

A PRAYER FOR A TROUBLED CHURCH

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The last several weeks we have been in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, looking at "The Prayers of the Apostle Paul." This morning I am going to ask you to turn to the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. We will be looking at the prayer that is included there in chapter 1, beginning with verse 3 and going down through verse 9. He recorded this prayer before he stated his purpose writing this epistle.

1 and 2 Thessalonians were probably written from the city of Corinth early in the fifties A.D., 51 or 52 A.D. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he had gone to Ephesus. You can tell from 1 Corinthians 16:8 where he mentions the fact that he is in Ephesus, that that was where he had gone. According to those who have made a study of the background of the epistles, these two epistles, 1 and 2 Corinthians, were probably written about the middle of the fifties, so three or four years after 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

It is clear from reading 1 Corinthians that the church at Corinth was in trouble. It was a church with many, many problems. Paul had received information about what was going on in Corinth. You can see, since he wrote from Corinth, when he wrote to the Thessalonian church and now writing back to them, that all of this difficulty must have developed within a period of three or four years. He had received part of the information from what he refers to in verse 11 of chapter 1: "It hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you."

Chloe is a ladies' name. To refer to the house of Chloe means that it had to do with members of her family. She evidently was a prominent person in the church at Corinth, although we cannot say that positively. They had brought word to Paul in Ephesus that there were difficulties in the church, contentions in the church, meaning, divisions in the church. Paul dealt with what he had heard from Chloe's family until he got to the end of chapter 6. Then, if you look at the beginning of chapter 7, you will notice these words: "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me..." Then he went on to speak of some problems that evidently were very pressing in the church. But I just want you to see, as we begin, that he had gotten the report personally from some members of the family of Chloe. Then, in addition to that, some in Corinth had written to him about difficulties that they were having in the church.

A reading of the epistle shows that, in addition to the contentions, or the divisions, that they had in the church, they had other problems which always seemed to accompany divisions. You can read through the epistle and see what their problems were. You will see evidence of pride. You see evidence of carnality. You see that there was criticism. Some of the criticism had actually been directed against the Apostle Paul. There was immorality in the church. Paul said that it was worse than you would usually find among unregenerate Gentiles. There were problems regarding marriage. There were those who were taking advantage of their liberty which they had in Christ. We know from 1 Corinthians 11, part of which we read a couple of times each month here at Trinity in connection with the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper was being desecrated. It was serious enough that God had judged some of the people in the church with sickness; some had actually died because they were profaning the Lord's Supper. Their fellowship with each other had been strained and broken, in some instances, over spiritual gifts. The church had been affected by false doctrine. This is not a complete list that I am giving you, but you can see that it is long

enough to show that the Spirit of God was grieved, and that the ministry of the church was being hindered. These things needed to be corrected if they were going to see the blessing of God restored to them again. Previously they had seen the Lord's blessing in a most remarkable way.

In the light of all of this, it is most amazing that we really have just one prayer in this Corinthian epistle. In going through the shorter epistles of 1 and 2 Thessalonians there were many prayers, but we only have one here. There is the possibility that two might be added. In writing about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:57 he simply said, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Then, the third prayer is the one mentioned, as I brought out last Sunday, like in the conclusion of 2 Thessalonians, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (1 Corinthians 15:23). This is the prayer that Paul used in closing most of the epistles.

Today we are looking at this one in 1 Corinthians 1, beginning with verse 3 and going down through verse 9. I would like to read this for you so you can have this freshly in your own mind and heart. He begins by saying:

Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

How would you pray for a church in the condition which Paul knew was true of the Corinthian church at that time?

Obviously, they needed prayer. They needed much prayer. In fact, it seems very clear in reading the epistle that there was a strong possibility that this church was in such great trouble that the work might not survive. However, when we are thinking about the work of the Lord, we must always have hope that things can be changed for the better. 2 Corinthians gives us some expectation that that was true. That was Paul's hope. It is interesting to see the nature of this prayer because it shows what hope Paul had when he faced problems like this in the Corinthian church, and the same thing would apply to problems in the life of an individual believer. We can just take this epistle and this particular prayer and bring it down to the Twentieth century, as you could any generation from that day until this, and see in this prayer the hope that Paul had.

Times have certainly changed drastically from the day Paul heard this news about the church at Corinth, when you compare it to our day, but the problems are very similar to problems that churches have today. The solution to their problem is the solution to those same problems when they appear today. That is one reason that 1 Corinthians is included in our New Testament.

One great lesson that we learn from this First Epistle to the Corinthians is that the people needed teaching. Some of their trouble was due to ignorance. When they did know about certain things, like spiritual gifts, they were misusing what God intended to be given to them for blessing. They needed teaching on a variety of subjects. We find a lot of teaching in this epistle. When we get into trouble, it is either due to our ignorance of the Word of God, or that we do not pay attention to what we have learned from the Word of God. A church without solid Biblical teaching really ceases to be a church in the New Testament meaning of the word, unless that condition is corrected. If a church is well-taught, many problems can be avoided altogether. So, nothing must ever replace, in the ministry of the church, the teaching of Scripture. It is also

very important for us to see in this epistle that before Paul began to teach, before he uttered a word of rebuke, he told them how he was praying for them, so we have that well-known emphasis in Scripture in this epistle that prayer and the Word go together, but prayer must come first.

We can see in the life of the Lord Jesus when He was here on earth how important prayer was to Him. In the midst of the business of His ministry it was not an unusual thing for Him to spend a whole night in prayer. When the apostles in the early in Jerusalem found themselves dealing with increased responsibilities and were under pressure to do other things in addition to what they were called to do, deacons were appointed to help them, but this was the explanation the apostles gave to the church in Jerusalem. They said, "It is not reason (it is not right) that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business (that is, of taking care of the widows in the church)." Then they said this, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:2-4).

It seems that in seminaries today there is more of an emphasis upon pastors being administrators than it is on pastors being teachers and pastors being able to give time to prayer. Perhaps that is one reason, a great reason, why the church is in the condition that it is today.

I remember reading somewhere many years ago that "we can do more than pray after we have prayed, but we cannot do more than pray until we have prayed." So, if you were working with Paul and Silas and Timothy, you would find that there was a strong emphasis upon prayer, not just as they met with people, but as they prayed for churches when they were away from them. There is a great emphasis upon prayer throughout the Word of God, throughout Paul's epistles, and there needs to be a real priority on prayer in every single one of our lives. I hope that you see that from what we have here in this chapter this morning.

He begins with his usual greeting. I am not going to spend time on this, this morning, except just to point out its significance as far as the Corinthian church is concerned. We had this in 1 Thessalonians. We had this in 2 Thessalonians. We are going to see it again in other epistles, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

The epistle shows that the people in Corinth knew very little about their daily need of the grace of God, and the troubles in the church meant that they were not experiencing much of the peace of God. So it had special significance here. It is not just a formal way to begin a letter. The Spirit of God was guiding Paul in writing this as much as anything else that he wrote. If a church ever needed to experience more of the grace of God and more of the peace of God, it was this church in ancient Corinth. In fact, if God did not bless them with His grace and with His peace, as I have said, we do not know what would have happened to the church at Corinth, and there certainly would have been very little purpose in Paul's writing this epistle. God's grace would make them receptive to what Paul had to say, and God's peace would make them willing to do what the Apostle Paul was going to tell them to do or not to do. So don't miss this verse. It has real significance. It is not a formality, as I say, but there was a real need for grace and peace, the strengthening of God and the blessing of God upon the work there in the city of Corinth.

He follows this with his thanksgiving regarding what had happened in Corinth in the past.

I think this is important for us to see. There was not much that he could thank God for in connection with the condition of the church in the present, but as he prays for them, he is thinking back to what God had done in their hearts. There was really a very remarkable work done in the city of Corinth.

This goes down to the end of verse 7. I suppose that in some ways you could include 8 and 9, but I want to separate verses 8 and 9--you will see the reason for that. He says that he is thankful "for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

If you cannot thank God for what is going on in a church now, you can always thank God for what He has done for them in the past, because the remembrance of what He has done for them in the past applied to the present is going to be one of the ways that they are going to come out of trouble. Don't worry about the fact that there is not a period at the end of the seventh verse, but let's look at this to see what God had done in the past in the lives of the believers in Corinth, so when there was not much to be thankful for as he wrote, Paul teaches us here that we can always look back and remember what God has done for a church in the past and then build upon that to bring the church out of its trouble.

The first thing that he mentions, or he gives himself to in his prayer, is thanksgiving: "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ."

The story of the origin of the church in Corinth is found in Acts 18. I am not going to ask you to turn to that this morning. Paul went to Corinth by himself, and later he was joined by the two men who worked with him in Thessalonica: Silas and Timothy. The Jews in Corinth were so strong in their opposition to the Gospel that it was there that Paul turned in a special way to minister to the Gentiles. Yet God, Acts 18 tells us, was not finished with His work with Jews. This is the report that Luke gave as he wrote that chapter (Acts 18). He says, "And he departed thence (after the Jews had rejected his ministry), and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue." He moved out of the synagogue and went to Justus' house next door. Then, listen to this: "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." That is, much people who have not been reached. Many people who are appointed for salvation, chosen by God. Paul was there ministering the Word and the Lord said, "You keep preaching. I am going to be with you. There is still a work to be done here." "And he (Paul) continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:7-11).

When Paul says here, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ," he is using grace here, I believe, in the sense of thanking God for the way He had saved so many of the people there. As he looked back upon the work, he had been there for a year and a half, there was no question in Paul's mind but that a true work of God had been done in the hearts of many of the people. There was not just a response, going forward in a service, signing a card, or something like that, but there was deep evidence that God had done a work of grace in the hearts of the people. He was thanking the Lord that He had saved so many of the Corinthians.

Godet, who has written a commentary on 1 Corinthians, says, "This grace comprehends the whole state of salvation with the new life that had been displayed in the church."

There was no question in Paul's mind but that the Lord had done a work. Look at verses 2 and 3 in this chapter: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's."

He would not have written in that way if he had not been convinced that these were true believers. Paul knew that God had done a work there. He had been with them long enough to see the evidence in their lives, and for this he was thankful, and continued to be thankful in spite of all of the problems that had arisen in the church. You see, he is dipping back into the past and bringing that up into the present and he says, "I am thankful for what God did then."

Now. Thanksgiving number 2, if I could address it that way. Verses 5 and 6: "That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you."

Let's look at this for a moment.

He does not suggest that the remedy to their troubles was to be found in seeking additional blessings from God, but in realizing what they already had in Christ. He says that they had been enriched by Him. That means exactly in the original what it means in the English. They were a spiritually wealthy people, infinitely wealthy. We sometimes here it said about some wealthy person that it is not possible to calculate how much money they have. Spiritually, this is true of every Christian. Paul told the Ephesian believers, you remember, as he began that epistle, that they had been "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

I like the response Dr. Mitchell used to make when people asked him if he had the second blessing. He said, "Yes, and the third blessing and the fourth blessing and the fifth blessing..." He could just go on and on.

We have all the blessings. When we know the Lord Jesus Christ, we are infinitely rich from a spiritual standpoint because there is no blessing that God has withheld from any of us that has to do with our salvation. I do not have any more blessings than you do, and you do not have any more blessings than I do. He poured out every blessing upon each one of us when we came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. We do not need more blessings. What we need to do is to know and appropriate the blessings that we have. We may differ in spiritual gifts. We may differ in the place that God uses us in His work, but we do not differ in spiritual blessings.

"In every thing you are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge." He is indicating here that he wants them to recognize how infinitely rich they are. God had not spared anything to make them spiritually wealthy, and they were wealthy beyond their greatest comprehension. I am sure that it will not be until we get to heaven that we are going to realize the riches that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet Paul was thankful that God's blessing on these believers included two things in particular: In all utterance--that is, the ability to speak to others clearly about their salvation, and, in a special way God had made clear to them much of the knowledge of His truth. So, you "are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge." It would have been a delight to be with those Corinthians in the early days of the church when God was blessing them in such a wonderful way.

The church at Corinth was like this. They were infinitely rich. In the past, they had shown how rich they were, because he says, "Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you."

What did he mean by that?

Paul had come to the city of Corinth preaching Christ. Paul had preached the Gospel to them. Paul had

perhaps declared to them what he wrote in the second epistle when he said, "If any many be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17). When he wrote to the Roman church, he said, "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, therefore, I am not ashamed of it." (Acts 1:16). Paul was saying here, when he says, "The testimony of Christ was confirmed in you," he says that what happened in Corinth gave others added proof for believing that there really is something to the Gospel, that the Gospel does change people's lives, that they are delivered from their sins, they are made new creatures in Christ, "...old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). So, you have been enriched by what the Lord has done for you and evidence of your riches in Christ have been seen by the changes that God has made in your life.

Remember, I have called your attention to the little preposition "in," in some of the prayers in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Notice that he says here, "The testimony of Christ was confirmed in you." That is different from saying, "the testimony of Christ was confirmed by you." If it were by them, it would mean that they were just simply giving testimony as to what Christ meant to them, which is important, but when he says that "the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you," he is saying, "You are different, you are changed as a result of what God has done in your hearts, and, as a result, your lives are different from what they were."

The power was not only in what they said and how they said it, but the power was evident in what they were.

You can see from Paul's statement, notice how many times he mentions the Lord in this prayer. He says that "grace and peace come from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ; I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him (by Jesus Christ); even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you; So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; Who (speaking of Christ) shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." You see, the passage is just full of the Lord. I wonder if this does not indicate that basic to the problem that was existent was the fact that they had gotten their eyes off of the Lord and gotten them on each other.

When a person is first saved, he or she is usually very much in love with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why it is called a first love. A newborn babe in Christ loves to hear about the Lord, loves to read about the Lord, loves to talk about the Lord. But, so often, we are like the Ephesian church in the Book of the Revelation where the Lord was writing to them. He had somewhat against them because they did not love Him as much as they used to love Him. They did not talk about Him as much as they used to talk about Him. They did not think about Him as much. They did not delight as much in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So often, when the first love is lost, then we find problems begin to develop in our lives. Problems can develop at church when this happens. Christ always has to be kept in the preeminent place. It is only by loving the Lord and growing in our love for the Lord that our lives, as well as our lips, will show how much He means to us. Salvation is nothing less than a living, personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, "you have been enriched by Him, and the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, you are living epistles, evidence of the truth of the Gospel, and your lives have been forever change." Paul says, "I thank God for what He did for you in those days. He enriched you in a way that you can never lose the riches that you have in Christ. You can ignore them. You can live as though you did not possess them, but you still have them. They are always available." So, you see, he is saying, "Let's go back to the foundation. Let's go back to remember what the Lord has done in your lives. I am so grateful," Paul says, in spite of all the trouble that you are having, that each one of you is infinitely rich because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has

done in your lives."

Now let's look at thanksgiving number 3. We have this in verse 7: "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

To "come behind" means to be deficient. 1 Corinthians, most of you will remember, has a great deal to say about spiritual gifts. He says, "You are not deficient. You have not come short. You, as a church, do not lack any spiritual gifts." In fact, this statement "So that ye come behind in no spiritual gift," indicates that no church could have been more gifted than the Corinthian church was. They all had the blessings of salvation, which are true of every believer, but, in addition, God had gifted them in various ways. As Paul said early in his ministry, "There is no church that I know of that is more gifted than your church, the work that the Lord had done in their lives." He said that to their credit they not only believed in the coming of the Lord, but when it says, "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," it means that they were daily expecting, momentarily that the Lord Jesus Christ was coming back. It is kind of strange to see that, isn't it?

There are two things here that people often take as indicating that there is vital spiritual life in the church: One is gifts and the other is prophecy. I do not know if prophecy today has the place in the lives of people that it used to, but Paul commends them for this. It used to be that if you were up on prophetic truth that this is what characterized you as a spiritually-minded believer, but, in spite of the fact that they were looking for the Lord to come back any day and they were more gifted than any church could possibly be, yet all these problems entered in, all these difficulties. They were rich in Christ, gifted beyond what most churches expect, looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but spiritually, they were sick; spiritually, they were in great need.

Paul is calling attention and praying for them that they would come to realize the resources that they had in Christ, resources that could never be exhausted because this was the means that he knew God was going to use to bring them out of their difficulty. They had everything in Christ. They had nothing without Christ. Therefore, they need to keep their eyes on Christ and be walking in fellowship with Him.

In spite of all that God had done for them, they were still in trouble, and it was because their fellowship with the Lord was not what it had been at the first.

In the early days of Trinity Bible Church, we had some weekday classes. We had a Church History class and a New Testament Greek class. My son Gary taught the Church History class. I did not attend the class, but one day I was talking to him about his lectures. He said to me that the tendency of the Lord's people and the tendency of the Lord's work as seen throughout history is downward. You know, it can start on a high level and people are in love with the Lord and are experiencing great blessing, but then things happen in people's lives and they lose their first love and do not walk in fellowship with the Lord the way they used to. They still have their riches. They still have all that they have in Christ, but there is a difference. You can see this in our day. Churches that used to be real power houses for the Lord are often not that way any

more. We have all seen people who seem to be deeply in love with the Lord Jesus at one time, but that love has almost disappeared in many of their lives. I hope that is not true of any of us this morning. A prayer like this ought to make all of us stop and take stock in our own hearts and lives. It can happen in a pastor's life just like it can happen to anyone else.

As we look at the Lord's work today, what is our hope? What assurance do we have that the work of the Lord is not going to die, but that we are going to see things deteriorate more and more? What hope do we have that those who are truly saved are really going to make it?

Look at what Paul said in verses 8 and 9:

Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We had the word "confirm" in verse 6, and we have the same word in verse 8. Their salvation was a confirmation of the truth of the Gospel, that through the Gospel lives are really changed. People are made new creatures in Christ.

When he gets down here to the end of his prayer, after having talked about what God had done in the past, now he begins to move into the present and project into the future what God is doing. He says that the work that the Lord started when those people first came to know the Lord Jesus Christ, God is going to continue. The Lord Jesus Christ is going to continue. He is not going to let you go. Nobody can pluck you out of His hand. You cannot take yourself out of the Lord's hand. He is going to confirm you unto the end. This is the Corinthian epistle way of saying what Paul told the Philippian church when he said, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

If the Christian life were a life that was dependent upon us and what we could do for ourselves spiritually, it would have been over a long time ago, wouldn't it? The very fact that we make any progress, the very fact that we continue on is due to what the Lord is doing in our lives. He confirms us unto the end. He is not going to give up on anybody who really knows the Lord Jesus. I am not talking this morning about people who simply make an empty profession of faith. I am talking about people who are genuinely saved, "he will confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless--that ye may be blameless." This means that there will not be any charge that God will bring against you when you stand before Him because of what Jesus Christ is doing in your life. He will confirm you blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You have been unfaithful, he would say to the Corinthians, but in verse 9 he says, "God is faithful." Aren't you amazed at the goodness of God and the faithfulness of God in your own life. I am as a I think about my life, how gracious and loving and faithful God has been. I have failed Him more times than I like to think about, but, you know, God has a perfect record with every single one of us. It is not because of any failure in Him that our love grows cold. The Lord worked in our hearts and he was working through the Apostle Paul prayed. Wouldn't you have loved to hear Paul as he poured out his heart--this is just an abbreviated form of his prayer--for the people there in Corinth. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called..." This was not our idea, our salvation, it is what God did. Remember that Paul said that in verse 2: "We are called to be saints," and, as a result, we call upon the name of the Lord.

Why are we called? Called so that someday we will get to heaven? Yes. That is God's purpose in our salvation. But here the Apostle Paul touches the very heart of it. You know, if you want a verse to memorize from our text this morning, take this last one: "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

That is what salvation is. We are called into fellowship with Jesus Christ. The word "fellowship" suggests the idea of participation. We are called to participate in every thing that Jesus Christ is. The reason you and I as believers are infinitely wealthy from a spiritual standpoint is because we have Christ. We can never

exhaust the resources that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the reason that Paul would write. This was the reason that Paul would pray. This was the reason that Paul would teach. This was the reason that he would minister to the Corinthians, because, though, as you look at the people of God, you see illustration after illustration of unfaithfulness. When you look at their God and you look at their Saviour, you see illustration after illustration of perfect faithfulness. That is our hope, isn't it? That is the reason that the Apostle Paul was rejoicing in the fact that with confidence he could pray for them and he could expect the blessing of God to return.

How do you pray for a troubled church? Just like Paul prayed for the church at Corinth. He prayed that they would remember what they have in Christ, what God had done for them in Christ, that they would get their eyes back on the Lord and remember that they had been called into a life of fellowship with them, that they would love Him like they once loved Him and trust Him like they once trusted Him, and seek to glorify Him as they once wanted to glorify Him. If all this were to take place, the testimony in Corinth could be revived and that you could once again see a blessing in the city and a mighty instrument in the hand of God.

Let's make the application to our own lives and to Trinity Bible Church that you and I may realize that God has called us not just to take us to heaven, but God has called us that we might enter into a life of personal and blessed fellowship with the Lord Jesus.

If I were to ask you personally this morning, Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ as much today as you have in the past? or, Can you think of a time in the past when you really loved Him more than you do now, when you delighted more in His Word than you do now? Perhaps the Lord brought you here this morning that that might be straightened out and that you might again see that the key to our fellowship, the key to our blessing is our relationship with our wonderful Saviour. Infinitely rich. What a wonderful work that God has done in our hearts. By His grace, and it can only be by His grace, He has promised that He is not going to let us go, but He is going to continue to work in our hearts so that when we stand before the Lord we will be there blameless to His glory.