



Session 1

Philippians 1:1-26

Introduction – This is letter to all God’s holy people (v. 1) - all the saints). *“It does not take much reading of Paul’s letters to recognize that the gospel is the singular passion of his life; that passion is the glue that in particular holds this letter together.”*¹ In this letter, to all the saints, we see **Paul begins with two tasks: To Give Thanks and to Pray**

I. Thanksgiving With Joy

- a. For the Partnership in the gospel (v.5)** – the apostle Paul thanks God for people and not things.²
 - i. *“Paul presents himself as a model of the right way to think and feel about friends in Christ.”*³
 - ii. They have partnered with him in every way from the very first day until this day. He is in prison. Ministry has been difficult. They have always stood with him in their mutual work of the gospel.
 - iii. How do we show our thanks for those with whom we are partners in the gospel?
- b. For fulfillment of the promise of God (v.6)** – Paul is confident in the work of Christ in the life of the Philippian church.
 - i. **He began a good work** – Paul was there when the work started, but the work was started by God, not by Paul or the response of the people. **“One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.”** (Acts 16:14)
 - 1. *Salvation would be a wretchedly unsure thing if it had no other foundation than my having chosen Christ. The human will blows hot and cold, is firm and unstable by fits and starts; it offers no security of tenure. But it is the will of God that is the ground of salvation. No-one would be saved had not the Lord been moved by*

¹ Fee, NICNT, 82.

² Ibid., 80.

³ Hansen, 52.

*his own spontaneous and unexplained love to choose his people before the world was, and, at the decisive moment, to open our hearts to hear, understand and accept 'the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' This, then, is the assurance: God has willed my salvation.*⁴

- ii. Is perfecting the good work – Jesus is the “**founder and perfecter of our faith**” (Hebrews 12:2). That perfection is an ongoing action in our lives. Though times are sometimes difficult, Paul reminds us in his second letter to the Corinthian church: “**So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.**” (2 Corinthians 4:16)
- iii. Has a day coming of perfection (when Christ returns) “**But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**” (Ephesians 2:4-7)
- c. **For the Love He had for them (vv.8-9)**
 - i. They were his people. He had been there as the church started. They were partakers with him in grace. He longed to be with them because they were his friends and spiritual children.

II. Prayer

- a. **Prayer that love will abound (v. 9)**
 - i. Love with knowledge – “*It is not blind love that will recommend us to God, but love grounded upon knowledge and judgment.*”⁵ John Gill writes, “*Some Christians are more affectionate, and less knowing; others are more knowing, and less affectionate; it is well when love and knowledge go and keep pace together.*”⁶
 - ii. All Discernment – That knowledge is coupled with discernment. Knowledge aids in our discernment of spiritual things.
- b. **With this love, you will approve what is excellent (v. 10)** – in this you will be able to discern what is best. Paul desired and prayed that they would seek after God’s best.
- c. **God’s best prepares you for the Day of Christ (see v. 6)**
 - i. As Pure
 - ii. As Blameless
- d. **This love shows you**
 - i. filled with the fruit of righteousness
 - ii. To the glory and praise of God

⁴ Motyer, 43-44.

⁵ Matthew Henry

⁶ John Gill

Challenge – Paul, as he sat in prison, found cause for joy. He could give thanks for a church that partnered with him in the work of the gospel. He could, though he was in chains, pray for them. His love for them was so great that he found joy and thanksgiving in the midst of great difficulty.

Acts 9. Even a man like Saul is useful for God. Ananias is told that Paul would suffer much for the name of Christ. We find him in that condition in Philippians 1:13. And God has certainly used him. How will the Lord use His people? **3 circumstances the Lord will use**

I. The Lord will use our trials (vv. 12-14)

- a. It seems that Paul's imprisonment would be bad for the spread of the gospel. Some could see it and think that it would impair the work. Yet, Paul says the opposite has taken place. The gospel is being heard throughout the entire prison. Most of the believers in Roman have become confident in the Lord. They are much bolder to speak the word and to do so without fear!
- b. This might remind us of Joseph's words to his brothers in Genesis 50:20: *you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.*
- c. Difficulties should embolden us, not cause us to retreat. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that *we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.* (Hebrews 10:39).

II. The Lord will use even our wrong motives (vv. 16-17)

- a. There are apparently two types of preachers in Rome. Some who love and respect Paul, some who do not. The reason is not clear. There is a problem. Alec Motyer points out that: "Paul observes people whose hearts were at war with their testimony."⁷
- b. The Lord can and often does use even our wrong motives. However, we need to understand that is not commended. The traits of envy and rivalry are listed as traits to be avoided elsewhere in Paul's writings. He is not saying these are commendable traits, but rather he is glad the gospel is being proclaimed. This should be a reminder to us to check our heart. Why do we do what we do?
- c. This is convicting because it is, at times, our default mindset. We look at others with envy and our critiques are not from pure motives. Paul is not excusing sin or okay with those teaching falsely. He does decide not to critique and criticize when someone is against him, but for Christ!

III. The Lord will use a humble heart (v. 18a)

- a. Paul could have found many reasons to be angry. People were proclaiming Jesus with impure motives. He was in prison, and some were using it as a time to try to get ahead. He does nothing of the sort. He acknowledges the issues, but trusts the Lord. The mission has never been about him anyhow. Christ is proclaimed! That is what matters most!
- b. Gordon Fee writes that Paul can write this because:
 - i. His theology is in good order
 - ii. He is a man of a single passion: Christ and the gospel

⁷ Motyer, p. 74.

- iii. His understanding of discipleship is to take up the cross and follow Christ.⁸
 - c. Think of how greatly the Lord used Paul! From persecutor of the church to missionary for Christ. He is an apostle with authority over the church, and yet he is humble as he writes from prison. The Lord uses a humble heart.
 - i. “He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.” – Psalm 25:9
 - ii. “The Lord lifts up the humble” – Psalm 147:6
 - iii. “He adorns the humble salvation” – Psalm 149:4
 - iv. “God...gives grace to the humble” – James 4:6
 - v. “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you” – 1 Peter 5:6

The Lord will use all sorts. That Lord will use all situations. Do not be dismayed at what happens around you and to you. Do not lose hope in even the direst of situations. Check your own heart and stay humble. The Lord is working more than you and I can fathom. We rejoice, knowing that in every way, what is most important, is that Christ is proclaimed.

“*Have you considered my servant Job*” (Job 1:8). With these words, uttered by God, the near complete destruction of Job’s life begins to unfold. With the loss of everything, he will later say: “*Though he slay me, I will hope in him.*” Job had the commitment that no matter what tomorrow would bring, he belonged to the Lord.

5 Questions with an Uncertain Tomorrow

- I. What will happen to me today?** (vv. 18b-19)
 - a. Christ will save me
- II. What should I expect of myself today?** (v. 20)
 - a. That I am not ashamed
 - b. That Christ is honored by my life
- III. For whom should I live today?** (vv.21-22; 25-26)
 - a. For Christ—to the benefit of others
 - b. If not for others, for what purpose are you living?
- IV. In what tension do we daily live?** (v. 23-24)
 - a. We live in tension between the desire to be with Christ and the work we are called to here.
 - b. In the body, we glorify Christ. In death, we are glorified with Christ. Paul writes in Romans 8: *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

Challenge – If you live another day, will it matter for the Kingdom?

⁸ Fee, NICNT, p. 125.

Session 2

Philippians 1:27-2:11

- I. Introduction** – ““Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.” (Luke 6:26). Conduct Yourselves as Kingdom Citizens. 3 realities of Kingdom living.
- II. Kingdom Citizens have Unified Conduct** (vv. 27-28a)
- a. Firmly in the Spirit – When we walk in the flesh, we find divisions in our fellowship with one another. We start to do things our own way, out of sinful desires, not in response to the leadership of the Lord.
 - b. Working as one – stronger as one, this is counter to our world’s culture and the individualistic “I am not being fed” or “I want this” culture in modern Christianity.
 - i. “The church which is experiencing unity must be a church without passengers. Is there unity where there is the tacit or spoken attitude, 'I agree with you but I will not do anything for you, or I agree with your aims but I will not go with you to fulfil them'? Acquiescence is not unity; consent is not co-operation; approval is not partnership;”⁹
 - c. Not frightened by our opponents – worldly or otherwise. **“So we can confidently say, *‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?’*”** (Hebrews 13:6).
- III. Kingdom Conduct Contrasts Life and Death** (v. 28b)
- a. “This unity, this standing firm in one spirit, this “con-tending as one man for the faith of the gospel,” serves as a double sign: “This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved-and that by God” (1:28). In other words, your change in character, your united stand in defense of the gospel, your ability to withstand with meekness and without fear the opposition that you must endure, constitute a sign. That sign speaks volumes, both to the outside world and to the Christian community. It is a sign of judgment against the world that is mounting the opposition; it is a sign of assurance that these believers really are the people of God and will be saved on the last day.”¹⁰
 - b. Kingdom conduct shows the destruction of the opponents of the Kingdom. – Paul tells us that when the believers conduct themselves as a Kingdom citizen, it shows the impending destruction of the opponents of the Kingdom. The term “clear sign” gives the idea of an omen. For those who oppose the Kingdom, judgement is coming and the Kingdom conduct of those who are in the Kingdom reveals to those outside that they are outside.
 - c. Kingdom conduct shows the salvation of the citizens of the Kingdom. – We see our own life in the Kingdom conduct that Christ renders in our lives. We know it

⁹ J.A. Motyer, *The Message of Philippians*, p. 96.

¹⁰ D.A. Carson, *Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians*, p. 55.

is not use. It is not our doing. It is contrary to our nature. It is Christ in me. *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”* (Galatians 2:20)

IV. Kingdom Citizens Suffer for Christ’s sake (vv. 29-30)

- a. You have been graciously given faith and suffering.
 - i. In a shocking expression, Paul tells us that we have been granted (graciously given) suffering for Jesus’ sake. It is a difficult pill to swallow. We are in conflict with the world by Christ’s grace.
 - ii. ““Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:10-12)
 - iii. “Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.” (Acts 5:41)
 - iv. “When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:21-22)
- b. This follows the pattern of Paul, and ultimately Christ.
 - i. Part of the inheritance of following Jesus is suffering. Jesus suffered greatly. Jesus said of Paul that he would suffer (Acts 9:16), and that is what we find happening here as he writes this letter to the Philippian church. Paul in turn wants that church to know that suffering will come and it is part of the Christian experience.
 - ii. “It is taken for granted throughout the NT, and nowhere more so than in Paul’s letters, that suffering is inevitably incurred by Christian existence in the present world. There was nothing surprising in this: Christ had suffered, and his followers—those who were “in Christ”—could expect nothing else. Paul himself, throughout his career as an apostle, knew what it meant to suffer for Christ’s sake, and he prepared his converts for similar suffering. Indeed, he encouraged them with the assurance that suffering for Christ’s sake proved the genuineness of their faith”¹¹

No matter what comes, our calling is to let our manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. As those called to the Kingdom, do we live as citizens of the Kingdom?

“Often we have majored on proclamation and God has honoured our endeavours in ways which we rejoice. But are we notable for living the life worthy of the gospel? Why should people believe our defense of the cause of Christ if they cannot see Christ in us, or take any notice of

¹¹ F.F. Bruce, *Philippians*, p. 56.

our offer of a saving Christ if they do not see the fruits of salvation in the beauty of holy living?”¹²

And do not lose sight of this. God is just and full of mercy. He will set all things right one day: ***“This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*** (2 Thessalonians 1:5-12)

So what is the action we take then to live as Citizens in the Kingdom? We take on the blueprint of Christ’s example of humility

- I. Be of One Mind (vv. 1-2)
 - a. Do nothing selfishly (v. 3)
 - b. Count other more significant (vv. 3-4)
- II. Have the Mind of Christ
 - a. He emptied himself (v. 7)
 - b. Took on the form of a servant (v. 7)
 - c. Humbled Himself (v. 8)
- III. He is highly exalted
 - a. He has the name above every name (v. 9)

We live as good Kingdom citizens humbled because He was humbled and humbled because He is highly exalted.

¹² J.A. Motyer, *The Message of Philippians*, p. 94.

Session 3

Philippians 2:12-30

Introduction – Christ’s humility, obedience, and joy pave the way for the Christian to follow Him. In the initial verses of this chapter, Paul calls them to unity on the basis of Christ’s humility. Christ humbled Himself to the point of death on the cross. God took on flesh, dwelt among His people, and died in their place. That reality produces something in us. What does it produce? **3 results for the Christian life because of Christ’s humility and exaltation.**

- I. Christan Obedience** (vv. 12-13) – because Christ has humbled Himself and been exalted, they can obey Him. They are to obey as they have always done. Paul tells them to work out their salvation with fear and trembling because God is at work. His will is that they obey and it is in His power through His Spirit that
 - a. God has made you to obey and capable to obey
 - b. We obey because Christ obeyed (v. 8)
 - c. The one you serve is holy and exalted, therefore, you should come before Him, you citizen of Heaven with fear and trembling. “The terror of God's holiness and wrath toward sin causes sinners to pursue God's mercy, and the reverent fear of a Holy Father causes believers to pursue obedience.”¹³
 - d. The Spirit gives us the will (v. 13) – “By his indwelling Spirit he works in them to will and to act-both the desire to act according to his good purpose and the power to carry it out. This is part of Paul's teaching about the Holy Spirit, even if the Spirit is not explicitly mentioned here. As he emphasizes elsewhere, the Spirit does what the law could not: the law could tell people what to do without supplying the power, or even the will, to do it; the Spirit supplies both (Rom. 8:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:4-6).”¹⁴
 - e. “Your own salvation is to be understood, not as an objective yet to be reached, certainly not as a benefit to be merited, but as a possession be explored and enjoyed ever more fully. [For example] the counsel to a newly-married couple to work at your marriage, for marriage once possessed is possessed in full but merits a lifetime of exploration, enjoyment, development and discovery.”¹⁵
- II. Christian Light** (vv. 14-16a) – When obedience to Christ is the disposition of the believer, what does that look like? The believer, in obedience to Christ, produces Christian light. The language Paul uses seems to echo Daniel 12:1-4. This is the goal of the Christian life: To shine brightly and turn many to righteousness.
 - a. Light doesn’t grumble – Paul tells them to do all things without grumbling or disputing. It seems some people in churches all across the world, would not attend if they had to hold to this command.
 - b. Light is blameless and innocent (externally blameless, internally innocent)

¹³ Moore, p. 144.

¹⁴ F.F. Bruce, p. 82.

¹⁵ Alex Motyer, p. 127.

- c. Light is the unblemished children of God
 - i. “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,” (John 1:11-12)
 - ii. “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:1-2)
- d. Light holds fast to the word of life – the concept here is not only that you believe it but that it causes you to take action. We are to take the Word of Life to those who are dying. They are dead in their sin and dying daily. We have the powerful testimony of what Christ has done and we take it with joy to those who are in such great need of the power of the Word of God in their lives.

III. Christian Joy (vv. 16b-18)

- a. There is rejoicing when obedience leads to light. Paul knew that Christ's obedience led to his, which led to the Philippians and that when the day of Christ came, he would be proud that he did not run in or labor in vain.

Challenge - Christ's obedience opens the door for not only our salvation, our obedience. When we are in Christ, God is developing in us our salvation and obedience. At the same time, the Bible tells us to work out our salvation. Explore it. Shine light because of it. Find great joy in it. This with me the words of this hymn:

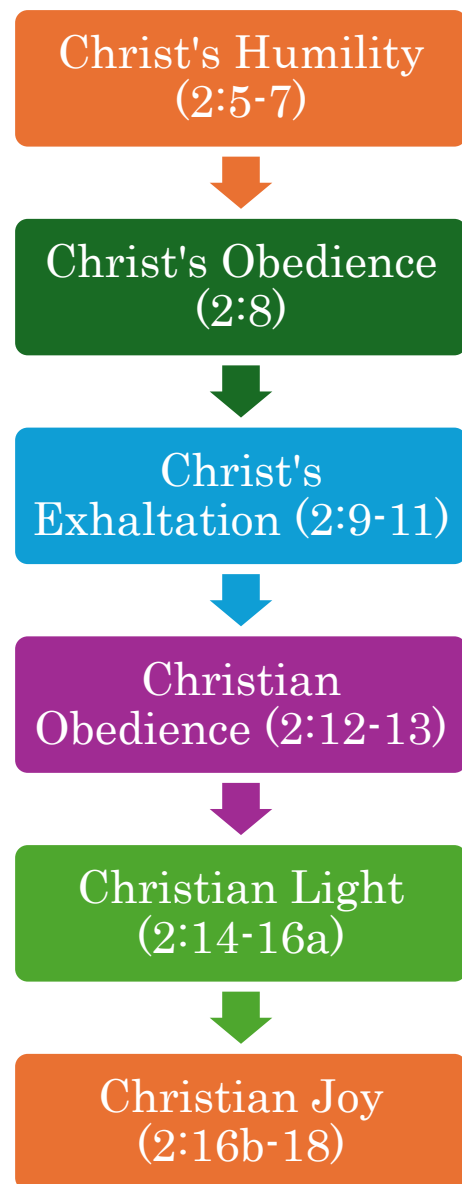
*When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still
And with all who will trust and obey
Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey*

Scriptures

““At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”” (Daniel 12:1-4)

“They have dealt corruptly with him; they are no longer his children because they are blemished; they are a crooked and twisted generation.” (Deuteronomy 32:5)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)



I want us to see what that joy looks like in three godly men in these last few verses of the chapter. Think about how these relate to us:

I. Paul

- a. Cheered good news (v. 19) – he found cheer in good news from the churches that he ministered to.
- b. Sends the best (v. 20) – he sends Timothy, his very best! His own spiritual son.
- c. Spiritual father (v. 22) – he has been a spiritual father to Timothy, teaching him how to follow Christ.

II. Timothy

- a. Genuine concern for other believers (v. 20) – he wanted the welfare of the Philippian church.
- b. Spiritual son (v. 22) – he has been a son to Paul, learning from him.

III. Epaphroditus

- a. Longs for his church (v. 26) – though his work was important, he longed to be with his church family.
- b. Risks his life (v. 30) – Paul said such men should be honored.

Challenge – These three men are very different and at different stages of their spiritual journeys. However, we see in each of them evidence of their spiritual maturity and faithful service. Their lives serve as lessons for us. As Paul writes elsewhere, “**Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.**” (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Session 4

Philippians 3:1-4:1

Introduction – Paul has now told the church at Philippi that he rejoices multiple times in the first two chapters. He does so again here. But why? He tells them to rejoice because his confidence and their confidence is in Christ and his finished work on the cross. There is nothing else to do. This morning, we see **3 prerequisites to rejoicing in the Lord.**

I. Watch out for dogs (v. 2)

- a. Paul's warning is a familiar one to believers. There were, and continue to be, those who would try to add more to the requirements of following Christ. It is not clear that this was a current problem in Philippi, but it was serious enough in other places and at different times that Paul addresses it here. There were those who said that one must become a Jew to follow Christ.
- b. We should be cautious in our own day about those who say you must do this and that to be saved, in addition to faith in Christ. They want to add to the requirements. They want to crucify Christ again. Think about three of the *solas* of the Reformation. We are saved through faith alone, by grace alone, through Christ alone. Beware anyone who says otherwise. Because we should watch for dogs, we should also:

II. Put no confidence in the flesh (vv. 3-6)

- a. Paul had every reason to be confident in his flesh. Look at his resume! He says, "***I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.***" With this resume, if he could not be confident in his fleshly background and achievement, no one can. No one can say, "Look where I came from; that is where I have hope."
- b. He reminds them at the beginning of this section that those who have the sign of the covenant with Christ are those who "***worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus.***" Those are the ones who put no confidence in the flesh. Our hope is not here and is not in what we do! We should, therefore:

III. Put all confidence in Christ (vv.7-11)

- a. Paul had lost everything, and that was okay with him. Any status that he had before, gone. His achievements, no longer critical. All was counted as a loss. In fact, it was trash in comparison to gaining Christ. Jesus says, "***For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?***" (Mark 8:36)
- b. What can you compare to having your confidence in Christ? What could equal that worth? Think of the things that are most valuable to you? They are rubbish in comparison to knowing Christ.
- c. As a small aside, think about how those things you value are redeemed when you know Christ—when He is what you value and have your confidence in. Think about how much more meaningful it was to Paul to know what he knew and be

who he had been, and then have those things put into the context of knowing Jesus.

This is what it means to “rejoice in the Lord.” This is Paul’s command in verse 1. He had told them before. He is reminding them again. It is a continual reminder for the Christian. Rejoice in Christ. Put all confidence in Him and Him alone. Put no trust in yourself or in your flesh—and beware of those who try to convince you to do so.

What drives you in life? What makes you get up in the morning? There are so many reasons. Why does Paul pursue Christ with the whole of his life? He tells us in this passage. He writes, ***I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.*** We know from the previous verses that his goal was to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. What a powerful truth to set your mind on. ***3 preparations we make as we prepare to be like Christ in His resurrection.***

I. Set your mind on what’s ahead (vv. 12-16)

- a. Press on; upward call; you are not there yet. Paul says not that I have already attained it.
- b. Forget what is behind
- c. The sign of your maturity is thinking this way
- d. If you think otherwise, God will reveal truth to you

II. Imitate maturity (vv.17-19)

- a. Follow the example set by the faithful
- b. Avoid those who are enemies of the cross

III. Know that you belong to heaven now (vv. 20-21)

- a. The Lord is going to transform your lowly body to be like His glorious body.
- b. This was what Paul longed for and he lived now in light of that day when he would obtain the resurrection of the dead.

Challenge – So the challenge is this: stand firm in the Lord. Everything before this moment is behind us. We have only to look ahead and press on. Our citizenship is in Heaven if we are in Christ this morning. We should therefore set our mind on what is ahead and imitate maturity as we press on toward maturity in Christ.