

W463B_Finish_Work_of_Christ_36.mp3

[00:00:01] This is the recording made in the Chapel of the Open book at the dinner hour meeting and is still a part of the study by the all covering title, The Finished Work of Christ. We have been looking at the acts of the Apostles. I think you all agree with me that there is no possibility of the work of God. The purpose of God ever reaching its goal apart from the finished work of Christ, if the Bible is to be trusted. Now that the making of it noun has been entrusted right down the ages to men who have been lifted out and given messages by inspiration of God, whether it by profit or by priest or by apostle or by evangelist or by teacher. And so we must be, for the moment, confined in these studies to the developing of ministry, which we find in the acts of the Apostles. I remind you, without turning to chapter and verse, the course of our time, that Peter is the dominant factor in the first few chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. Somewhere around about the 12th chapter, he begins to disappear. He appears on the scene for just a brief moment in Acts 15 and then is heard no more throughout the acts of the Apostles. But he stood up on the day of Pentecost and said This is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel. And it gives you the key to Pentecost, which has nothing to do with the church as we know it.

[00:01:34] But the great and dreadful day of the Lord that if Israel had only repented that day would have come. But, you know, they did not repent. And so time goes on. And then we come to the ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and another man is brought into the story, Saul of Tarsus, a rabid Pharisee. And yet he was brought down on that road and confessed that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he was persecuting, was his Lord. Well, then we were looking last time at Acts 13, where the Spirit of God said, Separate me, Barnabas and Saul, unto the work to which I have called them. And here we get the beginning of Paul's public ministry. The 13th chapter of the acts, the Paul's Public Ministry. And last time we were noticing that both of these ministries was accompanied by a miracle, which was not merely a miracle in itself, but because it was a sign. Peter's miracle was the healing of a man who was lame. And when they questioned him, he said, neither is there the healing or salvation, because the word salvation and healing are similar terms. Neither is there the healing of the nation in any other. But when you come to Paul's significant sign in Acts 13, instead of Israel being healed as that prophecy or that parable in action under Peter, we find a Jew who is withstanding a gentile and he is blinded for a season.

[00:03:17] And the Gentiles name is Paul. And for the first time, Paul is so named in the scriptures linking him with a Gentile. Well, now, I mustn't go further with that. I must leave that for you to ponder. And now we have to remember that if Paul comes into the story in Acts 13 and is the dominating factor as an apostle right through to the end, he nevertheless has a two fold ministry. He had a ministry while he was a free man, travelling about from place to place. And in that period of time he wrote, as far as we can gauge, seven epistles. I'll give them to you. But you need not take note for the time. We shall have to look at them again. Galatians, Thessalonians, Corinthians, Romans and Hebrews. Then comes a break and he ceases to be a free man travelling about and he signs himself afterwards. The prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. And there were seven more epistles that were written, five of them bearing the word prison upon them. So you see, we have before us now the consideration of the fact that this man had a two fold ministry. And if we are in the wrong department, we shall start taking things to ourselves that were true at the time but may not be true now.

[00:04:36] And we shall also miss some things that belong to us. Because you cannot live in two camps at once. Well, now I want you to turn straight away with me to Acts 20. I'm jumping a great deal, of course, but we cannot possibly go into every detail. Acts 20 The Apostle has called the elders of the church at Ephesus. If you look at verse 17 onwards, to meet him at the sea coast because he was pressing on his way to get to Jerusalem and then he starts speaking to them in a tone that is significant. He says in verse 28. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye 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 that nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks. Repentance to all, also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, now, any congregation listening to their minister standing up in the pulpit and reviewing a past ministry of what sort of man he had been would immediately become conscious that he was about to give them a statement that perhaps means he was going to leave.

[00:06:02] Well, that's exactly what the apostle was about to do. So the next verse and now here's the change. Behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the

things that shall befall me there. Save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city saying that bonds and afflictions abide me bonds. The word indicates prison afflictions were the many severe things that are accompanied by it. Glimpse, will you? Chapter 21. A certain prophet came down and it says in verse 11, 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. And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered What me to weep and to break my heart. For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. So it's most obvious a prison ministry was awaiting Paul and he was ready for it. Come back to Chapter 20.

[00:07:17] And now behold, I go bound in the spirit. At that moment, he had no shackles on his wrists, but he was already in spirit. The prisoner. He never called himself the Spirit, the prisoner of Nero, or of the failure of Roman Justice. He never called himself the prisoner of Jewish spite. He was the prisoner of the Lord. And so he says here. I don't know what things are going to be for me except this in verse 23 that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city saying that bonds and afflictions are awaiting me. That these things move me. Neither count I my life dear unto myself. That's one of the reasons why they didn't move him. He wasn't thinking of himself. The one thing he had in front of him was this, so that I might finish my course with joy and repeat the word finish and finish the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus. Not merely to preach the gospel, but to testify it. And when you know that this word testify and bear witness gives us our English word martyr, you'll see that it's a deep word. He was not merely going to speak. He was going to live. And if needs be, suffer and finally die. But nothing moved him. Now, he had a wish here that he might finish his course. Shall we turn to the last letter he wrote to Timothy, chapter four, just to get the beginning of the end.

[00:08:49] That's all we can do today. But it's a wonderful point. Two. Timothy Chapter four. This is the last letter that Paul wrote before his death, and therefore it is a solemnness about it. And so he says verse five of chapter four, But watch thou, in all things, is giving a commission to his son, Timothy, who was to succeed him. Endure afflictions. Do the work of an evangelist. It looks as though doing the work of an evangelist was connected with afflictions because he speaks about it earlier. Make full

proof of thy ministry, for I am now ready to be offered. Offered in Philippians, he said Yea, if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice. Now there is no confusion there with the offering of Christ. That's nothing to do with it. The word in the Old Testament that is used here was the word that described a little ceremony, a person bringing a sacrifice to the altar. It was offered by the priest, was permitted by God to have just a little share in it. He could pour it out over it. A flagon or a flask of wine. It was called a drink offering. It didn't make the sacrifice more acceptable to God, but he gave the offerer just a little opportunity of saying, Thanks, Lord.

[00:10:22] Paul says That's all I'm doing. But I'm being poured out as a drink, offering over the great sacrifice of Christ. He said now. I'm ready to be offered. You see, it was one thing to say I'm willing to be offered in Philippians. And another thing now to say it's come and I'm ready and the time of my departure is at hand. That's another link with Philippians four in Philippians one. He said, If I were left to be self, I've been there to a battering about, I would choose to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. He says the time for my departure has come. So two things he said in the early part of his ministry and our focusing here at the end. I have fought a good fight. This is not a military term. It's the contest. The Greek games, the wrestling, the racing, the running, the discipline that he uses so many times to urge others to stay the course. I have finished my course. It's interesting, perhaps, to know that this word finish in the Greek language supplies us with that universal word. Kelly. It's nothing, of course, to do with pictures or listening to sounds. The word, Kelly, in its beginning, means to go to the end and a telephone is speaking at a distance and a telegram is writing at a distance, and a telescope is looking at a distance.

[00:11:47] And he says, I touch the tape at the end. I finished my course. It's a marvelous thought, isn't it, to think that our covering title is the finished work of Christ? And here is one of his servants who is echoing the very words that Christ used on the cross. For Christ said, It is finished. John says he came, He said, My meat and my drink is to do the work of him that sent me and to finish. So he has his servant following him closely, saying I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. Well, now, will you turn back just to chapter one and you will see that this is one of the prison epistles. Chapter one, verse eight Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God. So he is the

Lord's prisoner and he has a testimony to give. But now we must go back because we haven't reached that point in the acts of the Apostles. What we must now do is this that in this part, this first part, he is laying the foundation, as he says in Corinthians, as a wise master builder, I have laid a foundation and whether Israel repented and the kingdom was set up or whether they didn't and the kingdom was postponed, that foundation remains unaltered.

[00:13:16] The great foundation that is laid, particularly in the epistle to the Romans, is as true today as when it was first uttered. Justification by faith, redemption by the blood of Christ. The great atoning work, the reconciliation brought about peace with God, access into his presence. That's a finished thing. Now, then, if Israel repents, that's a glorious basis on which that kingdom shall be a kingdom of righteousness. Indeed, that if they do not repent, then God had a secret purpose which is called in our version, the mystery. It's rather a pity. It's called the mystery because it sounds a bit mysterious, but it means a secret purpose. And when apparently the whole purpose of the ages was being ruined by the failure of Israel, who are now at this present moment in unbelief and blindness, then God revealed to that prisoner of his something which had never entered the pages of Scripture before. And the teaching of the prison ministry belongs to you and to me at this present moment. You see, in the early epistles of Paul, he preached the gospel to the Jew first, and some people feel they must do that today. But the Jew isn't first. Today, he could believe the gospel, if he will, as a sinner, but he has no preference over a Gentile today.

[00:14:34] Not in the sense that they did in the early days. What Our time is up. I've got a desperate job in these meetings to pack it in and you sit very, very calmly and I hope you take it in, turn it over, search and see like good bereans come up with some more next time so that little by little we may build up this. So you see what's in front of us. Now, having suggested that's all I've done, that there is a two fold Ministry of Christ of Paul. I want now to go into that ministry with the early epistles and show the basis there. And then as time goes on, go into the later epistles and show the glorious thing that's built upon it. But please remember, you're not going to lose anything. You're going to gain infinitely more by seeing your calling and all the blessings that God has designed for you rather than live in a fool's paradise and take the promises made to Israel which were never going to be turned over to you and so not know whether you're going to be the meek shall inherit the earth because of the Sermon on the Mount or whether you're

going to heaven or what not. You see, don't let's be distracted. Let's believe that God is working out his purpose and each link in the chain should be considered separately.