does Paul deal with them? Well there in verse 16 and following we're told verse 17 he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there and then we're told about these philosophers, these debaters and they began to debate with him and so what does he do?

Verse 22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said people of Athens in fact as he goes to debate with them and talk with them on their level in the way that they would debate things together he also quotes from their own philosophers he doesn't quote from scripture he says there in verse 28 for in him that's God we live and move and have our being as some of your own poets have said we are his offspring he takes their material he takes their poets and philosophers and teachers and he uses their language to point them to the living God and to Christ the saviour he acts as one not under the law and so as well he says to the weak I've become weak now that's a particular dig if I can put it that way at the Corinthians do you remember how they looked upon people who didn't exercise their liberties as the weak look over there in verse 8 sorry chapter 8 and verse 9 where he's been talking about food sacrifice to idols if you remember what happened was that they were in Corinth and there was all sorts of temples and pagan rituals and things going on and most of the meat that was sold in the market was meat that had first been used in a pagan ceremony as an offering to a false god and because that had been used in the ceremony it was much cheaper to buy in the market and so what happened was that some

Christians felt that it was against their conscience to eat that meat which had been used in the false worship of a god and Paul says it didn't matter it an idol is nothing there's no such thing as a false god there's only one god but for some of them it was a problem they struggled with it they felt they were condoning it others thought no problem it's cheap meat let's just buy it what does Paul say be careful he says in verse 9 however that the exercise of your rights in other words to buy it and eat meat however it's been used does not become a stumbling block to the weak in fact he comes to the conclusion himself verse 13 if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin I'll never eat meat again so I'll not cause them to fall Paul had imposed upon himself this slavery not to eat meat if it caused somebody to stumble and fall if it caused the conscience of a weak brother or sister or person to stumble then he was not willing to have his rights his own desires fulfilled all for the salvation of the lost to the weak

I became weak to win the weak I've become all things to all people we have that phrase used don't we he's all things to all people it's used in that sense of he's a compromiser so that's the question really is Paul actually saying here well of course you've got to compromise if you want to see people

come to church you've got to become more liberal you can't you can't set up certain doctrines that people have to accept you've got to be more willing to receive people whatever their beliefs whatever their religions after all as some people would say today all religion has some truth in it so surely we should be all things to all people we need to be really broad in our view get rid of principle get rid of doctrine let's have charity for all is that what

Paul was is that what he was actually saying that he was a compromiser and that all people should compromise with the gospel that they might hopefully win some certainly not when people use that phrase he's all things to all men and they take it from Paul then they have completely got it wrong the last thing in the world that Paul was was a compromiser the last thing he was was someone who was willing to water down or to do away elements of the gospel just so he could keep people happy that was never Paul in fact he makes it very clear when he writes to the Galatians if anybody else even an angel from heaven preaches a different gospel to the gospel I preached let him be accursed anathema there is no other gospel than the gospel that Paul preached the gospel of Christ the gospel of the sins forgiven the gospel of a holy

[31 : 26] God but neither was Paul some radical extremist neither was Paul some sort of fanatic when he speaks about this in slavery he impresses upon himself he's not some masochist who thinks that by imposing upon himself certain restrictions he's going to make himself holier or more acceptable to God like some early as it were monastic order where he would wear a coat of a vest of horse hair no Paul actually goes to show that this self imposed slavery which he practices is not something special it's not something just unique to an apostle like Paul rather he goes to show that it is actually the only logical conclusion and the only logical way of living for those who have trusted Christ verse 24 he turns their minds to the

Olympic games well not the Olympic games but the games that were very similar there were some games of course in every city in that time and the Olympic athlete is devoted to one goal he has one thing on his mind or her mind he has one purpose that drives and motivates him one passion that gets him out of bed in the morning what is that winning that's all that matters winning everything else in life takes second place verse 25 everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training they cut out the caffeine they cut out the cake they cut out the rich foods they cut out all those things which they enjoy and are free to eat but they say I'm not going to eat them I'm not going to give over to my appetites I'm going to enforce myself enslave myself to this one goal for the next four years to train to win the medal and just think how far an athlete will go for that championship race how far they will go to get that gold as we learnt last year some even to the point of breaking the law taking performance enhancing drugs just so they can win and even some governments will go to such great lengths to cheat the system that they might get some honour or glory for their nation they will go to such lengths getting up early in the morning punishing and pushing their bodies until they collapse and fall starving them to the nth degree going through strict regimes which are suffering an inscrutable pain what to receive a simple medal or a crown or an honour or a gold which is passing away do we think of these people as fanatics do we think of these people as strange don't we exalt them as heroes don't we say that they are great people don't we look upon them as people to emulate well why then dear friends should we think it's strange for a Christian to push and to present themselves as such a lifestyle which is punishing and self enslaving and sacrificial for something Jesus sorry something that Paul says which is not a crown that will pass away but he says in verse 25 a crown that will last forever every sportsman and woman is only a champion for a little while aren't they the crown of success that they win and earn for themselves may last to the next race only or maybe to the next championship or maybe just till somebody else comes along and breaks their record Wayne Rooney yesterday broke the record as the highest goal scorer for Manchester United in all their history 250 goals when he scored one yesterday beating Sir Bobby Charlton who hasn't played professional football since 1973 for Manchester

United all that time these records stood but now it's been beaten now it's come to an end now somebody else takes the glory no says Paul we aren't people who do things which are strange or odd when we put aside our passions and our desires when we give up our freedoms for the sake of the gospel because what are we doing dear friends we are working and striving towards an everlasting crown a crown of glory that's not just for a day or for a year or for a lifetime but for eternity a crown that will last forever Paul is not out of his mind he's not just some one-off extremist he's following in the very footsteps of his master the Lord Jesus Christ of whom it was said in

Philippians 2 who made himself nothing and took on to himself the very nature of a slave being found in human likeness see Paul knew very well that the Lord Jesus Christ lived that life when he enslaved himself into our humanity and came to serve those that he had created and suffer and die in our place because he knew that in doing so he would win and rescue and save a multitude but that he would also be lifted up and exalted through a place of great honor for Philippians 2 9 says therefore God exalted him to the highest place Paul wasn't a fool he was looking forward to receiving a prize that far outlasts and brings greater joy than any glory any praise any honor that the world here has to offer I myself may not be disqualified for the prize what's the prize he speaks about it just in Philippians chapter 3 as he has spoken of Christ so he speaks of himself as one who presses on towards the goal to win the prize which God has called me heaven words in

[38 : 16] Christ Jesus eternal life eternal joy eternal peace if Paul is laying before the Corinthians here and laying before us the normal Christian life life then how can we apply this example of Christ and Paul to ourselves how can we imitate this life of service today well the first thing dear friends as I'm sure you feel as I feel it challenges us it challenges us concerning what is the most important thing in our lives the most important thing to an athlete is to win and Paul says the most important thing to him is to win notice how on three occasions he speaks of winning to win as many as possible verse 19 to win those under the law verse 20 to win those not having the law verse 21 to win the weak verse 22 what will you and I do to take the gospel to the lost what will you and I do to remove hindrances and stumbling blocks to those who are unsaved what sort of loss are we willing to put up with what sort of sacrifices will we go through how far will you and I deny ourselves those rights and those wants just so that sinners can be saved how far will you go how far will I

I think there's something very strongly spoken of in verse 23 where Paul says I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings I think it highlights the reason why many of us are joyless in our Christian lives Paul speaks about sharing in the blessings of the gospel and I don't think he's only talking about those eternal blessings to come I think he's talking about those temporary earthly blessings that come when we share the gospel when we speak of Christ when we proclaim the good news it is joy unspeakable to tell a sinner to tell someone who is hungry for the bread of life where to find it it is an unspeakable delight to be able to lead somebody to the saviour and point them to the one who loved them and died for them there's nothing that compares with it in all the world

I would say to any Olympic champion who has won their ten thousandth gold that it is just a tiny drop of the joy that there is when one sinner repents in heaven and on earth and we miss out on that dear friends we miss out on it because we rather concentrate on those passing pleasures those things that make life comfortable those things that we don't want to give up people's high regard of us people's popularity of us or whatever it may be and then thirdly I believe that what Paul has to see here focuses us our thinking our living our talking all that we do upon the one thing that matters running the race fighting the fight notice he uses those two illustrations there of an athlete who runs and a boxer who punches he says there in verse 26 therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly can you imagine the athletic track and the people watching around and about and there's one of the athletes and they're all lined up and off they go but there's one of them he just sort of wanders he's just all over the place he's just sort of running and it's like he's out for a Sunday jog and then he goes the wrong way around the track what on earth is he doing or like a boxer he gets in the ring and they both come out and what does he do he turns away from his opponent and just starts punching the air over here and his opponent's over there you say well that's crazy but dear friends you see this is what Paul is getting at many of us live our lives aimlessly pointlessly we're doing all these things but we aren't focused on what it's all about we aren't focused on running the race and fighting the fight we don't even know where we're going and we're missing the target because we're aiming in the wrong direction your life and mine dear friends belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ who bought us with his own precious blood and he's brought us for a purpose he saved us for a reason he's brought us into the blessings and the joy of salvation yes that we might enjoy them and enjoy him for all eternity but that we might have a direction and a focus and a purpose for our lives that the freedoms we've got are not simply so that we can sit back the freedoms we got are precious treasures that we are to use and to pay for the opportunity to see souls saved there's one thing in life worth living for it's not to be the president of the USA it's the gospel of

Jesus Christ let's just take a moment in the quietness of our hearts before the Lord let his word and his spirit do the work because I know that every one of us will find the word of God challenging tonight let's wait on him to search us and to ask for his help that we might take up his call and that we might live that life of free slavery whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ what is more I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing [45 : 30] Christ my Lord for whose sake I have lost all things I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which is through faith in Christ I want to know Christ yes to know the power of his resurrection and the sharing in his sufferings becoming like him in his death so somehow attaining to the resurrection from the dead brothers and sisters I do not yet consider myself to have taken hold of it but one thing I do forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead I press on towards the goal to win the prize which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus Amen