

Finally, My Brethren

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

Date: 21 August 2024

Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to the last portion of Scripture that we read.
- I think we read about six. So the last one was Ephesians chapter six. Just picking up where we left off before the summer.
- Ephesians chapter six and verse ten. Where Paul writes, But this evening, particularly the word, finally.
- Finally. I don't know about you, but when I was young and when I was still unconverted, I would be sitting in church almost every Sunday morning.
- And sadly, to say, my attention was drawn elsewhere. My mind was always drifting far away from what the minister was ever preaching about.
- [1 : 1 3] And I'd probably be daydreaming and I would be completely zoned out from the sermon. That was until the minister said, And finally.
- And finally. And with that, I was often delighted. Because I'd switch on. I'd sit up. Knowing that the minister was coming to the conclusion of his sermon.
- And at the time, his sermons seemed like they would never end. And I suppose that's a sign of grace in your heart when the sermons of the minister start becoming shorter.
- But when I was unconverted, I thought that the sermons would never end. But it was those words, and finally, that would always make me look up and listen to the conclusion of his sermon.
- Now, maybe you were like that when you were young and unconverted. Maybe you're still like that every week, listening to me. You're drifting in your mind and maybe you're daydreaming and delighted when I finally say, and finally.
- [2 : 1 4] But of course, when I came to the early church, they weren't like that at all. They would be hanging on Paul's every word. Hoping that he'd never come to the conclusion of his letter.
- But what you notice about Paul's letters is that when he comes to his conclusion, he usually writes the phrase, Finally, my brethren. Finally, my brethren.
- That's what we see here. Although it's only finally if you're using the ESV. But it's finally, my brethren, in the authorised version. And I like the finally, my brethren.
- Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.
- Now, as you know, we're continuing our study of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. But we're also coming to the conclusion of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Hence the finally, my brethren.
- [3 : 1 2] But, you know, it was when I came back to study Ephesians after the summer. I just reached the first word. And I thought, that's an interesting word. Be good to study it. And, you know, when you study Paul's finalies, they're fascinating.

Paul's finalies are fascinating. And so, for a few moments this evening, I just want to think about Paul's finalies. And I want us to think about it from the letters to those churches that we read.

Because Paul's finalies, they appear, as we read in the letters to the Corinthians, Philippians, and Thessalonians. And, of course, they appear here in Ephesians, where he says, finally, my brethren.

Finally, my brethren. So, Paul's first finally, as we read, it was found in his letter to the Corinthians, where Paul writes in 2 Corinthians, he says, Finally, my brethren.

And it was sweet. And there's a reason why it was short and sweet. Because in comparison to his other letters to the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and the Thessalonians, some of the largest and even some of the longest letters of Paul, they were written to the church in Corinth.

[4 : 53] In fact, Paul, when you look at it, when you study his letters, you can see that Paul wrote four letters to the church in Corinth. Because 1 Corinthians, which we have in our Bible, was actually Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth.

And 2 Corinthians, which we're reading from earlier, was actually the fourth letter Paul wrote to the church in Corinth. We don't have the first or the third letter to the Corinthians.

They were lost and they were never found. But we know they existed because Paul makes reference to them throughout these letters that we do have, 1 and 2 Corinthians. And of these lost letters, one of them has been regarded as the letter of tears.

Because Paul refers to it in 2 Corinthians 4, where he says, I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

So Paul loved the church in Corinth, which is certainly evidenced by the fact that he wrote four large and four long letters to them. And in those letters, as you've read them, I'm sure yourself, Paul addresses big issues.

[6 : 09] He addresses big issues in the church, such as division, immorality. He addresses issues of marriage, the Lord's Supper, gifts of the Holy Spirit. Paul also wrote his last letter to the Corinthians in order to defend his own apostleship and even to denounce the false accusations being made against him by false teachers.

And throughout all his large and long letters to the church in Corinth, Paul irons out many of the issues, which is why when he comes to his conclusion, he makes it short and he makes it sweet.

Finally, my brethren, farewell. Be perfect. Be of good comfort. Be of one mind. Live in peace and the love of God and peace shall be with you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints salute you. So with such a history of division and difference of opinion with false teachers and false teaching, with so much separation and schism within the church in Corinth, Paul's conclusion is clear.

Love one another as Christ has loved you. Love one another as Christ has loved you. And when you do that, says Paul to the Corinthians, the blessing of God and the benediction of God will be upon you.

[7 : 27] Which is why Paul concludes with the pronouncing of the benediction. The words we often hear every Lord's Day and even on Wednesday night, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

Amen. And so that's the first finally. The first fascinating finally of Paul. It was written to the Corinthians. Finally, my brethren. The second finally is actually two finalies for the price of one.

Because in Paul's letter to the Philippians, as we read earlier, his first finally to the Philippians was in chapter three. And then his second finally to the Philippians is in chapter four.

And with this Paul, you know, he reminds me of a minister I used to listen to. And he'd be coming to the conclusion of his sermon. And he would say to the congregation the words I was longing to listen for.

And finally. But then his conclusion somehow gets a second wind. And he goes on longer than he anticipated. And longer than anybody expected. And so that he comes to his second.

[8 : 36] And finally. So usually we go to two and finalies for the price of one. And in many ways, that's what Paul does in his letter to the Philippians. But in Paul's first finally to the Philippians, he writes, as we read there in chapter three.

He wrote, Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me. And it is safe for you.

Look out for the dogs. Look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision. Who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus.

And put no confidence in the flesh. So Paul's first finally to the Philippians was a call to rejoice. That's why he writes, Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.

In fact, Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians as this call to rejoice in the Lord. The whole letter is about being joyful and rejoicing in the Lord. The whole letter is about having the joy of faith in Jesus Christ.

[9 : 38] And the joy of living the Christian life. Paul even described the Philippians. He loved the Corinthians. But he called the Philippians his joy and his crown.

And he probably called them that because, well, every time he would have thought of the church in Philippi, I'm sure that Paul would have remembered those who were first converted under his ministry.

You remember there was the demon-possessed girl. There was the Philippian jailer. And there was Lydia, whom the Lord opened her heart. And, you know, you think of that occasion in Act 16.

And you think about the night when Paul was in the prison cell. He was singing psalms with Silas. And it must have been an amazing night. A great night to be a Christian. To experience an earthquake.

Maybe not the best thing to go through. But then you have the prison doors swinging open. And then you have the Philippian jailer who comes to the end of himself. And he's asking, what must I do to be saved? And, you know, as a Christian, there's no greater joy in life than to point someone in the way of salvation and say to them simply, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

[10 : 51] And it's no wonder Paul considered the Philippians his joy and his crown. Which is why in his letter to them, he calls them to rejoice. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.

But as you know, Paul, he repeats himself in his letter to the Philippians. Because he's obviously saying the same thing. He writes in chapter 4, rejoice in the Lord always.

And I'll say it again, he says, rejoice. And for Paul, as a preacher of the gospel and as a pastor of God's people, he has no issue repeating himself. He has absolutely no issue recovering old ground.

Because his priority as a preacher of the gospel and as a pastor of God's people, his priority is that they would be free from false doctrine. And in Paul's mind, you can only really rejoice when you rid yourself of false teaching.

You can only really rejoice when you rid yourselves of false teaching. Which is why in his first, finally, in Philippians chapter 3, Paul warned the church to look out.

[11 : 58] That's what he said there in chapter 3. Look out. Look out for the dogs. Look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh. Paul warned the church, look out for the false teachers at Philippi.

Because they're like scavenger dogs. They seek to devour and they seek to destroy the church. They're evildoers. They're not out to encourage. They're out to bring evil into the church.

And their mantra and their mission, says Paul, is not the message of the gospel, but to mutilate the flesh. Because according to the false teachers at Philippi, in order to be a proper Christian, you needed Jesus plus.

It was always Jesus plus. Jesus plus knowledge. Jesus plus good works. Jesus plus law keeping. Jesus plus your circumcision.

It was always Jesus plus. Jesus plus. But this mantra, this mission to mutilate the flesh in order to be the proper Christian, it left the Philippians, as it would us, it made them feel inferior and inadequate, and that their Christianity lacked something.

[13 : 06] Which is why Paul says in his first finally, we are the circumcision. And we are those who worship God by the Spirit.

And we glory in Christ Jesus. And we put no confidence, no confidence in the flesh. Paul was clear. The message of the gospel is not Jesus plus.

It's Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. And with that, you read through Philippians, Paul gets a second wind. He gets excited. And he starts sharing his own story of salvation.

He talks about being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and circumcised on the eighth day, a Pharisee and a zealot. And he speaks about the fact that whatever gain he had as a religious zealot, he now counts it all as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour.

And that's why when Paul finally comes to the conclusion of his letter, with his second finally to the Philippians in chapter 4, he writes there in chapter 4, And you know, I think Paul's finally to the Philippians is probably one of the most beautiful verses in the Bible.

[14 : 36] because instead of focusing upon all the false claims and the false confessions of the false teachers at Philippi, Paul calls us to focus and to fixate our mind on Jesus.

He says to the Philippians, Sit and saturate yourself in his word. Sit and saturate yourself in his word.

And as you do, love him. Look to him. Learn from him. Lean upon him. And live for him. And when you read his word, says Paul, when you read it, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think on these things.

And of course, Paul is calling us to think about Jesus. Jesus. Because he is true. He is honourable. He is just. He is pure.

He is lovely. He is commendable. He is excellent. He is worthy of praise. Therefore, says Paul, think about these things.

[15 : 52] Think about Jesus. And you know, what a way to conclude a letter. Having addressed the issues and advised with instruction to this church to come to the conclusion of the letter and to say to these Christians, finally, my brethren, what I want to say to you is, think about Jesus.

Think about Jesus. Focus on him. Fix your eyes on him. Follow him. Finally, my brethren, think about Jesus. Jesus. So that's the second fascinating, finally, of Paul.

Then there's the third church with the third finally. And it's directed towards, as we read, the church in Thessalonica. The church in Thessalonica. And it was during a second missionary journey that Paul planted the church in Thessalonica.

where we read in Acts chapter 17 that on three consecutive Sabbaths, Paul, he reasoned with the Thessalonians with the scriptures. He proclaimed the gospel.

He proved that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and die and rise again from the dead. But as you can probably predict, there were those who responded to the gospel in faith and there were those in Thessalonica who responded to the gospel in fear.

[17 : 09] They rejected the gospel, particularly the Jews. The Jews were jealous of Paul's preaching to the point that they stirred up a mob to search for Paul and Silas. And when they couldn't find him, they made all these accusations, all these allegations which they brought to the city authorities.

And you remember what they said about Paul and Silas. These men have turned the world upside down. These men have turned the world upside down. And you know, as a Christian, I don't think you could have a better accusation or a better allegation made against you.

That the preaching and proclamation of the gospel and that your Christian life and your Christian witness is turning the world upside down. But you know, when Paul wrote both his letters to the church in Thessalonica, he was in prison for his faith and the church of the Thessalonians was being persecuted for their faith.

And like the church in Philippi, the Thessalonians, they were facing false teaching from false teachers. And these false teachers in Thessalonica, they were claiming that there would be no resurrection at the last day.

There would be no return of Jesus at the last day. And Paul affirmed and assured to the Thessalonians, he said that there would be a resurrection and Jesus will return to judge the quick and the dead.

[18 : 33] Because he writes there, and I love those words in 1 Thessalonians 4, the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, with the sound of the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.

And Paul writes to the Thessalonians, therefore encourage one another with these words. So Paul exhorts, he encourages the Thessalonians to remain focused upon Jesus, to remain faithful to Jesus until he comes again.

Which is why he concludes both his letters to the Thessalonians with these two requests. Please God and pray for us.

Please God and pray for us. When he says please God, he's telling them to live your life in a manner that is pleasing to God.

[19 : 41] Live your life worthy of the gospel. Live your life ready. Ready for the return of Jesus. Live every day as if Jesus was coming back.

Finally, my brethren, he says, please God. And then he says, pray for us. Pray for us. It's the last thing he says to the Thessalonians.

Finally, my brethren, pray for us. And you know, as a preacher of the gospel and a pastor of God's people, there's one thing Paul always knew and always needed.

And that was the prayers of God's people. The prayers of God's people. And I can't disagree with Paul. I certainly agree with him.

Because you are nothing without the prayers of God's people. You're nothing without the prayers of God's people. Which is why we need the prayers of God's people.

[20 : 41] Finally, my brethren, pray for us, he says. And it was Spurgeon in his daily devotional morning and evening. Maybe you've got it. Maybe you read it. Maybe you read it at one time.

It was there in morning and evening. Spurgeon focused on Paul's Finally. The morning of 7th of July. So you can go home and find it.

The title was Finally, my brethren, pray for us. And this is what Spurgeon wrote. This one morning in the year, we reserved to remind each reader of the importance of praying for ministers and we earnestly implore every Christian household to heed this request first uttered by Paul and now repeated by us.

Brethren, our work is solemn and our word is either a savor of life unto life or of death unto death. As officers in Christ's army, we are the special target of the hostility of men and devils.

They watch for our faltering and work to trip us at our heels. And yet we wish to encourage you by our preaching. We desire to be a blessing to your children.

[21 : 57] We long to be useful both to saints and to sinners. Therefore, writes Spurgeon, dear friends, intercede for us with our God.

We are miserable men if we miss the help of your prayers, but happy are we if we live in your supplications. In the name of Jesus, say Spurgeon, we beseech you.

Brethren, pray for us. Do you know, my friend, don't you find Paul's finalists fascinating? I hope your mind hasn't drifted or you've been daydreaming because even Paul's finalists, they have something to tell us.

They have something to teach us about the Christian life and even has been part of the church of Jesus Christ. And God willing, next week, we'll get past the first word of verse 10 and we'll see that what Paul's finally in his letter to the Ephesians has to tell us and teach us about fighting the good fight of faith because Paul says there in Ephesians 6, he says, Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles or the schemes of the devil.

So finally, my brethren, wonderful words. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks this evening for the wonderful fact that wherever we open the Bible and whatever page of Scripture we turn to.

[23 : 41] It is something to tell us. It is something to tell us about ourselves but also something to tell us about our wonderful Saviour and the church that he has established.

And Lord, we pray that we would learn from thy truth, that our prayer daily would be teach me thy way and in thy truth, O Lord, then walk while I, unite my heart that I, thy name, may fear continually.

And Lord, we confess how little we read it and sometimes how little we understand it. But help us, Lord, we pray, that as Paul was reminding the Philippians that whatever part we read, that we are to find Jesus in it, we're to focus on him, to fixate our minds on him and to learn more about him.

O Lord, enable us, we pray, to love him more, to serve him better, to live for him more honourably and seek to live and bring glory to his name.

Bless us, Lord, we ask, undertake for us, we pray. Remember those, Lord, who are mourning. We pray for the MacDonald family that we met with today and we ask that thou wouldst speak to them, that thy word would not return empty, but truly accomplish in the thing whereto thou descended.

[24 : 58] We pray also for in his year and tonight and the extended family, be gracious to them and comfort them, we ask, O Lord, that thou wouldst undertake for them, that they would know and be assured that underneath are the everlasting arms of God, a God who is an eternal refuge and a one who reminds us that he is a refuge and strength and a very present help, even in our time of trouble.

Go before us and we pray, bless us in our being together, take away our iniquity, receive us graciously, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening.

We're going to sing the words of Psalm 39. Psalm 39 in the Sing Psalms version. It's on page 50. Psalm 39, we're singing from verse 12 through the double verse and then also the last verse, verse 13.

So Psalm 39 and verse 12, the reason we're singing this psalm, it's the only psalm in the Psalter with the word finally. The only one I could find as it says there in verse 13.

So Psalm 39 and verse 12, O Lord, please listen to my prayer. Did I say sing psalms? Yeah, I did. O Lord, please listen to my prayer and hear my cry for aid. Do not be deaf to the appeal which I with tears have made.

[26 : 35] For as your guest I stay a while. I am like my father Joel, a stranger and a pilgrim here. Have mercy when I call. O turn away your eyes from me.

Let me rejoice again before I finally depart and hear no more remain. So we'll sing these verses of Psalm 39 to God's praise.

O Lord, please listen to my prayer and hear my cry for aid.

Do not be deaf to the appeal. Do not be deaf to the appeal which I with tears have made.

For as your guest I stay a while. I'm like my father and I have a stranger and a pilgrim here.

[28 : 19] A stranger and a pilgrim here.

Have mercy when I call. O turn away your eyes from me.

Let me rejoice joy again before I finally depart before I finally depart and hear no more remain.

Amen. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen.