

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

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INTRODUCTION

I don't think Paul ever planted a church as dear to him as this body of believers. Paul never intended to go to Philippi; he was trying to go up to Asia, but the Holy Spirit wouldn't let him.

He tried to go into the city, but the Spirit of Jesus stopped him, and then one night he was sleeping and in his dream, a man from Macedonia said to him, 'Come over and help us here,' **Acts 16:9**.

Paul knew that was the Lord's prompting, and so he and Silas crossed a body of water, and to our knowledge, they were the first Christian missionaries on the continent of Europe.

They reached the main city in this new region called Philippi, which was a Roman colony, and it was so pagan that it didn't even have a synagogue. Paul would usually go to a city, find a synagogue and preach there first and then preach to the people in the marketplace.

Philippi didn't even have a synagogue, and so on the Sabbath, 'he just went out to a river, and he found some women praying,' **Acts 16:13**. That's where he started, and he preached to them, and there was a woman named Lydia, and she and her family were baptised and were the first converts to Christ in Europe.

Paul began to walk through Philippi, and a little girl started to follow him everywhere he went, possessed by a demon; she was a little slave girl. And she would shout, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, and they are telling you the way of salvation,' **Acts 16:17**.

Paul was so upset that he would have any credibility come from such an evil source that he turned around and rebuked the spirit and said, 'Leave this little girl in the name of Jesus Christ', **Acts 16:18**, and the spirit obeyed, as the spirits always have to obey Jesus.

And she was delivered, and then the people who owned the little slave girl got upset because their chance to make money from her was gone. And according to **Acts 16:19-24**, they went to the magistrates and accused Paul of treachery against Rome, and they threw him in prison, but before they did, they beat him severely and chained him to a wall.

THE STORY

What are Paul and Silas doing? 'They are singing and praising God,' **Acts 16:25**. There was an earthquake, the bars of the jail came open, and the chains fell off their arms and legs, **Acts 16:25-29**. A jailer was about to kill himself, but Paul stopped him.

The jailer fell to Paul's knees and said, 'What must I do to be saved?' and Paul said, 'Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? You and your family can be saved,' and that very night he and his family were baptised, **Acts 16:30-31**. This is the start of a great church; you've got an upper-class elite woman, you've possibly got a poor little Greek pagan slave girl, and you've got a middle-class Roman jailer. And that's the start of your church, and this became one of the great churches of the New Testament that Paul was fond of because they were so generous.

And at least three different times we read in the Bible where they took up money to send to Paul, and Philippians is the story of one of those times. Paul was now in a Roman prison.

He was in jail in Rome, and the Philippian church found out, so they took up some money and gave it to a man named Epaphroditus, one of their brothers, and he went to Rome to give Paul the money, but that's not all he brought!

He also brought news of a church in need of a joy transfusion. We think that Philippi was a happy church because the word ‘joy’ was found sixteen times in the letter, more than in any other book.

But the fact is if you read closely, Paul says, ‘they ought to have joy, or they need joy’. He never said, ‘they had any’, not once in Philippians did he say, ‘they had any joy’. Paul’s got a prescription for a church needing some joy, and that prescription is to discover ‘the joy of Jesus’.

PHILIPPI

Witherington says the following concerning Philippi.

‘Located on the major Roman road known as the Via Egnatia, Philippi was “a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony”, **Acts 16:12**. Because of its strategic location, Philippi became a strategic location for trade despite the fact that it was 13 km from Neapolis, the nearest seaport. As a Roman colony, Philippi was intended to be a miniature version of Rome. However, the Roman character of the city did not erase the previously existing Greek Hellenistic culture. As the lingua franca of the Empire, Greek was widely spoken. Many of the Greeks and Thracians in the area who were displaced by newly settled Romans remained in the area. Witherington sums it up well when he writes, ‘We must then talk about a Roman overlay of culture and custom on top of the indigenous Greek Hellenistic culture which still continued in various ways.’

AUTHOR

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the disciples in Philippi, who were converted by him, Luke, Silas and Timothy.

DATE

Most scholars believe the letter was written around AD 62, while Paul was imprisoned in Rome.

OUTLINE

- Joy in all circumstances. Philippians 1
- Joy in serving. Philippians 2
- Joy in faith. Philippians 3
- Joy in giving. Philippians 4

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

‘Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus to all the saints in Christ Jesus in Philippi, together with overseers and deacons, grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ’. Philippians 1:1-2

When I study a book for the first time, I try to underline all the words that keep showing up that I think are important. The word ‘joy’ does show up sixteen times in Philippians, and the word ‘Gospel’ does show up nine times, but do you know what shows up fifty-one times?

Do you know what shows up three times in the first two verses? The name of ‘Christ’; the letter to the Philippians is full of Christ. And Paul says right there in the first chapter what the theme of his life is. What the obsession of his life is: ‘to live is Christ,’ **Philippians 1:21**.

When we read Philippians, we see a letter by a man who is absolutely obsessed with Christ, and we must understand that to understand Paul. We have to understand that to understand why Paul could be in prison and have more joy than the church he is writing to.

Notice how Paul describes himself and Timothy; he said that ‘they are servants’, literally, ‘they are slaves of Christ Jesus’, **Philippians 1:1**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Timothy.

‘This name is associated with that of Paul in several other Pauline letters, **Colossians 1:1 / Philemon 1:1 / 2 Corinthians 1:1 / 1 Thessalonians 1:1 / 2 Thessalonians 1:1**. Timothy was deeply interested in the Philippians, having been with Paul when their congregation was established, **Acts 16:11-40**, and in all probability having visited them again and again.’

If we wanted Paul to describe himself, Paul would say, ‘I’ll tell you who I am, I am the absolute possession of Jesus Christ, that’s me’. ‘I’ve totally sold out to Jesus Christ, that’s me.’ ‘I’m a slave for Christ Jesus.’

According to **Acts 9**, he was going to Damascus many years ago, and Jesus Christ appeared to him on that road, and from that moment on, you could sum up Paul’s life in one word: ‘Christ.’

He was absolutely sold out and obsessed with Christ, **Philippians 3:10**. He’s obsessed with Christ because for him, Christ was everything he had been searching for in life and more.

Then Paul says, they are the saints in Christ Jesus in Philippi, **Philippians 1:1**. Or if he were writing to us, he would say, ‘We are the saints in Christ Jesus in whatever city you live in.’

Paul is saying that we have two addresses, every one of us. We are the saints in Christ, in the place where we live today; that’s who we are. Fifty-one times, Paul says, we are in Jesus Christ; that’s where we belong.

Philippians is a letter written by a man in prison on trial for his life, **Acts 28:30-31**, written to a church, telling them not to be anxious, **Philippians 4:11-13 / Acts 16:11-40**.

Paul knew he was in Christ, and that’s his address; and if he is in Christ, then he shares in His riches, and he knows that Christ is going to give him everything he needs, **Philippians 4:19**.

Paul is telling the Philippians to ‘get back to their right address, get back to living in Jesus Christ, and everything they need will be provided, and the joy will come back’. That’s what happens when Christ is our all in all: we are filled with joy, **Philippians 4:4-7**.

The church in Philippi was blessed to have elders, **Philippians 1:1 / Acts 14:23 / 1 Timothy 3:1-7 / Titus 1:6-9**, and deacons, **Philippians 1:1 / 1 Timothy 3:8-10**. Paul wants God to bless them with grace, **Philippians 1:2**, that is, God’s unmerited favour and peace, **Philippians 1:2**, that is, the peace which comes from God Himself, **Philippians 4:7**.

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER

‘I thank my God every time I remember you and all my prayers for all of you. I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.’ Philippians 1:3-6

Notice how Paul’s affection oozes from this text. In the New Testament, every time a person became a believer in Jesus, he also became a member of the local church, and that is because Christianity is more than a private transaction with Jesus.

Biblical Christianity is corporate, and any time in the Bible when someone got a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, they immediately had a relationship with other believers in a local church.

We are never going to find a perfect church because it is full of people like you and me, and Paul had to learn how to love some pretty smelly churches, like, for example, the one in Philippi, because this church has got some big problems.

He writes a lot about joy in this letter, but he never once says that they have any joy, and they didn’t have much joy in Philippi because they were a divided church.

Paul writes to two women called Euodia and Syntyche, and he is pleading with them to get along with each other, and he has called on other people in the church to help those two women agree with each other, **Philippians 4:2-3**.

These two women had got into a disagreement. The church had taken sides, and the church was moaning, and it was causing division in the church. And these two women were affecting the entire church, and so all through this letter, Paul is appealing for unity, **Philippians 1:27 / Philippians 2:2 / Philippians 2:14**.

We come to church to be served and to get our needs met, but if we don’t like something that’s going on or if we see a problem, we take our problem to the man down the street and tell him all about it, but that’s not how Paul did church.

Instead of turning his back on the brethren in Philippi, he turned his heart towards them, **Philippians 1:3-4**. Paul constantly praised God for the people that God had brought into his life, even though sometimes they brought him grief. In the Bible, Christians didn’t just get up and walk out of church because of a few problems.

They were called upon to stay there and love those people, and love doesn’t mean that we are blind to their defects. But it means we’re going to be committed despite those defects; we stay there, and we love our church.

Paul gives us three reasons not to give up on our churches.

1. If we are going to love our church, remember to pray for them, **Philippians 1:3-4**.

Paul was a prayer warrior, and he constantly prayed for this church in Philippi. Notice he told them exactly what he was praying for; he said, ‘that you all grow in love,’ **Philippians 1:9**. That’s what they needed, so he was praying for it.

The interesting thing is, before he told them what they needed, He told God what they needed, and he told them he was talking to God about it, **Philippians 1:9**. Because Paul knew that if they had more love, they would make wiser choices, they would live pure lives, and they would bear fruit to the glory of God.

Notice that Paul said it gives him joy when he prays for them, **Philippians 1:4**. He didn’t say, ‘it gives him joy to talk about prayer, it gives him joy to write about prayer’. Paul said, ‘No, it gives me joy when I pray, when I pray for you, I pray with joy’.

Remember, Paul’s in prison, **Acts 28:30-31**. There is no other way to have an outlet for his affection. He can’t get his arms around them and hug them; he can’t kiss them on the cheek; he can’t shake their hands, but he can pray. We can

even pray for our enemies because what Jesus says works; we won't get so upset if we just pray for them, **Matthew 5:44 / Luke 23:34**.

2. Remember our partnership in the Gospel, **Philippians 1:5**.

Boice, in his commentary, says the following.

'Fellowship means more than a sharing of something, like the fellowship of bank robbers dividing the loot. It means a sharing in something, participating in something greater than the people involved and more lasting than the activity of any given moment; it means being caught up into a communion created by God.'

What he means by the word 'now', **Philippians 1:5**, is that the Philippians had just sent Paul a gift of money, and they had heard that he was in prison in Rome. They sent a brother named Epaphroditus, gave him some money and said, 'Go to Rome and give this to Paul', **Philippians 4:18 / 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 / 2 Corinthians 9:1-4 / 2 Corinthians 11:9**. Think about what they are doing. Paul is in Rome as a prisoner accused of treason against Rome, and they are identifying with him. They are putting their credibility and even their lives on the line by saying, 'We want to stand with Paul.'

And it filled Paul with warmth, and he said, 'I got to thinking when this money came, you've always been like that; I mean, from the first day until now, you've been my partners in the Gospel,' **Philippians 1:5**.

Being a partner in the Gospel doesn't just mean you believe in the same thing and share the same convictions. It means you are out there with your funds, your prayers and your witness, working side by side doing things for the sake of Jesus Christ. And that's what Paul chose to think about when he remembered the church in Philippi.

3. Remember that God is not through with them, **Philippians 1:6**.

Paul thanked God not just for what the Philippians were doing but for what God was doing in the Philippians. Paul believed that the power of God changed lives; he knew that the church had some problems, but Paul also knew that they were not on their own to solve their problems. God is working in them, and God is going to bring them to completion, **Philippians 1:6**.

Do we know why we became Christians? Because God started in us before we ever started for God. God began the work in us; we didn't start it, and God jumped in and helped. God started it, **Acts 16:14**.

We don't become a Christian because we do good work for God; we become a Christian because God started a good work in us, **Philippians 1:6**. And that salvation that God starts in us, He keeps going in us because not only is salvation by grace, but sanctification is by grace, **Philippians 1:6**.

Paul's confidence wasn't in the Philippians' ability to hang in there; his confidence was in God's ability to hang in there with the Philippians and to bring what He started in their lives to completion.

"It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. 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 until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God." **Philippians 1:7-11**

Notice Paul's affection towards the Philippians; he was filled with joy and affection for them, and they were in his heart. He had a great desire to pray for them because they stood by him while he was going through trials because of the Gospel, **Philippians 1:7**. They shared the same blessing of grace as he did, **Philippians 1:7**.

Mounce, in his commentary, says the following.

'They were partakers with Paul in grace, not partakers of Paul's grace.'

Notice also that God was Paul's witness about how he really felt about them, **Philippians 1:8**.

Clarke, in his commentary, paraphrases Paul's words as follows.

'I call God to witness that I have the strongest affection for you, and that I love you with that same kind of tender concern with which Christ loved the world when he gave himself for it.'

Paul prayed that their love would just grow more and more, **Philippians 1:9**. However, note that their love would come from knowledge and insight, not from feelings or emotions, **Philippians 1:9**.

They need knowledge and insight to know what is best, **Romans 2:18**, and how to be pure and blameless until Christ returns, **Philippians 1:10**. Paul encourages them to be filled with the fruit of righteousness for God's glory and praise, **Philippians 1:11 / John 15:4-6**.

Pink, in his commentary, says the following concerning **Philippians 1:11**.

'This verse, along with **Philippians 1:10**, sets before us a powerful incentive to live hourly with the judgment seat of Christ before us, that we may not be ashamed at his coming.'

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Every genuine follower of God has his glory in view by all that he does, says, or intends. He loves to glorify God, and he glorifies him by showing forth in his conversion the glorious working of the glorious power of the Lord.'

PAUL'S CHAINS ADVANCE THE GOSPEL

'Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and on top of everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.' 'Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defence of the gospel.' 'The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this, I rejoice.' 'Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.' **Philippians 1:12-20**

Paul loved the church in Philippi deeply, and they loved Paul and were concerned for him. They had heard that Paul had been arrested and that he was in a Roman prison, **Acts 28:30-31**.

Paul did not know if his life was going to end there or not, **2 Corinthians 11:23-30**. So they picked a man named Epaphroditus, gave him some money and told him to go to Rome and take it to Paul, **Philippians 4:18**. And more importantly, bring back some news about how Paul is doing.

In these verses, Paul tells us how he was doing when he was chained for the Gospel of Jesus. When we read the end of the Book of Acts, we find that Paul was illegally arrested, he was misrepresented in court, he was manipulated as a political pawn, and he was shipwrecked on his way to trial.

And then he was imprisoned and forgotten about for two years by the Roman judicial system. And that's where he is when Epaphroditus shows up, brings him some money and says, 'The church in Philippi is dying to know, how are you doing, Paul? How are you doing?'

And so, Paul writes them a letter to tell them how he is doing, but he doesn't write like a victim; he writes like a victor. They remember how he was the first time he was in Philippi, he was beaten and thrown in jail, and Paul was staying in jail, **2 Corinthians 11:23-30**.

Paul's heart's desire was one day to preach the Gospel in Rome; it was the ambition of Paul, for someday to take Christianity to the greatest city in the known world. He probably had it all planned out.

He was going to go into Rome one day; he was going to rent the Colosseum, and he was going to have the biggest Gospel crusade the world had ever seen. But God had a different plan.

God had Paul arrested, and God gave him a pre-paid ticket to Rome as a political prisoner, and it wasn't pretty. Thrown away in jail, literally chained to a palace guard who was changed every four hours, he lived like this for two years.

However, when Paul writes, he doesn't see himself as a man in prison; he sees himself ultimately as a man in Christ. The way Paul saw it was that, even though he was in chains, he said, 'they cannot chain the Gospel of Jesus'.

Notice that the Philippians are anxious to know how Paul is doing, but when Paul writes back, he doesn't tell them how he is doing. The first thing he does is tell them how the Gospel is doing, and even though Paul was in chains, the Gospel was going forth, **Philippians 1:12**.

Paul says, 'What has happened, my going to prison has actually served to be a platform for getting the gospel all over Rome', **Philippians 1:12**. How could that be? Paul says, 'because I'm in prison, the story of Christianity is being talked about all over the city', **Philippians 1:13**.

But not only that, Paul says, 'remember it's become quite clear to the palace guard,' **Philippians 1:13**. Now, who were those guys? The Roman army had a special group of soldiers, the finest regiment in the Roman army, called the Praetorian Guard, who were loyal specifically to Caesar.

Robertson, in his commentary, says the following.

'There were originally ten thousand of these picked soldiers, concentrated in Rome by Tiberius. They had double pay and special privileges and became so powerful that emperors had to court their favour. Paul had contact with one after another of these soldiers.'

They got paid twice as much as anybody else when they retired; they got more money than anybody else did, and they guarded the people who were on trial before Caesar. So for two years, every three or four hours, one of Rome's finest soldiers had to walk in and chain himself to Paul.

Now, let me ask you, what do you think Paul did for four hours with those guys? I mean, who was chained to whom? I can see that soldier walking in and saying, 'I have been sent here to guard you for my master'. And I can see Paul looking up and saying, 'That's strange, I've been sent here to guard you for my Master.'

Maybe that explains how Paul says, 'All the church sends greetings, especially those that belong to the household of Caesar', **Philippians 4:22**. How did the Gospel get into Caesar's house? Paul was preaching to his guards every single day.

Paul also says, 'the Christians in Rome have become bolder because I am in prison,' **Philippians 1:14**. He says, 'my imprisonment has actually advanced the Gospel'.

And so what other people saw as a setback, Paul saw as progress. He even rejoiced that the Gospel was being preached by some people whose attitudes towards Paul were quite negative.

Notice the people Paul describes aren't anti-Christ, but they're anti-Paul with vengeance, **Philippians 1:15-17**. And so they go out with some pretty lousy attitudes, preaching the Gospel.

They are preaching the Gospel; if they weren't preaching the Gospel, they would have been condemned by Paul because, back in Galatians, with the legalists who were trying to preach Jesus plus the law, Paul condemned them, **Galatians 1:6-9 / Galatians 5:7-12**. He doesn't condemn what they are preaching; he condemns their attitude, **Philippians 1:18**.

Boice, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Never in the history of the world have the opportunities been greater for the proclamation of the gospel; yet never has the believing church been more irrelevant and divided, the bitter fruits of the strife and envy that divide today’s believers.’

We can throw the messenger in jail, but we can’t jail the message. Paul says, ‘The way he sees it, they cannot chain the help of Jesus’. He not only looked back with joy at what happened in Rome, but he looked ahead with joy, knowing what was going to happen was going to be good too, **Philippians 1:19**.

In other words, Paul said, ‘Jesus promised if we go into all the world, he would be with us till the end of the age, and I know that no matter what happens tomorrow, Jesus is going to be there to help me’, **Matthew 28:19-20**. How is Jesus going to help him? Well, in two ways.

1. Paul said, through their prayers, **Philippians 1:19**.

The apostle Paul was never too big to ask for prayers. Paul says, ‘I don’t know what is going to happen tomorrow, but I know through your prayers, Jesus is going to help me’.

2. Paul says, ‘by the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ’, **Philippians 1:19**.

Paul knew that the presence of the Holy Spirit was the fulfilment of Jesus’ promise to be with him. And Paul knew that the Holy Spirit would especially help him to bear witness to his faith in his upcoming trial.

Remember, Jesus promised us that when we are on trial for our faith, the Holy Spirit will be there to give us something to say, **Mark 13:11**. Paul knows he can count on the Holy Spirit to strengthen his life.

He knows that God doesn’t just rule over our chains sorrowfully from the throne, but God sustains us in our chains from within. That’s one reason God blessed us with the gift of the Holy Spirit at our baptism, **Acts 2:38**.

Did you know that a person can experience the power of the Spirit in greater abundance sometimes than others can? This is called being filled with the Holy Spirit, **Acts 4:8 / Acts 4:31 / Ephesians 5:18**.

Paul is going through a test right now, and he’s going to be on trial, and he wants the Philippians to pray that he’s going to be full of the Holy Spirit. He’s going to be led by the Holy Spirit, and Jesus will help him that way.

Paul also says, ‘they cannot chain the glory of Jesus’, **Philippians 1:20**. Everybody has a passion, everybody has an obsession, but the problem with most people is that their life’s obsession can be chained. Not Paul; his obsession was Christ, and nobody could chain Him, **Philippians 1:20**.

Paul says, ‘death, life, it doesn’t matter; either way, Jesus is going to get the glory’, **Philippians 1:20**. How do we chain a guy like that? Jesus Christ is going to receive glory; Jesus Christ is going to be exalted, whether we participate or not.

Paul said, ‘He’s going to be exalted in my body whether by life or death’, **Philippians 1:20**. Paul also says, ‘they cannot chain his joy in Jesus’. We aren’t a people in chains; we’re a people in Christ, and we will not lose our joy if we don’t lose our focus on Him, **Hebrews 12:1-**

2. I think the real key to Paul is in these seven words, ‘for to me, to live is Christ’, **Philippians 1:21**. Paul says, ‘I’m not a man in prison, I’m a man in Christ’, **Philippians 2:9**.

‘For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through me being with you again, your joy in Christ will overflow on account of me’. **Philippians 1:21-26**

How would our thoughts turn if we knew that we were about to die? What would be our philosophy of living and dying that we would pass on to our loved ones, if we only had a little time and just had a few words to say?

Remember that Paul is in a Roman prison; he doesn't know whether he will live or die, and he faces the possibility of imminent death. However, Paul sums up everything we need to know about living and dying using very few words. Paul says, 'To live is Christ and to die is gain', **Philippians 1:21**.

As far as Paul is concerned, he is in a no-lose situation; if he lives, he lives for Christ; if he dies, he is with Christ, which is gain. He knows it doesn't matter what happens to him because he can't lose; to Paul, Christ is a matter of life and death. Most people have two great fears.

1. They are afraid they might die tonight.
2. They are afraid they might live tomorrow.

Dying frightens them, and living has no passion; and then there are people like Paul, who have a passion for living, and they have a passion for dying. And if you were to ask them which one, they would choose; they couldn't answer because they have a passion for both.

Paul says, 'Christ provides the purpose for joy and living'. A lot of people don't have enough to live on, but the real problem is that they don't have enough 'to live for'. Paul had a passion for living; he says, 'he's not afraid to live' because if he lives, it's going to matter, **Philippians 1:22**.

Because if he lives, he knows it's going to make a difference. Paul loved living because that meant that he could bring the joy of Jesus to other people, **Philippians 1:23-24**.

We are still alive because God knows that somebody else needs us; that's why we're here. God doesn't let us live another day for us, but for somebody else, **Philippians 1:24**.

Life in these bodies will never be joyful as long as we look for our own interests and not for the interests of others, **Philippians 1:25**. Although he wants to die and go home to Jesus, **Philippians 1:23**. Every day we live is a gift of grace from God, to be used to invest in people, **Philippians 1:24**.

Not only does Christ give us a meaning for living, but Paul also says, 'Christ gives us the hope and courage for dying.' When someone is dying, we often hear these words, 'it doesn't look like they have got long to live.' The truth is, nobody has long to live; everybody is terminal.

Sometimes we hear the words, 'Well, they're probably better off. 'Probably!' Why do we think it's a shame when a Christian dies? Paul says, not probably, 'they are far better off,' **Philippians 1:23**. Paul says, 'this isn't my home, this isn't where I belong, because I'm ready to go home'.

Life isn't about cardinal things or success; it's about eternity rather than time. Our bodies are getting older and breaking down, and they aren't meant to last a long time; they are not meant to be permanent, **2 Corinthians 5:1-2**.

Why did Paul want to die and go to Jesus? Maybe part of it was to get some release from the kingdom pressure. Maybe part of it was the burden of the churches, but the main reason Paul wanted to go was simple: Paul wanted the company of Christ.

Paul says, 'When he goes, he's going to have Christ, like he's never had him before.' Paul knew it was better if he remained because that way he could help them in their progress and joy in the faith, **Philippians 1:25**. He knew if he remained, they would have an opportunity to boast in Christ on account of him, **Philippians 1:26 / 1 Thessalonians 3:13**.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'After weighing all the possibilities, it seemed to Paul that he would probably live a little longer. He evidently believed this because the case his accusers had brought against him was not strong, **Acts 23:29 / Acts 25:25 / Acts 26:31-32**. The fact that he said, 'I know that I shall remain,' raises the question of whether he had received some

special revelation. That is a possibility, but the Greek word translated ‘know’ (oida) does not mean infallible knowledge necessarily, **Acts 20:25.**’

LIFE WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL

‘Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.’ ‘This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have’. **Philippians 1:27-30**

Paul’s just told them he’s not sure if he’s going to live or die, and so he starts telling the church how he wants them to behave in case he never sees them again, **Philippians 1:27 / Philippians 3:20.**

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘One thing Paul expected of every Christian was that he should stand fast in the faith. It was a foregone certainty that Satan would use every device to induce Christians to waver or defect.’

Paul knew that he wasn’t the only one suffering for the Gospel of Christ because the Philippian church was going through the same struggle that he was going through, **Philippians 1:27.** We must also remember, ‘the church is going to be opposed,’ **Philippians 1:28.**

Jesus was very blunt about this; we can read all through the Gospels that He promised people that if we follow Him, we’re going to get opposition. People will try to intimidate us, and people will try to embarrass us, **Matthew 10:16-25 / 2 Timothy 3:12.**

But we also read that the first Christians had a rather amazing response to persecution; they were thankful for it. Jesus had told them it was coming, and He had told them how to think about it, **Matthew 5:11.** And the early Christians remembered what Jesus said, and they lived that way.

For example, there is a story in the Book of Acts when the apostles were brought in front of the Sanhedrin because they kept preaching Jesus after they had been told not to, **Acts 5:40.** What was their reaction? They were excited that they could suffer for Jesus Christ, **Acts 5:41.** We get the same principle taught by Peter, **1 Peter 4:13-14.**

When suffering comes, we should count it an honour to endure it for the sake of Christ. Because when we get opposed, we can conclude that the world is seeing Jesus in us, **John 15:18-23.**

And so the first Christians would get persecuted and opposed, and they would rejoice because they knew that meant the world was seeing Jesus living in them.

The life that we live can’t be a sheltered experience; we’re going to stand up for Jesus, we’re going to be opposed, and what we need is a strategy so that we can handle the opposition in the best possible way.

Paul has a strategy to give the church on how we can handle opposition. How can we suffer for Jesus in a way that gives Him glory? What is the aim of the strategy?

Paul says, ‘the aim is fidelity, loyalty, faithfulness’, **Philippians 1:27-28.** The world is full of Christians who don’t stand firm, Christians who play down their faith when things get difficult. Paul is saying, ‘understand that our faithfulness and our loyalty and our fidelity to Christ packs a punch,’ **Philippians 1:28.**

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The thought here is that the fearlessness of the Christians would be an omen of perdition to the persecutors, and at the same time an evidence of their own salvation.’

Look at what Paul says about suffering: ‘it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him but also to suffer for him,’ **Philippians 1:29** / **Acts 16:22-24** / **1 Thessalonians 2:2** / **2 Timothy 3:10**.

What’s interesting about **Philippians 1:29** is that the ‘granted’ is the Greek word ‘grace’. It’s a gift of God; it’s the grace of God when you get a chance to be embarrassed or humiliated or insulted because you’re a Christian.

Paul says, ‘our faithfulness needs to be corporate’, **Philippians 1:30**. If the Christians in Philippi were going to stand strong against their foes, they were going to have to stand together. This is so critical because if our aim is fidelity, if what we want to do is to stand firm for Jesus Christ, the key, Paul says, ‘is unity’, **Philippians 1:30**.

Paul knew the real threat wasn’t from the outside; it was from the inside. Divide and conquer is a strategy that Satan knows well, and so what Paul does is that he connects the struggle for the Gospel that we must be about with the eternal unity of the church.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

‘Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, with any fellowship with the Spirit, with any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.’ **Philippians 2:1-2**

IMITATING CHRIST’S HUMILITY

Notice that Paul begins with the word, ‘therefore’, **Philippians 2:1**. In other words, everything he says in this chapter about relationships and unity is there because Paul knows that unless we keep our unity, unless we practice love, we’re not going to be able to stand strong when we are opposed and when we suffer, **Philippians 1:27-30**.

He’s just spoken about standing firm and suffering for Jesus Christ, and Paul says what will make my joy complete is, ‘Let me hear that you love each other; it’s not enough if you have the right attitude about me, but don’t have the right attitude about each other.’

My joy can’t be complete until I hear that your fellowship is complete,’ **Philippians 2:1-2**. Paul tells them about the resources they have for fellowship. He says, ‘We all have our common unity in Jesus Christ; we’ve all been united in Jesus Christ.

We all put him on in baptism; we’re all united with His death and resurrection; we’ve all been washed in His blood; that’s something we share’. ‘We all have the comfort of His love; we’ve all known the love of Jesus Christ poured into our hearts; we’ve all felt that.

We all have the fellowship of the Spirit; we were all baptised by the one Spirit into the one body, and we are all partakers of the empowering of the Holy Spirit who leads us and guides us. And we all have the compassion that comes from being saved by the mercies of God.

And because of all these resources that we have in Christ, Paul says, ‘make my joy complete by being like-minded, that of the same love, being one in spirit and purpose,’ **Philippians 2:2**.

When Paul says, ‘I want you to be alike, I want you to be like-minded, he’s not urging, reaching conformity’; he’s not saying, ‘you all need to dress alike, you all have to think alike’.

There’s no way you can get a crowd of people together and get them to all think alike; that’s not what he’s saying. But even though we’re never going to all think alike, ‘we can all think the same way about each other.’ He’s saying we can all be like-minded in the way we think of and treat each other.

Now there’s a special kind of ‘minding’ that Christians practice. We have the mind of Christ; we have a way of looking at each other, even when we’re having problems, even when we disagree, that’s very special.

That wasn’t going on in Philippi, with Euodia and Syntyche, whom we read about in **Philippians 4:2-3**. They’re having a fuss, and it was upsetting the church.

And Paul says, ‘Have you all forgotten how you are supposed to think in Christ? Have you forgotten that even though you don’t always think the same way about things, you could think the same way about each other?’

The greatest thing impacting our influence in the world is the relationships in the church that aren’t right. Our greatest threat isn’t on the outside; it’s on the inside.

If only we could rediscover the passion for the doctrine in the Bible for the unity of believers. If we only could rediscover a passion for what the Bible says must exist if we’re going to stand firm, **Romans 15:5-6**.

If we don’t have the oneness of heart, we can’t glorify God; we can’t do what we were meant to do until we have unity, **Ephesians 4:3**. United we stand, divided we fall.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘By commanding them to be in the Spirit, Paul touched upon the basic theological foundation of Christian unity. There is only ‘one Spirit’, **Ephesians 4:4**. Other passages bearing upon this basic unity are **Romans 12:5** and **1 Corinthians 12:13**.’

Remember, Paul said earlier, ‘the aim is fidelity’; we want to stand firm for Jesus, **Philippians 1:27-28**. If we’re going to stand firm against the opposition on the outside, we’ve got to have unity on the inside; that’s the key.

What do we need if we’re going to have real unity? What we need is humility because most churches that are divided have always had a pride problem, **Philippians 2:3**. If we don’t practice humility, we’re going to hurt the unity of the church, and if we hurt the unity of the church, we’re going to hurt the witness of the church.

We’ve got to remember what God thinks about pride, **1 Peter 5:5**. To get rid of pride, we must begin by remembering that we need grace in our lives, and if we want God’s grace in our lives, we’ve got to get rid of pride. God hates pride, and we’ve got to look at pride the way God looks at it.

‘Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.’ **Philippians 2:3-4**

What is humility? Humility isn’t thinking less of ourselves; humility isn’t thinking of ourselves at all, **Philippians 2:3-4**. Paul’s point is that we’re in a battle, a war, and if we’re going to stand strong for Jesus, we’ve got to practice unity. Our greatest weapon is spirit-produced oneness. We’re supposed to gather around the cross, the blood of Jesus and stand strong in Him. That’s what Jesus prayed for; out of all the things He could have prayed for the night before He died, that’s what He prayed for the most, **John 17:21**.

THE CHRIST SONG

‘Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! ‘Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.’ **Philippians 2:5-11**

These verses have been called ‘The Christ Song’, and Paul says when tension arises, let the cross of Jesus cross our mind. Or to put it this way, ‘the cross of Christ controls how we think and act towards each other.’

Paul wrote this for a very practical reason; he’s trying to say, ‘Jesus is the supreme example of unselfishness; He is the ultimate model when it comes to dealing with others’. We must have the same mindset as Christ, **Philippians 2:5**. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Having the mind of Christ in one is equivalent to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as well as to the indwelling of the Father and the Son in Christian hearts. The Christian’s being ‘in Christ,’ ‘in God,’ ‘in the Holy Spirit,’ or having ‘the word of Christ dwell in’ him are also equivalent in every way, **Galatians 5:23**.’

In other words, Jesus looked out for others’ interests, even when they weren’t looking out for His, **Philippians 2:6-7**. Here is one who had everything, who had every right to have everything. One who had done no wrong, looking out at a world full of people full of envy and hate, who had a right to nothing and instead of clutching, He let go to serve. The problem is, we come together, we read verses about the cross, and we sing about the cross. We put crosses on our necks, we put crosses on our church buildings, and then we leave the church and go home, and we don’t think about the cross again for seven days.

The apostle Paul is saying, ‘those scarred hands of Jesus have decided once for all who we listen to, what we think about, and how we live.’ We’ve got to cross our minds, and it’s not easy, and I think God knew it wasn’t going to be easy, so do you know what God said?

God said, ‘to help you out, here’s what I want you to do, every seven days, every Sunday, get together, and have a meal together, just to remember the cross, just to keep it on your mind, break some bread, drink some wine together, and when you do it talk about the cross’, **Matthew 26:26-28 / 1 Corinthians 11:23-26**.

We’re not supposed to come to the Supper if we have problems with one another. God says, ‘It’s an affront to Him if you do that,’ **1 Corinthians 11:28**, because we can’t come to the Supper if we don’t cross our minds.

When Paul quoted this beautiful song about Christ, his main purpose was ethical. He was trying to change the behaviour of some Christians. I think that song tells us something about Jesus that everyone needs to be clear about. Whether someone names the Name of Jesus or not, we don’t want anyone to stand before God someday and say, ‘they never understood what Jesus did.’

First, we’ve got to start with the problem, the problem of why our world needed Jesus. God made a perfect world, and he put Adam in that world and asked him to take care of it, and things got messed up pretty bad, pretty fast.

God is supposed to be the centre of our lives, and we were made in the image of God to look up to Him and worship Him. But do you know what Adam did? He listened to a lie from Satan, and he decided he would try to clutch or grasp at being God.

Satan came along and said, ‘Why do you want to worship God when you can be like Him?’ And so Adam said, ‘That’s what I’ll do; I’ll try to be like God, I’ll be God, and I’ll be my own God,’ **Isaiah 14:12-15**.

And he's passed that down to all his kids and his grandkids, and that's what we've all been doing. We've been trying to be our own god, and we've got the wrong centre, and that's why this world sounds so ugly. Notice what Jesus did; sometimes he's called the second Adam, 1 Corinthians 15:45.

AS GOD

Jesus is worshipped. Matthew 2:2 / Matthew 2:11 / Matthew 14:33 / Matthew 28:9

Jesus is prayed to. Acts 7:59 / 1 Corinthians 1:2

Jesus was called God. John 20:28 / Hebrews 1:8

Jesus was called the Son of God. Mark 1:1

Jesus is sinless. 1 Peter 2:22 / Hebrews 4:15

Jesus knew all things. John 21:17

Jesus gives eternal life. John 10:28 / John 17:2

The fullness of deity dwells in Jesus. Colossians 2:9

AS A MAN

Jesus worshipped the Father. John 17

Jesus prayed to the Father. John 17:1

Jesus was called a man. Mark 15:39 / John 19:5

Jesus was called the Son of Man. John 9:35-37

Jesus was tempted. Matthew 4:1

Jesus grew in wisdom. Luke 2:52

Jesus died. Romans 5:8

Jesus has a body of flesh and bones. Luke 24:39

Paul says that Jesus 'didn't grasp at trying to be God,' **Philippians 2:6**. The Bible says He did two things: 'He made himself nothing, and he humbled himself,' **Philippians 2:7-8**.

First, He emptied Himself or made Himself nothing, as some translations have it, so that He could serve, **Philippians 2:7** / **Isaiah 42:1**. Who was Jesus? Was He a God or was He a man? Just who was He? Well, yes, He was both; he was the God-man, **Hebrews 1:8**.

When the Bible says, 'he emptied himself', **Philippians 2:7**, that doesn't mean He became less than God when He was on earth; it means He became more than God. In the sense that He was God, but now He was also a man; He didn't get rid of deity; He emptied deity into humanity.

He could never stop being God because God's His nature, **Revelation 1:8** / **Revelation 22:13** / **2 Peter 1:1**. But do you know what He did? He relinquished His glory; He concealed it in human flesh.

Now and then, we got a glimpse of it. He was up on a mountain one time with three disciples, and He was transfigured, and they saw his glory, **Matthew 17:1-8**. Paul saw it on the Damascus road, **Acts 9:1-19**, and John saw it in **Revelation 1**, in his vision. And someday we're going to see the bright, brilliant glory of Jesus.

But when He was on earth as a man, He concealed that glory. Do you know why? So that we can approach Him. So that He could come near to us and serve us and meet our needs, heal the sick, wash our feet and tell us about God.

And so He humbled Himself or emptied Himself in order to serve us. But that's not the only reason. He needed flesh. No incarnate deity has flesh for a nail. Jesus of Nazareth was born to die, **Mark 10:45**.

If He had come as a man and had been born in a palace as a king, that would be commendation enough. But oh no, He came to inflict himself to the absolute humiliation of a criminal's death. Why? Because it was the only way you and I could be saved.

The Bible says, 'He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.' **Philippians 2:8**. How do we humble God? The only way God is ever humbled is if He humbles Himself.

The Bible says, 'He humbled himself, and he became obedient to death'. Jesus didn't have to; He obeyed when He died, and He chose it. Why? Because it was the only way you and I had a chance, **Isaiah 64:6**.

Jesus Christ came and lived a sinless life and then took the penalty that you deserved. He was willing to transfer His righteousness to us, **Romans 3:22-24**, so that when God looked at us, He saw sinlessness, **2 Corinthians 5:21**.

God took the place where only He belonged. Jesus of Nazareth was God in the flesh, **John 1:1-2 / John 1:14**, so that, that flesh could be nailed to a cross and take the penalty our sins deserve and give us the righteousness that we never could have, **2 Corinthians 8:9**.

Sometimes in Scripture Jesus calls the Father 'my God', **Revelation 3:2 / Revelation 1:6**. We must remember that Jesus is God, but the reference here alludes to Jesus' humanity.

The Father became Jesus' God when Jesus was in Mary's womb, **Psalm 22:10**, and since Jesus was human, we know that God is the God of all flesh, **Jeremiah 32:27**. Hence, when He speaks to Mary, he tells her to go and tell His disciples, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God,' **John 20:17**.

Remember also that Jesus ascended back to the Father in His new glorious body, which was also physical, **Mark 16:19 / Luke 24:50-52 / Acts 1:9-11**. In other words, in heaven Jesus still has His humanity; hence why He calls the Father 'my God', **Revelation 3:2**.

Now, what did God do? The Bible says God did two things. First, Paul says that 'God gave him a place no one can claim: God exalted him to the highest place,' **Philippians 2:9**. The word 'exalt' is the same word that is used in the Gospel of John, **John 12:32**.

In other words, men lifted up Jesus on a cross so that they could be saved, and then God lifted Him up out of a grave, **Romans 8:11**, and gave Him a place above everyone and above everything.

That means there's not a person or a thing in this world that has a claim on us that ought to supersede the claim of Jesus Christ, **Ephesians 1:20-21**. That's why we go every Sunday and give Him praise.

There is only One who deserves our worship; there's only One who deserves our praise. There's only one in the highest place, and it's the man with the scarred hands, **Hebrews 2:8**. The day is coming when 'every knee is going to bow, and every tongue is going to confess', **Philippians 2:10**, which Christians have been declaring for years.

Because God not only gave Jesus a place that nobody else could claim, but God gave him a Name that everybody is going to name, a Name that is above every name, **Philippians 2:10**.

And what is that Name? What is the Name that every intelligent being ever created is going to name someday? That name is Jesus, and He is Lord, **Philippians 2:11 / John 17:3**, and that had significance on that little church in Philippi. Remember, Philippi was a Roman colony and back then, a soldier might walk up to a Christian and get them to say, 'Caesar dominus noster est,' that is, 'Caesar is Lord.' But they would die before they would call anybody else 'Lord'.

The day is coming when every being in heaven and every demon in hell and everyone in between is going to say what that little persecuted church said every Sunday when they worshipped, 'Jesus Christ is Lord'. And when that day comes, God, the Father, will receive all the glory, **Philippians 2:11 / Revelation 6:15-17**.

DO EVERYTHING WITHOUT GRUMBLING

‘Therefore, dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and act according to his good purpose’. **Philippians 2:12-13**

Notice that Paul again uses the word, ‘therefore’. In other words, in light of everything he’s said about Christ, how He humbled Himself to save us, how He’s been exalted above to the highest place.

Notice that Paul did not say, ‘work for your salvation’; he didn’t say, ‘work at your salvation’; he didn’t say, ‘work toward your salvation’. He’s writing to people who are already saved, and we know that because he said back in **Philippians 1:2**.

Russel, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Work out your own salvation. Though salvation is through Christ, it must be worked out by obedience, **Hebrews 5:8**. With fear and trembling. That is, earnest anxiety.’

A Christian can only work out the salvation God has already worked in, and so, all we need to do is advertise the salvation God is working in by working out. In other words, we need to experience and express the salvation that God has given us in the way that we live, **Philippians 1:27**.

The Bible speaks about salvation in three tenses: the past, **Ephesians 2:8-9**; the present, **1 Corinthians 1:18**; and the future, **Romans 5:9**. God wants to give us salvation in the past, the removal of the penalty of sin, and someday He’s going to give us salvation in the future, the removal from the presence of sin.

And right now, He wants to give us salvation in the present, and that is victory over the power of sin. And He wants us to experience that; He wants us to grow with that and to express that salvation and let it out. And it’s your responsibility, not somebody else’s, **Philippians 2:12**. In other words, if we depend on ourselves to do it, then we’re not a church; we’re a cult.

Experiencing my salvation depends ultimately on God and not on man, and so we need to work out that salvation between God and us. Not only that, but you need to do it because it’s serious.

Paul says, ‘do it with fear and trembling’, **Philippians 2:12**. I don’t think he means we’d better do it because someday we’re all going to stand and pray before the judgement seat of God. He’s already said, ‘You’re in Christ Jesus; you’re saved, people.’ But what is a Christian’s greatest fear?

It’s this: that we would break the heart of God by abusing His grace, **Romans 6:1-14**. In light of all He’s worked into my life, in light of all He’s given me. The thought that I would stand before my God someday as a flabby, out-of-shape witness should be a great matter of concern to me.

Notice Paul said, ‘You can’t work out your salvation without God.’ It’s impossible without God; the same God that was working through Paul was going to work in the Philippians. What’s God going to do?

God’s going to work in us: 1. To change our will and 2. To change our actions, **Philippians 2:13**. Sin destroyed our power to want to do good, and sin destroyed our ability to do good.

And there’s not a person in this world who can live a life that pleases God by themselves, but God is capable of producing the kind of life that He wants in you when you yield to His Spirit.

In Greek, the word ‘work’ is the word ‘energain’, **Philippians 2:13**. It is where we get our word ‘energy’. In other words, God is our energiser, God is our power source, and God is there to help us complete our salvation and experience everything He wants us to know. Now all we’ve got to do is work it out, and Paul continues to tell us how to do just that.

‘Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour for nothing.’ **Philippians 2:14-**

Paul has told us three things that need to be a part of our workout plan.

1. Cut out the grumbling, **Philippians 2:14**.

Paul says, 'I want you to work out your salvation,' and he says the first thing we do to start working out our salvation is 'we stop the grumbling.' We've got this salvation from God working in us, and Paul wants us to work it out so people can see us.

And it's very hard for non-Christians to see salvation when Christians moan as much as everybody else, **Exodus 16:8 / Matthew 20:9-12 / Luke 5:30**. People can say, 'Well, I'm not grumbling against God,' but God takes it personally, **Exodus 16:8**.

When God has supernaturally delivered a person from a life of slavery and bondage and given them freedom, they could never get on their own and never deserve it. When God does that for a person and they start grumbling, God gets upset, and so God says, 'Do everything without grumbling and complaining. Everything!'

2. Let out the light, **Philippians 2:15**.

We have to reflect the brilliance of God's holiness in this dark world, **Ephesians 5:8-14**. Paul says, 'that it is crooked and perverse', **Philippians 2:15 / Deuteronomy 32:5**. In other words, it is full of crooks and perverts, and God needs some big old stars in it.

People aren't always going to like the light because the light exposes their evil deeds; that's why sometimes they're going to criticise the light, sometimes they are going to argue with the light, sometimes they are going to mock the light, **John 3:20**, but we've got to keep on shining, **Matthew 5:16**.

And that's what Paul said, we just need to keep on shining because it's not going to be hard to shine in the holy city, **Revelation 22:5**. When we experience our future salvation and we're taken to heaven and God Himself is going to be the light of heaven, it's not going to be hard to shine but God said, 'I want you to shine now amid a very ugly world', **Philippians 2:15**.

What we need is some salvation getting worked out in the world. We've got to be in the world so we can shine. Yes, we'll be criticised, but we've got to make sure there's no 'just criticism' against us.

We've got to live such bright lives that we shut up some of that criticism, **1 Peter 2:11-12**. It's God's will to let our lights shine so bright that some of the nonsense and sin gets spewed out, **1 Peter 2:15**. Some of the venom being poured out in this world just gets shut up because it just can't stand the heat of the light.

Now, please understand, I'm not saying that we work it out to save ourselves; we don't work for our salvation. But let's be very clear: God does use our works when we work out our salvation to shine light into people's lives and bring them to salvation.

3. Hold out the Word, **Philippians 2:16**.

Paul says, 'shine like stars as you hold out the word of life,' **Philippians 2:16**. In other words, the light of our Christian character is an uninterpreted parable if we don't speak of Christ. It's not enough just to be light; the purpose of the light is to call attention to our lives, so that we can hold out the Word of life and speak of Christ.

It's the Word of God that gives life, **Proverbs 3:2**. There's life in the Word of God, **John 10:10**. When we share the written Word, the Bible; when we share the spoken word, our testimony of Christ.

What we do is reveal the living Word, the Lord Himself, **John 1:1-2**. Working out our salvation demands bearing witness to the source of our new life, **John 5:24**. We have found new life in Christ, and we want others to hear about that because we don't want them to live in the darkness anymore, **1 Peter 2:9**.

'But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.' **Philippians 2:17-18**

Paul says, ‘I’m just about used up for Christ, and I am so happy.’ The point is this: the more we commit to expressing our salvation, the more joy we’re going to have. A cup of wine was poured out with the offering of Old Testament sacrifices, **Exodus 29:40 / Numbers 15:1-10**.

Paul rejoices that his sacrifices and toil have been poured out in conjunction with the sacrifice and service that have resulted from the Philippians’ obedient faith.

Barclay, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Paul was perfectly willing to make his life a sacrifice to God, and, if that happened, to him it would be all joy, and he calls on them, **Ephesians 2:18**, not to mourn at the prospect but rather to rejoice. To him every call for sacrifice or toil was a call to his love for Christ; and therefore he met it, not with regret or complaint but with joy.’

Because the Philippians had also poured out their cup of sacrifices, they could rejoice with Paul in his sacrifice and service for the Lord.

TIMOTHY

‘I hope in the Lord to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father, he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.’ **Philippians 2:19-24**

Paul doesn’t know how his trial is going to go; he’s not sure yet if he’s going to be released, although he wants to be released and wants to come to Philippi soon. He’s saying to them, ‘I can’t come straight away; I’m going to send the closest thing to me I’ve got; I’m going to send a piece of me; I’m going to send Timothy; I have no one else like him,’ **Philippians 2:19**.

Why wasn’t there anybody else like Timothy? Paul answers the question by telling us, ‘he takes a genuine interest in your welfare,’ **Philippians 2:20**. Evidently, Paul was looking for someone to go to Philippi; he was looking for somebody who could go and encourage them, and evidently, he couldn’t find any people in Rome who had any interest in that church in Philippi.

But Paul said, ‘I know, I’ve got one man who has proven he’ll take the form of a servant if I need him.’ Timothy put down his own interests to serve others; that’s what humility means. In other words, he put down his interests to serve others, **Philippians 2:21**. Timothy has proved himself in his service with Paul, **Philippians 2:20**.

Murray, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In contrast to most believers, Timothy had demonstrated his worthiness as a servant of Christ and of Paul over more than 10 years.’

When Paul finds out what is going to happen to him, he hopes he will send Timothy to them, **Philippians 2:23**. Paul was pretty confident that he himself would come to visit the church in Philippi soon, **Philippians 2:24 / Philippians 1:25**.

EPAPHRODITUS

‘But I think it necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed, he was ill and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore, I am all the more eager to send him so that when you see him again, you may be glad, and I may have less anxiety. Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour men like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.’

Philippians 2:25-30

Paul couldn’t leave right away, and he wanted to wait to find out how things were going for Timothy, so he talked about Epaphroditus. So who is this guy? He was a Philippian, and when the Philippian church heard that Paul was in prison in Rome, they said, ‘We’re going to send somebody with some money, and not just with some money; we’re going to send somebody to go and stay and minister to Paul,’ **Philippians 2:25**.

And they chose Epaphroditus, and so he takes off on the road, and apparently either on the trip or just after he got to Rome, Epaphroditus became gravely ill, **Philippians 2:26**.

Somehow Epaphroditus learned that the people back in Philippi know he’s sick; they know that he’s really sick, and it says that it caused him great distress, **Philippians 2:27**. I wonder why Paul didn’t or couldn’t heal Epaphroditus. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The answer lies in the purpose of miracles, which were never given for the personal needs of God’s apostles and preachers, but only for the purpose of ‘confirming the word’, **Mark 16:20**. Timothy suffered from a stomach illness, **1 Timothy 5:23**, and Trophimus was left at Miletus sick, **2 Timothy 4:20**, just as Epaphroditus was allowed here to suffer the normal course of his illness.’

And so he’s more concerned about their anxiety than he is about his own health and when he does get stronger, Paul says, ‘I’ll tell you what Epaphroditus, your so upset, your so concerned for your loved ones, I’m going to send you home, I’m going to send you home so that you’ll feel better and so that they’ll feel better,’ **Philippians 2:28**. The Philippians were to welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour him, **Philippians 2:29**.

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The apostle heaps commendations upon Epaphroditus, apprehending seemingly that he might have a cool reception, **Philippians 2:29-30**, since he is going home prematurely and without having rendered all the service expected.’

And he decided on the way that maybe he had better prepare them for his coming back. Maybe some people in Philippi were wondering why he came back early. Epaphroditus laid down his life to serve others, **Philippians 2:30**. How did he risk his life? In two ways.

1. By his willingness to minister to a prisoner charged with a capital offence.

Paul was tried because they were charged with being a threat to the Roman government. And when Epaphroditus shows up to be a friend and minister to him, he opens himself up to the same charge.

2. By his determination to complete his mission amid severe illness.

Maybe some people told him on the way, ‘Epaphroditus, you’re sick; you need to go back home’. And Epaphroditus says, ‘No, I’m not going to stop until I get to Rome and give Paul what I’ve brought him.’ Epaphroditus chose against himself for the sake of somebody else, **1 John 3:16**.

Notice how Paul describes Epaphroditus: ‘he’s my fellow brother, he’s my fellow worker, he’s my fellow soldier, we’re in the same family, we have the same focus, and we share the same fight,’ **Philippians 2:25**.

Now that’s a strange and exciting concept to me: the church is an army of servants. An army of servants that is going to march into the world and risk their lives by serving the world from the bottom up.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

‘Finally, my brothers rejoice in the Lord; it is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again. And it is a safe guard for you; watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh.’ ‘For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus and who put no confidence in the flesh. Though I myself have such reasons for such confidence, if anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, regarding the law, a Pharisee. As for zeal, persecuted the church, as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. 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 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law. But that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship in the sharing of his sufferings, becoming like him in his death and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead’. Philippians 3:1-11

NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH

Paul once thought he was so rich in many things, but one day he realised he wasn’t that rich at all, and his value system was completely reoriented. He learned that you’re never going to enjoy true joy until you discover what true treasure is.

Remember, Paul is writing to a church in need of a joy transfusion, and so he says to them, ‘finally brothers’, **Philippians 3:1**, and notice that it’s Biblical for a preacher to say, ‘finally,’ and then go on for a long time. He says, ‘finally’, in the middle of a book and then goes on for two more chapters.

Paul wants the Philippians to have lasting joy. Notice that it depends on self-doctrine. In other words, it depends on them having the proper understanding of the Gospel of grace, **Psalms 19:8**. Grace and joy go together; the Greek word for grace is ‘charis’, and the Greek word for joy is ‘chara’.

We’re never going to have lasting joy until we embrace the Gospel of grace. If our righteousness depends on performance, we’re full of anxiety. If our salvation depends on our performance, we’re never going to have lasting joy.

This is the problem of legalism, of making human righteousness the basis of salvation. That’s why, in Galatia, when Paul was writing to the Galatian churches about this exact problem of people wanting to add the Gospel of works to the Gospel of grace, **Galatians 4:15**.

Paul wants the Philippian church to have joy, and the best way to safeguard our joy is to learn to rejoice in the Lord and not in ourselves. But the problem is that Satan wants to plant in good, healthy churches people who want to advocate a grace-plus-works Gospel.

Now that’s what’s happening in Philippi and Galatia. These Judaizers come up and say, ‘Yes, Jesus is good, and Jesus is great; we believe in grace, we believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus and circumcision.’

‘So just be circumcised and add that to the Gospel and you’ll be saved,’ **Acts 15:1**. And in every generation, some people want to add to the Gospel of grace, and if you let them, your joy is going to go out the window.

Paul says, ‘Watch out for these dogs, these doers of evil, these mutilators of the flesh,’ **Philippians 3:2**. That’s pretty strong language, but Paul was tired of these guys who had been dogging him and his mission work for years.

Meyer, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They did not deny that Jesus was the Messiah, or that His Gospel was the power of God unto salvation, but they insisted that the Gentile converts could only come to the fullness of Gospel privilege through the Law of Moses.’

Interestingly, the Jews used to call Gentiles dogs. Paul turns it around and says, ‘they’re the dogs’; he says, ‘I wish they would just mutilate themselves’, **Galatians 5:12 / Deuteronomy 23:1**.

Now if those words aren’t offensive to us, it’s because we don’t cherish the Gospel as much as Paul does, **Matthew 7:6**. Paul gets fighting mad when people start messing with the Gospel.

Paul doesn’t have a problem with circumcision, but he has a big problem with acquiring any religious activity to supplement the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. He would rather fight than switch Gospels.

And the reason he was so critical is that we miss out on joy when we misplace our confidence. If we put our confidence in our ability to do anything to please God, we’re going to lose joy. Paul had to learn to give his flesh a vote of no confidence.

When Paul talks about placing no confidence in the flesh, **Philippians 3:3**, he’s not just talking about the worst of man. When we think of the flesh, we think about drunkenness, immorality, greed and idolatry; that’s part of the flesh. But he’s not just talking about the worst that is in man; he’s talking about the best that is in man. The part of man that tries to do good, the part of man that studies his Bible, the part of man that shares his faith, the part of man that goes to church.

He says, ‘I don’t place any confidence in that either’. The flesh is that self-confident spirit that says, ‘I can please God by myself.’ It’s the flesh that makes us think we are richer than we really are, and nobody learned this lesson better than Paul did. Paul learned two radical lessons which changed his life.

1. My righteousness gains nothing.

Paul says, ‘There are two types of righteousness that are available to us today.’ There’s divine righteousness that’s the gift of God, and there’s human righteousness that you accumulate as you do religious things.

Most people prefer the second kind of righteousness, but we just tend to trust anything that we can contribute. We’re the same way with our salvation; we like that kind of righteousness that has to be added to, and we think that’s more trustworthy.

Paul knows about that; he was the number one draft pick of the Jewish religion, **Philippians 3:4-6**. He was a model example of how you acquire those things that make you rich in human righteousness, **Philippians 3:4**. Paul had those things that would make us rich in human righteousness.

1. Inheritance advantages.

He says, ‘Look at my heritage’, **Philippians 3:5-6**. People do that today: ‘I’ve been going to church for seventy years, my daddy was a preacher, my granddad was an elder, my great-granddad was one of the first members of the church’, and we boast and place confidence in our heritage.

2. Performance advantages.

He says Check me out: I was circumcised on the eighth day, **Genesis 17:12 / Leviticus 12:3**. I was a Pharisee, **Matthew 23:23**; he says there were only six thousand allowed in that club, and I was one of them. I was of the tribe of Benjamin, **1 Samuel 9:1-2**.

‘Not only that, but according to my zeal, I loved Judaism so much that I travelled all over the world to kill people who opposed it and check out my legalistic righteousness, **Romans 10:2**, try to find one thing I was doing wrong in the law of Moses,’ **Philippians 3:5-6 / Luke 18:18-23**.

When he says, ‘I was blameless, faultless’, he doesn’t mean he never sinned; he means that even when he sinned, he did exactly what the Law of Moses told him to do, **Philippians 3:6**.

When Paul is criticising human righteousness, he’s not doing it as an outsider. He didn’t write as a have-not; he wrote as somebody who had everything, but then he realised one day he had nothing.

One day changed his life; he’s on the road to Damascus, **Acts 9:1-5**, and he’s going to persecute some more Christians and add some more human righteousness to his bank account. And suddenly he encountered a blinding light that threw him to the ground. **Acts 9:3-8**.

What happened that day when Paul met Jesus Christ for the first time in his life, he got a glimpse of perfect righteousness, and he suddenly realised he was on the wrong road in more ways than one. One glimpse of the perfect righteousness of Jesus, and suddenly he realised all of his righteousness had gained him nothing, **Matthew 13:45-46**. Paul understood what the Old Testament said when he quoted ‘as it is written: there is no one righteous, not even one,’ **Romans 3:10**. He might have even added, ‘not even me’.

Paul’s trying to say, ‘I worked myself to the bone, I piled up one credit after another of human righteousness, and now I realise that if you haven’t done it my way, you haven’t missed a thing because all of that gained me nothing’.

This text stands as a strong warning to anybody who thinks all God is looking for is moral living and some strong convictions. Hell is going to be full of nice people with strong convictions.

As far as human righteousness goes, nobody has more credit than Paul, and he was on his way to Hell. God is looking for more than a moral life and some strong convictions. God is looking for surrender to the Gospel.

So Paul says later, ‘but a righteousness from God apart from law has been made known, to which the prophets testify, this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe,’ **Romans 3:20-21**. The righteousness of God demands a vote of no confidence in the flesh.

We’ve got to turn away from our own view of our goodness, and we’ve got to accept God’s view of our goodness. And then we’ve got to turn from our goodness to God’s. We’ve got to understand that our righteousness gains nothing.

2. My faith gains His righteousness.

The good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ isn’t just that people can be saved; it’s that people can be saved by faith instead of by works. The good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that salvation isn’t a matter of climbing upstairs; it’s a lift from almighty God, **1 Peter 3:18**.

We don’t step our way to God with human righteousness; we receive righteousness when Christ brings us by faith, **2 Corinthians 5:21**. Once Paul got a glimpse of perfect righteousness that day on the road to Damascus, he never again preached anything but the Jesus-plus-nothing plan of salvation.

He could afford to surrender everything else but not Christ. Once he found the real treasure, it’s amazing how unimportant all those other riches were anymore, **Philippians 3:7-8**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The word (rubbish) means the vilest dross or refuse of anything; the worst excrement. The word shows how utterly insignificant and unavailing, in point of salvation, the apostle esteemed everything but the Gospel of Jesus.’

Paul says, ‘It’s just garbage, and I’m happy to call it garbage because I don’t want any more of the righteousness that comes from keeping laws; I want the righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus Christ,’ **Philippians 3:8-9**.

Jesus Christ didn't come to contribute to our salvation; He came to pay for it, Colossians 1:14. Paul is saying that 'God's way of making us right with him depends on faith,' **Philippians 3:9**.

What is that? It's counting on Christ alone. Faith is placing confidence in Christ's work and acknowledging no confidence in my flesh. Voting no confidence in our ability to obtain righteousness and total confidence in Christ's ability to give us righteousness when we trust Him.

Paul knew what he was saying when he said, 'Rejoice in the Lord, it is a safeguard for you,' **Philippians 3:1**. It's the only way to keep that joy lasting and permanent; it's when that joy is in the Lord, **Philippians 4:4**.

Whenever it dawns on our little minds, whenever it breaks through, when we finally understand that our righteousness in the eyes of God is because of the gift of Jesus Christ, **Philippians 3:8**.

Do you know what is going to happen? The Holy Spirit is just going to prompt outbursts of worship in our lives. We're going to love to worship, we can't wait for church to start, and we won't ever want church to end.

Legalists go to church because they have to, but grace-centred Christians can't wait to get to church, because they have to worship by the Spirit of God. Grace and joy go together; it means you're leaning solely on the work of Christ, and it's going to mean 'releasing anything that competes with Christ'.

When Paul says, 'I count it all a loss,' in **Philippians 3:7**, that same word is used back in **Acts 27:10**. Remember when Paul was on a ship, and it had all this valuable cargo, and it was worth a whole lot, until there was a storm at sea, and suddenly they had to throw stuff overboard to save their lives, **Acts 27:18-19**.

That cargo that was so valuable, all of a sudden, it's just lost. It doesn't count so much anymore when we're trying to save our lives. And that's the word that Paul uses, and what he's saying is, 'we need to throw away anything that's hindering our relationship to Christ'.

Notice, Paul didn't just throw away junk for Jesus; he threw away stuff that once was of tremendous value to him. I think Paul would say that's how many people spend their lives, in trivial pursuits.

Paul said, 'I didn't know it was trivial; I thought what I was going after in my life was really valuable, but one day I saw Jesus Christ, and now I realise that all that stuff I was trying to get, it's just rubbish. I have a new passion now, and my new passion is to know Jesus Christ my Lord; nothing competes with that', **Philippians 3:10**.

How do we know Jesus Christ is Lord? We know Jesus Christ is Lord when we're willing every day to die and live for Him. He says, 'I want Jesus Christ so bad; I want to live like him, and wherever Jesus lives, that's where I want to be,' **Philippians 3:10**.

Notice he put resurrection first, **Philippians 3:10**. Do you know why? Because the resurrection isn't just a doctrine; it's an event, and it's powerful to the Christian today, **Acts 2:24 / 1 Corinthians 15:1-4**.

And when we know the power of the living Christ, we're increasingly going to go into places and suffer for Christ, **Philippians 3:10 / Romans 8:17 / 1 Peter 4:13 / Romans 8:17 / 2 Corinthians 1:5 / Colossians 1:24 / 2 Timothy 2:11**.

When the living Christ is inside us, and the power that raised Him from the dead is filled up in our lives, suddenly we're willing to go anywhere and do anything to suffer for Christ. Because that's all we really care about, is living and dying for Christ every day.

All Paul wanted was to know Christ; that was his quest. It was a quest that was going to occupy the rest of his life. He was determined that nothing was going to keep him from knowing more and more and more about Christ, **Philippians 3:10-11 / 1 Corinthians 15:12-23**.

'Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I

do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” **Philippians 3:12-14**

Paul has just finished saying, ‘anything is rubbish except this, knowing Christ.’ Paul said, ‘that anything we do to get human righteousness is rubbish; we’re not saved by our effort or by our merit.’ We’re saved by putting faith in the work of Christ, and when we put faith in Christ, we receive divine righteousness.

After saying human righteousness is rubbish, is Paul now saying, ‘that salvation is the product of human effort?’ No, we need to understand how Paul thinks. Paul isn’t saying, ‘we need to strain to be saved’. He’s describing the activity of somebody who has abandoned all the claims to merit.

The way people live who have received divine righteousness through their faith in Christ. Paul knows he’s saved, **Philippians 3:12**. He knows that Christ holds him, and he knows that Christ has embraced him.

What he’s saying is, ‘Because Christ has embraced me, because Christ has pursued me, I’m going to spend the rest of my life pursuing Christ.’ The way we live in grace is by pursuing the One who pursued us, **Luke 9:62**. Jesus Christ came and paid the ultimate sacrifice. Why? So that He could take hold of us. So how do you spend the rest of your life?

Doing what Paul was doing, trying to take hold of more and more and more of Christ and the knowledge of Him, **Philippians 2:13**. In other words, what we’re trying to do is what Paul said earlier, ‘we try to work out that salvation, God has worked in,’ **Philippians 2:12**.

Remember when the Bible says, ‘we’re saved by faith, not by works,’ **Ephesians 2:8-9**. In the Bible, faith is always described as a walk. When we live by faith, we’re moving, we’re active, and we’re going somewhere.

A great example of faith in the Bible is Abraham, the Father of the faithful. He spent his whole life in a tent; he spent his whole life on the move, following the lead of God.

And so when Paul says, ‘you’re saved by faith’, he doesn’t mean you become a spiritual couch potato. We’re supposed to be active in our pursuit of the goal that God has for us.

When Paul says, ‘I’m pursuing that goal,’ **Philippians 3:14**, he’s not talking about salvation; he’s already got that in Christ. The goal he’s talking about is Christ-likeness, **Romans 8:29**. He’s pursuing an increasing knowledge of Christ so that he can become more and more like Christ, **2 Peter 3:18**.

In other words, it is a quest to ‘morph’. The Bible says it’s possible for us to ‘morph’, to become increasingly more like Jesus Christ, **2 Corinthians 3:18**. To think and feel and act more and more as Jesus did. Are we going to receive that perfection in this life? No. We’re not going to receive that perfect ‘morphing’ until He comes back, **Philippians 3:12**.

In other words, Paul was never going to say, ‘someday I’ll come to Philippi and stand up and say, ‘I’ve arrived, I’m as mature and complete and perfect in knowledge of Christ as you could possibly be.’ Paul says, ‘I’ll never be able to say that’, **Philippians 3:13**.

Before he became a Christian he thought that, before he was a Christian he thought he had arrived spiritually. But once you start knowing Jesus Christ, you understand that there’s always more to know, there’s always more growing to do and so we never arrive at our perfect knowledge of Christ, **2 Peter 3:18**. But we have an understanding that God’s purpose for us in this life is to aim, and even strain for increasing Christ-likeness, to desire to ‘morph’, **Philippians 3:13**.

Notice that Paul writes to the Romans, ‘we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him who have been called according to his purpose,’ **Romans 8:28**. We usually stop right there and don’t read the next verse, which tells what the purpose we have been called for is.

Why has God called us? Why does He make all things work out? ‘Because He foreknew and predestined that we’re conformed to the likeness of His Son,’ **Romans 8:29**.

That word ‘conform’ is your word ‘morph.’ God’s plan for us wasn’t just to give us fire insurance; God’s plan when He saved us and took hold of us is that we would ‘morph’ into the likeness of Christ. That’s God’s plan, that’s God’s purpose, that’s what Paul says, ‘I’m straining for,’ **Philippians 3:13**.

Christ has taken hold of us; now we’re straining to take hold of Christ. We’re straining to grow in our knowledge of Christ, so we can be more like Christ. Paul’s trying to say, ‘Jesus Christ came and died for freedom so that we could be free from sin and go to heaven.’

That’s why God works all things out so that He can make you look more and more like Jesus and represent Him, **Galatians 4:19**. Remember, Galatians is dealing with the problem of legalism, and we need to understand that legalists, for the most part, have good hearts.

They see people who aren’t growing spiritually, and they want to help them, and the way they want to help them is by giving them rules. And so the legalist in Paul’s day said, ‘be circumcised, eat this food but don’t eat that food, don’t go here but go there, honour this day but don’t honour that day,’ **Colossians 2:16**.

And by rules, they were going to help you look more like Jesus. The problem with that is if we’re going to look more like Jesus, we’ve got to change on the inside, and the outside rules can’t do that.

They think that if we give everyone a bunch of rules, we’re going to change on the inside to be like Jesus. The only way we can change a person on the inside, the only way we can really ‘morph’, is if we listen and obey the Holy Spirit, **2 Corinthians 3:18**.

Paul’s point is this: when Jesus Christ came, He took hold of us, and now God’s purpose and goal are that we’ll take hold of Christ and ‘morph’ into the image of Christ as we follow the Spirit.

And when we follow the Spirit, we don’t become a spiritual couch potato; we get up and move. When we listen to the Spirit, we’re going to be active and growing and straining.

What Paul is trying to say is, ‘Jesus Christ came all the way from heaven to earth.’ Why? To get us to start it? No, to get us finished. He had a purpose for us, a goal for us. He wants us to cross that line and ‘morph’ into His image. Paul knew how to run the race, and he gave us three pieces of advice to help us run.

1. Forget the past, **Philippians 3:13**.

If we’re going to run the race, we need to forget the past, **Philippians 3:13**. When he says, ‘forget’, he doesn’t mean we’re going to forget our knowledge of Scripture, our Christian friends, our experiences of God’s grace. We’re going to remember that, in fact, the central act of Christian worship is memory, **1 Corinthians 11:24**.

Our problem is we like to remember what we ought to forget, and we forget what we ought to remember. Paul is saying, ‘We don’t let anything in our past impede our progress in becoming more like Jesus.’

Paul had some ugly stuff in his past, too, and he didn’t forget in the sense that he couldn’t remember what it was that he used to do, **Acts 22:3-4 / Acts 26:9-11 / 1 Corinthians 15:9**. But he forgets in the sense that he didn’t let it control him anymore and keep him from running the race.

Don’t let your life get sidetracked by sins God can’t remember, **Psalms 103:12 / Hebrews 10:17**. We need to forget our sins, get back on track and start growing into the image of Jesus. Some of us need to forget our successes.

Paul had to do that too; he could talk about all the churches he planted, all the sermons he preached, all the letters he wrote. But let me tell you something about living in the past: the mercy God gave you for yesterday was good for yesterday, but the devil is after you brand new today.

But the good news is that God’s mercies are new every morning, **Lamentations 3:22-23**. God’s got mercy to give us today for our run today. What Paul is saying is that we need to forget about the good old days, and we need to forget

about the bad old days, and we need to run today. Because God has got some growing and learning for you to do today.

That word ‘forget’, **Philippians 3:13**, means we do it daily; it’s a part of your training as a Christian. Something we do every day is forget. We forget all the stuff in the past, good and bad, that would keep us from running hard today.

2. We need to listen to the coach.

If we want to run a good race, listen to the coach. We’re all on this path to perfection in Christ, but we’re all at different stages of progress. And one of the things that bog us down is that we wonder, what are we going to do about all those people who aren’t running very fast?

We can encourage them; we can set a good example for them by the way that we run; we can pray for them and ask God to bless them. We can do what Paul did: trust God and leave it to him, **Philippians 3:15**. God is more committed to our maturity than we are.

In every chapter in **Philippians**, Paul says, ‘God is more interested in you growing into Christ than you are, and He’s at work doing it,’ **Philippians 1:6 / Philippians 2:13 / Philippians 4:13 / Philippians 3:15**. That’s one reason why God lets us have trials.

Remember back in **Romans 8:28**? ‘All things work for good.’ The Bible doesn’t say, ‘all things are good’, but ‘God works all things for good according to his purpose that you become like Jesus,’ **Romans 8:28-29**.

God lets hard things happen so that He can speak to us and coach us and get us back out there running the race the way He wants us to run it. God is more committed to our being more like Jesus than we are. So are we listening to the coach? Are we staying in touch with the Holy Spirit?

We’ve got to run every time the Spirit says run; you’ve got to obey every time the Spirit says obey, **Galatians 5:25**. Every time we obey the Spirit’s leading, God will reveal more to us, and we can run further the next day, 2 **Corinthians 3:18**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following about the words ‘press on, **Philippians 3:14**.

‘The Greek word points out the strong exertions made in the race; every muscle and nerve is exerted, and he puts forth every particle of his strength in running. He was running for life, and running for his life.’

3. Focus on the goal.

Paul says, ‘One thing I do, not twenty things I dabble in.’ ‘One thing I do, I press on toward the goal, for the prize which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus,’ **Philippians 3:13-14**.

Paul is saying, ‘I’m going to evaluate my life, I’m going to recalibrate my life, I’m going to re-order my life, if I’m going to let anything into my life, it’s going to have to pass this test.’

If we want to run a good race, we put our eye on the finish line, and we stare at it until we get there, **Hebrews 12:1-2**. Paul wouldn’t let anything take his eye off that goal; he says, ‘I’m going to have perfect knowledge of Christ, I’m going to finish the race, and He’s going to give me His perfect crown of righteousness,’ 2 **Timothy 4:7-8**.

“All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.’ **Philippians 3:15-16**

After explaining the goal of becoming like Christ, Paul says everyone who is mature should think the same, but if they don’t, God will show them how important it is to have that same mindset. This would certainly help in maintaining unity within the church, **Philippians 2:1-2 / Philippians 2:5 / Ephesians 4:3**.

Fee, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The sentence is thus predicated on their mutual friendship and mutual trust, which is so secure that Paul can simply leave it in God’s hands to ‘reveal’ to them what further understanding they may need on matters wherein they might not be ready fully to agree with him.’

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘All Christians, but especially the immature who are in view here, need to maintain a consistent life in harmony with our understanding of God’s truth. We should not wait until we have a complete knowledge of what God has revealed to put into practice what we do understand.’

FOLLOWING PAUL’S EXAMPLE

‘Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and now say again, even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.’ Philippians 3:17-21

All through the Bible, the saints say to God, ‘How long, how long are we going to have to wait for Jesus to come and deliver us from this sin-cursed planet?’ But the problem is, as that wait continues, we find ourselves becoming increasingly attracted and seduced by the pleasures of this world. So we’re temporary residents; this world isn’t really our home, but we’re going to have to be here a while.

Jesus, for a time, wants us to live among the daily debris of this sin-cursed planet, **John 17:15**. Paul says, ‘We’ve got to walk off that wait.’ We’ve got to wait; we’ve got to wait with eagerness for what we long for. And what Paul said was, ‘The way to solve my wait problem is with a good daily walk.’

Paul is telling the Philippians, ‘I want you to walk after the pattern set by Jesus Christ,’ **Philippians 2:6-8**. But Paul recognises, and it breaks his heart to do it, Paul recognises that some people don’t walk that way.

Paul’s describing people who profess Christ, but their lives are denying what their lips are confessing, **Philippians 3:18-19 / 1 Corinthians 6:12-20**. He calls them enemies of the cross. Why? Because they’re walking in a way that denies the priority of pursuing Christ-likeness, **Philippians 3:12-14 / Matthew 16:24-26**.

But some people aren’t walking that way; they’re disgracing the cross with the way they’re walking while we wait for Jesus. And Paul says, ‘their wait problem could prove fatal’. Paul tells us three pieces of advice, which will help us walk while we’re waiting.

1. Paul tells us, ‘to always regard who we walk with’, **Philippians 3:17**.

As we wait for the return of Jesus, we need to pay special attention to who we’re walking our model after. Paul wasn’t bashful; he knew that Jesus was doing something real in his life, and so he says, ‘I’m not shy about it; if you need a model, choose me, walk like I’m walking’, **Philippians 3:17**. He says the same thing over in **1 Corinthians 11:1**.

Paul was humble enough not to say he was the only one who ought to be a model, **Philippians 3:17**. In other words, Paul says, ‘I’m not the only one whose walk you can copy.’ We’d better regard who we’re walking with because we need to remember that somebody is watching our walk too.

2. Paul says, ‘Always remember what we walk under’, **Philippians 3:18-19**.

What brought Paul to tears was the knowledge that many so-called Christians were disgracing the cross by their pursuit of sensual pleasure, **Philippians 3:18 / Luke 12:16-21**. Their walking grace value was in direct contradiction to the standards of the cross. Christians who actually glory in things they should be ashamed of.

God gave us a gift: God gave us the gift of five senses, but the problem is we make getting the pleasure out of those senses our god. We make our stomach our god, **Philippians 3:19**, and Paul isn't talking so much about particular sins. He's talking about the sin of pandering to self, of making my pleasure the centre of my life. And he says, 'that disgraces the cross' because if the cross says anything, the cross says, 'we're to deny ourselves and seek the will of God first.' The cross is an 'I' that has been ruled out, **Galatians 5:24**.

If we're a people walking under the cross of Jesus Christ, we've got to give up the pet sin heresy, **Romans 6:8-14**. It's a heresy that plagues many Christians. The pet sin heresy says, 'you know we live under grace, we can't be perfect, and I've got one part in my life that's totally out of control, but hey, after all, nobody is perfect, and we're under grace, and so you don't do anything about it.'

Paul is saying, 'Listen, we've died to self, we've died to sin; that's what carrying the cross is about. There is no part of our life anymore which should be out of control; every part of our life should now be under the control of Jesus Christ.'

When Jesus Christ returns, when the wait is over, we want Him to be able to see that we've got the cross He gave us. We've traded in all that stuff that used to be important. We've traded in all that stuff that the world calls valuable. If the cross is important to us, it's going to change how we think, **Colossians 3:1-4**.

3. Always reflect on where we're walking to, **Philippians 3:20**.

He says, 'Our citizenship is in heaven,' **Philippians 3:20**. Notice the text says, 'is' in heaven, present tense. Heaven is our present possession. The Philippians could understand that.

Philippi was a Roman colony; it was six hundred miles from Rome, and a lot of people had never been to Rome, but they were Roman citizens. They dressed like Romans, they ate like Romans, and they spoke the Roman language. They lived in the Roman culture, and they obeyed the Roman laws.

But what Paul is saying is, 'We too are citizens of a city we haven't seen yet; talk like heaven people, dress like heaven people, obey the laws of heaven, live the culture of heaven.'

In other words, he says, 'We want to live here like we're already there. Let our walk reflect where we're going.' Paul is saying, 'If we really believe that, then let our conduct match our citizenship, as we wait here, walk as if we were there.'

And one thing, which is going to keep us motivated, is that one day the emperor is going to show up. In other words, be ready for Him to come; walk like you're ready for Him to come, **Philippians 3:20**.

There are some things inappropriate if we really believe that Jesus is going to come. They are parts of our walk; we just don't want to do them if we really believe Jesus is coming back to take us home, **1 John 3:2-3**.

Paul says, 'when He comes back, the power that enables him to bring everything under his control', **Philippians 3:21**. In other words, some people wish He wouldn't come back, and some people oppose the return of Jesus.

But there's not a person, there's not a demon, there's not a creature of hell that can stop it when Jesus says, 'it's time to come back.' That's when we're going to get our total salvation, because at the moment, we don't have it yet, **Philippians 3:21**.

Remember, the Bible speaks of being saved in the past, **Ephesians 2:8-9**; being saved in the present tense, **1 Corinthians 1:18**; and being saved in the future, **Romans 5:9**. The total salvation Jesus won for us on the cross, we haven't received yet, because God doesn't just want to save our souls; He wants to save our bodies.

Our bodies are lowly, **Philippians 3:21**, they are still subject to sin, death, decay and disease, but God's got a plan: Jesus Christ is going to come back, and he's got the power that puts everything under His control, and He is going to change our bodies, our lowly bodies, to be like His glorious body, **1 John 3:2**.

WHAT WILL OUR BODIES BE LIKE IN HEAVEN?

One of the most intriguing events when Christ returns, and probably one of the most speculative, is wondering what kind of bodies we will have in the afterlife. There are many theories concerning our bodies about which we could argue all day; some give good food for thought, whilst others aren't even worth discussing, but whatever our bodies will be like, they won't be prone to disease, old age, disabilities, etc.

It's not the purpose of this study to lay out exactly what our bodies will be like, but I do want us to stop and think for a moment about a couple of possibilities.

NEW BODIES AT THE RESURRECTION

There's no doubting that when Christ returns, we are promised that we will be reunited with our bodies, **Romans 8:23**. I don't think anyone would argue with that, but the real question is, what will these new bodies of ours be like? There are a few Scriptures which will help us answer this question.

THE NATURE OF OUR RESURRECTED BODIES

When we read **1 Corinthians 15:50-57**, we read that to 'inherit', 'kleronomeo' is to receive a share of an inheritance, to inherit a portion of the property, and to be an inheritor or heir. Clearly, flesh, blood, and corruption, the physical man of Adam, do not belong in heaven.

Heaven is an eternal and immortal abode, and thereby corruptible flesh has no place there. **1 Corinthians 15:39** spoke of the various fleshs that were of the earth, and these fleshs have no place in eternity, whereas the heavenly body is fit for eternity.

The Scriptures often speak of the 'kingdom of God' as the church, **Mark 1:15 / Mark 9:1 / Luke 10:9-11**. Here, however, the 'kingdom of God' is revealed to be the heavenly home of the righteous.

We may define the church in the here and now as those terrestrial bodies undefiled by sin through the blood of Christ who, if they continue in faith, will comprise the church, kingdom of God, in heaven with a celestial body.

The word 'listen', 'idou', means lo! Behold! See there! There! Take it! Paul expresses his desire for the Corinthians to hear, understand, and hope. Those who taught that there was to be no resurrection were zapping the hope out of people. He tells them 'a mystery'; it was a mystery, and now he reveals the hidden things of the resurrection.

'We all shall not sleep (die), but we shall all be changed.' The antecedent to the plural pronoun 'we' includes Paul and all of humanity. The fact that Paul includes himself in the 'we' indicates that he didn't know when this would occur, but he knew, by revelation, what would occur at that time.

There will be some of humanity that don't see death, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. When this change from an earthly body to a heavenly body shall occur, no one knows, Matthew 24:36-44; however, the trumpet of God shall sound and mark the time, 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

At that point, a 'change', 'allasso', will occur in mankind's bodies, both dead and living. The Greek word 'allasso' is to make other than it is; to change, alter. When false witnesses were hired to speak against Stephen in Acts 6-7, they said, 'For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us,' Acts 6:14.

To 'change' the customs or laws given by Moses would be to change the Jews' way of life. Likewise, when man shall experience the change that shall occur when resurrected, he will be different from his mortal state. Man will move from the earthly state to the heavenly.

He will be fitted for eternity with beauty and might, and this change shall occur instantaneously, i.e., 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.' Paul tells us the when, as best as he is able, 'for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.'

'Imperishable', 'aphtharsia', which means incorruptible, immortal, undying, enduring. The body that was subject to corruption and decay will be fitted for eternal existence on that day.

'Perishable', 'phthora', which means mortality, death, the decay of matter. The word 'must', 'dei', indicates binding necessity, 1 Timothy 3:2. This will surely occur because the Scriptures cannot be broken, John 10:35.

THE CURRENT AND FUTURE STATE OF MAN IS ILLUSTRATED IN TWO WAYS

1. Man will go from a perishable state, death and decay, to an imperishable state, unending existence.
2. Man is said to go from a mortal state to an immortal state.

When this transformation occurs in the resurrection, Paul states that Isaiah's prophecy will have been fulfilled. Isaiah said, 'Death is swallowed up in victory,' Isaiah 25:8.

Victory swallows death, and it will be no more, Revelation 20:14. Furthermore, Paul quotes from Hosea 13:14, saying, 'O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?'

The prophet foretold a resurrection of the dead so that at the point in which it occurs, one would exclaim, 'Where is thy sting, O death?' Death stings like a scorpion while man is in the terrestrial state; however, once the transformation of resurrection occurs, death and Hades will be cast into hell and will no longer exist. If the scorpion is gone, so is its sting!

Because man sins, he dies physically and spiritually just as the first man, Adam, Genesis 2:17 / 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22. The death sting is due to sin, and the power of that sting of death is the law. Law defines sin as transgression, 1 John 3:4. If there were no law, then no sin would exist, Romans 4:15.

If no law or sin existed, there would be no death. Law does exist, however, and thereby sin exists, and so does death. The power of sin has been destroyed by the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross.

Mankind is set free from the law and sin through the blood of Jesus Christ, Romans 7:1-25. When man now sins, he can ask for forgiveness if he is in Christ, Galatians 3:27. This is the 'victory through our Lord Jesus Christ'.

OUR RESURRECTED BODIES WILL BE LIKE CHRIST'S

The apostle Paul gives a little clue as to what is involved in this change; he tells us that our bodies will be glorious like Christ's glorious body, **Philippians 3:20-21**. At the resurrection is when we're going to get our total salvation. The total salvation Jesus won for us on the cross, we haven't received yet, because God doesn't just want to save our souls; He wants to save our bodies.

The bodies we have now are lowly bodies; in other words, they are still subject to sin, death, decay and disease. But God's got a plan: Jesus Christ is going to come back, and He's got the power that puts everything under His control, and He's going to change our bodies, our lowly bodies, to be like His glorious body. The apostle John also speaks about this change, **1 John 3:2**.

These verses tell us that those who die, having trusted Christ as their Saviour, will be given bodies like that of the Lord Jesus Christ. It will be a body that isn't subject to disease and death any longer.

It will be in all points perfect, as the Lord Jesus Christ's body is also perfect. We further know from **2 Corinthians 5:8** that a Christian, immediately upon their death, goes into the presence of the Lord.

WHAT WAS JESUS' GLORIFIED BODY LIKE? JESUS' BODY WAS PHYSICAL

Jesus wasn't a spirit walking around after His resurrection; He had a body, much like what we will have. The Gospels tell us a great deal about what Christ's glorious body was like and what He did whilst He was still here. A passage that gives a clear description of Christ's resurrected body is found in **Luke 24**, as He appeared to the disciples.

In **Luke 24:39**, Jesus draws attention to His completely physical and yet glorified body. With clear words, Jesus instructed His disciples to view His hands and His feet, and even to touch Him, and to see that He had a real physical body and not a spiritual body that couldn't be touched.

With these words, given in the context by Christ Himself, He rids the world of the false view of the nature of Christ's resurrected body as being some mystical 'spiritual resurrection.'

It should be noted that the fact that Jesus said flesh and bones rather than 'flesh and blood' doesn't necessarily indicate that His body had no blood. The life principle in a resurrected body may not be in its blood but in the spirit of God.

In Luke's Gospel, he tells us that the risen Jesus walks unrecognised with two of His disciples. It was only after they arrived at the village of Emmaus, and Jesus broke the bread at the dinner table, that they finally recognised him. The story continues with Jesus appearing to a group of disciples, **Luke 24:40-43**.

Then there is the scene with Peter and the other disciples after a long day of fishing. They see the risen Lord calling them from the shore. When they arrive, they find that He has cooked a breakfast of bread and fish for them and invites them to 'Come, have breakfast,' **John 21:1-14**.

WHAT ABOUT JESUS' ENCOUNTER WITH MARY JUST AFTER HIS RESURRECTION?

In **John 20:17**, we read that Jesus hadn't ascended back to the Father in His new resurrected body at this point. Jesus is telling Mary not to cling to Him because there is work to be done; she needs to tell others what has happened, and so there's a sense of urgency.

She wanted to hold on and not let go of Him, but Jesus wouldn't allow her. This has nothing to do with the spiritual state of His body; after all, a little later, Thomas was invited to touch Jesus, **John 20:27**. Jesus had His new glorified, resurrected body, His new everlasting body, but it was still physical. Isn't that what the resurrection is all about?

RECONCILIATION WITH OUR BODIES!

We know from **1 Corinthians 15:35-44** and **Romans 8:23** that we will be reconciled with our bodies at the resurrection, but they will be new, in terms of glorious.

JESUS' BODY WAS SPIRITUAL

There's no escaping the fact that Jesus' resurrected body did things that the un-resurrected body couldn't do. Notice in **John 20:19-20** that the door was locked, but Jesus came and stood amongst them. How did He get through a locked door? Notice again what happened a week later, **John 20:26**. How did He get through a locked door?

JESUS' ASCENSION

One of the biggest proofs that our new resurrected bodies are different from our old ones is seen in the ascension of Jesus, **Luke 24:50-51** / **Mark 16:19** / **Acts 1:9**. What a sight this must have been for everyone present; it's not every day to see someone going up in the air like this.

Seems to me that if our new resurrected bodies are going to be like Christ's glorified body, then they are going to be capable of doing things they couldn't do before, and just like Jesus resurrected body, they are going to be physical as well as spiritual.

WHEN WILL WE RECEIVE OUR NEW GLORIFIED BODIES?

Paul told us earlier when we will receive these new bodies: 'for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed,' **1 Corinthians 15:52**. When Christ returns, it will happen then, **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**.

CONCLUSION

This isn't an easy question to try to answer, as we're trying to describe something which is way beyond our comprehension. The reason for this study is to offer some things to think about, not as a fact, because when all the speculations are said and done, does it really matter?

Will our new redeemed bodies be spiritual? Yes, no one will argue with that. Will our new redeemed bodies be physical? yes! no! possibly! Who knows! Who cares!

We do know that death will be no more, incurable diseases and old age will be no more. The important thing is where our redeemed bodies spend eternity, **2 Peter 3:9**.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

‘Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!’ **Philippians 4:1**

CLOSING APPEAL FOR STEADFASTNESS AND UNITY

Paul tells the Philippians that he loves them, **Philippians 2:12**, longs to see them, **Philippians 1:8 / Philippians 2:26**, and they are his joy, **3 John 4**, and his crown, **1 Thessalonians 2:19 / Philippians 4:1**.

Believers' Crowns		
Title	Reason	Reference
An Imperishable Crown	For leading a disciplined life	1 Corinthians 9:25
A Crown of Rejoicing	For evangelism and discipling	1 Thessalonians 2:19
A Crown of Righteousness	For loving the Lord's law	2 Timothy 4:8
A Crown of Life	For enduring trials	James 1:12 / Revelation 2:10
A Crown of Glory	For shepherding God's flock faithfully	1 Peter 5:4

Barclay, in his commentary, says the following concerning the crown.

‘It was the crown with which guests were crowned when they sat at a banquet, at some time of great joy. It is as if Paul said that the Philippians were the crown of all his toil, that at the final banquet of God they were his festal crown’.

In the previous chapter, Paul spoke about how our citizenship is in heaven, and we're eagerly awaiting our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is going to come someday and take us home to heaven where we belong. And he reminded us how to live our lives while we are waiting for His return, **Philippians 3:20-21**.

And so, after telling us to live like heaven people, Paul tells the Philippians they need to stand firm in the Lord, **Philippians 4:1**. We're supposed to walk in this world in such a way that it reflects our true citizenship, and there's going to be a lot of opposition.

So Paul is saying, ‘he wants us to take a stand against Satan, but not only that, he wants us to fight intelligently’, **Ephesians 6:10-12**. Paul now goes on to speak about three ways we can stand firm against the devil. Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Standing firm involves living in harmony with one another, **Philippians 4:2-3**, rejoicing on all occasions, **Philippians 4:4-7**, and developing the quality of sweet reasonableness, **Philippians 4:8-9**. This is clear because three imperatives in the Greek text explain ‘so stand firm’ or ‘stand firm thus’ (Gr. *houtos*).’

‘I plead with Euodia, and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life’. **Philippians 4:2-3**

1. Paul says we must take a stand against disunity.

Notice Paul thinks that preaching the Gospel, the work of the Gospel, is a co-head task, and women were helping him spread the Gospel in Philippi and these two ladies, Euodia, whose name means ‘Success’, and Syntyche, whose name means ‘Lucky’, had played a prominent role in his ministry in Philippi.

We don’t know who Paul’s true companion was; maybe it is Epaphroditus, maybe it’s Timothy, maybe it’s Lydia, we don’t know. These two sisters, Euodia and Syntyche, were estranged, and Paul felt their disagreement was serious enough to mention their names.

I don’t think their dispute was over a point of doctrine because Paul doesn’t say, ‘one is wrong, and one is right.’ We see in his other letters that Paul isn’t bashful about giving his opinion when doctrine is at stake, and so, whatever was upsetting these two ladies, it wasn’t about doctrine. Whatever the problem was, there was a bigger problem.

The bigger problem was that these two ladies weren’t ‘putting the interest of the others first’, like Paul said to do back in **Philippians 2:3**. They needed to be reminded that their common love for the Lord was more important than their present conflict.

Satan wants us to live in such a way that we deny our citizenship, and so, instead of taking sides, Paul mobilises the church to address the conflict. Paul didn’t deal with this privately because he knew it was going to take the church to help with the healing.

Conflict is like an infection, and if you don’t do something about it, it’s just going to spread, and it’s going to suck the joy right out of a church. So Paul isn’t going to ignore it; Paul isn’t going to pretend everything is ok when it’s not. For Paul, the health of the body was more important than the appearance of health.

And so, Paul tells certain mature leaders to step in there and be peacemakers, and it’s a compliment to this church that he thinks that they’re mature enough to handle it.

Peacemakers aren’t appreciated in the body like they ought to be, **Matthew 5:9**, but Paul says, ‘their names are written in the book of life,’ **Philippians 4:3**.

We must note that there is a difference between the Book of Life and the other books. They are not the same book but two separate books. The Book of Life contains the names of the redeemed and those who belong to God, **Philippians 4:3 / Revelation 21:27 / Revelation 3:5 / Revelation 13:8**.

Those whose names are not found in the Book of Life will end up in hell, **Revelation 20:15 / Revelation 17:8**. The other books contain the records of the specific earthly deeds, choices, and works of every individual, whether good or bad, **Daniel 7:10 / Revelation 20:12**.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Bible refers to more than one book of life: the book containing the names of people presently alive, Exodus 32:32-33 / Psalms 69:28, and the book containing the names of God’s elect, i.e., all believers; Luke 10:20 / Revelation 3:5 / Revelation 13:8 / Revelation 17:8 / Revelation 20:12 / Revelation 20:15 / Revelation 21:27, and the names of faithful believers, Philippians 4:3.’

What saddens me about this passage of Scripture is that even though Euodia and Syntyche stood side by side with Paul and helped him preach the Gospel, they are remembered for having a fuss, and they wouldn’t make up.

FINAL EXHORTATIONS

‘Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.’ Philippians 4:4-7

2. Paul says we must take a stand against anxiety.

Notice Paul says rejoice ‘in the Lord’ always, **Philippians 4:4**. The reason there are so many sad Christians is because they are rejoicing in their jobs, their relationships, their wealth or their health, all of which can be gone in a moment. When we lose any of those things, it causes us great anxiety.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The type of rejoicing commanded here is possible only for the redeemed in Christ. After almost 2,000 years, the incredibly beautiful power of this letter still shines. How could such a document have been written from a prison? Surely its writer was “in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

I think worry is our greatest joy stealer, and Satan knows our witness of citizens of heaven is rendered absolutely impudent when our lives are dominated by anxiety.

Now, what is a worry? A worry is anything that’s draining our tank of joy. Anything that’s making it hard for us to rejoice in the Lord is a worry, and we need to take a stand against it. What am I supposed to do about worry? Well, Paul says two things.

1. ‘Remember the Lord is near, remember that Jesus is close’, **Philippians 4:5**.

Anxiety is usually caused by an uncertain future, but for the Christian, the future has already been secured; we know what’s going to happen in the future. And we can rejoice in our circumstances because our circumstances don’t have the final word; the Lord Jesus has the final word, and He’s coming back soon. And worrying is going to start leaving us when we remember Jesus is coming.

2. ‘Pray about everything,’ **Philippians 4:6**.

If we spent the time praying we spend worrying, we would have a lot less to worry about, **Ephesians 6:12** / **Ephesians 6:18**. Some Christians do the exact opposite: the more they have to worry about, the less they pray. Paul says, ‘worry about nothing, pray about everything, and give thanks for it.’

Notice that the very act of praying is recognising the sovereignty of God and His control over tomorrow. Just the act of praying will help you with your worry, but there’s something else that’s going to happen.

Paul says, ‘When we start regularly praying to God, we’re going to get what we need most of all; we’re going to get the experience of a supernatural touch in our lives.’

We're going to get a peace that will flood life, that we can't even explain, but we cannot explain away either,' **Philippians 4:7**. I can't explain it; the Bible says, 'It's beyond understanding.' But it's God's gift of a supernatural visitation to you to take away our worry.

Notice that the peace we receive will guard our hearts and minds; the word 'guard', literally, was a military term. In other words, God's peace is going to set up like a sentry around our minds, to keep all that worry away.

Hendriksen, in his commentary, says the following concerning God's peace.

'The smile of God reflected in the soul of the believer, the heart's calm after Calvary's storm, the conviction that God who spared not his own Son will surely also, along with him, freely give us all things, **Romans 8:32**.'

'Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.' **Philippians 4:8-9**

3. Paul says we must take a stand against negativity.

In the Book of Philippians, there are sixteen references to a person's mind or his thoughts. I believe that joy is a gift of the Holy Spirit, but I also believe that our thoughts can quench the Holy Spirit or spur the Holy Spirit to fill us with joy, as His desire is.

I believe that most Christians are much too indiscriminate about what they allow in their minds. Paul says, 'We should drill our minds to look for all the reasons around us to rejoice.' The Bible say, 'Be careful what you think because your thoughts run your life,' **Proverbs 4:23**.

Satan loves to plant negative, critical thinkers in our church, and they suck the joy right out of that place. We must dwell on what is good and fine about other people and think about all we can praise God for them and be glad about it, **Philippians 4:8**. We must understand that standing firm doesn't mean standing still. Paul wants us to identify what our struggle is and do something about it, **Philippians 4:9**.

THANKS FOR THEIR GIFTS

'I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last, you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.' **Philippians 4:10-13**

A LITTLE REVIEW

Why did Paul write to the Philippian church? Remember, he had a great relationship with them, but as he mentioned, he lost contact with them, and they didn't know exactly where he was. Paul got arrested and was sent to Rome and was put in jail, and when the church in Philippi found out, they wanted to do something to help.

We must note that our prison system today isn't like the Roman prison system. When we put people in jail, the tax that you pay pays for their food and their upkeep while they're in jail, but in Rome, when they put you in jail, you'd

better have some friends and some family to take care of you, or you'll starve because the Roman government didn't pay for you while you were in jail.

And so when the Philippian church heard that Paul was in jail, they knew he would have needs. So they gathered up some money, and they gave it to their servant Epaphroditus, and he went six hundred miles to Rome to give Paul the money so that he could be provided for.

And Paul is writing back and thanking them for their gift, and that's how we close the Book of Philippians with his thank-you note to them, but it's one of the most amazing thank-you notes a preacher has ever written.

Because he said, 'I'm not needing your gift,' **Philippians 4:11**, and he says, 'I wasn't seeking your gift,' **Philippians 4:17**. In no way did he want to communicate that the physical comfort their money afforded had increased his ability to cope with his circumstances.

He said, 'The only reason he took their money was so that they could be fruitful, not because he needed it,' **Philippians 4:17**. Paul wants it to be clear, 'thank you for the gift, it was very kind, I can use it, but it didn't change my ability to rejoice in the Lord.'

Paul wasn't defined by wealth or by poverty but by a contentment that transcended both. Paul had discovered a secret, a secret that kept his personal happiness from being dependent upon the proper arrangement of the external circumstances in his life. Paul had learned the secret of contentment in any situation, and he learned three things.

1. Paul learned to be satisfied with his blessings.

One of the great disgraces of our day is the huge number of ungrateful Christians. Paul said, 'he knew plenty', and he also said, 'he knew want', **Philippians 4:12**.

My own opinion is that Paul knew plenty of wants. Paul said, 'Thank you for your gift, but I'm not saying this because I'm in need.' He says, 'I have learned to be satisfied with the things that I have and with everything that happens,' **Philippians 4:11**. Paul said the same thing to his young friend Timothy, **1 Timothy 6:6-8**.

We don't bring anything into the world, nothing. We come into this world naked in every sense of the word, and we're going to leave this world with nothing, **1 Timothy 6:7**. And so everything we have between the time we come and the time we leave is just a temporary gift from God to us.

Notice that Paul says, 'God is able and willing to meet all of your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus,' **Philippians 4:19**. What I have found is, like Paul, I know how to be content when I have plenty; my problem is being content when you have plenty. We're never going to be joyful Christians until we learn to be a grateful people, **Philippians 4:6**.

2. We need to learn to be sustained by His strength.

Paul's confidence that God would meet all his needs wasn't an affirmation that God would remove all his difficult circumstances, but a firm belief that God would supply the resources in Christ to cope with his circumstances. Paul says, 'I know God's going to give me the resources amid my problems to do everything Jesus wants me to do,' **Philippians 4:13**.

Remember Paul was in prison, he didn't look anything like a winner, he wasn't a strong man, but he was a man with a strong confidence in the ability of Christ to match every situation, **2 Corinthians 12:9**. Paul is saying, 'even in a stinking prison, I can do everything Christ wants me to do because He's going to give me the strength to survive.' Whatever Christ wants us to do, Christ can give us the strength to do it, and if we want to experience God's power, we need to take a step in faith, in obedience and do what God said. And God will show up along the way and give us the strength to complete the mission, **Joshua 3:15-16**.

3. We need to learn to surrender to His will.

I don't think we can understand Paul's contentment until we understand Paul's commitment. Circumstances didn't take over his life because Paul wasn't preoccupied with his circumstances.

He was occupied with how he could honour Christ in any circumstance. He was so totally surrendered to Jesus Christ that it didn't matter what you threw at him; he was going to honour Jesus, **Philippians 1:20-21**.

'Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.' **Philippians 4:14-20**

Paul is thanking this church for their gift of money, but he doesn't need their money to be joyful. What he's rejoicing about is all the blessings that they're going to receive because they have given their money to the Lord by giving it to Paul.

Paul says, 'I want you to receive the blessings that come from giving,' **Philippians 4:17**, and Jesus said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' **Acts 20:35**. The real blessing comes from being a giver and not from being a hoarder. Paul says there are at least three wonderful blessings that come when we're good enough to share.

1. By giving, you encourage others.

Paul was very encouraged by their gift and rejoiced greatly for their concern for him, **Philippians 4:10**. When Epaphroditus brought the money, it wasn't the money that made Paul happy.

What made Paul happy was the proof that the Philippian church really cared about him. It wasn't just talk; if you really love people, you're going to meet their needs, and that's going to demand sacrifice.

When a man is in prison, the state isn't going to take care of his food. They're not going to take care of his medicine; they aren't going to pay for his blankets. He doesn't need a lot of talk; he needs cash.

And the way you show you care about him, and the way you show you are concerned for him, is you support him. Commitment to ministry requires more than talk.

It requires a willingness to bear the expense of the ministry, and this was the Philippian church, which sent him aid, again and again, **Philippians 4:15-16**. Ministry is expensive, and it's an encouragement to people who are in ministry when they know some people want to be partners by giving to that ministry, **Philippians 1:3-6**.

Paul said, 'It's an encouragement to know that you're growing in Christ and the way I know you're growing in Christ and that he's completing the work he's started in you is by the tangible demonstration of your willingness to sacrifice for kingdom causes.'

Do you know that when churches give to support the Gospel, they encourage other churches? When Paul wanted to inspire other churches, he would talk about the church in Philippi.

This church had a great reputation and encouraged churches all over the world because they were willing to put their support on the line for Jesus Christ, **2 Corinthians 8:1-5**.

2. Through giving, we invest in eternity.

We all know that we can't take money with us when we die, but we can send it on ahead. Those words 'credited to your account' in **Philippians 4:17** literally mean, 'I'm looking forward to all of the accumulated interest you're going to receive.'

In other words, we have an account in heaven and every deposit we make and every time we put some treasure in heaven, that account is recorded, and it's rewarded. And the way we put treasure in our heavenly portfolio is by investing in kingdom causes, **Luke 16:9**.

We do this by investing in people and in helping people find Christ, and then someday, when we are received into heaven, all the people who were blessed by our gifts are going to be there to welcome us.

We never become poor when we give to bless others; we're just sending ahead what we can't take with us. It's one of the true blessings in giving, **1 Timothy 6:18-19**.

3. We're blessed because we worship God.

I did a little study one time with the word 'worship', and I found something interesting. The first time the word worship is used in the Old Testament is in **Genesis 22:5**, when Abraham was about to offer Isaac up to the Lord on a mountain and said to his servants, 'I'm going to go up to that mountain and worship God.'

And the first time the word worship is used in the New Testament is in **Matthew 2:2**, when the wise men bring gold and incense and myrrh, and they lay it at the feet of the baby, and they kneel, and they worship him.

And so, we're introduced in the Old Testament and the New Testament to this very important truth, and that's the worship of God, which is bringing your very best to God and laying it at his feet to honour and praise Him. Paul understood that giving is, in fact, pure worship.

God receives pleasure from our giving, **Philippians 4:18**. Why? Because when we give, we're most like Christ. When Paul said that money given to people to preach the Gospel is like giving to God, he said, 'It's a fragrant offering and an acceptable sacrifice'.

When we give in our offering, we're making an offering that pleases God; we're sacrificing just like Christ did, **Ephesians 5:2**. Every pound we own has a smell; every pound we own either has a fragrant aroma to God or a rotten stench because it was either used for His glory or used for selfish passions.

Paul understood that when we give to people in Jesus' Name, we're really giving to God, **Matthew 25:40**. Paul knew that God is going to treat people the way they treat others; if we're generous to others, then God is going to be generous to us. In other words, we can't win a giving contest with God.

Notice Paul doesn't say, 'out of his glorious riches but according to,' **Philippians 4:19**. When God pours out blessings into our lives, He doesn't give them out of His riches; He gives them according to His riches.

In other words, the finite can never exhaust the infinite. God isn't just going to give from His wealth; He's going to give in a manner that befits His wealth. He's going to give like the rich King that He is when we trust Him.

The promise is that God is going to meet all the needs of the people who sacrifice and give for the sake of the kingdom of God. God promises that if our heart is to be a cheerful giver, God will make sure we can always fulfil what our heart desires, **2 Corinthians 9:6-8**. If we want to be a person who supports the kingdom of God, he'll give us what we need to make sure we can do it, **2 Corinthians 9:11**.

FINAL GREETINGS

'Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings. All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.'
Philippians 4:21-23

Paul continues and gives us three reasons why Jesus Christ makes us glad.

1. Jesus is our identity.

‘Greet all the saints’, he said, ‘in Christ Jesus,’ **Philippians 4:21**. Now, something is going on here that’s kind of interesting. Usually, when Paul closes a letter, he mentions a bunch of people by name, but when Paul closes the letter to the Philippians, he doesn’t mention anybody by name.

He stresses the equal worth before God of every member of the congregation. Remember that this church is marked by diversity. When we go back to **Acts 16**, we remember the first three converts.

The first one was a Jewish lady, or at least a Jewish proselyte named Lydia, **Acts 16:15**, the second convert was possibly a Greek slave girl, **Acts 16:16-18**, and the third convert was a Roman soldier jailer, **Acts 16:33**.

These first three Christians in Philippi are as different racially, religiously, and socially as you could possibly be. And you’ve got a church that is made up of people who are from completely different kinds of backgrounds.

And so Paul ends the letter just like he started it back in **Philippians 1:1**, by speaking to ‘all the saints in Christ Jesus’, **Philippians 14:21**. In other words, Paul wanted the brethren in Philippi to look at each other and see only one thing, not Jew, Greek, Roman, not slave, free, and not male-female.

He says, ‘I want you to see one thing when you look at each other, I want you to see a fellow believer who’s been washed by the same blood that washed away your sins.’ Our common unity is because we have a common identity, **Philippians 2:1-2**.

It ought to make us glad that there’s a place where we can come, and it doesn’t matter if we’re rich or poor; it doesn’t matter if we’re black, white, red or brown. It doesn’t matter if we’re sick or well, if we’re old or young; it doesn’t matter if you hold up your hands or sit on them; it doesn’t matter.

What matters is that all of us have been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ; that’s what matters, and that ought to make us glad. Because it’s our identity in Christ that keeps us safe when the world throws all they have got at us.

2. Jesus is our victory.

Paul said in ‘All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household,’ **Philippians 4:22**. Now, why did Paul mention those brethren specifically? I think it goes back to what he hinted at in **Philippians 1:12-13**.

The palace guard was a special set of elite Roman soldiers attached to Caesar’s house to protect him and his family, and all the people who were waiting to see him on trial.

Every day, about every six hours, a new soldier would come in, and he would chain himself to Paul and say, ‘I am here, assigned to guard you for my king,’ and Paul would look back up and say, ‘That’s funny, I am here to guard you for my King.’

He’s telling the church in Philippi that the kingdom of a crucified carpenter is already starting to advance against the greatest empire in the world. He’s telling them they’re a part of a movement of God that hell and the strongest army on earth cannot stop.

What Paul is saying to them, and us, is, ‘hell has no chains that can stop or bind the Gospel,’ **Matthew 16:18**. When Jesus Christ was crucified and then when He was resurrected, what that means is that every power in heaven, on earth and under the earth is subject to the kingdom of Christ, **Colossians 2:15**.

Sometimes I hear Christians say, ‘listen, we ought to go out there and fight for victory’; that’s wrong; we don’t fight for victory, we fight from victory. The victory was achieved for us when Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.

We’re waiting for the King to come; we’re waiting for the victory to be announced, **Philippians 3:20-21**. And one day, we’re going to witness the total submission of everything in the universe to Jesus Christ.

Every kingdom, every power, every agenda in heaven and on earth and under the earth, they’re all going to bow down and call Him Lord, **Philippians 2:9-11**. He’s our victory; it makes us glad.

3. Jesus is our sufficiency.

Paul, by becoming a Christian, didn't escape difficult circumstances; what he discovered was that Jesus Christ was sufficient regardless of the circumstances. That's what Paul meant when he said in **Philippians 4:11**, 'I can be content in any situation.'

That word 'content' means sufficient. Paul said, 'I've learned in any situation the grace of Jesus is sufficient,' **Philippians 4:23** / **Philippians 4:12-13** / **Philippians 4:19**. And we can never exhaust the supply of grace that Jesus Christ wants to send, and that's why Paul could say, 'He has made me glad'.