

## 2 Corinthians 1:12-24

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, pastor, vicar, minister, whatever you call him. It's still a tough job. If he visits! his flock, he's nosy. If he doesn't, he's a snob. If he preaches longer than ten minutes, it's too long. If he preaches less than ten minutes, then he can't have prepared his sermons.

And what do we pay him for? If he runs a car, he's worldly. If he doesn't, he's always late for appointments. If he tells a joke, he's flippant. If he doesn't, he's far too serious. If he starts the service on time, his watch must be fast. If he's a minute late, he's keeping the congregation waiting. If he takes a holiday, he's never in the parish. If he doesn't, he's a stick in the mud. If he runs a gala or a bazaar, he's money mad. If he doesn't, there's no social life in the parish. If he has the church painted and redecorated, he's extravagant. If he doesn't, the church is shabby. If he's young, he's inexperienced. If he's getting all the auto attire. But when he dies, there's never been anyone like him.

I've never read that before. Now, Paul was critics, even the apostle Paul. And he planted the church in Corinth. But after he'd left, other leaders come in from Corinth from the outside. And they'd turn people against the apostle Paul. It's one of the oldest tricks in the book, isn't it? You raise yourself up by putting others down. Our ministers are very, very good at that, actually. And that is what they were doing in Corinth. It is a deliberate attempt to alienate Paul in the affections of the Corinthian church. And you get strong feelings as you read this book, and do read this book, that nothing Paul ever does is right as far as his critics are concerned. He couldn't do anything right. So he doesn't charge a preaching fee. Well, he can't be much of a preacher then, can he? If he doesn't charge for his service, everybody else travelling around Macedonia, well, the Mediterranean world, they charge big fat fees for their inspirational speaking. Paul wasn't much of an inspirational speaker if he didn't charge. And he doesn't have the right qualifications. So in America, the big thing that ministers get is something called D-Mins, Doctor of Ministry. It's not a PhD, it's a two-year long essay. At the end of it, you become a Doctor of Ministry, a demon. Os Guinness calls it the demonization of ministry. But where are Paul's qualifications?

Where are Paul's qualifications? They say, Paul, where are your letters of commendation? And where are your credentials, Paul? And he answers that in chapter 3. It's a brilliant response.

[ 2 : 43 ] He says, I've actually credited you are my letter of commendation. I've written my ministry on your heart. And that really is the acid test, isn't it, of elders' ministry. It's not what letters they've got after their name. But what kind of people do they leave behind?

That's the test, isn't it? And here's another criticism that we're going to look at. They're accusing the Apostle here of insincerity, of being fickle, of chopping and changing. So if you look at verses 15 to 17 of chapter 1, he's always changing his plans. He's saying one thing and doing another. He's promising to visit, but failing to follow through with that promise. So how can you trust a man like that? That is what they're saying. How can you believe anything he says? At one level, I don't know what you think, but as I've read on Corinthians, you just want to say, is this water off of that back? You're going to get stick, Paul. Why rise to the bait? You always get criticisms. Sticks and stones, I hurt my bones, but names will never hurt me. Well, we all know that that's a lie, don't we? And words have devastating effects. And you can see the reason that these super-apostles, as Paul calls them, these false leaders, are so critical of Paul. And it's not just because what they envisage is fickleness, what they see as fickleness, but it is because actually they are against the message that he preaches. The reason people attack the messenger is because they don't like the message. And it's not just Paul who is under attack in 2 Corinthians.

You must see that. It is the gospel itself that is under attack. And that is why Paul defends himself so strongly. That's why he defends his ministry so strongly. Because the gospel itself, he can't just let it pass. Because the gospel itself is under attack. On the surface, it seems like a petty little

squabble about Paul's travel plans. He's changed his mind, so big deal. But in reality, it is a massive attack on Paul's gospel. Now let me try and show you that. I've got two points. I'm not really sure how the second one is going to work out.

But I've got, the first point is the gospel message, and then my second point is the gospel ministry. I know where I'm going, roughly. Alright? So this is what he says in verses 17 and 18. He says this gospel message, it is not yes, no, maybe. It is yes and amen.

[ 5 : 18 ] In Christ. And so they've accused him of being undecided. They've accused him of not being able to make up his mind. And he says to them there in verse 17, was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Did I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say yes, yes and no, no, at the same time? You got people like that? Yes, yes. No, no, there's a ministry in wheels that always answers that. You ask him something and he says yes, yes, no, no. And when you try and push him on that, he kind of shuffles on both feet like preachers do, and more yes than no, more no than yes. Well there are questions like that, aren't there?

Is the Bible the word of God? They say, well, yes and no. More yes than no. More no than yes, depending on which day you get them. Did Jesus Christ, is he God's son, come in the flesh? Well, yes and no, they say. And Paul is saying that is not the message that I brought to you. Paul is saying there is no yes and no about it. All the promises of God are yes and amen in Christ. All God's promises, all of God's plans, all of God's dealings, throughout history, find their conclusion and focus in Jesus Christ. In the film, I'm saving a private writer, bloodthirsty movie, but some of you will have seen it. The original story is a true story.

It comes out of the American Civil War and Stephen Spielberg took that story and put it into World War II. But the story hinges on a promise. A promise that the United States General Staff made amongst themselves that there was one mother in the Midwest who would not have to face the death of all four of her sons in the Second World War. That is the storyline. I'm going to ruin the film for you, but you will forgive me that. It's a promise that the General Staff made amongst themselves.

Now this mother, who had lost three sons, and they were determined that she wouldn't lose a fourth son. So at immense cost to themselves and the infantry section, they fight their way across to Normandy to find and to rescue her only surviving son, Private Ryan, just to keep a promise.

[ 7 : 37 ] And yet for all the determination, the US General Staff might not have been able to keep that promise, might they? They might not have been able to rescue Private Ryan alive. They did, but they might not have been able to. We are not always, are we, able to keep our promises. Sometimes, like the Apostle Paul, we have to change our minds, don't we? We have to change our minds.

We are not even able to keep our promises to those that we love the most. But God does. That is what Paul is saying. God does. And you can absolutely rely that God will always carry through on what he's promised. He hasn't made a single promise that's failed to follow through on. And all the promises God has made, you can read them there in the Old Testament, all the promises of God, all that God has promised to do, culminate and conclude and find their focus in Jesus Christ. That is what he's saying. That is the message that planted the church of Cohen. All the promises of God are yes and amen in Christ Jesus. And God has promised, doesn't he, to mount a massive rescue operation. And he's done that in Jesus. And Jesus is not plan B, as some people teach. God's first plan was to kind of rescue the world through Israel.

And Israel messed it up, and so in the end God sent Jesus instead. Some people say the law was too hard. Originally God sent the law, but people couldn't live by the law, so God then sent Jesus. All that is rubbish. It is nonsense. Everything that God has ever planned to do, everything that God has promised and planned before the foundation of the world is all fulfilled in Jesus at great cost for himself. Think of the blood and gore of saving Private Ryan. Think of what those men went through to keep that promise to that mother in the Midwest. That is nothing.

It is nothing to what God has done in Christ. Go into the Garden of Gethsemane. And you see Jesus facing there something worse even than the Holocaust. Jesus facing there even worse than what is going on in Nigeria and Iraq and Saudi Arabia. You see Jesus struggling, sweating drops of blood, pleading, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but your will be done. Do you see that even when it's inconvenient? Even when it's painful? Even in the Garden of Gethsemane. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done. All that God has promised. All that God has said he's going to do, he is going to do it. Even though it's inconvenient, even though it is

painful. And again, we often focus, don't we, on the pain that Jesus went through for us on the cross. When he went through hell on the cross. But don't forget the pain of the Father. The pain the Father went through in giving Jesus up to the cross. And yet all he has promised to do. He doesn't step back from that. He doesn't change his mind. He doesn't bring in plan B. All that God has promised to do is yes and amen. And God has promised not just to save private Ryan, but a multitude that no man can number. From every tribe and tongue and nation and language. And God has promised to save a people for himself. And he will do it through Jesus. He will do it on the cross. Now let me try and apply this for a while, before I move on. Let me ask you first of all, have you said your amen? Have you said your amen? Amen means agreed. Let it be. So Paul says in verse 20, he's talking about himself and Titus and Silas as preachers of the gospel. Verse 20. For all the promises of God find their yes in him. And that is why through him that we utter our amen to God for his glory. And God has done exactly what he said he was going to do in sending Jesus into the world. And all we've done, Paul said, said amen to that.

Agreed. We've not taken away from it. We have elaborated on it. All we've done in preaching the gospel is said amen to that. And I want to ask you tonight, have you said your amen?

[12:07] To God's yes. Amen just means so be it. All the way to say it, you can say that if you understand. Instead of saying amen, you can say agreed. Or so be it. Good fun. Instead of saying amen, we can say that. We agree with this. Have you accepted what God has done in Christ? Have you done that? One of the characteristics, I think, of London life is that we are marvellous at giving a non-committal answer. We've found that particularly students where you don't really know what they're saying. You don't really know whether it's a yes or a no. Or maybe genius is pretty good in it as well, aren't they? Where you give a kind of non-committal answer. Are you coming next Friday? I'm hoping to be there, isn't it? If all the puns are well, if it's a good week, I'll be there. It's not a yes or a no. It's non-committal.

So let me ask you tonight, is that what you're doing with the gospel? That God has done for you the most remarkable thing. It's sending his son into the world to save you. And you say, I'm waiting for a better offer, actually. Yes, no, maybe. I'll become a Christian.

Is that what you're saying? What is stopping you tonight, tonight, from saying yes to God's Amen? What is stopping you from committing yourself? Handing yourself over to the one who died for you. And maybe it is the fear of change, isn't it? Of having a change. I think one of things in life is we are reluctant sometimes to get to know about something, because once we know about that something, we know things have got to change, isn't it? I thought that was technology, isn't it? I'm due for a new mobile phone. I've been due for about three months. Part of me doesn't want a new mobile phone, because once you get a new mobile phone, you get more into the mobile phone. And you spend more time on the internet. And a waste of time. People are nodding in front of me. We know what it's like, don't we? Once you have that knowledge of change, isn't it? And you have to change. And I think it's the same with the Gospel. And that's maybe, I think, why some people actually, they keep on the fringes of church life. If I say Amen to the Gospel, if I commit to the Gospel, then I know I'm going to have to change my life. And I don't want to do that. If I say Amen, I will have to change from being a rebel to becoming a worshipper. I'll have to change from living to please myself, to please him who died for me. That's what a Christian is. I don't want to do that. C.T. Stutt said, if Jesus Christ be God and die for me, then no sacrifice can I make it? He's to grave him or something like that. Saving Private Ryan, it begins in the graveyard of Normandy, with a man looking at a grave. And it ends in the same way. And at the end, you find out that the old man is actually Private Ryan. And he's looking at the grave of Captain Miller, who was the rescuer. And the film closes with him saying to Captain Miller, he calls his wife as a witness and he says, I've tried to live a good life so that the sacrifice you made for me was worth it. You see, if you say yes to what God has done in Christ, you're going to have to change. You can't say, God has done this and he's done it for you and just go through life saying yes, no, maybe. You can't. Or perhaps, maybe you think tonight, lots of people think this, I'll never be able to keep it up. If I say my amen, if I say yes, I'll never be able to keep it up. You know the facts, but you're not committed to them. You've not said amen. And you know you'll have to change, but you're just not sure you'll be able to keep it up. It's a very real fear. Well, look at verse 21. And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us.

How do

I know I'm going to be able to stand firm? I want to become a Christian. Maybe that's you tonight. How do I know I'll be able to carry it through? When you won't, but God will. And that's what Paul is

saying. It is God who will. Look at verse 22. And who has put his seal on us. Who has anointed us. And given us his spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

[ 16 : 53 ] He has anointed us. It's the word Christ actually. Christ is the anointed one. And so when people believe in the gospel, when they say yes to Christ, they are christened. They are Christed.

The great thing is that you can say tonight, we actually do Christians in IPC. When people say yes to the gospel, they are christened. They are Christed. They are anointed. And so God sends his spirit into your heart. So that you are not on your own. And Christ comes to live in you by his spirit. Verse 22. He's put his seal on us and given us his spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. He's put his mark of ownership on you. Now if something is yours, isn't it? You have something which is yours. You are protective of it. You are concerned about it. You spend money on something and it belongs to you. And you lend it to somebody and you're concerned about it. It matters to you. And what Paul is saying to you, when you say yes to the gospel, when you say your amen to what God has done, Christ says, that's my boy. That's my girl. He puts his brand on us. He puts his stamp of ownership on us.

Look at verse 21. And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us and who has put his seal on us and given us his spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. If you're a Christian tonight, God is saying, you belong to me now. How safe is that? Does it get any safer than that? You belong to me now. He's put his seal of ownership on us. And he's put his spirit in our hearts as a deposit guarantee in what is to come. So you've got to take a mortgage and you have to pay the deposit. And that is a guarantee, isn't it? The deposit is a guarantee that you will pay all the payments until the debt is paid. And what God does is he gives you his Holy Spirit. He puts his Holy Spirit in us as a down payment, as a first installment that guarantees the rest is coming. And ultimately we'll have it all. So what's keeping you? What are you pussyfooting about for? Why are you sitting on the fringes? Either this is true or it's not.

And if it's true, then why won't you say you're our man to it? Now let's move to verse 22, the gospel message, and then we're going to look at the gospel messenger, really, and see that he is sincere and loving. So note how Paul answers his critics. First of all, verses 12 to 14 of chapter 1, he insists on his sincerity. And then from verse 23 to chapter 4, verse 2, you'll see he protests his love. So we're seeing the gospel message, that you must put a yes an amen. Now let's see the gospel messenger. First of all, he insists on his sincerity. He gives two reasons why he changed his plans. His ministry is under attack from these super apostles. They are accusing him of insincerity. In fact, they are accusing him of worldliness. He picked that up in verse 12. For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we have behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom, but by the grace of God and supremely so towards you. That is what they're accusing him of. But according to God's grace, he has acted.

They were saying, listen, he doesn't know, he doesn't know, this guy, Paul, he doesn't know whether he's Arthur or Martha. He doesn't know whether he's coming or going. He doesn't know what he's doing. If he was a really spiritual person, they're saying, well, he would know.

[ 20 : 57 ] We know exactly what we're to do because we have a hotline to heaven, they were claiming. God has told me. People say that, don't they? I was at a meeting like that this week where somebody said, oh, I won't go into it because it drives me mad thinking about it, but they say the Lord said, and everybody else around the room nodded. The Lord told me about it at my desk this morning. And I said, no, actually, I don't agree. You can't argue with it, can you? Those super apostles, they have a hotline to heaven. They are the spiritual ones, Paul. Paul doesn't know. He can't even have to make up his mind about his travel plans. He's a worldly man. How can you trust him? But Paul insists.

He says, no, I'm sincere. He says, this is our boast, verse 12. The testimony of our conscience that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity. We've been governed not by our own personal preferences, not by selfish considerations, but it is grace that has influenced my decisions. So verse 13. For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand, and I hope you will fully understand. So the super apostles would say, here is a man and he talks and he changes. How can you believe anything he says? And Paul says there are no hidden agendas. You don't have to read between the lines about what we wrote to you. It's plain and it's simple, just like the gospel itself. All the promises of God are yes and are men in Christ. And he says there in verse 20, it's why it is through him that we utter our men to God for his glory. That is the message. Do you see what he's saying? It's a bit complicated.

He talks earlier on about Silas and Timothy in verse 19. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not yes and no. That is not the message we preached. All we did when we came was open up to the Old Testament scriptures and just say, Amen. This is what it is. We didn't add to it. We didn't elaborate on it.

We didn't subtract from it. And so I think in the midst of this, what is not an easy chapter, I think it's a really good test for us as a church. And it's a really good test for you if you're looking for a church. You want to evaluate the preaching in a church. Are they preaching Christ simply? Are they preaching Christ straightforwardly from the Bible? If you've ever got testimonies, you ask yourself that question. So for example, the Bible tells us that all nations will be blessed by one man, Jesus. That is what God promised, that in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. So if you hear somebody preaching, and they do preach, don't they? Actually, we don't really need to evangelise Hindus and Muslims and Buddhists because they will be blessed by God without Jesus, then actually you realise that person is a false teacher. Get out of that place as soon as you can. They're not preaching the Christ of Scripture. Or the Old Testament tells us that God will save his people through the death of one man, the suffering servant. That God is actually going to send somebody who will suffer and die, and the suffering servant is going to bear, come and bear God's anger against our sin. And that person is Jesus. That is what I preach to you, Paul says. That all God promised to do is fulfilled in Jesus. So if you go to a church where they deny the substitutionary sufferings and death of Jesus, get out of the place. It's a dangerous place to be. Why? Because it's false teaching. And those are false teachers. And the Old Testament tells us that God will ultimately judge the world. The day of the Lord is the great theme of the Old Testament. That God is going to judge the world and his enemies and overthrow all opposition through his King, through Jesus Christ. So if you find somebody who denies the final judgment of God, that isn't a Christian church. The Old Testament tells us to look forward to the new heavens and the new earth. So if you find someone saying, well actually you can have your best life now, you can establish heaven on earth. That is not a Christian ministry.

Test the ministry. Paul said, there's nothing we talked about that you shouldn't be able to understand. There's no secret. There's no reading between the lines. There's no mysteries. We spoke simply and straightforwardly about Jesus from the Bible. And all we did was say amen to what God has done. We didn't add to it. We didn't take away from it. That is gospel ministry. And Paul insists that he is a simple, straightforward, sincere gospel preacher. And that is why it's so important. Verse 14, because their internal destiny is at stake. Verse 14. That on the day of the Lord Jesus you will boast of us as we will boast of you. It's very interesting. There's a lot of boasting going on in Corinth. Isn't there?

[ 25 : 46 ] Lots and lots. 25 times the word boast appears in 2 Corinthians. And Paul, almost against his better judgment, uses the same language. He says, okay, let's boast. I want you to boast.

I want you to be able to boast of me and my ministry so that I will be able to boast of you on the day of judgment. And the word boast means to have justifiable confidence in. And Paul says, this is why I'm defending myself. It's not out of wounded pride. It's not out of self-defense. The reason I'm defending myself and my ministry is I want you to be able to boast.

I want you to be able to have justifiable confidence that I am the genuine article, that I am a gospel preacher. I want you to have that confidence in me and my ministry because I want to have confidence on the day of judgment in you. Do you see what he's saying? It's a remarkable thing. He's saying, unless you can boast of us, we won't be able to boast of you on the day of Christ Jesus. I can't have any confidence that you will be able to stand on that day unless you stick with me.

You stick with me and my gospel. And that is what he's saying. It's quite a claim to make, isn't it? I think it's something that we miss, that the actual message of the gospel is so tied up with the apostle Paul. Again and again in the New Testament letters.

[ 27 : 06 ] Stick with me and my message, he says, and you'll be saved on the last day. And so Paul insists on his sincerity. And lastly, he protests his love for them. So the implication, as you read it, is, well, Paul, he doesn't really care.

He's just thinking about himself. He doesn't care about them. And he answers that in verse 23. He says, Okay, it's a bit complicated, isn't it?

But Paul's last visit to them has been pretty painful, pretty difficult for all concerned. And there's a problem. We'll look at it from verse 5 onwards next week. But there was a problem in the church in

Corinth.

One of the members of the church had gone out of line and there was some scandalous behaviour. We're not actually sure of the details. Some people think it was the same guy in 1 Corinthians. Who was sleeping with his mother-in-law.

And Paul had called for discipline in the church. And they'd done nothing about it. So he sends them a harsh letter. He talks about that in verse 4 of chapter 2. For I wrote you out of much affliction and anguish.

[ 28 : 49 ] It's a painful letter. Do you remember those lines? This line from your parents? This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you. Do you remember that? This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you.

I didn't believe it. At all. But now I'm a parent. I do believe it. I know it's true. And that is how Paul felt about the Corinthians.

He says to the Corinthians. Listen boys. This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you. And he's governed by love. And that is why he's changed his mind. He's upset them. It's a really interesting passage.

He's upset them. And if he visits through seed soon. It's going to be counterproductive. The wounds will still be too raw. He wants to give them time to think it through and to work it out.

He's not avoiding the issue. He's written a painful letter. And now he wants a little distance. And a little time. And a little space between his visit and the next letter. That's all. And so he insists on his sincerity.

[ 29 : 46 ] And he protests his love. And he proves it. Just look on with me. We'll come back to this next week. But look on. Chapter 2 and verse 12. When I came to Troas. To preach the gospel of Christ.

Even though a door was opened for me in the Lord. My spirit was not at rest. Because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them. And went on to Macedonia. Just think about that.

He says I wasn't settled.

I didn't have peace of mind. Even in a place where there was a gospel opportunity. Troas he says there. Verse 12. The Lord has opened this door for me in Troas to preach. Here is a gospel opportunity presenting himself.

But I had no peace of mind. I couldn't get on with it. I couldn't settle. I had to go to Macedonia. I had to find out. I was anxious to find out. What is happening in Corinth. That's what he's saying. I had to catch up with Titus in Troas.

And he wasn't there. So I went on to Macedonia. Because I wanted to find out what you were doing. So don't tell me Corinthians that I don't care. And then he goes on to say this.

[ 30 : 42 ] Listen to me. Look at verse 14. But thanks be to God. Who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession. And through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

For we are the aroma of Christ to God. Among those who are being saved. And among those who are perishing. To one a fragrance from death to death. To the other a fragrance from life to life.

Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not like so many peddlers of God's word. But as men of sincerity. As commissioned by God in the sight of God. We speak in Christ.

It doesn't matter where we are. Whether in Troas. Or in Macedonia. Or in Corinth. Thanks be to God. Who always leads us in this triumphant procession of Christ everywhere. I was trying to think of a place that smells really nice.

And you cycle down up Bridge Road at lunchtime. And you get to just opposite Persian Palace. Just a little bit long there. And you have this glorious smell. Don't you? Of kebab.

[ 31 : 44 ] But that sounds horrible. But it is a lovely, lovely smell. And the bread. The naan. You breathe it in. Isn't it? It is like that. Isn't it? And it's this beautiful smell.

Then you get on the Eden Broadway. You get to Hayes. You get out of the train at Hayes. Breathe in. You smell Nescafe coffee.

It's horrific isn't it? It's horrific. It's a horrible thing. It's this smell. The fragrance of the gospel goes everywhere. It doesn't matter where you are.

You have this location. It doesn't matter where you are. The location doesn't matter. Wherever he goes. He can tell people about Jesus. And the fragrance of the gospel of God goes everywhere within. You can't help but notice it.

Whether it's Troas. Whether the doors are open there. Or whether it's Macedonia and the doors are shut. There's another smell. Isn't it? It's worse than this. Do you remember? Do you remember there used to be the rats.

[ 32 : 44 ] That used to die under the floorboards in the creche. Do you remember that? Do you remember that smell? John Corcoran would be in there for weeks trying to get them out. Isn't it? And you. It's that absolutely foul smell.

And there's something about it in there. Isn't there? Isn't there? Well, there's. The gospel is in it. It's either like the smell of kebabs on the expert road. Fragrant, glorious smell.

The smell of life. The smell of a creche with a dead rat in it. What he's saying is this. You can't stop the gospel. The gospel stinks.

And God is always leading us on in triumphant procession. Whatever circumstances. Whatever location you're in. And what is important to Paul is that wherever he goes.

He's sharing the Lord Jesus. He's preaching the gospel. Notice how he goes on in verses 14 to 17. I've just read it. It's a magnificent verse. We'll come back to it. But there's such sincerity.

[ 33 : 45 ] And you see for us. This gospel message. And this gospel messenger. Who is sincere and loving. We should be able to say with Paul. Chapter 1 verse 12. For our boast is this.

The testimony of our conscience. That we behave in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity. Isn't that a magnificent testimony? What is Paul saying? He's saying I live in line with the gospel. So Paul's rationale for changing his mind. And his plans. It's not whim. It's not worldly considerations. It's not being selfish. It's not a lame excuse.

He's saying I changed my plans because of the gospel. And his plans might have changed. But they changed out of loving kindness and tender mercy. Not out of fickleness or insincerity. And his plans have changed.

But are the same considerations that brought Jesus Christ into the world. That's what gospel heartedness and gospel mindedness means. So let me ask you as I finish.

[ 34 : 43 ] Are you a gospel Christian? Have you said amen to what God has done in Christ? And are you living in line with the gospel?

I think that's what this chapter is about. And maybe to know what you're here tonight and you're not yet a Christian. And you're trying to figure out your Christian friends or your Christian family.

And some of the things that they say and the way that they behave are very difficult for you. Very difficult for you to understand. And maybe it's because you haven't actually understood the gospel yet. And they are trying to live in line with the gospel.

And a person who is living in line with the gospel will do things. And will say things. That maybe unbelieving people in their family. And their unbelieving friends. Will never be able to understand. Until they understand what God has done fresh in Christ. Let's pray.