

Revelation Chapter 2 v 8 - 11

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[0 : 0 0] Revelation and chapter 2 and verses 8 to 11. In a moment or two the children will go out to Sunday school and if you've got children here you're visiting there's a Sunday school provided and the crash if you want to make use of that please follow the crowd. But first of all we're going to read God's Word. It's good that we read it together as the whole family of the church and then give a few moments for folk to go to Sunday school. So it's Revelation chapter 2 and verses 8 to 11. It's the second of the letters that Jesus sends to the seven churches in Asia.

That's Western Turkey as we know it today and each one of these churches was a real fellowship of believers and each one of them had a letter from Christ speaking directly into their situation and need and so we're going to pick up on this letter to the church in Smyrna and read that.

It's verse 8 then of Revelation and chapter 2. To the angel of the church in Smyrna write these are the words of him who is the first and the last who died and came to life again.

I know your afflictions and your poverty yet you are rich. I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer.

I tell you the devil will put some of you in prison to test you and you will suffer persecution for 10 days. Be faithful even to the point of death and I will give you the crown of life.

[1 : 5 4] He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death. And we're going to be thinking about that passage in particular and applying it as we consider a suffering church in a moment or two.

Please turn in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 2 if you've got one to hand and to that letter which we read just a few moments ago from the risen, the ascended, glorified Lord Jesus to the church at Smyrna.

And if you have that open that will be a help to you. One of the descriptions that is given in the Bible in the Old Testament in looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ is that he will be the suffering servant.

And in Isaiah 53 particularly, God says through Isaiah the prophet, look at my servant, he says later, a man of sorrow and familiar with suffering.

We know that description of Jesus Christ as the suffering servant is particularly to be found of course in the hours leading up to and including his death on that Good Friday.

[3 : 1 6] If you read the account and I'd encourage you to do that from time to time, we realize that Jesus Christ there was exposed to torture and to beatings of the most severe kind, to pain and ultimately the cruel agony of execution upon the cross.

Probably and possibly one of the cruelest way for a person to die. The sufferings of the Lord Jesus of course are unique. He suffered on our behalf, he suffered in our place that he might be the saviour of the world, that he might take upon himself not just those beatings and sufferings, but a take upon himself the punishment our sin deserved when he was separated from God on our behalf.

But those who enjoy the blessings, who share in the blessings of what Jesus won for us in his death, must also share in something of the sufferings that he endured as well.

This is the teaching throughout the Bible. Romans 8 verse 17, Paul speaks about the fact that we share in his sufferings. We thought a little bit about this last week when we talked about Jesus as the vine and every believer as a branch, that we are united with him.

What makes somebody a Christian is not them going to church or praying or reading the Bible or calling themselves a Christian or being baptized or any of those things. It is we have a living unity with Christ.

[4 : 46] We have a living spiritual life force which flows between Christ and us. We are united with him. We are part of his body. And since he, the head, suffered, that must mean and does mean that we, the body, will also share in his suffering.

This is what Jesus told his disciples over and over again to expect. Here in John 15, Remember the words I spoke to you.

No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you. In Luke in chapter 1, he warned his disciples, You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends.

They will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. The words of Jesus. He never ever, as it were, gave a rose-tinted view to people about what it meant to follow him.

He never ever said, Come and follow me and all of your problems will disappear. He made it very clear that to follow him meant sharing in his sufferings. And so we find it was the experience of the church, the early church which is spoken about in the New Testament.

[6 : 00] Acts is full of occasions of Christians either being put to the sword, stoned to death, imprisoned and so on. And so when Peter writes his first letter sometime later on in the early part of the church, he writes this, Dear friends, Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. One of the Christians, one of the churches that endured such suffering is the church in Smyrna.

And we have this letter here which tells us something about it in Revelation chapter 2. Now because this is the week in which we are remembering the suffering church, and standing together with our fellow Christians around the world who are being persecuted and oppressed in a way that we have not experienced, it's very good for us to set our minds upon these things.

We live in safety. It's very hard for us to appreciate what it must mean to suffer for Christ. And it's very hard for us to accept the truth that suffering for Christ is the norm, not the exception.

That's why in 2 Timothy chapter 3, Paul writes, He says, In fact, truly, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

[7 : 33] Everybody who wants to follow Jesus will be at some time persecuted. And the reality is that we are the exceptions. Those of us here in Whitby and in the UK and in other parts of the world and the country, we are the odd ones out.

We are the peculiar ones who do not know what it is to suffer in the way that others suffer for Christ and for his name. It's the norm to suffer. We are the exception.

And so I think it's very healthy for us not only to consider the sufferings of the majority of Christians, the majority of Christians around the world and in the church worldwide, but also to obey the commandments that the Bible tells us and gives us about how we are to react towards those who are suffering for his name.

Hebrews in chapter 13, the writer says this, Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering.

So we're not to say out of sight, out of mind. We're to remember. And in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, where Paul is giving this picture, an illustration of the church as being a body, he says this, If one part of the body suffers, every part suffers with it.

[8 : 49] If one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. We are to recognise that we are connected and united with those brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering.

We're to remember them, and we are to care for them as if it was ourselves, as if it was happening to us. And so we're looking at this letter very briefly that the Lord Jesus sends to Smyrna, hearing a little bit about their sufferings and the sufferings of Christians.

I'm going to interject some of the points with testimony about other Christians and things that are going on around the world at this moment. I hope that we can better understand what it means for us to be one in Christ and to share in the sufferings of his church.

Now, out of the seven letters that Jesus writes or Jesus sends here in Revelation, this is the only one where Jesus doesn't have to rebuke the church or correct them for errors in the way that they act and behave.

That isn't to say that the church in Smyrna were perfect, and that's why Jesus didn't pick up on any faults with them. There is no perfect church. This is far from a perfect church, as far as you can get from being a perfect church, isn't it?

[10 : 02] Okay, well, I think it is. But Jesus' intention really, of course, was to sustain them, to help them, to encourage them in what they were facing, in the difficulties.

And also, to give them encouragement. Encourage them. And we'll come to the encouragements in a little while, but first I want to recognize and see the types of difficulty that they faced, that Jesus tells them is coming, and how they are very similarly replicated around the world, even today.

So Jesus begins by saying there in verse 9, I know your afflictions and your poverty. Afflictions, in particular, their poverty. And really, their poverty could have been simply because they were the lowest class.

Many of the early church, or much of the early church we know, was made up of slaves, but not just always slaves, but of lower classes. So perhaps they were poor for that reason. But because Jesus connects it with their afflictions, it's clear that they were poor because of what they were suffering, what was happening to them.

They were being, perhaps, robbed by other people around about them. And that does happen. Paul, sorry, the writer to the Hebrews, reminds the Christians of what happened to them.

[11 : 25] They said, you sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. So Christians who are persecuted often robbed, or they have their properties taken away from them, or destroyed, or so on.

Here's just one instance of that. Officials from the state censorship department visited the offices of SAT-7 in Cairo, in Egypt, earlier this month, and confiscated cameras and other equipment.

The prosecutor and censorship department will now decide if the case should proceed to court. Discussions would take up to a fortnight. Meanwhile, SAT-7 will be deprived of vital equipment that was confiscated, which will cause significant disruption to its operations.

So there's equipment, there's possessions taken, confiscated, stolen, and so on. For others, of course, many Christians are driven into poverty because they have to flee for their lives, leaving behind their homes, their fields, their businesses, their everything.

Here's just one again. Six Hmong Christian families in Laos, Laos is a small country near to Vietnam, were forced to leave their homes in Kohai village, Kamket district last year, because they refused to deny Christ and returned to the animist beliefs of most of the villages.

- [12 : 53] Become Christians, and they were driven out of the village because, and so, they were finding it very difficult to survive. So, poverty. Next, Jesus says, I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

I suppose, in any way, this may be the closest we ever get, really, to suffering for Christ. We may get some slander. We may get some name-calling, some mickey-taking, or even perhaps some aggressive things said against us when we seek to witness for Jesus.

It seems clearly from what we read here that in Smyrna, as in many other towns, there were a congregation of a synagogue of Jewish people. They were people who believed that they were right and they were the true worshippers of God, but according to Jesus, they were actually serving Satan instead.

The reality is, sadly, that the majority, the large majority of persecution against Christians comes from other religious groups, other faith groups who attack Christians.

Now, of course, we immediately think of IS in Iraq and Boko Haram, Muslim groups, Muslim extremists, Somalia and Nigeria and so on, but they are not the only ones.

- [14 : 18] September the 6th this year, four Buddhist monks forced their way into the village of church. The village church premises at around 10.30 a.m.

in Bandagoroma in Sri Lanka. Told the pastor he had no right to conduct worship services in the village. Previously to that, his own house had been torched and the church had been stoned.

This is happening with Buddhists, with Hindus, with people of every single type of religion, whether it be animist as well, atheistic too. There is an attack against Christians.

Thirdly, we see here that they were, some of them, worried to be imprisoned. Do not be afraid of what you will suffer, says Jesus in verse 10.

I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you. We know several of the apostles in Acts were imprisoned, weren't they? Peter was imprisoned and miraculously and wonderfully set free from that imprisonment.

- [15 : 17] Paul and Silas were imprisoned, weren't they, in Philippi and in the middle of the night were singing hymns and praying to God when God set them free, but others were kept in prison and martyred.

And again, it's not just religious groups but government authorities that oppose the church and frequently act. Very difficult, isn't it?

If you stand up against one person or even just a few people who oppose you being a Christian, that's hard enough, but imagine having to stand for Christ against the state, against the official government of the land where it is illegal or they make it illegal for you to practice and to live out your Christian faith.

Here's another example of what happened recently, just this month. Three Indian evangelists were arrested on Saturday, 3rd of October in Satnar district in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

They were accused of violating the state's anti-conversion law after Hindu nationalists stirred up trouble when the evangelists were invited to a village by a local Christian to show a film.

- [16 : 24] Arrested for wanting just to show a film about the Lord Jesus. So, there is government attack and there is imprisonment and there are many, many Christians around the world who are imprisoned because they are their faith.

Well, that's hard to be impoverished by persecution, to be slandered and attacked by religious groups, to be imprisoned, but Jesus goes and tells them that even worse is to come.

Be faithful even to the point of death. The point of death. We know that Stephen was the first martyr, isn't he recorded in the New Testament?

We know that out of the 12 apostles of Christ, only John wasn't executed for his faith. He only had to spend several years in isolation on the island of Patmos in prison. Conservatively speaking, and that means estimated, it's estimated that there are more believers, more Christian believers who died from persecution in the last century, the 20th century, than all the previous 19th centuries put together.

So things are not getting better, and in the 21st century, Christians are regularly dying simply because they love Jesus. Christians in Tanzania are facing escalating violence with many attacks on churches, resulting in damage to the buildings and injuries to the Christians.

[17 : 56] Seven churches already been burnt down this year. During one of the worst of those attacks, one pastor was murdered, a youth pastor was seriously injured. And it's not just church leaders in eastern countries and faraway places who are being murdered for their faith, although they are often the first to be targeted.

I'm sure you all saw this on the news just a few weeks ago. 26-year-old Chris Harper-Mercer asked students at Umpqua Community College in Oregon, USA, are you a Christian?

Before he shot them, nine people were killed, at least seven more were injured. People are dying simply for acknowledging Christ.

And so what we're reading here in Revelation 2, which is happening, Jesus is speaking into the first century AD, it's not ancient history, is it?

It's not just something that we can consign to the history books or something we can say, well, that's what it was like then. Thank God it's not like that now. It's a very real experience of countless believers today, tomorrow, and in the coming months and years ahead.

[19 : 08] And we need to recognise that. But then we recognise this, that into that situation the Lord Jesus Christ speaks. And he writes this letter or sends this letter to them, doesn't he, to encourage them as they face this suffering.

And his words reveal not only his great love for his church, his great care for his church, but also he sets us an example of some of the things that we can do practically and in reality today to help and support our brothers and sisters who are suffering for Christ.

It's in the words of this letter that he writes that we not only see the suffering but we see what he has to say to them and the encouragement he brings to them. And the first encouragement I would put to you is this, verse 9, I know your affliction.

I know. Twice he assures them of that for he says it later on as well. I know the slander of those. He's not ignorant of what they're going through.

We often are ignorant. He's not ignorant. He knows what it is they are suffering. One of the hardest things in suffering, particularly if you're imprisoned and in solitary confinement but in other situations too, is that you can feel as if no one knows what's going on.

[20 : 29] No one understands what you're going through. It can be a very lonely experience. Not just in the sufferings of persecution but in all sufferings. But the fact that Jesus writes them and declares to them, I know what you're going through means, of course, he's with them.

He's not forgotten them. He's not sort of pushed them to one side. This thought that God somehow is too busy to be concerned for us as individuals is foolishness. God is concerned for individuals.

God knows you and he knows me. He knows all about our sins and our failings, our shortcomings, as well as knowing about our sufferings and trials and difficulties. To suffer with the knowledge that we're not alone is a huge boost, that we're not forgotten is a huge help.

And of course, Jesus says when he knows their sufferings, he also knows the limit of their sufferings. He says, you will suffer persecution for ten days.

He assures them that their sufferings are limited. Now, I'm sure that like the rest of Revelation, this ten days is not a literal ten days, it's an appointed time.

[21 : 42] But in one sense, Jesus says, this is not going to be forever. This is not going to always happen. You're not always going to be suffering. There's going to be light at the end of the tunnel. There's going to be a limit. And we have to say, ultimately, that that limit is set by Christ himself.

You will only suffer what I will allow you to suffer. The book of Job is a wonderful example of that, where there is a limit put upon the sufferings of God's people. He will not allow us to suffer beyond what we're able or tested beyond what we're able.

He won't go on forever. So Jesus encourages them with that. I know. I understand. And of course, being as one who himself has suffered to such a great extent, even to the point of death, his saying, I know, is not simply the glib words of, I know what you're going through.

But Jesus also gives encouragement because he gives them insight into what is happening and shows them that their sufferings are part of an ongoing spiritual battle. This is 9 and 10.

We're told there about those who are the synagogue of Satan. Then he tells them the devil will put some of them in prison. The same person, the devil and Satan, the same person, different titles, one meaning accuser.

[23 : 03] Jesus attributes the persecution of the church to an inhuman source, to Satan himself, the devil.

And those religious groups who spoke so slanderously of the church, they are not seeking after God, but they are following Satan. That's a very hard word, isn't it?

But it's a very true word. Something that we're not allowed to say in one sense. But the truth is that men and women who act, whatever their religious name, who act with violence and hatred, must be people who act under the influence and the direction of Satan.

There's no other way around it. He is the source of all evil and they are the doers of evil. But this reality that the church is engaged in spiritual warfare shouldn't surprise us.

When we read the news and we see what's going on as Christians, the first thing we should think of is that this is a spiritual attack. This is Satan at work in the world, the God of this age.

[24 : 06] Paul wrote that to us and to the Christians in Ephesus in Ephesians chapter 6. He says, Our battle, our struggle is not against flesh and blood, in other words, normal people, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

What's going on throughout history? What's going on that we're seeing just the outside of on the news and in the paper is a spiritual battle. Satan is opposed to the people of God.

We mustn't forget that. And that those people who are persecuting, and this is an encouragement for the believers who are going through this, the people who are persecuting them are not doing it out of self-motivated hatred.

They are doing it because they are being motivated by Satan himself. The devil is at work in this world. His purpose is to harm the church if he cannot destroy it.

Here's Peter, again writing to the church which was being persecuted. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for whom he may devour.

[25 : 19] And let me just take that aside for one moment and put it in perspective for you yourself, dear friends. There are only two rulers in this world.

And there are only two rulers of your life. either the ruler of your life is the Lord Jesus Christ. Either he's the one that you've acknowledged as the King and the Lord and that you are seeking to follow and do his will.

That's being a Christian. You received his forgiveness and his grace and you want to live for him and follow him. The other ruler of this world and the ruler of your life is Satan, the devil.

It's not you. You're not the God of your life. You're not the one who's in control of your life. You're not the one who ultimately has the reins but there is a devil and you are under his authority and his rule.

He's the one who guides and tempts. He's the one who is at work. Who is your King? Who is your Lord? Is it Satan or is it Christ?

[26 : 20] There's no fence to sit on. There's no in between. Let me urge you to put your faith in Christ. Let me urge you to take him as your saviour. Let me urge you to kneel before him and acknowledge him as your saviour and your Lord.

So Jesus says to them, they're in a spiritual battle. It's not just that these people hate you. It's because Satan is behind it at work.

And then he tells them this, the words of encouragement. Do not be afraid of what you're about to suffer, verse 10. Do not be afraid. Why not? Why not be afraid?

If you knew that this was about to come upon you, any normal person in their right mind would be afraid to face such a certainty of slander, of imprisonment, of poverty, of death.

Of course, Jesus is really reminding us of his own words to the disciples and to those who heard him in Matthew 10. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

[27 : 28] Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Why aren't they to be afraid of suffering? Why aren't they to be afraid of death?

Because their eternal salvation is secure no matter what happens to them. That's what Jesus says to them, doesn't he?

Their eternal salvation is certain no matter what happens to them, no matter what their persecutors do, no matter how long they're in prison, no matter what they go through, nothing can take away the forgiveness of God and the eternal home that they have in heaven with Christ.

He says, I will give you the crown of life. He overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death is the assurance. See, what happened to Jesus himself, that's why he introduces himself there in verse 8.

I am the first and last who died and came to life. Just as surely as I died and came to life, so just as surely though you die, you will come to life. The resurrection is the guarantee to us of eternal life.

[28 : 36] The reality, of course, is that we must all physically die. No matter who we are, it doesn't matter whether we're 40 or 80, the time that we have in this world and in this life is short.

It's brief, especially in comparison with eternity to come. We all have to die. It's just a matter of when and how. For them, it was dying for Christ.

For us, it may be of some illness, disease, accident, whatever, but we all have to die. The question is this, where will we spend eternity?

Have we the certainty that we have eternal life? Have we the certainty that as we face death and as we die, that we shall be received by Christ into eternal life in heaven? Or, and this is what Jesus has to say next, which is so important why they shouldn't fear death, because to be a Christian is to be saved from the second death and that is much more fearful.

He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death, the end of verse 11. What's this second death? It's the Bible's shorthand for hell. A real place.

[29 : 46] Revelation has much to speak about this. Revelation 21, where the Bible assures us that those who have trusted in Christ and loved him will be in heaven, but he says this.

Revelation 21 and verse 8. Sorry, my eyes are going. The cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars, their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

This is the second death. There's something much more fearful than dying physically and that is the second death. That is being thrown into hell.

That is enduring eternal everlasting suffering and grief in hell. And for those who die, however we die, if we know Christ, whatever we suffer, if we know Christ, if we have him as our savior, then we need fear nothing because this life will end and we shall be with him in eternity.

But there's also implied surely here in this letter from the Lord Jesus the implication that he is the one who not only knows what it is to be tested.

[31 : 09] He knows what it is to suffer. But he is the one who is able to give grace and help to those who do suffer and are tested just as he did. Hebrews in chapter 4 reminds us of that wonderful truth that we do not have a high priest, Jesus.

We do not have someone who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. We have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are yet was without sin.

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. The Lord Jesus Christ not only knows what it is like to go through these things but he is the one who is able to equip and help us to go through them as well.

See, Jesus' expectation of them is that they will be faithful. His hope for them and confidence in them is that they will overcome. How will they overcome? They will overcome because of him.

Because he overcame. And they can face those trials and they can face that suffering looking forward to what is beyond. That he will keep them through it and bring them out the other side.

[32 : 20] Again, this is true of what happened with Jesus himself. Hebrews 12 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus. Let us keep looking at him, putting our faith in him, the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before him endured the cross scorning the shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

It's help. Jesus encourages them that he knows. Encourages them that he will bring them through and that nothing can take away their eternal life should they shouldn't fear.

And he encourages them by looking to him for grace. But let's turn this round again then to us. What can we do? What can you and I do to help our brothers and sisters in Christ?

First of all, like Jesus, we need to know what they're going through. He says, I know. Therefore, we need to get educated. We need to be educated as to the sufferings of the persecuted church.

We can't afford just to bury our heads in the sand. It is unpleasant at times to think about and to read about what Christians go through. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't read about those things and understand those things.

[33 : 35] There are Christian newspapers, organizations, the Barnabas Fund, Open Doors, Release International, others as well. There's some Barnabas magazines outside.

Read them. Arm yourself with knowledge so that you can act with understanding. When we know these things about our brothers and sisters in Christ, I believe there are three things minimally that we must do.

Three things minimally that we must do. First of all, I believe we must give financially. Brothers and sisters in Christ are poor. We should give. That goes all the way through the teaching of Jesus.

Man has two coats, give one. We can alleviate the sufferings of our brothers and sisters in Christ as and when we can by giving.

Philippians 4.16, here's Paul's testimony. Even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. That's exactly what we should be doing.

[34 : 37] There's opportunities to do that, to send money to those families who the husband's been killed, money to help refugee Christians fleeing persecution, all sorts of ways we can give.

Let's not try and brush it under the table, as it were. Money's what's needed. Finance is what's needed. We've got an abundance of it. Secondly, dear friends, when we know and understand these things, we can do something else.

We can write letters, can't we? We can send letters just as Jesus sent a letter to the church that was suffering to encourage them. It's amazing what difference a letter can make.

Here's an example. Pastor Tandon lives in the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. Last year, he was sentenced to nearly four years in prison, but he was released earlier in the year, and he told Release International these things.

There were times when I looked out through the prison window, saw the barbed wire and the walls, and asked myself, will anyone remember me? Will anyone help my family? And then he picked up a card and a letter that he had there before him.

[35 : 46] He'd received it while he was in prison, and he said this, When we read your cards, we felt God's presence and love and knew that he had not forgotten us. Such letters and cards are easy.

I went on to the, I think it was words, Voice of the Martyrs, and you can actually, they'll give you phrases to be translated into Arabic. They'll do it all for you. You can print it out, and you can just post it.

How difficult is that? What a difference it might make. So we can give. We can support the letters and cards.

Finally, and foremostly, we must pray. We read there from Ephesians chapter 6 earlier on, didn't we, how we are in a spiritual battle, and when Paul speaks about that battle and about the armour of God that we've been given, he says at the very end, this, pray in the spirit on all occasions and with all kinds of prayers and requests.

With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints, all believers. You see, this spiritual battle that our brothers and sisters are engaged in on the front line in suffering, we are part of that war as well.

[37 : 01] There is no conscientious objectors in this Christian life. We can't hide behind that. We are engaged in the battle. We may not be, as it were, feeling the effects of the slings and the arrows and the attacks, but we are the much-needed support services.

We are those who can call upon the Lord and call upon him to supply our fellow soldiers with grace, with help, with strength to carry on even unto death.

The very least we can do, but the very best we can do, is pray. Paul, while he was in prison, was confident that the prayers of those who were praying for him were effectual.

He writes this in Philippians 1, 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.

Imprisoned he was, chained, unable to preach the Gospel, but he believed in the prayers of God's people that they were effective and they would bring about Christ's deliverance.

[38 : 06] If only we knew the power of prayer, dear friends, we would pray much more than we do. If we only knew what God accomplishes through our prayers, we would pray and pray and pray.

It's hard to quantify what prayer accomplishes and achieves. Just as we hear of many believers in prison, so we read of many who are set free, who have been in prison for years and yet set free, many who have been protected in times of persecution and so on.

That's the great thing about being educated. It doesn't just tell us about the hard things that happen, it tells us what God does in bringing good things out of these things too. So let's pray.

Let's do that even now. Lord Jesus, we thank you again for your word to us.

It is a word to your church that is persecuted and suffering, but it's a word to us because your word is relevant every day and in every situation and every circumstance. And though Lord, your word to us can at times be uncomfortable, it can be a bit like a sharp stick giving us a prod, yet Lord we thank you that your word is for our good and for the blessing of the whole church, the whole body.

[39 : 29] And so we pray, oh Lord, that what we have heard from your word and the experiences of your people, that you would work in us and through us to bring about change in our lives, that we might be those who increase in love for one another as you've commanded, that we might be like you, Lord Jesus, active in the giving of ourselves in love.

We ask again, oh Lord, for those of our brothers and sisters this morning who are in fear of their lives, that Lord, your comfort and your grace, your goodness and your peace would surround and fill them and that, oh Lord, you would help us and use us to be part of the answer to our own prayers.

For we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing together and then we're going to close. Please do stay if you're able to have tea and coffee, refreshments, and again, we'll be meeting this evening at six o'clock.

So we're going to stand and sing, oh church arise, put your armour on. hear the call of Christ come out today, go now the weep and say that they are strong in the strength that God has given.

With shield of faith and belt of truth, we'll stand against the devil's lies and are behold with his badge of Christ, God, reaching out to those in darkness.

[41 : 36] God falls above to love the captive soul, and to rage against the captive, and with the storm, and face the wounded hope, we will fight with faith and power.

When faced with trials on every side, we know the outcome is secure, and Christ will have the prize for which he died, and he buried some patience.

and the love of God and the love of God and mercy meet, and the love of God and mercy meet, and the Son of God is spread, and see his foes and crush beneath his feet, for the conqueror has risen.

And as the stone is rolled away, and Christ emerges from the grave, and the love of God and the love of God continues till the day, and every eye and heart shall see him.

and the love of God and the love of God and the love of God and the love of God will strengthen every stride, give grace for every hurdle, and we may run with faith to win the prize of a servant good and faithful.

[43 : 28] As saints of all still line the way, returning triumphs of his grace, we hear the cause and hunger for the day when with Christ we stand in glory.

And the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ after you have suffered a little while will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast.

To him be the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.