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Philippians (Overview) - Part 2



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

Discover the key themes and powerful teachings found in the book of Philippians through an insightful overview provided by Steve Gregg. Gain a deeper understanding of the circumstances surrounding the writing of Philippians and its potential location. Explore the central theme of unity and like-mindedness among believers, as well as the exhortation to have the mind of Christ. Delve into Paul's perspective on suffering, the pursuit of knowing Christ, and finding joy and peace in God amidst challenging circumstances. Gain valuable insights into the Christian journey and the transformative power of living in accordance with the teachings of Christ.

Transcript

Okay, we want to just kind of look at some of the other passages in Philippians before we're done tonight. I don't want to go too late, but I mean, there's just some passages that it's really criminal to say nothing about. As I said, Paul was in prison.

I've not yet committed to where he was, and that's because it's hard to commit to where he was. Traditionally, Philippians is thought to be a book of Acts, which has been written from Rome. This is also the traditional view about Ephesians and Colossians and Philemon.

There are four epistles, the ones I just named, that are traditionally called the prison epistles, and they're traditionally assigned to the two years that Paul spent in Rome as a prisoner, which is the season that the book of Acts closes with. In the last chapter of Acts, in chapter 28, Paul comes out as a prisoner to Rome after shipwreck en route from Caesarea. And the book ends by saying he spent two years under house arrest there.

But though he was under arrest, he had a lot of liberty. He could entertain visitors all he wanted to. People could come and talk to him and stuff.

And so he had this two years of confinement while he was waiting for a trial. And in that trial, he was going to face Nero because he had appealed to Caesar while in Caesarea. And we don't know.

I should say in the book of Acts, it doesn't tell us what happened. Traditionally, he was exonerated by Caesar and traveled more, makes more travels that are not recorded in Acts. And then later, in a later persecution, he was arrested again by Nero.

And this time he was executed and is believed that the books of first and second Timothy and Titus were written during that second imprisonment that Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon were written during the first imprisonment at the end of Acts and that the pastoral epistles, first and second Timothy and Titus were written during the second imprisonment from which Paul did not leave alive. But that there was some traveling in between those two imprisonments. Again, the book of Acts doesn't document that.

But as you read the pastoral epistles, Timothy and Titus, you find Paul makes reference to having been certain places and gone. He left Timothy and Ephesus. He he left Titus in Crete.

Well, the book of Acts Paul never went to Crete. So I mean, it's like there were some other travels of Paul after his first imprisonment at the end of Acts. And so he was actually in second Timothy actually talks about when he was on trial.

And he says in my first answer, I was delivered from the mouth of a lion. So he apparently was exonerated the first time. And so the tradition, the very common tradition is that he wrote these letters, including Philippians from that two years Roman prison.

And we could just take that without questioning and move on. And we'd be in company with virtually what the church is held most of the time. It's just that many scholars think there are reasons to question whether the book of Philippians gives evidence of being from Rome and some thought maybe he wrote it from a prison imprisonment in Ephesus.

There are some who think Colossians and Fleming were written from Ephesus. Also, we don't know of any imprisonment in Ephesus. All we know is that Paul did spend three years in Ephesus and it didn't always go well with him.

And at a later date, he said he was in prison. So he said he'd been lots of imprisonment. Some of them might have been overnights only like in Philippi.

Others may have been a little longer. But one reason for suggesting Ephesus is because of the travels involved between Philippi and Paul. If Paul was in Rome, the Philippians would be 700 and something miles away.

And at the speed of travel in those days, that takes several months to travel. And yet, while Paul was in prison, wrote Philippians. First of all, he had received a gift delivered from Philippi to him.

What's the same role that would have taken several months for a papyrus. Then a papyrus fell sick and news of this got back to the Philippians. So I would take another several months for news to get back to them.

And then news from the Philippines that they were alarmed, got back to Paul. I've been other several months of travel and then Paul argued that he planned to come and see them. There's just a lot of long trips.

If he's in Rome now, that doesn't make it impossible. But one of the arguments against Rome is that when Paul came to Rome, his expectation was to go on to Spain that he actually was hoping to get to Spain when he wrote the book of Romans. He says in Romans 15 that he hoped to pass through Rome on his way to Spain.

So he was heading west. But if in fact, when he wrote Philippians, if he is Rome and he's talking about going back east to Greece, to the Philippians, then his plans are in Spain, apparently had changed, which is not impossible. After you've been in prison for a couple of years, you've had a lot of opportunities to rethink what your plans are going to be.

So some people think it unlikely it was from Rome because of those things. But there's no real solid case for the alternative. Some think he wrote from Caesarea because he was in prison for two years in Caesarea.

Some figures from Ephesus. One scholar, at least, said he thought he was in Corinth, but we have no record of any imprisonment in Corinth. So we just have to say it's undetermined, undecided.

It's not stated where he's in prison, except one important key is a type of fever's household and the Praetorian guard in Chapter one. He says in verse 12 and 13. I want you to know, brother, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.

So that it has become evident to the whole palace guard. That's the Praetorian guard. And all the rest that might change or in Christ.

In other words, the guards in the Praetorian guard had because he was in prison among them had heard about his imprisonment. This strongly argues for Rome, although those who hold the other views hold that there might have been royal residences in Ephesus and in Cicero. And some of the other places that are theorized, but the Praetorian guard would most naturally be assumed to be those in Rome.

And then also at the very end of the official. He sends greetings. Verse 22, Chapter 422.

He says, All the saints greet you, but especially those of Caesar's household. The Caesar's household be his servants, his bodyguard and things like that. And again, Rome

is much more likely candidate for the place where the Praetorian guard was overseas.

The household was being converted by Paul. He's converting people in Caesar's household. So that's one reason it was really good that he was in prison because he had access to a demographic that might not have come to listen to him anywhere else.

And that's the royal family and the military guard in Rome and so forth. Anyway, I suspect that Rome is the right place. It's the tradition.

These things would more naturally fit with Rome. The objections to Rome as a place are not fatal to the theory. So, you know, I'm not going to give too much credence to emphasis or says, for his alternatives, it's not important anyway, but it's probably a Roman prison.

Now, when we get to Chapter one, verse 19, he says, I know that this will turn out for my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I should be ashamed. But that with all boldness is always so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. Now, this reference of being by life or by death is not just being melodramatic.

He was actually on trial for his life. There's a possibility it might end in his execution. This was not just saying, I just want to please God where I live or die.

Well, we should all be able to say that, but he was actually facing the prospect of actually dying. And he said, I want Christ to magnify my body, whether by life or death. Then he begins to talk about these two options, living or dying in verse 21.

For to me to live is Christ, but to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit of my labor. Yet I show what I should choose.

I cannot tell from hard press between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to remain in the flesh is more useful to you. And he says, I think that's probably what's going to have to happen.

I don't think I'm going to get out that easy. He said, I would much rather die. I'd be very happy.

I'm ready to die to live as Christ to die is gain. I'd love to depart. Which is far better.

That's very obvious that Paul did not apparently believe in what we call soul sleep. The doctrine of soul sleep is that when we die, we're unconscious. We're nowhere until the end of the world when Jesus raises the dead.

And then when the resurrection happens, we wake up from, as it were, sleep. But in the interim, between our death and the resurrection, we're nowhere. But Paul believed that if he were to depart, he'd depart to be with Christ.

And that's obviously in heaven. He's not talking about the resurrection. He's not talking about Jesus coming.

He's talking about him departing. And he's clearly talking about his death. He spoke very similarly, of course, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. And there, it seems obvious that he's talking about the intermediate state, not the resurrection.

Because he says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 6, Therefore, we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased, rather, to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

Now, obviously, he used the expression present in the body to mean alive at this present time. And while we're present in the body like this, we're absent from the Lord. But he says we're looking forward to being absent from the body.

Well, that means when we die. It says in James chapter 2, the body without the spirit is dead. When you die, your spirit is no longer in your body.

So you're absent from your body. But he says, but present with the Lord. So, he's not talking about the resurrection.

Because on the last day when the resurrection occurs, we won't be absent from the body. We'll be in our bodies. We'll be in our glorified bodies.

There is only one time in archaeology that would allow us to be absent from the body. That's after we die. We're no longer in the body.

And before the resurrection, when we will again be in our bodies. So, absent from the body is when we're dead before we're resurrected. And that is, he says, the same as being present with the Lord.

So that's how Paul saw things. We live in this body until we die. Then we live with Christ in heaven until he returns.

And then we live in resurrection bodies. All right. In verse 20, 70, only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

So whether I come and see you or I'm absent, he's hoping maybe he'll be released to come see them. He's not sure if I'm absent. I want to at least hear that you're striving in the spirit with one mind, striving together in faith.

There's many references to being like minded and of one mind and of one spirit. In fact, every chapter has at least one reference to it here in chapter one, verse 27. We have that reference to it in chapter two, verse two.

He says, fulfill my joy by being like minded, having the same love being of one accord of one mind. In chapter two, verse 20, he says of Timothy, I have no one like him who's like minded with me. I find like minded brothers.

Sometimes chapter three, verses 15 and 16. He says, therefore, let as many of our mature have this mind that is the same mind. If anything, you think otherwise, God will reveal to you nevertheless, to the degree that we've already obtained.

Let us walk by the same rule. Let us be of the same mind. Then in chapter four, verse two, I implore you to be of the same mind in the Lord.

So every chapter has references to being like minded or unified. And so if there's any concern you have about this church, he didn't bring it up much, except that he wanted to urge them to be unified and to rejoice, be happy and be unified. Be of the same mind.

How can you be of one mind when you disagree? Does someone just have to bite the bullet and agree with the other person if they're not convinced? If two people disagree, how can you tell them, well, just just be of the same mind, just agree with each other? Well, wouldn't that be like saying you both have your reasons for believing what you believe? One of you has to give up and deny your reasons to just leave with the other person. And if so, which one's going to give up his who volunteers to give up their own reasons for believing what they believe in order to just believe that they don't believe because someone else has reason for it. Obviously, how do you fulfill this exhortation? To me, this reminds me of First Corinthians chapter one, and I think the answer is perhaps there in First Corinthians one ten.

Paul said, Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you'd be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment. Well, when I get what you got, how do we do that? Well, we've got people who are not of the same mind and you just say, well, get over it. Just agree with each other.

Well, certainly Paul doesn't mean that you're not supposed to think for yourself and have good reasons for you believe and that you just kind of throw out your beliefs, which you think are warranted in order to be in unity. What does he mean when he goes on to say what he means in First Corinthians in the next chapter versus verse eleven for it has been declared to be concerning you, brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, each of you says, Remember, you're supposed to say the same thing.

Well, that's not happening now because each of you are saying I'm a Paul or I'm of Apollo or I'm of Cephas or I'm of Christ. In other words, you need to be saying the same thing, not four different things, because three of those things are not true. Only one of those things is true.

You all need to say that same thing. You shouldn't be saying I'm a Paul. You shouldn't be saying I'm a Peter.

You shouldn't be saying I'm of Apollo. You should say I'm of Christ. And we know that that's what Paul means because he says, was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? Of course, the answer is no.

But who was crucified for you and who in whose name were you baptized? Clearly, Christ. So he's saying you're not of Paul because Paul wasn't crucified for you. You weren't baptized.

But you are of Christ because he was crucified for you and you were baptized in him. You were all baptized into Christ. So all of you say the same thing.

Don't any of you be saying I'm a Paul or I'm of Apollo or I'm of Cephas. There's all of you have the same testimony. We are followers of Jesus Christ.

Well, do we have to agree about everything else? Well, it's nice if you can. But if you can't at least have this. We're following Christ together with whatever other disagreements we may have.

We don't have to agree about everything. We're to agree about who the Lord is, who the king is, who we're following, who we belong to. All of you need to have that same mind and not let other disagreements prevent you from making that testimony.

Because he says also in chapter three, verse 16, nevertheless, well, actually, 15 and 16. Therefore, let as many of us as are mature have this mind. And if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

Notice he's saying some of you, even mature people might not have exactly the same opinion about this. But if you don't, God will show you. In other words, Paul is confident that God can teach his disciples.

Jesus can lead them into all truth through the spirit. Paul tells him he wants them to all be of one mind, especially about what matters. But on other things, if you have other opinions, we'll leave that to God to bring each one along and teach them.

Now, in that context, by the way, chapter three, verse 12, he says. Well, we should go earlier. Frankly, that whole chapter is important.

But some things in chapter. I'll take those and then we'll try to just end here. Chapter two has one of the most famous passages in it and certainly worthy of mention.

He says. In verse three, chapter two, verse three, let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in loneliness of mind, let each of them others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interest, but for the interests of

others.

Let this mind be in you. That was also in Christ Jesus. Now, he hasn't just changed the subject.

He's illustrating the subject. I'm telling you, don't look out for yourself. Look out for others.

Put others interests ahead of your own. Like Jesus did. Remember him? You know, the mind of Christ imitate that.

But the same attitude or thought in the Greek is the word thought, but the same thought being you. That is, in Christ Jesus, a lot of the word mind appears several times in Philipians. But most of the time it's the it's the Greek word for thought.

Let the same thinking be in you as Christ. Well, what what exactly about Christ thinking is that we're supposed to imitate? Well, he was in the form of God and he did not consider robbery to be with God. Now, this translation follows almost slavishly the King James.

The King James said he did not take it robbery to be with God. That's not really what almost all translations would prefer. The word robbery there in the Greek means snatching.

Obviously, you can see how that could be related to robbery. If someone snatches a purse from someone else, that's a robbing robbery. But the word the Greek word for snatching has a broad meaning of snatching or seizing or clutching or grasping.

Many translations that probably the preferred translation is instead of saying he did not think it robbery to call it with God. They trusted he did not think of equality with God or thing to be grasped. And that is probably a more accurate literal translation.

He did not see equality of God, a thing to be grasped. Now, the Jehovah's Witnesses like that translation because they say, hey, he wasn't equal with God. He didn't even attempt to grasp it being with God.

That would have been inappropriate. In fact, I think their Bible says something like he did not speak to usurp equality with God or they have some really awkward phrase like he did not seek to affect a usurpation. Of equality with God or something like that.

But what they they think he's saying is Jesus was not equal of God. And he didn't even he never even dreamed of grasping at that for himself. However, what Paul points out is he did exist before God and he changed.

He enters up, took on the form of a servant. That is, his equality with God was something he didn't cling to. The word in the Greek can mean clutch.

He didn't clutch it to himself as something he jealously guarded his equality with God. He was willing to release that and become like us. And he took on the form of a servant.

And he then reduced himself even to die, even the death of the cross, which is the most humiliating of all known deaths in history. Now, by the way, so he emptied himself. Some people think this means he simply emptied himself of his status by taking on the form of a servant.

Others say he emptied himself of his divine privileges and attributes like omniscience and omnipotence and omnipresence. These things which God possesses that Jesus possessed when he's in the form of God, that he put those aside. He emptied himself of those prerogatives so he'd be like us.

He was not omnipresent when he was in human form. He was not omniscient. He was not omnipotent or omnipotent.

He was not invisible. He was not immortal. These are divine prerogatives that he possessed before he became man.

But by becoming a man, he became mortal. He became subject to temptation. God cannot be tempted.

But Jesus was. God does not become wearier in sleep. But Jesus did.

God is everywhere. Jesus wasn't. In other words, he emptied himself of his divine special privileges of divinity to become really limited and live with our handicaps as a human being.

And then he subjected himself to death. It says in verse nine, Therefore, God also is highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow those in heaven, those on earth and those under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father.

This is one of the passages that Christian Universalist appeal to. They say every knee is going to bow to Jesus. Every time he's going to confess his Lord.

And I will say this, I've just first have been familiar to Christians probably from their early Christian lives. I know all my childhood. I was familiar with this verse.

Every knee shall bow. Every tongue shall confess Jesus Lord. But I always assumed it meant, you know, Christians do that voluntarily.

But even those who don't become Christians got to do so voluntarily or not. You know, there will come a time when Jesus comes back and everyone is called before him. And even those who are rebels still will start to bow down and confess he's the Lord.

And no doubt this. This is a reasonable belief. But the thing is, he said they will do it to the glory of God the father.

They will bow down and say, Jesus, Lord, to the glory of God the father. Now, if they are forced to do this insincerely, because they're simply terrified. I don't know if that if God would be glorified, but I don't know if God is glorified by insincere worship or by forced worship.

Some might say, well, God glorified by his so he's so powerful that the fact he terrifies his enemies into that kind of submission is to his glory. Maybe so. So I have to say, I don't know if God feels particularly flattered to have dust forced to submit to him.

He is glorified when we love him, when we submit him, when we recognize him and want to serve him. So some say that the wording of this suggests that the time will come where everyone's going to actually repent. I'm not affirming that, but this is one of the verses that they use, which actually, while there are verses that also stand to confirm other views, contrary to that.

This is one that seems to work for them. But the point here is it's because Jesus humbled himself that God gave him the high position. And that's, of course, what the Bible says.

Humble yourselves unto the mighty hand of God that he might exalt you in due time. It says in first Peter five, James also says, humble yourselves inside the Lord. He'll raise you up, lift you up.

Jesus said you should take the lower seats when you're invited to take the less prestigious positions. Let others elevate you. If you take a high seat when you come in, you know, prestigiously, someone more prestigious than you may come in and the host will say, I'm sorry, you have to step down here.

Someone better than you has showed up. Then he says you'll be humiliated in front of everybody. But if you take the lowest feet and they come to all know you, you deserve a higher seat because then you'll be respected.

The idea is there's a principle here. You lower yourself and there will be exaltation in it. Pride goes before a fall and a haughty spirit for destruction.

And Jesus was had had the most cause for boasting that one could have. He was God, but he took on himself the form of a servant, washed his disciples feet, died for his people. And therefore, God has elevated higher than anyone else.

Now, the last part of Chapter two talks about Timothy. We won't say more about him and about a path for guidance. We won't say more about him.

We've read those verses. We've talked about him when he comes to Chapter three. Paul

has finally written something.

He's closing the zone halfway through. He's got two more chapters to go, but it's apparently his final point that he wants to emphasize. He says, Rejoice in the Lord.

That's his point. Rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you to say.

Now, rejoice in the Lord here has a particular connotation because some people rejoice in other things in the Lord, in particular, their own righteousness. And that would include many of the Jews and the Judaizers. They rejoice in their in the boxes they can tick of righteousness.

I'm circumcised. They keep the law. They're kosher.

You know, they they're not they avoid all unclean things. And that's what they rejoiced in their their superiority, according to the law. Well, Paul said, no, you need to rejoice in the Lord.

And he goes on to say, beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation. In the Greek, the word mutilation is the cutters. It's an unflattering statement for people who want to circumcise you.

People want to force you to. He's not the circumcision party. He calls them dogs, which is an irony because the Jews called the Gentiles dogs.

Now, Paul, a Jewish Christian writing to Gentile Christians, called the circumcision party dogs. You know, the circumcision party thinks the uncircumcised are dogs. Also, now, these are the cutters.

They're the real dogs. They're the evil workers. He says, though I also might have confidence in the flesh, I could rejoice in those things that they are rejoicing in rather than in Christ.

But I don't want to do that. I want to rejoice only Christ. After all, I was circumcised on the eighth day, which is what they want you to do.

Of the stock of Israel. That is, he wasn't a Gentile proselyte who got circumcised later in life. He was born from Israelite stock of the tribe of Benjamin, which was kind of prestigious.

The first king of Israel came from the tribe of Benjamin, and the tribe of Benjamin was a small tribe that remained loyal to Judah when the nation split. Even the city of Jerusalem was in their in Benjamin's territory. So it was like they were the smallest of the tribes, but has some prestige and being in their history.

A Hebrew of the Hebrews probably means he was not a Hellenistic Jew as some Jews had adopted Hellenistic culture and language. But the Hebrew Hebrews, how strangers did not. Concerning the law and the Pharisee concerns deal, I first give the church.

How more zealous can you be than that? Concerning the righteousness, which is by the law blameless. So Paul says I was as good as they come in that system. If I wanted to rejoice and boast and be confident in those kinds of things, I'd be at the top of the list with the biggest brownies, the most brownie points.

But he says, but what things were gained in all these religious accomplishments? These I have counted lost for Christ. Indeed, I also count all things that lost for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ. Jesus, my Lord, so he's not rejoicing in those ways, rejoicing in the Lord in Christ.

And that's what he's telling them to do. He's not just saying rejoice. He wants to rejoice, but he wants to specifically to rejoice in Christ, as opposed to in the kinds of things that other religious people rejoice in.

He said, I count these things rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law. And he doesn't say that I might gain heaven, but I might gain Christ. Apparently, giving up everything he gave up is worth it.

If he just gets Christ out of the deal. Now, many people want to be bribed with something more than Christ, because they don't care. They don't value Christ much, but they would value heaven if the option is going to hell.

They'd rather go to heaven and hell. So they'll they'll make the hard sacrifices and they'll do what they have to do if they think that's what's going to keep out of hell. But see, that's the religious attitude.

That isn't a joyful attitude. It's like whatever I got to do, I guess I got to make this sacrifice. I'll do it.

I won't like it, but I'll do it because I don't want to go to hell. Paul says, no, I just want Christ. And he's worth he's the pearl of great price.

He's worth it. I'll sell everything I have to buy that pearl of great price. I'll give up all the prestige, all the claim to fame I had that I can have Christ so that I might know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings.

I want to know him and the power of his resurrection, which I believe is the resurrection of life that's given to us because of the resurrection of Christ. And when we're born again and Christ was in us, his resurrection power enables us in life. I mean, he could be referring to I want to be resurrected like Jesus was because he does speak about that

also next.

But this seems to be talking about something earlier. I want to know him and the power of resurrection and fellowship of his sufferings. I want to fellowship with him in his sufferings.

He suffered. How can I be close to someone who suffered like if I don't suffer? How can I relate with him? I want to be close to him. I want to be a participant with him in his sufferings because that's knowing him in a deeper way than without it.

It says, if by any means I may change the resurrection of the dead. So that's the final resurrection is talking about. And it says not that I've already obtained it, but I am perfected already.

But I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus is laid on me. So I'm not perfect yet. I haven't been resurrected and glorified, obviously.

But that I don't use that as an excuse to give up. You know, when some people, some Christians, even when they find that they have failed and you point out a failure to them, maybe as constructive criticism, sometimes those you say, well, nobody's perfect. As if to say, since nobody's perfect, why bother? Why bother to make it important to be perfect? Who cares? Nobody's measures up like that.

Well, Paul says, I'm not perfect. And I think he could easily say, and nobody is. If I'm not, nobody is.

He's saying, I think. But he says, I don't use that as an excuse for not trying to be perfect. It's because I'm not perfect.

That's a goal that I have yet to reach. I press on to that mark. I forget the things that are behind.

Now, a lot of times we use that to speak about, you know, forget your sinful past and just press, don't feel guilty. Just go on to do Jesus. And no doubt that's good counsel.

But the things in his past were good, were religious things. Forgetting the things that are behind, what the circumcision, being a Pharisee, being blameless, those things that I forget those things put aside those things. I'm looking toward Jesus.

I'm pressing on for the mark of the high calling of God, Jesus. So Paul is basically saying, I don't think I'm perfect yet. But since I'm not.

That I use that as my reason for pressing on. If you're not perfect, don't say, I give up. Nobody can be perfect.

I keep trying. I'm still not perfect. Also, no, that's just reason to keep pressing on.

That's a goal you have to aim at. A Christian is never perfect in this life, probably in the ultimate sense of that word. That's going to be in the resurrection.

But a true Christian wants to be perfect. And that's an important thing. And we don't say, well, nobody's perfect.

So I'll just I'll just accept this lower bar. If I if I can meet this lower bar, that'll be good enough because I'll be better than most. No.

I'm not really a follower of Christ unless I want to be perfectly obedient to him. Unless I really want to please him completely. That's got to be in my heart or else I don't have a new heart.

I don't have his laws written in my heart. So if I don't want to obey completely, in what sense is his law in my heart? You know, the point is, the Christian life is a life of intention. To obey Christ completely, fully, perfectly, but also recognition that the flesh and the spirit are at war with each other.

We don't always do what we want, but that simply defines the battle. That simply defines where our efforts need to be placed. We need to keep our eye on the goal, on the prize and keep pressing on toward perfection.

And he says, therefore, let those who have who are mature have this pain. This is the attitude of all mature Christians. He says in verse 17, Brethren, join in following my example.

In other words, I'm pressing on. I want you to take me as an example and do the same thing yourself. You're not perfect either, but press on.

Forget what's behind, move on forward. For many walk differently than I do. Their end is destruction, their God is their belly, etc.

We read that. They says in verse 24, our citizenship is in heaven. Now, remember, he's writing to people who are kind of proud of their Roman citizenship.

This Roman colony where they are proud. We got all the citizenship. Not everyone has had.

Well, no, actually, you're just strangers and pilgrims here. You're really just ambassadors like us. Your citizenship is somewhere else.

Your true loyalty is not to Rome or to any nation on Earth. Our loyalty is to a king who's in heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven.

The Commonwealth that we belong to has its headquarters in heaven. We're here. We're domiciles like ambassadors in a foreign land.

But our citizenship is elsewhere. You know, if somebody is an ambassador to another country, they have probably their family and their home and a lot of the things they care about. Their friends are back home in the United States, but they live in France or Germany or Spain or Iraq and probably kind of homesick a lot of the time for their family and stuff like that.

But they're and their loyalty is to America because they're ambassadors of America in a foreign land. They're domiciled away from home and they have to kind of fit in with the domicile nation. They can't go around breaking the laws.

They have to basically be good. Locals, but on the other hand, when there's a conflict between the values of the land, they're domiciled in and the land that sent them that they belong to their loyalty has got to be where their citizenship is. And it says our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to this glorious body, according to the working by which he's able even to subdue all things to himself.

Our bodies will be transformed into the image of Christ's glorified body. And so when we see his resurrection body in the Gospels, whatever we can deduce about its characteristics, we can we can say, well, that's pretty much the kind of body we're going to have to chapter four very quickly. I'm not going to talk about the early verses.

We've talked about them. He does say in verse 60, anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with Thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Anxiety in the 90s from a psychiatric journal said that anxiety is the disease of the 90s.

That is the key disease that they're going to prescribe drugs for and things like that. Anti-anxiety drugs and so forth. Psychiatrists, of course, they see anxiety as a disease, not as something you have any power over.

They see depression as a disease. They see anger as a disease. They see addiction as a disease.

Now, a disease, by the way, is something you have. These other things are something you do. There's a difference between having a condition like pneumonia or AIDS or COVID or diabetes.

Those are diseases. You have them. You don't do them.

You didn't choose them. They have nothing to do with your behavior, although they may inhibit your behavior. They they're not your responsibility.

You're not responsible for the fact that you're sick. That's something that happens to

you. And you have that condition.

Behavior is different, even mental behavior. We are expected to have control over that. The one of the fruits of the spirit is self-control and to control your mind, to be transformed by the renewal of your mind and not conform to the world.

This is a different category than disease. Now, there may be physical conditions that some people have that contribute to greater amounts or tendencies to worry or be depressed. I mean, there are some cases where people have bad situations in their brains, a tumor, perhaps a brain injury, maybe some kind of a flood of some kind of chemical imbalance or something like that.

I mean, obviously, for example, we know that chemistry can affect moods. Women who are affected, especially by the monthly period, they know that the hormones, which are chemicals, have an impact on their moods. That's just the way it is.

We know that somebody who gets alarmed. Chemicals respond. Adrenaline, which sometimes allows them to do things they couldn't do otherwise, because the mood triggers the adrenaline.

There are there's an interaction between chemicals and moods. Sometimes a mood triggers the chemicals, as in the case of adrenaline. And sometimes the chemicals trigger the mood, as in the case of a woman who's having a hard time on her period emotionally.

Those we do not deny that physical conditions can impact mental states. But when a mental state is a moral responsibility, we have to assume that God expects us to be able to handle the moral responsibility. If Paul says rejoice in the Lord, well, then we'd better get over our depression.

If Paul says be anxious for nothing, then we better get over anxiety. And he assumes we can't. That's because it involves making certain choices.

He says be anxious for nothing. That means worry. But in everything, this is instead of being anxious in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

So the peace of God is the reason. The peace of God is the opposite of anxiety. Having anxiety is an entirely different mental state than having the peace of God.

And he says, how do you get from there to here? How do you get from anxiety to the peace of God? Well, in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Now, I know some people, especially Christian psychologists have said, oh, you can't just give out Bible verses like a like an aspirin

when people have deep depression or deep anxiety or whatever. You can't just give them a Bible verse and hope that makes it go away.

Right. I won't just give out a Bible verse, but the Bible verse actually tells us truth, deep truth, deep truth about the human psyche and the human spirit. And it's not just an aspirin.

It's a cure. An aspirin may make a headache diminisher go away, but a cure cures the disease. And again, we're talking metaphorically here because anxiety is not a disease.

But the if we metaphor use a metaphor of disease for it, we could say, well, it is cured by in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make your request known to God. If you're anxious in everything. Give it over to God.

Pray about it, not just once, but in every circumstance with thanksgiving. This is handing your anxieties over to God. It says in First Peter, Chapter five, casting all your cares upon him because he cares for you.

That's cast all your worries on him because he worries for you. Christ worries for us, but we have to give him our worries. I mean, it's simply the logical thing to do when you belong to Christ.

You've been bought with a price. You're not your own. He owns you.

If he owns you, he owns all that you have, including your words. All your problems are his problems. His worries are his.

Your words are his because you're his and therefore say, OK, Lord, I'm worried about this, but this is your word because I'm your problem. I mean, I am your servant and my problems are your problems. Now you're responsible for them.

If I'm obedient to you, you take care of the rest. Right. So I'm going to turn that over.

You're going to just keep being obedient and not worry about the outcomes. What if I die? Well, that could happen. I'm not worried about that either.

To die is game. What if I lose friends? Maybe that's what I'm worried about. Maybe I lose my reputation if something embarrassing comes on.

It hasn't, but I'm worried about it. No, no problem. I can lose friends.

I can lose my life. If I'm doing what God wants me to do, the circumstances are in his hands. I cast that care on him and let him worry about the outcomes.

That's how the peace of God takes over. Whenever you have stress or whenever you have anxiety, whenever there's a circumstance that is threatening, and there are many

in life, well, I mean, it reminds you, this is God's problem. You buy prayer and supplication, thanksgiving to God, just make your request known to him, and then really do it.

I've heard people say, well, you know, I've had anxiety. I said a prayer and it didn't help. Well, maybe you're using prayer as a magic wand.

Prayer is connecting with God. Prayer is getting in touch with God and saying, God, I'm your child. I'm your servant.

I've got problems here, which you said you'll take all my problems and handle them for me if I obey you. So I'm going to obey you. And I mean, if this is a real transaction really going on between you and God, it's more than just saying a prayer as a rote thing to do.

This is how, this is the path to overcoming anxiety process. And he says, let me say finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are good report. If there's any virtue and if there's any thing praise, we meditate on these things.

Now, I suspect that what it means is if there's any of these qualities in any of the people in your life, look at those qualities in them. And as you're required to love them. Some people are not very lovable, but can you find anything about them that's praiseworthy? Can you think of anything about them that's just or pure or lovely? I mean, if you can think about those things, dwell on those aspects of a person so that you might find it frankly, more easy to love them.

Now, he doesn't say, think on these things as qualities of other people. But he is describing qualities of people. I guess he could mean qualities of you.

Think about being noble. Think about being pure. Think about that.

Or he could be just thinking, saying, focus your mind on things generally that are good. As opposed to things that are not. And he says, and the things you've learned and received and heard and saw me do these things in the God of peace will be with you.

The God of peace, he said, the peace of God, a couple of words there and there, the God of peace will be with you if you imitate Paul in this matter. Now, let me just say about thinking on virtuous things. We have things that come before us and command our attention all the time without our asking for them.

Then there's those things we deliberately bring before our attention. The kind of people that we hang out with, that certain kind of conversations we have a pretty good idea of how edifying that's going to be given the person we're talking about or the things we watch the movies, whatever. I mean, things we entertain ourselves with.

We have to say that if we're not very spiritual and we're actually not devoting our thoughts to righteous, virtuous, pure things, there may be a connection there. You know, Paul is saying you want the God of peace to be with you. Then focus on the good things, the righteous things, the things that please God.

And in our society, that's going to mean you're going to skip out on some of the more common ways that people spend their time. Which all kinds of impure things into their head. And each person has to decide for himself before God what things in their life may fall into those categories.

Now, he does. We're pretty much done here because Paul then thanks them for the gift. But certainly something that needs to be said is that he's thanking them for the gift, he says, and it really helped me.

But it's not like I really am mindful of my needs, although I was in need. He says, my neediness doesn't really impact me that much because I've learned whatever state I'm in to be content. Happiness is not based on circumstances.

Happiness is based on being content with what you have. Many people who are not happy think if I just add this, if I could just acquire this possession, if I could just add this relationship to my life, if I could just have this title, this job, then I'd be happier. You know, they think happiness comes from adding to the life.

It actually comes from subtracting things and being content with whatever you have. Content, the word content in the Greek means enough. It's the same word that sometimes says enough that you have in your mind enough, even if it's not much.

False is I know how to be abound, meaning I have a lot. I know how to be a base to be hungry. I mean, I'm content.

I have enough in my mind. My answer is whatever I have, it's enough. I'm not striving for something more to make me happier.

It's enough. What I have is enough. In fact, it's interesting.

He said, I know how to abound. I know to be a base. And here's a little see Paul knew how to have money and be wealthy.

We should. He wasn't against that. But if you look and say.

In verse 18, he says, indeed, I have all and abound. So he's in prison, but he's abounding. That's abounding.

Being in a third world jail is abounding. I wonder what being a base looks like. When Paul says I can be abounding, I can be full or I can be a base and be hungry.

We think, well, I guess we get to have the we get to be the ones who abound because we're Americans, we're comfortable. We got a lot. But that's OK.

Paul said he knew how to do that and we can do that, too. Right. But he said, what does abounding look at? Well, I'm in prison and I abound right now.

You guys sent me some help. I'm abounding. So he doesn't speak of circumstances more comfortable than that as one of the choices he has.

Sometimes he has less. Now, Edgar, who wrote this 30th chapter of Proverbs, was the opposite of Paul. Edgar said, give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only those things sufficient for lest I be poor and feel and take the name of the Lord, my God, and they are less by the rich and forget the Lord.

In other words, he said, I don't want to be trusted with riches or with poverty because I'm not sure I'm spiritually able to really handle either one. If I'm too poor, I may not be able to handle it. If I'm too rich, spiritually speaking, I may not be able to handle it.

So just give me the even road without too many challenges. Paul says, I can be rich or poor, it doesn't matter. It's not going to challenge me.

I can do all things through Christ's grace. I've learned the secret of being content. And contentment is a choice.

Your circumstances are usually not a choice in many respects. Many things in your circumstances are not in your control. But your contentment is.

To be content in a job that isn't as glorious or high paying as one you think you could have had if you got another to be content in a marriage. That's not everything you wish it was or in a church, frankly, that isn't as perfect as you'd like it to be or in standard living. That's less than what you'd like to be.

Can you just choose it? Being to say it's enough, I've got more than I need. Paul said to Timothy in first Timothy chapter six, having food and clothing, we will with these things be content. That's a choice.

If I have food and clothes, I choose to be content with that and nothing more. Now, Paul didn't always have only those things, but sometimes he had that and less. In first Corinthians four said we're naked and we're hungry.

He didn't even have food and clothing. He says, you know, that's that's the calling he had. But it doesn't matter as long as he's alive and in the will of God, he's content.

So that's where he stands. He says, though, even though I don't care about money that much, I've got food and I'm blessed that you sent money. It will help.

But he says more than that, I'm rejoicing in the fruit that will abound to your account because you sent the money. That's what he said, because he he's saying that the fruit of Paul's labors will abound to their account because they financed it. As far as God is concerned, God will put that on their account.

They paid for it. Paul Paul ministered. There is fruit in his ministry, but they were his underwriters.

And so they get the dividends from God. They're counted as the ones who own that fruit, as it were, to bounce to their account. So these are some of the things he says to them.

We didn't do verse by verse, but we covered most of the major passages and we're now out of time. Right there.