

Philippians Chapter 1 v 12 - 30

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[0 : 00] No, don't keep them open. Well, good morning everyone, welcome, and happy new year to you.

Maybe a blessed new year might be more appropriate, but welcome to our service this morning. Good morning. We are going to have a slightly different service in as much that the children don't have to come up to the front, but I will be asking you questions.

You might be even asking some adults some questions as well. But before we begin, let's come to the Lord in prayer and ask his blessing upon us. Let's do that.

Our gracious God and our merciful and loving Heavenly Father, we do thank you that we are here today entirely because of your grace and your goodness to us.

That you've given us that health and that strength, that desire, maybe a compulsion to come here this morning and to seek your face, to worship you.

[1 : 07] The beginning of a new year which we mark in celebration, but Lord, may the new year for each one of us here be a year of great blessing and spiritual growth.

We pray that you would indeed just fill us with your Holy Spirit and with the truth of your word, and that you would bless us as we seek to apply it and walk in your ways.

That you would indeed be the one who is ever before us. That you may be the one in whom we are always trusting. That you may always be the one in whom we have absolute confidence.

That even though we live in a world that is full of warring and turmoil and great uncertainty, that there is a dependable God.

There is only one God. And you are the one, our Heavenly Father, who sent the Lord Jesus Christ to us to be that sacrifice, that atoning sacrifice for our sin.

[2 : 09] So we can offer to you any acceptable worship to you this morning. It is through him, through what he has done for us, by dying for us on that cross. And we thank you that we are not alone because your Holy Spirit is the one whom the Father has been sent, and whom the Son has sent.

That together with the Father and the Son, through the Holy Spirit, you, our Lord and our God, are glorified. And we pray that you'll come and bless us. We pray that we may know the inspiration of a holy God in our midst this morning.

And we ask this for the glory of your name. Amen. We're going to sing on the screen, Jesus is Lord, the cry that echoes through creation.

Amen. Jesus is Lord, the cry that echoes through creation.

Praise, man, and power, eternal birth, our Lord. The Son of God, will be the glory of the heavens.

[3 : 43] Jesus is Lord, the Lord, the cry that echoes through creation. Jesus is Lord, his voice, the saints, the stars and planets.

He's the lamented byulum and mourn.

for us suffering with aim and thirst to bring salvation to God.

Jesus is not but to his glorious be empty not even death could crush this will of God.

The crisis made the chains of us and we're forgiven and we can run into the arms of God.

[5 : 03] Jesus is not a shout of joy and trial and anguish as he rejects and every need of souls.

Every heart and every heart will see his glory the church of all will take his children home.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Well then children rather than have you come to the front and sort of listen to me talk the Bible leads to Philippians I don't know what the page is in the church Bible but it's Philippians chapter 1 and we are going to read verses 12 to 30 so it's Paul's letter to the Philippians chapter 1 and verse 12 Now I want you to know brothers that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.

As a result it has become clear throughout the whole palace garden to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry but others out of goodwill. the latter do so in love knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

[7 : 07] The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition not sincerely supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.

But what does it matter? The most important thing is that in every way whether from false motives are true Christ is preached and because of this I rejoice.

Yes and I will continue to rejoice for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.

I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body whether by life or by death.

For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I'm going to go on living in the body this will mean fruitful labour for me yet what shall I choose?

[8 : 25] I do not know. I am torn between the two. I desire to depart and be with Christ which is better by far but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

Convinced of this I know that I will remain and will continue with all of you for your progress and joy. in the faith so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

Whatever happens conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence I will know that you stand firm in one spirit contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.

This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed but that you will be saved and that by God. for it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him but also to suffer for him since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Well we'll be looking at that word in a short while but well this morning I want to take a verse which is found in the passage we read which is Philippians chapter 1 verse 27 if you have a new international version it says this whatever happens conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ it's the only translation actually has that strength where it says whatever happens conduct yourself in a manner worthy what it means is is just simply this that whatever happens means that the only thing that matters the only thing that matters to a

[10 : 58] Christian is to conduct ourselves our lives in a manner worthy of Christ and what I want to do this morning is to try and work out how we can do that but before we do that what I want to do is to look at the context the historical context of Paul as he writes this letter to to have a look at what has been happening in that context and then look at our own context and see where we are and how that compares and I want to draw out four things which I trust will be a help to us all the year is AD 61 when Paul writes this letter it's one of his several prison letters and written in this case from Rome but almost a hundred years before in

AD 42 the forces of Antony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius and the battle that took place was the battle that took place in Philippi and it was known as the battle of Philippi and what happened there was the ending the ushering in of the end of the Roman Republic and the ushering in of the Roman Empire Philippi became a Roman colony and as a Roman colony enjoyed all kinds of privileges it actually became so popular that it was a retirement place for people from the Roman army so it was a very good place to be was Philippi and all because of a hundred years before this battle had taken place and this big seesaw switch in the world history happened when the republic ended for

Rome and the Roman Empire began 10 years earlier in AD 50 10 years early to when Paul is writing this letter a group of travelers turn up in Philippi the principal people that we know are Paul the apostle Paul and Silas on what we call the second missionary journey and they arrived in Philippi and they started preaching the gospel now they arrived in Philippi because they'd wanted to go into Macedonia into Turkey but the spirit of God had said no you're not to go there and they kept trying to go up there and eventually they were pushed around to Troas on the western side of Asia and there they had a vision for a man who called out and said come over here and help and so because they realized this was a vision from

God Paul and his companions they cross over into Philippi Philippi became the first place in Europe where the gospel was preached and Philippi the Philippian church became the first European church a remarkable historical significance so that's what happened ten years before the letter was written now Paul finds himself not in Philippi but he's in Rome he's in Rome and he's in prison and he's in prison we read about it it says that he's in chains it says that we know that he's writing this letter amongst other letters and he's possibly at the same time reflecting on a lot of experiences that he had had as being a Christian for instance he'd been shipwrecked many times in his travels he'd been flogged and beaten many times stoned to death and left to dead and he had really been going through an awful and difficult time in his witness to being an apostle of Christ and he's now actually undergoing his sixth imprisonment so he's been in jail this is jail term number six and he's writing this letter so is

Paul discouraged well no he's not he's positively encouraged in fact the letter to the Philippians is known as a letter of joy he's just overjoyed joy just keeps bubbling out over his situation and over how he is blessed by the understanding of the Philippians have in their faith Paul is in prison but he's actually in his own rented house his own rented accommodation and he actually is allowed visitors and he has full expectation that he's going to be released and go and see the Philippian church again so he's very encouraged now nationally at the same time all is not well it's not well because there was happening an ever increasing distancing between the ruling classes the emperor and the common people the emperor now considered themselves as gods untouchable and it's thought and it's probably very well true that the seeds of the destruction of the

[17:07] Roman Empire had already begun that there was trouble ahead in fact there was trouble ahead three years later in AD 64 Rome was going to be burned to the ground and that was going to make way for Nero and some vain building projects that he wanted it said that Nero did it but what Nero certainly did was that he brought about great persecution upon the church of God and we'll come to that in a moment so 200 years later from this time of writing we see the actual decline of the Roman Empire is complete and is no more it's a long preamble isn't it but let's just try and look now at where we are in terms of our own present day and what I want to do I think it's just frozen just give it a minute we'll be all right whilst we're doing that can anybody think back of what was happening 100 years ago

I know you weren't there but 100 years ago we were in fact in the middle of World War One so in the same time that 100 years ago in Paul's day there was a great battle going on at the Battle of Philippi 100 years ago the Battle of the Somme we commemorated that on July the 1st last year the Battle of the Somme and where millions and millions of casualties happened across all sites 50 years ago we were in the middle of the Cold War just emerging from the Second World War we now find ourselves in the Cold War era and I find it quite funny when the press talk about a new Cold War nothing like this and those of us old enough realise that probably the defining moment in the

Cold War was the Cuban missile crisis in October 52 when the American President Jeff Kennedy and the Russian President Nikolai Khrushchev basically faced each other off because what they had done is put nuclear tipped warheads bases in Cuba and these are the bases and there were more on the way and the big standoff was to turn the ships around and those who was old enough actually realised there was nothing else to think about because it was an awesome thing because we knew that if Russia did not turn the ships around there was likely a new way ironically last year in November we had announced the death of Fidel Castro who was the leader the Republican leader there and there he is buried his ashes are in a big boulder so that's 27 years ago sorry that was 50 years ago the what's the point of all that well 27 years ago we saw the downfall of communism and some would say that we're seeing the downfall of democracy today but whatever our situation is whether that's true or not it's true that after half a century of serving the gods of money and the gods of possessions and the gods of celebrity and the gods of technology we now have a more troubled world and a more discontented world than there has ever been and political unrest is just like a stormy sea

I'm not making political points here I just want us to try and understand where we are and what it was like when Paul was around as well to see if there's any difference Brexit brought about the downfall of a seemingly invincible prime minister when will article 50 get invoked you know we live in political unrest people talk about hard Brexit and soft Brexits in the USA we saw the election of Donald Trump and all the furore that has brought and that will happen when he becomes president on January the 20th paradoxically the stock markets have boomed and they're just going up and up and up and up you know so where is the trouble that was promised what about today today we have terrorist wars don't we this is a picture of

Aleppo the broken peace between is very very shaky what will happen in 2017 when France and Germany have their elections will the euro survive you know we live in such an uncertain and troubled world and the challenge that we have is the same for us as it was in Paul's day is how shall we live how shall we live and that's why I chose verse 27 of Philippians chapter 1 because Paul says this whatever happens and I read the context he's in prison he's in chains he said whatever happens to you to us to me to everyone conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ as

[23 : 34] Christians we are called to be different we all of us live in the same troubled world but we have a Christian perspective which is different to what the world has and we are to live a life that is different to the world in a manner that's worthy of the gospel of Christ so how can we do that how can we live such in such a way that it makes a difference well as I said right at the beginning I've got four things four things that we can be and the first one is this that we are to be Christ minded we're to be Christ minded if you look up Philippians chapter 2 the bible is still open at that point following on from the passage that we read we read what the Christian attitude is to be in other words whatever if we want to be

Christ minded we have to get an attitude and the attitude is not the attitude of the world or its thinking the attitude is the attitude of Christ and so we read the first four verses let me just read them to you says if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ if any comfort from his love if any fellowship with the spirit if any tenderness and compassion in other words if your Christian faith means anything at all then make Paul's joy make God's joy make my joy complete by being like minded having the same love being one in spirit and purpose do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility consider others better than yourselves each one of you should not look to your own interests but also to the interests of others and your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ so in other words if we are to live a life that's going to make a difference that's going to keep us together as it were whatever happens conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of

Christ we have to have an attitude that's the same as Jesus Christ and that attitude is that attitude of obedience and humility which that wonderful next few verses that hymn of praise continue with in Philippians I won't read it it's well known to us and so the first thing we have to do is to have a right attitude towards God which will give us the right attitude towards the world as well a right mind comes hand in glove with a right attitude if we're thinking right then we'll behave right and we'll respond to the situation we find ourselves and Christ in his humility and obedience is what we are to wear it's only a starting place because it is the only starting place because it's only then that we can get the right perspective now the next one is whatever happens is be a winner well we've had lots of winners haven't we newspapers newspapers are full of sports personalities and so on but we're called to be a winner in other words we're called to to press on press on with our

Christian faith he says this in chapter 3 and verse 13 14 and read it forgetting what is behind and straying toward what is ahead I press on towards the goal to win the prize which God has called me heavenward this is the apostle Paul he's single minded that's what it is the attitude that we have is to be single minded being single minded means that we have a goal in view being single minded means that goal is a prize of eternal life and glory with Christ and a smile from God himself and that is surely something to covet isn't it many Olympic medalists have got their knighthoods as we said earlier on and companions of honour and OBEs which will last the longest is it the crown that Paul is now wearing that we will think about towards the end or is it the crown of honour and gold medals and so on it speaks of itself doesn't it the crown that we are aiming for the prize which is ours is an eternal crown it's not pie in the sky when we die it is glory in itself and

Paul is still wearing his crown when Ken Dodd who knows how much longer Ken Dodd got but his knight is not going to last that long is it let's put things in perspective so we've had we're to have an attitude we're to conduct ourselves in a way by being Christ minded we're to have an attitude which is pressing on towards the goal and we're to have an attitude of generosity generosity all these things come out of this letter to the Philippians Paul writes to the Philippians he says this in chapter 4 and and so yeah 4 and verse 14 he says yet it is good of you to share in my troubles moreover as you Philippians know in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel when I set out from

[29 : 36] Macedonia that's a journey that brought him over into Europe not one church shared with me the matter of giving and receiving except you only for even when I was in Thessalonica you sent me aid again and again when I was in need to be generous the Philippian church was generous it was generous in all of these things I know it's alliteration but generous in their tithing they collected the money to send off to Paul they collected their money so the church and the gospel could continue and expand and grow they used their talents and their gifts Epaphroditus was a man that they sent with the money and Epaphroditus almost dies as he contracts an illness and the whole church both in Rome and in Philippi is concerned and they sort of hear about

Epaphroditus is ill but they were willing to sacrifice the talents of this man and the time of this man in order to secure the expansion of the gospel and the toil of the early Christians is really quite marked is it not and that's marked here as well we are those who do give of our money of our talents of our time who labour in the gospel and we labour and we press on so that we might see the church grow and expand and we pray that God will bless us that's why we're having a week of prayer we want God to bless the work of our hands and bless and that includes our giving our generosity in our time in our sharing it's in all of these things and it is one mark of a

Christ centred church is that we're always generous we're always generous in our tithing and our talents and in our time and in our toil we all have different gifts don't we our gifting is different and yet it's all valuable all of it is valuable this is what Paul says in Romans he says we have different gifts according to the grace given us if a man's gift is prophesied let him use it in proportion to his faith if it is serving let him serve if it is teaching let him teach if it is encouraging let him encourage if it is contributing give generously if it is leadership let him govern diligently if it is showing mercy let him do it cheerfully that's the call of the church that is the call of the Philippian church it's the call of our church to be generous in these things and we may say well I don't have enough resources

I'm lacking in backing well if you're lacking in backing Paul also says that my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus we're not lacking in anything because God has given us everything and we can call upon God more and more to give us that grace and that strength and that wisdom that we need in these days but the final thing I want to come to is this that whatever happens we're to be unafraid whatever happens we're to be unafraid we saw at the beginning and throughout really that we live in an uncertain world we may think that things today are more topsy-turvy than they ever have been but in reality they've always been like that there's always been wars there's always been anarchists always been terrorists there's always been the struggle against good and evil and wise and foolish people but the main difference perhaps in these days is that communications are so quick that we hear about these things far sooner everybody who turned the tv on this morning heard about the bombing in Istanbul you know that's the world we live in they only heard that Epaphroditus had been ill really unsure you know they don't even know the gifts got there you know things are a lot slower aren't they but fear is a very present emotion and it's something which dogs us because of our of our really our sinfulness the fact that we want to go our own way we want to shrug off God and when we shrug off God we can't live as Christians but it is taking on Christ that we we become different and distinctive

I just want to read something this is the fallout from hard Trump strategy would be worse outside America this was taken the day after present after Donald Trump became president elect this is well there's no guessing which newspaper it comes from right but what is surprising is what he said here let me just read some of it to you it says if Donald Trump means what he says the west is dead with the west as a is dead as a meaningful concept the international system and liberal trading order upheld by the US since the second world war will disintegrate in short order Haitian balance of power will unravel weak countries on the Pacific Rim will be left with no choice cut off by an isolationist America they will succumb to an orbit of expansionist China Japan will rearm at breakneck speed when I read this

[35 : 54] I couldn't believe I was reading it Russia's Vladimir Putin will have a free hand in Eastern Europe well that's true and are able to lever his temporary military advantage to maximum political effect whether Mr. Trump pulls out of NATO or lets it wither on the vine the outcome is the same nobody will believe in solidarity and the deterrence of Article 5 a series of wars metaphorical and real will obstruct the flow of global goods and capital we take for granted it will leave emerging markets in the lurch interlocking supply chains will become unworkable the World Trade Organization will go the way of the League of Nations it is impossible for markets to price such a strategic earthquake which sorry to say that again it is impossible for the markets to price such a strategic earthquake which explains the wild gyrations we have seen since the election shock all models break down and so on well can you see why fear why as a world we live on fear we're fed with fear and we know that all the pundits have been wrong but there is one thing that is constant and that is the stability of a God who is sovereign and as Christians we will succumb to fear it's always there let me just move on what about Job

Job we think he's such a great man who had terrible things happen to him never had a weak moment but here's a weak moment Job's weak moment is this for my sighing has become my daily food my groans pour out like water what I feared has come upon me what I dreaded has happened to me I have no peace no quietness I have no rest but only turmoil do you know we we succumb to these things don't we we feel these things we are living in a certain world and we wouldn't be human if we didn't feel like perhaps that's what Job felt in a moment of weakness Christmas and the resurrection accounts and the Bible have do not be afraid running through them like sticks of Whitby Rock running through the accounts of Christmas and and the resurrection we have do not be afraid do not be afraid do not be afraid

I bring good tidings of great joy the tomb do not be afraid we God knows that we're likely to get afraid but he also has a remedy for that which is do not be afraid something this is really the antidote that Paul whilst we have Job's week moment we also have Paul's confidence and Paul's confidence was this I know you will stand firm right into the Philippians I know you will stand firm in one spirit striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you our trust in God our trust in the word of God our trust in all that the

Saviour has done for us we mean that we will not be shaken means that we can't be shaken because he is holding on to us even Paul asks for sufficient courage in chapter 1 and verse 20 and so he's aware of that Philippians was written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment in AD 61 on July 16 AD 64 three years later the great fire of Rome began and three of Rome's 14 districts were utterly destroyed and devastated burned for a week and only four districts actually escaped damage just like the great fire of London and blame was placed expediently upon Christians which began the great persecution when

Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians he didn't know what lay ahead he didn't know what lay ahead and what lay ahead was more imprisonment three years later we find him writing another letter to a man called Timothy in AD 67 he's in prison but this time it's so so different this time we read this he's writing to Timothy he says do your best to come to me quickly Demas because he loved this world has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica Crescens has gone to Galatia Titus to Dalmatia only Luke is with me get Mark bring him with you because he is helpful with me in my ministry I sent Titicus to Ephesus when you come bring the cloak he's cold bring the cloak I left with carpers at Troas and my scrolls especially the parchment and then he says this at my first defense no one came to my support but everyone deserted me may not be held against them was

[41 : 55] Paul afraid of the ultimate price he was going to pay for his faith well we know he wasn't because we read in Timothy he says this for I am already being poured out like a drink offering and the time for my departure is near I have fought the good fight I have finished the race I have kept the faith now there is in soul for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day and not only to me but to also to all who have longed for his appearing Paul is applying what he wrote to the Philippians to his own situation in a few months time the worst would happen he would lose his life because of his faith but the gospel was going to press on carry on and victory was for sure for him and for all who are to follow so we read this he says we have a sure and certain hope that that was that

Paul says I was delivered from the lion's mouth and the Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom to him be glory forever and ever the Lord will deliver us we will perhaps be afraid have weak moments you know as we as circumstances as things happen to us are we anxious are we worried about our health or about money our relationships are we worried about the church people moving house moving area are we worried about wars are we worried about Brexit are we worried about Trump well the text that we have is for every one of us isn't it that whatever happens we're to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ and when we do that when our minds are fixed on him when we're working and toiling for him when we're doing his will when we're minding his business then we will know strength and stability in our lives and we shall see the church continue and grow in spite of any opposition that can come along so we're going to sing our final hymn now which is come people of the risen king k

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[48 : 11] Rejoice, rejoice, let every tongue rejoice, one heart, one voice, O Church of Christ, rejoice.

Amen. Amen.