

Pressing Forward to the Resurrection

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[0 : 0 0] Good, let's turn to our Bible reading this morning, and we're in Philippians, and chapter 3. Edward is continuing his series through this letter, and we looked at the first half of the chapter last week, and we were looking at the second half. We're going to read the whole chapter again, so chapter 3.

I'm reading from verse 1. The Apostle Paul writes,

Well, good morning, friends. Very good to see you all, and very good to know that others from Bath Street and Queen's Park are also listening.

Welcome also to any who might be hearing from their own homes. Well, now let's turn up our passage, which is Philippians chapter 3, and I particularly want to look at the second half of the chapter this morning, beginning at verse 12.

So Philippians chapter 3, verse 12, down to chapter 4, verse 1. That's our passage. It is impossible for us to believe in the resurrection of the dead on the evidence of our own eyes and experience.

[4 : 5 9] You and I have never met in the flesh a person who was truly dead and was then raised from death. I've had many opportunities to meet such a person because in my past, in parish ministry, I've taken a very large number of funeral services.

Hundreds of times, I've stood beside an open grave watching the undertaker at work. I've finished the undertaker, I've finished the undertaker, who has then nodded to his four burly assistants.

They've then lifted up the canvas ropes, threaded through the handles of the coffin and running beneath the coffin. And then they've slowly and gently lowered the coffin down into the grave, six feet down, eight feet, ten feet sometimes.

But I have never heard a hurried knocking from inside the coffin, followed by a voice crying, let me out. And I'm quite certain that you haven't either.

The evidence of our eyes and experience suggests that death is final. It is impossible to believe in the resurrection of the dead if our own experience is all we have to go on.

[6 : 1 5] How was it then that Paul the Apostle could be so sure? Well, he had two pieces of evidence to go on. The first one, preliminary, and the second, absolutely decisive.

His first source of evidence was the Old Testament, which he knew intimately. He'd read passages from the Old Testament books like Job and Isaiah and Daniel, which speak of a future resurrection.

In a sense, they speak of the death of death. Any Pharisee well-trained in the Old Testament believed in the resurrection. But for Paul, the decisive evidence came on the road to Damascus.

And it was this experience that turned his life right around because he met the risen Jesus. And what he saw and experienced there was unmistakable and overwhelming.

Many years later, he was on trial at Caesarea before Festus, the Roman governor and King Agrippa. And he described his experience like this in Acts chapter 26.

- [7 : 19] He said, I journeyed to Damascus. And at midday, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun that shone around me and those who journeyed with me.
- We all fell to the ground. And I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the ox goads.
- And I said, who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise now and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me.
- Now, Paul needed no further evidence. And after he was converted, he quickly came to understand the whole of the gospel story, including the truth of the resurrection of Jesus.
- He quickly learned how Jesus had appeared to the other apostles in Jerusalem after he was raised and appeared to a number of the women disciples. And he came to understand that the resurrection of the dead was not only for Jesus to experience, it was for everybody who belonged to the Lord Jesus.
- [8 : 32] Later on in his letters, he described Jesus as the firstborn from the dead and as the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.
- Firstborn implies the first of many, and firstfruits means the beginning of a very great harvest. Paul taught with utter conviction that the power of God that raised Jesus from the grave would raise everybody who belonged to Jesus.
- Well, let's turn now to our passage in Philippians chapter 3. My title is Pressing Forward to the Resurrection. Now, there's no evidence from this particular letter that the Christians at Philippi were not believing in the resurrection.
- That did happen in certain places. Paul had a problem particularly with some of the Corinthian Christians over the resurrection, and he had to say to them in 1 Corinthians 15, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?
- Some of the church members at Corinth were badly mistaken about the resurrection and didn't believe in it, and Paul was having to correct them. But there's no suggestion that there was a similar problem at Philippi.
- [9 : 47] But it's possible that the Philippian Christians, although they believed in the reality of the resurrection, didn't think very much about it. Perhaps it didn't mean very much to them.
- But it meant everything to Paul because it gave shape and purpose to human life lived under the blessing of God. Perhaps the Philippians had a meager and diminished perception of the resurrection, and therefore Paul was determined to bring it right up into their faces so that they should learn to think like him about the resurrection.
- At one level, all of Paul's letters are designed by Paul to help his readers to think like him. That's what teaching is all about. He is the teacher. He teaches them with real authority because Christ appointed him to be his apostle, to be the apostle to the Gentiles.
- And this is why he says in our chapter, Philippians 3, verse 17, Brothers, join in imitating me. In other words, learn to think like me as well as to live like me.
- I am the example to you of how to think true thoughts about God and about Jesus as well as how to live the Christian life. So imitate me. Accept my teaching.
- [11 : 03] Follow my example of the authentic Christian life. So let's see how Paul teaches his readers three main things in our passage.
- First, he teaches them and he teaches us to press on towards the resurrection, to keep the resurrection of the dead, that is to say our own resurrection, at the very center of our hopes and longings.

Now you've perhaps noticed that this third chapter of Philippians is very personal and very autobiographical. I can hardly think of another chapter in Paul's letters where he talks quite so much about himself.

We saw last week in the first half of chapter 3 that he speaks of the proud Pharisee, the proud Jew, that he had been before he became a Christian. We saw how he came to regard all his prized Jewish credentials as rubbish compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, as he puts it in verse 8.

And he speaks in verse 10 of what he longs for most of all now that he's a Christian. He says there, verse 10, that I may know Christ and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

[12 : 27] Attaining the resurrection, that is now his great goal. And in verses 12 to 14, he amplifies this passionate desire to be with Jesus in the resurrection.

Look at verse 14, for example. I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. The call to be with Jesus in the new world.

Now he's already spoken strongly about this back in chapter 1. Just glance back to chapter 1 and verses 21 to 23. Look at chapter 1, verse 21, famous verse.

To me to live is Christ and to die is gain. Why should it be gain? Because I shall be with him. That's what he means. And verse 23.

My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. So he's already told us back in chapter 1 that he longs to be with Christ in the resurrection.

[13 : 25] But he's pressing this point further in chapter 3, verses 12 to 14. So why is Paul telling the Philippians so much about himself, about his own life and thinking?

Is this an ancient version of social media communication, where you send pictures of yourself to your circle of friends, hoping to provoke a favorable reaction? Look at me with my new hairstyle and my lovely new shoes, which only cost me 25 pounds.

And what do you think of that? Oh, and here's me with my lovely new little kitten. Isn't he beautiful? He's called Ahasuerus. And within five minutes, 1,473 of your friends have sent you a message to say how lovely you are.

Now, is this what Paul is doing in his autobiographical section here? The answer is no, not at all. He has no interest in giving information about his own life.

His purpose is quite different. He is establishing a pattern of what it means to be a Christian, what it means to be in the Lord. He writes like this for their sake, so that they should understand better how to develop a really God-centered way of looking at their lives.

[14 : 37] He's not preening himself, and he's not asking them to preen themselves. He's teaching them to be people who press on forcefully to the goal of the resurrection. So let's look at his words now in verses 12 to 14.

The first thing to notice is the urgency of his attitude here. Verse 12, he says, I'm not there yet. I haven't already obtained the resurrection, but I press on.

Notice that verb, press on. And then verse 13, I'm straining forward to what lies ahead. And verse 14, I press on towards the goal. He's a man in a hurry.

He's purposeful. He's determined. He's using the language of an athlete. He writes elsewhere in 1 Corinthians that like a boxer, he trains and disciplines his body.

He encourages Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 2 to battle for the gospel like a trained soldier who is willing to suffer hardship. This is not a picture of an easygoing man.

[15 : 40] But he not only encourages us to imitate him in verse 17. He also says in verse 15, let those of us who are mature think this way.

In other words, it's part of grown-up Christianity to think of oneself as an active athlete pressing forward to the finishing tape. It's very challenging.

But of course, Paul means it to be challenging. And in verse 12, he gives us a solid reason for his pressing on attitude.

He says, I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Now, that's why he's a man in a hurry.

And he uses the same Greek verb twice in that sentence. Our English version here rather tones it down and softens it. But it's a violent verb, really.

[16 : 35] You could translate it, I press on to seize resurrection for myself because Christ Jesus has seized me in order to possess me, to make me his own. Jesus seized Paul.

That's the way Paul sees it, on the road to Damascus. That's where the arrest and capture of Paul took place. And in response to Jesus seizing Paul out of his great love for Paul, Paul now wants to seize the very presence of Jesus because of his great love for him.

It's a verb of powerful love. It's almost violent love. Paul is saying the real Christian is a person who is forcing their way towards the resurrection. Don't you love that?

Get to the gym. Get in training. Get your running shoes on. There's something strenuous here. But verse 13 develops the image of the runner further. In verse 13, Paul says, I don't consider that I have yet grasped the resurrection.

Well, of course not. I'm still alive. I'm in Rome. But I have now this single-minded attitude. One thing I do. One thing. Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.

[17 : 47] I press on. So he's going in that direction. And that's where his eyes are fixed. You can't run a race if you're forever turning around and looking over your shoulder to see what's going on behind you.

So how are we to understand this phrase, forgetting what lies behind? Well, in Paul's case, he certainly means the Jewish past that he was so proud of.

He was discarding all that and counting it as rubbish or dung. He might also be including his Christian past. Things that he had done since his conversion.

Things that he wasn't proud of. After all, he was morally flawed, like the rest of us. He writes eloquently about his personal flaws in Romans chapter 7. But he was learning to forget what lay behind him and to concentrate on what lay ahead.

And what about us? Well, we too have things in our past that we're not proud of. Things that make us blush with discomfort as we remember them.

[18 : 52] But if we're Christians, our guilt for all of those things has been taken away fully, decisively, by Christ's death on the cross. Those things don't need to trouble our memory or our conscience anymore.

We can move on and turn the page, knowing that we're forgiven. But there could be other things. Not sinful things that we have done, but sinful things that have been done to us by other people.

Episodes in our lives where other people have misused us in some way. Perhaps have robbed us or cheated us. Defamed us or deceived us. We can hold on to those memories with anger and resentment, nursing bitter feelings against somebody, wanting revenge, perhaps wallowing in self-pity.

It's far better to hold in our hearts a forgiving attitude towards anybody who's hurt us. To pray for that person and then to move on, to leave it all behind.

Paul is saying to us, forget all that stuff. Let it be water under the bridge, carried away into oblivion. We have something much better to do than to be shackled with our past.

[20 : 07] And that is to strain forward to what lies ahead. Which is, verse 14, the goal, the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. That's the attitude to develop.

Looking forward, not back. Because what awaits every Christian in the great future is unspeakably glorious. As Paul describes it in 1 Corinthians chapter 2.

No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined what God has prepared for those who love him. That's what every Christian can look forward to.

The unimaginable joy of the resurrection. So friends, let's allow our thinking and our dreaming and our longing to be with Christ in the resurrection.

Let's allow this thinking to develop in us, to grow. If your longing for the resurrection at the moment only occupies about half of 1% in your thought life, big it up.

[21 : 09] Reduce your longing for your next holiday or your next pay rise. And pour fertilizer on your longing for the resurrection. It is, after all, your destiny if you're a Christian.

Look again at verse 15. Let those of us who are mature think like this. As Paul explains his thought in verses 12 to 14. Let us think this way.

And if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. So Paul is saying to long like this and strain forward for the resurrection is part of growing mature in the Christian life.

And if you're not thinking like that, if your thoughts about the resurrection are small and shriveled, God will help you to understand. He will develop your longing to be there.

And then verse 16. Don't slip back. Let's hold firm and true to the understanding of the resurrection that we have already grasped. Perhaps one reason why we don't long very much for the resurrection in the way Paul does is that we're living in a relatively affluent and comfortable society.

[22 : 19] Life in Scotland is in many ways very pleasant. Why should we want to be elsewhere? Isn't this rather nice at the moment? I know we're facing difficulties.

We're facing high inflation, rising prices, all sorts of problems. But there is food in the supermarkets. We're not fearing that our homes are going to be bombed by somebody in the night.

There's medical care available to us when we're not well. Compared with many societies around the world, we're pretty well looked after. How different, for example, historically, how different were Christian black slaves in the cotton plantations of the southern states of the United States in the 19th century?

They had to live in terrible conditions, harsh, horrible conditions. And their longings to be with the Lord in the resurrection were often expressed in their songs. For example, I looked across Jordan.

And what did I see? Coming for to carry me home. A band of angels coming after me. Coming for to carry me home. Swing low, sweet chariot.

[23 : 25] Coming for to carry me home. Now that's what you long for when your life on this earth is becoming almost unbearable. Think of Paul. Think of what he was enduring.

He was in prison. He was manacled with a chain. He was facing trial and possible execution. So we may be free people. We may have food on our plates.

But let's learn from Paul to long for the resurrection because God sent him to be our teacher and our example. And in any case, our life on earth is pretty short.

Seventy or eighty years in most cases. So it's good that our joyful anticipation of the resurrection should be building up ahead of steam as we get older.

We're all in the departure lounge. And some of us are getting pretty close to the gate. So let's press on like Paul towards the resurrection. Well now secondly, verses 17 to 19.

[24 : 27] Paul is teaching us to distinguish carefully between true faith and false religion and a particular form of false religion here. He's telling us in these verses where to look, where to keep our eyes fixed as we make this distinction between the true and the false.

So look at verse 17. Keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example that you have in us. Us being Paul and Timothy, who is the co-author of this letter with Paul.

So Paul is saying, you have our example. You know us well. You know well how we live. You know Timothy. You know me. And there are plenty of others, he's saying, in verse 17, who live in the same way that we do.

Follow our example and the lifestyle of those who live like us, with our minds straining forward to the resurrection, longing for heaven. And I say this because, verse 18, there are many who are quite different.

Whose minds, look at the end of verse 19, are set on earthly things. So in these verses, Paul is contrasting two irreconcilable lifestyles.

[25 : 42] And do you see how he uses the word, the verb, walk, twice here? In verse 17 and again in verse 18. Two different types of walk. In Paul's language, walk describes a person's habitual ongoing lifestyle.

Some walk, verse 17, according to Paul's example. But he says many others walk, verse 18, as enemies of the cross of Christ.

So in what way are these people enemies of the cross of Christ? Almost certainly, Paul is still speaking of the ones that he has described back in verse 2 as dogs, evildoers, and flesh mutilators.

People of Jewish background who professed to be Christians. Now that's the key point. Professed to be Christians. But were insisting that Gentiles who wanted to be saved should be circumcised and should obey the Jewish food laws.

So these people were radically undermining the truth about the cross of Jesus. Paul was saying, trust the cross because the death of Jesus has removed every barrier that separates a person from God.

[26 : 52] At the cross, all your sin has been dealt with. Your full penalty has been paid. There's nothing now that you need do. All you must do is trust the death of Christ to bring you lock, stock, and barrel into the kingdom of God.

The cross of Jesus is sufficient for your salvation. You need to do nothing. There's no contribution for you to make. But these other people were saying, well, if you want to be saved, you must submit to the rites and rituals of Jewish law.

In fact, if you don't play your part, you cannot belong to God. So the cross of Jesus is not sufficient to put you in the right with God. So Paul is saying to the Philippians, you have two sorts of people.

Those who follow my example, who trust the cross and are straining forward for the resurrection. And these others who count the cross as insufficient and want to bind you with religious requirements.

That's why they are enemies of the cross. And Paul is in great distress about the influence of these people. Look how he speaks in verse 18. For many of whom I've often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

[28 : 09] Paul weeps over them. He sheds hot salt tears over these people. Partly because, as he puts it in verse 19, their end is destruction, eternal damnation.

And partly because their influence is so pernicious and they threaten the eternal security of people who might be tempted to follow them. Their influence is pervasive and it makes Paul weep to think of the damage they might be doing in Philippi.

And Paul describes them now in four telling phrases in verse 19. I'd just like to linger on verse 19 for this description. In that verse he tells us what their end is, what their God is, where their glory lies, and what their mindset is like.

So first of all he says, their end is destruction, eternal condemnation. And these were people who in some sense were calling themselves Christians.

It's a warning, isn't it, that it's possible to be outwardly a churchgoer, somehow involved in the church, and yet truly to be headed for destruction, to be an enemy of the cross.

[29 : 24] Then secondly, their God, with a little g, their God is their belly. What a thing to say. Just imagine exchanging the true and glorious God of heaven for your belly, for your physical appetite, your pleasure in food and drink.

But that second phrase here in verse 19 surely provokes all of us to think of the part that food and drink play in our lives. I needed some new trousers the other day, and I walked into a men's store, good store, and a staff member came forward very politely to speak to me.

He said, good morning sir, can I help? I said, yes, thank you very much. I'm looking for some trousers. 30 inch leg, 36 inch waist. I've always been 36 inches in the waist, I said.

So he helped me. You know where this is going, don't you? He helped me to select some trousers, and I stepped behind the curtain into one of those little fitting booths. Anyway, I wrestled with these trousers.

It was hard work. I wrestled for about 20 seconds, and eventually I managed to clip the little fastener at the waist. So I stepped outside the booth to where this man was waiting for me, and rather sheepishly, I said to him, you wouldn't have the same style in a 38 inch waist, would you?

[30 : 42] Yes, sir, I think we could manage that, sir. So I tried on the 38s, and they fitted me perfectly. I said to him, do you find, you're an experienced man, aren't you?

Do you find that men of a certain age quite often have to buy larger trousers? Oh, yes, sir, he said. It is a phenomenon that we very often observe. He didn't quite use those words. Now, friends, we're all battling with this, aren't we?

I know that some of you, one or two of you, are as skinny as a whippet, and you could eat 10 doughnuts a day for all your life, and you wouldn't put on an ounce. But 99% of us are not like that.

We're daily tempted to eat too much. Foodism, foodism has become a big thing. Do we eat to live, or do we live to eat? The central feature of all Paul's ethical teaching, read any of his ethical lists, the central feature is self-control, self-discipline.

Would it not say something to the non-Christian world if they could see by just looking at the shape of us that we practice self-control and worship the true God and not the God of food and belly?

[31 : 49] I need to hear this challenge as much as anybody else does. But the challenge surely is there in verse 19. Then thirdly, their glory.

They glory, says Paul, in their shame. Now, it's hard to know the particulars of what Paul means by that, but the general idea is absolutely clear. These people, while professing to be Christians, have inverted true moral values.

The practices, the behaviors that should cause people to be deeply ashamed because their sinful practices are things that these people glory in, delight in, and rejoice over.

Now, what does Paul glory in? Look back to verse 3, where he tells us, we glory in Christ Jesus. But these people are glorying in their shameful behavior.

The most obvious contemporary example of this is homosexuality. In 1950, or thereabouts, even the most liberal church leaders would clearly say, did clearly say, that homosexual activity was wrong, sinful.

[33 : 02] But there's been a landslide of capitulation since then, so that many churches up and down the country, denominations, whole denominations, not only countenance homosexual activity, but positively encourage it.

And therefore, the Bible's clear teaching, the unambiguous teaching of the Bible, is despised, and those who uphold it are regarded as pariahs. So let me encourage my fellow pariahs with the words of Jesus.

He says, Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

So friends, let's stick to our guns on this and value that great reward in heaven more highly than we value living a quiet life on earth and winning the approval of other people.

Then fourth, their minds are set on earthly things. Their whole attitude and study and effort is focused on things within this world.

[34 : 16] They cannot even conceive that there is anything beyond this world. Paul's eyes are fixed on his heavenly future. Look back to verse 14.

I press forward, I press on, towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Or think of how he puts it in 2 Corinthians chapter 4.

We look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

This verse 19, with these four clauses in it, it's a very challenging verse for us because it's describing people who are claiming to be Christians in some sense at Philippi.

These are not people who are living far away from Philippi. These people are there. That's why Paul weeps. That's why Paul says in verse 3, look out for them. They're close by.

[35 : 16] So part of his message to us is be willing to distinguish the true from the false. We have to look at people carefully. Paul is saying don't shrink from asking searching questions about other people.

There are verse 19 people whose end is destruction. And there are verse 17 people who are pressing forward to the resurrection. So we need to be on our guard.

We need to think fearlessly about these things because so much hangs on them. Well, let's look finally at verses 20 and 21 where Paul teaches Christians about our wonderful eternal future.

You'll see verse 20 begins with a but because Paul is contrasting what he's just said with what he's about to say. The people of verse 19, the enemies of the cross, are earthbound.

Their minds are set on earthly things. But our citizenship, the citizenship of true Christians, is in heaven. And this is a phrase that the Philippian Christians would particularly have appreciated because Philippi, quite unusually amongst Greek cities, was a Roman colony.

[36 : 29] It had been granted the privileged status of being a colony back in the second century BC when it was conquered by the Romans and became part of the rapidly expanding Roman Empire.

And a Roman colony was the imperial city in miniature, Rome in miniature. And its free citizens, not its slave population, but its free citizens, were citizens of Rome itself, even though they were living at Philippi.

So they were very familiar with the idea of belonging to a great city which was far away. It was a great privilege for them. They lived at Philippi, but they were citizens of Rome itself, even though many of them had never been there.

So a citizen of Philippi could say, I live here, but I belong there, in the headquarters of the empire. And Paul is picking up this idea and transforming it, assuring the Philippian Christians that they are citizens, not merely of Rome, but of heaven itself.

And this means that every Christian has a dual citizenship. You and I, we're citizens of an earthly nation, the United Kingdom, or perhaps some other nation. But if we're Christians, our real and abiding citizenship is in heaven.

[37 : 46] That's where we belong. That's where our names are registered. We belong to the holy city, where in the imagery of the book of Revelation, the water of life flows through the middle of its main street, where the tree of life grows, whose leaves bring healing.

The city where death shall be no more, neither mourning, nor crying, nor pain. So if that's where we belong, let's make sure that our lives and our lifestyle demonstrate our citizenship.

Lives marked by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The fruit of the Spirit demonstrates the life of heaven. But Paul has something more to say about heaven in verse 20. From it, from heaven, we await a Savior.

And he then gives the Savior his full titles, the Lord Jesus Christ. We await him. So we're gentlemen in waiting. We're ladies in waiting.

[38 : 50] Waiting is our middle name. We're awaiting his arrival in glory. And when he comes, whether that's before or after our physical death, he will transform us.

And just notice in verse 21 what he's going to transform. He's going to transform our bodies. Not just our souls or our minds, but our bodies.

If this earth is physical, heaven will be far more so. We don't know what physical really means now, but we're going to know it then. And what are our bodies like now?

Well, he tells us. He speaks here of our lowly body. The authorized version translates it, our vile body. What a phrase that is.

Our vile body. If you're young and fit and handsome now, just give yourself 50 years, then take off your shirt, look in the mirror, and then you will know what a vile body looks like.

[39 : 50] But these vile, degenerating bodies of ours will be transformed by Jesus to be like his glorious body.

Is that believable? Well, of course it is. When you see at the end what power he has, what power he's able to use. There it is in thrilling words at the end of verse 21.

He will transform these vile bodies of ours to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

That's the omnipotent Jesus. So our Lord Jesus will take the power that made the Himalayas and the Rocky Mountains, not to mention the Pleiades and Orion and the Great Bear and the Milky Way, and He will transform our lowly and fragile bodies to be like His glorious body.

And in our glorious resurrection bodies, we will live with Him and we will live for Him forever in heaven. So therefore, friends, let us press on like Paul towards the resurrection.

[40 : 56] And as he puts it at the very end, chapter 4, verse 1, having said all this, he says, Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, don't go the way of these other people.

Stand firm, thus in the Lord, pressing forward to the world to come, my beloved, my beloved. Well, let's pray together.

Our dear Lord Jesus, how we thank you for your power and your love, your loving purpose to take all your people to be with you in the place that you have prepared for us in the glory of the resurrection.

Deepen in our hearts, we pray, the desire to see your face and to be with you. Come quickly for us, Lord Jesus, and while we wait, help us to display the life of heaven in our work, our relationships, and every part of our conduct.

And we ask it for your name's sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.