

Day 1: Christ centered contentment begins with a Christ centered view of life

For the next two weeks we will take a devotional tour through Paul's letter to the Philippians. Dr. Luke, in Acts 16, describes the founding of the church at Philippi, which occurred in approx. 49-50 A.D. Paul had a vision where a man of Macedonia called him to "come over to Macedonia and helps us" (16:9). Paul then travelled to the region of Macedonia, which included Philippi, a leading city in the region named for Phillip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. The city was an important Roman Colony and an important seaport on the banks of the Aegean Sea. The citizens were proud of their Roman citizenship as evidenced in their accusations toward Paul based upon their Roman identity and Paul's appeal as a Roman citizen himself (see Acts 16:24, 37). In Acts 16:13, Paul sought a place to preach by locating a "place of prayer," which suggests that a limited number of Jews lived in the city as the normal place of Paul's initial evangelistic efforts, a synagogue, was apparently not available. The first church members were a female entrepreneur, Lydia, a seller of purple, and her household (Acts 16:14-15) and a slave girl (Acts 16:16-18). The last founding member mentioned are a Roman jailer and his family (Acts 16:29-34). The church was diverse cadre of mostly middle-class Roman citizens and eventually some Jewish converts.

Most scholars believe that Paul wrote this letter while imprisoned on house arrest in Rome where he spent two years. Acts 28 provides an account of his time in Rome and how Paul survived his prison experience at his own expense. The Philippians sent a gracious gift to Paul through Epaphroditus, a Philippian church member (Phil. 2:25-27). The purpose for the letter is to encourage the Church and to thank them for their supplying his physical needs (Phil. 4:18).

Read: [Philippians 1:1-2](#)

A. Overview of Philippians: Radical contentment regardless of circumstance

Paul's overarching theme in this letter is Christ centered contentment evidenced by Christ glorifying joy regardless of circumstances. To understand this letter, we must understand the distinction between worldly happiness, which depends upon satisfaction in circumstances, and Christian happiness or joy, which depends upon satisfaction in Jesus Christ. As Elisabeth Elliot once said, "The secret of contentment is Christ in me, not me in a different set of circumstances." Paul wrote this encouraging letter to teach the Philippians the secret of contentment.

Contentment is generally characterized by feelings of peace and joy, it is a general sense of wellbeing. The Greek word Paul used for contentment in Chapter 4 is a compound word that means fully satisfied independent of external circumstances. As Paul explained in each and every circumstance, in both hardship and prosperity, he learned contentment (4:11). Circumstances vary, but contentment anchored in Christ is a constant. Contentment is about understanding that we can do all things that Christ has given us to do with the strength Christ provides (4:13) and it is about having confidence that God will supply each and every one of our needs in Christ Jesus (4:19). Contentment is about getting by with little even when we could have more. Contentment comes when we stand back and say to ourselves, "I don't need this to be happy." No matter what "this" is because we are dependent on Christ alone for contentment.

B. We have a new identify as servants of Christ and saints in Christ (vs. 1).

As we take this two week tour through Paul's letter to the Philippians we will extract the principles Paul teaches to live a contented life in Christ regardless of the circumstance. We begin this journey with vss. 1 and 2.

Paul begins this letter by teaching Christ centered contentment begins with a Christ centered view of life. Paul identifies himself and Timothy as a bondservants (slave in Greek) of Christ. Paul's identity in Christ was the lens through which he viewed his entire life. Paul was many things (see his resume in 3:4-11), but he introduced himself as a slave of Christ.

Paul appeals to the church not as proud Roman citizens, but as "saints in Christ"- the identity that really matters. Paul later reminds them that they are citizens of heaven (Phil. 1:27; 3:20). The Philippians, like Paul had a resume. However, Paul encourages them to view their identity with an "in Christ" focus.

C. We have grace and peace through God the Father and the Lord Jesus (vs. 2).

Paul can extend grace and peace to the church at Philippi principally because of their identity as saints in Christ. We are only saints because of God's grace. We will never find peace in our bank account, our job, our spouse or anyone or anything – only in God alone can we experience true peace.

The takeaway from Philippians 1:1-2: View your life through the lens of your position in Christ as a servant and a saint in Christ. Permanent contentment begins

first with your view of your life. How do you introduce yourself? Start today by thinking of yourself first and foremost as a sinner saved by grace, one who is able to experience peace and contentment with God because you are in Christ.

Close your time with God in prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank you for saving me. Thank you for the identity I have in Christ and because of Christ. I pray for wisdom to view my life in this world as "in Christ" alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Day 2: Christ centered contentment flows from a Christ centered prayer life

Prayer produces confidence in our life, which leads to contentment. If you pray for those you love, your church, your country, etc., you can have confidence that God has got the particular circumstance and He will take care of the rest. No need to worry or feel out of sorts about your circumstances – give them to God. We see in today's passage Paul's heartfelt prayer for a people that he loved. We will look at the petitions for principles to live by as well as clues on how to strengthen our prayer life.

Read: [Philippians 1:3-11](#)

This passage begins today with Paul's offer of a prayer of thanksgiving (vss. 3-8) and ends the passage with a beautiful intercessory prayer for the Philippian church (vss. 9-11).

A. Principles of a contented prayer life (3-11)

1. Pray with thanksgiving (vs. 3). Thanksgiving should be an element in every prayer.

2. Pray for others (vs. 3). Paul remembered the Philippians. Maybe you need a prayer list to help remember. Maybe you assign prayer to days, like missionary Monday. Perhaps there are things you pray daily or urgently. Whatever the method, remember others.

3. Pray always (vs. 4). Paul doesn't mean that he spends every waking hour praying for the Philippian Christians, but rather that such prayers are a regular part of his prayer life.

4. Pray with joy. Paul not only prays for the Philippians, but he does so always and with joy. Don't check the box as mere duty. You are talking with the God of the universe who hears your prayer. In order to effectively pray for others with joy, you must have a relationship. Paul focuses on the partnership the Philippians have had with Paul over the years (vs. 5). Build connections, love others, and pray for them with joy.

5. Pray confidently (vs. 6). Believe in God for your prayers. Use the promises of the Bible as you pray. Here is a good one – God finishes what he starts (1:6).

6. Pray with love (vss. 7-8). Paul has the Philippians in his heart, and he has affection for them in Christ, he longs for their fellowship.

7. Pray specifically (vss. 9-11). Paul lifts specific requests to God for the Philippians. Our specific prayers should likewise focus on God's best for others. The Philippians were suffering saints and Paul knew it would get worse. Paul did not pray for relief, rather, he prayed that their love would grow. Paul prayed that they would approve of the excellent things in Christ, and that they would be filled with the fruit of righteousness despite their circumstance. As an example, when you pray for God to heal someone, also pray that they would grow in love, knowledge, and discernment as they trust God through the difficult time.

B. Partnership in Christ (vss. 3-11)

Paul focuses on the ministry bonds among the Philippians as unified partakers of grace. They shared a fellowship in the Gospel. They were partners with Paul in his defense of the Gospel and confirmation of the Gospel. Notice the importance of giving to the Church and supporting missionaries. In context, the good work in vs 6 for which Paul is thanking God is the church's partnership in the gospel (vs. 3-5, 7-8). Where we spend our money and our time tells us all we need to know about our priorities in life and is an indicator of whether Christ has changed our heart. We also can partner with others through prayer, service work, or any number of creative ways. The important principle is to be part of what God is doing around you – join in and make that work an integral part of your life. As a result, your love and affection for those you are joined with will grow. Also, you will be less focused on yourself and your current circumstance, which fosters contentment.

We have a confidence in Christ that allows us to express risky love for one another because our security is in Christ alone who works in us until the end – the day of Christ (vs. 6, 10, 11). God will finish the work he started in each believer (vs. 6). The work of Christ creates in us a love abounding with knowledge and discernment (vs 9a) – a love that will take risks. The fruit of righteousness in our lives is the evidence that Christ is working in us (vs. 9b -11).

The takeaway from Phil. 1:3-11 is that we will experience contentment when we rest our full confidence in God through Christ:

1. Confidence brings joyful contentment when we fix our attention on being thankful for all we have in Christ.
2. Confidence brings joyful contentment when we trust God with our life and the lives of those we love – let God be sovereign over your circumstances and don't worry about them any longer.
3. Confidence brings joyful contentment when focus on our partnership with other believers in service to Christ. Go and serve in whatever way you can, physically, prayerfully, financially; just do it! You will be rewarded.

Close your time with God by personalizing vs. 9-11 as a prayer: *Heavenly Father, I pray that a risk taking love would abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment, that I may prove what is excellent and be pure and blameless for the day that I will stand before Jesus. God, fill me with the fruit of righteousness that comes from Jesus in me so that I may have a life of lasting purpose – to bring You praise and glory! In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Day 3: To live is Christ and to die is gain

Paul's perspective on his life while imprisoned serves as an example of the perspective that each of us must have as we face life on life's terms. George Whitfield, leader of the First Great Awakening in America, was a founder, along with John and Charles Wesley, of the Methodist church. Whitfield had a theological disagreement with John Wesley and left the Methodist Church rather than see it divided over competing allegiances. Whitfield's friends urged him to take back his position and warned that his decision to leave would lead to his work and name being forgotten. He famously said, "My name? Let the name of Whitfield perish if only the name of Christ be glorified." His singular passion was to make much of the name of Christ, like John the Baptist, he proclaimed that he must decrease so that Jesus' ministry would increase (see John 3:30).

Read: [Philippians 1:12-26](#)

A. Paul focused on the Gospel regardless of personal hardship (vs. 12-14).

Paul's was consumed with Christ. The ministry Christ entrusted to Paul was his goal in life. That ministry was the proclamation of the Gospel. Paul says his imprisonment advanced the Gospel. One would expect Paul to declare his mission to proclaim the Gospel was hindered by his chains (Acts 28:11-14 explains the circumstance of his current imprisonment). However, Paul takes a different view – the Gospel is actually advanced by his chains in two ways: 1) Unbelievers in the Praetorian Guard and Ceaser's household heard the Gospel (Paul closes the letter with a greeting from "Ceaser's household (4:22)) and 2) An evangelistic explosion occurred because of Paul's imprisonment through emboldened believers having no fear to preach the Gospel

B. Paul focused on the Gospel regardless of petty rivalries (Vss. 15-18).

Paul rejoiced in the advance of the Gospel rather than his own interests. Paul identifies that some preach from envy and selfish ambition and still others do so out of a personal rivalry. Important to note that the content of the Gospel is not at question, Paul in Phil. 3:2 calls those who twist the scripture dogs and evildoers. He rejoiced only when the truth was preached regardless of motive, but he recognized that a false Gospel is no Gospel at all.

C. Paul focused on the Gospel regardless of his personal preferences (Vss. 19-26).

Paul's overarching perspective of his entire life is to proclaim Christ and strengthen the church – by life or death. Paul actually rejoiced in his unknown future because of his confident security in God. He was hopeful regardless of uncertainties. Paul was concerned with the ultimate salvation of his soul not the outcome of his imprisonment. Paul learned to approach life with a long view, an eternal perspective. Paul rejoiced in the certainty of salvation rather than the possibility that he may or may not get out of prison. Vs. 21 presents the theme of this section: to live is Christ and die is gain. Paul saw death as gain because he knew he would be with Christ (vs. 23). When Paul said to live is Christ, he meant what he wrote in Gal. 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live . . . "

Three takeaways from Phil. 1:12-26:

1. When Christ is the central factor of our life, we gain a new confidence. No matter how negative our current circumstances, we can confidently trust that the God of the universe is working all things for good, for those that love him and are called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28). Don't miss the last phrase – we must love Him and live for His purpose – in other words, we must make Christ the central factor of our lives to have this confidence.

2. When Christ is the central factor of our life, we lose our preoccupation with what other's think about us. How freeing it is not to worry what other's think. In vs. 15-18, Paul had no concern about the ill motives of others because the Gospel was proclaimed – his mission in life. When our focus is on Jesus and his express will for our lives, what others say or do means very little.

3. When Christ is the central factor of our life, we will have no fear of the future. When we can say that to live is Christ and to die is gain, we have nothing to fear. Death means unity with Christ and life means living for Christ here on Earth.

Close your time with God with prayer: *Heavenly Father, help me to live like Paul, help me to have Jesus Christ as my singular purpose in life so that I may truly say, like Paul, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. I pray for a faith that is confident in you regardless of circumstances, that I may be free of what other's think of me, and that I have complete trust that you have my tomorrow and forever in your sovereign hands. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Day 4: Let your conduct match your confession

We have a popular idiom in American culture: "Walk the walk, talk the talk." The expression implies that a person's actions and words should match up, when they don't that person is a hypocrite or a phony. Phoniness of all adults was the very thing that irked teenage cynic Holden Caulfield, protagonist of J.D. Salinger's seminal work *A Catcher in the Rye*. The book identifies the many ways people are shallow, superficial, fake, and inauthentic in their daily lives. Caulfield becomes so pessimistic at phoniness that he convinces himself that it is pointless to follow societal rules and norms. He could not reconcile the perceived phoniness of adults and the rules of society to which adults paid mere lip service. When we as Christians proclaim Christ while the pattern of our life does not match our profession, the world will not see any value in our Gospel because of our witness. Like Caulfield's rejection of societal rules and norms, those that perceive our faith as inauthentic may reject the Lord we say we love but do not follow from the heart.

Read: [Philippians 1:27-30](#)

Today's devotion focuses Paul's command to walk in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Paul provides the Philippians a command to follow, then a purpose for that command, and ends with the reason for the command.

A. The Command: Walk in a Manner Worthy of the Gospel (1:27a)

Paul commanded the Philippians, in 1:27-30, to walk in a manner worthy of the Gospel standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel - not fearful of anything. Did you catch the command - walk in a manner worthy of the Gospel. The word "manner" in the Greek is the same word translated as citizenship in Phil. 3:20. We are to live like citizens of our heavenly homeland. There is a great contentment in that, as we suffer hard times on Earth, we understand that we look forward to a heavenly city whose designer and builder is God (Heb. 11:10). When Paul says we are to walk in a manner worthy, he means that the standard, the measuring rod, of our conduct is the Gospel (*see* Eph. 4:1). The Gospel is the gold standard for our life in Christ. Does the way you live your life promote the Gospel of Jesus to a lost and dying world?

B. The Purpose of the Command: Unity in Christ (1:27b-28)

Paul identified as a servant of Christ in Phil. 1:1, which in the Greek literally means slave. Romans 10:9 says "If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord . . . you will be saved." As a Christian, by confessing Jesus is Lord, you are necessarily confessing the antithesis, "Jesus I am your slave." When there is continuity between our confession as Christ's slave and our conduct, we will walk in a manner worthy of the Gospel.

Your reputation precedes you. Notice Paul says, "so that whether I come and see you or am absent" (vs. 27b) immediately after the command to walk worthy of the Gospel of Christ. St. Francis of Assisi famously said, "Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words." Never forget that we preach a message with our reputation, the question is what message we will preach.

The true test of walking in a manner worthy is evident in vs. 27: unity with our Christian brothers and sisters in boldly spreading of the Gospel to the world. Notice the words Paul uses in vs. 27: "stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind,

striving together for the faith of the Gospel.” We are united as brothers and sisters in one Spirit, the Holy Spirit. One mind indicates our singular purpose. Striving together has the idea of working side by side for the cause of the Gospel of Christ.

Unity is so critical that Paul says that this unity will remove fear from our worldly opponents (vs. 28a), lets the world know that they are without Christ and headed for destruction (vs. 28b), and provides the world and each of us a sign of our salvation (vs. 28c). As Americans, we often compartmentalize and treat our church life as just another distinct area from our home life or our work life. Paul is calling us to take our commitment to each other to a radical level – to live like we would die without each other. Dedicate yourself to loving your brothers and sisters in Christ because it truly is a matter of life and death. I used to attend a church that had a sign prominently posted as you departed the parking lot, it said, “you are now entering the mission field.” We need each other so that we can enter the world, as the mission field, ready to stand firm for the sake of the Gospel.

C. The Reason for the Command: The Gift of Faith and Suffering (1:29-30)

Faith is a wonderful gift from God that enables us to receive God’s gracious gift of salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). Faith sustains us through hard times. But, we don’t think of suffering as a gift. Suffering is the common bond between Christ and Christians from the beginning of the church until now. Suffering works like the refiner’s fire to burn the impurities out of our life and provides us confidence that our faith is genuine (1 Peter 1:6-7). As evident in 1 Peter 1, faith and suffering go hand and hand because suffering is the fertile ground where faith grows.

Four takeaways from these three verses that should provide us a great deal of peace, contentment, and hope in Christ:

1. We are never alone in this world – we have each other (vs 27)
2. We are promised victory in the end, so maintain an eternal perspective on the present hard times (vs 28)
3. When we encounter hard times, we can know that hard times are God’s plan for our good and His glory (vs 29, *see also* Phil. 1:6, 1 Pet. 3:17)
4. When we encounter hard times, we identify with Christ and suffering saints since the beginning of the church, in other words, we are in good company (vs 30).

Close your time with God with prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank you for making me a citizen of heaven. Strengthen my faith to always focus on my heavenly homeland*

and live like a pilgrim here on Earth. Thank you for including me in a legacy of faith with godly examples that extends through the throughout all time. Thank you that I have my brothers and sisters in Christ today so that we have each other to stand with during the hard times. I praise you for always working for my good and your glory, I pray for faith to understand these truths when I am tempted to worry. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 5: Humility Produces Harmony

The Welsh preacher from the last century, Martin Lloyd-Jones said this about humility

There's only one way to be humble, and that is to look into the face of Jesus Christ; you cannot be anything else when you see him. That is the only way. Humility is not something you can create within yourself; rather, you look at him, you realize who he is and what he has done, and you are humbled. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Living Water*, 710 (Crossway 2009).

Read: [Philippians 2:1-4](#)

A. Blessings of Harmony with Christ (2:1)

Paul begins this section with several hypotheses of a singular conditional (If/then) statement: If there is any consolation in Christ; if any comfort of love [in Christ]; if any fellowship with the [Holy] Spirit; if any affection and mercy [in Christ] " The tacit presumption in each of these hypotheses is that we experience unity with Christ on the basis of salvation.

Once a person is saved from God's wrath, that person enjoys the benefit of consolation, loving comfort, tenderness and compassion with and through Jesus, and fellowship with the indwelt Holy Spirit. The key to these blessings is "in Christ." In the *Reason for God*, Tim Keller wrote that "The Christian Gospel is that I am so flawed that Jesus had to die for me, yet I am so loved and valued that Jesus was glad to die for me. This leads to deep humility and deep confidence at the same time. It undermines both swaggering and snivelling."

We cannot begin to have any of these blessings until we, born as objects of God's wrath, receive salvation based on faith alone, through Christ alone, because of God's grace alone. If you are not enjoying the blessings in verse 1, pause, seek God through Christ, repent, and trust in and submit to him as Lord.

B. Basis for Paul's Happiness is Harmony (2:2a)

"Then make my joy complete" is the conclusion to Paul's conditional hypotheses stated in verse 1. Like-mindedness, harmony, and unity among the Philippian believers makes Paul's joy full and complete. Throughout this letter Paul expresses joy and contentment because Christ is the central factor of his life and his joy full focus is squarely on others.

What makes a person happy, really happy, tells just about everything about a person's heart – their desires, loves, appetites, etc. What makes you happy? What brings you joy? Think about that for a moment. Is your happiness and joy connected in some way to other people, to your brothers and sisters in Christ? Is your happiness and joy fulfilled in the greater work God is doing in your community and beyond? Are you part of the work God is doing in your community and beyond? Ask yourself these questions as a heart diagnostic.

C. Become One within the Harmony of the Church (2:2b)

Apparently, differences of opinion on nonessential issues in the church at Philippi created disunity. Paul is not concerned about nonessential issues, rather Paul commands unity in matters essential to the faith and to the mission and testimony of the church. Saint Augustine said it best, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things love."

In view of the tremendous blessings that the Philippians received in Christ (vs. 1), Paul urged the church to be united in a holy harmony. Think of the sound of a symphony playing in perfect harmony, it is difficult to identify the sound of anyone instrument, but together they produce a beautiful harmonious sound distinct from the sound of any one instrument. Paul calls for this same type of harmony within the church in four ways: (i) like-mindedness (same attitudes, concerns, intentions), (ii) same love, (iii) one accord in the same fight (*see Phil. 1:27*), and (iv) one mind. As Bob Marley sang, "One Love, one heart . . . Give thanks and praise to the Lord and I will feel all right."

Paul uses this idea of "one mind" in the demonstration of harmony above (and in 1:27). Our mind determines our motives and our motives determine conduct. Harmony in the collective church begins in the heart of each individual believer.

D. Be humble to achieve Harmony within the Church (2:3-4)

Instead of being envious and contentious (cf. Phil. 1:16), or following empty ambitions, Paul calls the members of the church to humility. Humility is the quintessential characteristic of Jesus Christ and his true followers. Paul gives clear and practical advice on how to live with humility towards others. Firstly, Paul advised believers to regard one another as more important than themselves, and, secondly, Paul advised believers to not only look out for one's own personal interests but also the interests of others.

Selfishness, envy, jealousy, contentiousness, conceit, pride, and arrogance have no place in the life of a Christian. Selfishness and self-centeredness are the exact opposite of the character we see displayed in Jesus. To follow Jesus Christ means to "die to self," die to our selfish and sinful passions and desires (see Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20, 5:24). Dying to self for the sake of Christ ironically leads to joy and satisfaction as demonstrated by Paul throughout his personal examples in this letter and, specifically, in Phil. 2:2. Part of our journey towards spiritual maturity is that we continue to live for God and for other people, especially believers, instead of following empty and meaningless selfish ambitions.

True humility begins with Christ. If you have a relationship with Jesus, put Paul's straightforward advice into practice immediately. Through the strength Christ provides and through the power of the indwelt Spirit, treat your brothers and sisters in Christ as more important than yourself. From your heart, express and demonstrate a real interest in the interests and welfare of others.

Three takeaways from Phil. 2:1-4:

1. Never let selfish ambition or vain conceit be your motive (2:3)
2. Always regard others more important than yourself (2:3)
3. Don't limit your attention to your own personal interests, include others (2:4)

Close your time with God with prayer: *Heavenly Father, I pray for unity and harmony in your Church, the Body of Christ. I pray for a heart check-up to identify where I need to change. I pray you would downgrade my selfish desires, the self-gratifying pleasures that make me happy, and match my heart's desire with your desires, interests, and concerns so I may experience the perennial joy you so freely give. I pray for a humble heart that looks out for others even more than myself. I pray the Holy*

Spirit in me will form and shape me toward a humility that works in concert with other believers to produce harmony in the Church. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 6: What would Jesus Do? (WWJD)

WWJD is a popular saying taken from the 1859 fictional book *In His Steps, What Would Jesus Do?* by Christian Socialist Charles M. Sheldon. The phrase WWJD? is a useful tool to evaluate our attitudes and actions in light of the example of Jesus.

When I was a young Marine stationed in Iwakuni, Japan, I attended a Christian mission in town. I was a shift worker at the time that required my presence every other Sunday on an emergency response team, much like a fireman. I copied the Marine Corps regulation that required leadership to allow Marines to participate in religious activities even during shift work. I carried that regulation, with the pertinent parts highlighted, in my pocket for quick reference for the times my church attendance was challenged. Overtime, I realized that my church attendance led to a bad reputation as I was absent for some of the team's labour. I chose to surrender my right to attend church after considering WWJD? I missed church a lot, but my witness was enhanced. The surrender of my rights for the sake of the team gave me ample opportunity to share my faith. Looking back, I can see that I made the right choice to forgo my own preference for the benefit of the other Marines on my team (see Phil. 2:3).

Read: [Philippians 2:5-11](#)

Paul in Phil 2:1-4 instructs the Philippians to not act from selfish ambition and to practice humility. He gave the Philippians a "for instance" example in Christ. Then, Paul paints a vivid picture of the Jesus's perfect example of humility for us to follow.

A. The Entreaty: Have the Mind of Christ (vs. 5)

Paul tells the Church that each person is to have the mind or attitude of Christ. "Mind" is the same word used by Paul twice in the previous section where he tells them to be like-minded (2:2) and of one mind (2:3). Now he tells the Church what that "mind" is in the example of Jesus who is perfectly free of selfish ambition and empty conceit and full of humility and love.

We observe in this passage the innerworkings of the mind of Christ by his outward example. If you ever want to know if you truly believe the Gospel, examine your conduct. Your conduct reveals your true belief. If you see a disconnect between your conduct and your confession of faith, stop right now, confess to God your disbelief revealed in the way you live your life, and surrender your life to Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

B. The Example: Humility of Jesus (vs. 6-8)

This section is known as the *Kenosis* for the Greek word for empty (Christ emptied himself). Here we see the 5-step process of the descent of Jesus:

1. Jesus emptied himself (made himself of no reputation) (vs. 7). Jesus surrendered the rights and privileges he possessed as God. Jesus was in the form of the eternal God (vs. 6), which means he always existed in and of himself (*e.g.*, *aseity*) and is equal to God (John 1:1, Col. 1:15-19). Important to note here that Jesus never subtracted from his deity, rather he added humanity – Jesus always was and always will be God. Jesus did not count equality with God as something to selfishly exploit.

2. Jesus took the form of a bondservant (vs. 7), one who is subjected to the authority of another– the exact opposite of the form of God (*see* Phil. 1:1).

3. Jesus became a man (vs. 7) to fulfil God's plan of salvation. Jesus became fully man while at the same time being fully God.

4. Jesus humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death (vs. 8). Jesus is the perfect model of the low-minded humility Paul called for in Phil. 2:3-4.

5. Jesus willingly accepted the humiliating and excruciatingly painful death on the cross (vs. 8) and atoned for our sin (Rom. 3:21-26) by becoming a curse for our sakes as the object of God's wrath (Gal. 3:13). As Audrey Assad wrote in the song *Humble*, "He was not too proud to wear our skin or bear our sin."

C. The Effect: Highly exalted by God (vss. 9-11)

Following Christ's humility and sacrifice, God highly exalted Him and bestowed upon Him a name above every name (vs. 9). Every realm will acknowledge and bow at the universal reign of Christ: the realm of God and the angels (heaven), the realm of humanity (on the earth), and the realm of the underworld with the demons and the Devil (under the earth) (vs. 10). And, every tongue will confess Jesus is Lord to God's glory (vs. 11).

The question for each of us is will you, like Jesus, submit to God's authority now or forcefully in judgment? Will you confess Jesus is Lord today or only when forced in the end? God will get the glory either way, as our justifier today or exacting His justice upon us in the future.

Like God highly exalted Jesus, he will reward each of us for submitting to him and serving others in humility. As Solomon wrote, "When a man's ways are pleasing to the Lord, He makes even his enemies be at peace with him." Prov. 16:7).

Four takeaways from Phil. 2:5-11:

1. Reflect upon God's love for you and Jesus' sacrifice for you, especially when times are tough. Remember that our sins were so low, so depraved, that our rescue required Jesus to do all he did to redeem us from sin and death.

2. Don't demand what you think you deserve. Phil. 2:7a tells us that Christ gave up his divine rights and privileges. Yes, you have rights, but let God meet your needs rather than demanding your rights.

3. Look for ways that you can serve. Phil 2:7b teaches that Jesus humbled himself as a bondservant to serve us by dying for our sins. You cannot have the mind of Christ without following Christ's example in serving others.

4. Do what's right even when it's painful. Phil. 2:8 says, Christ "humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." No matter how hard it seems to be, in every circumstance always consider WWJD?

Close your time with God with prayer: *Heavenly Father, I pray for the wisdom, desire, and the strength to follow the perfect example of love and humility Jesus demonstrated by dying for me, while a depraved sinner by birth and by choice. God, show me opportunities to serve others and love others that I may bring you glory by following the example of Jesus. Thank you, Jesus, for redeeming sacrifice and sending your Holy Spirit to dwell within me. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Day 7: Work out your salvation with fear and trembling

What will you do with Christ's example in Phil. 2:5-11. One option is to fake it, put on the façade of humility and love. In 1990, the pop sensation Milli Vanilli had several chart popping hits and won a Grammy Award for their album, "Girl You Know It's True," the only problem is it wasn't true! They lip-synced the whole thing, which led to their disgrace and infamy. Milli Vanilli looked and sounded the part and fooled audiences. The problem with faking it, is that the image without the

content of real faith will eventually be revealed when we must give an account for our life (Phil. 2:9-11, Mt. 12:36). Another option is to keep trying to live up to Christ's example, your resolve may be to just try harder. This approach leads inexorably to exhaustion and burn out. Today's passage presents another option: depend on the enabling strength God provides to live a life pleasing to God. Once we have the mind of Christ in us (Phil. 2:5), Christ like attitudes and actions necessarily follow.

Read: [Philippians 2:12-18](#)

This section begins with "therefore," which begins a call for action based on some previous teaching. That is why we began by looking back at 2:5-11 and considering the perfect example of humility and sacrificial, selfless love we have in Jesus. Importantly, Paul here is not teaching salvation by works. Remember, he is writing to saints in Christ (Phil. 1:1) and addresses his audience here as "my beloved" (vs. 12). This passage tells us how we can follow Christ's example.

A. Resolute work through His enabling power (vss. 12-13)

When Paul says "work out" your salvation he is signaling that we should resolve to carry out our very reason for existence. Physicians have prescribed me antibiotics several times over my life. The doctor always warns to take all the pills as prescribed until the antibiotic is completely gone. I struggle with that. I begin to feel better and I seem to forget to fully exhaust the prescription. We have been prescribed to have the mind of Christ as an antibiotic for selfish ambition and conceit. We must follow the example of Christ all the way through to the end, until we recover and receive our glorified new selves in heaven. The good news is that we don't need to grit our teeth as live in our own strength because God promises that He is at work in us! God supplies the desire for obedience and the power that enables us to live for His good pleasure. His will, not ours, His glory, not ours make life meaningful. It all begins with attitude, our resolve, remember we are to have the mind or attitude in us that was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5).

B. Resolve to shine as lights through proper attitudes and actions (vss. 14-16)

In 2:15, Paul says in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, our lives should be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish. Our lives should shine as lights in the world.

Paul also says to do all things without complaining and arguing (vs. 14). Complaining and arguing create an atmosphere of pessimistic negativism where only the bad side of everything is emphasized. Paul says we are to be blameless and innocent, children of God, without fault (vs. 14), who shine as lights in the world (vs. 15) by holding fast to the word of life (vs. 16). Holding fast means both believing God's Word and following it. No need to shout and scream, just shine by holding fast. Paul encourages the church to "hold fast" so he can rejoice having not labored in vain (16). Paul did not want his life to have any wasted efforts. Don't waste your life on vain pursuits – hold fast to the word of life.

C. Resolve to possess mature joy through a proper focus (vss. 17-18)

Paul says that he is not sure if he will get out of the situation he is in (remember he is on house arrest in Rome), but even if he does not, he is okay, actually more than okay – he is glad and full of joy (17). Paul is consumed with Christ and his central focus is on others. Paul did not complain, he did not argue. He refused to focus on the negative, even refusing to let the possibility of immediate and certain death steal his joy.

We can have the same contentment and joy Paul had in any impossible situation: Paul calls the Philippians to be glad and rejoice with him (vs. 18). Paul is saying that the attitude of Christ, the attitude he learned, can be the attitude of the Philippians, and, by way of application, our attitude. It is a process – that is why vs. 14 says "that you may become blameless" (*emphasis added*). We must press on toward maturity. We must hold fast to the word of life.

Five takeaways from 2:12-18:

1. Conquer your tendency to take charge of your life. A meaningful life in Christ begins with an others' focused, humble attitude through God's enabling strength (vss. 12-13).
2. Stop complaining (vs. 14). No matter what, do not complain about anything, ever. Complaining shows a lack of faith.
3. Stop arguing (vs. 14). No one really wins an argument. The goal is to cause another to capitulate through terse verbal and nonverbal communication. Victory rarely happens, and if it does, there usually is fall out from winning. Take the back seat and trust God for your needs.
4. Stay in the Bible – every day. That is how to follow or hold fast to the word of life (vs. 16).

5. Don't waste your life. As you make choices, and live life, consider whether your day will bring glory to God. Woodrow Kroll hosted the radio program *Back to the Bible*. He ended every program by saying, "Have a good and Godly day for what lasting value is a good, if it is not also a godly day."

Close your time with God with prayer: *Heavenly Father, I pray for a life of meaning, one where I shine as a light in this dark world. Thank you for your promise to work your will in me for your pleasure. I resolve to daily work out my faith, to hold fast to the word of life. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Day 8: Friends are friends forever if the Lord is the Lord of them

We live in a high-tech world that tends to isolate us from the ability to grow deep and meaningful friendships. Self-sufficiency is ingrained into our fabric as Americans, yet we all intuitively know the essential ingredient of other people in our lives. When we forget that, we tend to treat others like inconveniences. Yet, chances are you are where you are today and who you are today because of the people in your life.

We grow in our faith by being part of a discipleship framework. Whether in a one on one relationship or through a home group, we need each other to grow. When times are tough, we long for dear friends for comfort and support. John McCain was shot down over Vietnam in 1967 and spent the next 5 and a half years enduring torture and suffering that few of us could ever imagine at the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" prison. The prisoners formed bonds that lasted the course of their lives. These POWs spent much time in solitary confinement, but even then, they communicated through tapping on the walls. McCain often spoke about how the bond among these brothers provided him the ability to survive. Forty years after his release, McCain said that "the bonds of friendship and love for my fellow prisoners will be the most enduring memory." Do you have friends like that? Friends that are like brothers? How about friends that are integral to your walk with Christ? Today we will see two friends of Paul that fit these molds.

Read: [Philippians 2:19-30](#)

Paul wanted to send Timothy to Philippi (vs. 19). Paul knew he could trust Timothy because he shared the mind of Christ (2:5).

Paul viewed Timothy as:

1. A kindred spirit (vs. 20). Paul described his deep relationship with Timothy as like-minded (literally “same souled” or kindred spirits).

2. Concerned for others (vs. 21). Paul says that Timothy had a genuine concern for the Philippians. Paul recognized that “All seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.” Not Timothy, he was different, he was unique, he was special. Timothy looked out for the interests of others (2:4). Timothy modeled what Paul wrote earlier concerning an unselfish attitude (see Phil. 2:3-4). Compassionate individuals are hard to find.

3. Possessing a servant’s heart (vs. 22). Paul says that the Philippians knew of Timothy’s proven character. They knew Timothy at Philippi because he was with Paul as part of the church plant (see Acts 16:1-40). Timothy served with Paul in the cause of the Gospel as a son serves with his father – what a beautiful picture of discipleship. Paul did not just teach Timothy about Christ, but they served Christ together. Timothy was not playing one-upmanship, he was not trying to make a name, he was serving right alongside Paul, learning as he went. Timothy followed the servant model of Jesus (2:7).

Paul did send Epaphroditus back to Philippi (he probably carried the letter). We see a difference with Paul’s relationship here than with Timothy. Paul and Timothy had a deep kindred bond. Paul describes his relationship with Epaphroditus not by their personal bond, but by his risky service for Christ, without regard for his own life, to bring the gift to Paul from Philippi (vs. 30). Paul says to hold men, like that, men like Epaphroditus, in high esteem (vs. 29).

Paul viewed Epaphroditus as:

1. A brother (vs. 25). While not as close as a kindred spirit, Paul viewed Epaphroditus as a brother, a member of the same family in Christ. They were close, which is why he thought of Epaphroditus dying would bring “sorrow upon sorrow” (vs. 27).

2. A fellow worker and fellow soldier (vs. 25). It is one thing to have friends that are Christians, but it is quite another to give your time and talent to another in unified service to Christ. As the hymn goes, “Onward Christian soldiers! Marching as to war.” Paul was in prison. Like John McCain in an example earlier, Paul needed solid friends, fellow soldiers, more than ever. Epaphroditus was Paul’s man for the moment.

3. As Philippi’s messenger and a minister to Paul’s needs (vs. 25). Epaphroditus got sick to near death once he brought the gift to Paul (vss. 26-27). Epaphroditus

came with a message from Philippi and he came to serve. Even in sickness he was thinking of others, modeling humility (vs. 26).

The takeaway from Phil. 2:19-30 is the importance of friends. Timothy and Epaphroditus demonstrated rather good qualities for a friend. Friends like that hard to come by. Find men and women with these qualities. Demonstrate these qualities and be a friend. To have live changing friends that bring joy takes risks. It starts by being a friend. Demonstrate humility and sacrificial love to other brothers and sisters in Christ. Bond with others in ministry. Hopefully you can find a special friend, one about whom you can say is a kindred spirit or a fellow soldier.

Close your time with God with prayer: *Heavenly Father, I pray for friends in my life where we can grow in humility and love for one another and encourage one another. I pray for the fearless and risky love to be a Timothy or a Epaphroditus to others. I pray together we can model Christ's perfect love. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Day 9: Joy in Jesus is a safeguard against legalism

Out of 1.7 trillion dollars in US currency circulating worldwide, approximately \$103 million are counterfeit. You may have passed a bill to a retailer who uses a special pen to mark the bill to determine whether it is true currency. The pen has iodine, which reacts differently to real currency. Unlike true currency, counterfeit money reacts when a fake bill is tested with a certified banknote detection pen. Similarly, the world is full of phony teaching masquerading as truth. As Christians we don't have a special pen to test counterfeit gospel messages, we have the Word of God. We must test all things, and holdfast to the truth (1 Thess. 5:21).

Read: [Philippians 3:1-3](#)

Today, we will look at Paul's prescription for satisfaction in Jesus and proscription against a counterfeit Gospel.

A. Joy in Jesus is a safety net for satisfaction in Christ alone (vs. 1)

You probably never thought of joy as a safeguard against legalism. If you are rejoicing in the Lord, you are necessarily satisfied and content in Christ. When you buy into the lie that you have to do a bunch of Christian good deeds to make God happy, then you worry about your salvation because you can never be good

enough. Our salvation is based upon the finished work of Christ on the cross, nothing more, nothing less.

For the Philippians, not only were the pressures of daily life enough to threaten their contentment and joy in Christ, there was also the threat of legalists, Judiazers who required certain ceremonial acts to prove that someone was truly saved.

B. Counterfeit gospel puts confidence in the flesh (vs. 2-3)

Notice that the hard words Paul uses here as compared to the seeming acceptance of those who preach the Gospel from selfish motives in Phil. 1:15-17. We can endure flawed teachers, but we cannot endure a flawed Gospel, which is no Gospel at all. Why? Wrong message means wrong eternal destination. That is why Jesus condemned the Pharisees in Matt. 23:15, they made their converts to their way of thinking “twice as much a child of hell” than they were.

Paul said to beware of dogs (vs. 2). Dogs in the ancient world ran wild in packs and proved to be a menacing threat. They were filthy and ate indiscriminately. Ironically, the Judiazers were filthy dogs because they indiscriminately added something to the free gift of God’s grace. Paul warns by telling the Philippians, and us by way of application, to watch out and beware because these dogs will assault you and steal your joy and contentment in Christ.

Paul goes further by saying to beware of “evil workers” (vs. 2). This is in contrast to those that were fellow workers, like Epaphroditus (2:26). Judiazers and legalists taught that salvation was by works, things done outwardly. Their message was to do more, work harder, to witness longer, to pray with greater earnestness. The problem -enough is never enough and the Philippians were left in a continual state of obligation and shame. Legalism will always find you lacking, and it never provides relief.

Finally, Paul calls these Judiazers and legalists the “false circumcision” (vs. 2). True believers in Christ are the true circumcision (see Ezek. 36:26-27; Rom. 2:28-29). Legalism posits the idea that you can do some outward act to be saved – the result, confidence in the flesh. That is why Paul instructs to “have no confidence in the flesh” (vs. 3). What a relief! God’s gift of eternal life is based upon what He has done for us, not what we have done for Him! If you put any confidence in the flesh, you have missed the whole point of grace.

Three takeaways from Phil. 3:1-3:

1. Make much of Christ! Paul said in Phil. 1:20 "Christ will be honored in my body, by life or by death."
2. Put no confidence in the flesh. We must put all confidence in Christ to save and no confidence in salvation by works of the flesh (*see* Phil. 3:4-6).
3. Recognize false teaching and avoid it like the plague. Nothing will rob you of contentment and joy in Christ more than believing doctrinal lie. Dig deep into the Word of God so you can know a counterfeit when you see it.

Close your time with God with prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank you for the joy I have in Christ, knowing that I don't have to do any deed for satisfaction and rest in you. I pray for protection against legalism and any false teaching. I pray for wisdom, based upon your Word, to help me identify false teaching. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Day 10: God's principles of accounting

I am a tax attorney; I spend a lot of time examining the books of businesses to make sure they have properly counted debits (losses) in one column and credits (gains) in another. In America, we have a uniform method of accounting, which makes my job a lot easier. We follow GAAP, or Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. If these principles are not followed, the books will not balance. God follows GAAP as well, but the acronym is slightly different: Gospel Accepted Accounting Principles.

Read: [Philippians 3:4-14](#)

Today, in the example of Paul, we will see the Gospel Accepted Accounting Principles at work.

- A. GAAP principle 1: Move the items from the gain column to the loss column (vss. 4-8)

1. Pedigree (vs. 5). Where to place your pedigree? Move it from the gain column to the loss column. If anyone could be confident in the flesh, confident of who he was, it was Paul (vs. 4). His circumcision was his badge that he was of the chosen people of God (vs. 5). Of the stock of Israel indicates that he stood in a covenant relationship with God (vs. 5). Paul states he is of the tribe of Benjamin (vs.

5). Israel's first king, Saul, for whom Paul was named, came from Benjamin and Benjamin was the only Patriarch born in the holy land (the rest were born in Haran while Jacob was in exile for fear of Esau). He was a Hebrew among Hebrews (vs. 5), meaning he was probably of the aristocracy of Israel.

2. Performance (vss. 5-6). Where to place your performance? Move it from the gain column to the loss column. Paul was a Pharisee with respect to the law, meaning he dedicated his life to learning and keeping the law (vs. 5). Paul was zealous, even a persecutor of the church (vs. 6). Paul oversaw the martyrdom of Stephen (see Acts 7:58). When Paul added it all up in his mind, when compared to others, he was blameless or righteous (vs. 6).

B. GAAP principle 2: Replace the gain column with Christ alone (vss. 7-11)

1. Paul now adds Christ to his gain column (vs. 7). Paul's life was radically changed by Christ (Acts 9). All the things that were gain were now loss. Now the only item in the gain column is Jesus Christ. (vs. 7).

2. Paul then adds being found in Christ to his gain column (vss 8-9). Paul has renounced his spiritual and ethnic privileges for the sake of knowing Christ (vs. 8). He counted all those gains as losses, as trash (vs. 8). Paul is not saying that Earthly pursuits are inherently evil, rather he is saying that in view of the excellencies of Christ, they are worthless. Paul's new purpose is to gain Christ by being found in Him through a righteousness by faith alone and not by any good work (vs. 9).

3. Paul adds a third item to the gain column – that he may know Christ (vs. 10). Paul wanted to enhance his gain column, but not through works of the flesh or law, but in knowing Christ through the power of his resurrection (vs. 10), through the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death (vs. 10), to attain to the resurrection of the dead (vs. 11). Paul wanted to know Christ intimately, in every conceivable way, no matter how painful.

Paul's loss column is everything; his gain column is singular – Jesus.

C. GAAP principle 3: forget the past losses and focus on the gain in Christ (vs. 12-14)

Paul just said that his purpose in life is to gain Christ, be found in Him, and to know Christ in every conceivable way (vss. 8-11). Here he states he has not arrived

(vs. 12). Isn't that great? Even Paul is a work in progress. Paul is determined, he resolves to press on by forgetting what lies behind and focusing on the future eternity with Jesus (vss. 12-13). He presses on toward the upward call in Christ (vs. 14).

Five takeaways from Philippians 3:4-14:

1. Keep your gain column singular. Christ alone. Nothing more.
2. Focus on the true gain of the Gospel – it is not forgiveness, it is not heaven, it is not peace, joy, or contentment. Jesus Christ is the gain. You get Him! You get a relationship with the God of the universe.
3. Three steps forward and two steps backward is progress. If Paul has not arrived, we are not going to either – until Christ returns.
4. Forget the past and press on toward the future. Do the next right thing, use your past to remind you of how it used to be, but don't add up your pedigree or performance.
5. Resolve to follow Christ. Make a plan that focuses on relationship and not a checklist. Get into a one on one discipleship with another person if you don't know where to begin.

Close your time with God with prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank you that I gained you when I was made righteous through faith. I pray that I may know you even more intimately, even if that is painful in this world that I may gain even more. I pray for wisdom to put my accomplishments in perspective, and I pray for the strength to press on every day in my life adventure loving you Jesus! In your name I pray, Amen.*

Day 11: Our citizenship is in heaven

We live in a sad and empty world. As America has become wealthier, more technologically efficient, and more medically advanced, the suicide rates have likewise increased. The CDC reports that from 1999 to 2018, the suicide rate increased 35%. Currently, for every 100,000 people in the U.S. 14 will commit suicide. As Christians we understand that we are born with an insatiable desire for more that will never be satisfied: more wealth, more stuff, more pleasure. The story goes that a reporter asked J.D. Rockefeller, once the wealthiest man in the world, how much was enough. The famous billionaire opined, "just a little bit more." The result, more discontentment and more misery. Henry David Thoreau said it best, "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." Today we will see that Christians are on a different path that begins with our heart and mind.

Read: [Philippians 3:15-4:1](#)

A. Maturing through imitation (3:15-17)

Paul gives two ways for believers to grow toward spiritual maturity, first, is to maintain a long view of life focused on the eternal, and, the second, is to imitate godly examples found in the Bible and found in our lives today.

1. Focus on the eternal (vss. 15-16)

Paul calls upon the mature Philippians to share his pattern of life demonstrated in Phil. 3:4-14, which is what he refers to when he says, “think this way” (vs. 15). Like Paul, believers are to press on towards maturity in Christ by counting their pedigree, things like education and social standing, and performance of good works as worthless. Instead believers must place all their confidence in Christ.

The sign of spiritual maturity is a single-minded focus on Christ. If you are not quite there, that is okay, because, if you are in Christ, God will reveal that to you as you grow (vs. 16). Paul recognized he still had a way to go and would not be perfectly mature in his faith until he was with Jesus. Meanwhile, forget the past and press on. This eternal perspective is what Paul wanted for the Philippians. Remember, God will finish the good work he began in each of us all the way until the day of Christ (Phil. 1:6).

2. Focus on godly examples (vs. 17)

Paul tells the Philippians to imitate him (Phil. 3:4-14) and to keep their eyes focused on those who walk according to the example you have in “us” (vs. 17). The “us” Paul is referring to is Timothy (Phil. 2:19-24), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-30), and the preeminently perfect example of Jesus (Phil. 2:5-11). Paul encourages the Philippians to find mentors who fit this mold and focus on them (*see* “note those who walk” in vs. 17). Believers need mentors and must stay close and imitate their life.

Paul is not talking about merely acting out faith by following these examples. Paul uses the word “mind” in this passage and throughout the letter. He is calling

the church to a way of thinking and acting from the heart revealed in the believer's lifestyle. Lasting change always is from the inside out not the outside in.

B. Misery of the mind set on Earthly things (3:18-19)

Paul tearfully reminds the Philippians that many are enemies of the cross, whose end is destruction (cf. Phil. 1:28), whose god is their belly, and who glory in their shame (vss. 18-19). A person whose god is their belly is a person driven by appetites, the ultimate description of the insatiable desire for more. We can identify glorying in shame as we live in a world that celebrates greed and lavish living. Also, we live in a world that celebrates adultery, fornication, homosexuality, and the full spectrum of alternative lifestyles that follow. We no longer have any shame. Instead, we have affirming self-esteem. Bottom line, the mind of hopeless people is set on earthly things (vs. 19). The world is wholly dedicated to material things. But we have a better way. Guard you mind to the allure of this useless way of living. Set your mind on things above (Col. 3:2).

C. The mindset of a heavenly citizen (3:20-4:1)

Heavenly citizens away from home wait for Jesus (vs. 20-21) and stand firm in the Lord while waiting (4:1).

1. Wait for Jesus

Paul gives Philippians a stark contrast to the mind set on earthly things by reminding them, and us by way of application, that the believer's citizenship is in heaven (vs. 20; cf. Phil. 1:27). We are only passing through as we await our glorious transformation (vs. 21, cf. Heb 11:13-16). To experience the radical contentment and freedom enjoyed by Paul, we must have an eternal perspective as we face life here on earth. We must wait for our savior with hopeful expectation.

2. Stand firm in the Lord

Paul has already said to have confidence in the Lord (1:6), to have the attitude of the Lord (2:5), to rejoice in the Lord (3:1), and now the Philippians are to stand firm in the Lord (4:1). You begin to see that Paul is directing the believer's focus away from circumstances, other people, and ourselves. Paul redirects the believer's focus to the Lord as the source of life, love, confidence, contentment, and joy. Avoid drifting into a worldly way of life, instead stand firm. Life is short,

eternity is long, stand firm. The battle is already won, wait for your ride home, stand firm.

Four takeaways from Phil. 3:15-4:1:

1. Find a mentor. You will follow someone, something, or your own appetites. If you can find a mentor, talk to your pastor, he will gladly help. Remember, "iron sharpens iron . . ." (Prov. 27:17).

2. We live among enemies (Phil 3:18). Don't get drawn into a hopeless life that is driven by appetites and dedicated to material stuff. Careful little eyes what you see, careful little ears what you hear, careful little hands what you do, careful little heart whom you trust, and careful little mind what you think. Words form a children's song that have all the wisdom you will ever need to avoid the enemy.

3. We belong to a heavenly homeland. Never forget that we are in the world and not of it (John 17:16). The temporary trouble here is nothing compared to the glory to come (2 Cor. 4:17).

4. Stand firm in the Lord. Paul has the same advice in many letters, take a look at 1 Cor. 16:13, Gal. 5:1, 1 Thess. 3:8, and 2 Thess. 2:15. Don't let the ebb and flow of life move you (see Eph. 4:14).

Close your time with God with prayer: *Heavenly Father, we live in a fallen world that is growing more corrupt by the day. We know you are soon to return - thank you! Come quickly! Until then, Father, I pray that I would stand firm in you. I pray that you would help me be eternally focused. Father, I pray for courage and dedication to enter into a friendship with another person to help me grow in you. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

Day 12: Can't we all just get along?

In America, we cling to identities. There are many, but most common are a person's national origin, gender, religion, race, politics, or career. Distinct groups form based upon these identifying characteristics. Each identity group has different goals and worldviews and some times they clash. During one such clash due to perceived racial inequality, the LA Riots of 1992, Rodney King, the subject of the riots, called for reconciliation and peace. Mr. King uttered the now idiomatic words, "Can't we all just get along." In other words, members of distinct racial identities should find some way to get along with each other or unite around some common ground.

I am reminded of my time in Marine Corps bootcamp. The first day, the drill instructor informed the entire platoon that racial discrimination was unacceptable. He said from that moment onward that our only color was green, and he assured us that he hated each of us equally. Race, gender, religion, politics, or whatever possible identity did not matter in the Marines – we were all green, a common bond. We had distinct roles to be sure, some Marines are officers and some enlisted with ranks within each class and some were in the infantry while others had different specialties, but we were all green.

The Church enjoys this sort of harmony in Christ, except the unity is divinely fostered by Christ and is glued together by the Holy Spirit. We all have distinct gifts and roles in the church, but we are all saints and slaves of Jesus and we can have perfect unity at the Cross. Also, as Christians, we share one worldview as citizens of heaven (Phil. 1:27, 3:20). Unity is a common theme throughout Philippians. Unity only occurs when we focus on Christ and love and serve each other sacrificially without regard to worldly characteristics. But, we are human and the identity we have in the world still causes conflict even in the church. Today we will see how Paul handled one such conflict among two ladies in the church at Philippi.

Read: [Philippians 4:2-3](#)

A. Common causes of conflict (4:2)

In Phil. 4:1, Paul used very affectionate language, calling the Philippians brothers, those whom he loves, those for whom he longs to see. Paul calls them his joy and his crown. Believers are brothers and sisters in Christ – that is our identity. Most conflicts among believers in the church are the result of some world based identity and expressed in selfishness.

James 4:1-2 says the source of quarrels and conflicts in the church is not between believers; rather, the source is inside each believer. The source is the pleasures that wage war inside each believer. James goes on to provide examples of how the inner war in each believer spills over into conflict among believers: you say that you don't have, so you commit murder; your envious so you fight and quarrel (Jas. 4:2). The desire to please one's self is the source of petty battles, power struggles, silent standoffs, and even lawsuits between believers. The passion to get our way or else drives us towards shameful and selfish actions just like the world. Many conflicts in the local church often begin among strong minded

parishioners or unyielding pastors. Paul zeros in on a particular conflict between two ladies, Euodia and Syntyche (4:2).

B. Common ground in Christ (4:2)

Conflict resolution begins with finding common ground. Paul urges these ladies towards finding harmony without specifically rebuking anyone. Implore (vs. 2) and urge (vs. 3) are the same word in the Greek, meaning that Paul is not assigning fault; rather, his direction is towards finding common ground.

The common ground begins with Christ (Vs. 2 – Paul said to be of the same mind in the Lord). These ladies shared a common Lord, a common mission, and a common destination. Paul is especially eager to see Euodia and Syntyche reconciled because they share a common mission having have labored side by side with him in the Gospel (cf. 1:27, where Paul also encourages unity among those who are “striving side by side”). Also, these ladies share a common destination as both their names are written in the book of life.

C. Common solution through the common bond of a third party (4:3)

Reconciliation often requires third-party intervention, in this case a true companion (vs. 3). The person is unnamed, but he was a friend of both parties – the Greek word for companion is “yoke fellow.” He was commonly yoked with both Euodia and Syntyche. Paul sought a trusted mediator to help the disagreeing parties find a common solution.

Sometimes parties must agree to disagree and put the disagreements aside. In humility, disagreeing parties must focus on the common love for Christ and, by extension, each other. Often hurt feelings may have to be addressed and mutual love may be difficult, but the love of Christ compels reconciliation that ends in mutual love for each other.

If you struggle with unforgiveness, let it go now. Anger and resentment are a poison pill you swallow hoping the other person dies, but ultimately the poison pill kills you! Nothing steals joy and contentment like a bitter heart. Start by telling God how much it hurts and ask for His help to forgive. Maybe you need the help of third party, a counselor or pastor to work through the issues. But, once you forgive, you will no longer rehearse the ugly, offending scenes in your mind. Vengeful

feelings will wane. Peace will come. You cannot experience love, peace, joy, and contentment in Christ and at the same time hold on to anger and resentment.

Three takeaways from Philippians 4:1-2:

1. Conflicts and clashes will continue to occur in your life but use the method Paul provides to identify the root sin and resolve the problem.
2. Not all conflicts indicate a fault by someone. Sometimes individual personalities or unresolved issues require separation. Even Paul and Barnabas had to split ways (Acts 15:26-41). Normally, reconciliation and unity are the answer to conflicts among believers.
3. If a conflict is resolvable but continues, then sinful stubbornness and selfishness may need to be addressed. Perhaps even church discipline (see Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13).

Close your time with God with prayer: *Heavenly Father, I pray for unity in your church and that we would unify around the cross. I pray that if I have a dispute with another believer that I will not grow bitter and follow the steps Paul gives to resolve conflict. I pray for a heart that loves and a spirit that seeks to reconcile. I pray that I would be a forgiving person that loves others like you loved me Jesus. In you mighty name, I pray, Amen.*

Day 13: The recipe for a happy life

Americans spend millions trying to figure out the key to personal happiness. There are now even apps to help us turn our frowns upside down. One problem for Americans is we tend to define happiness in terms of the individual self rather than attainment of social harmony. We tend to think of happiness in terms of internal feelings of pleasure rather than rejoicing in the greater corporate unity and work of the Gospel. American rugged individualism may have provided our country wealth and prominence in the world, but Americans overall are miserable. I hope you are ready for a change. What Paul suggests is risky, but the payout of true happiness is worth the risk. Throughout the letter Paul teaches us to deflate ourselves and seek lowness for the sake of finding harmony with others in Christ.

Read: [Philippians 4:4-9](#)

In this passage, Paul lists several ingredients that go into the recipe for true happiness, a happiness rooted in our identity in Christ and focused on harmony among believers in the local church.

Ingredients of true happiness:

1. Rejoice always (vs. 4)

The command is to rejoice in the Lord always. Paul gives this command with a double emphatic – repeating it twice. The only way to rejoice always is “in the Lord.” Joy that is not dependent upon circumstances. What we have and who we are in Christ is not dependent upon circumstances. It is not even dependent upon us. It depends upon the Lord. Rejoice in him and do it always.

2. Build connections (vs. 5)

We must let our gentleness, or our reasonableness be known to all. We are to emulate Christ in our relationships rather than self-centered interests. You probably won't find many takers to unite around your own selfish interests. We build connections with other believers who share the common interest of Christ and what Jesus is doing in the world through His church.

3. Live every day like it is your last (vs. 5)

The Lord is at hand. His return is imminent and could be at any minute, yet we have a purpose in this life. We are to fulfill that purpose as if the Lord would return today. How would you live if this was your last day? Would you spend your day doing something completely focused on you? Time is short, focus on others and love like Jesus.

4. Worry about nothing (vs. 6)

Paul is calling for radical belief. The more we grow in our faith, the more we are able to trust God with our lives. The greater the trust, the less the anxiety. The first step is to let go and let God.

5. Pray about everything (vss. 6-7)

This command is an extension of not worrying about anything. When worry or anxiety creeps in, and it will, the first thing we must do is pray. Stay at it, pray until you are able to let go of the anxiety. Claim God's promises throughout Scripture. Trust him. Pray about worrisome circumstances in your life.

6. Seek serenity (vs. 7)

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding is an amazing promise. How? Through prayer. We are promised peace to the extent we pray about everything and worry about nothing. The peace of God is how we guard our hearts and minds, which makes verse 8 possible.

7. Think right (vs. 8)

Much could be said about all that Paul gives us to think about. You may consider committing this verse to memory. Paul is saying to be careful what you see, hear, touch, because our minds receive data through our senses. Once data is in your mind, be deliberate about being optimistic – the glass is really half full in Jesus! When we are tempted to think wrongly by worrying, being fearful, angry, or other damaging thoughts, redirect your mind toward the positive. Maybe sing a hymn or worship song. The ill feeling will slip away and contentment will emerge.

8. Surround yourself with Christ like role models (vs. 9)

Paul was a role model, a godly example, for the Philippians. You may not consider your friends or acquaintances as role models, but they are because you cannot help but be influenced by what you see and hear. This calls also for wisdom in selecting those who influence you – look for the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5) or the characteristics found in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-12).

9. Imitate godly examples (vs. 9)

Bad company corrupts good character (1 Cor. 15:33). In other words, you spend time with dogs, you will get fleas. Spend time with people who demonstrate Christ in word and deed.

The takeaway from Philippians 4:4-9 is to put these 9 principles to practice today and you will be happy.

Close your time with God with prayer: *Heavenly Father, we live in a fallen world that is growing more corrupt by the day. We know you are soon to return - thank you! Come quickly! Until then, Father, I pray that I would stand firm in you. I pray that you would help me be eternally focused. Father, I pray for courage and dedication to enter into a friendship with another person to help me grow in you. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

Day 14: The secret of contentment

As humans we are wired to seek satisfaction and happiness. However, we often seek satisfaction in ways that will never deliver permanent contentment – our gut tells us we just want more and more. We seek satisfaction in money, power, reputation, job, the right guy or the right girl, kids, grandkids, sports, entertainment, you name it – but contentment based on any these is temporary at best and simply leads us to want more. But there a better way. C.S. Lewis in his book *The Weight of Glory* pointed out that our problem is that we are actually far too easily satisfied. Here is what CS Lewis said “We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.” Infinite joy is the byproduct of permanent contentment. Are you ready to give up the mud pies for something far greater?

Read: [Philippians 4:10-23](#)

Paul demonstrates the secret of contentment that he gave the Philippians throughout this letter.

A. Focusing on others fosters permanent contentment (vs. 10)

Paul is in prison, yet he is rejoicing in the Lord greatly. How? Not over his circumstances for sure. Paul is rejoicing in the Philippians because they have once again sent financial support to Paul (vss. 14-16). Paul doesn't care about the gift (vs. 17). He is thrilled not that his account is full, but rather Paul is excited about the fruit that abounds to the account of the Philippians (vs. 17). Paul focused on others even while in prison and was more concerned about their wellbeing than his own.

B. Finding your “why” leads to permanent contentment (vs. 11)

Sandwiched in the middle of Paul's expression of thanks to the Philippians, Paul says he is content. He said, he "learned in whatever situation . . . to be content." Paul was so focused on his primary purpose in life that nothing else shook his resolve.

Paul says he learned the secret of contentment and imbedded throughout this letter are examples and exhortations on just how we all can learn the secret of contentment. Hopefully, you have spent the last two weeks looking at all the principles Paul gives for what he calls his secret of contentment. If not, the bottom line for the secret of contentment is Jesus Christ. In the *Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren said it pretty well: "It's not about you. The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose and for his purpose." If you are not sure about your purpose here on Earth, the *Purpose Driven Life* is a good book to help you find your purpose.

C. Adapting to life's uncertainties provides permanent contentment (vs. 12)

On Day 8 of this journey, we looked at John McCain's experience as a POW in the infamous Hanoi Hilton as an illustration. Chuck Swindoll recalls talking to survivors of that hellish experience who all gave similar accounts. These brave men said that "We learned after a few hours what it took to survive, and we just adapted to that." They didn't whine or complain, they didn't lose hope because of their horrible conditions – they adapted. Flexibility is key to not stressing over life's challenges. Flexibility is essential to permanent contentment.

D. Confidence in Christ fuels permanent contentment (vs. 13)

Paul believed that he could do anything Christ had for him to do in the strength Christ provides. Paul could not do all things in his own strength or the strength of his friends, it is only the strength Christ provides that allowed Paul to do all things! In context, Paul is explaining how he was able to be content regardless of circumstances through the strength Christ provides. And what did Christ have Paul do? Be content. Christ wants you to be steady, balanced, satisfied – content in every circumstance. Christ will provide you the strength to do just that! It is a promise.

E. Connecting through community builds permanent contentment vss. 14-23

Paul reflects on how the Philippians shared with him in the past and now again through Epaphroditus. When we sacrifice for each other as part of a faith community, the local church, the sacrifice leads to contentment. Paul promised the Philippians that God would supply all of their needs according to His riches and glory by Christ Jesus (vs 19). What do we all really need? Not more stuff. We need Christ centered contentment. Paul ends the letter with a salutation of among brothers and sisters in Christ.

The takeaway from this last section of Philippians is to think about Paul's example here as he practices what he preached throughout this letter. You can live a contented life like Paul by focusing on others, finding your "why," adapting to uncertain situations, placing all your confidence in Christ, and connecting to the brothers and sisters in your local church.

Close your time with God in prayer: *Heavenly Father, help me to live a contented life through following Paul's example. I resolve to live beyond my circumstances. I resolve to have my attitude shaped by you rather than the cycle of ups and downs that comes my way. I pray for joy and peace as you tarry in your return. In Jesus' name, Amen.*