

W_23_The_Seven_Epistles_Of_Paul_After_Acts_28.mp3

[00:00:02] The first thing I would like to say is this, that as far as I can foresee, this meeting will close not later than 7:15. I mentioned that in case you have any anxiety about trains, I won't say buses. Of course that would be what they call an anachronism. So. And then I think I will take an opportunity because I've got a little bit more time than the program allowed me to just mention the interest in the witness of this wonderful truth in Holland. Most of you know or some of you know that I had an invitation to speak at a conference at Utrecht in Holland about a fortnight ago. And Mr. Van Mierlo, there is known to some of you friends. He was my interrupter. He explained to the folks in Holland that there were two words in the English language. One was an interpreter and one was an interrupter. And of course I spoke a bit and he spoke a bit. And then we argued the point a bit, but it was very, very happy meeting. We started at 10:00 in the morning and we finished at 6:30. But there was an interval when the it was in a hotel. The meeting was held. There was an interval when bowls of soup were all handed round. Very acceptable. A cup of coffee. And then later on, there was another little break for a cup of tea. But it was good to see these folk gathered from all parts of Holland, rejoicing in this high calling revealed for us poor, outcast gentiles.

[00:01:38] And I was very embarrassed to discover that when they started the meeting they gave a little resumé of my life story. They introduced me as the father of the witness in Holland, and I didn't know that. But I'll come back again thanking God that He gave me grace to stand fast and without compromise and the consequences. For nearly 30 years, there's been a growing witness in Holland. Isn't it good to know that? This afternoon, our brother referred to the balance sheet. It might be. Think if you look at the first bound volume of the brain expositor, you'll see the balance sheet for the year. I hope I'm not misreading it, but I believe it says carried forward five shillings and ninth and halfpenny. If anything could have been started in this world more lowly than that little berean expositor, it's a difficult thing to imagine. A balance sheet all set out an audited and we carried forward five shillings and £0.09 halfpenny. God has said in his word that he has passed by the great and the noble, and he's chosen those things which are not to confound those which are that no flesh should glory in his presence. Friends, you're all the result of a balance sheet that carried forward five shillings and £0.09 ain't me. So don't despise the day of small things. A seed's a very small thing, but it can be a very potent thing, as most of us know.

[00:03:08] Well, when I was at this meeting at Holland, they or they gave me all sorts of other titles as well. I was a man raised up to make discoveries. I was a past master at discovering structures and all sorts of other things, but I did correct them over one little issue. I said, It is not strictly true to say that I was the first one to discover the frontier of Acts 28. I didn't sing it. If you know the writings of B.W. Newton, even B.W. Newton saw it. But the little bit that distinguished me from all the others was that they came up to the frontier and had a look at it, turned round and went back and built their ecclesiastical systems in the middle of the act of the Apostles, imagining that the people of Israel were still here, imagining the New Covenant were still functioning, imagining that they got the gifts of the spirit, whether they could demonstrate them or not. But I just got that other little bit of curiosity about me. I said, Here's a frontier. Let's go over and see what it's like the other side. Oh, I found a land that was beyond dreams. I discovered a people and a company of God's people that could rejoice in his presence without the slightest element of Ceremonialism, sacerdotalism ecclesiastical ism, or any other of the isms you can think of just called Out of Darkness into Light by Marvelous Grace made members of the Body of Christ redeemed by his precious blood and on the way to glory.

[00:04:40] Well, I came back with my bunch of the grapes of Eshkol, but. I don't say they treated me like they did Caleb and Joshua because they were going to stone them, But in a measure they had much the same attitude. So it's a very great comfort. After 50 years of bearing witness for this brilliant expositor we hope will reach its jubilee by next February. 50 years to realize that God has set his seal upon this testimony that although we don't expect to have great gatherings and public statements in the press. There is a comfort to know that those whom he chose before the foundation of the world have come into contact with this truth which makes them free, gives them their standing in Christ, and all the wonders that go with this ministry. There's another thing that I would like to say with regard to this aspect, and that is this. For for us all to remember. We keep on saying, say, Acts 28. The dispensation or frontier? Well, that's the truth. But have you ever been at a frontier? It's one of the most desolate, inconvenient, horrible places that you can spend a holiday or a lifetime on a frontier. There are people dressed up in peculiar regimentals. They measure you. They look you up and down. They write down the color of your eyes and where you were born and whatnot.

[00:06:09] A frontier. Its only value is that it divides between one territory and another. So let's say this that Acts 28 is the dividing line between one calling of God and another, so that we remember that it's only a value if we recognize it and cross over it. We can make a shibboleth of x 28. And war was everlastingly talking about the boundary. Well, let's say. Right. We'll accept the boundary. We'll go over and see what God has prepared for those who are willing to take the step. The subject this evening will be associated with that Acts 28 boundary, and that is the prison ministry of the Apostle Paul. And there again, we've got a word you can say. You know, most important thing that we recognise that Paul was a prisoner. But if you put it that way, we may say, well, we were rather sorry to think that a man like Paul should be put in prison, but that's all it amounts to. That isn't the truth. It's a prison ministry. It's the name of a special element in God's dealings with men that differs from all others. He was the prisoner, not of Rome. He was the prisoner of Jesus Christ. He was a prisoner. Not because he broke any law, but he was the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, because he had received a dispensation and he was now fulfilling it.

[00:07:37] See? The effect of being in prison makes us feel sad. But he doesn't give us any further. But the fact that the prison was a part of the program, that in that condition God was going to reveal something to him that he did not reveal until that day. That makes all the difference. Well, now I want to speak about 1 or 2 other things before we get down to this. I'm using this opportunity. I'm not going to mention names. I don't want to pillory anybody. But if you ever received any of the literature or heard any of the records of a believer in Christ who for many years has stood for the principle of right division, has understood the boundary of Acts 28, you will realize that we've got to be watchful. We can quite understand and expect that those who are in the denominations will have hard things to say of us because they couldn't be in it if they didn't. I wouldn't respect them if they didn't. But when somebody from within begins to pull the foundation stones out, then it's time for some of us at least to say a word. This is Foundation Day. Well, somebody, I believe is tinkering with the foundations. And I'm going to ask you, first of all, to look at the 17th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles in order to get to statements made and put them together for comparison. One of them.

[00:09:10] You know, if you know anything about our work at all, one of them, you know, almost without turning to the chapter, the verse 11. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched

the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. This was a small village inland named Berea. If you look, look, look for it on a modern map, you will find it is spelled with a V. I'm not quoting Dickens. He spelled it with a Y, I suppose, but it's spelt with a V, And of course, a B is a aspirated, uh, p sort of sound. And so the V stands for it. Berea Well, these bereans had this element about them that they received a word readily, but. That they didn't swallow anything that was told them. And that's our position. We hold ourselves responsible before God to see that what is taught and what we are told is so now in this same chapter. There's another type of mind, and I'm afraid that also is at large. It says in verse 21, same chapter for all the Athenians and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. Now the word new is in the comparative. So it strictly says they spent all their time either to tell or to hear something newer. And, you know, that can be a fatal idea.

[00:10:59] The one that I'm speaking about. Without revealing his name, he said, Oh, I must have something new. When I go round to my Bible, classes must have something new. Well, I suppose you can't find it. Well, there's a temptation to invent it and then somebody else has got this maggot. Or was it this brain? I'm the one that discovered this. I'm the one that found something new. I remember years ago I just made a comment on the part of the book of the Revelation. And then either letter. From somebody in America. And he said, Oh, reprimanded me for putting that into my magazine because he had discovered it. And then he wrote and said that possibly he had made a mistake. Because my magazine only published a little bit earlier than his. And then he wrote again and said, Oh, but perhaps he'd written it before I did. So I finally wrote to him and said, Don't worry, friends, I've got a book on my shelves where it's all printed before I was born. What's it matter? What does it matter what a foolish idea that is? But it can be a snare. Now, I think this good brother I have in mind has been bitten with this bug. He must always be the man to find something newer. Well, there's plenty of new things in the world yet to come out, but not in that spirit. So I'm just asking you to be watchful. It's possible it will be perpetuated in this country yet by some who are partly associated with our work.

[00:12:42] So I must be faithful. The first thing that was debunked. You know, there's that tendency among modern writers of other things to take the mickey out of everybody. I mean, who bothers about Shakespeare Now, you see, the only one who

couldn't possibly have written Shakespeare was Shakespeare. Anybody else, but not Shakespeare. See? So you cleverly dispose of him. And so with regard to all these things, well, now he says. He says there's no such thing as heavenly places. Now you say, Well, the epistle to the Ephesians says that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. No, no. It simply means among the mighty ones and the only place for every redeemed child of God at any calling, the only place is the earth. So that wipes out heaven. I just asked him, was that particular adverb an adverb of place when it says where Christ sits? That's a place where. Heavenly places. So that's gone. He says that we ought to dispose of the word body. Don't speak of the church, which is the body of Christ. Just say the substance. So you've got to say the church, which is the substance of Christ. What does that mean? How far are we advanced? And then when you read in the body that this particular substance has got eyes and nose and hands and feet, well, you say, why not call it a body? Why be so new and rob us of this wonderful figure? And then the next thing is that the word gentile in Ephesians chapter two, Does it mean a gentile? But it means the Jewish people who had lived out in the Gentile world so long they'd almost forgotten that they belong to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

[00:14:30] So that puts you out of it. So by the time we're done, we'd better pack up and go home, friends. Because by the time these people were their ideas of something newer, get going. There won't be anything left at all. Now, you're not really concerned about that. Should be, but it is to be watched. Lest these fundamental things which mean so much to this peculiar calling, should be frittered away. Well, now, that's so far as that little part is concerned. And we'll get back to our theme. I want to demonstrate, if I can, that having crossed that boundary, there is a definite system of truth. And the first thing I bring back after crossing the frontier is a sort of a sketch map. I put it up before you. You may say, Oh, I've seen that before. Yes, But I'm going to say this, you know, like the man who was boasting, he was the only man. You won't find it in any other publication, but those which are produced in this place. When I went to see Dr. Bullinger as a young man of about the age of 28, I expected that when I spoke to him, he would pat me on the head and say, Now you run away home.

[00:15:41] Don't you worry. But he didn't. He looked at me for a moment or two. He said that, Correct. Half the books that I've written that we want the truth. All I thought is a man of grace thought he was a man of 70 years of age and a scholar of repute. And I

was just simply nobody. But all that I did was to say to him, Doctor Bullinger, you've seen X28 as a frontier and in you turn back and you all end up with a flourish of trumpets in one Thessalonians four. I think they said that's what we find when we go over the boundary. A complete system of truth. It doesn't mean that we dispense with the rest of Scripture. We need all scripture from Genesis to revelation to understand that truth. But the thing that we have emphasized many times, and I emphasize to you, is that while the Bible is written for us, it's not written about us. Not all of it. Why, you'd have the difficulty to put all of it into practice. Especially some of the laws of the law of Moses. The penalty of which was to be stoned to death. Rather awkward, wouldn't it? So you see, people have little blind spots in their eye when they talk like that and they let that one go.

[00:17:01] Here we have a complete system of truth. And that's is this system of proof is emphasized. Under this term, the prison epistles. Now, here's the next word that's challenged. I was listening to a recording of this self-same Brother in Christ and he was speaking about Ephesians chapter three and it says, I therefore the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. He said, Now that word doesn't mean a prisoner. It only means that Paul said, I am the bound one of Jesus Christ, the same as you and I. Do you think all our lovely is just bound to him by ties of love and grace? But is it true? So I'm going to ask you. To consider a few passages of scripture, because if you have any doubts about this, then it begins to have a bad effect. But I want to show you. This is where I believe this brother goes wrong. He picks out one verse. He tells those who are listening to him Now take it from me. It means this. And that's the end of it. But I think the only way to do it is the Brian way to say look that a 20. References. Let's look at the 20. And then you've got the material that I have and you can make up your mind before God as I have to. Well, I'm not going to give you the 20, but I'll give you a specimen of this particular word which is translated prisoner before we go any further.

[00:18:37] When you turn with me to Matthew 2715. And just see whether there's any possible doubt that this word desmos d. S m i o. S 2715 can bear any other translation but a literal physical prisoner. Now at that feast, the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner. A prisoner. And this prisoner was Barabbas. There's no doubt about that man being in prison, literally in prison. We can't say he was the bound one of Jesus Christ or anything else. He was bound because he was a wicked man put into prison. Let's look at the acts of the apostles with regard to Paul himself. 20th chapter.

Verse 23. This is plunging right into it. We'll come back again in a moment. Save that. The Holy Ghost. Witnesses in every city saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. That word Bonds. What sort of bonds were they? Oh, this particular brother says the bonds of love and affection and grace. Well, look at the next chapter 21. Verse ten. And as we tarried there many days there came down from Judea, a certain prophet named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet and said, thus saith the Holy Ghost. So shall the Jews of Jerusalem bind the men that only this girdle and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

[00:20:34] Can you believe that? That doesn't mean literal prison. That's what the Apostle went through. That was what was demonstrated in that way. And in the 16th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. We are in verse 11. Onwards. 16th chapter. Oh, verse 25. I think the passage I have in mind. Yes. And at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God. And the prisoners heard them. The prisoners? Same word. Well, is there any need for me to go on? That's the word that the Apostle has used on himself several times. He wrote his epistle to Timothy. Be not there, therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner. And he says, as you remember in Ephesians three, I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, and then associated it with a dispensation that had been given to him with reference to the Gentiles opening up and making known that which had hitherto been a secret or as we call it in our authorized version, a mystery. He also says in the epistle to the Ephesians that he conducted an embassy in a chain. The next thing I want to do is to make sure that you see for yourself the prison epistles. Shall we look at these epistles just to see which ones are marked by this word prison, so that there should be nobody here in this meeting who is going to take it just because I happen to say so, Ephesians.

[00:22:14] As already said in Chapter three, he says it again in Chapter four. I, therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that ye walk worthy. Do you notice the change of title Chapter three? It's the prisoner of Jesus Christ. If we follow the revised text chapter three. It's the prisoner of Christ Jesus that always means the exalted Christ at the right hand. Now, in chapter four, he's not dealing with doctrine. He's dealing with practice. He changes from salvation to service, and he changes the title of Jesus Christ the Lord. The Word Lord emphasizes the fact that you recognize him as your master and that you owe him allegiance. He's the same person. So we have the prisoner of the Lord. Then in chapter five six. He says in verse 20 concerning this mystery and this gospel

associated with it, for which I am an ambassador in bonds. And the literal rendering is for which I conduct an embassy in a chain. And I wouldn't put it past the Apostle Paul to be playing with the word all you say. Did he play with words? He did. I'm very glad he did it. He might have been driven insane by some of the things he went through, but he could see something sometimes to help him through, he said. Others who aren't ambassadors have a chain of office. I've got mine. You see, when a man takes that view, you can't get him down. He never called himself the prisoner of the spite of the Jew or the slip of justice of the Roman.

[00:23:57] Never. He said, I'm the prisoner of Jesus Christ. It's all right. He knows, and he's put me there. He has a purpose. Well, that's one epistle that you must include. Ephesians. That must be included as a prison epistle. Now look at Philippians. Verse seven, even as it is meet for me to think this of you all because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. Ye all are partakers of my grace. He emphasizes his bonds. He comes back to that again in the next few verses. He says in verse 13, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace. And the margin tells you that Caesar's Court, that's where the prison was, that's where these bonds were manifested. So here we have another epistle where he stresses the fact that he is in bonds. Now Colossians follows and in the fourth chapter. It is. He says, verse three, with all praying also for us that God would open unto us a door of utterance. I'm always glad to see that word. If I were in prison, I think I'd be praying for the Lord to open a door to let me out. But this man is so forgot all about himself that when he did pray for an open door, believe it or not, he didn't think about himself.

[00:25:22] He thought about the utterance of the Word of God. You can't get anybody down when he's got so far as that, can you? Free. You know, I have access to a prison when I go to Manchester. And when I went there, I think it was the last time after the men had all walked down into this room, about 30 of them Bible class in the prison. Long term convicts. And the key was turned and the warder let them. I said, Men, I've brought a ladder in. Oh, I said, I'm sorry. It's not one that you think. I said, If I were in your place, I'd be thinking of digging up the floor or breaking a window. But I wouldn't have pluck enough to do it. But I said, I can't do that. But I brought another one in, and I showed them that ladder that, you know, where there are seven rungs and it starts at the greatest depth of humility and degradation. You could conceive the death of the cross, and then with Christ, you may go up that ladder until you are manifested with him

in glory. Fancy talking to prisoners like that. Well, they say, surely you ought to take them some little smoothing down message. Well, I didn't. And I've got a testimonial from that prison, which I'm very, very proud of. One prisoner turned to another when my name was announced, and he turned to one of these other men, says he's got the stuff as a valuable testimony.

[00:26:42] He's got the stuff because that stuff is to preach Christ and his finished work. Whether you are respectable or whether you're in prison, you need him just the same. Well, let's get back to our subject. Colossians Chapter three with all praying also for us that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ for which I am also in bonds. See he was in bonds for a particular thing. He never made He makes a mention of his prison to get your sympathy. No, he says I'm here. That's a part of my credentials. And at the end, verse 18, the salutation by the hand of me. Paul, remember my bonds. Now, I don't know whether this is a bit of imagination. But we do know that Paul was in military custody. He was able to have his own hired house, but he would never be free from a Roman guard who would have a thin chain fastened to his wrist and the wrist of the Apostle Paul. And he would stand on guard for a couple of hours, say. It's probably think that that man was chained to the other man who was dictating the epistle to the Romans or something, wasn't it? Or the Ephesians here. This man man's listening to it. And some of them took it back with them. The praetorium, the Roman guard got to know of it, it says in Philippians.

[00:28:05] But I can see the apostle putting out his hand to take the pen and say with my own hand, I. And the chain, of course, would bang against the table. And he says, Remember my bonds? That's all. Well, that's if he Philippians Colossians. There's one other epistle that belongs to this period, and that is a very brief one. Philemon. And if you're not sure where to find it, you just find the epistle to the Hebrews first and it will come just immediately before it. We sometimes do not include Philemon if we are dealing with those epistles, which are basic to our calling, because Philemon is a almost a private epistle written by Paul because he knew that he was going to be set free from his prison and he was hoping that finally would provide him a lodging. But there there's some very gracious and wonderful bits in it if you'll study it. But we'll just. We just notice how he speaks here. Verse nine, he says, I could be of enjoined you and demanded of you. Yet for love's sake, I rather beseech thee being such an one as Paul the Aged and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ, I beseech thee for my son Onissimus, whom I have

begotten in my bonds is He? So there we have the emphasis of prison bonds. Now there's only one other epistle to consider. That is two Timothy. You go back a few pages and you find two.

[00:29:37] Timothy This is the last epistle of Paul's series, Chapter four. Oh, no. Chapter one. First of all, I'm sorry. I'm forgetting. Chapter one, You may say, Well, why don't you use your notes were they're all over the place. So much pain. I don't know where to begin or end. Two Timothy Chapter one, verse eight Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner. You notice which comes first, don't you? The testimony is the testimony of our Lord. It comes through his prisoner. If it was the other way round, it might be Paul's idea of what the Lord said by that isn't so. He says, I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received. And he makes that clear all the way through. So here he says he is a testimony associated with me as a prisoner. Chapter two. Verse eight, Remember that Jesus Christ had the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel. What do you mean? To put it like that, Paul, when he said the same Jesus Christ of the same seed of David was raised from the dead according to Peter's gospel. Somebody different. Oh no. It is the same resurrection. But he was raised from the dead to be the king of Israel. But he was raised from the dead to be the head of the body of. Oh, you see, it depends upon whose gospel you're listening to as to whether you'll be going along the road to the kingdom or whether you be going along the road to the church of the high calling.

[00:31:10] So he differentiates wherein I suffer trouble. You know, when you hear some people saying about somebody is going into the ministry, you know, going into the ministry, you think you're going in for it. Yes. It used to be said, of course, years ago that in certain classes they are there waiting for the law or the army. And if they weren't quite up to scratch, they'd go into the church. You see. Well, that's one way of doing it. This man had it laid upon him. Yea, woe is me, he said if I do not. And he said this very gospel that I preach, this very witness that I have, I suffer trouble. I suffer trouble as an evildoer. No longer was he in military custody. He was a malefactor. Now there was no possible option. Now there was no escape. Now he knew he was a doomed man. Wherein I suffer trouble as an evil doer even unto bonds. And then you couldn't keep the man down. This is what he says, even unto bonds. But the word of God is not bound. That's the sort of man he was, you see. He said, I'm in bondage. I prayed for an open door for the utterance I'm in bondage for the Word of God is not bound.

[00:32:28] And then we get the conclusion. This chapter. He said, I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown. Well, that gives us the cluster of epistles that we refer to generally as the prison epistle. Now, I think you'll realize that it is a right thing to do because the apostle has drawn our attention several times to the fact that this imprisonment was a special part of his equipment. And then there come these epistles, which have their own peculiar line of teaching. So first of all, I would like you now to turn back again to the 20th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where we just lifted out one verse. I want to be sure that we realize we've reached a crisis. The apostle is on his way to Jerusalem. To keep the Feast of Pentecost. He wants to get there on the day of Pentecost. It says so at the end of verse 16 of chapter 20. And if you know the Mac sufficiently well, you'll understand that if he went up the river mouth to Ephesus and back again, he would lose a considerable time. Shall I put it in modern language? He got as far as Southend and he'd already called upon the folks in London to meet him there so that he wouldn't have to come up all the way up the river and all the way back again.

[00:34:01] That's what you see on the map. And from Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church. Now he's called the elders of the church. He's got something to say to them. What's he got to say to them? When they were come to him? He said unto them, You know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons. Serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears and temptations which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you. But I showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks. Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know what he's going to say? Don't you? Before ever he gets there, you know, he is summing up a ministry and he's going to say to them, well, that's finished. If any minister stood up in his pulpit tomorrow morning and said, and I won't try to imitate him, that would be too bad, wouldn't it? But if he said, well, beloved brethren, you know that I took over the pastorate of this church six years ago and we have done this and we've done that and the other. And I do ask you to bear a testimony that I hear. They look at one and say, you know, what are you going to say? He's telling us that he's got a call to go somewhere else.

[00:35:25] That's what he says. He says that's the summing up of the ministry. I've already. Accomplished. Now they will go on. Verse 22. And now behold, I go bound in the spirit. You see, before ever a shackle was put on this man's wrists. He was bound in the spirit. He belonged to the Lord first, and the others simply followed. They couldn't have done it otherwise. That's why he triumphed over it. I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there. I don't know yet. He said he didn't know at this time, as far as I understand, the truth of the mystery, because the Lord had said, I will again appear unto you when the time comes. You'll find that in Acts 26. But he said, I do know this, that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city saying that bonds and afflictions are awaiting me. And of course, in the next chapter, Prophet Agabus showed you put the bonds on him. He said that's what's going to happen to him if he goes. Bonds and afflictions are widely. And here's this man reaction. To the idea that he's got to become a prisoner. If ever there is a champion of liberty in the New Testament, it's the Apostle Paul. Think of it a ringing challenge in Galatians. Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.

[00:36:44] And here's the man contemplating prison. I can't believe prison was a very pleasant place. The best of prisons in Paul's day. I don't expect they had a wireless in the whole prison. I don't expect they had visitors that were very kind to them. But he was contemplating it. And he realized it was a part of the ministry that he had to perform. But he said these wonderful words, But none of these things move me. Thank you. That none of these things move. Me neither. Count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy. Now you notice he's starting with a ministry in view. And he says, The one thing I do hope is that I'll finish my course. Do you remember two Timothy? Chapter four we read? He said, I have finished my course. That's the end of it. So here's the beginning. And two Timothy four is the ending of the prison ministry of the Apostle Paul. A complete section. I might as well finish this. I might finish my course with Joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify, the Gospel of the grace of God. And now behold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God shall see my face no more. The definite end of a ministry. A beginning of a new one.

[00:38:10] Associated with prison. Well, we only going to read another chapter or two and we find him in prison. He went up to Jerusalem and he said he got involved in a riot because they said he'd taken a Greek into the temple. You know, our people can read

the acts of the apostles and believe what they do. I don't know. You see. He Is the temple still functioning in Jerusalem? And it was still considered perfectly wrong for a Gentile to go into that temple. And yet we are told that on the day of Pentecost, Peter opened the door for you and me to go in as well. It doesn't work. You see, that time hadn't come. It was coming, but not so. But Paul became involved. The Roman guard had to rescue him from these bigoted Jewish people. He spent two years in Caesarea. Waiting to get a hearing properly. He went before one judge and another. Can't help remembering how Shakespeare puts his finger so much on many things when Hamlet is enumerating the burdens of this life. Among other things, he says the laws denies. Oh, yes. Here is 22 years waiting to get a hearing until I could wait no longer. And he said, I appeal unto Caesar. And he was a Roman citizen. Paul was. And when a Roman citizen appeared unto Caesar, unto Caesar, he went, That was the end of it. Now, he may have been wondering how he was going to get to Rome.

[00:39:52] But you see, Rome paid his expenses, of course, when Jonah ran away from the Lord. It says definitely in the scripture He paid the fare thereof. I don't say always do this, but he may not always work out. But that's how it happens when you're in the line of the Lord's will. The Romans themselves paid his expenses to get to Rome, and the Lord said, You've got to be a witness for me at Rome also, Paul. What he did and in the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. We find him at Rome. But there's 1 or 2 features in this last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles that we do well to keep prominently in our mind. Will you look at the opening verses? Acts 28. And when they were escaped. Then they knew that the island was called Melita. Probability it's the island we call Malta. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness. You see, in the Greek world, you were either Greeks or barbarians. In the Jewish world. You were ordered Jews or Gentiles. So the barbarous people, they were not true Greeks showed us no little kindness, for they kindled a fire and received us every one because of the present rain and because of the cold. And when Paul, Paul, when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks. Well, we are told that there were sailors and other prisoners. And I don't know what on board the ship.

[00:41:26] It is Paul. He must have left his halo behind, mustn't he? He is Paul, the only one who got gumption enough. To go around and get some sticks to keep the fire going. You see, some people have got weird ideas of sanctification. I met some people who must have their quiet time, and it always coincides when there's a job to do. No, no, no.

Friends, that's not true. That's not true. This man had his quiet time when he was up to his neck in business. And he was the one who could think of others beyond himself. He gathered the sticks and it says there came a viper out of the beat, the heat, and fastened on his hand. I don't know whether you've ever handled a Viper, friends. I haven't. And I don't want to. I know some people after they've been for a walk through, say, Epping Forest, come back with yarns about snakes. But it's only a poor old grass worm that frightened of him. But this was the real thing. Friends, this was the real thing for the very islanders who knew it. They watched, they said. Ah, this man's fleeing from justice. But he's caught. And they waited for him to swell up and die. But Paul had just went like that with it and slung it into the fire. And they waited a long time. And when they found it, he didn't succumb. They said, Oh, my, he must be a god.

[00:42:50] You see just the reverse. But what I'm getting at is to the very last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, they had supernatural gifts. How anybody with any rationality can believe that they belong to a church that was in the Acts of the Apostles And read that last bit, I don't know. But Mark, 16, says these signs shall follow them that believe. They shall take up serpents. They shall drink poison. They shall lay their hands on the sick and they shall recover. Well, let's look further down. We are told in verse seven that the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius. Verse eight, his father lay sick of a fever and a bloody flux. That's good Anglo-Saxon, but the Greek word is dysentery. That's bad enough, isn't it? Here's a man. Look, the disease wasn't something that nobody could diagnose. You didn't say, Well, I've got a sort of a kind of a feeling, you see. And when I went to that meeting and they all stood up and sang, you know, it left me. Not actually. And so they said, Hallelujah, here's another one. Healed. They don't follow the poor wretch home and find what happens to him when it all collapses again. They don't put that down in the reports. But listen to me. You can't argue with dysentery. Friends, if you've ever heard of anybody coming home on a troop ship when they're all suffering with dysentery at every few moments, the engine stops and another one's buried overboard.

[00:44:21] And then they go on again. And another one that's dysentery. Now, this man, he had the power to pick up a viper unharmed and to cure dysentery. Well, I hadn't. And neither have you. And yet, if you belong to the acts of the Apostles, you haven't got the sign yet that you're a believer. These signs shall follow them that believe. And you haven't got them. Well, I'm not worrying because I don't belong to that. I've gone over

the frontier. I've gone into another country and I say, they haven't got these supernatural gifts at all. They're they don't belong there, so it doesn't worry me. But if you say you see all this and you're going back there and you haven't got them or there's something radically wrong there. Well, now he gets to Rome and he says to them, verse 20. For this cause, therefore, have I call for you to see you and speak with you? Because for the hope of Israel, I am bound with this chain. The last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the hope of Israel was still possible. Now, most of you know that I must make it plain for the sake of Eddie. Most of you know that the factor in the bulk of scripture is the people of Israel. They are the important people because even the matter of time gives you an indication of that. If you read chapter 1 to 11 of the Book of Genesis.

[00:45:48] You've covered exactly the same period of time than if you read Chapter 12 of Genesis right through the Old Testament. Over the 400 years. It is abridged till you get to the gospel, according to Matthew. The same amount of time. So it's the people of Israel that come into view in the call of Abraham that dominate the whole book. And they were chosen to be a kingdom of priests, that through them, the righteousness and the truth and the salvation of God should go to the ends of the earth. But all what a terrible mess they made of it. Like all human factors do, until they look upon him whom they pierced and take that attitude which they must do or will do one day. But if the people of Israel were the medium through which salvation was going to the Gentiles, and if our savior could say to the woman of Samaria. Salvation is of the Jews, he said so. If he said when he came into this world and started his public ministry, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, go not into the way of the Gentiles. And then there comes a moment when the people of Israel themselves are scattered. Are city destroyed? Their temple burned, and God takes back to himself his title. He said, You will not know my people and I will not be your God.

[00:47:12] But what's the good of me then? Looking around to find I can't be blessed with Israel and no Israel to be blessed with. That doesn't mean to say that if one of the Sons of Israel came into this meeting, he wouldn't be welcome. We've had them here, but we don't say, Oh, you're a Jew, you come first, you say, but all on equal terms. Dear friends, we all need a savior exactly the same. And you get no preference. Just as just as I am. So are you. In this present interval, a day will come when the people of Israel will at last enter into the glory of their calling. They've got to go through it. They've got to be purified. They've got to be cleansed. They've got to be sanctified. But when they are,

they'll become that kingdom of priests for which the world is waiting. And then light and truth will radiate from them as a center. But not just now. So what are the questions that you would ought to ask ourselves continually is, well, where do I come in? Have you read the scriptures? Where do I come in? You say you'll find it. Any amount of God's people have been putting themselves into a position which is untenable. We have here in this vicinity, surrounded this chapel, especially in that direction, houses that deal with covenants and money, transactions and agreements. And it's not possible to believe that anybody could go to one of these big societies and say, I believe you have here the deeds or the covenant or something that was made by Mr.

[00:48:46] So-and-so. They say, Well, yes, we have, but all he says, I live next door to him. Oh, you do? Yes. Well, I understand he's going to America and he's shutting his house, so I think I'll move in. But he says. What? Why have you. You see here we are Gentiles. We are described in Ephesians two as being hopeless. Christless Godless. Having no relationship to covenants, having no place in the Commonwealth of Israel. And yet any amount of those very people tell you they are blessed under the terms of the New Covenant. What is the New Covenant? A covenant must have two contracting parties You can't have a covenant without. And if the names are not written, then it's not valid. I don't know whether you are the owner of your house. Have you ever looked at the deeds and see whether your name is on it? And you better make sure friends. Otherwise somebody else might move in. Look, it says in Jeremiah two that any people who broke the first covenant when he led them, he made a first covenant when he led them out of the house of Egypt, which they broke. He said, I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah. Now, are you the House of Israel or the House of Judah, who I know some people say they are.

[00:50:14] Well, I say, well, that's your funeral, friends. If you think so, I can't do anything about it. Well, I've even been pelted in the oatmeal because I'm a renegade Jew in their estimation. But I'm not. No. So, look, my name isn't there. My father's name isn't there. God never made any covenants or promises with my father's. In fact, if you were to press me and say, And who are your fathers? But I really don't know. Uh, my name is Welsh. Our English by ancestors as far as I go back, came from Exeter. And when I was a tiny baby, I suffered a terrific scald and an Irish nurse volunteered and gave the skin of her arm to help me. So I'm English, Welsh, Irish. There's only one thing lacking, and that's scotch. And I dare not say a word about that. But you see, look,

friends, I've got no place. I've got no place in this new covenant. While the people of Israel are here, it could be extended to me, for that was the purpose. I could be made of wild olive grass, contrary to nature, into the olive tree of Israel. But it must be in the olive tree of Israel. And where's the olive tree of Israel today? Cut down by the roots. It was spout again in God's good time, as he said. But not just now. So that's where this series comes in.

[00:51:36] This is the Ukraine. Don't you worry about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israel, Palestine. Jerusalem. Leave them where they are. They belong to that people. And you can't do anything about it. But here's a calling. And it doesn't need to. Something left. It gives you something more than ever. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob dreamed to the outcast. Gentile is given the highest of all callings because we're dealing with grace. And grace has no reference to merit or reward. Well, now it's time that I looked at this arrangement of the passages here. Otherwise, all this introduction will get us nowhere. You will notice that we, first of all, have in Ephesians. Now. I don't want to look at it, friends. I want these people to see it. Now, you've turned it further the other way, you see? Now just leave it alone. It'll swing around. Good. We have in the epistle to the Ephesians some key words. Now, I won't. I couldn't spend the time this evening in looking up every one of those verses. But I believe most of you who know the epistle to the Ephesians would have to agree with me that they are the key words. It's the dispensation of the mystery. It emphasizes heavenly places. It speaks of Christ and the Church as associated with fullness. It tells us of Christ as the head and the church as the body, and it associates their sphere of blessing with principalities and powers. Right now, if you look at Colossians, that's the same letter down there.

[00:53:09] You see again the dispensation of the mystery, the fullness, the head, the body, the principalities and powers. I don't mean to say that Colossians is just a sheer. Repetition of evasions, but it's dealing with the same aspect and giving further details. Right. Well, now we come back to Philippians. Now Philippians instead of being foundation truths. Which is the gift of God. It now addresses you as a believer. And says to you, What are you doing with it all? This is most important. While we are right to say that our salvation does not depend upon ourselves at all, that can be an error if it isn't corrected by the other side. We are not to live loosely because we are saved by grace. We are to seek to walk worthy of our calling and we receive grace. So to do so, we have another set of epistles Philippians and these are Timothy Philippians stresses a prize.

May I quote the verse? He says, I don't want you to think I'm already perfect, said the apostle. But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before I press toward the mark for the prize of the calling of God in Christ Jesus. Now our prize is a thing that you win. One Corinthians Chapter nine makes it very clear that although there may be many who run, if it's only one receives the prize, it's a sign that you win.

[00:54:46] So salvation is an indie. You don't win salvation. You can't run for it. It's a gift of God. But after you're saved, you're supposed to manifest the fruits. To show the route buried beneath the earth is living well now that is also associated with another feature. Philippians opens with the words to the bishops and deacons. This is service. You see in the very address the Ephesians are not told about bishops and deacons. They are told about membership of one body in every member taking its part and doing its work. But in Philippians its definite ministry. So he not only speaks to the Philippians as a church and a company, but he says, with the bishops and deacons. And when you look further down, you find that first Timothy and Titus are taken up, particularly with the character, the nature and the office office of a bishop or a deacon. So it's in perfect harmony on all fours, you see. That's a wonder of the Word of God when you're on the right track. You don't have to search for it. It stands out and says, Here am I. People say to me, Well, over in Holland they said, Would you tell us how you find a structure? How can you tell people you ought to see it or you don't? But when you begin to get the thing, it begins to scream out sometimes and you say, Well, there it is.

[00:56:11] There's the bishops and deacons in the Philippine service. Here they are once again. Now, instead of having a prize, when I come to Timothy, he says. I finished my course. I have kept the faith henceforth is laid up for me. A crown. So that again, is the end of a race course, the end of a running. He's finished it. A crown. When they go back to Philippians. He says in the first chapter that we should approve the things which are excellent or as the margin puts it, try the things that differ. Well, if you try things that differ, friends, you're rightly dividing the word of truth. So that's what it says when he says it the next time at the bottom. There you see. Same thing. And then you come back again. And he says about striving and he uses the very self-same word in Timothy striving. The word gives us the word to do with an athletic striving. And then he says, I press to the mark. He's got a goal in view and he's running for it. Here he says, Finish my course. Saint Anne's Racecourse terms all the time. And then he says two things in

Philippians. He never says that again anywhere else except in second Timothy. And I think they're put there so that it's utterly impossible for any of us once we see it, to disregard it. Now, he said in Philippians, If I had my choice, he said, Fancy.

[00:57:44] He was in prison. Is not about badly or he suffered tremendously. He said, If I had my choice, I would depart and be with Christ, which is far better. But he said, I know I'm going to remain for your sake. When you get to second Timothy. He said, The time for my departure has come. In Philippians he was willing for it in second Timothy It had come. Now this word depart. Is a Greek word which has come into everyday use. Analysis. But as the U. Is nearly always written as a letter Y when it comes into English, it's analysis. Now, what did Paul mean when he said, the time for my analysis is come? What did he mean? Well, if you'd asked him, I think he said, you look at Genesis three. Genesis three. Yes, Dust thou, art and unto dust. Thou shalt return. That's your analysis. Oh, yes. What a shocking idea. He said, no, that's all I know. He said, if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, I have a house of God. Not made with hands eternal in the heavens. Do you worry? Then he says. Yay! He says in Philippians, If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice. Now, that word offered means to pour out as a drink offering. He said, I could never make a sacrifice to save your friends, but I can accompany the sacrifice of Christ with a devoted life, which is like the symbol of pouring out that little spot of wine over the great sacrifice.

[00:59:32] I'm willing for it. I'm willing to be offered. Now, he says right into Timothy. I am now about to be offered and the time of my departure has come. Offered the two words that link those two together. And so we have. The question of our standing in Christ accepted in the beloved. No possibility of condemnation. Waiting for the manifestation of the Son of God that we may be manifested with him in glory. No ifs about it. And then we have the other side. How far is it that we are walking worthy? How far would our service be? Recognized by the master. Two sides, very healthy. Don't emphasize the one to the expense of the other. Now, don't go to the other extreme and worry yourself night and day because you may not win the prize. You see? Just keep that. Keep that. And he sums it up in second Timothy like this. If we died with him, we shall live with him. Now that dying with him is outside of your control. That's what God reckoned when his son died for you. That's finished. If you died with him, you shall live with him. Nothing at all to that. If you endure. Your reign with him. But writing is a very

different thing from living. There are millions of people living in Great Britain today and only one person is reigning.

[01:01:09] When I hear some people standing up, their meetings are all going to wear a crown, you know? Dear, dear. This apostle said he wasn't sure about it till the very last. But there's no possible doubt about your living. If we deny him. He will deny us. What of life? Oh, no, that doesn't go. He cannot deny himself whatever ever happens to you. That's true. That's remains. So we've got now this perfect balance of truth. And now if we were living in Puritan days, I would pick up the the little what do you call it? I'm thinking about an egg boiler. You know, that's one the hourglass. And say, now friends will start all over again. But we can't if we got our limits, I'd like to go through those epistles now. And first of all, show you how rich they are in blessing, taking you up to the highest sphere where Christ sits, taking you back to the before the foundation of the world, right back to the beginning of Genesis, according that's distinct and beyond all dreams. Baraka. We can only pray that it's been worth your while to sit here and have these things sketched out for you. But you won't be satisfied with that sketch. You say, What if that's the truth? If that belongs to me, if I like to put out the hand and take it just as a sheer gift of God, recognizing my need of a savior and accepting Him as God has preached and presented him to me, then those epistles.

[01:02:43] Can occupy the rest of your pilgrim journey. I don't put myself up as a very great student. But I've been 50 years studying. These epistles. And I begin to wonder if I know much about them now. That's always the case, isn't it? So there are debts beyond our sounding and heights, beyond our scaling. That must be so if these scriptures are given by inspiration of God. But the smallest, the weakest among us, if we belong to this calling, have Christ as our head and from the head all that necessary. Power, strength, understanding, wisdom might. Doesn't matter what it may be comes down through you and through the ministry of your fellow members. They could all help one another. Somebody given ability to write and start to speak and some to prepare tea for us when in between whiles each one part doing its share. And it's so good that the one part does its share. We've got members of our bodies that do different functions. I'm sure you would have a different sort of tea if I said, Well, you come up here and take the meeting this evening and I'll go down there to make the tea. You'd say, Oh no, let's keep each member doing his part. Well, will you do yours thing? If you're a member of the Body of

Christ. You're not one of those members that the people don't know what to do with them.

[01:04:07] They don't know whether you ought to have them or not know each one's in his place doing, and if you're not doing it, your fellow member may be suffering a little bit. That's the responsibility side. We should hold the head and remember that we are members, one of another. Well, I promise that this meeting, so far as I was concerned, would conclude at a 7:15. And if we went on till 11:15, we should still have to say there's more to be said. Thank you so much for coming. I wondered when the strike interfered with travelling, whether we should have a problem, and I wondered whether in a cookery book or tome there was any way of getting rid of about 200 ham sandwiches and making them up, you know, But evidently that's solved. There's no problem. And another thing which has struck some of us, we've had meetings here now for since 1943. We never know exactly who's coming. And we've had this chapel comfortably filled and there's never been any need for any one person not to find a seat or stand outside. Isn't it remarkable? I think the Lord knows his business and we can trust him, even with details like that. So may the Lord be with every one of you. And as you go back, you'd at least realise that we are a blessed people, for we've got something to be thankful for. And we have got that thing which the world is so desperately needing, a firm foundation and a blessed hope.