

Philippians

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having the mind of Christ and the attitude of Christ, as seen in Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Duration: 54:54

Topics: "Philippians"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses how Caesar's family may have been converted to Christianity through the influence of Paul. He imagines that Paul, who was chained to a Roman soldier for eight hours, would have used that time to share the gospel with him. The speaker emphasizes the difference between serving for honor and having a servant's attitude, using an example of a minister sweeping the floor for a few seconds to gain reputation. He also shares a personal experience of learning the importance of punctuality as an elder in a church. Throughout the sermon, the speaker highlights Paul's dedication to spreading the gospel, even while imprisoned, and encourages readers to remember this as they read Paul's letters.

Transcript

Let's turn now to Paul's letter to the Philippians, Philippians and chapter one. We've been trying to see in each letter the main theme of that letter and we could sum up the theme of Philippians in one verse found in chapter two, verse five. Have this attitude in yourself, which was in Christ Jesus.

Having the mind of Christ or having the attitude of Christ. That is the theme of Philippians and everything he writes there basically works towards that goal. In there's a lot of emphasis on joy in this letter.

He says in chapter one, verse four, always offering prayer with joy in every prayer. I pray for you. And towards the end in chapter four, verse four, also, he says, rejoice in the Lord always.

And again, I say unto you, rejoice. Now, it's very interesting to see that, that Paul writes about joy so much from a prison. Philippians was written when Paul was in prison.

And he's not writing in an easy chair, living comfortably and writing about joy. It's one thing to talk about joy when all your circumstances are easy and comfortable. It's quite another thing to talk about joy when your circumstances are difficult and you're in prison.

And Paul writing about joy in Philippians, more than in any other letter, shows that it's possible for a Christian to have joy under all circumstances, because that's that is the mind of Christ. That's the attitude of Christ. Do you remember when Jesus spoke about joy the most? In John chapter 15, just a few hours before he was crucified on the last night, he said, these things have I spoken unto you that your joy may be full.

John chapter 15 and 16. No one can take away your joy. I want to give you my joy.

It's like a man who's going to be hanged tomorrow, going around encouraging people today. Say, I just want to encourage you, fellas. I have so much joy in my heart and he's going to be hanged tomorrow morning.

That would be an amazing Christian testimony. And that's what we see here in Paul. Paul had the mind of Christ, the attitude of Christ.

And he was also full of joy. And those days, prisons were much worse than prisons today. They were dark dungeons full of rats and mosquitoes and all types of creeping insects and no beds.

You just slept on the floor and maybe a little straw and no proper food, no light. And sitting there, he was full of joy and writing this fantastic letter. So remember, as you read this letter, that this is a man living in a deep dungeon for preaching the gospel.

And he's got no tears for his own problems. He doesn't want any sympathy, feel sorry for me because I'm here struggling for the gospel. No, full of joy.

So many times you see believers trying to get other people's sympathy because they're having a little difficulty, a little trial here. What a lesson we can get from the apostle writing this letter to the Philippians. He says, first of all, he doesn't say a word about his sufferings.

He says, I thank my God and all my remembrance of you. I can imagine that he wrote that after a whole night of being bitten by mosquitoes and trying to avoid the rats that were crawling around the dungeon floor and the insects and things that were there. And he probably didn't even have a lot of warm clothing in the cold in that place, wherever he was.

We don't know exactly. Part of the time he was in a house where he was permitted to stay. And even there, he was a prisoner, whether he wrote it there or in a dungeon, we don't know.

But it was certainly not pleasant circumstances. And in the midst of that, he says, I just praise the Lord whenever I think of you Philippian Christians. His joy came not from his circumstances.

His joy came from the result of his work in Philippi. Many years earlier, he had got a vision saying, come to Macedonia and help us. He had followed that vision and he had gone there and led people to the Lord.

He was imprisoned in Philippi and they had seen him praising the Lord there. And the Philippian jailer was probably an elder in the church now in Philippi by now. And he would have remembered, he would have told other people, I saw this man rejoicing in the prison in Philippi.

And now he writes this letter and he thanks God. His joy was found in that he had spent his life usefully for the Lord. You know, when you come to the end of your life, the thing that will bring you joy is the fact that in the days when God gave you health and strength, you did not spend it making money.

You spent it serving the Lord, building the church, gathering people to be established in his kingdom. Think of it now so that when you come to the end of your life like Paul, you can thank God for what's happened there. Always offering prayer for you.

Paul was a great prayer warrior. He prayed for God's people all the time, everywhere. He didn't just preach to them.

He prayed for them. A true servant of God not only preaches but prays for his people. And he says to them, I'm absolutely convinced that what God has begun, verse 6, he will complete in the day of Christ.

Verse 7, it's right for me to feel like this because I have you in my heart. Now, I told you in another session that if you want to have a prophetic word from God for his people, you must have two things in your heart. You must have God's word in your heart and you must have God's people in your heart.

If you have God's word in your heart and those people in your heart, then God will give you a word for those people. If you've only got God's word and not those people, he cannot give you a word for them. If you only have the people in your heart and not God's word, again, he cannot give you a word for them.

But if you have God's word and his people on your heart, you carry them there, he'll always have a word through you for those people. So because Paul carried these people in his heart, like Aaron had the names of all the 12 tribes over his heart, Paul carried certain people. He couldn't carry everybody in the world, but those whom God had given him responsibility for, he carried them on his heart.

If ever you serve God and you have to serve people, please learn to carry them on your heart and then you'll always, even if you speak one sentence, it will bless them. God will give you prophetic words to bless them. And so God gave him a prophetic letter here to bless those people.

The secret was he had those people in his heart and he longed for them, verse 8, with the affection of Christ Jesus. And he prayed for them that their love would increase. And there's one thing I want to point out to you in verse 9. He says, when your love increases, I know you love one another, I'm praying for you that your love will increase in discernment.

Love without discernment can be dangerous. Your love must increase in discernment so that you approve the things that are excellent above the things that are good. There's a proverb in English which says, the good is the enemy of the best.

How do you, what is the meaning of that? Supposing you're going to a shop to buy a pressure cooker or a tape recorder and you find one, say, that's so good for that price. And you don't look around anymore and you buy it. And after you come home, somebody tells you, do you know that for the same price, you could have got another pressure cooker or tape recorder, which is at least three or four times better than this? You got a good one, but the good was the enemy of the best.

For the same price, you could have got a far better one. So we don't do evil things, we do good things, but there's the best things. Like the other day, we spoke about unrighteous, righteous and lawful.

So he says, I'm praying that your love will grow in discernment so that you can approve not just the things that are good, but the things that are excellent. In other words, not just a good way to serve the Lord, but the best way to serve the Lord. Not just a good message to preach, but the best message to preach.

Not just a good way to help people, but the best way to help people. That requires discernment. Not just a good word to share with a person who's in need, but the best word to share with that person who's in need.

Like a doctor says, I don't want to just give him a good treatment. I want to give him the best treatment. But for that, the doctor has to love that person.

If it's the doctor's own relative or son or daughter, he'll want the best treatment. Yeah, if it's just some patient from the street, say, OK, I'll give him some good treatment. If you love people, you'll want to give them the best.

Do you desire to give them the best? I often think of people who invite me for a meal, how they take so much trouble to prepare the very best for me. And I say, Lord, when I stand in the pulpit and I give God's word to people, I must do the same as that housewife has taken so much trouble to make the best meal for me. I must give the best.

But for that, you must love. And then he talks about his imprisonment in verse 12 onwards. He said, don't be discouraged about my imprisonment because my imprisonment has turned out, verse 12, for the progress of the gospel.

Paul believed in Romans 8, 28, that everything works for my good. How did Paul's imprisonment work for good? Well, let me tell you, first of all, here is one way in which that imprisonment worked for good for us. You know, Paul was a man, I'll tell you where I learned this later.

Paul was a man who was always on the go. Even when he was 60 years old, 65 years old, he was on the move all the time. And I tell you, he wasn't traveling in buses or anything.

He was walking a lot of places in ships which could be exposed to shipwreck. He was always on the go for spreading the gospel. He had only one life and he knew it was running out.

And he said, I can't afford to waste my time. I've got to reach as many places with the gospel as possible. He had such a passion and a longing in his heart.

But at the same time, he had such a close walk with God who had been through so many trials and tests that inwardly he had become such a rich man spiritually. But he had not written down most of those things. You know, in any type of written form, parchment or whatever they used those days, they didn't use paper.

And God knew that this man has got so much wealth. There may almost never be another man like this in Christendom. And what he has learned, he must put down in writing.

But how to get this fellow to put down in writing? Because he never stops for one day anywhere. He has no time to write anything. He's always on the move.

So what did God do? He allowed Paul to be imprisoned. And because Paul was in prison, now he could not travel, travel, travel. He had to sit in the prison.

He said, OK, let me spend my time profitably. Let me write a letter. And he wrote to the Philippians and he wrote to some of the other churches.

And what is the result? His life has now become a blessing. His being in prison has been a blessing to millions of people for 2000 years. Was that imprisonment good or bad? Tell me.

That was good. I remember many years ago, I think it was 15 years ago, I had to be admitted in a hospital for a very small bit of work the doctors had to do on me. It was something the Lord could have healed me without going to a hospital.

And I prayed much, but he didn't heal me without hospitalization. But he did heal me with hospitalization. But when I was in the hospital, I said, Lord, why have you put me in the hospital? It was almost the first time and the last time I ever went into a hospital.

And I said, why did you put me here? You could have healed me and I could have been busy serving you somewhere here or there instead of lying down in the hospital for so many days. And the Lord said to me very clearly, I did not put you in hospital to heal you. I could have healed you without hospitalization.

I put you in hospital so that you can just lie down for a little while and listen to what I have to tell you. You're running around so much that I hardly get a chance to talk to you. I said, oh, is that the reason? Then I'm happy to lie down here as long as you want me to.

I want to hear you. And I lay there and the Lord began to speak to me. And as he spoke to me, I wrote down all that he was saying.

And that was one of the, I'd say, one of the only articles that I've ever written, which I wrote almost as the Lord was speaking to me. It's a little tract called God Needs Men. It's just about six pages.

It's in one of my books called New Wine and New Wineskins. And it's also in a book called Principles of Serving God. But that's a little tract that I now see God has used around the world in so many places.

But God gave me that because he put me in a hospital for about a week or 10 days. I don't remember how long. And I see that sometimes God stops us from doing things by sickness or imprisonment to make us do something we would never do otherwise.

So learn to give thanks when God stops you from going around, traveling, preaching all the time. He has a purpose. That's one thing.

The second thing is, it says here in verse 13, as I said, the first thing is the letter to Philippians and many other letters. The second thing he says, my imprisonment has become well known throughout the whole Praetorian Guard and to everyone else. And later on in the end of the letter, chapter 4, verse 22, he says, all the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's family.

How did Caesar's family get converted? Because some of these people, these officers and prison guards were getting the gospel because Paul was there. I can imagine it must have been something like that. In those days, I've heard that prisoners would be chained to one prison guard for because so that the prisoner doesn't run away.

So here's Paul with a chain on his hand and chain to another Roman soldier for eight hours. Now, what do you think Paul was telling this Roman soldier for eight hours? He was telling him about Jesus and the gospel. And this fellow cannot escape.

It's not a one hour meeting. He cannot run away. He has to sit and listen to this preacher for eight hours.

And by the time the eight hours is over, the fellow has repented and he's ready to receive Christ and Paul says, let's pray. And he accepts Jesus as a savior. And now he says, my eight hour shift is over.

Another fellow comes for eight hours. He says, OK, let's start now with this new man. And number of people were getting converted like this.

And gradually there was a little fellowship inside that Caesars household. And Peter said that Paul says, these saints are also greeting you. Was his imprisonment good or not? Good.

He wrote the scriptures. He converted people. That's not all.

Something more. Because of my imprisonment, verse 14, many more people, the believers have got tremendous courage now. You know, all those timid believers who are all scared to speak to somebody about Christ.

Oh, what will happen? What will happen? Now they heard Paul is in prison for the gospel. Who's going to preach now? If Paul is gone, we've got to preach. And these quiet fellows suddenly became bold.

And they got a chance to speak and share God's word. And they became bold. Was Paul's imprisonment good or not? It was good.

But he says, there are some people, verse 15, even in those days who were preaching out of jealousy. You know, even in the church in those days, there were people in competition with other people. Some people who said we never got a chance to preach in this church because Paul would always come and preach.

Ah, now Paul has gone to prison. Now is my chance to preach. And he would get up in the church with the wrong spirit.

To show that I'm a better preacher than Paul. And when Paul heard that, that some of these fellows are jealous of you, Paul, they don't have 1% of your anointing, but they want to show that they are great preachers. And they get up in the church.

And what do you think about that, Paul? Paul says, praise the Lord. That's good. They're preaching Christ.

I'm not bothered with what motive they preach Christ. I'm just rejoiced that Christ is being preached. He says, some people preach Christ, verse 17, out of selfish ambition to cause me more pain.

What do I do? I rejoice, again that word joy, twice in verse 18, that Christ is proclaimed. Today, I see so many people preaching Christ to make money. I rejoice that Christ is being preached, even though I know God will one day send them to hell.

For preaching Christ to make money. You can't do preach Christ to make money and go to heaven. No.

Preaching Christ for the sake of honor, for the sake of money. I rejoice that Christ is being preached. Let them do it with wrong motives.

God will judge them one day. Is somebody preaching to show that he's a better preacher than me? God bless him. Let him preach.

Let him preach Christ. There are people who read my articles and books and preach those sermons who are ashamed to admit that they got those truths by reading my books, because they're a bit ashamed to admit that. Praise the Lord.

Let Christ be preached. We don't want any honor. We don't want anybody to quote us.

Let Christ be preached and let them bless other people. And if they want to pretend that that was their own revelation, let them do it. God will judge them for all that.

Christ is being preached. Somebody is blessed. That should be your attitude, even when somebody you don't like is preaching the gospel.

Praise the Lord, brother. What does it matter if somebody else is preaching your message or your sermon? Just rejoice. Or somebody's doing it with the wrong motive.

Let him do it. Christ is being preached. Somebody's being blessed.

He's doing it in a different way from you. Do it different from your convictions. Let him do it.

I don't take collections in my meetings. That person takes collections and preaches the gospel. Never mind.

That's between him and God. Christ is being preached. I want to rejoice in everyone who preaches Christ, even if he's unconverted.

Here's an unconverted person who goes around distributing tracts. Praise the Lord. Somebody may get saved through those tracts.

Somebody may get saved through those gospels, even though the fellow who distributed it will finally go to hell. It doesn't matter. I rejoice that Christ is being preached.

This should be the attitude of ours. We don't have to judge them. God will judge them all in the final day.

These fellows who got up in the church and preached out of jealousy. You think God will spare them? He'll really judge them in the final day. But Paul rejoiced.

He did not have a bad spirit towards anyone who was preaching the gospel. That's a good example for us. And he goes on to say, verse 21, For to me to live is Christ, to die is gain.

If I live, that means I'll have many more opportunities to serve the Lord. But if I die, I'll be with Christ. And he says, I don't know which to choose.

If I die, that's a gain to me because I'll be with the Lord. If I live, I've got some more years to spread this wonderful gospel to bless others. That's also a great joy to me.

And he says, I don't know which to choose. Should I live or die? Both are equally good for me. He says in verse 24, I think I should live a little longer for your sake.

And God allowed him to live for a few more years for the sake of those believers who still needed to be established for a few more letters that still needed to be written to complete scripture. And because I'm convinced of this, he sensed in his heart, I'm not yet going to die. He knew later on when he wrote 2

Timothy, Now my time is ready to go.

This is my last letter. But here he says, I'm convinced, yeah, I feel in my spirit that God will allow me to live a little longer for your sake. And he says, only please conduct yourself in a manner, verse 27, worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I'm in prison or I come to see you, I'll always hear.

This is his burden. Listen to this. That you're standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving together.

See the expressions of unity there, one mind, one spirit, striving together and not in any way alarmed, verse 28, by your enemies. Because when your enemies attack you and you're not alarmed, that is a sign of destruction for them. But a sign of salvation for you.

You remember when Pilate told Jesus, Don't you know I have power to crucify you? And Jesus said, You have no power against me, except what my father gives you. Jesus was not alarmed. And if a time comes in your life or mine, where we have to stand like that before somebody, remember the words of Jesus, the confession he made before Pontius Pilate.

You have no power over me, except what my heavenly father gave you. No way alarmed. And that testimony is going to be a sign of destruction to your enemies.

Because God has given us two privileges. What are those two privileges? Two degrees, we can say. Verse 29.

One, to believe in Christ. Second, to suffer for his sake. Both go together.

God has given you the privilege of believing in Jesus. God has given you the privilege of suffering for Jesus' sake. So he's continuing with this theme of unity, which he spoke of in verse 27.

One spirit, one mind. And he says the same thing in verse 2 of chapter 2. Be of the same mind, same love, united in spirit, in one purpose. You see, so many times he speaks about unity.

At least seven expressions of unity. In chapter 1 verse 27 and chapter 2 verse 2. Seven times he speaks about unity, unity, unity, unity. And then he tells them the secret of this unity.

How we can be one body like this. You must never do anything, verse 3, from selfishness or pride. Do you know the two sins that will remain with us till we die? Are selfishness and pride.

Dirty thoughts need not remain with us till we die. We can overcome them. Love of money, we can overcome.

Getting offended, we can overcome. Slandering, gossiping, bitterness, unforgiving spirit. We can overcome all of these almost totally over a period of time.

But pride and selfishness are so deeply rooted in us that we can cleanse ourselves. These are like two big onions. You peel off one layer, there's another layer underneath.

You peel off that layer, there's another layer underneath. And I've discovered in my own life that it's so easy to be selfish in the way we live, in the way we do things, especially in the way we spend money and the way we spend our time. Selfishness.

And if you're getting light on it, you can cleanse away that selfishness. That means one more layer of the onion is taken away. Your selfishness becomes a little less.

And then next month, you may do something where you get light on some more selfishness. Peel it off. And gradually you become unselfish and loving and Christ-like.

But it's a very thick onion. But if you're not getting any light on your selfishness and you're not peeling it off, then you'll remain with this big fat onion of selfishness till the end of your life. Make sure you keep on peeling off these layers of selfishness as you get more and more light on different areas of your life.

Other area is spiritual pride. See, it could be pride of appearance, intelligence. But those things we usually overcome earlier on in life.

I hope you have. But then comes the dangers of spiritual pride. That's another massive onion.

We sometimes say things and afterwards God shows you that was because of a little pride in you that you said that. And you repent. Sometimes we give a testimony and after we have given our testimony, the Lord says when we go back home, that was a little pride in that testimony.

You didn't give all the glory to give me. You gave me 90% of the glory and you took 10% of the glory to yourself. And I say, Lord, forgive me.

Have mercy on me. I peel off one more layer of that onion of spiritual pride. This is how we become more and more one with each other.

If you and I are faithful in peeling off this onion of selfishness and spiritual pride. Gradually, you and I will become more and more one with each other. And in this connection, it says, have this mind in you, which was in Christ Jesus, this attitude.

Verse five. You know that with one that one verse, you can live all your life. Have this attitude in you, which is in Christ Jesus.

You don't need any other verse in the Bible for transformation. In every situation, ask yourself, did I have the attitude of Christ here? You face another situation somewhere else and you ask yourself, did I have the attitude of Christ here? Did I have the attitude of Christ in the way I conducted myself in the dining hall? Was I selfish in the way I conducted myself? You know, there's a lot of selfishness in us in matters of food, in matters of seeking the most convenient place to stay and making it a little more difficult for other people. Let them have the difficult, the most more inconvenient thing.

And let me choose the convenient thing. Let me choose the best bed and the best food and the biggest apple and the biggest slice of cake. Children are like that.

They always grab. When we grow older, we don't grab like that because we lose our testimony. But we're still like that inside.

We hope nobody will grab that before we grab it. There's a lot of selfishness in us. And if we cleanse ourselves and have the attitude of Jesus, what was the attitude of Jesus? When he was in heaven, he thought of the poor people on earth who don't have what he has.

And he said, they must have what I have in heaven. That's the attitude of Christ. You look at other people and you say, they don't have what I have.

I've got forgiveness of sins. They don't have it. I've got victory over sin.

Those believers don't have it. I must give it to them. They're suffering with so many difficulties.

They don't have drinking water. They're struggling. I must do something to help them.

Even in these practical things, they don't have a blanket at night. I must provide for them. This is how it must be on a cold night.

When you cover yourself with a blanket, think, do the fellow believers you're responsible for all have a blanket? That's the spirit of Christ. When you eat some good food, think, the fellow believers in my church, do they all have food to eat? This is the mind of Christ. In heaven, he thought, a lot of people down there on earth don't have what I have in heaven.

I must go to them and give it to them. That is the attitude of Christ. And when he came here, that is unselfish consideration for others.

And then when he came here, he humbled himself. It says here in verse 6, though he was God, he gave up that equality with God and became a servant. He humbled himself.

He came here, not only became a man, but became a servant of all men. Amazing. Have this attitude in you which is in Christ.

He knew that he can help people only if he serves them. Not if he's like a Maharaja, a king over them. That's why he refused to be a king.

You can think that a king can help a lot of people. But Jesus showed us, it's not a king that helps people. It's a servant that helps people.

That's what Jesus demonstrated by his life. That's why he refused to be a director. He refused to be a chairman.

He refused to be a king. He said, I am a servant. And he spent all his life serving, serving, serving, never taking a position or a title.

The only title he had was son of man. What am I? Son of man. An ordinary son of an ordinary man.

He was God Almighty, even on earth. But what did he call himself? Son of man. He was a servant, a servant, a servant.

His whole mindset was that of a servant. It's not just a question of serving. Do you know the difference between serving and being a servant? Have you seen these photographs in the paper? Sometimes the minister is inaugurating the cleanliness campaign by sweeping the road.

And everybody's taking photographs of the minister sweeping the road. How long does he sweep the road for? About 10 seconds. And he wants all the photographs to come in the paper.

This great minister is sweeping the floor. Is he a servant? No, he's not anybody's servant. But for 10 seconds, he's serving to get a reputation.

There's a difference between serving and being a servant. Serving, you can do like that for honor. Being a servant is an attitude of mine where I always think I am this brother's servant.

I'll tell you how the Lord taught me the truth of this in one situation. As I told you, I spent many years in the military where coming on time was very important. If we had a parade at 630 in the morning, we had to be there at 625, not at 631.

If you came at 631, they teach you such a lesson that for the rest of your life, you'll never come late again. So I learned for 11 years in the military to be on time. And then I became an elder of a church where I found more than half the people don't come in time for the meeting.

We'd have a meeting at 930 and they won't come on time. I said, this used to disturb me. And I used to say, listen, you fellows take your children to school every day at 830 on time.

But you can't come to God's house at 930 on time. It's because you're afraid of that principle. You're not afraid of God.

And it's true. But the thing worst part of it was it disturbed me. And then I came to rest.

When the Lord showed me, you're not a master in that church. You're a servant. The servant must always be on time.

At the breakfast table, master can come whenever they like. Right or wrong? Isn't that right? Master may say breakfast at 830. Servant must be there at 825.

Master may come at nine o'clock. That's up to him. And the Lord said to me, all these people in your church are masters.

You are the servant. Let them come whenever they like. You're a servant.

You come on time. And if something needs to be done in the church, you do it. Come on time and do it.

Then I came to rest. Then I realized it's not serving but being a servant attitude. It changed my whole perspective.

It didn't make me agitated with those people. I was agitated earlier because I thought I was the master and they were the servants. And when God changed my mindset and I saw that I'm the servant and they are the masters, I stopped being agitated.

You know a lot of your agitation is because you think you're the master. No, you're not the master. You're the servant.

That's what Jesus was. So that's a beautiful passage there. How Jesus humbled himself and therefore God exalted him.

The more you humble yourself, the more God will exalt you spiritually. He will exalt you over sin. He'll exalt you over your lusts.

He doesn't mean he'll exalt you and make you a director. I never want to be one in my life. I want to be exalted over sin.

I want to be exalted over the world. I want to be exalted over the devil. I don't want to be exalted over people.

Are you waiting to be exalted over people? Forget it. Seek to be exalted over sin, over the devil, over the world. That's what I want to be exalted over.

I want to humble myself so that God exalts me over these wretched things and keeps me always as a servant of people. That's how we are called to be. And it says here, do all things, verse 14, without grumbling or disputing.

There are two things in salvation. One is what we have to work out, verse 12, work out your salvation. And the other is, verse 13, what God works in.

See this wonderful characteristic of Christ of humility and unselfish love. You can't produce it. It says in verse 13, God has to work it inside you.

And when God works it inside you, you work it out in your daily life, verse 12. So God works in and you work out. And then God works some more in and you work some more out.

God works some more in and you work some more out. The Holy Spirit does something in you and you work it out. And day by day, you grow in the Lord more and more with the attitude of Christ.

And we learn thereby to do everything in life, verse 14, without grumbling or complaining. And then he gives the example of a man called Timothy, verse 19 onwards, and another man called Epaphroditus, verse 25, who had the attitude of Christ, which is just mentioned. He says, I wanted to send Timothy to you.

I have many co-workers and Timothy, but Timothy was the only one whom I could send to you because, verse 21, all the others are seeking their own. What a sad thing that among all of Paul's co-workers, everybody sought their own. They were all good people.

They were born again. They were baptized in water, baptized in the Holy Spirit. They spoke in tongues.

They were anointed. They could preach. They've had a passion for souls.

But with all these good qualities, they sought their own gain. Some honor, some money, some comfort, something for myself. And Paul was a very spiritual man.

He could discern. Yeah, these are good brothers, but they're not all the same quality. One man here is outstanding.

It's the same today among Christian workers. In any group of Christian workers, you'll have good brothers, very good brothers. But you may find one is outstanding.

Outstanding in what? Outstanding in not seeking his own. That's what makes a man outstanding. Even among Paul's workers, people sought their own.

So, do you think in today's Christian workers, people don't seek their own? I tell you, more than 90% of born-again Christian workers in India today seek their own. Be among the 10% like Timothy, who do not seek anything for themselves. Lord, everything for you.

Lord, I don't want anything for myself in my life. Everything for Christ. Everything for God.

That's the man whom God picks up and gives revelation. Be one like that. Timothy was like that.

And Epaphroditus was another like that. And he was sick to the point of death serving God. But his life radiated the glory of Christ.

Chapter 3, again he speaks about rejoicing. Verse 1. And he says, I want to write the same things again to you. Paul was not afraid to write the same things again.

Some preachers are ashamed to preach the same sermon a second time. You know, whenever they make a list of their notes, they'll always write underneath. OK, this sermon I preached in this place, and this place.

So that when I come back to those places, I don't preach the same sermon. See, these are professional preachers. They're always, they're not prophets listening to what God is going to say.

They're saying, I must get honor. Every time I come here, I must preach a new sermon. They're not in touch with God.

They're seeking honor. But Paul said, I'll preach the same thing again to you, because you need to hear it. I'll write the same things to you.

Was that what I wrote last time? Well, if God led me to write it this time, it's because you need to hear it. He says, beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision, the people who believe in the external circumcision. He says, we are the true circumcision.

What is the meaning of circumcision? It means no confidence in the flesh. Verse three and glorying only in Christ. Cutting off of the flesh.

We are the true circumcision. And he says this matter of confidence in the flesh. If anybody thinks he can have confidence in the flesh, I more than all of them.

Because these were my qualifications. I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. And as to the righteousness in the law, absolutely blameless.

From my childhood, I kept the Ten Commandments. I lived an upright life. I had all this goodness in me.

But when I found Christ, I knew this is all garbage, rubbish. By the way, this word garbage did not originate with me. It originated with the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3, 8. Somebody asked me once, brother, why do you always speak about garbage, garbage, garbage? I said, because that's what Paul says.

He says everything is rubbish compared to Christ. He used that expression. He says, I counted all his rubbish compared to Christ.

It's all garbage. It's all rubbish compared to Jesus Christ. Have you seen it in your life? Have you seen that all the money in the world is rubbish compared to Christ? Have you seen that all the honor that people can

give you is all rubbish compared to Christ? Have you seen all the comfort you can get in your Christian work? You manipulate things so that you have a lot of comfort.

You know, it's all rubbish compared to Christ. Doing God's will. Being in the place where God wants you to be.

Fulfilling the ministry which God wants you to fulfill. I'm not bothered if other Christian workers get honor. Let them get honor.

My calling is to get dishonor. It's all rubbish, this honor and dishonor. Are you jealous that somebody gets a better salary than you? And he's also serving the Lord and you're also serving the Lord and he's getting more than you? That means you haven't seen it as rubbish.

Otherwise you'd say, his garbage bin is a little bigger than my garbage bin. He's got more garbage in his garbage bin than I've got in mine. Oh, how sad.

He's got more garbage, is it? And you're feeling sad about that. You haven't seen it as garbage. Paul saw it.

That's why he was so free. Oh, he's getting more honor than me. I did the work and he's getting the honor.

His garbage bin is bigger than mine. This is what's happening in Christian work. None of these people have seen the honor of men as garbage.

None of these people have seen all that money in Christian work as garbage. Where can they serve the Lord? Let me tell you, my dear brothers and sisters, you can never serve the Lord till you see that everything outside of Jesus Christ is garbage. We need money to live on the earth.

I'm not saying that we don't need it. I need money and I receive money and I use it for my life on earth. I needed money when my children were being educated.

I had to educate them. I needed money for food. I needed money for my children's clothes.

I needed money for earthly expenses. I'm not saying we don't need it. But when you're competing with somebody else, and when you're calculating and you're thinking of money as the main factor in serving the Lord, you've completely missed the road.

That must be secondary. Do you know where the gold is in heaven? Who can tell me? Where is the gold here on earth, on your heads? That determines whether you're ready to go to heaven or not. If you can put gold under your feet here, you're ready for heaven.

But if you still got gold on your head like these earthly kings, brother, you're not ready yet. You better learn to put gold under your feet. That's where they have it in heaven.

See it as garbage. It's something we walked on. Yeah, we need a road to walk on, but we don't put the road on top of our head.

Keep it under the feet. We need money, but keep it in its proper place. If somebody gives you honor or dishonor, it's just the same.

He counted it all garbage. He says, what is my longing in life? My longing in life is not to become a famous preacher, or to be well known, or to be written about in all the magazines. That's all garbage.

My desire, verse 10, is to know Christ, the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings. I haven't attained that, all that I want. He says in verse 12, I'm not yet perfect.

In one way, I'm not yet perfect. I've not yet reached the perfection of Christ. But in another way, verse 15, I'm already perfect.

Have you understood this? Many people are afraid of this word perfection because they haven't studied the Bible. Paul says in verse 12, I'm not perfect. In verse 15, he says, I and a few other people are perfect.

And it's the same word. All you Greek scholars can go and check that out. It's the same word.

What does it mean? That means there is a perfection we can have on earth, and there's a perfection we can never have till Jesus comes again. The perfection we can have on earth now is a perfect conscience. Perfect in my conscience, every sin confessed, everything set right with God and man, every sin, known sin, cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ, every restitution made, every debt repaid, every apology made.

My conscience is perfect. That's the perfection I can have. Verse 15, the perfection I cannot have, verse 12, is becoming like Christ totally.

I'm not like Christ. Paul was not like Christ. Nobody is like Christ.

That will come when we reach, when Jesus comes again. It's a goal. It's like climbing a mountain.

When I'm born again, I'm at zero feet. Becoming like Christ is 30,000 feet. Every day I climb, maybe I've reached 500 feet.

I'm pressing on to perfection. But I'm not going to sit at zero feet all my life. This is the Christian life.

So Paul says, think of those people who are with a perfect conscience and make them your example. He says, follow my example, verse 17. Follow my example and others who walk like me, because many people don't walk like this.

They are the enemies, verse 18, of the cross of Christ and whose God, verse 19, is their stomach. Do you know people whose God is their stomach? How do you know whether your God is your stomach? One day if the food is not tasty and you get upset with your wife or with the cook or anybody, what is your God? Your God lives on your tongue. Those taste buds are your God.

And you bow down. You think you're praying for the food. You're actually praying to your taste buds.

I want good food. Don't make your taste buds your God. Don't make your stomach your God.

Let Jesus Christ be your God. If you get good food, praise the Lord. If one day it's not so good, praise the Lord.

If one day the breakfast is not ready on time and you have to go to work, don't get upset with your wife. Say, well, Lord, maybe the Lord wanted me to fast today morning, so he permitted the breakfast not to be ready. Maybe I'm a great lover of food and God wants to free me from it.

Always give thanks and go. Don't make your stomach your God because it says here, such people, their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship, verse 20, is in heaven.

Chapter 4, verse 4. Rejoice in the Lord always. Not sometimes, not most of the time, but all the time. This was the verse that challenged me many years ago when I was much younger.

And I said, Lord, this verse is not true in my life. Do you want to be healthy sometimes, most of the time or all the time? We all want to be healthy all the time. Do you want to rejoice sometimes, most of the time or all the time? All the time.

Is it possible? Yes. By the grace of God, yes. We must say, and if it is not true in your life, be honest and say, Lord, I'm not healthy all the time.

I'm healthy most of the time, but I want to be healthy all the time. Spiritually healthy anyway. I want to rejoice all the time.

Please fill me with the Holy Spirit and teach me that everything in the world is garbage except Christ and I will rejoice all the time. It's because you don't consider everything in the world as garbage other than Christ that you have a lot of grumbling and murmuring and complaining. Rejoice in the Lord always.

And again, I say to you, I meant what I said. Rejoice. And then it says another thing.

Be anxious for nothing. That's another mountain to climb. Anxiety comes so easily for so many things.

When you don't have enough money to meet your needs at the end of the month. When you're married and your children have gone to school and they are two hours late. They haven't come back from school.

You wonder what happened. When you're growing older and older and older and no marriage proposal has come. Anxiety.

Am I going to live like this till I'm 50? So many things can cause anxiety. And I'm not saying that we can come to a place where nothing disturbs us. But I'm saying we can press on to that place where our faith and confidence in God grows to the place where whenever that anxiety comes, we can take it to the Lord in prayer.

Like that lovely song says, what a friend we have in Jesus. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Oh, what peace we often forfeit.

Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. That's what he says.

Take it to God in prayer. And along with the prayer, add a thanksgiving. Thanksgiving means, Lord, thank you.

You got my request. The letter has arrived. The message has reached heaven.

Thank you, Lord. You'll take care of it. Learn to thank God.

And then you may get up without your anxiety. Sometimes you get up with your anxiety because you didn't learn to give thanks. OK, learn to set your mind on things that are excellent.

Verse 8, verse 11 and 12, learn to be content with much or little. Whatever God gives you, learn to be content. I can do all things, verse 13, through Christ who strengthens me.

I can rejoice always as Christ strengthens me. I can come to that life gradually where anxiety disappears from my life because Christ strengthens me. I cannot do it on my own, but I can do it through Christ who strengthens me.

And one last verse, verse 19, my God is able to supply all your need according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus. Everything we need in life, God is able to supply to us. This is not primarily talking about earthly things.

It's according to his riches and glory in Christ. Everything I need for my spiritual life in earth, overcoming sin, a life of joy, a life of peace, a life anointed life, a spirit filled life, a useful life in God's kingdom. Every single thing can become mine if I trust him.

He can make me rich and supply all my needs. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, help us to appreciate the tremendous riches that are ours in Christ and to appropriate them and to live cleansing ourselves from selfishness and pride, partaking of the mind of Christ and being built together for your glory on this earth.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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