

How Do You Unlock the Treasure Chest?

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[0 : 00] G'day, Watermark. How are you all doing? So, sorry, that was my very, very poor attempt at an Australian accent. And the reason being is that myself and Irina and the kids, we are planning a move to Philistine country, otherwise known as Australia.

And so part of it is learning the language and learning the culture. And it's been quite a crazy season for us, right? So in two and a half months, our bags will be packed and we will get on an airplane and off we go.

And I think the closer it gets to that time, we're just really excited for a new adventure, a new chapter. But at the same time, there's this bitter sweetness because there's an incredible sadness that comes with leaving a place that is home, right?

And you guys are just the real thing that tugs on our heartstrings, right, as we come to say goodbye. So just to start off, just wanted to thank you, everything that you've been to, Irina and myself and the kids.

We really, really are going to miss you. But it is a season of change for us. And so we're not only changing countries, changing cultures, but I'm going to be moving from education, where I've spent many years into ministry, right?

[1 : 25] So that's just a whole new world for me. Kind of, I'm going to be a fish out of water. Truly something new for me. And part of that is that I now have to write a CV for a church that hopefully we're going to be part of.

Like, how do you write a CV to be part of a church, right? Are you allowed to say, like, I think I'm good at this and all that kind of thing? So as I'm pondering this, I'm thinking this, I read this.

And this was Paul's CV. This was his CV. This is what he said. He said, I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.

Five times I received from the Jews the 40 lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was pelted with stones.

Now that wasn't just like a little stone, throw it at you, get out of town. This was big rocks with the intention to kill him. Three times I was shipwrecked. I spent a night and day in the open sea.

[2 : 37] Now if this stuff had been happening to us, we would be writing a book about it. But Paul goes on. He says, I've been constantly on the move. We are planning a move.

We get to get on a nice airplane and we get to get taken to a new place. Paul was constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at the sea, and in danger from false believers.

I have labored and toiled. I have often gone without sleep. I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food.

I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Okay.

Hands up. Who wants to be an apostle? Russell. Okay. So I'm reading this CV and I'm thinking, this is the guy who wrote this letter.

[3 : 42] This is the guy who wrote the letter to Colossians, which we're reading about. And if Paul had to walk through those doors into our service today, he's the kind of guy we would turn our heads and go, dude, what happened to you?

His body would have been an absolute mess of scars, broken bones. He's not like the cool, trendy preacher who's got the designer jacket, the cool sunglasses. He would have been absolutely broken.

So this is the author who's writing this letter to a church in Colossians. Colossians was a church that he didn't know. He had never been there, never seen them face to face.

And it was a church made up of Gentile believers. Now in the passage that was so beautifully read by Oti and Lorna, it's often in your Bibles labeled Paul's labor for the church.

But I want to give it to you like this today. I am essentially still a teacher at heart. So I do things that help me remember, and this is one thing that helps me remember. So there's five sections.

[4 : 50] Number one is they all begin with S. It's amazing how it worked out that way. Okay, one is his suffering. Two is his secret.

Three, his strain. Fourth, their seduction. And fifth, his solution. All right, so you've got five fingers on your hand. They all begin with S.

Later, if anyone asks you what the sermon was about, you just look at your hand and you can read them off, right? His suffering, his secret, his strain, their seduction, his solution.

Now Paul begins off this section with his suffering, and he's writing this letter. He's probably chained to a Roman soldier, and this is what he says. I am so happy about my suffering.

I'm rejoicing in the fact that I'm suffering. Now Paul is not like this weirdo who likes being hurt. He likes going through all this bad stuff, right?

[5 : 49] The reason he can say that is because he goes, when I suffer, when I go through these shipwrecks and these beatings and this danger, I know that I'm joining with Christ's suffering for your sake, for the sake of the church.

You see, one thing that we need to understand is that Jesus has not stopped suffering for his church.

Suffering for sin is dealt with, dealt with. On the cross, it was this climax, this pinnacle was brought to the atonement for sin.

It is absolutely finished. The whole Old Testament gave us the sacrifices that were needed for atonement, that you had to be a blood sacrifice. The Lamb of God.

And on the cross, Jesus took that, and he said, suffering for sin, he cried out, it is finished. And when he said it was finished, it was the atonement for sin was paid for once and for all.

[6 : 53] But the suffering for his church continues. So we've got two children, right? And when Irina found out she was pregnant with Elijah, I still remember it, right?

So we kind of had this idea that she might be pregnant, and we went and got one of those pregnancy tests. And anyway, she came out of the bathroom, and she looked at me, and she said, you're going to be a daddy.

And with that, she turned right around, went back in the bathroom, and proceeded to puke, right? All the morning sickness kicking in. And so anyway, for the next nine months, the suffering continued, right?

Up until the point of the absolute climax, the day of birth, the suffering just gets more and more intense. Anyone who's a mother here will know what this means, right?

So for us, Irina goes into this 13-hour labor of intense suffering. I still have the claw marks in my arm of where between the contractions, and I felt a little bit of that suffering.

[8 : 01] But anyway, after 13 hours, our son is born. There's this relief. There's this joy. It is finished. The suffering of bringing a child to birth is dealt with. But now, is Irina's suffering as a mother finished?

No. Not even in the slightest, right? So every time that your child is sick, that's suffering. Every time your child is in trouble, that's suffering. And there's this desire as a parent to bring your children to maturity.

To bring your children to maturity. And the suffering that goes along with that. And that's what Paul's talking about here. I join in with Christ's affliction. His suffering for his church.

And Paul is basically saying, I'm in agony until I see Christ formed in you. And Paul's really saying, he goes, my suffering, these things that I'm going through, is actually his suffering.

Christ's suffering. Through my body, for your sake. You see, Paul is not adding anything to the cross when he talks about this.

[9 : 15] But he is adding to the maturing of his church. So I want us to think about this for us. Because we can be part of that story too.

When you go through a time of suffering, do you realize that Jesus is suffering too? He feels that pain. He feels your doubt.

His suffering is your suffering too. And when did Paul finally get this? When did the light go on for Paul, right? It's in his very first conversation with Jesus.

Paul is riding his horse. He's going to Damascus. Paul is the ultimate anti-missionary. He is intent to destroy Christianity. And he's going to Damascus to destroy it even more.

And on his way, he meets Jesus. Jesus comes to him, knocks him off his horse. And he hears this voice. And this voice says to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

[10:16] Why are you causing me pain? And Paul gets it. He gets it. And he realizes, like, who are you?

And he says, I'm Jesus. It's like, Jesus, I'm not persecuting you. But you are. You're persecuting those who follow me.

And that hurts me. That causes me pain and suffering. And I always think it's amazing, right? Paul went from that to understanding he is the one who's causing some of that pain. And then to go to the point to realize that he's actually receiving some of that pain.

He becomes part of it. But this is the part that really blew my mind. Paul says he's suffering for people he doesn't know. He never knew this church.

He wasn't known. He didn't know them face to face. Now, I don't know about you, but I struggle to suffer for people I do know. Not even for people I don't know.

[11:16] And you see it in Paul's letter, right? That little section I read to you from Paul's CV right at the beginning when he says, I'm going through all this. All the beatings, all the shipwrecks, all the stonings, all that is nothing compared to my daily concern for the church.

That was the thing that caused him the most agony. And this week I read about the church bombings in Indonesia. Did anyone?

Have you guys read that? So if you haven't, there was this family. So a father takes his wife and his two daughters. He drops them off at a church.

Bombs strapped to them. His sons go to another church and the father himself goes to a third church. And they blow themselves up. They kill themselves and they kill believers attending a service to worship God.

And I read that and I go, well, that's terrible. But where is my concern for the church in Indonesia? And is some of that pain and that suffering that the church is feeling, do I realize that it's actually for the maturing of his church?

[12:31] Because you see, for Paul, the key to his suffering, the key in his suffering was Christ. Christ is the key in your suffering.

When you see your suffering, that you are not in it alone, Christ becomes the key, not yourself. I don't know about you, but I often talk to people going through a time and they ask this question and I've asked it myself.

Why am I suffering? But very rarely do we actually think, Jesus, you're suffering too.

In my moment of incredible suffering, you feel that pain too. And Paul says, I have a secret to share with you.

And he goes, I have been appointed as a minister of this gospel. He says, the stewardship has been given to me. Now the language there is like a master to a servant.

[13:30] You do this. You go and do this job. And Paul's saying, I've basically been assigned my housework from the master. In any family, you're now part of the family.

Welcome in. And this is your housework. This is your part of the family. Any family, you have a little bit of housework to do. What's your housework?

You're part of a family. We call ourselves Watermark. What's the housework God's called you to in this church? For Paul, he says, my housework is to preach and to share this secret.

Now it was the most awesome secret that's ever been kept. And it had been hidden for ages and generations. It was kept. And it wasn't discovered. Paul didn't discover it.

It was revealed to him. And when Paul gets it, he goes, that is amazing. That's incredible. The secret is there. Now hopefully you're thinking, what is the secret?

[14:30] Tell me the secret. Okay, are you guys ready for it? This is the secret that got Paul. Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Okay, now I was kind of hoping you guys would go like, yes, that's pretty awesome, okay? It's too late, Kev. Doesn't count. Okay.

But now, the reason is we're not sitting in Colossae, right? But the church in Colossae, when that letter's been read into them, they would have got to that line and it would have blown their minds. They would have gone, what? Christ in you, the hope of glory. They would have had a totally different reaction to ours. So let's look at this. We're going to camp out here for a while.

The first three words there. Christ in you. Quick little Greek lesson. In Greek, if you wanted to emphasize a word, you give it the most prominent place in the sentence, right?

[15:29] So what we do in English, you bold or you underline. In Greek, you want to give the most prominent word in the sentence, you put it in the most prominent place. So here we go.

Christ in you. Which of those three words do you think is the prominent one? Which is the one Paul is saying, this is the one that deserves your attention? Let's vote, okay?

Hands up if you think it's Christ. Okay. Hands up if you think it's in. Hands up if you think it's you.

Hands up if you don't like putting your hands up.

Okay. For those of you who put your hands up, when I asked, is the word you? You're right.

Why? Okay. Now, in the Greek, the word you there is plural. So Paul's not speaking. He's speaking to you. You, right? I'm speaking to you.

[16:27] Now, if you notice, Paul doesn't say Christ in us. Right? Because that would have included Paul. Christ in us. Paul says Christ in you.

Paul is talking to a Gentile church. And Paul himself is Jewish. Paul's saying, he's saying this incredible thing, right?

Christ, the Messiah, the Jewish Messiah, is in you, the Gentile church. Up until that time, everyone had been expecting a Messiah for the Jews.

Everyone was expecting. It was written in Jewish scripture. They were always expecting a Messiah to come and rescue them. They were expecting a Messiah that would deliver them from their political enemies.

Right? Rescue us. Jesus coming into Jerusalem. He's riding on a donkey. Everyone's lining the streets and they're shouting. Like the royal wedding yesterday. But they're shouting, Hosanna, Hosanna. Hosanna.

[17:36] Hosanna. Literally means deliver us now. Save us now. And they were so hoping that Jesus would be the Jewish Messiah that they were hoping for. He was going to deliver them from Roman occupation and give them a kingdom under King David.

Jesus said, I am the Jewish Messiah. But I haven't come to deal with that enemy. I've come to deal with a far greater enemy. The enemy that is in every one of you.

The enemy of sin, of a sinful nature. The enemy of pride, of self-righteousness. The enemy of death. And Paul said, guys, don't you get it?

Don't you get it? That now this Jewish Messiah is in you, the Gentile church. The secret is open. It's not just for the Jews.

It's for everybody. And it's amazing, right? If you look at the early church, this was one of their biggest disagreements, right? They still didn't quite get it.

[18:46] They would always argue over this issue. They would argue over whether you actually needed to become Jewish in order to be a Christian, whether you needed to be circumcised, whether you needed to obey the full law.

Paul, and it all comes to a head in Acts 15, where you have these two characters, Paul and Barnabas. And they go straight to Jerusalem. They go straight to the headquarters of the church. And they say, this is what we see God doing among the Gentiles.

When they see that, they're just like, yes, you're right. That's it, right? That is it. Christ in you. What a secret. What a secret. If the Gentile church would have heard that, wow, everything that was in the Messiah is now available to us.

And from then on, Paul devoted his life. He was just headstrong. And he said, this is what I'm devoting my life to. I'm going to share this secret. I'm going to go, and I'm going to share this secret. And he said, but the secret has been unlocked.

Therefore, I will preach Christ to everyone. The secret is available to everyone. Everyone is welcome. And you look at the fruit of Paul's ministry, right?

[19:53] This Jewish guy who looked beaten up, broken. And Christianity started off pretty much as like a Jewish sect, right?

Jewish believers that believed that Jesus was the Messiah. And we look at it today. It's largely a Gentile church. We preach from a Jewish book.

Most of the authors in this book are Jewish. We celebrated communion, which is a Jewish feast, the Passover feast. And it's fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus is still the Messiah to the Jews, but he is also the Christ of the Gentiles.

And if that part is good, right? They're just like, Christ in us, Christ in you, the Gentiles. We never had a hope. We never had a hope outside of Christ, right?

As Gentiles, it was always the Jews that were going to get their savior, their rescuer. And now the Gentiles are included in it. And it gets better, right? It's Christ in you. The hope of glory.

[21 : 03] The hope of glory. Now, what does that mean? Okay. So I hope this illustration does justice to it a little bit. But I want you to imagine that you have your favorite sports team.

Okay? And your sports team doesn't ever do that great. But then you find out they have just bought a star player. He is phenomenal.

And you'll hear people talking about their sports team now. Oh, he is our hope for glory. Meaning that this player, he is the one who's going to bring us the trophy.

He's going to bring us victory. He is going to bring us the glory, the parade. Everything that we hope for is going to be found in him. He's going to bring us this victory. And that's kind of what he's saying here.

Christ, he is now our hope for glory. And the word there, hope, it's an incredible Greek word, right? It's called alpis. And I learned that this week.

[22 : 05] And I thought, what an awesome word, alpis. It's just got such a ring about it. Can we say it together? Alpis. Okay, there you go. Now you know a Greek word, right? It's totally useless.

But anyway, you know a Greek word. And the sense of the word alpis means to wait. To wait for something. What are you waiting for? What are you longing for?

What are you waiting for? And now it's ours. As a Gentile church, now it's ours. There's hope. We had no hope. Now we have hope in Christ.

And we have this hope of glory. This waiting for glory. In Psalm 26, there's a verse that says, I love your house, O Lord. The place where your glory dwells.

Now, it's talking about the temple. And in the temple, you had the outer courts, the inner courts, and the Holy of Holies. The place where God's visible presence was manifest. But one priest, once a year, was allowed in to the Holy of Holies for a limited amount of time.

[23 : 14] One priest, once a year, for a limited amount of time. To be in the very presence of God. The very physical presence, the manifest presence of God.

Now, Paul's saying that's just blown it wide open. It's not just one priest once a year. Now we have hope of that glory all the time. The promises of the Messiah are now available to us.

To us. Being in His presence. And living out His presence. That is our hope. So, do you remember we had a public holiday beginning of May?

Everyone remembers holidays in Hong Kong, right? So, that day I took Elijah and Daniela out and we went to the playground. And we were kicking a football in the playground.

And as we're kicking a football, an old man comes past. And I don't know what happened. He must have just got out on the wrong side of bed that day. But he wasn't in a good mood.

[24 : 21] And Elijah kicks the ball. And this old man goes crazy. He just starts chewing out Elijah. He's like, you can't kick the ball here. You can't kick the ball here. And there are many times that Elijah does deserve a chewing out, okay?

This was not one of those times. And in that moment, I have to be honest with you. I just forgot I was a Christian, okay? I just like, oh, no graceful answer here.

My little boy, you know, he's kind of being there. And I just kind of just lying in me. And I went up to him and I said, excuse me. Do not talk to my son like that. And he turned to me and he said, he started chewing me out, right?

And he says, you're not allowed to kick the ball here. This is for Hong Kong people. And in that moment, I was like, wow. I said to him, I am a Hong Kong person.

I have as much right to be here as anyone else. And he looked at me and he went, you? And then he grumbled and he kind of walked on. But that same reaction, you're part of Hong Kong?

[25 : 25] No way. That's exactly the reaction here. You are now included in the promises, the culmination that was built up. You're included in those promises.

All the benefits that Hong Kong brings are now yours. All the benefits that the Messiah was promised to are now yours. Paul says, because this is true, because this is true, the secret is available to everyone.

The church is open. He goes, I strain. I sweat. I struggle. And the language he uses is kind of like from the athletic world.

I want you to imagine someone who's doing pull-ups, right? And the muscles and the strain and they're straining and they're pulling. And Paul says, that's what I do. I strain every muscle, every fiber, because I want to proclaim Christ to everyone.

I want to warn everyone. I want to present everyone mature in Christ. Paul says, you know, I put in this effort.

[26 : 28] And when I put in this effort, you know what I find? I find his energy is there. His power is there. This limitless supply of his power. The more I strain, the more I work, the more I give myself to this, the more he pours himself into me.

You know, guys, one truth that we have to come through. In the Christian walk, there is strain. There is effort. But there is a limitless supply of Christ's power.

His grace and his energy available to us. And you see in here, as Paul says this, he's just, this is the heartbeat of evangelists, right? He's not just interested in bringing people to faith.

He's interested in bringing them to maturity. So, in the 1700s, there were two evangelists from a very small island.

Very small. Significant little place called the United Kingdom. And that's for you, Chris. And anyway, the two evangelists were called John Wesley and George Whitefield.

[27 : 37] And George Whitefield, both incredible preachers. But George Whitefield was probably the more successful of the two. He drew bigger crowds. More people came to faith under his ministry.

But they had different strategies. And what John Wesley would do is he would go to a place, he would preach, people would come to faith, and then he would go back.

And he would visit. And he would put them in groups called societies. And build them up. Whereas George Whitefield, he'd go to a new place, new place, new place, new place.

And at the end of George Whitefield's life, this is what he wrote. He wrote to Wesley, right? And he says, My brother Wesley, you have acted wisely. The souls that were awakened under your ministry, you joined into societies.

And in this way, you preserved the fruit of your labor. This I neglected. And my people are a rope of sand.

[28 : 41] Have you ever tried to grab a rope of sand? And it's not really useful as a rope. He says, Wesley, you built them up. You built them up. You aim to bring them to maturity.

And this is Paul's aim, right? In this letter here, he goes, Guys, I want you to have a faith that is unshakable. I want you to stand firm. I don't want arguments that can come in and harm you and destroy your thinking.

I want to make the word of God fully known. So I have to tell you, I'm going to let you in a little bit of a kind of a fly in the wall moment. When we have our elders meetings and we sit together, one of the key things that we focus on is, Are we committed to preaching the word of God?

To making the gospel known to us? In our deep in our hearts, in our own hearts, in the people's hearts, are we making sure that the gospel, the word of God is really center to what we do as a church?

And that's why we're committed to a teaching ministry. It's why we go through books of the Bible. It's because we want you to know the full counsel of God. We want you to know the fundamentals of your faith.

[29 : 56] And Paul says, listen, if you want a firm foundation, you want to build, you want to become mature, you're going to need three things. And the first thing he says, this is what you're going to need. You're going to need courage. He says, encouraged in heart.

And literally, encouraged means to put courage into you, right? Put courage into you. Paul says, you're going to need courage. I don't know about you, but I put myself in this category, right?

When I go to work, I need courage to speak out the gospel. I need courage to live out the gospel. I was telling a friend of mine this story about how I struggled to actually talk about my faith in the workplace.

And he said to me, he said, you don't need opportunities. You need courage. And it's true. I need courage. But you know what else it means, what courage means? You need courage to ask for forgiveness.

You need courage to say those three most difficult words to say. You know what those three words are? You all know them. They're very difficult for you too. I am sorry.

[31 : 06] Okay. Not easy, right? We need courage to do that. We need courage to live out the gospel. And Paul says, secondly, you're going to need community.

You're going to need to be knit together in love. That's what he says. You know, when you're standing out there and you're the only Christian in your workplace, you're the only Christian at school, at university, and you need courage to be there.

But to know that you have a loving fellowship behind you that'll stand with you, that'll pray with you, that knits you together, right?

You have to have that behind you. And there's a beautiful story that I think just illustrates one segment of what community is like. So, in 1995, October 1995, two twins are born.

Brielle and Kari Jackson. And they're born 12 weeks premature. And as they're born, the doctor comes to the parents and says, you know, 12 weeks, at the moment things are okay, but at any moment things could turn for the worst.

[32 : 19] And for one of the twins, Brielle, that's exactly what happened. She developed this massive fever. Her heart rate became irregular.

And the doctors were incredibly worried about her. And the nurse there, she has this brilliant idea. She says, can I take the stronger twin and put her together with her sister?

And the doctors are like, no way, this is like cross-twin infection. We don't usually do this. And the nurse goes to the parents and says, this is what I think we should do.

And the parents say, go for it. Do this. So, they take Kari and they put her next to Brielle. And as the twins are kind of lying next to each other, it's this awesome little moment, right?

Kari puts her arm around Brielle. And very soon after that, her fever, Brielle's fever begins to come down.

[33 : 16] Her heart rate begins to normalize. It's this incredible moment, right? So, this is the picture. This is Brielle and Kari. Let's have a look. That's them there. Can you see that?

That moment, you're supposed to go, aww. Kari, that's awesome, guys. That little moment, that became known as the rescuing hug. The rescuing hug.

Okay, this is Brielle and Kari today. So, one more picture. There we go. Two twins. As close as ever, but they were from that moment.

Guys, that's a little picture of what community is about. A rescuing hug, right? Right? Sometimes, we're all in need of a little bit of a rescuing hug from the week we've had.

And sometimes, we're there to give a rescuing hug to others. And Paul says, the third thing you need, you need full assurance. You need a complete understanding.

[34 : 20] I want you to bring you to a place where you're able to say, I know whom I have believed. I know Jesus.

I know whom I have believed. And he says, this full assurance, to get there, to get full assurance, you need wisdom and you need knowledge. Now, knowledge is the ability to see the truth, to understand the truth, to really grasp it.

But knowledge also has another side to it, where you're able to present the truth to others. You're able to present it clearly. And then you have wisdom. And wisdom is the ability to apply that knowledge in the right situation.

Okay, now that all sounds great, but I don't know about you, but that's a problem to me, okay? All this knowledge, all this wisdom, how am I going to get it?

Like, what does that mean? Do I have to go to seminary? Do I have to read a million books? What do I have to do? The good news is that there's a shortcut.

[35 : 27] There's a secret. There's a key. And the key is, say it with me, guys, the key is Christ.

The key is Christ. And Paul gives this example. He says, all the treasures, I want you to imagine a treasure chest. And inside this treasure chest is all the wisdom and all the knowledge that you will ever need is inside this treasure chest.

But it's padlocked. It's got this huge chain on it, and there's this huge padlock on it. And the only way to get all that wisdom and all that knowledge is, is to open that padlock. But you need a key.

You need a key. What's the key? The key is Christ. You need Christ. You only need one thing. You need the person of Christ to unlock all that wisdom and all that knowledge that's available to you. You know, the person who knows Christ knows more than the greatest philosopher that doesn't know Christ.

[36 : 35] And the whole reason Paul is building them up to this point, why they need to get this, why they need to be brought back to the fact that Christ is the key, is because there's a little bit of trouble in Colossae.

And this is where he gets to their seduction. They're being seduced. Paul's saying, I'm concerned about you guys. He says, don't let anyone deceive you.

Okay, guys, I need to stop and ask us a question here. Okay, it's a question. Just look at me. This is the question. I want you to think about this and answer it honestly. Is it hard to follow Jesus?

Yes. Yes. Okay. If you said no, that's amazing, but it's not true. Is it hard to follow Jesus?

Yes. Okay. Your family thinks you ate something and you've gone crazy. Your coworkers think you're an idiot and they're quite happy to tell you.

[37 : 36] Plus that we live in a culture which tempts us morally every day, but it also attacks us mentally. It challenges our thoughts, right?

And Paul's saying, he goes, they're clever talkers. And the language there is they smooth with their tongue. And they come in between you and they're giving you this wisdom and this knowledge.

But it's without the key. It's without the key. And he says, it's a danger to your faith. It's leading you away from Christ. Guys, we face the same dangers today.

The dangers still persist today where we have this thought attacking us. So I love the way Ravi Zacharias talks about this. He talks about it as mass spiritual marketing.

And the person he uses as an example is Oprah. So sorry if you like Oprah. I'm going to slag her for a bit here. But Oprah only shows us that there is a hunger and a thirst for the spiritual.

[38 : 44] There is a hunger and a thirst for the spiritual in every human being. Are we supposedly becoming more scientific? The heart of man is religious beyond all else.

We want to know that there is something greater than us. And Oprah fills that void with this knowledge and this wisdom which sounds so good. But there's no key.

There's no key. There's no Christ in there. And Paul's saying, don't let anyone persuade you. The key is Christ. When you stop using Christ, it's a danger to your faith.

Because you see, Jesus is not just a clue. He's not just a good moral figure. He's not just a teacher. He's not just a guideline.

He is the key. He's the key. He's the one that binds it all together. You know, and the simplest Christian with the key has more understanding of truth than the most brilliant sinner.

[39 : 49] You know, the most offensive thing Jesus ever said about himself was this. He said, I am the way, the truth, the life.

Now, if Jesus had just said, I'm a way, a truth, a life, fine, no problem. No one's got a problem with that, right? Sure, you believe, good for you. He's a way. But Jesus made it exclusive.

He said, I am the way, the truth, the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Jesus is saying, I'm the key.

I'm the key. And Paul looks at this church and he goes, this is the solution, guys. Here's my solution. And he starts off, right, with this incredible statement.

Paul says, I'm absent from you in body, but I'm with you in spirit. Now, have you ever said that?

Now, we use it today, right? But usually when we say, oh, I'll be with you in spirit, we kind of mean like, oh, I'll be thinking of you or something.

[40 : 58] That's not what Paul means here. When he says, I'm absent from body, with you in spirit, Paul's actually saying, I see what is going on in your church by my spirit.

It's been revealed to me what is happening in your church. I know what is happening. So we probably need to be a little bit more careful when we say, I'll be with you in spirit, to what actually Paul's meaning here.

And he says this. He goes, I delight in your good order. Now, he's using a military term there. A military term. And they would have understood this, right?

So it's a term he says, you guys have got it right. You guys have got it right. And what they would have done is they would have formed a square. They would have linked arms. They would have formed a square.

So they're facing out the enemy, but they join together. And right in the middle would have been the general. Right in the middle would have been the general protecting the troops, right? Giving orders to the troops.

[41 : 56] And that's what Paul says. That's what I see. You guys are joining in together. You're linking. You're forming a square. You're looking out. And right in the center is Jesus. Right in the center is the Christ.

And that's good, guys, because when an argument comes, you guys are standing firm. You're standing together. You're not going to be budged. You're not going to be moved. It's going to be okay because you're standing close to him.

I'm going to use a lion example. I'm from Africa, so I'm allowed to use a lion example. But when lions hunt, okay, so it's the lioness. It's the girl lion who hunts, right?

And when they hunt and they're looking at any herd that they're hunting, doesn't matter what it is, zebra, wildebeest, whatever, they will lie in wait. And they're looking for the one that becomes separated from the herd.

The ones that are always safest in the herd are the ones who are closest to the leader. They're the ones closest to the head of the herd. They are the safest. But every now and then, one will become separated from the herd.

[43 : 00] And that's the one the lion attacks. They look for the ones that are wandering, and those are the ones that attack. And that's what Paul's saying here. He goes like, don't wander. Don't wander. Be together.

Be together. Be close to the leader. Be close to Jesus. And you're going to be fine. You're going to be fine. I was told once, never ever preach a sermon without telling the people what you want them to do about it.

So I gave you the five S's, right, of Paul's sermon. And now I'm going to give you the three C's that he wants us to take away. And the first one is Christ.

Christ. Just make sure that Christ is the key to the things you are facing. In your suffering, in your confusion and your doubts and your wondering, make sure that Christ is the key.

You see him in your suffering too. When you're declaring the secret of the gospel that's available to everyone, make sure that it's Christ that you preach.

[44 : 12] When you are straining and you're working hard and you need his power and his energy, make sure that you come to Christ.

And those moments when you feel that you're being seduced and you're wondering and you're doubting and you're wondering away from the flock, come back to him.

Make sure that Christ is the key. And finally, in your solution, when you're standing firm and you're on him, rejoice in Christ.

Rejoice in Christ. And the second thing we all need is courage. The second C is courage, right? Courage to stand firm. Paul writes, right?

This is the great apostle Paul. He says, pray that I might preach and declare the gospel as I should. Right? If Paul needed boldness to declare the gospel, to live out the gospel, my goodness, so do we.

[45 : 14] In love. Courage to preach the gospel in love. Guys, if you're new to Watermark, please understand that you are coming into a broken church.

We're full of broken people with our own messed up traits. But we are on a journey. We're laying down the thing where we're determined to follow Jesus. We're determined to follow Jesus.

In our brokenness, you're not going to find perfection here. But you are going to find a community that is determined to follow him. And it's going to hold him up high. We need courage to do that.

And the third thing is we need community. We need each other. We need to be knitted together as we walk this journey. We need to be a community of rescuing hugs.

Community group is going to be awesome this week, right? Everyone is going to be hugging each other. It's going to be great. But really, there's an element there, right? Jesus wants you to be knitted together.

[46 : 19] And then you grow to maturity. I'm going to pray for us. And I need to pray for myself here. And then we're going to worship.

And I'd ask you to stand as we sing this song. We've been singing it for a couple of weeks, right? But it's about the holiness of God. It's about asking him to reveal who he is to us.

And as we sing it as an act of worship, I would ask us to really turn it into a prayer. God, show me. Open up my eyes to the wonder of who you are.

Build my life upon your love. Let me be firm in you. Let me find the joy and the hope that is in you. Lead me in love to others.

Help me to serve others. Help me to love them. And help me to die to myself. Let us pray. Father, I want to thank you that you have revealed Christ to us.

[47 : 20] Lord, I pray that you bless us with the Jewish Messiah and all the promises that are now ours in Christ Jesus. Lord, I pray that the reality of knowing Jesus would be real to us this week.

As we walk out of this church service, may our time of worship not just end, but may we truly reflect on who you are. Lord, I pray that our hearts would be encouraged.

I pray, Lord God, that we would come to a place where we are knitted together in love to serve one another, Lord. And Lord, above all, I pray, help us to know you more, to love you more.

In Jesus' name.