

When I was young (and I believe, it true to say, that I was young once) it was given a brown 10 schilling note to spend on anything that I liked.

Now in those days 40 years ago 10 schillings was probably equivalent to £10 today.

So for a 10 year-old this was a pretty big deal.

I remember going into the toy shop and just looking at all the Toys and imagining all the various things that I could buy.

The imagining was half the fun.

It was like spending the money many times over.

I could buy a Robot, or a board game, or some soldiers...

But what??

I knew that once I had spent the money: that was it

so although it was burning a hole in my pocket

I knew that choosing what to buy was very important.

No mistakes.

When we were born, God gave us all a gift.

He said “I give you this gift of life”, “here is your life”,

“spend it wisely, you only get one chance to live each day,

so make wise choices, invest it carefully, make it work and make it work forever”.

So the question: *What shall I spend my life on?*

its one of the most fundamental questions in the world for all of us

What shall WE spend our life on?

So that we don't want to waste it,

because only get to live it once,

because we don't want to stand before God and regret the wasted years.

And so that's what I want to think about this morning.

“How shall we invest our life?”

Because that's what Paul had to think about.

Up to a certain point, his whole life had been invested in a particular way, all his child-hood, all his student years, all his early adult ambitions; and

then came a moment

when he realised

he was just making a huge mistake:

he was backing the wrong horse,

he was investing in a sinking ship; and

he had to make a huge decision/ a life changing decision

Do I have the courage to change direction?

In Philippians chapter 3 Paul tells us about

- What he had placed all his confidence in,
- What he discovered that changed his mind; and
- What he pursued more than anything else in the world.

What he **had**, what he **discovered**, what he **pursued**.

First idea, he said

1. I used to place my confidence in what I had.

Paul begins chapter 3 with v1 (I guess that's pretty obvious v1 is always a good place to start a chapter),

where he says

“Finally Brothers” – OK, he’s starting to wrap up his letter:

“Finally Brothers”, He says:

“Rejoice in the Lord” –

In other words, ‘let your joy be found centred in God’.

Rejoice in the Lord

“I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again” he says

“It’s no trouble for me to write the same things to you again”.

because I really want you to get this...

Let your joy/ your happiness/ your fulfilment be found centred in God.

This will safeguard you., he say

This will keep you safe.

This will make your life work.

And

v2: “Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh.”

Now that’s a strange phrase!

What he is saying is

Watch out for those people who **say** they are Christians, who **think** they are Christians but who require you to be circumcised to prove it.

Who place their confidence in outward signs of respectability!

Now since there is no-one here who is itching for someone to get circumcised to prove they’re a real Christian, an orthodox Christian, a respectable Christian

And if you do think that – none of us want to know!

What it means for us it

Watch out for a way of thinking that places

our sense of value, our sense of security, our ambitions

in what we can do with our hands or achieve with our minds, or gain with our wisdom

In other words

watch out for a way of thinking that places our confidence in life in what WE can DO or ACHIEVE or GAIN!

Because Paul says “you’ve got this all wrong”

That’s what I used to think

v4 “If YOU put confidence in the flesh” (in human things, in physical things, in what you can do or achieve)

THEN KNOW THIS

“I have even MORE to be confident than you”

*I was circumcised on the 8th day
of the people of Israel
of the tribe of Benjamin
a Hebrew of the Hebrews
in regards to the law a Pharisee,
as for zeal persecuting the church
as for legalistic righteousness - faultless*

Its like someone saying

I was born an Englishman

Christened in Westminster Cathedral

A member of the Upper Class

Educated at Eton

A High Court Judge

A campaigning advocate for human rights issues
A respected man of impeccable integrity
I am all right.

If you think you're something special
Then know this, I used to think that of myself too, by any human standard
I'd arrived.
Respect, honour, achievement, success – I've been there, and got the Tee Shirt.

*In Harry Potter terms I am not "a muggle", I was a "Slither of the Slitherns".
Mary Whitehouse would have been proud of him.
He was a pillar of Jewish society.
A faultless C.V when applying for a en-suite room in heaven and liable to get upgraded to a room with a view.*

I had confidence that if I achieved respectability, honour, status with my hands, my skills, my life
then my life would be count for something, I would be OK, eternal life would be OK

Good job, good house, good family, good friends, good morals, good conscience, good works
it would make me good and it would make me good with God.

How many people in our world think that to be true
How many people who go to church think that's what its all about
Good job, good house, good family, good friends, good morals, good conscience, good works
it will make me good and it will make me good with God.

I used to think that!
Paul used to think that!
Do you?
Good job, good house, good family, good friends, good morals, good conscience, good works
it will make you good and it will make you good with God.

Then Paul realised he had got it all wrong.
Then he realised that he HAD got to the top of his ladder only to realise it was leaning against the wrong wall
Then I realised he had not understood what life, what Christianity was really all about at all.

He had all this stuff,

2. Then secondly, He discovered something.

2.1 Firstly, He discovered that life went far beyond keeping the rules.

*In his book about Customer Care,
Michael LeBouf tells a story about a well-known supermarket where he went up to the delicatessen counter
when he was the only customer in the store.*

*And as he got to the counter he saw three Sales Assistants:
Two (a boy and a girl) who were obviously deeply engrossed with each other (and it was clear they weren't
talking about the precise make up of a Florida Salad).
And the third was filling in a form.
The two obviously weren't going to stop their conversation for him so he walked down to the other end of the
counter and stood in front of the third assistant.*

*Finally, she looked up and said, 'You got a number?'
I'm sorry?' he replied, looking around seeing the place **totally** deserted.
You got a number?*

You gotta have a number.' she said.

LeBouf replied, 'Miss, I'm the only customer in the store, Surely I don't need a number?

But she insisted, she would not serve him until he had a number.

By now, it was obvious to Him that she was more interested in following rules than helping customers.

So, he went to the "take-a-number" machine, pulled number 37, and walked back to the salesperson.

And with that, she promptly went to her number counter, which revealed that the last customer who had been served was number 34.

So she shouted out, '35!...35!...(no one in sight, store empty) 36!...36!...(silence) 37!'

"Yes, I'm number 37,' said Michael.

"May I help you?" she asked - without the hint of a smile.

"No, replied Michael, and he turned and walked out of the shop"

This world sets rules and expectations

Good job, good house, good family, good friends, good morals, good conscience, good works

But there is something beyond them,

far more important than them.

Paul said

"I had it all – everything my society expected of me – I had it in spades"

But then v7

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord,

for whose sake I have lost all things.

I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ

It is possible to follow the best rules and expectations of our society and completely miss what life is all about.

God has given you a gift – the gift of life

Like any parent they hope the child they have/ they adopt/ they sacrifice themselves for might want to know them and have a relationship with them.

Paul realised this

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord,

Of KNOWING him!

The point our life is not about what we can achieve with our hands, our minds our hard work

Its not about things, or applause, or honour

we all know this - its about the relationships

And the most profound relationship is the relationship we have with the one who made us.

We are made for more than just what we achieve

We are made for more than just the "here and now"

We are made to know God

That is surpassingly outstandingly great!

And if you believe that

if that strikes you as true.

Then you need to have the courage of your convictions and invest in that relationship.

Paul said

I consider everything that I have achieved as rubbish, in comparison to knowing Christ

That can only be said by somebody who gets it.

Firstly, He discovered that life went far beyond just doing really well.

Secondly, He discovered that his relationship with God was not based on

2.2 “what he could do to impress God” – but on “what God had already done to love him”.

I had a bloke in my office on Thursday,

A big bloke.

I accept I'm a small bloke slowly getting bigger.

But this guy is a real man's man. Big, stocky, broad, very confident,

We were talking about faith –

He's a new Christian.

We were talking about what he found difficult in church – he's doesn't get all our strange “churchy” language.

But then he stopped and he said

“There IS something I really don't like”

Then he went all silent, and then to my utter amazement his eyes went all red and he began to fill up.

I thought crikey “we must really be upsetting him with this!”

He said “I don't like it when you sing about how the cross and how much that shows God's love”

Because I hate crying in church!

He was serious. BUT he WAS serious.

Nothing we can do will impress God so much that he needs us to live with him in heaven.

So we need to stop trusting in ourselves, thinking we earn God's approval.

Because in comparison to what he wants of us

We've all just screwed up.

No we need to see, like that man in my office saw,

it really is ALL about what he has done for us.

In him we trust, in him we live and move and have our being.

Life is all about our response to him.

And if you get that, you need to have the courage of your convictions and invest in it.

Firstly, Paul had it all – and he realised that it didn't amount to a “hill of beans”

Secondly, He discovered the possibility of knowing God

3. Thirdly, He invested his life in that.

3.1 Invest in KNOWING Christ.

He said

v10 *I WANT TO KNOW Christ.*

You've got one life:

don't waste it (says Paul)

you only live it once,

don't stand before God and regret all those wasted years.

The heart of our faith is a relationship with God

And for any relationship to flourish we need to invest in it.

We only have three resources in our life our time, our skills, our money.

Where we spend these things reveals (more honestly than any words can) our true priorities.

A husband or wife who say they love each other and yet who do not invest time with each other – and who “spend” time mainly on their careers, hobbies or own interests are not being honest – their relationship is in trouble.

For relationships to work we need to invest in it

Someone who says “they want to know God” and yet does not invest quality time in finding Him and spends money only on their own desires, is not being honest - their relationship with God is in trouble.

If we want a living relationship with God then we need to invest what we have for God.

- we live in such a busy world, rich with leisure options, frantic in demands – and everything competing for our time and money.

- we find ourselves constantly juggling our priorities “everybody wants a piece of us”.

Our family, our friends, our hobbies, those in need.

They are like Piranhas “everyone taking their little bite”, everyone demanding their slice of the action, everyone wanting just a bit of our time – before we know it – there is nothing left.

That’s why God said

look, if you don’t deliberately set aside time & skills & money to invest in knowing me at the beginning of the week, there WILL BE nothing left at the end.

If we don’t give to God from the first – there will only be crumbs from the last.

So however, we are hearing this at the moment,

- whether it is the need to make every Sunday more special for God, or

- whether it is the need to reassert our objective to give to God from the first

I encourage you to walk the talk to invest in your knowing Jesus with practical steps.

How will you respond?

and finally,

IN all your life do it WITH Christ.

v10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

I want to know the presence of God’s power in my life, in the good times & in the bad times,

I want to know Jesus presence all the way through my life, wherever I am, from beginning to end, from birth to death

Our faith is 24/7.

Wherever we go, whatever we do – we can know the presence and the power of God in our lives.

I have seen people caught in devastating trauma rebuild their lives because they know they are not alone

I have seen ordinary people timid and quiet stand with courage for God because his smile is what they seek and know

I have seen people critically ill shine with an inner peace and confidence as they sense God’s resurrection power in them.

So whenever you face critical challenges in your life, and they be “like mountains”

lay your fears, invest your security, trust your life

into the hands of the living Jesus and the power of his resurrection presence.

A young University student called Jim Eliot was preparing to go out on the mission-field.

Before he left he wrote these words in his diary:

'He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.'

Some seven years later he was sitting with four friends deep in the Ecuadorian rain forest.

They had gone to this remote spot in an attempt to make contact with a very reclusive tribe called the Auca Indians.

On Sunday morning, 8th January, they radioed to their family saying that they were about to go in and talk with these people. Those at base waited and waited for further news, but none came.

Many months later they learned that these five young servants of God had all been killed as soon as they made contact..

Elisabeth Eliot (Jim's wife) tells the story:

'We found their bodies in the Curaray river, slain by the men they had come to share God's love with.

The world called it a nightmare, a tragedy.

But the world did not recognize the truth of Jim's words "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.'

Paul would agree.

When we were born, God gave us all a gift.

He said

"I give you this gift", "here is your life",

"spend it wisely, you only get one chance to live each day,

so make wise choices, invest it carefully,

make it work and make it count forever".

The purpose of this life is not in the things we can do, achieve or create for ourselves

The purpose of this life is in the relationships we form

The most profound is the one that will last forever

which encompasses, embraces and magnifies all our other loves