
Philippians

To live is Christ

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Overview

Christ centred worldview

[Philippians 1:1-11 – Joyfully Sharing in the Gospel](#)

That we would see the gift of salvation as so precious, be filled with an affection for other fellow recipients and be careful to live it out well.

[Philippians 1:12-26 – To Live is Christ](#)

Paul is willing to suffer for the advance of the gospel, as his top priority is for Christ to be preached. He desires to continually exalt Christ in his body, and ultimately his worldview is 'to live is Christ, to die is gain'.

Christ centred living

[Philippians 1:27-2:11 – Christ Centred Conduct](#)

Paul calls us to have a Christ centred conduct, to be comforted by his love and fellowship and so to live in a like manner. He calls us to be humble, servant-hearted, to honour others above ourselves and ultimately lay our lives down on behalf of others, as Christ set the example for us.

[Philippians 2:12-18 – Work Out Your Salvation](#)

Overall, we need to continue to work out our salvation, that this should be at the fore-front of our minds as we live our lives. It should compel us towards obedience and submitting ourselves to God, in growing in purity and holiness, and being willing to embrace service and sacrifice

[Philippians 2:19-30 – The Signs of a Saint](#)

Timothy and Epaphroditus set a real and visual example of what it means to live a servant-hearted lifestyle. Their lives are characterised by genuine care for others, having a teachable spirit, a close companionship and being sacrificial.

Christ centred confidence

[Philippians 3:1-11 – Faith Over Flesh](#)

Prior to Christ Paul measured his life by many standards and was a high achiever. Yet now he only measures it by one standard, knowing Christ, being found in Him and possessing His righteousness. Do we measure our lives by other standards, even Christian one? Or do we consider them garbage for the sake of knowing Christ?

[Philippians 3:12-4:1 – Press on Towards the Goal](#)

Because we seek to put no confidence in the flesh, we press on towards the goal, which is Christ Jesus. We deny that we can stop and rest on our current achievements and so we strain ahead into further ministry and maturity. Yet the road forward is not un-chartered, we follow in the footsteps and examples of those more mature than us.

Christ centred contentment

[Philippians 4:2-9 – Peace of Mind](#)

Paul's letter to the Philippians is a gritty read with a hard calling, yet he makes clear in this passage to rejoice and rest in the peace of God. His promise is that hardship and suffering that may come does not need to disturb the peace that God offers his children as we fix our thoughts on Him.

[Philippians 4:10-23 – Meeting Your Needs](#)

Just as God provides us with a 'peace that passes all understanding' so He also provides for our needs. God continues to supply for our needs through the body of Christ. He is the one who truly strengthens us, so that in plenty or lack we can do all things through His strength.

Key Themes

- Suffering – Paul, his companions and the Philippians endure suffering on account of Christ and this encourages us to embrace hardship for the sake of the gospel. This letter is gritty and challenging, calling us to live a truly Christ centred lifestyle
- Rejoicing – Paul uses the word 'rejoice' multiple times throughout his letter and reminds us that our strength and joy are found in Christ
- We are happy sufferers, joyful servants, contented endurers

Philippians 1:1-11 - Joyfully Sharing in the Gospel

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

- Paul addresses and describes the Philippians as holy. Holy means to be 'set apart' - God has set his church apart from the world, as a people of their own with their own leaders (overseers and deacons).
- Paul's letter to Titus further expands on the importance of godly leaders within the people of God.

2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,

- Paul is thankful and praying for the Philippians, but for what purpose? - because of their partnership in the gospel!
- This is because he too shares in the gospel, so this is a common grace between them
- partnership = fellowship
- Paul is thankful that the Philippians are partners in the gospel, and so now they have a common fellowship. They are on the same team, part of the same family, and belong to the same tribe.
- Like meeting someone who has a common interest or hobby to you, the nature of the relationship quickly deepens and you begin to talk for ages, all because you have a common fellowship with someone!
- We too should have joy, and pray with joy that our friends, family and acquaintances are partners in the gospel with us.

6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

- Where does Paul place the emphasis and responsibility of salvation? - on God. It is God who opens our hearts to the gospel and keeps us secure in our faith.
- God both began the work and will continue it - we did not start it and we are not left to finish it
- In Acts 16 it describes the conversion of a woman named Lydia from Philippi, and notes that 'the Lord opened her heart' to the gospel. It is clearly God who began the good work in Lydia's life and will be sure to bring it to completion.

7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. 8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

- 'In chains or defending or confirming the gospel' - Paul's worldview is so Christ centred that he sees himself only doing two things: suffering for the gospel or ministering for the gospel (or both!)
- Again we see the reason for Paul's love and joy for the Philippians is because they 'share in God's grace with him
- Our love for others in the church is directly affected by our thankfulness for our salvation!

9And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

- What is Paul's response to the fellowship he shares with the Philippians? - that we would be so careful to live out this salvation, by growing in knowledge and insight so that we can discern what is best and live fruitful lives
- This is like when you buy an expensive gift for someone, you would have two desires for them: for them to be careful with it (knowledge/insight/discernment) and for them to use it well (fruitfulness). We must be conscientious and productive with the gospel!
- 'to the glory and praise of God' - Ultimately the purpose of the gospel and even our salvation is for the glory and praise of God.

Summary

- That we would see the gift of salvation as so precious, be filled with an affection for other recipients and be so careful to walk in it

Philippians 1:12-26 - To Live is Christ

The gospel is advancing despite suffering

12Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. 13As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

- Paul makes the conclusion that his suffering is advancing the gospel
- The palace guard and others are clear that he is suffering for Christ, therefore his incarceration is exposing more people to the gospel
- Not only this but Paul's suffering is also encouraging others to be bolder in proclaiming the gospel.

My priority is that Christ is preached

15It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 18But 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.

- We can see that Paul's priority is for Christ to be preached, despite some doing it for false motives (envy, rivalry and selfish ambition). The fact that Christ is preached is Paul's single focus and goal, and it calls us to adopt that goal as our own.
- This, however, should not be used to excuse false motives, rivalry and selfishness in our Christian ministry, since those that Paul talks of cannot really be saved. How could a genuine believer preach Christ only to stir up more trouble for Paul in prison?
- No, this is more akin to non-believers and secular organisations supporting the mission of the church in the proclamation of the gospel, even from non-faith motives.

Eagerly expecting for Christ to be exalted in me

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. 20I 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.

- What could Paul mean by his deliverance/salvation? - deliverance from prison, his Christian salvation (becoming a Christian), or his ongoing salvation (sanctification)
- Paul could be mimicking the words of Job from Job 13:16 "Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance", in that the greater purpose of both Job and Paul's trials were not for their destruction, but for their deliverance and vindication.
- Paul shows then, that these sufferings will add to his 'ongoing' salvation (sanctification), him being strengthened by the saints prayers and God's provision of the Spirit
- It is important for us to note that the work of sanctification and transformation is our ongoing salvation - the work is not yet complete. We are like a ruin who has been selected (saved) but is now being restored to perfection (sanctification), but it is all one process

- This salvation process is that Paul would not be disgraced/ashamed but given sufficient courage to continually exalt Christ in his body, whether by life or death - this is his hope and eager expectation.
- We too can and should have the same desire, that moment by moment and in every circumstance our eager expectation is that Christ would be exalted in us

To live is Christ, to die is gain

21For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

- Paul has two great desires: to die and be with Christ whom is better by far, and secondly, to live and fruitfully labor for the faith of others, that their boasting in Christ might increase.
- So his simple phrase 'to live is Christ, to die is gain' packs so much weight. To live means to live for Christ and his glory alone. To die means to be with Christ, the very joy and crown of our lives. This phrase becomes the central theme and focus of Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Summary

- Paul is willing to suffer for the advance of the gospel, as his top priority is for Christ to be preached. He desires to continually exalt Christ in his body, and ultimately his worldview is 'to live is Christ, to die is gain'.

Philippians 1:27-2:11 - Christ Centred Conduct

Gospel driven conduct

27Whatever 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 the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel 28without 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.

- Paul's emphasis here is that whatever happens in life, and especially in the context of suffering, that we be united in our Christian conduct and values.
- This brings to mind the image of Christians locking arms and walking together in unity, that we all walk in the same direction and hold gospel values at heart.
- The key benefit of a solid Christian unity is a fearless and bold response to any opposition
- In fact, one of the things stopping us pursuing a gospel driven conduct is fear. But when we know that we stand in unity with other brothers and sisters in Christ who share the same gospel values, this gives great confidence and boldness.
- The "for" in the next verse makes clear that 'whatever happens' is meant in the context of suffering

Embrace suffering

29For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, 30since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

- The Philippians were enduring suffering and Paul points out that this has also been "granted" from God as was their belief in Him. The Church continues to endure the suffering and world's rejection of Christ.
- 'granted' is a positive thing, it is not just that God had allowed it but that God delighted to give them (and us) times of suffering.
- We need to see that suffering is something to be used as an opportunity to glorify God and deepen our dependence on Him, and just as Paul said in verse 19 these times can 'turn out for our deliverance' (ongoing sanctification).

Empowered to serve

2:1Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing (fellowship) in the Spirit, if any tenderness (affection) and compassion (mercies), 2then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

- Up till this point, Paul's letter to the Philippians can be quite a gritty, hard read. It calls us to a high account, to be willing to suffer, to proclaim 'to live is Christ, to die is gain'. How is a Christian supposed to handle all this?
- Paul shows us here that our strength comes from the Lord. He is the one who encourages, comforts, provides fellowship, shows affection and compassion to us in our walks. We are pilgrims, but tenderly loved pilgrims.

- These blessings are not just for us personally though, but they intend to overflow and spur us on to serve others.
- The blessing and comfort of Christ enables us to be loving, united, humble and to serve others above ourselves.

Jesus sets the example

5In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6Who, being in very nature God,

did not consider equality with God something to be grasped;

7rather, he made himself nothing

by taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

8And being found in appearance as a man,

he humbled himself

by becoming obedient to death—

even death on a cross!

- Jesus sets the example for us of a humble, obedient, servant, who grasps at nothing for his own benefit.
- He was willing to disguise his own divinity and be found in the appearance as a weak and humble man. His ultimate example of humility and obedience was shown through his death on the cross, as he laid himself down for us.
- It is through Jesus' humble & servant attitude towards us that we can be like-minded and be the same to others

God exalts the humble

9Therefore God exalted him to the highest place

and gave him the name that is above every name,

10that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

- This is the "J Curve" - that Jesus humbled himself and made himself lowly, but was then exalted because of it, and will be exalted even further in time to come.
- A name in the world of the Bible can carry a lot of weight and significance, e.g. when God changed Jacob's name to Israel and that became the name for his chosen people. So for Jesus to have a name above every other name means he will have absolute pre-eminence over all things.
- All beings in heaven and on earth, living or dead (under the earth) will bow the knee and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- Even though Jesus Christ will be pre-eminent and have authority over all things does not mean that He will take glory away from God the Father, for it says 'to the glory of God the Father'. The Father still receives and retains glory for glorifying his Son. In the words of Jesus, 'no servant is greater than his master', even if the master exalts Him to the highest place.

Summary

- Paul calls us to have a Christ centred conduct, to be comforted by his love and fellowship and so to live in a like manner. He calls us to be humble, servant-hearted,

to honour others above ourselves and ultimately lay our lives down on behalf of others, as Christ set the example for us.

Philippians 2:12-18 - Work out your salvation

Work out your salvation

12Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

- It's easy to obey when the eyes of others are on us, but not so much when we are by ourselves. Our personal and private life are the crucible of obedience and how much more do we need to depend on God's working to walk in the way of holiness
- Greek word for obedience means to listen - the question is, who are we listening to and trying to please? Men or God?
- Work out your salvation - even though our salvation is final and assured, it is not consummated and fully complete yet. We are still in the process of being saved, and indeed only those who 'endure till the end' will truly be saved - this is why we must continue to work out our salvation.
- What should cause us to will and act rightly is God and not creating a pretense for others or a desire to look good. We must ask, what fuels our desire to will and act rightly, to look good/right/okay in the eyes of others or God himself?
- Note the dual participation here: God's work in us, and we work our salvation out. A life of discipleship requires both the grace of God and the perseverance of the saints

Shining like stars

14Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 15so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16as you hold firmly to the word of life.

- Just as Christ did not open his mouth to justify himself, so should we walk throughout our lives without grumbling or arguing - to do so is simply to hold and see your own agenda higher than others
- Holiness should mark our lives as it has done with believers throughout history
- In a world which constantly wants to warp and twist God's values and truth, we hold firmly to the word of life and seek to walk in a straight manner
- We will shine out in the universe, not only because of the way we live but also of the word we proclaim - to shine does not mean to dazzle but to lighten/show, and therefore by our way and word we lighten and show the path of life
- Hold firmly/unto the word of life - this could also be 'hold out/forth' but firmly/onto seems a better translation. Our holding onto onto the word of life enables us to live in a holy and pleasing way to God, which is what makes us shiny in the universe

Poured out as a drink offering

And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. 17But 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. 18So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

- The goal of Paul's ministry was to see people come to faith, work out their salvation and to shine like stars in the universe - the goal of ministry is to see people live in such a way

- Even if Paul and the Philippians are called to make big sacrifices and indeed to sacrifice their very lives for their faith, he rejoices for this and so should the Philippians. Our biggest fear or concern is not that we would endure suffering or hardship for our faith but that our lives would be wasted!
- Our desire should be that our lives are poured out as drink offerings to God, that at the end of it all there would be nothing left to give.

Summary

- Overall, we need to continue to work out our salvation, that this should be at the fore-front of our minds as we live our lives. It should compel us towards obedience and submitting ourselves to God, in growing in purity and holiness, and being willing to embrace service and sacrifice

Philippians 2:19-30 - The Signs of a Saint

19I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. 21For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

- GENUINE CARE - Timothy showed genuine concern for the welfare of others - to be truly loving and compassionate, not looking out for their own interests
- Often our concern for others is mixed with other motives and intentions (even to see them saved!) but as Christ did we must seek to love for the sake of love
- With the motive of seeing people saved through our actions, it is God who saves though the Holy Spirit, not through us anyway. God may use us or He may not

22But 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. 23I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. 24And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

- TEACHABLE - Timothy served like a son with his spiritual father Paul - he was teachable and had a spirit of being able to learn
- We are willing to do this when our hearts desire is to serve the work of the gospel and not our own ends
- A teachable spirit says, it's not about me and I am willing to face correction because I desire to serve in the work of the gospel

25But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. 26For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill.

- Epaphroditus was a brother, co-worker and fellow soldier to Paul: they loved together, worked together and fought together. This is what should mark the relationships between disciples.
- Epaphroditus was distressed for the Philippians not because they were ill, but because they heard he was ill. So in his illness he was distressed that they would be worried and concerned for him. How great a man to see not to his own interests but the interests of others!

27Indeed 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.

- BROTHERHOOD - Paul sees that it was God's mercy not just to spare Epaphroditus' life but also to spare Paul from excessive sorrow. It shows how much these guys were bonded together in brotherhood and loyalty. One might consider that for God to save a dear loved, their closest friend, would be to save them from sorrow

28Therefore 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. 29So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, 30because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

- SACRIFICIAL - Epaphroditus almost died on behalf of the gospel and serving others - as disciples we are called to make big sacrifices in this world.

- Sacrifice deserves honour and those that sacrifice much deserve to be honoured much. It should make us think of those that have sacrificed a lot in our lives and whether we honor them rightly? e.g. pastors

Summary

- Timothy and Epaphroditus set a real and visual example of what it means to live a servant-hearted lifestyle. Their lives are characterised by genuine care for others, having a teachable spirit, a close companionship and being sacrificial.

Philippians 3:1-11 - Faith over Flesh

Put no confidence in the flesh

1Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. 2Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. 3For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— 4though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

- There were some who would still put confidence in their flesh and the law and insist on circumcision, yet Paul calls them mutilators of the flesh! - really that is what they are if it served no purpose at all!
- We are circumcised in our hearts, not our flesh
- We boast and rejoice in Christ Jesus, not in our flesh and achievements!

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

- We might be tempted to put confidence in the flesh and trust in our own self-righteous efforts and deeds, but these will be shown to be worthless
- Whether it is church attendance, moral uprightness or theological knowledge, these things can become 'vessels' in which we place our trust and confidence. These things are not wrong or bad inherently but only when we start to idolise them and worship them instead of the things of God
- It is true that we can begin to worship the things of God instead of God himself

Everything a loss

7But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9and 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 on the basis of faith.

- Paul exclaims that anything that he might have put confidence in beforehand, he now considers loss for the sake of Christ. i.e. it has been detrimental and damaging to his journey towards and with God
- Not just that, but he considers all a loss for the sake of knowing Christ, anything that would give him a righteousness of his own he considers garbage/dung!
- We desperately need to evaluate our own standing before God and check that we are not putting confidence in garbage, in anything which would give us a righteousness of our own
- This is hard for those in leadership or with a 'good track record' since the waters can easily become muddied in terms of the source of our righteousness
- That which he/we should place our confidence in then is faith in Christ, not in our flesh. It is faith over flesh, as that is where our righteousness come from

Knowing Christ

10I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

- If all things that we might place our confidence in then are truly garbage, then really the only thing of value is knowing Christ and being found in Him!
- This is what Paul exclaims and makes clear for himself, that he desires to know Christ, to know his power, to know his suffering, and be hopeful of the resurrection
- If we can place no confidence in ourselves then we need to place full confidence in Christ and seek to know Him fully - as that is where our confidence lies; knowing Christ!

Summary

- Prior to Christ Paul measured his life by many standards and was a high achiever. Yet now he only measures it by one standard, knowing Christ, being found in Him and possessing His righteousness. Do we measure our lives by other standards, even Christian one? Or do we consider them garbage for the sake of knowing Christ?

Philippians 3:12-4:1 - Press on towards the goal

12Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

- Already obtained all of what? - what he has just listed in verses 10 and 11: “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead..”
- So we can say here that Paul describes the goal of the Christian life as knowing Christ, knowing his power, participating in his sufferings, dying to sin and self and living with the resurrection as our reality - living a holy and zealous life for God!
- In fact, this is not just our goal, but it is also the reason why Christ Jesus took hold of us, meaning it is Christ’s goal for us - that we become like him in power & suffering

13Brothers and sisters, 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, 14I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

- Even despite Paul’s extraordinary ministry, service and suffering he does not consider himself to have taken hold of the Christ-like lifestyle he sees as his goal
- Even more so, he forgets what is behind and presses on towards the goal of knowing Christ and his power, suffering and resurrection. Meaning that whatever ‘successes’ he has had in Christ or whatever fruit he had from his ministry, he forgets these things, leaves them behind and strives onwards towards Christ
- It is a reminder to us that we should never rest on our accomplishments, no matter how noble and godly they are. For if we rest on them, we rest on the fact that we participated in them or made them happen, and this would be putting confidence in the flesh

15All of us, then, 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. 16Only let us live up to what we have already attained. 17Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.

- This might present quite a bleak picture that we can never really attain to anything in life since there is always more to strive towards
- But Paul takes a turn and says that some can actually possess a maturity whilst we still strain towards what is ahead. Maturity when there is no maturity
- As we grow from maturity to maturity and glory to glory, we can follow the example of others who are ‘further along’ than us in Christian maturity. Whilst their life is not a model of perfection and completion it is an encouragement to someone who is less mature
- Without the practical examples of other people in our lives we wouldn’t know how to practically pursue holiness and Christian maturity. We would ask ‘what does this look like?’. This then is the importance of the body of Christ, that as each of us are growing in our own maturity, we encourage and set an example for each other
- Our challenge then is to constantly keep growing in maturity and only live up to what we have already attained. That our spiritual graph should never dip, or that we should look back at the ‘glory days’

18For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. 20But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21who, 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.

4:1Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

- The difficulty of living in such a way (pressing on towards the goal) is that we live in societies and are surrounded by people with different values, and even our own bodies crave the things they crave
- People live as enemies of the cross of Christ, because they will not worship or give glory to Him, in fact they seek to steal glory from Him
- 'Their god is their stomach' - the 'gods' in our lives can simply be whatever we want or desire and this is what society tells us to pursue
- We eagerly await a saviour who will transform our lowly bodies and release us from all our sinful and selfish desires which keep us living for ourselves
- We stand firm against desires to settle back and live only for ourselves, to stand firm in our mindset to keep pressing on towards the goal, for which God has called us heavenwards in Christ Jesus!

Summary

- Because we seek to put no confidence in the flesh, we press on towards the goal, which is Christ Jesus. We deny that we can stop and rest on our current achievements and so we strain ahead into further ministry and maturity. Yet the road forward is not un-chartered, we follow in the footsteps and examples of those more mature than us.

Philippians 4:2-9 - Peace of Mind

2I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3Yes, 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.

- Either these women are jointly not agreeing with Paul or with each other, probably the latter
- Despite the grace available to us as believers we are all prone to relational difficulties and we need to fight for unity and for having the same mind, and we all need help in this as these women did
- Most conflicts or disagreements start in our own minds with the stories we tell ourselves and there needs to be a work of forgiveness and understanding first
- This also shows that women were active and central to the work of the gospel, which agrees with and brightens a complementarian view of leadership

4Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

- The theme of Paul's letter has been very gritty and high commitment, which can produce a somber spirit when faced with these exhortations, but yet Paul constantly encourages the Philippians to rejoice (rejoice is mentioned 11 times in his letter!)
- Rejoicing brings about a gentleness in our spirit rather than an intensity, and comes from a close relationship with the Lord

6Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- The greek word for anxiety here means to be 'pulled apart into pieces' and that is what can happen when we try to handle all things by ourselves, but it is God who holds us together
- Through prayer we present our requests to God (petition) and receive the peace of God back to us
- The mindset that we are to live by is one of peace - a peace that transcends all understanding. So even when we haven't got our problems figured out and don't understand everything we can have peace. The peace guards our hearts and minds and prevents them being burdened and pulled apart by the circumstances we face

8Finally, brothers and sisters, 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. 9Whatever 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.

- Rather than be overcome with anxious thoughts, think about that which is noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy!
- And as we continue to press forward towards these things in Christian maturity, we can glean from the examples of others and put their behaviours into practise
- Again, Paul encourages us that as we fix our thoughts on Him, He will give us peace of mind!

Summary

- Paul's letter to the Philippians is a gritty read with a hard calling, yet he makes clear in this passage to rejoice and rest in the peace of God. His promise is that hardship and suffering that may come does not need to disturb the peace that God offers his children as we fix our thoughts on Him.

Philippians 4:10-23 - Meeting Your Needs

Contentment in Christ

10I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12I 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. 13I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

- If our contentment is truly in Christ, (since he is the goal for which we strive) then we can be content whatever the circumstances
- Paul says he has learned to be content, and that is something we should grow up in too. How easily do we strive for the wrong things or insist that our circumstances should be better, when there is an inner contentment to be gained despite it all
- Ultimately it is God gives us his strength, therefore in all testing circumstances where we might say "I can't do this/I can't cope" we can say that we CAN do all things through Him who gives us strength
- We find that God does not need to meet all of our needs, but that we learn to be content despite our circumstances
- Yet this is neither an endorsement for the 'poverty gospel', since Paul says he has known lack and plenty - the key bit here is contentment that rises above it all

Meeting Needs

14Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15Moreover, 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; 16for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. 17Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. 18I have received full payment and have more than enough. 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. 19And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

- Paul shows that the Philippians 'shared in his troubles' by supporting him financially. They helped carry some of the burden somewhat with the support they could offer
- Giving and receiving is something that we share in, not that we only give or only receive but there is both
- Just as the Philippians gave to Paul to support him, he encourages them that they will receive what they need from God - he uses the idea of an account and credit, that as we give out we can expect God, through others to give in
- Our goal then as the church of God is to open our eyes to the needs around us, seeking to participate in filling those needs whilst trusting that God will satisfy our needs
- This is an act of fellowship and strengthens the body of Christ, as we give and receive acts of love to each other

20To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

21 Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. 22 All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

- Paul finishes by reminding the Philippians and us that all is for God's glory
- His final words are common across his letters and remind us that we are spiritual beings, that our bodies are finite and will die away but our spirits will live forever (in new bodies) forever. Therefore we place the things of faith and spiritual truth higher than all things.

Summary

- Just as God provides us with a 'peace that passes all understanding' so He also provides for our needs. God continues to supply for our needs through the body of Christ. He is the one who truly strengthens us, so that in plenty or lack we can do all things through His strength.