

Sermon

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- [0 : 00] Let's pray. Gracious God, we come to worship you and thank you that you are such a God, a God of great grace and great kindness.
- You are a God who is great in every way, but we do rejoice in your amazing love that you took hold of us and brought us into a knowledge of yourself.
- And what a wonderful knowledge that is. We thank you that, yes, you are great in every way. You're great in your majesty, your power.
- You're great in those things that you made. And you are very gracious to us in allowing us to see that beautiful world that you made and the beauty, indeed, of the heavens, which so often causes us to gasp and be overawed.
- But you, O Lord, are the God over the heavens. You spoke, and they were. You brought them all into being by your mighty, powerful voice, by your wisdom.
- [1 : 21] And you did it, and you've given us eyes to see these things. And so we thank you for that. We thank you that not only are you a God of great, great, great power and majesty, but yes, you are a God of great grace.
- For we, though we see these things, we don't always glorify you. And so often we pass them by and just look at the things and think, oh, that's really beautiful.
- And we don't have any great thoughts for you. And that is so sinful of us, so wrong of us. You've given us eyes to see, and yet we don't see.
- Lord, we pray that you'll help us in coming days to see your amazing creation and give glory to you.
- And then we bring to you the other problem that we have. We hear your word, we see your word, and yet so often we're moved by it.
- [2 : 33] And we confess the coolness and deadness of our hearts. And we thank you that you've given us that word, that word which speaks of your great salvation.
- It tells us of your creation, which is wonderful, but your works of salvation are so absolutely staggering that you have taken us, you've opened our eyes to behold what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us, and you've given us faith.
- And that is so amazing that you have taken us in that way and given us that eternal life that's to be found in him.
- We thank you for his great love. Thank you for his perseverance, how it was that he came into this world and persevered on his earthly track and went all the way to Calvary in order to deliver us, in order to pay for the sins that we have done.
- And we ask that you would help us always to acknowledge our sins freely before you and that we might know that rich forgiveness in our hearts.
- [3 : 58] We pray for any here who as yet do not know that love, do not know that assurance that you loved them and gave yourself for them.
- And we pray that you would give them that sweet knowledge that they are yours and that we might have fellowship together.

We thank you for the grace of the gift of the Holy Spirit, that he opens our eyes, that he speaks to us. He speaks to us words of rebuke, yes, but also of peace.

Peace and peace as we behold the love and kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we pray today that you would help us, pray that you would help us to truly make our boast in you and those things that you have done and those things you have made and those things that you have done in order to save our souls.

And we ask that you would forgive us that so often we boast in other things. Pray that you would help us to be sensitive to our sin, but more sensitive to the Saviour that you sent and that we might delight in him and boast in him.

[5 : 22] For we ask it in his name. Amen. In the Bible it's 1 Corinthians and chapter 1. I wonder if anyone has a church Bible, if they could perhaps tell me what the page number is for 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

11.44. Thank you John. So we'll read that chapter. Paul writing to a church that he visited some months earlier.

This is what he said. Paul called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and our brother Sosthenes to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.

For in him you've been enriched in every way, with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge, God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you.

[7 : 03] Therefore, you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

He will also keep you firm to the end so that you'll be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you might be perfectly united in mind and thought.

My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household, have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this. One of you says, I follow Paul.

Another, I follow Apollos. And another, I follow Cephas. And still another, I follow Christ. Is Christ divided?

[8 : 19] Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I didn't baptize any of you except Crispus and Gers, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name.

Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, the intelligence of the intelligent, I will frustrate. Where is the wise person?

Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

[9 : 38] For since in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

Jews demand signs, and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews, and foolishness to Gentiles.

But to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

For the foolishness of God is wiser, than human wisdom. And the weakness of God is stronger, than human strength.

Now a little bit later on, we'll be looking at the closing verses of that chapter in particular. But before we do that, let's sing again. chapter 163, chapter 163, chapter 163, chapter 163, I hope.

[10 : 49] 163, it's the hymn writer, is boasting in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he writes, when I survey the wondrous cross, on which the prince of glory died, my riches gain, I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.

Let's rise to sing 263. Generally, people don't like those who boast.

So, are you guilty of boasting? Should you ever boast? And if you do, are there those things that you should boast in?

I was reading a book some time ago, and the book said, we're actually hardwired to boast. So, is it ever right to boast?

Now, if you were a Christian, in the first century city, Corinth, and you'd read verse 26 through to 31, you would have no doubt about the answer to this.

[12 : 13] He spilt it out in verse 31. Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. So, I put the question to you again.

Do you boast? Paul was engaged in writing a pastoral letter to the church at Corinth, which had kept the culture around them in which boasting was common.

Yes, they were converted. Yes, they'd turned to the Lord Jesus Christ, but sadly, they'd taken attitudes with them into the church.

Worldly attitudes were baptized, if you like, and they became Christian worldly attitudes, and boasting was common.

But let's just think a moment about Corinth. what sort of city was it? It was a city where the people boasted in their achievements, their skills, their gifts.

[13 : 18] There were powerful athletes there in Corinth. They actually had special games there, a bit like the modern Olympics there in that city of Corinth.

strength. And then there were clever orators that would have their hearers in the palm of their hands as they were able to make out all sorts of arguments.

They would sound absolutely fantastic to listen to. They were very successful in their ability to capture the hearts and minds of others.

There were philosophers there, wise people, who would be able to make all sorts of arguments about this, that and the other and stun others into silence.

And then there were also self-made businessmen, self-made merchants there at Corinth. And it's very hard for successful people to avoid boasting.

[14 : 19] But the fact is this, and you're very aware of it, boasting in the world leads to jealousy and hatred. It can lead to cliques among those who follow, those who want their abilities, be they football stars, football clubs or whatever.

And it leads to bitterness among those who don't have those abilities. The case of the haves and the have nots. And so there was bitterness there in that Corinthian society.

And the boasting of some of those spectacular people actually caused quarrels and divisions. That was there in the city of Corinth.

Not too different from our own society, our own culture today. But the church in Corinth had got people from the world who had been brought out of the world into the church and they brought their attitudes with them.

And the result was something like this, that the church at Corinth was like a boat floating on the surface of some water but the water had got into the boat and the boat was in trouble.

[15 : 37] There were divisions there in the church and Paul was writing to correct the worldliness in the church. And if you're guilty of boasting and causing divisions and unhappiness in the church, you should pay particular attention to what Paul is saying here in those verses that I read earlier.

I would suggest that none of us should lightly pass over those verses that contain a warning about one kind of boastfulness which is wrong but an encouragement to boast in the right way.

These verses have got so much to teach us and in particular, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. Now, clearly, Paul doesn't want you to boast except in the Lord.

It wasn't just the apostle Paul's teaching, it was very much older teaching. In verse 31, Paul referred to the prophet Jeremiah who spoke to the people in Jerusalem centuries and centuries earlier.

At the time, at the time of Jeremiah, Babylon, the armies of Babylon, that great powerful nation were surrounding Jerusalem and threatening Jerusalem.

[17 : 02] Jerusalem, the people of Jerusalem had been guilty of all sorts of sin against God. Boastfulness, yes. Idolatry, yes.

But so many other sins, many sins common today, and it was offensive to God. God is always against sin, and he judges sin.

Be sure of this, one way or another, God will judge your sins, either in Christ, when he died there on the cross, or on that awesome, awful day of judgment, when you will face the living God.

But let's return to Jeremiah for the moment. the city of Jerusalem was doomed. It was under God's judgment for all its sins, and in chapter 9, where the verse was taken from, death and destruction was going to overtake that city.

The people were going to die like flies, either from sword or famine. It was awesome. It was dreadful. You can barely read those verses if you turn, not now, to Jeremiah chapter 9.

[18 : 17] Now, some of the citizens of Jerusalem were rich. Do you think they thought that they could buy their freedom, their deliverance from the Babylonians, using their riches, and say, come on, I'm rich, can I pay a ransom to escape?

No, no, they were going to perish along with everyone else. And some were wise. did they think that they could reason their way to safety?

Did they suppose that they could go out to the Babylonian armies and say, we're very clever, we've got a lot to offer you, and yes, we'd like to do that.

Do you think they could actually accomplish their salvation by their wisdom? Not at all. They were doomed along with everyone else. Some were powerful.

people. Did they think they could out fight the Babylonians, or out run the Babylonians? No, all were going to perish. There's to be no escape for those people who had rebelled against God.

[19 : 28] Now, the rich, the powerful, the wise, I wonder what sort of character they had. Did they look down upon the other citizens? Did they think they were beyond or above the judgments that would fall on the rest of the city?

Did they expect special treatment within the city? More food perhaps? More rest time? Much more than the common people? Did they really think that anything that they boasted in would save them from the coming judgment?

Now, that city was a doomed city. It was a divided city, as its complacent citizens, put their confidence in their particular gifts. Now, the wrong kind of boasting common in Jeremiah's day was present in Paul's day, and I'm sure that you'd agree it's a problem that we have in our day.

Boasting was going on there in the church at Corinth, and it would be very surprising if none of us were guilty in one sense, in one way, of boasting, whether it's even inward self-congratulation.

We can boast to ourselves, can't we, about the great things we've done, and take a delight in ourselves, rather than in God, the God who deserves all our worship, all our praise.

[20 : 57] Now, Paul was writing to combat a dangerous spiritual condition there that led the people to boasting. Their actual boasting had a spiritual root.

The boasting could be heard and noticed by all, but it was a symptom of something much deeper. Now, a doctor noticed symptoms that most people notice, but he looks below the surface.

He would ask this sort of question, what's caused those spots? what's caused that breathlessness? And Paul was a spiritual doctor who analyzed the symptoms and made a conclusion about the underlying cause of that boasting.

And he prescribed some medicine. That medicine very often is very unpleasant. And his words, in verses 26 to 28, were not pleasant words for them to hear.

they weren't flattering, but humbling. And I think if I spoke any of them directly to you, you would not welcome them. You might well find them to be blows below the belt, but they are for you.

[22 : 13] They're for all, everyone, in every place, who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, that includes you, doesn't it? Are you calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Christ? Well, these words are for you. And they're designed to help proud Christians become humble Christians. They're there for our good.

Now, nasty medicine is much more palatable if we know it's going to do us good. And these very harsh words on the surface of things of Paul actually are designed to do us good.

The words are a reality check for us. Some years ago, there was a catchphrase that's still used, I think, to some extent. This is the phrase, get rail.

And Paul invites us to get rail. Let's see how he does it to those Corinthian Christians. He writes this, brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called.

[23 : 18] Not many of you were wise by human standards. Not many were influential. not many of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.

God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not.

I wonder how those Corinthian Christians receive that. How would you receive it if someone said to you that you weren't wise?

You were foolish. And that you didn't have any influence. That you were of low birth. That you were foolish, weak, despised. Your life is so meaningless that it doesn't matter whether you're there or not.

That's the sort of language that Paul was using when he was speaking to those Corinthians. He was describing what they were in the past.

[24 : 16] He was humbling them. So why did Paul engage in this put you down to the Corinthian Christians? They needed it. They were puffed up with pride.

And here in these verses Paul takes a pin and pricks the balloon. They were exalting human achievement either of themselves or their heroes.

And that fed envy and pride. It led to divisions and quarrels. There's a proverb in the Old Testament actually found in the Proverbs 13.10 and it's translated in the authorised version by these quite memorable words, memorable words, only by pride comes contention.

Now that's something to think about. If you're engaged in a quarrel with someone, stop and ask yourself, is it because I'm proud? Is it because they're proud?

Is that why there's an argument? Between the two of you? And if you read through the rest of the letters of the Corinthians, it's clear that there's a lot of pride in the church at Corinth.

[25 : 25] That's why divisions occurred. And Paul saw that the boastful speech of the Corinthians came out of proud hearts that had been puffed up as a result of all they gained in their new life in Christ.

Notice what Paul had to say of them in chapter 1 and verse 4. Paul, I always thank my God for you because of his grace given to you in Christ Jesus and here's the interesting thing, for in him you've been enriched in every way with all kinds of speech and all knowledge.

They'd suddenly been transformed in all sorts of different ways. they found that they were able to speak about deep truths of theology. They were able to put their finger on what was wrong with the world, that the world is in rebellion against God and that God judges the world.

They were able to speak about that sort of thing. They were able to speak about the love of God, the love of God which sent the Lord Jesus Christ into this world to die for our sins.

They were able to speak about the future of this world, how this world will be judged and how the Lord Jesus Christ would appear in glory to judge the quick and the dead. Now the people of Corinth didn't know about these things.

[26 : 58] They'd been lifted above the sorts of ignorance that the people of Corinth had as they worshipped God they didn't really know. Yes they'd been given great wisdom.

I remember years ago, years and years ago, I met a man who had a book this size. He was a very, very simple man, really simple and yet he had this book and the pastor of the church said are you able to cope with that book?

Oh yes he said. I just read a little bit at a time and it's so encouraging to me. Now that man was barely literate but he had this book and he'd been changed so that he loved books and wherever the gospel had come in the past their education came.

People were transformed and people who were illiterate who couldn't really speak about anything or put two arguments together at all, they were brought to the truth and they were able to rejoice in the truth.

But there's a problem and the problem is this, that coming into this new world, this new life, you can become proud and this is the sort of problem that these Corinthians had and Paul had to remind them about their origins.

[28 : 18] But he thanked God for them because they'd received the grace of God and they got these gifts but they were misusing those gifts.

They'd forgotten where they'd come from. Moses, way back in the Old Testament addressed a similar situation. Remember that Moses addressed the people of God before they went into the promised land and he spoke to them about the dangers that were going to confront them.

He said this in Deuteronomy chapter 8 verse 11, Be careful you do not forget the Lord your God in failing to observe his commands, his laws, his decrees that I'm giving you this day.

Otherwise when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart becomes proud and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

You may say to yourself, he said in verse 17, my power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me. But Moses said, remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.

[29 : 53] wealth and the Israelites went on to forget. They said that their success and their riches came from themselves and they turned the grace of God upon its head.

And the spiritually enriched Corinthians were guilty of doing exactly the same thing and they needed reminding of their origins just as Moses reminded the Israelites of theirs.

Remember what Moses said of them, what God said through Moses, you are among the fewest of the peoples, the least of them and I took you.

And that's what God does today with Christians. He takes those who are the least in the world in many senses and he makes them rich in Christ.

Now the examples of the ancient Israelites and the Corinthians are a serious reminder to us lest we think we're self-made Christians.

[31 : 01] I remember not so long ago, not here, not in this area, but someone said quite publicly, I did it myself, I made myself a Christian.

Well, sadly, he's nowhere today. He boasted in himself. So these Corinthian Christians, yes, Paul humbled them, but did that mean that their lives had no significance?

On the contrary, their lives had immense significance, immense value. Listen how he described them.

He described them as being called. Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Who called them?

Well, the answer is God called them. The almighty God spoke to them inwardly and called them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were amazing people just like you and I.

[32 : 09] if God has called us, we are amazing because of what God has done for us. Think of Abram. He was living there in Ur of the Chaldees.

He was a rich man, yes, but if he'd stayed there, he'd have perished in his riches and none of us would be any the wiser. What made the difference? God called him.

Abram was called by God to go to the land that the Lord had promised him. And that's what gave Abram his significance. He was called by God.

So what did Paul mean by that term calling? Have you been called in the sense that Paul meant? Well, Paul made it clear in verse 2, to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called, called to be his holy people, called by God to be his holy people.

Paul spoke of those sanctified or set aside for God and called by him to be holy. He was writing to those who had been set aside by God for the specific purpose of being made like him.

- [33 : 28] That was their heavenly calling. Sometimes you hear about rough diamonds. diamonds. If you saw them, they're unwashed, shapeless, not particularly attractive.

Certainly aren't the finished article. They need work done on them. First of all, you would wash them and then the craftsman would come along and he would cut them into a beautiful shape that reflected the light that fell on them.

diamond. Now, I'll put it to you, if you're a young Christian, you're actually a very rough diamond. But God has washed you.

He's washed you in the blood of Christ. He's taken away your sin. He's taken away your guilt. You're blameless in his sight. Beautiful in his sight. Yes, but you're going to be more beautiful because the craftsman, the master craftsman is going to change you and mould you and cut you for his purpose.

Then when the light of God shines on you, you reflect that light to others. Beholding the glory of the Lord, we're changed into his glory. That's what goes on when you're called by God.

- [34 : 45] So, the Corinthian Christians have been picked up and washed but they needed to be cut and shaped by a wise, skillful worker if they were going to reflect light properly and be fit for the purpose for which they've been called.

In verse 9, again he speaks about called, called into fellowship with his son, Christ Jesus our Lord, called into fellowship with his death and resurrection and glorification.

How amazing! Called to have fellowship with Christ, be united with Christ, be put into the vine of Christ. Yes, united into his death. He died for us.

He's taken the punishment for us. We're united to him. We're in fellowship with him. Christ was raised from the dead. We're going to be raised from the dead. Christ is glorified.

We're going to be glorified. Now has Christ called you into fellowship with him? That's an amazing thing, is it not? Let me emphasize that Paul is talking to believers.

- [35 : 53] He wrote, brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Brothers and sisters. brothers and sisters. He's speaking about them in a different way. He's accepting them as being one with him as well.

One with Christ, yes, but one with Paul. And then he describes them as being chosen. Jesus himself spoke in this way.

Many are called, but few are chosen. So how do you recognize whether or not you've been called and chosen? Well, Paul helps us.

He describes most helpfully what those are like who have been called and chosen. In verse 2 he says this, all, everywhere, who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you're called, if you're chosen, you will call. You'll call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's how you can be recognized as being a Christian. You call upon his name.

- [36 : 54] Remember his name. How precious it is. You'll call him Jesus because he'll save his people from their sins. And you're calling upon that name.

You're calling upon the saviour. You're calling upon that one who showed so much grace and mercy and kindness and willingness to forgive when he was here on earth.

So if you're a Christian, you call upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And we can say that the character of one who is called is that they call and continue to call upon the Lord.

They call upon the Lord because they feel a need of the Lord's kindness and grace to them. They realize their helplessness and their lostness and they need his mercy rather than his judgment.

Now a tremendous example of that is King David. King David in Psalm 51 said this. He was aware of his sin and he spoke to the Lord.

[37 : 57] He called upon the Lord. There was some urgency there. Have mercy on me O God according to your unfailing love. He's calling upon the name or the character of this God. Your unfailing love according to your great compassion. Again, God's name, God's character, his great compassion. blot out my transgressions, wash away my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

That's a mark of someone who's been called by God. They call upon him in return. Now those who called upon the name of the Lord in Corinth were largely Mr.

Average or Mr. Less than Average. You can probably identify with them. Yes, there were rich, powerful, wise people in Corinth but it's very rare for such people to call upon the Lord.

They don't feel their need. They might be very religious. You might be very religious but I'm asking you, have you called upon the name of the Lord or are you confident in your own religion and those things that you do, those things that you pray, those things that you read about, those things that you exalt before others and others think very largely of you.

[39 : 19] or do you call upon the power of God, the grace of God. Now, there at Corinth, there were some in that Corinthian congregation who weren't just Mr.

Average or less than average. Just as here, perhaps in this congregation or in Whitby or elsewhere in this country, those who call upon the Lord who are rather more than Mr.

Average. I'd like to describe one such person. Way back in time, back in the 18th century, there was a well-known and zealous Christian lady from the nobility called Selina, Countess of Huntingdon.

What a name she had. And she said she owed her salvation to a single letter in the English language. And it was the letter M. She said that the verses we were reading together were really encouraging to her.

She said that the verses said not many rich and influential would be saved. She was so thankful that it didn't say not any. And she said she owed her salvation to a single letter, the letter M.

[40 : 39] And she was chosen by God, called to be holy. holy. Now Paul recalled those there in that congregation at Corinth and described how God's grace was poured upon those ordinary people and even those described as being less than ordinary.

And it was those people that God chose to make examples of his grace. It can be despised by men, but proof is of the grace of God and examples to others.

So are you amazed at the grace of God in choosing you, in calling you, in saving you? You know, if you're saved, you're saved because it's God that saves.

It's not you. You don't save yourself. Look at verse 30. It's because of him you are in Christ Jesus. It wasn't because you were more religiously inclined than others.

It wasn't because you had deeper insights than others. It wasn't because you were superior to others in any way. Some years ago, a book was published in this country, and it had an important title, Who Saves?

[41 : 52] God or Me? And if you're a Christian today, it's not because you're wiser than the vast majority of men. It's not because you were born into a better family, a Christian family, or you had a Christian gene there, sort of back in your background.

It wasn't because you had a better secular education than others. It wasn't because God owed you anything. Now, over the Christmas period, one verse that was very probably read in lots and lots of churches was a verse from John chapter 1, verses 12 to 13.

And it reads this, To all who did receive him, receive Christ, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God.

Children not born of natural descent, nor of human decision, or a husband's will, but born of God. If you're a Christian, it's not because your parents gave you that new life in Christ, and you weren't given a new heart by the action of a religious priest that you had connections with.

You were born of God. It was he who saved you. And the believers at Corinth didn't become believers because of anything in themselves. They didn't become believers because they were cleverer, more intelligent than others.

[43 : 20] It wasn't because clever men persuaded them with manipulative speech. They didn't become Christians because of the forcefulness of their parents, or the coercion of the city authorities.

It was because God saved them. God made them such. Remember what Jesus said to his disciples, no man can come to me unless the Father sent me draws them.

Again, in the same chapter, chapter six of John's gospel, they shall all be taught of God. God makes people Christians. God saves.

And the passage reminds you, it reminds me, that if we've come to Christ and we trust in him and been enriched in him, it's God who's done it. And that's true whether you're great in this world or poor in this world.

I'd like just to tell you about a poor young boy who was born in a township outside what was then Salisbury in southern Rhodesia.

[44 : 25] Now that city is now called Harare, and southern Rhodesia is called Zimbabwe. Now this lad was very badly treated by his father. His father left him to go to one of his women friends in Malawi.

His mother couldn't cope, and he was simply abandoned in the middle of the city along with his little brother and baby sister. To cut a long story short, Stephen became a gang leader, became very resentful against the Europeans, and in particular Christians.

And he and his gang decided to bomb a tent mission where the gospel was being preached. You see, he hated Christians. He was resentful. He was angry. He was really badly disposed towards the authorities.

And he entered this tent and was riveted by the gospel. And he was converted on the spot. God saved him there. That nasty man, filled with anger, wanting to bomb the place and bomb all those Christians out of existence.

Now, the following morning, he woke up a new person. And he was determined to tell others what had happened to him. And he made contact with the missionaries there in southern Rhodesia.

[45 : 46] And he was taught to read and write and use a knife and fork. You see, he didn't use that sort of thing. And to sleep in a proper bed. And eventually, he became a well-known evangelist in Africa.

And he was transformed from being a violent youth to a preacher of peace. God did it. The city authorities couldn't. Only God could do that sort of thing.

And the lesson that Paul was teaching the Corinthians and us is that we should remember that it's God who saves. It was his salvation that they needed to be thankful for.

It was the Lord that they should boast in. They were taken up with their gifts and their religious performances like children with their toys. So, question, are you more conscious of your gifts than the saving grace of Christ?

Have you forgotten what you were? Have you lost sense of the big picture? What is the big picture? Well, the big picture is this, the free righteousness given us through Jesus Christ.

[46 : 57] God setting you apart from what you were. The redemption that he's given you, redemption from sin and judgment, the power of sin and that awful judgment that's going to be poured out upon the world.

Now, are you conscious of that big, big picture? If you are, you're not going to boast about the trifling gifts that you've got. Paul said, it's because of him that you're in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God, that is, our righteousness and holiness and redemption.

If you live in the light of the big eternal picture, you'll boast in the Lord. Well, we'll sing again, and I particularly want you to note the last verse in the hymn that we're going to sing.

It's number 493, and then after singing this hymn, we'll have a communion. So, 493. 493. 493.