

What is the Gospel?

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[0 : 0 0] ago when he was with us for a day conference, which was a terrific time. Philip has been in ministry for some 40 years in Sydney, Australia, particularly on student campuses, running Student Church and St. Matthias Church. Latterly, he's been in charge of the training and further development of people for ministry within Sydney Diocese and has been Dean of St. Andrew's Cathedral. He retired from the cathedral just at Christmastime and is now going to be continuing in ministry in a different form with Two Ways Ministries, continuing his passion for training people and mentoring the next generation of gospel preachers, missionaries and gospel workers all over the world. And we're very privileged to have you with us, Philip. We're delighted that you're here. You've been a very, very good friend to us in this church and to many others in this room. And we thank God for you. And we're very, very much looking forward to your ministry. So without further ado, I'm going to pray and then hand over to you. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for all the stimulation that we've had already this morning in the different seminar groupings. And we pray that already you would have sown seeds in our minds and hearts that will take root and in due time bear fruit in our churches as we work in our own places and our own patch and increasingly seek to work there, but with a knowledge of partnership with others who are laboring in the same harvest field. And so also now we ask that you would help Philip as he speaks to us.

Give him just the right words. Give us listening ears and open hearts and make us able to hear what you have to say to us and that we also might be stimulated more to be better followers of the Lord Jesus and better servants and workers in the harvest field. So help us, Lord, we pray. Draw near to us as we draw near to you and open our minds and hearts, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thanks. Well, let me commence by apologising. Whether Willie needs to apologise, I don't think so. I need to apologise to him and to you for being late this morning. It's not a sign of old age. It was because I did the same thing 30 years ago down in London. So I know it's not a sign of old age. I just got confused between the time I was supposed to arrive and the time I was supposed to leave.

I had the wrong time sitting in my head. I had a very pleasant breakfast and just taking my time thinking, this is a wonderful conference, so civilised, we're starting so late in the morning.

[3 : 1 1] So do forgive me. The last time though in London, that was, here's the good news of it really. What I did was I walked very slowly from where I was to where I was supposed to speak and I had to walk across the London Bridge. And seeing I had plenty of time, I started playing poo sticks on London Bridge and dropping things on this side and racing over to the other side, missing the traffic en route to see how quickly they came out the other side. It's a really brilliant bridge for poo sticks. If you want to play poo sticks anywhere, can I suggest London Bridge? A little distance to travel, more so for me than you.

And the good news is that the talk I gave when they finally found me, in my recalcitrant mode of childhood, the talk I gave turned out to be one of the most popular talks I've ever given, even outselling love, sex and marriage. And anything that outsells sex has got to be something really important. So you can hope high for today, but this is the second time I've done it and maybe this will be the better talk than sex also.

I want to apologise to the seminar leaders in particular and I've got good news, bad news. Thank you very much for stepping in the breach and doing work so much earlier in the day.

The good news is you can now sit back and relax. I've done your chat, is that right? And cope with me doing these three talks in a row and here we go. I do appreciate enormously the invitation to be here, both at the Tron and for today in particular in the West Scotland Gospel Partnership.

These gospel partnerships that are across Britain now are really very important for until we learn to work together in partnership for the gospel. We have little hope of reaching the society and with the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 10] The message is too important and too big. The task is too large and too daunting to leave it to just one church or one group of people working by themselves.

We have to overcome our petty quarrels and our private empires if we're going to see Scotland won for Christ and the kingdom of God proclaimed here rather than my empire.

We have to learn to work together in the gospel, to be partners in the gospel, because we believe in something that is bigger than us. We believe we're undertaking a task that is greater than our own resources could possibly do.

And we are the brothers and sisters in the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and we need to work as a family, a functional, not a dysfunctional family. But I'm not going to concentrate in these three talks on our partnership in the gospel so much as on the gospel and our partnership in making it known.

So the three talks are really about the gospel. Now I'm going to give you slightly unusual and complex talks because I'm going to combine two kinds of talks in one.

[6 : 29] Topical talks on what is the gospel, what is evangelism, why evangelise. Together with expositional talks on 2 Corinthians chapters 2, 3, 4, 5.

Not that these three chapters answer these three questions, but the aim will be ultimately to expound 2 Corinthians 3 to 5 in the light of these questions and to some extent to mine those chapters in order to answer these questions.

Now how successful it is of combining topical talks and expositional talks together, we will know by the end of the afternoon, you will then go home and I will go home and I have an airline ticket, not just out of Scotland but out of Britain.

So the first session is on then what is the gospel and 2 Corinthians 3. Now we start with the question, what is the gospel?

Or really, I want to start with what is a gospel? What's the word gospel about? The word comes from the word angel, which means a messenger, an announcer, an announcer with a message.

[7 : 46] It doesn't mean somebody with wings in a dressing gown. You can entertain them unawares. I think if I saw a bloke come in with wings in a dressing gown, I would be aware.

It's not normal rigour down under to wear dresses. I understand there is something up here. But there's wings, no, that would be the giveaway.

It's not that, it's a messenger. That's what an angel is and the gospel is a message. A message that the messengers give. It's important message though. It's great news.

The great news of a conquest or a victory or an enthronement. It can be personal. It can be political. But it's the kind of news that brings joy.

It's meant to be good news for the recipient. Sometimes it can be bad news if you're on the losing side. It's connected to the word of promise though because it's news about what's happening for the future.

[8 : 45] It's the kind of news that's going to change the world in which you live. It's more than information. It's telling the news that changes the situation of life that you're in and brings a new order to life for you.

See, let me read to you a personal gospel. It comes in 1 Thessalonians chapter 3 verse 6. Now that Timothy has come to us from you and has brought to us the gospel of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us as we long to see you.

And for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction, we've been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live if you stand fast in the Lord. Now we wouldn't normally call that a gospel.

In fact, I just changed the translation and put the word gospel in because the translation has good news. But the same word that is used for the gospel is used for the good news.

And the good news is very personal good news of this time. You know, Timothy has come and we heard the good news that the Thessalonians are still Christian. And so that's the gospel.

[9 : 54] Most references in the gospel in the New Testament are the more public and bigger political pronouncements of kings and kingdoms and especially, of course, in the New Testament of the kingdom of God.

Let me ask you. What does September 23rd mean to you? What is the significance of September the 23rd?

Anybody got anything significant about September the 23rd? Your birthday? No? Whose birthday? Your birthday. Yeah? Had to be someone in this crowd who had a September the 23rd birthday.

Anything else anybody knows happened September 23rd? Just another day. A bit of a dud. Sorry, mate. However, nothing else is happening so you can have a big party.

You know, you won't have any conflict. Well, it was the birthday of the first emperor of Rome, Augustus Caesar, who lived from 63 BC through to 14 AD, who ruled over the Roman Empire from 27 BC to 14 AD.

[11 : 08] That's a fairly long rule, isn't it? Not 41 years. And he brought unity to the whole empire. An empire which stretched all the way up to, well, it didn't come here, did it?

But a long way from Rome. On his birthday, at the height of his reign in 9 BC, the Greeks of Asia, which really we'd call Turkey today, they proclaimed a gospel.

And they called it, it is a day which we must justly count as equivalent to the beginning of everything, if not in itself and its own nature, at any rate, in the benefits it brings.

By sending in him, as it were, a savior for us and those who come after us to make wars to cease and to create order everywhere.

And whereas the birthday of the God, that's Augustus, was the beginning of the world of the gospel that has come to men through him.

[12 : 11] The proconsul and the province have devised a way of honoring Augustus, hitherto unknown to the Greeks, which is that the reckoning of time for the course of human life should begin with his birth.

He is the savior of the world. He is the one who brings the world peace. And so from now on time, 23rd of September is the beginning of life, is the beginning of the world.

All dates will come from the 23rd of September, 63 BC, because there's somebody else who's come along since then, who has overwhelmed Augustus.

And we date everything from his birth now, because we think he is the savior of the world, not Augustus, who brought the world peace. But that's a gospel that was proclaimed.

That was proclaimed before the Lord Jesus was born. It's a gospel heralding a new era that brings it about, a proclamation in itself.

[13 : 14] Since the salvation it proclaims is already present, it's proclaiming the new age. And we still have gospels today like that, especially around royal births.

You see, there was a 41 cannon salute in Green Park down in London, and two evangelists came out and proclaimed the message at Buckingham Palace. The message they proclaimed was written, Her Royal Highness, the Duchess of Cambridge, was safely delivered of a son at 4.24pm today.

Her Royal Highness and her child are both doing well. Signed by four witnesses to the truth. And then, down in the Thames, there was a 61 cannon salute.

That's a gospel. Something has happened. A baby has been born. But this baby is not just any baby. This is the baby who is the heir to the throne.

And so the dynasty will continue. And it will continue beyond Charles, beyond William. Now we have where it's going to continue. And so this is a proclamation that makes everybody happy.

[14 : 27] Especially people who want to see guns going off. Now if that's what is a gospel, what is the gospel? The word as a noun is all over the New Testament.

And there's a verb as well, except in the gospel of John. And in different contexts, different wording is used as the content of the gospel. But there is a proclamation of a new age.

A new king. Quite clearly throughout the New Testament. And the gospel is the gospel of God. It's God's gospel. It's also the gospel of Christ. Not that there's two gospels.

There's only one. But it's God's gospel and Christ's gospel in that they own it. It's their message. But it's also a message about them. And so it's God's gospel, it's Christ's gospel, because it's the gospel about God, about Christ.

It's not a human gospel, but God's gospel. There's only one gospel, of course. And it's a spoken thing generally, though we have four written versions of it in our New Testaments.

[15 : 32] And being God's gospel, it is powerful. It brings in a new age. It's not just selling you that there is a new age.

It brings in the new age. For the gospel is powerful. You remember Romans 1, verse 16. It's the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Well, in preparing this talk, I sat down just to the top of my head and thought, well, where does the Bible teach me that it's powerful?

And I just started to make a list. There was so much there after a few minutes that I thought, I'm not going to give a talk like this. But I'll just rattle it through for you. Because it'll remind you, you see, it creates faith in Romans 1 and Philipians 1.

It brings salvation and life in Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 15. And also judgment in Romans 2. It reveals God's righteousness in Romans 1. It brings fulfillment of the hope of God in Colossians 1.

It intervenes in the lives of men and creates churches. It's not fettered by human chains. It produces rebirth and new life. It brings peace. It draws together the near and the far off, the Gentiles and the Jews in Ephesians 2 and 3 there.

[16 : 45] It gives salvation in 1. It brought life and immortality to light in 2 Timothy 1. And I thought, this is going to be too long a talk. We won't go down this line any further. If you don't get the point from that list, going on longer about it, you're never going to get it.

The gospel is dynamic. The gospel is powerful. The gospel affects change. The powerful, effective change agent in the New Testament is the gospel.

That's what changes people. And you'll see that in 2 Corinthians 3. So let me remind you of the context of 2 Corinthians if you'd be opening up your Bibles there.

The church Bible that I have a copy of here is on page 965. Let me remind you of the context.

It's a context of a troubled relationship that has been resolved with thanksgiving to God. So if you look back at chapter 2 verse 12, When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was open for me in the Lord, my spirit was not at rest because I didn't find my brother Titus there.

[17 : 56] So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia. But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To one a fragrance from death to death to the other a fragrance from life to life.

Who is sufficient for these things? For we're not like so many peddlers of God's word. But as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God in the sight of God, we speak in Christ.

You see, he was troubled, deeply troubled. He had the opportunity of preaching in Troas, but he was too troubled. Titus hadn't come. But notice the sudden mood change in verse 14.

But thanks be to God. So verse 13, I'm really troubled. Verse 14, thanks be to God. What happened between verse 13 and verse 14? Well, the answer is Titus came.

[18 : 57] Just turn over to chapter 7 with me. Chapter 7. Remember, in chapter, verse 13, he's in Macedonia. Going into Macedonia, verse 5 of chapter 7.

For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn, fighting without and fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus.

And not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he comforted us by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoice still the more.

So here he is, troubled about the Corinthians, going around troubled about the Corinthians, unable to do his work, troubled about the Corinthians, and waiting for Titus to come, and waiting for Titus to come.

And then Titus turns up with the news the Corinthians do love him. The Corinthians are standing firm in the gospel. They are still wanting the truth of the gospel. So his spirit is lifted, he's rejoicing, and thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us on, he says, in triumphal procession.

[20 : 06] There he explains what's happening in his life. And he explains it in terms of the conquering general, who leads his troops through the streets.

As we would kind of, you know, with a ticker tape parade with our Olympians, when they win medals. We haven't had one of those for a long time.

And so we rejoice at their victories, and we all come out to cheer and shout them. So with the conquering general, he would come. But as he came, he would lead all the captives that he'd taken, all the booty, all the plunder that had taken place.

He would all be in the train behind him. And so people would gather to see all this. And he would give out some of the trophies to the people who are his favoured ones, that they wanted to.

And in so doing, he would be displaying his might, and his power, and his pomp, and his splendour, humiliating the defeated. And making a strong political point for anybody who wanted to revolt against Rome, that one day you might be in the long line of slaves down there, who were being carted along in chains behind everybody else.

[21 : 19] And so with music and with banners, the triumphal procession would proceed with the captives, the new slaves of the victor, showing the incense as they went.

Now it's a striking analogy that Paul is using to explain his life. God is leading him on as a slave of Christ in the triumphal procession, the Christian procession.

God is leading his people in victory. The battle has been won by God with Christ in his death and resurrection. And now we are being taken by Christ throughout the world.

We're like slaves wafting the incense of the victory of Christ as the news of the conquest spreads throughout the world through evangelism. We don't look all that impressive.

We're part of the victor's trophies. But we're sending out the message of the great king, as the slaves always do. The empire is great.

[22 : 22] We truly are defeated. It's good news, bad news. Depends whether you're a Roman or whether you're an enemy of Rome. It's good news, bad news, isn't it? But it's great news.

The world is not the same anymore. And so we are the aroma. Remember the sweet-smelling life to those who are saved. The stench of death to those who are lost.

And it's always like that with the conquest, isn't it? There are those who rejoice. It's so exciting we've won. Remember the streets at the end of the Second World War and the photos of people just coming out into the streets just to rejoice.

There's a very famous photo of a man in Sydney just dancing down the streets behind a train with sheer joy that it's all over after those terrible years of that war.

But of course there's no joy like that in Germany at that time or in Japan at that time. What does the new world order hold for them?

[23 : 33] There's fear. There's anxiety. There's horror. There's disappointment. There's shame. And so that's our job, you see, to be the smelly people. That's the stink of Christians, you see.

The stench to those who are dying. The sweet perfume of those who are being saved. And who's sufficient for these things, he asks there at the end of the chapter in verses 15 and 16.

Who is sufficient for these things? Who is competent for the task of going about with the gospel, bringing death and life to people? And the answer you expect is Christian humility.

Well, I'm not really competent. I couldn't do such a thing. It's the answer you expect he would give. It's the answer that you would most happily give. But Paul says, I am competent for the task.

Not that my sufficiency, my competency is in myself. Our sufficiency is in our God. For God is at work in us. So look down at chapter 3, verse 6.

[24 : 34] 3, verse 6. Who has made us, well, let me pick up verse 4. Such is the confidence that we have through Christ towards God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything is coming from us.

But our sufficiency is from God. Who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant. Not of the letter, but of the spirit. For the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.

The new testament, the new covenant, is then being compared to the old covenant in chapter 3. Remember, the word testament is just the Latin form of covenant.

There's a profound comparison which is really a contrast that he has. Because just as we've read in verse 6, the spirit of the new covenant gives life.

The letter of the old brings death. And so look at the contrast that you have as we read through this passage. Verse 1. Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?

[25 : 37] Or do we need some due letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter of recommendation written on our hearts to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us.

Written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God. Not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts. Such is the confidence that we have through Christ towards God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything is coming from us.

But our sufficiency is from God. Who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant. Not of the letter, but of the spirit. For the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. Now, if the ministry of death carved in letters on stone came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end.

Will not the ministry of the spirit have even more glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of the condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.

Indeed, in this case, what was once had glory has come to have no glory at all because the glory that surpasses it. For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have come to glory.

[26 : 51] There's a whole series of contrasts between the two covenants and the ministries of the two covenants. I mean, look, just put your eye on it as I tell you. Verse 3. It's not written with ink, but with the spirit.

It's not on tablets of stone, but it's written on the tablets of human hearts. Or down in verses 7 and 8, the contrast there. Letters on stone came with glory, but the ministry of the spirit came with more glory.

Because in verse 9, Moses' ministry was a ministry of condemnation. But Jesus' ministry was a ministry of righteousness. Or in verses 10 and 11, Moses' ministry is transitory, fading.

Overwhelmed it is by the glory of Jesus, while Jesus' ministry is permanent. They're both glorious, but the new covenant is so much more glorious.

In fact, so much more glorious that the glory of the old can't even compete with it and has come to an end. The glory of Jesus doesn't come to an end. The glory of Moses.

[27 : 59] Well, it's more a contrast than a comparison. For Jesus so far outshines Moses. I like the illustration of the moon and the sun.

See, when there's no moon, the night is very, very dark. Especially if you're out in the country where there's no electricity, no lights. You really can't see where you're going. But when there's a full moon, the moon shines so bright that you can see where you're going.

You can even read your map. Yet, its light is really only the reflective light of the sun. It has no light in and of itself. And when the sun comes out in all its brightness, the moon and its light recedes.

So that you can still see it. But it apparently casts no light on you. You can go out some daytime and if you look around, you will see, oh, there's the moon.

You can see it. But it's got no light that makes any difference to the light the sun's in. So it is with Moses and the law. When we lived in the darkness of night, before the Lord Jesus Christ had come.

[29 : 10] Before the saviour of the world had arrived. Moses was the brightest light humanity had. Showing us God. Showing us to live by God's ways and showing us God's plans.

But once the sun comes, the sunshine of the son of God so overwhelmed the moon and its light that you could hardly see it. However, if you fail to see Moses, if you fail to see how glorious Moses was, you may never realise how much more glorious Jesus was.

Remember the Mount of Transfiguration? There was Jesus transfigured in glory. And there on his one side was Elijah and there on the other side was Moses, the two greatest prophets of the Old Testament.

And then the voice comes from heaven. This is my beloved son. Listen to him. In the face of the great Moses, in the face of the great Elijah, listen to him.

But there's even more. Now we have the Jesus letters. For by his spirit, Jesus is an author. He has written.

[30 : 29] He has written his letters in the world. Are you one of them? I hope so. For they're not the normal letters on papers and posted in envelopes, nor the electronic letters of our computers.

But the spiritual letters of the changed heart, of hearts moved to obey God's law. Moses' message was for all the people, but it was hidden from them.

He put a veil over his face because of their fear. And they put a veil over their hearts because they were too terrified. They didn't want to hear. But Jesus writes his letters on our hearts.

Opening our hearts. Opening our minds. To want to hear what God has to say. And to want to respond in joyful obedience. The gospel is not an external imposition of rules and regulations.

But an internal transformation. Of the person that makes a real difference to the way we live. The difference the spirit of Jesus makes is not putting new clothes on the old person.

[31 : 44] But putting a new person in the clothes. Thus we lived with unveiled freedom. For while the Jews still read Moses, and they do in every synagogue of the world to this day.

They read him with a veil over their minds and over their hearts. Only Moses, when he turned away from the people into the Lord, unveiled his face.

To hear the Lord's voice. So in verse 16 we read, But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. When anybody now turns to the Lord, and finds in his death forgiveness of sins.

And finds in his resurrection new life given by his spirit. The veil is removed. The law of God is no longer condemns us.

The law of God is no longer something that is forbidden and fearful. The veil is removed. And the law of God no longer brings death. But we find what the psalmist knew.

[32 : 55] That the law revives the soul and makes wise the simple and rejoices the heart and enlightens the eyes. And it's more to be desired than gold. Sweeter than honey becomes the law of God.

Because the veil is removed. Because we now have the freedom of the children of God. And when we turn to the Lord, We turn to the Lord Jesus who by his spirit rules the world today.

For the Lord is the spirit. And it is the spirit of the Lord who gives us this freedom. Freedom from death. Freedom from condemnation. Freedom to live.

Freedom of righteousness. Freedom from fear. From being frightened of God and his word. The people of Israel, you see, were afraid of God. They didn't want to hear his words.

But we now have the freedom to listen without fear of him. For now we know God as our father. And are bold and confident to come into his presence and to listen with joy to what he has to say.

[34 : 00] That is how we are to approach God's word, my friends, isn't it? Not wondering how we can avoid what it has to say to us.

But eager to find out what it has to say to us. That we may change our lives to be in accordance with what he says. We have the freedom to be changed and changing.

For as we look at the Lord Jesus Christ, as we see him in all his glory. The word of God who is full of grace and truth. The lamb of God who has taken away the sins of the world.

The son of man sitting at the right hand of God in all power and authority. The faithful witness. The firstborn from the dead. The ruler of the kings of the earth. Who loved us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.

And made us a kingdom of priests to his father, our God. As we see Jesus in all his glory. We're changed and are being changed.

[35 : 03] Transformed is the word that's used. Pick it up verse 12. Since we have such a hope, we are very bold. Not like Moses who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

But their minds were hardened for to this day when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted. Because only through Christ is it taken away.

Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the spirit and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

For this comes from the Lord who is the spirit. We are now being changed. Transformed. The Greek word is the word metamorphosed.

[36 : 07] Changed like the grub that turns into the butterfly. Our transformation is one internally. We're changed from within, outwards to our behaviour.

We're changed to become like Christ in all his glory. It's a gradual change that works through our lives once we've been born again. And it doesn't finish in this lifetime.

Only when Jesus returns will we be fully transformed into the likeness of his glorious body. But now we are already being changed.

We are already changing from one degree of glory to another. As we slowly and steadily become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's the spirit who is at work within us to bring about this change.

To change us. To give to us his fruit. That what might be seen in us is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

[37 : 11] This is what the spirit is at work in you. This is where God is leading you. This is the outcome of your life in Christ Jesus.

This is what you should appear to be like. These are the values and virtues that Christians aspire to. But more than that, the Holy Spirit enables and changes us to be like.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. The fundamental work of the Holy Spirit is not gifts.

The fundamental work of the Holy Spirit is fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is infinitely more important than the gifts of the Spirit. In fact, the gifts of the Spirit aren't even the gifts of the Spirit.

For the very same gifts of the Spirit are called the gifts of Christ in Ephesians 4. And the gifts of God in Romans 12. They're the gifts of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

[38 : 14] It's not the distinctive work of the Holy Spirit to be giving gifts. It is the distinctive work of the Holy Spirit to transform your life. Producing fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness.

That's what the Holy Spirit is at work in every believer to produce. And so we become more and more like Jesus. How are you going, friends?

Have you put the transformation on hold for a little while? Do you think you've already arrived? Just ask your wife. She'll tell you. Teenage children, even more clearly.

I'll let you in on the secret. You need to get back into gear, don't you? Because that transformation needs to keep going. The fruit need to be keeping on developing, don't they?

There's a great rush when we first get converted. As the tree changes, suddenly I become a fruit-bearing tree that I wasn't before. But then as the years roll on, the incremental change becomes so small that it doesn't really happen.

[39 : 27] Well, now, my friends, the Spirit of God is at work to keep changing us. You've got a long way to go yet. I don't know you, but I can tell you, you've got a long way to go yet. Just keep in step with the Spirit.

For this is the work he is doing within us. And therefore, says Paul, in terms of his ministry, we don't lose heart. In the face of opposition that he has in Corinth and around the world, in the face of seemingly poor results of his evangelism, we don't lose heart in the gospel.

Because the ministry of the gospel is the ministry of transforming lives. It's the ministry of the power of God at work in the world.

It's the ministry that transforms me and can transform you. We don't, therefore, turn aside from preaching it faithfully because we've lost confidence in it.

Chapter 4, verse 1, therefore, having this ministry, this mighty powerful ministry that is more powerful than Moses' ministry. I mean, Moses is impressive, isn't he?

[40 : 40] You can make a movie about Moses. You can make a whole TV series about Moses. Moses, it's a little difficult to imagine that you have a ministry more powerful than Moses.

Moses couldn't change the hearts of the people. The ministry we're engaged in is changing the hearts of the people. Our governments are called ministers these days.

Goodness only knows why. However, every now and then I have to fill in forms, you know, like travelling overseas. What is your job? Minister. Minister. And you can see people saying, I wonder which party he belongs to.

You know? Sometimes they even ask you, what's your portfolio? I'm still trying to work out a good gospel answer to that. You might like me to answer me for later. But here is, you see, the word minister has been, but then again, you think about these ministers.

See, they're weak and feeble and frail. I know they're corrupt and stupid as well. That goes, they're politicians. But they're weak and feeble and frail, even the best of them.

[41 : 44] Because they cannot do what you and I can do. Change human hearts. You think of the, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

You think of the tax laws. Oh, he would love to change human hearts, wouldn't he? If he could change the human hearts of the British citizens so that everybody wanted to pay tax.

The tax law could come down to about one page, couldn't it? You know, give what is needed in our community and you have the opportunity to provide.

That's about the tax law, wouldn't it? All those tax accountants, out of business. Wouldn't need them anymore, would we? Because the people want to give for the common good.

How many people filling out their tax forms want to give for the common good? That's why we're always looking for the loophole.

[42 : 46] That's why we're trying to reorganise our finances to minimise our tax. And some naughty people to avoid their tax. That's naughty. Minimise is supposed to be alright. Talk about Phariseeism. There's no desire to give tax to the common good.

We don't mind benefiting from the common good. That's alright. But we're not going to contribute to the common good. We have to be forced. It has to be squeezed out of us by all kinds of threats of condemnation and judgement and all kinds of bigger and bigger and more complicated tax laws so that in the end we all have to pay not only for the common good but also for the tax accountant to help us fill out the forms.

They're so complicated. But oh, if we had a minister with power real power the power that changes human hearts well mercifully we don't because they're all corrupt and awful it would be awful if one of them had that power, wouldn't it?

But God has given us that power in the ministry of the gospel. And so Paul says I don't therefore use tricks. I don't need to.

Given the ministry I have I don't need to use disgraceful, underhanded ways. You see in verse 2 there I've renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways.

[44 : 08] We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word. And we commend ourselves, he says, to everybody's conscience. How? By the open statement of the truth.

There would be a novelty for a politician, wouldn't it? But see, that's all we need to do because the power lies in the very word of God that we are preaching in the very gospel.

But you say but Philip, don't you understand Scotland is pagan now. Fewer and fewer people are listening to the gospel. The gospel has lost its power in Scotland. It's lost its effect in Scotland.

Well, Paul understood. For he says, you see pick it up for one for therefore having this ministry by the mercy of God we do not lose heart but we've renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways.

We've refused to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word. But by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everybody's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled it's veiled only to those who are perishing.

[45 : 10] In their case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. Who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

For God who said let light shine out of darkness has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. See, even if our gospel seems to be veiled that just as Moses spoke and the people of Israel weren't changed we speak and the people of Scotland aren't changed he says it's the unbelievers who are veiled it's Satan they have to thank for veiling their minds and hearts so that they will not listen to the gospel.

There's nothing wrong with the gospel message it's still powerful it will still change and transform people as they receive this message for this gospel breaks through it's like it's like when God said let there be light and there was light that same power is in your mouth and my mouth when we preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ the power of creation is in our mouths when we testify to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ the transforming power that people may see the glory of God in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ Christ so what is the gospel that we preach well the summary of it is there for you in verses 4 to 6 it's one of the summaries there's loads of summaries in the Bible for you see there in 4 to 6 that it's the glory of Christ the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God for what we proclaim is not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord we do proclaim ourselves as your servants for Jesus sake for that is the gospel and the talk

I'm going to give straight after lunch instead of straight after morning tea morning coffee that one it's going to go through the content of the gospel let's get ourselves really clear on the gospel we want to be partners in the gospel let's make sure we've got the same gospel because otherwise it's a phony partnership isn't it that's not going to work the concept of ecumenicalism the concept of unity for unity the concept of well let's get everybody involved doesn't work everybody who believes the same gospel have to be in partnership when you understand the gospel you realise it is bigger than your church it is bigger than your ministry it is bigger than your village it is this is the big stuff that we should be united on many many people mainly in the name of Christ aren't united on it and that's really sad we need to preach the gospel to them as well but those of us who share in the common gospel should share in the partnership of the gospel if we're going to preach it to our nation and bring them to hear the sound of Christ if we're going to be what we've been called to be the sweet smelling perfume of salvation to the lost and the stench of death sorry to the saved and the stench of death to the lost so what is this gospel well just looking at those verses it's the light of the glory of Christ who is the image of God so we're going to uphold how glorious

Christ is we're going to show him who is the image of the invisible God to our nation that the gospel is about how great our Lord Jesus Christ really is he's got to be preached in his glory which is the image of God which of course is the image that we were created to be and so seriously failed to be and the image that we are now being recreated to be as we become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ because the gospel is not about ourselves that's how you can be in partnership if it's about ourselves well we'd be fighting and quarreling with each other but when you realise it's not about ourselves we stop fighting and quarreling therefore if we're fighting and quarreling with each other can I suggest it's because we're not preaching Christ we're preaching ourselves and so it's not about ourselves it's about Jesus Christ as Lord that's what it's about there is a four word summary of the gospel

[50 : 21] Jesus Christ as Lord well what part do we play well we are the slaves the word is slaves we are the slaves we're the slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ yes that's obvious enough but because we're the slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ we do what he wants us to do which is to be the slaves of other people that's what he wants us to do and so we are your slaves for Jesus sake so Paul was the slave of the Corinthians for the sake of his service of Jesus because the aim you see is to bring the knowledge of God and where do you see God how do you know God how you'll see it in the face of Jesus so we preach Jesus in all his glory and people come to know God as their father who forgives them and regenerates them transforms them by his spirit the spirit of his risen son and changes them and their families and the society around about them the power agency is the gospel and this is the western

Scotland gospel partnership let's pray father in heaven we thank and praise you for every good gift that you give to us but above all for the Lord Jesus Christ we thank you for his life we thank you for his death we thank you for his resurrection and we thank you for his spirit that he so freely and generously has given we thank you for rebirth for forgiveness for pardon we thank you for the transforming power of your spirit in our lives producing this fruit of love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and gentleness self-control thank you heavenly father for accepting us sinners as we are and changing us from being the sinners we were thank you heavenly father that you not only have transformed us by your gospel but have entrusted your gospel into our hands into our mouths to preach to others thank you for this enormous inestimable gift of the gospel of the lord jesus christ and assist us please father in our fellowship one with another that together we might uphold christ and him crucified that we might proclaim the resurrected lord that we might show scotland jesus in all his glory that in the face of jesus our fellow citizens our family members the world may come to know you as their father and bow the knee before their your son and all acknowledge that in jesus christ is lord to the glory of our father our god to your glory and we ask it in jesus name amen