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Philippians 3 - 4



Philippians - Steve Gregg

In this insightful examination of Philippians 3-4, Steve Gregg warns against a complexified Christianity and highlights the necessity of finding true righteousness in Christ rather than in fleshly observances of the law. He emphasizes the need to press toward a high calling in God and pursue a perfect heart toward Him, even while acknowledging that perfection is not attained in this life. Gregg also addresses the issue of worry and encourages listeners to find peace in resigning oneself to the Lord's control, using examples like George Mueller to inspire faith and trust in God's provision.

Transcript

Alright, we'll turn to Philippians chapter 3, where he begins by saying, Finally, which makes it sound like he's about to close the epistle, but he's only really halfway through. But this is his last point he really wants to stress. He's been stressing the need for humility and unity, but now he wants to stress another point, namely, rejoice in the Lord.

And this, he stresses, on to the end of the epistle. We see it in chapter 4 again, verse 4. He says, Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice. Now, to understand what he is trying to get across when he says rejoice in the Lord, I think we need to read the first four verses, and then we can see what he really is meaning by rejoice in the Lord.

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is saying, Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision, or the cutters. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

For though I might also have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh that he might trust in the flesh, I more than he goes on to his natural qualifications, if righteousness had to do with outward qualifications, he certainly would qualify. He has circumcision, he has Jewish blood, he has a pharisaical background, he has all the things that under the law might be considered to be a plus, which he eventually says that all those things that were a plus to him, he counted them as a minus. In fact, he counted them worse than minus, he counted them as dumb.

He put them away from him as them making no contribution to his relationship with God at all. He had to totally throw that whole background out in order to follow Christ. Now, what he's saying then, when he says rejoice in the Lord, he's stressing that in the Lord.

Sometimes when we read this, we might think that his stress here is rejoice in the Lord. I mean, you're in the Lord, but as you are in the Lord, you should be rejoicing. But that's not what he's stressing.

He's stressing what we need to be rejoicing in, that is, boasting in, putting our confidence in, namely in the Lord, not in the flesh. And by the flesh he would mean fleshly legal observance, observance of fleshly laws for righteousness, as the Jews were. Now, he's definitely warning them here against those who would complexify Christianity.

He mentions the concision, which would be the circumcision party, a contentious term for them, the cutters. They're probably the same people he's talking about when he speaks of dogs and evil workers in the same verse. In chapter 3, verse 2, he says, beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

It would seem like these three terms all apply to the same group, although it's ironic because the term dogs is the term that the Jews used of the Gentiles, but Paul, a Jew, speaking to Gentiles and speaking about Jews, called them dogs, showing that it's not being either Jewish or Gentile that would make a person unclean, because a dog was an unclean animal, but whether a person was preaching the right gospel or not. And even a Jew who perverted the gospel would be an unclean person, a dog. But the point here is he's warning them against those who would bring Judaistic flavor into the Christian religion.

And he says, you should be rejoicing not in the flesh, not in the things that I have to glory in the flesh, he says in verse 4, though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinks that he has whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. By that he means religious credentials as a Jew.

If anyone thinks that fleshly observance of the law can put them ahead with God, I certainly would have something to boast about that, but he's stating very clearly, I don't. Even though I have those things I could boast, and I don't boast because I see them as nothing. I don't rejoice in those things.

I don't rejoice in the flesh. I rejoice in the Lord. That is to say, the Lord Jesus, what he has done for me, is a finished work.

I don't add to it by my observance of the law. I just rejoice in what he's done for me. I'm rejoicing in him, not in any concept that I have of myself perfecting a legal righteousness before God.

That again is pointed out in verse 3 where he says, We are the circumcision, meaning

we, the church, he's writing to Gentiles, including them, although they weren't physically circumcised, he means we are the true spiritual circumcision, which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus. Remember he started out saying rejoice in the Lord. He says we who rejoice in Christ Jesus are not putting confidence in the flesh.

So to him, rejoicing in Christ Jesus is the opposite of putting confidence in the flesh or rejoicing in fleshly claims to religiosity or to righteousness. He points out that if anyone were to claim or to rejoice in the flesh, I could, but I don't because I see it very clearly that it is nothing to rejoice about. It was a hindrance, if anything.

So when he stresses here in verse 1, he says, finally rejoice in the Lord. He's not just saying be happy. He's not just saying cheer up, as we might think.

What he's saying is put your rejoicing in the Lord, in him, in what he has done for you, who he is to you, in the fact that he has become your salvation, not in any other concept of obtaining righteousness before God. He's not rejoicing in something else but rejoicing in the Lord. So when he stresses it again in chapter 4, verse 1 says rejoice in the Lord always.

Again I say rejoice. Then he's stressing the joy part, but here he's talking about the in the Lord part. He says it's safe for him to say this.

In other words, it's dangerous. They are facing a certain danger. If he didn't remind them to rejoice in the Lord, they might run into trouble.

Now, if he was just telling them to be happy, it's hard to know how that would keep them from serious danger. I mean, sadness is not a serious danger. But if he's warning them against rejoicing in legalism, then of course this exhortation would clearly be something that would be seen for their safety.

And that's what I believe we should understand this exhortation as. Rejoice in the Lord as opposed to rejoice in the law, or in legalism, or in works righteousness. Rejoice in the finished work that Jesus has done, and in the fact that he has become unto us righteous.

He says it's not burdensome or grievous for me to repeat this. I know I've said this before, but I'll say it again. I don't get tired of saying it, as long as I know that it is safe for you to hear it repeated.

You need to hear it again and again. And the more you hear it, the safer it is, so that you don't forget it. And look out for those people who will pervert it.

Those gods, those evil workers, those perverts who will come and try to bring you into circumcision. He says, we are the true circumcision, you included. You Gentiles who aren't circumcised physically are nonetheless circumcised in heart.

And that is clear by the fact that you worship God in the spirit, that is, not in the flesh. He is a true Jew who has gone inwardly, and that is circumcision which is of the spirit, not of the flesh. So that is what he's saying here.

And now he goes off on this to warn them further against entertaining any notion that the Jewish law adds sanctity to a Christian mind. He points out how that he had as much sanctity as a person could have through the Jewish law before he was a Christian. But becoming a Christian showed him how empty all of it was for righteousness, and he casts it off as a contemptible thing.

When he says, I count it as done, we have another four-letter word that has the same meaning that we would utter in a church. But it has the same thought, you know. Basically saying, I utterly can have contempt for these things now because I see how they blinded me to the true righteousness in Christ.

He says, let me list some of the things I could boast of in the flesh as far as that goes. There's circumcised on the eighth day, verse 5, of the son of Israel, of the child of Benjamin, and Hebrew of Hebrews as touching the law of Pharisee concerning the zeal persecuting the church. That's considered a plus as a Jew.

Touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless. You couldn't fault me. If we were to be made righteous by the law, you could scrutinize my life using the law as a fine-tooth comb, and you wouldn't find anything there that didn't belong there.

I was blameless as concerning the righteousness of the Christian law. When he points out he was circumcised on the eighth day, he's making it clear that he's a true-born Jew. He was not a Gentile who had become a Jew.

He was circumcised the eighth day, not sometime later in his life as a Proselyte. He was the stalker of Israel. That means that his parents also were not Proselytes.

His parents, his lineage, was Israeli, Jewish. He says, I was of the tribe of Benjamin. This was something of a boast also.

The tribe of Benjamin was sort of an elite little tribe. They were the smallest of the tribes right from the beginning. In the book of Numbers, when the defenses of the tribes were taken, the tribe of Benjamin had the smallest number.

But not only that, they became smaller in the days of the judges when they went to war with their countrymen. The whole tribe of Benjamin was reduced to 400 men at one point when there were hundreds of thousands of the others. So it was rather a small elite tribe.

And they had the distinction, of course, of being the tribe that produced the first king of Israel. Saul, the son of Kish, was of the tribe of Benjamin. And Paul himself, the apostle,

had been named after this great Benjamite, the foreign Saul of Tarsus.

His name, his parents gave him, obviously, he was named after the most famous person of their tribe in their history, the first king of Israel. So the Benjamites had that distinction, that they produced the first king for Israel, even though he turned out to be a bad one. They also had a further distinction, that they were the only tribe of the 11 that remained faithful to Judah and to the house of David.

When the rebellion took place under Jeroboam, ten tribes departed, one tribe stayed with Judah, and that was Benjamin. And that, of course, turned out to be, you know, they were eventually vindicated when God brought the Jews back from Babylon. It was clear that they had stayed on the right side.

They had picked the winning team. They had stayed loyal to the house of David, and God was on David's side. So the Benjamites could sort of boast of that against the other tribes.

Furthermore, the piece of real estate that the temple in Jerusalem sat on belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. Even though it was the capital of the nation of Judah, it was really on the parkland that was given by Joshua to Benjamin. So the Benjamites really, if any Jew had heard them boast about it, the tribe of Benjamin would be the one tribe to be of.

There were very few of the tribe of Benjamin. They were the ones that produced the first king of Israel. They were the ones who stayed true to David when all the others defected.

They were the ones who even owned the real estate that the temple was on. And that's the tribe policy. If it really makes any difference, if Jewish blood and Jewish birth mean anything, I have plenty to boast about.

I was not only a Jewish stock, I was even of the tribe of Benjamin. Not many Jews could say that. Some could, but when he says I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, he is stressing that he was not one of these compromising Hellenistic Jews that had given in to the Greek culture in the intertestamental period when Alexander tried to Hellenize or Grecianize the whole empire, including Jerusalem.

Many of the Jews compromised and were called Hellenists. And they prevailed as a group even in the New Testament times. The thought that I wasn't a Hellenistic Jew, I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

That is, my family did not compromise with Hellenization. Also, he says, as touching the law of Pharisee, which of course stresses he was of the strictest, most conservative order with respect to keeping the law. Now, what he's saying in all this is I'm as Jewish as they come.

I'm as kosher as the bagels. You can't get any more righteous, as far as the flesh is

concerned, under Jewish thought than I was in all these things. My zeal for the law, my zeal for Judaism was so great, in fact, that I even persecuted the church.

There weren't many of us doing that in those days, he said. And I was one of the pioneers of church persecution. There weren't many like me.

In Galatians, he actually says that he excelled all of his contemporaries in zeal for the law. So, he must have been an extraordinary Jew, even before he was a Christian. Now, he says in verse 7, but what things were gained to me, meaning all of these seeming fleshly advantages, from the Jews' point of view, these would be a gain to him.

He says, those which were gained to me, those I counted lots for Christ. I counted them a deficiency rather than a plus. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but done.

That I may win Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that I may know him in the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead. Which is where he begins to, his discussion turns a corner here and brings another thought in. Up to this point, what he's done, in chapter 2 he was exhorting the Philippians to humility and he gave an exhortation in the form of giving the example of Christ, how Jesus humbled himself.

Now in chapter 3 he's exhorting them to stay true to their unperverted gospel of rejoicing only in the righteousness of Christ, not in legalism, and he gives the example of himself. As he gave Jesus as the example of humility in chapter 2, for their exhortation and for their example. So he gives his own case as an example in chapter 3 of the need to put a low, extremely low value on legalism or on Jewish sort of righteousness of the law.

So he shows that while I had it all, I threw it all away. I not only threw it away, but I counted it as dung. Something to be trampled upon, that we might not think of it as, if we think of dung, of course we think of what dogs leave around on the ground, but really probably dung is more properly fertilizer in his thought.

That which is just used to fertilize the soil and people just walk on it, that's all it's good for. So he says, I put those things away so that I won't have a righteousness which is of the law, in verse 9. So that I won't have my own righteousness which is of the law, because that is inadequate. But that righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, which he describes of course in Galatians and Romans carefully, a different righteousness, a justification is imputed.

Because you put your faith in the finished work of Christ rather than in an unfinished work which requires you to do certain works to make up the difference. And he calls that the righteousness which is of God by faith. That is, it's not a righteousness of man, which man generates from his own work.

It's a righteousness that comes from God and is only imputed to us by faith. And he says he did this so that he might know Christ. Now, he implied that he couldn't know Christ without putting these things away.

If he continued to have any of those things in which he might put a false trust of religiosity, it would hinder him from really knowing Christ. And knowing Christ involved him not only in putting away any confidence in the flesh, but doing so in such a blatant and public manner as to bring the reproach from his Jewish friends. He put all those things behind and he incurred the wrath and the persecution of other Jews for doing so, so that he entered into the fellowship of Christ's suffering.

Because the Jews persecuted Christ, they also persecuted Paul. So he says, I'm experiencing a oneness with Christ in suffering the same thing he suffered. But he said, that's what's needed for me to know him.

Knowing him intimately requires that I involve myself in walking through the same path he walked. And that path includes suffering at the hands of my countrymen, just as it did for Jesus. But it also, of course, involves the power of the resurrection, which is seen not only in the resurrection, but also the power of the resurrection.

We experience death in ourselves, and we bear that in our body, the dying of Lord Jesus, so that the life of Jesus, not only when we rise from the dead in the last day, but just as we die for self more and more, there's a new life power that is given to us, and that is the resurrection life of Christ. So that we experience the power of his resurrection, which has power over sin, power over death, power over our own corrupt nature. This power, this resurrection power that he's knowing as he walks the path of suffering, and he undergoes the dying of Christ daily, but at the same time he's partaking of the resurrection power of Christ.

This is all part of the fellowship of Christ that he seeks, and for which he's put away all other benefits and all other claims to glory. In verse 11 he says, If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead. Now, this is his great hope, is to be involved in the resurrection of the just.

Now, he doesn't say resurrection, which makes it almost sound like only some people are going to be raised from the dead. You know, like, I want to be raised from the dead, so I really have to put away all this stuff and follow Jesus in the fellowship of his suffering, in the power of his resurrection, so that I can be raised from the dead. But in fact, we know from Paul's teaching elsewhere, notably his testimony in Acts, that he believes in the

resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

So he's not just saying, I'm doing this so that I will experience resurrection, but so that I will experience resurrection with those who are left. Because everyone, in a sense, is going to be resurrected. Jesus said that, and Paul said that.

Jesus said, Marvel not this, for the hour is coming when all the dead in the grave shall hear the voice and shall come forth. Some unto the resurrection of life, and some unto the resurrection of damnation. So, all will be resurrected at the same time.

Some will be resurrected to eternal life, some to damnation. The resurrection he's hoping to reach, of course, is the resurrection of life. Now, you might say, why would Paul feel as though there's any question about this? The way he speaks almost makes it sound like maybe he's not going to make it.

Maybe he needs to keep pressing in. And that was, he's not necessarily saying that. He could be just talking about the initial sacrifice he had to make just to become a Christian, of the righteous.

Because all these things he laid down, he laid down so that he might know Jesus instead of knowing Moses. He could be one of Jesus' disciples, instead of Moses. At the same time, we know from the way he spoke at the end of 1 Corinthians 9, that he saw the Christian life as a struggle, a race that had to be run, so that having preached the gospel to others, and so it does seem as though, even though Paul knew he was saved, he considered that he had to continue to walk the path of Christ in order to attain unto the resurrection of the just.

Because he actually says about it in verse 12, "...not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." Now, he says, not as though I had already attained. I don't think what he's saying there is that he has not yet earned the right to be resurrected, as though that was something to be earned. What he's saying is, I am not yet what I shall be when I'm resurrected.

Perfection comes at the time of the resurrection. Ultimate perfection is not here yet. I have, of course, laid everything aside so that I might pursue after Christ and know him, but having done so doesn't mean I'm as perfect as I'm going to be.

I haven't yet attained absolute perfection, but I'm still going in that direction. He says, "...but I follow after, if that I may apprehend, that for which also I am apprehended of Jesus Christ." Some Christians are so disinterested in perfection that they'll make any excuse not to have it. I'm amazed how most Christians... You talk about sin, and most Christians sit around without much shock.

You start talking about being perfect, and there's a bunch of Christians who raise every objection you can think of. Nobody's perfect. Well, okay, nobody's perfect.

Paul said he himself wasn't perfect. He said, since nobody's perfect, I'm just going to give up the idea of being perfect? No, he said, because I'm not perfect, I press on toward it. Okay, I can agree I'm not perfect yet, but that's all the reason more to press toward it, not to make excuses for not being perfect, but to see what I'm going to do to be more perfect.

And the mentality of Paul is absolutely the one that a Christian must have, to say, well, nobody's perfect, so I'm okay even though I'm not perfect, is the way people talk. Not because a person must be absolutely perfect to be a Christian. Of course, that's not true.

But a person who doesn't want to be like Jesus, but just wants fine insurance, wants to go to heaven instead of going to hell, without any cost to himself, has apparently not experienced the grace of repentance or the grace of conversion, because conversion means change. And a person who changes by the power of the Spirit, of course, that's only the best argument I can think of, to keep pressing on. It's no argument to sit still.

He says, I'm not perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend of Christ Jesus. He uses a play on words. He says, Christ apprehended me first, but now it's up to me to apprehend what he apprehended before, namely, to reach that goal of perfection.

He says, brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgiveness, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press toward the mark of the Christ Jesus. Now, he says, though I haven't yet apprehended this perfection, what I have done is I set it before me.

The perfection of Christ is what I put before me. My legalistic perfection, my blamelessness according to Christ, I put no priority on that whatsoever. I put it behind me as something that had no value, so I'd still be around, but I put it back there, and I look toward my new goal, which is just to follow Jesus.

And even though I've not reached perfection, I don't turn to the law in order to find it, or to advance in it. In fact, if anything, turning to the law hinders me. I have to put that legally, because it will hinder me from reaching perfection.

And so, this I do. I put behind me all this legal righteousness that I had so much confidence in in the past, and I put before me Christ, that I might know him. And that's how I press toward the mark, toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Now, he says an interesting thing in verse 15. He says, Let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, be less minded. Now, the funny thing about that is, he just said a few verses earlier, he wasn't perfect.

And I says, Those of us who are perfect should be less minded. And this very clearly shows that perfection exists on different levels. There is, of course, absolute perfection, which Jesus is now described as absolutely perfect.

And we could say he was morally perfect all of his life, and yet we know from Hebrews that he was perfected through the things that he suffered. Twice in Hebrews we're told that Jesus was made perfect. Yet, even before he was made perfect through suffering, he was perfect in many respects.

He had a perfect heart toward God, he was wholly committed to God. Remember, the word perfect means complete. And in many cases, when the Bible uses the word perfect, in the absolute sense, it just means perfect in the sense that, though my heart is totally the Lord's, I still am.

And I do not exhibit in my behavior the absolute perfection, which will characterize me after the resurrection. After the resurrection, there will be no more of any of that. I'll be as perfect.

Nonetheless, in the meantime, I can have a perfect heart. I can be wholly the Lord's, and in that sense, I'm perfect in his sight. Just as the Bible says that concerning the Lord is God, except in the case with Uriah's wife, meaning Bathsheba.

Now, there are many things David did that were less than the perfection of Christ. Yet, it is said that he was perfect before God, except for the incident with Bathsheba, which suggests that God saw his heart was wholly the Lord's. And the lack of self-control or lack of even understanding of the will of God, which exhibited faults in his life, those things God turned a blind eye to, because he saw the man's heart was wholly the Lord's, that is, completely devoted to God.

And there's another sense of this. And that might be what Paul is speaking of in the second sense here. In the first sense, when he says, I'm not perfect, but there are people who are mature Christians.

Remember what he said in 1 Corinthians 2-6, after he said to the immature Corinthians, I crucify you, and I didn't use words, because I didn't want your face arrested with them. Then he says in 1 Corinthians 2-6, but to the perfect, meaning to the mature Christians, we do speak the wisdom of God in the mystery. So there are people that he calls perfect people, mature Christians.

And that's probably what he actually means in this case, in verse 15, Philippians 3-15, those of us who are perfect. Or it could either mean mature Christians, or it could mean just people whose hearts are wholly the Lord's. Now, there's a difference, because, of course, a person whose heart can be wholly the Lord's, it's not as though they have to go through some lengthy period of, you know, that doesn't make you mature.

Maturity is seen in your growth in wisdom, and in the fruit of the Spirit, and in self-control, and things like that, which you don't have the moment you're converted. But you might be wholly the Lord's nonetheless, and therefore have a perfect heart, a form.

So there's really three senses in which perfection can be seen.

The first is, second is, being a spiritually mature person, a mature Christian. And that has to do with having the fruit of the Spirit, having matured in your life, having grown and risen in your life, so that your character is a lot like that of Christ. But absolute perfection is the third sense, in which we only experience that at the resurrection, when we'll be in every way like Christ.

So, those of us who are perfect could just, anyway, those who are perfect, you should let them be blessed minds, let's have this attitude. I think if you're hard and tolerant of the Lord, He says, you'll, that is, you'll see that you're not really perfect, but you'll keep pressing on toward absolute perfection, because that's what you'll be striving for. If you're hard and tolerant of the Lord, obviously, you will be molded in the fact that your behavior isn't always glorifying the God.

You know, even in some of you. Now, what he's saying is, if you're hard and holy to the Lord, you might not immediately agree in principle and in context with everything I say, but God will reveal it to you. If your heart is holy to Him, He will be faithful to open your eyes to things that you don't yet see.

Having your heart perfect before God doesn't mean your doctrine's perfect. A person might be holy to both God and yet have some funny doctrines. But Paul is not so concerned whether they agree in context with Him on everything, so much as whether their heart is holy to the Lord.

And if they are holy to the Lord, then he'll just trust that God will show them whatever it is they don't see clearly now in His time. And verse 15 says, Nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Now, that means, whatever level of perfection we've reached at this point, let's not fall back in any sense.

Let's walk worthy of whatever level of perfection God has brought us to already. And walk by the same rule, meaning, of course, the rule of pressing on toward the mark. So, whether you're highly mature, or whether you're really a babe in Christ, because whatever you've attained so far, don't go backward.

Let's walk at least according to that which God has brought in us, and move toward more perfection than yet. Brethren, be followers together of me. That is, imitate my attitudes and my behavior.

And mark them which walk, so as ye have had us for an example. That is, if there are Christians in the church there who walk the same way we walk, take special note of them, and imitate them. It says that also in Hebrews 13.7. Where it says, Honor those who are over you in the Lord.

And it's Marshall who, who taught the word of God, says, whose faith follows. That is, imitate their, their example. But then he talks about how we shouldn't walk, because he said there are some around who are really bad examples of how to walk.

In verse 18, For many walk, of whom I have told you before often, and now I'll tell you even we think, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. This is certainly not a reference to the pagans. Paul would hardly have to tell the Christians that there are pagans who have wrong values.

That's the most commonly known thing. He's either talking about Christians, who are worldly, or very probably, Judaizers. Judaizers, that, they, they're enemies of the cross of Christ.

Remember what he said in Galatians? He says, if I have preached circumcision, then why am I still persecuted? Because then they, implying that the cross of Christ, as Paul preached it, spoke of such a complete salvation, that circumcision, and he says, if I still preach circumcision, I wouldn't be offending people, but I wouldn't be preaching it. There's something contrary between these two. And he's saying that these people he's talking about are enemies of the cross, and they're minding earthly things.

That is, physical circumcision, physical Jewishness. They're enemies of the cross. Their message, they hate the message of the cross, because the message of the cross says, no more legalism.

No more law. And I think he's talking here about the Judaizers, that they need to watch out for. As I said, you hardly have to warn them about pagans.

They would already see the immense difference, since the pagans were totally in idolatry and fornication. It's hardly necessary for them to tell them that some people walk that way. They see it every day all around them.

But what he's warning them about is that not everyone who appears to be a Christian is. There are some you need to be warned about. They're not walking according to this rule that we're talking about here, that is, putting legalism behind them and pressing on toward the mark of Christ.

They haven't walked according to it. They're walking differently. They're walking in a way that brings grief to God and to me.

I've told you about them many times. I'm telling you about it again. They don't appreciate the gospel of the cross.

They're enemies of that. Their end is destruction. They're not saved in other words.

Their glory is in their shame. They're glorying in the law, but they don't realize that that's real. So what they glory in is what they're... And they mind earthly things.

Now, he doesn't say worldly things, meaning sex, drugs, booze, and all those kind of things, but earthly things, but things that only have to do with fleshly religiosity, circumcision primarily, and keeping other laws that have to do with earthly, you know, physical religion. And he says about that, for our conversation is in heaven. Now, the word conversation is better translated citizenship.

Sometimes the word conversation with King James should be rendered behavior, but in this case, the Greek word is actually citizenship. And it's perhaps an especially worthy comment to make to this group since they were in Philippi, where they were proud of their Roman citizenship. Not that the church was proud of it, but the Philippian people in general, at least the pagan Philippians were, proud of their Roman citizenship, and that's what they even threw Paul out of there for, because he was teaching them things that they said violated their Roman citizenship.

And I say to the church, don't put any stress on your Roman citizenship. Our citizenship is in heaven, which means, of course, we are citizens of another kingdom. And not that the kingdom of God is confined to heaven and not on earth, but simply that our king is in heaven, and our loyalty is to a king who is in heaven, and that's what he's stressing here.

Our citizenship is the capital of the kingdom, happens to be in heaven at the moment, that's where the throne is, although it extends to the earth as well. From whence, that is from heaven, we also look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. And speaking of our body as vile, I don't think Paul is speaking of it as morally vile, because that's more a Greek idea than a Christian idea, that the physical body is evil.

He may be thinking more in terms of how contemptible his body was. Remember how sickly he was, how repugnant it was to look upon him. He was thinking perhaps that his physical body was going to be changed for a glorious body.

His body is looked at as a vile, unattractive, grotesque thing. And he says when Jesus comes, he's going to change that body into the image of his glorious body, namely the resurrection body. Our resurrected bodies will be like the resurrected body of Christ.

Now he says that this will be accomplished according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things himself. Sean brought up this suggestion one time a few days ago, that this might mean that the glorious body, the degree of glory, I think this is what he was saying, it's an interesting thought, that the degree of glory of our resurrection bodies will be determined according to the degree to which God has been able to subdue

us, everything in us, all the parts of our life to himself. That is to the degree that ourselves have been submitted to him, that he has by his working brought every part of our nature into subjection to himself, that that would have some determination of the way our glorious body is.

Now I haven't historically seen it that way. As far as I know, not knowing Greek, I couldn't say that that is or isn't what Paul means. It's an interesting thought.

And it could be true for all I know. I've always just seen it as though he was saying that he will exhibit the same power that he exhibits in bringing the whole world into subjection to Christ. This same power will be the power that brings about the resurrection of our bodies.

So that as we see the gospel going forth and subduing people from every nation, kingdom, and tongue to Christ, we see the power of God exhibited, the gospel of the power of God under salvation. We see God's power manifested, and that should give us confidence that he's also able to raise us from the dead, because the same power that is actively subduing all things to himself is working in us and will be the power by which he will fashion our bodies differently. So I don't know which way of seeing that is the right way, but both thoughts are interesting and worth considering.

Chapter 4, And therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved, in long form, my joy in my crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. Note the terms of endearment in this. He twice calls them dearly beloved in the same verse.

Long form, his joy in his crown. This church would appear to have been his favorite church. I mean, just judging by the superlatives that he uses to speak of them and how much joy and how much affection he has for them.

He speaks much more about his longing after this church than about any other church we read about. So thy beseech you, Odius, and beseech Spinticus, that they be of the same mind in the Lord, that is, agree with each other over their, over whatever their problem is. And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, which I said might be Miss Luke, whoever Paul considered his yoke-fellow in the church, he doesn't name them, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other of my fellow laborers whose names are in the book of life.

So he's basically telling whoever is there that he calls his fellow yoke-fellow. I frankly think it probably is Luke because it's, it's, it's, a yoke-fellow like Paul would have to be of an apostolic rank rather than, say, one of the elders in the church or just an evangelist or something. If he was under, if he was pulling the same load Paul was, if he was under the same yoke Paul was, and was like Paul's assistant, which is what a yoke-fellow would suggest, then it would be someone who was more of an apostolic rank rather than just a pastor or a prophet or an elder in the church.

It was probably someone like Luke that is addressed here telling him, no, I can't be there because I'm in jail, but you help these people, help them to get it together, get their relationships together. And he says in verse four, Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say rejoice.

Now, it might seem redundant for him to say that, but you know what I think he's doing? He has already said rejoice in the Lord in chapter three with a certain emphasis to that, namely, rejoice in the Lord, don't rejoice in your own righteousness. But now he says it again, rejoice in the Lord always, and now I want to emphasize the other part, the rejoice part. Again I say rejoice.

Okay, I've been talking about how important it is that you're rejoicing being in the Lord, but now we've established that. Let's go talk about the other part. You can rejoice.

There's a cause for rejoicing in the Lord. I say rejoice. Let your moderation be known to all men.

Moderation would be something like self-control. The Lord is at hand. Now, in saying the Lord is at hand, it might sound like Paul thought Jesus was going to come back immediately, but I don't think that's what he's saying.

That's more the way we would perhaps view it from our point of view, because we think in those terms more, maybe, than Paul. But the Lord is at hand simply means he's nearby. That is, he's watching.

He's close. It's like what James says in chapter 5, or chapter 4, whichever it was, where he says the judge is at the door. It's chapter 5. James 5 and verse 9 says, Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned.

Behold, the judge standeth before the door, implying God is close by. Jesus is walking on. He's scrutinizing.

He's the judge. Don't do anything that you wouldn't do in front of the judge, because he's there. He's at the door.

And in saying the Lord is at hand, simply means the Lord is close by. He's scrutinizing our behavior, and therefore we need to let our moderation be evident. Be careful for nothing.

Now, the word careful should be translated worry or anxious. And this is an important expectation, because anxiety or worry is one of the most common sins among Christians. And it's easy to see why we would have it, in a sense, because there are many things that, many uncertainties, many things that would create insecurity in our lives today, just with nuclear threat and financial instability, economic instability, you know, problems in raising children or whatever.

There's all kinds of things people find to worry about. And I think it is the natural state of a worldly mind to worry, because we know we can't control the future, therefore there's a possibility the future might go away we wouldn't want it to, beyond our control. Therefore, some people just have a natural fear of that happening.

But that fear, worry, is essentially sin, because it is not trusting God, and whatever is not at stake is sin. You cannot trust God and worry at the same time. And it's very clear that Paul, throughout all this, is saying, I'm not worried, I'm just trusting God, I'm content, I'm resigned.

That's what I want you to be. Don't worry about a thing. Here's what you do instead of worry.

You know, it's one thing to tell people don't worry, another thing to give them practical alternatives. Paul doesn't just say don't worry, he tells you what to do instead of worry. And what he gives is an antidote to worry.

He says, be careful for nothing, or don't worry about a thing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which is the opposite of worry, the peace of God in your heart is obviously the opposite of anxiety, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. So your heart will be kept, and your mind will be kept through the peace of God.

Now, I think it was yesterday, yeah, it was yesterday you were studying Colossians, and there's a passage there that says, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, which the word rule there means to play the umpire, or moderate, like moderate between two sides. And the peace of God, or the peace of Christ, spoken of by Paul in Colossians, is seen as having a role in our divine guidance. If there's two decisions to make, I need to get a look at my heart and say, which one do I really have the peace of God about? When I think about this course of action, do I have the peace of God in it? Or is there some anxiety? Or if I think of this other course of action, is there a peace about that? It says in Isaiah, you should be led forth with peace.

And I believe that peace is the factor in leading us forth, in leading us. God uses peace as an umpire to make the decision between two alternatives. Do I feel at peace about this? If not, I shouldn't move that direction, because the peace of God is to be given the rule, or the role of umpire in my decision-making in my heart.

But it is, how do I acquire the peace of God? Simply by resigning myself to the Lord. You see, I might feel a false peace. I may not really have the peace of God.

I might have a false peace that's based on my assumption that things are going to go better if I do this than if I do that. You know, for instance, if God called me to go carry

smuggled Bibles into Russia, but I'd really rather go and live in Orange County and be a Christian rock and roll star and get my name in lines or something like that. If I'm not really submitted to God, I might have a lot more peace about going down and being a rock and roll star and raking in the money and being a household word and so forth, rather than going somewhere that's dangerous.

But that I have more peace about one than the other doesn't mean it's the peace of God. I have to have the actual peace of God to make that decision. And when it gets down to it, to tell you the truth, I would really have more peace about going and smuggling Bibles into Russia than the other alternative, just because when I consider what God would really want and I submit myself to God, my thinking to God, His peace makes me think all differently about it.

Now, Paul's saying here, instead of worrying about something, just submit it to God through prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, and just make your request on Him and then leave it with Him, and then the peace of God will be the natural result. Instead of worrying, you'll be at peace. You'll have left your burden at His feet.

It says in 1 Peter 5.8, casting all your cares on Him, for He cares for you. The word cares means words, and you can actually translate that, casting all your worries on Him, for He worries for you. Some of you have heard the tapes that I have on this kind of worry and how to overcome it, and the little illustration that I gave at the beginning about the man who... How many of you have heard that tape? Anyway, there's this guy who's known as a worrier, and his friend who knew him as a worrier saw him one day, and he wasn't worried at all, and he said, that's all, I don't ever worry anymore, I haven't worried for weeks.

He says, oh, no secret at all, I just hired this fellow who comes into my house and worries for me all day long. I said, well, that must be tremendous, and how much does he charge? And the guy says, oh, \$10,000 a week. And the fellow says, well, how in the world can you afford that? He says, I don't know, that's his worry.

So you really have nothing to worry about at all. So he's taking on the job. Well, of course, essentially that's what 1 Peter 5.8 is saying.

It's like the Graham slogan used to be, leave the driving to us, you know. Jesus said, leave the worrying to me. Cast all your worries on him, for he'll worry for you.

Let him do the worrying for you. He cares for you. Don't be careful for anything.

Just lay on Jesus by prayer and supplication. And by prayer doesn't mean just utter the words, but actually give it to him, and thank him for it, because with thanksgiving, thank him that he's taken it into his hands, make your request unto God, and walk away from it, realizing that the love has been given to him. Instead of, in some cases, we go

through form prayers, and we carry our load to Jesus, and we pray, and we say, Lord, I give you my, you know, please take care of this, but we walk away and carry the load with us anyway, because we don't want to leave it there.

We leave it there by faith. We say, okay, God, I gave it to you. I now resign.

But this situation is entirely in your hands. You can do whatever you want with it. Then the peace of God comes on me, and then I can make my decisions and so forth.

The peace of God will keep my heart and mind through Jesus Christ. Verse 8 is a well-known verse. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.

This verse, or if only one verse, immediately condemns most of the entertainment that we might see in the world, because we are told to fill our minds with those things that are virtuous, praiseworthy, true and honest and pure, and you cannot fill your mind with two things at once. You can only really be thinking about one thing at a time. Therefore, you cannot be thinking about things that are pure and also filling your mind, and you can only fill your mind with things that are not pure, not praiseworthy, and not virtuous.

And this rules out a tremendous amount of reading material and entertainment options. If we are to fill our minds with that which is good and pure, we obviously cannot be at the same time putting other things in there. We are told to feed our minds with that which is wholesome and good, and while that might seem like a spoilsport thing to do, obviously, it's the most fulfilling thing to do.

I mean, if your mind is full of good thoughts and positive things, you're going to be a happier person than otherwise. And Paul just tells you, basically, take control of your thoughts and determine what you feed them. Bring consciously to mind things that are pure and honest.

Things naturally come to mind frequently that are not pure. Impure thoughts come to us as temptations from the enemy, but we deliberately need to supplant them with thoughts that are pure and put out of our minds things that are impure and replace them with something that is pure. Now, you might say, well, how do you do that specifically? And I've thought about that for many years myself, and I believe the best way to do that is to think of Jesus.

He is the one who is pure, and He is the one who is honest, and He is the one who is true, and He is lovely and of good report, and praiseworthy and virtuous. So I've always figured, well, if you just think about Jesus, think about His character. And if that's difficult, you can always, of course, see some of His character in some other Christians.

There are certain Christians that when I fall into mind, it just fills my mind with this particular virtue in which they're eminent. Like Paul said, I thank God for every remembrance of you. There are certain Christians that when I think of them, the memory of them is just fragrant with holiness and with purity and with Christ's character.

It's always possible to call these people to mind. There's times when the most corrupt or impure thought may come into my mind, but it's easily driven away if I call to mind someone that is eminent in virtue and in purity whom I have desired to imitate, whom I have desired to be like. I don't know why it is it just has a certain power of eradicating impurity.

Like if I'm tempted to worry, to think of George Mueller, to think specifically about George Mueller really helps a lot. If I'm tempted with impurity, frequently if I think about Les Pantin or some other brother, Jim Soderberg, who I believe have extremely pure minds, or if they don't, it's certainly a big secret. They seem extremely pure in the area of relations with women and so forth.

It seems like I just know so many brothers, either that I've read about in the past or that I know personally, that their memory is all of these things. It's pure, it's lovely, it's virtuous. And when I fill my mind with that, of course, I'm really filling my mind with Christ because that's the life of Christ being made manifest in their mortal bodies.

That's the character of Christ we're talking about, made visible in his people. And to do that is, of course, the way to battle and overcome unwholesome thought life, to fill your mind with these things. He says, those things which ye have both learned and received and heard and seen in me do.

Now, in a sense, Paul's enforcing what I just said. He's saying, you've seen me, you've heard what I do. Imitate that.

It's like I said, there are pure things and virtuous things that you've seen in me and that you've heard about in me. Follow that example. And the God of peace shall be with you.

Interesting, earlier in verse 7 he said, and the peace of God shall keep you. Now he says, now the God of peace shall be with you. You'll not only have the peace of God, but you'll have the God of peace as well.

He won't just give you peace as a separate quantity to himself, but he gives you peace because he gives you himself. He's the God of peace. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me hath flourished again.

This refers to the money they sent. And this is really probably what occasion they're writing in this letter. He saves this for last.

Wherein you were all so careful that you lacked opportunity. Now he's saying, your

concern for me has become evident again by this gift you've sent. It really made me rejoice to see it.

He says, not that I really suspected that you had forgotten me. I realized that you had me on your heart beat, because they were a poor church. He says, not that I speak in respect of want or lack, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am in, therein to be content.

I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound. Everywhere, in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

Notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with me in my affliction. Communicate means share. Now ye Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, for even in the temple of life, that ye sent one to begin unto my necessity.

Not because I desire gifts, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. So he's saying, the reason I rejoice to see this gift, is not that I'm really so poor at the moment, not that I really lack things, but because I just love to see that you're going to get a reward from the Lord. I seek fruit abound on your behalf, on your account.

It really makes me see that the church is doing well and that God is going to honor and bless the church. And that's really the cause of rejoice. And of course, it's always nice to get the gift too.

Getting a gift doesn't make me rejoice in itself, because I can rejoice whether I have a gift or not. I've learned how to be abased and abound, whether I'm rich or poor. Just my life of Christ has instructed me and taught me these lessons that I can resign to anything.

So it's not because you gave me money, and I needed money to make me happy, that I'm rejoicing, but I'm rejoicing because of the fruit, he says, that will abound on your behalf because of this. And of course, the whole lesson that he learned of being content and being resigned to the will of God, it applies to other circumstances besides finances. I believe we just need to learn contentment in general, in suffering or in comfort.

Some people are never comfortable when they're suffering. Others, they feel like if they're too comfortable, maybe there's something wrong. Well, I've learned either way.

I can be poor or I can be rich. It doesn't really make a big difference, because when I'm rich, the riches don't get a hold of me. When I'm poor, the poverty doesn't get a hold of me.

In chapter 30 of Proverbs, which was written by a man named Edgar, there's an interesting thing. I'll show it to you. Proverbs 2, 30, verses 7 through 9 were written by a

guy named, or the whole chapter was written by a guy named Edgar, who his father was.

His father was Jacob. But in verse 7, he said, 2 things have I required of thee. Deny me them not before I die.

Remove them from me. Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food convenient for me.

Don't make me poor or rich. I'll just be satisfied to be middle class, in other words. Lest I be poor and deny thee and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal and take the name of my God in vain.

That is, don't let me be rich, because I might just forget about you, God, and put myself in riches and deny thee. On the other hand, don't let me be poor, because I might be tempted to steal, and then I really defile your name. So don't let me be either poor or rich, because I can't handle either.

Both of them are a threat to my soul, he's saying. I might deny the Lord in one case, or defile his name in the other case by stealing. Now, you see what he's saying is, the reason I want to be middle class is I can't handle poverty or riches.

It will destroy me spiritually. Paul is the opposite. Paul says, I can handle both.

I can be rich or I can be poor. Neither of these will stumble me. Neither of these will destroy me, because my heart's on the Lord, I'm going to be content in Jesus.

So if I'm poor, I'm not going to go out and steal, I'll just put my trust in Jesus. If I'm rich, I'm not going to forget the Lord. Everything I have is the Lord's anyway, I'm going to use it for Him.

So I can handle either situation. I agree with the Old Testament, but Paul in the New Testament had that grace that he could handle any circumstance of poverty or riches. Although he very seldom had riches, that was seldom put to the test.

Verse 18, that I have all and abound, and I am full, and have received, which is an odor of the sweet smell of sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. Now this means that the offering, the money they spent, is like a sacrifice to God. And we talked about the priesthood.