

Who Walks, Wins!

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 October 2005

Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 0 0] Well, turn with me, if you would, to Galatians chapter 5. And we're looking this evening at verses 16 to 18, and the title is simple, Who Walks Wins.

Last week we were introduced to the great enemy of the Christian life and the Christian church, the flesh. Not our bodies, not some kind of lower nature as opposed to our higher nature or civilized being, no, our whole natural state.

What the NIV translates as our sinful nature. Not what God made us to be, but what sin and rebellion against God has caused us to be. Not God-centered, but self-centered.

Not glorifying God, but glorifying ourselves. Not submissive and ruled by God, but self-assertive. Ruled by our own minds and our own hearts.

And the rule of the flesh is the rule of our ego. And as we all know, where ego rules, then chaos reigns. It's the results of self-rule, of self-assertion, of self-exaltation.

[1 : 1 4] It's all around us in the world, isn't it? It's the root of all the problems that we see in our newspapers and our televisions. God created the world as a place where all things were in harmony.

All relationships are right and good and perfect. But, of course, because everything was created by God and was perfect and was as it should be, does not mean that it's what we see.

Mankind rejected God's rule, God's authority. Ruptured all of that perfect, harmonious relationship in the universe. We destroyed our own right relationship with God.

And as a result, we've destroyed and ruptured almost all other human relationships. And the relationships also between human beings and the rest of our world.

The animal kingdom. The natural world around us. And that has spread and pervaded every aspect of the world that we know.

[2 : 1 6] And that's the work of the flesh. The work of self-assertion. My ego rules. And that we see spelled out in verses 19 to 21 that we'll look at, God willing, next week.

What that results in. It results in messed up sexual relationships, doesn't it? Sensuality and impurity and so on. Results in messed up personal relationships. Strife and jealousy and anger and dissension and envy and all these things.

Results in messed up spiritual relationships. Idolatry, witchcraft and the like. That's our world, isn't it? International relationships awash with ego assertion.

That's why we have wars. That's why we have trade wars. That's why we have economic strife and diplomatic crises. It's egos on the international stage. That's why we have religious strife, fanaticism, suicide bombers, all of these things.

That's why we have a world full of personal relation breakdown. Marriage rupture, family rupture. I wonder if you saw in the paper just the other day that it was speaking about marriage in our society and saying that it's soon going to be a thing of the past.

[3 : 2 6] Marriage breakdown won't be a problem in a decade's time. There won't be any. It'll be even worse. The instability and fracture of personal relationships. We see it in work relationships, don't we?

I was just speaking to somebody in the congregation this week who was telling me about a new boss wreaking havoc throughout their whole division. People resigning. People retiring.

People going off sick. And all the rest of it. All because of massive ego assertion. Ripping through the whole fabric of a place of work. And that's the world. Isn't it? But very pointedly, what Paul is saying in this letter is that too often that's also the church.

He's very blunt, isn't he? That was clearly a problem in the Galatian church. The sinful nature, the flesh, the ego was at work. Verse 15. People were biting and devouring one another, he said.

Verse 26. They were wracked with conceit. People provoking one another. Yes, he's talking about real life in a real church. And sadly, that's all too often too true, isn't it?

[4 : 35] I was reading this week, as I do, I have to say, not with great joy every month when it comes in, the minister's mailing that comes to us. But it was striking this week that the first four or five letters were all from ministers who had given up and left the ministry.

Destroyed physically and mentally by the sheer warfare within their congregations. It's really quite depressing. But notice, Paul, that should not be.

That must not be. That's what your salvation is all about. That world, the present evil age, the world so wrecked by human sin, that's what you've been set free from.

That's what your justification means. And just as justification has implications for the church, as we've seen in this letter, it implies, it demands that we're united in Christ by his spirit.

That we're all one in Christ Jesus by faith alone, not by faith and works of the law or human endeavor or anything else. So justification also has implications for every Christian believer's life.

[5 : 47] It implies, it demands that we are united to Christ by his spirit. That is, we've received a new life when we believed in Christ.

Chapter 2, verse 20. I have been crucified with Christ. The old me, what I once was. My ego who asserts himself before God. I have been crucified with Christ.

It's no longer I, ego, me, who lives. It's Christ who lives in me. How does Christ live in me? Well, we saw in chapter 4, verse 6.

Because God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts. And that's the result of Jesus' death on the cross at Calvary. Something decisive has happened to us. Something has changed once for all.

Not just the forgiveness of our sins in the past. It is that. But far more. We've left that whole world behind. We've been rescued from this present evil age, Paul says, for the new creation.

[6 : 48] So, in chapter 5, verse 24, as we read, Paul says, those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its desires. Look over to chapter 6, verse 14, opposite.

Paul says, the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. It's a total decisive change. That's the freedom that we're called to. That's the freedom that we're called to defend. And it's a freedom from all the external obligations of the old age.

So, we're to stand firm. We're not to go back to the bondage, to the slavery, to external authorities, to religious systems. To the bondage of slavery that that alone can bring.

But on the other hand, that doesn't mean that we're free for a free-for-all. We saw that so clearly last week. Certainly not freedom to indulge the flesh, to indulge our selfish egos with all our desires.

No. We're freed precisely from all of that, says Paul. We're freed to fulfill our destiny. We saw that last week. We're freed, verse 13, so that we can serve one another in love.

[7 : 59] That's our destiny, verse 14 says. That's fulfilling all the promise of God's law from the very beginning, that God would have a holy and a precious and a righteous and a loving people.

A people that reflect God's true nature to the world. That's your destiny. And that's what you're freed for. That's what freedom in Christ means, says Paul. Now, live in line with that.

Serve one another in love. The only alternative, he said, remember, to living for your destiny is to destroy yourselves, verse 15.

Consuming one another, just like this world does. So it's live out your destiny, he says, or live for your destruction. The choice is very stark.

The stakes are very high. You've got to see it. The only thing that counts, now, says Paul, is faith expressing itself through love. Faith working through love. And that means serving one another in love.

[9 : 00] It means right relationships with God's people. And that, of course, is only possible if we're going on in a right relationship with God.

If we're walking in his spirit. And that's what's in verse 16. And that's what we're going to consider tonight. You see, Paul says in verses 13 to 15 that true freedom means that we're willing slaves.

We're under obligation to one another. We're slaves to love. We're freed to love. But that seems so impossible to us, doesn't it? It just doesn't seem realistic.

That we could really and truly love others as we love ourselves. So radically to suppress our own ego, our own desires, our own lives. And live wholly for one another.

It seems impossible, doesn't it? To truly love one another with the self-giving love of Christ. That love that gave itself for us on Calvary.

[10:02] Can you do that? Well, we'll never grasp this. We'll never make sense of the struggles that we face. Unless we also grasp the message of verses 16 to 18.

Because in these verses, Paul tells us that true freedom does not mean sudden perfection. As a zap. And suddenly we're all perfect.

No. True freedom means, says Paul, that we are willing soldiers under obligation to the Holy Spirit. We're freed to fight. And that's the message of these verses.

It's a message of great realism. We're not freed from the battle. We're freed for the battle. But it's also a message of great encouragement and hope.

Because we fight to win, Paul says. He who walks this way wins. So let's look then carefully at these verses 16 to 18. Let's try to get to grips with this vital truth.

[11:01] Remember Paul sets in 14 and 15 two alternatives. Live your lives of freedom to serve one another. And you fulfill your destiny. As God's holy people now. And he promises you will fulfill your destiny.

Ultimately, ultimately, chapter 6 verse 9, you will reap eternal life. Live like that or live so as to destroy yourselves now. And as chapter 6 verse 8 makes clear, by sowing to the flesh you reap corruption.

It's an either or. It's two paths. They don't cross. And so inevitably, if we're honest, we're plunged into despair, aren't we? Which does it seem to be more often in real life?

What does it seem to be in your experience? Verse 15, the love? Or verse 14? Or verse 15, the strife? What does it seem to be? And in the list in verses 19 to 23, the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

What does it seem to be more in your personal life and in our church life? Flesh or the Spirit? See, it's easy to get depressed, isn't it? We find it hard. And it seems as if your experience and my experience is so different from what it should be, that surely there must be something more that we need in our Christian life.

[12:23] Something more than we presently have if we're ever going to have any victory like this over the desires of the flesh. Doesn't it seem like that to you? It just doesn't seem to fit these great decisive statements that Paul makes.

I have been crucified with Christ. It's done. The life I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God. Decisive. Just doesn't seem to fit. So maybe there's something wrong with my experience.

Maybe there's some power or some blessing or some gift that I still need to give me the victory. That's what we think, isn't it?

And of course there are many teachers who say, Yes, you're absolutely right. And we've got it. Here's an email I got just yesterday from the River Dream Center.

Why do some people seem to be more blessed than others? Why do I always seem to struggle more than others? This course will help to restore your identity and destiny in God.

[13:29] So it says, get positioned for blessing. And the answer will be, quote, Living life like you always dreamed it would be. Now, I get lots of emails like that.

I get lots of mail shots like that. So do you. You see it all the time. People offering some special thing. Some special baptism in the Spirit. Some special secret of holiness.

The secret of power prayer. You know, the prayer of Jabez and all that sort of thing. Or the secret of power living. Or the secret of self-denial. Or whatever it is. Sometimes it's the secret of this correct and perfect doctrine.

And then you'll be all right. As though the most important thing in the world was to get absolutely correct on the secret of the last days of the second coming. And the number of the beast.

Whatever it might be. Or in Galatian terms. Circumcision. And the power of submitting to Moses. See, that's what's going on.

[14:31] People offering all sorts of things to help you in your struggles. To stop your persecution. To make things better. And Paul says, no.

You don't need anything more than what you have in Christ. By his Spirit. How could anything in this world. How could anything that this world has to offer.

Possibly begin to come close to the power of the new creation. That you have in you even now. When you believed. Don't be idiotic. How could anything. Possibly come close to that.

Now what you do need to do, says Paul. Is you need to learn what's already true of you. What it means to have faith in Christ. And you need to live in line with that reality.

That's all. God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your heart. The life you live is by the faith of the Son of God in you. So I say, walk in that truth.

[15:32] Walk by the Spirit. And you will not lose the battle with the flesh. It's so straightforward. Of course, that's not at all the same as saying it's easy.

It's not easy. It's not easy precisely because there is a war on. Because we are not freed from the fight. But we're freed for the fight. We'll come back to verses 16 and 18.

But let's focus first on verse 17. Because that's what explains Paul's command in verse 16. Do you see verse 17? The reason that he has to command us to walk, not just to lie back and relax in our victory, but walk, is verse 17.

Because there's a great conflict. Two opposing forces within every Christian believer and therefore within every Christian community, every church.

Do you see verse 17? Why is it so hard? For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit. And the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. For these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

[16:43] You see, unless we start to realize this, we're heading for disaster in the Christian life. We are in a war. We better get used to it.

But why, you say? Well, what about all this freedom from bondage? What about all the new creation and all that? I thought with Jesus coming and His Spirit coming, we're no longer slaves.

We're sons. Yes, we are. We are sons, says Paul. But, remember that other thing that we are because we're sons.

Remember chapter 4, verse 6? If we're sons, then we're also heirs. And what do heirs do? Well, heirs, of course, possess the inheritance, in fact, but not yet in their full experience.

Isn't that right? Prince Charles, heir to the throne. Poor old Prince Charles. Will he ever be king? Living in frustration. It's his, but it's not his. And that's us, says Paul.

[17:46] We possess the inheritance, the hope of righteousness. The certainty of true and lasting holiness. We possess that. But we do so, as chapter 5, verse 5 says, through the Spirit, by faith.

And so we're still eagerly awaiting the consummation. There's still and not yet. And so, therefore, there is an inevitable tension now in your life and in mine.

Because our old age bodies are still with us. And the dregs, the remains of our old nature are still hanging around our neck. The troublesome ego of what we once were, what we've not yet finally and forever cast away, is still raising its head.

And that will be the case and cannot but be the case until we finally lose these earthly bodies and our bodies are renewed wholly in the new creation.

And the whole creation itself is renewed and freed from its tension and its groaning. Yes, says Paul, in Christ's decisive victory, the work is done decisively.

[19:02] The war is won. Yes, the battle is won and the enemy is defeated and victory is secured. But there remains in this present time a putting down of all resistance, of counterinsurgency, of guerrilla warfare, of all the scattered and shattered but nevertheless still dangerous factions that war against the rule of the Son of God.

That's what the New Testament tells us is true in a cosmic sense, in our world. That Jesus Christ has begun his kingdom, that even now he is putting all his enemies under his footstool.

His rule has begun, he is subduing the world, but that has not yet come to its end. It has not yet come to its climax, its consummation.

He is not slow to do it. Peter says he is merciful, desiring that none should perish but that all should come to repentance.

But that is what is happening in the world. And that also is what is happening in you, in your heart, in your own Christian life. You are in that war. That war is being played out within you and your personality.

[20:22] Not a battle of something outside with something inside, but a conflict within the hearts and the minds of every single Christian believer.

Because the new nature that we have received in Christ and the old nature, the person I once was, that's been dealt a death blow and is moribund, but which until the very last day stays in me, they are at war.

It's the war of the world taking place within you and your personal life and our church life. Isn't that what you experience in real life? Of course it is.

You want to do something right, something loving and helpful, something that maybe causes a sacrifice to yourself in terms of time or money or something else. You have to give up.

You want to do it, but then, oh, you suddenly find all sorts of excuses rising up about why you shouldn't do it or can't do it or won't do it. That's the flesh desiring against the spirit.

[21 : 30] That's your old ego asserting itself and saying, no, I want to be in control. Not going to do it. You find yourself tempted to do something you're wrong, you know is wrong. And maybe you give in and you do it, but you can't quite be content doing it.

You can't be happy. Well, that's the Holy Spirit asserting his holy desire against your flesh, doing what you know to be wrong. Do you see? These two are opposed to one another to keep you from doing what you want to do.

That's what Paul says. The commentator Burton puts it this way. Does the man choose evil? The spirit opposes him. Does he choose good?

The flesh hinders him. You see, that's the normal Christian experience. Can't be any other way.

That struggle of spiritual warfare will be so right till the very, very end.

And it's so important that you grasp that. So important because so often people experience this kind of struggle and they know it's real. And they assume somehow it must mean that they're a failure.

[22 : 40] Not so, says Paul. It's a mark of genuine Christian freedom. It's a mark of the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Think about, for example, the struggles of sexual behavior. Do you struggle with your sex life? I hope so. I sincerely hope so.

Because if not, I doubt if you're a real Christian. Because only if you don't struggle, if you go merrily along with the ways of the world, the desires of the flesh, well, then you're showing no resistance.

There's no sense of the Spirit of God and His desire for purity within you. Do you struggle with anger, with jealousy, with rage, with greed, with rivalry, with all these other things in that list and many others?

Well, praise God if you struggle with these things. If there's no sense of struggle, if there's no sense of battle against these things, there's no sign at all that you're at war.

[23 : 44] Do you see? There's very little evidence of the Spirit of God at work in you, changing you. That's the normal Christian life.

That's not failure. That's not unbelief. That's the mark of genuine Spirit-filled discipleship. And you must know that. We're freed to fight.

The Spirit and the flesh will be at war until the very end, says Paul. So do not give up. Don't give up. Until we reap eternal life. Don't grow weary of the battle, he says, in chapter 6, verse 9.

You're not a failure. In due time, you will reap. You don't give up. We're at war until the end. We must not be naive. But, and this is a big but, that does not mean that we will be beleaguered and defeated all the time right till the end.

We're not to swing to the opposite extreme of pessimism and despair. It'll be defeat after defeat after defeat till the end. There's no hope of perfection so well.

[24 : 57] There's no hope of any growth, of any progress in my life either. Better just grit our teeth and wait for heaven. I've heard people take that approach.

But no, says Paul. Certainly not triumphalism, thinking we can be perfect and have glory now, but not defeatism either. Faith doesn't just wait for a future glory.

Faith works now through love. Faith walks now by the Spirit. And he who walks wins, says Paul.

He's not painting a picture of stagnation and stalemate and defeat in these verses.

He's giving a prescription for progress, for victory, even now. The Christian life, says Paul, is a life of victory, of progressive victory in the midst of an ongoing battle and warfare.

That's God's command to us. That's his purpose for us. We'll never be free from the warfare, but he wants us to advance, to go on. You see, to deny that is just as wrong as to think we can have perfect heaven now.

[26 : 09] Because it's to deny the power of God's Holy Spirit in us. That's to deny the power of the cross of Christ. That's why Paul's command is so pointed in verse 16.

Look at it. So I say, walk by the Spirit. He's not kidding us. He's not telling us to do something we can't do. That would be perverse. No, God commands us.

When he commands us, he also enables. Do you see that? This command is attached to a promise in verse 16.

And in verse 18, it's backed up by a power. Look at the promise, verse 16. Walk by the Spirit, he says, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

That's a promise of God. That's not pretend. Yes, you are in a conflict in the present life, and you always will be. But it's not an equal conflict. That's what he's saying.

[27 : 10] It's not like the fairy stories, where you have two equal forces of good and evil battling it out. You never quite know who's going to win. No. There's no doubt. There's no shadow of a doubt.

About who has the victory here. In the conflict between the Spirit of God and the flesh. Between the new creation and the present evil age. The Spirit of God is the herald of victory.

He's the deposit. He's the down payment. He's the guarantee of the whole new creation. Of the promise. Of the future. The Spirit's present ministry in this world is the harbinger of the final coming of Christ with all his glory.

And God's promise to us is that if you walk by the Spirit, if you will day by day embrace your new identity, then you shall not gratify the desires of the flesh.

You will not sow to the flesh. You will not therefore exhibit the works of the flesh. And you will not therefore reap corruption at the last from the flesh.

[28 : 16] No. Rather, you will grow and you'll exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. And you will reap eternal life at the last from the Spirit. That's God's promise. And it's a promise, friends.

And God keeps his promises. Don't doubt his promises. But of course, we have to believe his promise and obey it. We have to walk.

That's what Paul says. There's a promise. But verse 18 also, it's backed by power. And since you are led by the Spirit, you're not under the law.

You see, we are to believe God's promises. This is the way to live, to grow in holiness. And we're to obey his command, to walk in the Spirit. We have a responsibility. God won't do your walking for you.

You can't just lie back and sip your gin and tonic and God will walk the walk for you. No. You must walk. But nevertheless, he tells us in verse 18, you never walk alone.

[29 : 16] Do you see that? We really are led by the Spirit. And that means that we really can walk in the way of real life transformation.

We can. In fact, that's the only hope, the only possibility. Of any transformation in our lives. Of any victory over the flesh.

Paul's opponents, you see, we say, oh, there's only two ways. Either it's the flesh and license. That's Paul's gospel. Or else it's the law and its restraint.

That's what we're offering. Helping you on the way. And Paul says, no, it's neither of those two things. That's a false choice. It's neither. It's the Spirit and its victory. It's a way that soars above both of those things.

The gospel does not free us into a vacuum and leave us leaderless. It's not that we reject the law behind and we're catapulted into lawlessness. No, says Paul. Rather, a powerless leader has been left behind for a leader who has power.

[30 : 24] Who really can impart life. Who really can lead us into holiness and into victory. The law, you see, in the past age. Well, the law could show the way.

Could teach us the way. It could point the way. At best, it could restrain sin. But it could never impart the life of the new age.

But the Spirit can and the Spirit does. That's what Paul's saying. The Spirit gives life. He leads the way. The Spirit brings the transforming power of the new creation into our lives.

Now, today. It's not that the Spirit leads us by going ahead and saying, come on, do it like this. Follow me. You know, if you're walking up a mountain and the kids are straggling behind you, saying, come on, come on.

Walk this way. No, it's not that. That's not how he leads us. The Holy Spirit rather puts his hand in ours. He leads us. He walks with us.

[31 : 27] We're in his grip. The strength of his arm is helping us walk. His powerful arm is propelling us as we walk behind him.

Our footsteps go in his. His hand is in ours to help us. You see, it's a promise backed by power. Real resurrection power.

The power of the new age in us now by the Spirit of God. He leads us because he applies the power of Christ's risen life to us.

So that it's not our old life. But our new life in Jesus Christ. That's lived out in us as we walk with the Spirit. And at the same time, the Spirit lifts from us the crushing hindrance of the law's condemnation.

Since we're led by the Spirit, Paul says, you're no longer under the law. In other words, the Spirit's power is doing in us what the law demands but had no power to do.

[32 : 30] There's wonderful words in Romans 8, verses 1 to 4, where Paul says that the Spirit of life has set us free from all condemnation. Because he's done what the law could never do.

He's fulfilled all the righteous requirement of the law in us. Who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. And so he's lifted the condemnation from us that crushes us and holds us back.

You see, he who walks by the Spirit wins. Because Christ's victory has been applied once and for all in our hearts to free us from sin's penalty.

We're freed from that crushing burden that hinders us. But Christ's victory is being applied again and again day by day in our lives, freeing us more and more from sin's present power in our lives. From the desires of the flesh. And the Spirit will go on doing that day after day after day as we walk with him until Christ comes.

[33 : 38] Until at last we reap eternal life and we reap the body that frees us at last from sin's presence forever. So Paul says walk.

Walk in the Spirit now, today, day by day, and you will have victory. You'll have victory in your life now and ultimately.

Of course it'll be a struggle. Of course the battle will never end. Of course you'll experience setbacks and disappointments. Of course. Because the flesh is weak. But you're freed to fight. And you fight on the side of victory. And that makes all the difference. True freedom means that we're willing soldiers. We're under obligation to the Spirit.

So we're to walk by the Spirit. But what does that mean in practice? How do I do that? What does walking by the Spirit mean tomorrow morning when I go to work?

[34 : 39] Well that's a very, very important question of course. Let me just say one or two things as we close. According to Paul, what it does not mean is anything to do with feelings of spirituality.

Or singing. Or special blessings. Or any of these sorts of things. Rivers of dreams. There's no pyre in any of these things. Now this is where we need to remember what Paul's been talking about all the way through this letter.

What he's been saying again and again. Paul says here that true freedom means that we're willing soldiers. In obligation to the Spirit we're freed to fight. And that's just another way of saying what he's been saying all the way through this letter.

That true freedom depends on us being willing hearers. Under obligation to the faith of the Gospel. We're freed by faith and faith alone. That's what he's told us again and again.

What sums up our fight of faith in the present as we await the hope of glory is what he says in chapter 5 verse 5. And through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly await.

[35 : 45] Do you see what he's saying? Walking by the Spirit is walking by faith. Chapter 5 verse 7. He calls it running well. He calls it obeying the truth.

Trusting the truth of the Gospel. Trusting in the promises of God for the future. That's what it means to walk in the Spirit. We trust God's grace day by day.

That's all we need. It's the same as what he talks about in chapter 2 verse 14. Keeping in step with the truth of the Gospel. That's what it means to walk in step with the Spirit.

That's how we began our Christian life. That's how it goes on. Just look back to chapter 3 and verse 2. Remember Paul says that's how you began your life.

Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by the hearing with faith? Of course, by the hearing with faith. That's how you receive the Spirit and believe. How then do you go on in the Christian life?

[36 : 46] How does God go on supplying his Holy Spirit to you day by day so that you can walk with him? Well, the answer is in verse 5. Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law?

Or by the hearing with faith? Not by works. Not by anything we do. Not by strange experiences. Not by any of that sort of mumbo-jumbo.

Just by the hearing of faith. So friends, do you want victory in your struggles in the Christian life?

Do you want to be holy? Do you want to resist evermore day by day the desires of the flesh? Well, Paul says you must walk by the Spirit. That means you must walk in the faith of the gospel. Trust in God's grace. Be a willing and a patient hearer of the promises of God in his word again and again and again day by day. Fill your heart and your mind with the truth of God, with the gospel of God in all the scriptures and the implications of the gospel.

[37 : 53] It's richness. It's greatness. It's horizons. It's glory. It's sheer grace. As you do that. As you do that. As you begin to grasp more and more of the length and the breadth and the height and the depth of the love of Christ to us in the cross of Christ.

As it begins to fill your heart and your mind with joyous hope for the future. Then is when the desires of the flesh of this present evil age becomes so much less attractive.

So much less desirable compared to the surpassing glory of knowing Christ. Of being found in him. Of understanding what it means to be a child of God.

Ultimately, friends, it's only a perception in our minds and deep within our hearts of the glory of Christ. And of the promise of his kingdom.

Only that that can overcome all other desires. Even the desires of our own selfish egos. Only a mind and a heart full of the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ day by day.

[39 : 09] Thomas Chalmers used to call it the expulsive power of a new affection. That's why the focus of our personal Christian life and the focus of our church life must always be.

Expounding and glorying in the truth of the gospel. It's meaning. It's implications. It's grandeur. It's glory. It's hope. It's promise. It's joy. It's joy. The pearl of great price. Only if your mind and heart is so full of the glories of the new creation.

Will the false gods and false promises and false pleasures and false offers that this present and passing evil age has. Only then will they be squashed down and seen for what they are trifling and pitiful and hopeless and horrible.

Only if your mind is full of the glory of the gospel of Christ. So I say, says Paul, walk by the spirit.

[40 : 21] Fill your minds and your hearts with the glory of the gospel of Christ day by day by day. And you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

He who so walks wins. That's a promise. And God keeps his promises. One way that we do that is by reminding ourselves in word and in action of the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And that's what we're about to do now as we gather around the Lord's table and remind ourselves of the gospel of the cross. And as we do that, we're going to sing together our communion hymn, which is number 415.

It invites us to come and see what it means to be found in Christ by the spirit. Come and see the king of love. See the purple robe and crown of thorns he wears.

Soldiers mock, rulers sneer as he lifts the cruel cross. Lone and friendless now he climbs towards the hill. We worship at his feet.

[41 : 31] So let us turn our minds and our hearts once again to the glory of the cross of Jesus Christ. That it might fill our souls with love for him and with power to walk in his spirit.