

I have a confession to make, I had never heard of Brightons before Scott came here. Falkirk yes, Brightons no, but it has been a privilege, a real privilege, to get, in a sense, to know you through Scott.

Scott and I have known each other for quite a number of years, quite a number of years! He was studying at the Bible College and we worked together in a church in Edinburgh. He was really like my youth worker and the thing I always remember about Scott, I don't know if he's listening in or not, was we almost had to put the reins on him such was his enthusiasm, his keenness, that he just had such a heart and passion for the Lord and I'm sure that is continuing with you to know just now. But now I do know Brightons, I can even find my way here, mind you I did use the sat nav!

So I'd never heard of the Church. I just thought I would go into Google for a couple of minutes and just try and find out some of the history. I couldn't find very much. You might be able to enlighten me, and even if my few facts here are wrong you can enlighten me but I believe the Church was built in the mid 1800s. I'm getting the nod so that's great. And it started from stone quarried in the village nearby. It was probably a lot smaller even then. It was quarried by a man called Alexander Laurie and the Church building now still stands here. There's obviously been some additions from what I can see and gather, but, more important than this building, beautiful though it is, and established though it be, is that the people of God are still here. Now not the same ones certainly looking around I doubt any of you go back quite that far! That God's people are still here over many years. Additions will have been made; people will have been taken home; others will have moved away from the area.

You're going to be studying and looking at the book of Philippians. It's actually one of my favorite books. I just love the book of Philippians! There's such a love and a warmth that comes ringing through it but one of the things, one of the portions I love, is the portion that I've been given to start off with and I've used these verses many a time to friends and colleagues who I really thank God for. And Paul's heart just reaches into my heart and into the hearts of people that you cannot help but just lift your heart and thank God every time you remember them and what they've meant to you. You have to read in Acts chapter 16 for the foundation of this church; every church has its foundation.

Now the church of course is not buildings. That's part of us but this was on Paul's second missionary journey round about AD 52, so it wasn't too long after actually Jesus's crucifixion and certainly it was a church of some traumatic beginnings, some lovely thoughts, as well of the woman Lydia praying down by the riverside, but then you get the traumatic appearance or calling of this young slave girl and that caused such an upset. When Paul rebuked the spirit and the spirit left her, the evil spirit left her, and she was no longer good for her master's use of telling fortunes, and that led to trouble, to a riot that led to Paul being imprisoned and been beaten. It led to an earthquake!

It was quite traumatic and read it for yourself and you'll find out the beginnings of this church and sometimes as you go through a book you need to constantly almost look back to remind yourselves as to the beginnings because the people here in the pews

the people at home perhaps you're starting to forget some of their faces. Not those that you know very well but I'm sure, like many churches, there are people that will come and go, people that just come in and listen to the word and sing and then leave, and you hardly get to know them. Others will be known, you'll have known them for years but these have been very difficult years or a year, very difficult months, so you're not just sitters in a pew, you're not just people who sit at home, and I hope when this is all over you will return to the pews, there's sometimes a fear that people think "Oh this is great I just have to get up last minute, get my cup of coffee and then I'll join in the church service." Do not deny yourself the fellowship of God's people when we're allowed to meet once again.

What I want to do is just look at some of the words in this passage. Words that stand out to me in just 11 short verses, and the first one is the word you, you, you. You know in 11 short verses it's mentioned 11 times? Now that's a lot for one little word and it's in the plural. It's not just so often we become very individualistic and we certainly live in a very individualistic society. "It's me" "My" "Mine". The church is not "me, my and mine"! The church is "you" collectively and there Paul writes every time I remember you who were the you. Now obviously from my point of view I know Scott and Gill, I don't know any of you either here or in your homes, but you do! You, God's holy people. That's what Paul said right at the beginning "to all God's holy people in Christ" and then he goes on every time "I remember you", and we'll look at some of the others in a moment. You just feel and you recognize and I'm sure, as you go through the book you will see it again and again, how Paul pours out his heart and thankfulness for "you" now, who, where - the "You".

Well of course we don't really know, we can surmise, it may have been Lydia or she may have gone home to Thyatira to her business, it probably certainly was the jailer and his family. You know it may even have been some of the other people in the jail with Paul and Silas at the time. Paul and Timothy sorry at the time, it may have been a young slave girl and her owner, it may have been the soldiers? We just don't know names. We do know, because they're in the book itself, is Epaphroditus as Euodia and Syntyche and Clement, but for most of them we don't know who they were. But when you have a phrase like this from his heart, he remembers you "I remember you from my heart" it's amazing! Now I don't know how long it'd been but it was about 10 years from the founding of this church to when Paul actually writes this letter, so things would have changed as things would change in your church.

What are you thinking about just now of the "you" that are not here? Perhaps it's many weeks or months since you've seen some of them. Even close people that you know and perhaps you've even forgotten the faces or the names of the person you last spoke with who was new to the church. You think I don't remember their names? They have been very difficult months but let's remind ourselves, even when you're a full church, we are not just people who sit in pews, we are people who are in partnership together with the Gospel and "all my prayers for you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now."

It's great when we come together because we can build one another but it's not just to have nice wee pally conversations, it is that and we need that, and we miss that, but we are in partnership together in the Gospel. "I remember you" so when you go through this book remember that you are a you together as Paul teaches, as he perhaps rebukes, so he doesn't do an awful lot in this book as he does in some others, but just remember you are together. Even if you get right through this book, which is very possible, and we're still not able to meet together in the way we would love to so, that's one word "you".

Another word that struck me was struck me was remember, remember. Do you remember the day when we didn't have to wear masks? Do you remember the time when we could sing our hearts out? It will happen again and these masks will go. I can remember you know, not that long ago, of you watch people in countries which are terribly polluted by fumes car fumes etc. and a lot of the people go around with masks on. You think "Oh my goodness!" and now we are, but here is this word Remember, remember. Because this pandemic has brought a lot of troubles into our midst, individually and collectively, There's the fear of dying or of catching it. There's the fear of those who have lost loved ones and have not even been able to go to their funerals. It just hurts. So remember, there's a lot of people. and it may include you sitting here. and it will certainly include some at home. of the heart and the pain of being unable to say goodbye in a normal way.

There's a pain in the heart of those who have lost their jobs and will yet lose their jobs, but you know, despite all that, and it is horrific, personally one of my biggest struggles is the loss of fellowship. We're built for congregational, we're a gregarious people, we are not individuals. You miss the hugs. you miss the lack of visiting people. I have a brother in Edinburgh who's dying of prostate cancer and I can't visit him. Well, I shouldn't visit him! There's times when I've had to go - he's not a believer, he has prostate cancer his wife has Parkinson's - and it's hurt. We've never fallen out but we've never been that close but I've been able to read with them to pray with him and sometimes I confess and admit - and please don't tell this to the authorities - I've broken the rules and crossed the bridge and gone into Edinburgh because I felt I had to and if he deteriorates and get worse I would do it again. I would do it again because sometimes there are laws that are greater than the laws of our government. Now that's not to encourage you to break rules, and we know one of the big problems, and we need to remember this, that this epidemic has caused an epidemic of loneliness. People on their own. My wife at the moment is going through, well we don't know what it is but she's just not well at all and it's got worse and worse. And how we miss friends that just can't come and visit us. Our friends that we just can't go and visit them. We have families that live abroad, well one lives in in southern Spain and another lives in Northern Ireland, and their children. We have one daughter at home. But it's this sense of loneliness and how we need to remember, how you need to remember, the people that sat beside you, the people that sat around you, and Paul encourages "I remember you. I always pray with joy because of your partnership."

Such is the heart and such should be our hearts for those you know. Memories are a wonderful thing and I know the older you get sometimes the memories fade a bit so you can't remember! I'm getting to the stage where I can't remember people's names that I know, so, well I don't know if there's a problem going on, but here Paul says I have you in my heart. Are there people that are on your heart, in your heart, in your congregation that you haven't seen for weeks and perhaps you felt you've not been able to contact. You may not be able to visit them but you can phone them. Now this is where we really thank God, which I've now never always done, is for the internet and for guys that can put these things out and pull together ways that we've been able to meet in some ways. But the memory of the people you miss dearly. It must have been a while since Paul had seen some of them but he longs for them. Long for the people of your congregation. Go on longing for them and for the day that you'll be able to sit together once again. Let your mind even now, I don't mind if it wanders the rest of this sermon and wanders to people that you remember so fondly.

And you can still contact them either through social media by phone or, my next word, through prayer. I do admit when it comes to this word and Paul's prayer I would take a series of sermons in itself to go through the whole gambit of prayer for one another but Paul says, and I'll just simply read this "and this is my prayer, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ. To the glory and praise of God." You see Paul's big heart in these verses and you see Paul's big prayers. Extend your prayers either to people or what you desire for people and as you go through this book. Many things will come to you and perhaps somebody that you are really feeling for. What you learn through the next few weeks, pray for someone in the congregation. They might be listening but you add to what they're hearing because it is terrible not being in touch and even when we do have social media. I've heard, I've said that many, many times "You know, I am Zoomed out!" I never even heard of Zoom before! That's the problem, most of us hadn't! I'm sure their share price has rocketed - but you know there are times when you just get weary. We thank God for the whole setup but we long just for that hug, that handshake, and that warmth. But remember because Paul comes through with here, with that joy of who's ever running through your mind just now, that you long to see, to remember those people with love and with feeling and to remember to pray fervently for one another.

The day will come when we will be back together and my last word is not actually one word but two words and Paul says this in verse six "Being confident of this that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." note the word "good work". "He who began a good work in you." Now he doesn't say good works, it's not plural, it's our work that's been done in you and me and many others. What is that "good work". Now there's been lots of good works being done during this pandemic, some of them are amazing, what people have done. I just even heard on the news this morning about a group a group of Sikhs that took food down to the lorry drivers and I think they traveled quite a distance and you just wonder who else was doing that? Were the Christian communities likewise doing that? They have

been named. You think there's people that have felt for these lorry drivers stuck away from home, stuck in something that was not of their making, and here were people with kindness, there were good works, You've got the young footballer Marcus Rashford that has taken him back to his childhood, a difficult childhood, and longs to see children properly fed. Lots of good works. But that's not what Paul's talking about here. There is a theory, well it's a theory, there's a belief that by good works people are saved. You know if I do good enough, enough good things, then God's bound to let me into heaven. That is false good works. Never saved anyone. But His good work did. It's the work of God, "He who began a good work in you." I wasn't brought up in a Christian home and still I don't my family, my immediate older family are not Christians, but what was that good work? It was when the Lord took hold of my life and saved me and changed me. Just let me read a verse or two in the book before in Ephesians "As for you", there's that word again "you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air". We were all dead in trespasses and sins, every single one of us. The same, not just here but same for people sitting at home. There was a time when we were not in Christ.

And for those of you who are listening who are not in Christ, you know there is a good work that God wants to do in your life now and it can only be done through Jesus. Doesn't matter how many good works you do and keep doing them, but it will not save you. It will not get you to heaven. Here is a good work, the work of God, and again you could do a whole series on this the ministry of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, into our lives. An initial starting of a good work in you - perhaps this new year you will find Christ as your Savior and that good work will change your life but of course it's more than just an initial thing because he says "who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." It doesn't end when we first get saved, that's the starting point of the journey. If you're a young Christian and have not long come to find faith let me quote Jeremiah 29 where Jesus our God says "I have plans for you." "I have plans for you." You have a tremendous journey ahead of you. See, I wasn't born into a Christian home and as I look back over the many years since I've become a Christian it's incredible what has happened in me through the teaching of the Word, through the way the Lord has led. It's taken me to places that I thought I would never ever see. The Lord has been so gracious and He continues on in that work. So if you're not long starting the journey then I thank God for it. Sometimes I wish I was starting again but I'm not, I'm coming nearer to the end of my journey, and certainly I am from the beginning His plans for us will be very different from the plans that He's had for me. Plans about your jobs, plans about your home, plans about your family, plans about where He might take you, what he might do with you. So look back and remember the day when Christ saved you. He began a good work in you. He will continue a good work in you and if you're of the age - I am and retired and I don't particularly enjoy retirement, I've struggled a lot with it - He's not finished because you're still here. You can't do the things you used to do but sometimes a stillness, sometimes just a heaviness, a weariness settles into our lives but you know it need not be, and I think I speak very personally, so wherever you are, if you're not yet a Christian, may that good work begin in you, even this morning, this year, this month. If

you're a new Christian just look forward to an exciting journey ahead of you. If you're a long-standing person in the faith and feeling stale, find a freshness and as you go through this book. Many other avenues will open up to you. We're yet in another lockdown and even coming across I think it was the bridge or somewhere it says stay local and I think Well I'm not staying local. You're now in tier four and I know I shouldn't be." but in one sense Scott assured me no you're coming to a place of work not just a place of worship, so I'm quite legitimate in me coming here but in other areas we are in lockdown who could have imagined. We're not in a dictatorship. Who could have imagined that our government could have legislated to lock us down? It was just unthinkable but physically we are, but sadly some people are getting spiritually locked down and that's what we need to do, to remember, to remember, to pray, to grow and to have our spiritual lives refreshed and renewed no matter how young or no matter how old we be. And so my prayer, as we close, is to just simply say to you "the Lord bless you and keep you and the Lord use you, as a congregation of His holy people. May it be so for His namesake.