

To Corinth, with Love

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[0 : 00] Well, please do be seated and please turn in your Bibles first to Acts chapter 18. If you're following in one of the Blue Bibles, you'll find that on page 927, Acts chapter 18.

We're going to read the first part of this chapter. After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.

And he went to see them. And because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked, for they were tent makers by trade. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, Your blood be on your own heads.

I'm innocent. From now on, I will go to the Gentiles. And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue.

[1 : 30] Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing Paul, believed and were baptized. And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.

And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. But when Gallia was prone consul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying, This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.

But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallia said to the Jews, If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves.

I refuse to be a judge of these things. And he drove them from the tribunal. And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallia paid no attention to any of this.

After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Sencria he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow.

[2 : 58] And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there. But he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. But on taking leave of them, he said, I will return to you if God wills.

And he set sail from Ephesus. When he'd landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch. After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Now please turn over to 1 Corinthians chapter 1. Page 952, 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

This chapter written probably three years or so after Paul's departure from Corinth. Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus and our brother Sosthenes to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[4 : 54] God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This is the word of the Lord. Let me begin with a question. I wonder if you've ever been troubled by the question of whether your life can be, in any meaningful way, any sort of success.

You ever wondered about that? How you were doing? How you might fare in the success stakes in this world? Have you ever worried about that? Could I ever be a success in life, in education, in work, in marriage, as a parent?

You don't have to have done it long to have worried about that. You don't have to have done it much longer to be pretty sure about the answer. You probably know there is at least one area in life which you already regard as a massive failure, and you suspect there may be more to come.

Our society's preoccupation with success meets us at every turn, every day. We compare people with people constantly.

[6 : 10] Examination grades, performance charts, league tables, salary bonuses, which car, which house, which job, which marriage. Only those who feel they might yet be supremely successful feel any good about how they're doing, and they're usually very strange people.

Do you ever feel burdened about whether you can be a success spiritually? Perhaps you've come here this evening feeling on top of your game, have you?

Reassured about how you're going in the spiritual life? Well, maybe you've come here strongly suspecting that everybody else may be going fine, but you don't really belong, and you're not confident that the spiritual life is going well for you.

If any of that stuff has ever troubled you, this is a great evening to have made it to church, because that kind of issue is right at the heart of our Bible passage this evening, and you'll find tremendous reassurance here.

If you're not there already, 1 Corinthians chapter 1, please. We'll be meandering through the first few chapters of this book over the next few Sunday evenings, and tonight we're just dipping our toes into the book through the introduction, the first nine verses.

[7 : 34] Before we do that, let me just set the scene briefly. Corinth, ancient Greece, south part of Greece, big Greco-Roman city. Paul arrived there probably in AD 50, and he spent 18 months there, and during his time, a church was started.

We've read about that already in Acts chapter 18. How large a church? Well, probably not huge, probably a few large houses full. He had to leave Corinth 18 months later.

He's in Ephesus now, across in modern Turkey. It's about three years on from his departure from Corinth, and he begins to hear things that worry him.

Chapter 1, verse 11. There's a concerned group within the church in Corinth who get in touch. He also seems to have heard from the Corinthians themselves.

A letter has arrived from the church, reading between the lines, a rather stropic, argumentative sort of letter, in which they raise a number of issues with him that they jolly well want answers to.

[8 : 44] And the apostle is deeply concerned about what he hears. Now, this is a long and careful and loving letter. Just flick through the pages to the end.

Quite a lot of words. In fact, the apostle wrote two long, careful, and loving letters to the Corinthians. I don't imagine any single person in this room has written or will ever write a letter as long as this to anybody ever.

It's a remarkable letter, and all the more so because he did not do it on his laptop. A letter like this, jointly authored, verse 1, how much more difficult it is to write something with somebody, would almost certainly have been a massive undertaking, a team effort, involving multiple contributors, probably some of those names at the end of the letter were part of it, extensive secretarial help, many drafts, several weeks in composition, the writing of multiple copies, at a total cost, in today's terms, one author estimates of at least a couple of thousand dollars.

And that doesn't include the cost of the travel of the guy they sent it with. This is a huge undertaking, this letter. It must be very important, don't you think? It's a letter written with love, and that's reflected not just in its length, but in its tone and content.

Chapter 1, verse 3, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter 1, verse 4, I give thanks to my God always for you.

[10 : 28] Chapter 1, verse 10, I appeal to you, brothers. This is a warm letter. It's strong in many places, confrontational, but it's written with deep, loving concern.

And that is all more remarkable, because as we'll find out, the Corinthians are really horrid towards Paul, their apostle. Now, it's characteristic of the introductory verses of Paul's letter to contain in embryo the big issues of the whole, and that is true here, and I want to spend the rest of our time together beginning to unearth some of those big issues from these introductory verses.

What's going on in Corinth? And what's Paul's antidote to it? I hope that we will, even with this cursory look, begin to find for ourselves the beginnings of reassurance and stability and confidence in God as we face the issue of success or failure in the spiritual life.

Now, I want to pinpoint three issues concerning the Corinthians that are here in this introduction, and they give us a window into the problem and Paul's answer to the problem.

First issue we bump into. The Corinthians thought they were really special people. And actually, Paul agrees, but disagrees.

[12 : 05] Verse 2. To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, you are indeed special, he says, and yet, he continues, together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their God and ours.

You are special, he says. That's what sanctified really means. It means set apart, distinct, marked out, under new ownership. You are really special, but, you are special, together with all those in every place who call on the name of the Lord Jesus.

In other words, you are really special, but no more special than any Christian anywhere. Now, the Corinthians thought they were really special, but they thought they were different from Christians everywhere.

Now, this is of critical importance to the Corinthians and to us. Being a special person, a sanctified person, a spiritual person in the Bible is basically an on-off thing.

You are or you're not. You're sanctified or you're not. You're spiritual or you're not. You belong to the Lord Jesus or you don't. And if you do call on Jesus as Lord, you are in precisely the same boat as everybody else everywhere who calls Jesus Lord.

[13 : 42] There are not grades of spiritual in the Christian life. It's not like the army in church. Privates, corporals, sergeants, captains, generals at the top.

It's not like that. It's not that there aren't leaders and structures. The point is, if Jesus is your Lord, you have the whole Jesus is Lord spiritual package, just the same as everybody else who calls on Jesus as Lord.

That is what it's like to be under the Lordship of Jesus. He's such a magnificently generous Lord that he gives you the whole package.

It's a package so big, you'll never exhaust it, you'll never outgrow it, and you'll never need to move on from it. And every single person who calls on Jesus as Lord gets the whole package.

Now, the Corinthians were in no doubt whatever that they were special, and Paul agrees. Sanctified, set apart, called to be different, but no more so than anyone else who calls on Jesus as Lord.

[14 : 56] Now, this issue runs all the way through this letter. Turn over, please, to chapter 7, verse 17. Here's one example.

Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. Now, why does he need to say that?

Because the Corinthians thought they were different from the other churches, and that rule didn't apply to them. We'll turn over to chapter 11, verse 16. If anyone is inclined to be contentious, brackets, I know some of you are, close brackets, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.

What's different about you lot that you think you can be different, he says? The Corinthians thought themselves very special indeed. So chapter 1, verse 2, together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, they thought themselves more spiritual than others.

When they thought of themselves in relation to the other churches, they didn't even have to think. They just knew at gut level that they were superior. And of course, they didn't just think that about other churches, they thought that inside church life as well.

[16 : 26] In Corinth, there were the superiors and the inferiors, the spirituals and the non-spirituals, the people worth bothering with and the people not worth bothering with.

It is very common for Christians to think that way. There are some Christians who without thinking about it, just sense at gut level that they are superior. They have something that other Christians just don't have.

They're higher in the pecking order than other people in church. They're more acceptable than other people in church. They've got more right to be in the building than other people. Conversely, there are others who feel deep down that they are not nearly as special, not as spiritual, not as properly in.

There are some churches who just know at gut level instinctively that they're superior. Just know that others are not important as them who feel superior.

Conversely, there are other churches who feel small and weak and inferior and as though nobody would ever bother with them. They're not that important. If you've thought like that, think again right now.

[17 : 39] really special, Paul says, but no more special or less special than anyone whose Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ is.

They thought they were really special, more special than others. Second thing we find in these verses, they thought they were really rich. And once again, Paul agrees, but disagrees.

Verse 4, I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him, in all speech and all knowledge.

You are indeed rich and I thank God for it all the time, he says. Two particular sorts of riches are mentioned here. enriched in all speech.

Now, speech is one of the key words of this letter. The Corinthians, it seems, love a spiritual sounding speaker and they love spiritual sounding speech and they know that they really do have good speaking stuff in their congregation.

[18 : 57] Chapters 12 to 14 are all about that explicitly. And Paul says, yep, you are indeed rich in all speech. Second, enrichment is that they're enriched in all knowledge.

Verse 5. In this letter, the words know and knowledge pop up all the way through from beginning to end.

The Corinthians saw themselves as having great spiritual wisdom and knowledge. They knew stuff, they could teach you stuff. They were wise, wiser than others.

And Paul says, yep, indeed, you are rich in all speech and all knowledge. What are you expecting? You're expecting a but, aren't you?

And there is a but. Verse 6. Even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Now, this is the sort of statement it's dead easy to skim over because who knows what that means.

[20 : 01] What does it mean, the testimony about Christ? Well, Paul is talking here about the message about Jesus that he brought to Corinth. Now, imagine you're a Corinthian reading this letter.

Corinthians, you are enriched. Great, he agrees. In speech and knowledge. Great, he agrees. As you read this, you're very happy that Paul thinks that about you.

But how did that richness come about, says Paul? Verse 6. As our message about Jesus took root in your lives, that's how it came about.

Instantly, you, Corinthian, are much less happy because the idea that your spiritual riches came through Paul and his message, that is no longer good news in Corinth three years later.

Now, this is very important. Let me try and prove that to you. Turn over to chapter 4, would you please? Chapter 4, verse 8. And we tap into the same language. How do the Corinthians like to think of their enrichment?

[21 : 18] Chapter 4, verse 8. Already, you have all you want. Already, you've become rich. Without us, you've become kings.

Oh, would you, you did reign so that we might share the reign with you. You see, the Corinthians think themselves rich and reigning, spiritually speaking. And the key words here in this verse are the two words, without us.

Without Paul and his associates, the Corinthians, they think, are now really succeeding spiritually without Paul. In chapter 1, Paul brings their riches and his message very close together.

Your riches, the testimony about Jesus. But the Corinthians want to push those things right apart from one another. Yes, we are spiritually rich and reigning, but not, not, not in association with you.

Now, why on earth might they want to do that? Paul has brought them the gospel message. Why on earth would they want to distance themselves from him? Well, I think the answer is seen in the verses that follow.

[22 : 37] Chapter 4, verse 9. I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death.

He's talking here about death in the Roman arena. Because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ.

We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute to the present hour. We hunger and thirst. We're poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless and we labor, working with our own hands.

When reviled, we bless. When persecuted, we endure. When slandered, we entreat. We have become and are still like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. Now, do you see the running contrast here?

We, you, we, you, all the way through. The Corinthians look at themselves and they see wisdom, strength, honor. They look at Paul, and they see folly, weakness, dishonor.

[23 : 43] Why? Because his way of life looks rubbish. He doesn't always eat well. He doesn't wear nice clothes. He gets beaten up from time to time.

He has no home to go to. He will insist on earning his own keep in that disgustingly manual job, tent making, when people would give him money if he only asked. When people are nasty to him, he takes it rather than smacking them down like a really powerful person would do.

Basically, he's not a very spiritual looking apostle. Frankly, a bit embarrassing to be associated with. If you're the guys who want to look spiritual, now this issue is right at the heart of the Corinthian problem.

They, they think, are the spiritual guys. it is very hard to look spiritual if you have to acknowledge that you're dependent on the apostle Paul for everything you've got.

And so they see themselves as having moved on from him, rich without him. Oh yeah, they heard about Jesus from him, but now they have a grander knowledge.

[24 : 56] Now they have a more splendid sort of speech. Now they're much more spiritual looking people than he is. This is a massive issue in the letter. And let me say it's been a huge issue in church life in every single age since then.

Christians like their leaders to embody what they themselves aspire to. Christians like their leaders to look successful because they want to look successful.

Like their leaders to wear smart clothes because they aspire to smart clothes. Like their leaders to be clever and eloquent because they'd hate to belong to something that was viewed as being stupid.

Like their leaders to be rich because they too long for money. Like their leaders to be an honored part of society. Welcomed at school prize givings and public functions because they too long to be welcomed in society.

Sometimes, of course, Christian leaders collude with this. how splendidly spiritual and wise and knowledgeable and rich and well-dressed and comfortable it is to be me.

[26 : 08] But Paul is not playing that game. And so he remains a fly in the Corinthian ointment, an unwelcome reality in the Corinthians wannabe spiritual dream world.

What did the Corinthians think? They thought they were really special. Paul says, yeah, but no more than any other Christians. They thought they were really rich. And Paul says, sure, but only through my gospel message.

And third, they thought they lacked nothing. Now you're probably still in chapter 4. So look again at chapter 4, verse 8. Already you have all you want.

They were thoroughly satisfied people. Back to chapter 1 now. As before, Paul agrees but disagrees. Look at verse 7. So that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift.

You're not lacking in any gift of God's grace, he says. There's no doubt in Paul's mind that this is an enormously gifted church. God has given them many, many good things.

[27 : 16] But notice that isn't all that Paul says. Not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for. The revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ who will sustain you to the end guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You're not lacking in this age, but you are supposed to be waiting eagerly for the appearing of the Lord Jesus. Because what you have now, though not lacking for this age, is absolutely nothing to what you'll have in comparison when the Lord Jesus appears.

The truth is that the Corinthians had lots now, and the lots they had made them feel satisfied now. We have all we want.

Their eyes were on the present age, and all that they had. They were just full of that. It made them feel really splendid, self-satisfied, somewhat superior, spiritually successful, so that they were no longer eagerly looking forward to the appearing of the Lord Jesus.

No longer was that the center of their attention. No longer were they longing for the perfection that would one day be brought to them at Jesus' return. The final freedom forever from sin and guilt, the deliverance from all the difficulties of this age, somehow that seems to have slipped off the center of their attention.

[28 : 52] Three little glimpses of the Corinthian mindset and Paul's response. Special? Certainly. Rich? Absolutely. Lacking nothing?

Certainly you are. But no more special than any believer. Only rich in association with Paul's gospel. And having what you need, but looking forward to something much greater.

Three little glimpses. Now we'll be unpacking those, looking through those windows at greater length in the weeks ahead. But for the moment let me address an issue that is probably already there in your minds.

How on earth could these people have been like this? they've had the apostle Paul as their evangelist. They had him three years ago. It's such a short time.

He must have taught them well surely. He's had 18 months. So it's easy to assume as you read this letter that these must be especially stupid people.

[30 : 05] Especially arrogant to be able to think in this sort of way. And let me say that as you read through this letter it's very easy for that assumption to be reinforced because you'll find in this letter some pretty grotesque attitudes and some really gross sins.

And you can read the letter of 1 Corinthians and think well I've never seen anything that looks anything like those people. They must just be mental. But let me assure you that would be a mistake.

For you do not have to look Corinthian to be Corinthian. You do not have to look Corinthian to be Corinthian. You see all that the Corinthians did was the thing that is so easy to do to take the values that their own culture already loved and dress them up in spiritual clothes.

To apply a veneer of spirituality over the things they've always held dear and call that Christian. That's what the Corinthians did.

Corinthian culture loved eloquence so the Corinthian church loved an eloquent preacher. Corinthian culture loved esoteric knowledge so the Corinthian church loved to be in the know.

[31 : 25] Corinthian culture had significant issues to do with sexual license so the Corinthian church bigged up sexual license and were proud of their spiritual freedom. the Corinthian culture loved spectacular stuff so did the Corinthian church.

Why do we think their behavior gross? Because we're not Corinthians. We're not from that culture and we see much more easily than they would have done how grotesque some of the issues are in this letter.

but they thought these things spiritual not because they were stupider than us because it's always hard to see what's close to home.

The godlessness that you've absorbed since your first moments in life the resident evil that just gets dripped into your life all the time from the culture you live in.

And it's so easy to dress that up in spiritual clothes and call it Christian. You do not have to look Corinthian to be Corinthian.

[32 : 34] Two practical questions as we close. If these issues are hard to spot how do we identify them? And second what on earth do we do about them?

One how to spot them? Look at verse seven again. Do you think the Corinthians had forgotten that Jesus was coming again or that that was important?

I very much doubt it. I'm quite sure that was there in their theological textbooks and their mental mindset. The issue is as we look through the letter they're just completely preoccupied with all the spiritual stuff that's going on now.

Far too preoccupied to think about that thing that they know is true but they just kind of functionally forget it. So how do you spot your errors? How do you spot your Corinthian issues if it's not that you've forgotten what the truth is?

Well my guess is that they're indicated most sensitively not by remembering what you know about God or what you know about the Bible. They're identified most sensitively by looking at what you think of yourself and your church in relation to other Christians and other churches.

[33 : 55] Interestingly that's what Paul leads with. Look at verse 2 again. Called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus their Lord and ours.

The Corinthians knew at gut level that they knew better than others. That they were superior to those other Christians out there in the things they could do.

They knew that they were more of a spiritual success story. So they thought. Their issues are seen most clearly in their attitudes to the churches out there and to one another within church.

And my guess is that that's the most sensitive indicator of the presence of Corinthian type issues in life. That I myself or we corporately are always thinking about how we are and how that compares to other Christians and other churches.

For better or for worse. I'm not like that person. Maybe I'm okay. I'm not like that person. I must be a disaster.

[35 : 21] We're not like that church. We'd never do that. We're not like that church. We're so grateful that we know lots from the Bible and we know things.

When you work through this letter, the constant feature is that the Corinthians have their eyes on themselves in comparison to others, in comparison to the apostle Paul and in comparison to the other churches out there.

The way we think about ourselves in relation to others, that is going to tell us where we are spiritually. that's how to spot it.

What to do about it? Well, the solution is not to look harder at yourself. What does Paul do? Paul takes the Corinthians' eyes off the Corinthians.

all the way through this section and indeed all the way through the letter. The Corinthians all the way through the letter are full of their activity, their abilities, what they can do, what they can say.

[36 : 34] Here, Paul de-emphasizes all of that. Look how he describes them. Verse 2, sanctified, passive, something done to them.

Verse 2, called to be saints, something done to them. Verse 4, he talks about grace given to them. Verse 5, he talks about them having been enriched, something done to them, not by them.

Verse 7, they have spiritual gifts, things given to them, not earned by them. Verse 8, they are sustained, something done for them.

Verse 9, they're called, something done to them. The only active verbs used directly here of the Corinthians is in verse 2, they're people who call on the name of the Lord Jesus, and verse 7, they're people who wait.

They call for somebody else, and they wait. They're not terribly active verbs, those, are they? Corinthian activity is really downplayed in this introduction.

[37 : 40] It's all about God. What's it replaced by? Verse 1, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus. Verse 2, those sanctified in Christ Jesus.

Verse 2, people who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 3, grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 4, the grace of God given in Christ.

Verse 5, enriched in him. Verse 6, the testimony about him. Verse 7, waiting for him. Verse 8, guiltless in his day. Verse 9, partnership with him at every turn.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord Jesus Christ, all the way through this introduction. Jesus is at the center of Paul's vision.

His generosity, his achievements, his perfecting work, his appearing, his way of doing things. Especially verse 9, God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his son.

[38 : 54] Now that word fellowship in the Bible means partnership. You were called into the partnership of the Lord Jesus. Who are you in partnership with?

Well let me suggest to you that the Lord Jesus Christ in this world was not what would humanly be called a success story. Powerful, yes, but hated, betrayed, deserted, falsely accused, beaten, humiliated, and executed.

the results. The results, well, verse 7, we wait for the revealing of those, don't we? Jesus, the success story, is not a story you can write with your eyes at the moment.

Who are you in partnership with, Christian? A rich, well-dressed, successful-looking guy who made it in this world? A guy in a sharp suit with loads of money, a big car running a big institution?

I don't think so. And that means you don't have to look like that to be on the right track. And let me assure you that if you're in responsibility for Christian leadership, you certainly don't want to model that to others.

[40 : 26] That is not what you're joined in with. It's not the deal. You're not joined into a successful looking thing in this world if you're a Christian.

The flip side of that is that when you look at yourself, your gifts, your performance, your church, where you might once have felt despair, you might find encouragement.

Does church look great? No. Do you look great? No. But that's the kind of partnership you're joined in with in this world.

If you look at yourself, your gifts, your performance, your church, the only results will be pride or despair, which are really both manifestations of self-centeredness.

But if you look at him, then something entirely different from either pride or despair is available to everyone, everywhere, who calls on his name.

[41 : 42] Let's pray together. it's such a relief to us, gracious God, to know that we are in partnership, called into partnership with the Lord Jesus Christ and indeed his apostle, neither of whom looked great in this world.

And we pray that you'd help us, please, not to be constantly comparing ourselves with one another and with churches elsewhere, thinking either in turn that we are hopelessly failures or effortlessly superior.

Help us rather to have him in our minds, his work, his achievements, his greatness, and his sufferings in this world as we wait for his revealing in glory.

Thank you that you are able to sustain us to the end, guiltless when he appears. Thank you that you are faithful and can be trusted to deliver that day to all those who call on him as Lord.

Help us to do that. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.