

Through Faith in Christ Jesus

By Don Green

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Bible Verse: Philippians 1:1-2
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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

After a series of introductory messages, we are ready to pay closer attention to verse by verse exposition of this letter from the Apostle Paul to the church at Philippi, and I just want to say from the start as I've wrestled with myself in my own study and I deal with conflicts in my own mind, I've come to this conclusion contrary to some men that I respect in terms of the way that they would approach exposition, and I don't mean that as a slight to anybody, just different preachers have different ways of doing things and that's fine, in my opinion, the depth and the majesty of the letter to the Philippians bids us to take our time, to not be in a hurry as we go through it. The more that I study this letter, the more that I'm just overwhelmed at the majesty of it. I'm seeing things that I had never seen before and I'm eager to share those things with you but I can only do that if I'm not in a hurry, if I'm not trying to rush things through just so that we can get through this book and onto whatever comes after it. You know, what's the point of that? What we're going to see this month not just on our Sunday morning exposition but kind of in an unintentional tagteam with our Tuesday midweek study, is that we are going to get a very profound survey of what it means to be a Christian, of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

Now you might think, you might think that, "Well, I already know that. Why do we need to slow down and talk about that?" Well, if you're inclined to dismiss it, let me invite you to come and to sit and to kind of sit at the feet of the Apostle Paul, sit at the feet of the word of God and let it instruct us because I know, I just know that there is so much here that we all need to hear, myself included, and what we're going to find on Sundays is the true reality of being a follower of Christ, what does it mean to be a slave of Christ, what does it mean to be a saint in Christ Jesus, what does it mean to be part of the fellowship of church. Those are all questions that we are going to answer in the coming month. On Tuesdays, I invite you to make an extra little effort if you can to be with us on Tuesdays as we're dealing with a whole different matter and approaching things from a different perspective, seeing what the world thinks it means to believe in God and to follow him in specific ways and then just seeing how far short this spirit of our age is from true Christianity. So on Sundays we're going to have this positive exposition of what it means, on Tuesday coming together approaching it from a different angle, and by the end of this month there are going to be things so crystallized and so clarified in our minds as a body and as individuals that we're really going to have a sense of direction where we go from here. I know that's a pretty lofty claim to make over the coming month but I believe it to

be true. So for some of you, I know you can't be here on Tuesdays. I just really implore you and ask you, encourage you, beg you, whatever verb you want me to supply there, that would motivate you to at least get the downloads and listen to those because this is a really crucial time in the life of our church. It's an exciting time. It's a wonderful time. The things that lie ahead of us are so great, the opportunities are so excellent, the potential for you to grow in Christ is unlimited as the infinite Spirit of God takes the infinite truth of the word of God and applies it to your heart and he renews our mind and gives us clarity on things. This is just a really really strategic time and I invite you to be a part of it with me and with the rest of us and these opening verses in Philippians are going to be a very strategic part of that. So, yeah, I'm not in hurry, I guess that's what I'm trying to say.

Now, the Philippians just by quick way of review here, the Philippians were a noble body of believers that loved and supported the Apostle Paul. This is review of things that we've said in the past few weeks. Paul was thankful for them. Paul was praying for them consistently and their relationship was strong. That's really important to understand, that Paul is writing to them as a beloved servant of Christ. He loved this body, he was thankful for them, and they were thankful to him. He had been the instrument that God used a few years earlier, as we saw in the book of Acts 16, he had been the instrument that God had used to bring the Gospel to them. Lydia would read this letter and remember how Paul was speaking and the Lord opened her heart. A slave girl who Paul had delivered from a demon would be there and remember her salvation. The jailer in Acts 16, the jailer would remember how he was trembling and Paul spoke the word of God to him and he believed, he and his household, and they came to Christ. So there is this rich history that is behind this letter. There is a strong bond between the apostle and this church, and they were unique in the extended way that they supported him in his ministry. Wonderful relationship between the apostle and this church and you think, then what more is there then? You've got a good history, you've got a good relationship, what could there possibly be to discuss? Well, what we find is that there was still room for spiritual growth. Even in a church like Philippi, there is still room for spiritual growth. In that body, in that wonderful oasis garden of spiritual life in the ancient world, in that beautiful garden of truth and love that was present there, even in a garden like that there were weeds growing up, weeds of conflict, weeds of false teaching. As you read the book, the short book of Philippians, you see insects attacking the garden, insects of personal dissatisfaction, of anxiety eating away at the harvest of Gospel fellowship to which everybody was committed, to which everyone, there was this shared history and this shared purpose but they were starting to be fault lines that were being exposed, pressure points that had the potential to break into open conflict and indeed had already begun to do so.

So what we see and what we should take from this here today as Truth Community Church, as grateful and thankful as we are for everything that the Lord is doing in our midst, as grateful and thankful as we are for the loving fellowship that we enjoy together, beloved, we would be fools, we would be inexcusable fools to think that there wasn't significant room for us to grow as individuals and as a congregation together. It would be the height of arrogance, hubris, and pride to think that a little church like ours with the

short history that we have had somehow arrived. Now, there's no room for pride here. We need to humble ourselves before the word of God and see how it would instruct us on what it means to be a true Christian and what it means to be a true church, and all of those things are going to come up, believe it or not, in the initial couple of verses here in Philippians 1:1 and 2. Let's read Paul's opening greeting and start to dive into this book that will consume our minds and change our hearts and lives over the next several months. What a wonderful time this is.

Verse 1,

1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now beloved, it would be easy to take these opening verses for granted. It would be easy for me to blow through these things and you wouldn't even know we had missed anything if I did it. In fact, one popular level exposition that I read in my preparation for this passage actually completely passes over the first two verses of Philippians and just starts its exposition at verse 3, and then that's where it picks up. Well, you know, that guy can do what he wants to do and he's been a very successful expositor, far more influential than anything that's ever crossed my path admittedly, but I think that's a mistake. I don't want to pass over these two verses because, beloved, here's the thing, here's what I want you to see and I want to cultivate your affection even more for the book of Philippians than you already have for it. What you have here in the first two verses of Philippians is no sterile introduction. This is not just a formality that Paul needs to get through in order to talk about what he really wants to talk about. That's not it at all and, beloved, in part what you find here is that if you have a high view of the word of God, if you believe that every word in Scripture is inspired by God and is infallible and inerrant, a reflection of his mind and instruction for the church, then you realize that there must somehow be value and sanctifying converting power, converting sanctifying grace that is embedded at least in seed form in everything that is said, and that's certainly the truth here as we read the first two verses of this book. What these two verses have done for us is they have already, in what I just read, they have already introduced to you the dominant theme of the book of Philippians. The dominant theme of the book of Philippians is expressed plainly on the surface, no shadows to it, the dominant theme in the book of Philippians has already been expressed in those two verses that I already read. And what is that theme? Nothing less and no one less than the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Look at it with me. You may have missed this. Three times in two verses Paul refers to Christ Jesus. Verse 1, "we are bond-servant of Christ Jesus. To all the saints in Christ Jesus. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul says, "We write to you as slaves of Christ ourselves. We write to you and address you as saints in Christ Jesus, those who have been set apart to Him for His service, and we extend to you, we wish for you, we pray for you God's grace, God's peace from our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. We are slaves of Christ, you are saints in Christ. Grace to you from Christ." Jesus Christ, as I'm going to show you here directly, Jesus Christ is

absolutely central to the entire book of Philippians and yet, in fact I would venture to say that, maybe better stated, ironically, whatever adverb you want to plug in there, Christ is central to Philippians but ironically it's his very centrality that makes it easy to miss him if you're not paying attention, and the best thing that I can do for you today as a teacher of God's word to you as we look forward to what Philippians has for us, the best thing that I can do for you is point this out to you this morning right from the very start, how central Christ is to the book of Philippians.

Now look, I realize that there are certain passages in Philippians that we hold dear and we cling to, "be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God," and we take that and we latch onto that as being that which would help us fight against anxiety and that's good to do that but there's a whole context that makes that, that informs that statement.

I'm not one for giving away stats very often but I want to do it here. In the book of Philippians, the name Christ, just Christ, Christos, Christ appears 36 times in the four chapters of Philippians, 17 in chapter 1 alone. The name Jesus appears 22 times in the four chapters of Philippians, eight in chapter 1 alone. And the title Lord appears in the four chapters of Philippians 15 times through the four chapters. Beloved, that is 73 references to Christ in four short chapters. You know, I should have counted the verses, I could do it real quickly here, 60, 81, 104 verses in the book of Philippians and 73 times Christ is mentioned, it's almost one per verse. One per biblical verse. That needs to weigh on us. That needs to flavor and inform the entire perspective in which we receive this book. If we were to put on glasses, it would be the spectacles, the lens through which we are to understand everything that comes to us through the book of Philippians is coming to us – watch this – it is coming to us through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You should not think about Philippians and dealing with anxiety apart from a prior understanding and recognition of Christ and other matters that we are going to see as we go through this time.

Beloved, ah, this is just so important. Beloved, let's not miss the forest for looking at the trees of individual verses that we maybe memorized or liked in the past. You must understand this right up front: Paul, the apostle writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writing down God's word for God's people throughout all of the ages because the word of the Lord will not pass away, beloved, you must understand what I'm about to say. It's so critical. That's why I raise my voice, to emphasize it. Paul is not writing to this church to fix human problems on a horizontal level. There is division in the church, there is conflict in the church, but he's not writing simply to smooth things over there. There are problems of false teaching influencing the church but he's not simply trying to get people's mental thinking straight about things, what he is doing here in the book of Philippians is he is continually, repeatedly at every crucial point, at every crucial juncture pointing the readers of this letter vertically up to Christ, and every problem that he addresses, every issue, every expression of love, every admonition for spiritual growth and improvement is filtered through a vertical perspective on the Lord Jesus Christ. That may seem a little bit abstract right now here at this opening part, but beloved, that is the perspective that informs everything else, is that every issue related in the book of

Philippians and every issue that you and I have in life, is designed to bounce your thinking vertically, bounce it up toward Christ so that you become conditioned, you grow in your ability and you grow in your self-discipline so that you are viewing all of life through the vertical perspective of Christ and not simply viewing your life and aspects of it in isolation apart from him. Everything in your life is designed to be understood in light of the person of Christ if you're a Christian, everything is designed to be understood in light of him and in response to him, not to think about anything apart from, separate from Christ, all the more clinging to him the more that life assaults us and assails us, the more it is designed to drive us to the port of safety that is Christ himself, and you see that by the emphasis that Paul makes again and again and again in Philippians, pointing them to Christ. If Paul had cut his hand while he was writing this letter, dictating it, however that was done, Christ would have bled out because he was so filled with Christ in what he had to say, speaking metaphorically obviously.

Let me point something out to you. One of the names for Christ that we see in the book of Revelation is he's the Alpha and Omega, right? Alpha and omega being the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet and so the idea is that he is the beginning and the end, everything is summed up in him. It all comes together in him. He gathers it all up in himself. Well, beloved, here in the book of Philippians I want to point out to you, I like these kinds of things, I like to point them out, Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega even of the book of Philippians, even of the book of Philippians. You saw the three names, the three times that Paul alluded to him in the first two verses. Look specifically at the 2 here. We're still doing a little bit of overview kinds of things. Verse 2, Philippians 1:2, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Now go to the very last verse of the book of Philippians, Philippians 4:23, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." He opens up, "Grace to you in the name of Christ." He closes, "Grace to you in the name of Jesus Christ."

So he is communicating to them this grace which is dispensed through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and, beloved, what I'm about to say will flip some worldviews if people will hear it and receive it. This changes, what I'm about to say changes your whole perspective on why you exist and why you are a Christian. What is it that you seek, what is it that we seek from God? What is it that we are living for? Well beloved, what you see when you look through the book of Philippians in light of these things that we're saying here this morning is something profound even though it may, the trajectory that this takes you goes, it starts so close to gather but then it separates depending on what you follow. Here's what I want you to see: your responsibility, your privilege, your prerogative, your duty as a professing believer in Christ is this, you are to seek the very person of Christ, to know him, not merely the blessings that you think you can get from him. Christ is not a means to another end for the true Christian. "Oh, I can know Christ and get life, happiness, wealth and health. I can have Him solve my problems. He can make me feel better in life and so that's what I really want and so I'll go after Christ so that I can get that from Him." Look, that's not true Christianity. If the blessings that Christ can give you is the endgame, you need to rethink your whole perspective on what it means to be a Christian because Christ is not a means to another end to fulfill your earthly desires. Christ himself is the end. He is the goal. He is the purpose. He is what we seek.

Paul made this clear in Philippians 3:9, we'll come back to this. Look at it right now, actually verse 10 he says those great words that what he wants, he wants that he would "know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. I want to know Christ," he says. And so we are to seek the person of Christ, to love him for who he is, not merely what he can give to us and, beloved, if you think about it just from a human personal perspective, you'll understand all of the difference in the world to it. Isn't it true that, let's say that you were a person of means and you had people, you had someone who came to you and ingratiated themselves to you and you knew that it was simply because they wanted what you had, they wanted to get something from you and they feigned friendship to you in order to get what it was, and if they got the gift or they got whatever it was they wanted, you would realize that at the core of this outer semblance of friendship and loyalty was merely a self-serving use of you divorced from affection for you, you wouldn't find that to be appealing at all. You would realize this wasn't love at all, you simply wanted what you could get from me rather than wanting to be close and us to be, you know, to be friends, for us to be close because we genuinely cared for one another apart from what we could get from each other. All the difference in the world, you understand that on a human level and find it distasteful when people deal with you that way, and you know that there is a hook in the relationship, that they are after something from you. They want to sell you Amway or they want to sell you something else, or they've got something that they want to market to you, and all of a sudden what you thought was of friendship suddenly takes on a different luster, a diminished luster saying, "You were just after what you could get from me. This wasn't a real friendship at all. This wasn't real love at all." You understand that on a human level, I don't have to explain it any more than that. Well, beloved, multiply it by infinity and see what we owe to Christ, that the love and the devotion that we give to him is for the sake of his own glorious worth, the sake of his own goodness, the sake of his own greatness to praise and honor him, to express gratitude to him for saving our souls, to be given over to a life dedicated to his purposes, to be his slave that is obedient and gladly so to his every wish, his every demand expressed in Scripture, to be given over to that just out of pure love for him regardless of anything that he might ever do for you. Jesus said in the Gospel of John, he said, "If you love Me, you'll keep My commandments."

So we need to draw a distinction in our mind between, we need to have it clear in our minds that loving Christ is something different than wanting what we can get from him, and to the extent that we have perhaps unconsciously tried to use Christ to get what we want on earth because he is omnipotent and he's gracious and we can get stuff from him, so the thinking goes, to the extent that that becomes the dominating motivation in pursuing an outward form of the Christian life, we need to cut it out. We need to purify our motivations and to realize that we don't want to be dealing with Christ as though he were our Amway customer.

Now, Paul here in the book of Philippians does not give us a systematic treatment of Christ and his salvation like you might find in the book of Romans, for example, where it's all very systematic and laid out one logical thought upon another as one thought leads

to another, it's not like that here in the book of Philippians. Paul was an amazingly versatile writer and he was just on a human level, he was very engaged with the audience that he was addressing, and he would address one church differently than he did another. To the Galatians he would write and rebuke them, say, "You foolish Galatians." To the Philippians, he's writing to them in a spirit of love and acceptance and encouragement and that informs the way that he writes. He's writing a personal letter to them and just as you would speak differently to a close friend in your living room around the fireplace maybe drinking a cup of hot cocoa together, you'd talk to a person in that environment differently than if you were giving a lecture in a university hall to convey information to people. Well, in like manner, Paul here is sitting around the fireplace, so to speak, communicating to his friends and so we don't expect a systematic treatment in that context, rather what we find is woven throughout everything that is said is expressed in the context of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I want you to see this now, that Christ undergirds everything that he has to say in this epistle. You can't miss it once it's pointed out to you.

So let me just go through a half dozen questions here real quickly that we'll just kind of treat pastorally here, address them in the second person to you just with the idea that we're going to see how Paul brings Christ to bear on the common problems and perplexities of life, and that it's vertical. It's not human advice here, he's giving them Christ in everything that he says.

So first of all, we'll just walk through the epistle together quickly. Are you uncertain about your purpose in life? Do you struggle with despair and a sense of meaning? Well, look at what Paul says in chapter 1, verse 21, and notice how he points to Christ. That's the point of all six of these things. Every time without exception it's the person of Christ that he is directing their minds to. So in chapter 1, verse 21, he says, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake." He says, "The whole reason that I live is Jesus Christ. I started this letter saying to you grace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ. I'm going to end the letter talking about grace to you from the Lord Jesus Christ." And one of the ways that we see this illustrated in his perspective is he says, "Everything about my ambitions, all of my affections are tied up in the person of Christ. To know Him, to love Him, that's why I exist and therefore from that perspective, for me to die is actually a graduation party because then I go into His immediate presence when that happens. That's how central the person of Christ is to me." Understand beloved, he's talking about a person. He's talking about the living reality of the real person of the Lord Jesus Christ, not giving somebody a piece of advice as to here's how you can feel better. Your whole purpose in life is Christ. That's why you exist. Beloved, we need to parcel this out, we need to think through these things. Christ is more central to you than your spouse, he is more central to you than your children, he is more central than your possessions, your business, your opportunities, your life ahead, your past. He surpasses all of that infinitely and by the sheer intrinsic worthiness of his being, his essence, he lays hold to the highest affections and ambitions of your heart. So if you're trying to untangle

the meaning of life, beloved, start there. Start with who Christ is. Start with saying, "Do you know what I really need more than anything," it's true of every one of us, "what I really need more than anything is to know Christ and to know Him better." It all starts there. It starts vertically with him.

So secondly, do you have areas of personal conflict maybe in your family, maybe in the church, things that are, you know, things that are unsettled and, you know, there's just a butting of heads going on? Well, look to Christ. Look to Christ. Philippians 2:3. Actually we should start in verse 2. He says, "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." Unity. Unity. Unity. Fellowship of believers. He says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." Here in this church that was experiencing conflict, as I've pointed out in the past, Philippians 2:14, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." Chapter 4, verse 2, "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord." There is conflict in this body and what does Paul do? He doesn't simply say, "Stop fighting. Get along with each other." He points them up. He takes them by the chin, as it were, and he lifts their chin up so that they will look up to Christ.

Look at verse 5, he says, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." In the person of Christ, you see manifested the spirit that I'm calling you to," Paul says to the Philippians. "He was humble. He gave of himself. In a surpassing way, taking on humanity, leaving behind the glories of heaven to take on humanity, to go to the cross to redeem us from our sins. That's humility. That's how you get around conflict. That's how you solve conflict, is you adopt this humble position of a slave in your interactions whether it's reciprocated to you or not." So the humility that is manifest in Christ in his Incarnation becomes the answer to your contribution, your contribution to the solution of conflict is that you adopt the attitude of the one that you say that you know. Rather than entrenching yourself, digging your heels in, "I'm right on this. You're wrong." There was none of that in Christ. If Christ had had that attitude, we would all be condemned because Christ was right and we were all wrong and he didn't dig in and say, "I'm right," and speak down. He said, "I'll take the form of a slave. I'll be obedient to My Father. I'll go to the cross to redeem all of these that God has given to Me. They are enemies of Mine now but I will win them in an act of selfless humility that secures their eternal redemption." Christ being the answer to the way that we think about any conflict that we are in, spouses, parents, children, people within the church, this all applies. Be united in one spirit and have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus. So he points to the Lord himself as being the answer to the conflict that was embedded in the life of the body.

Well, let's go to a third aspect of it. What about purpose, what about conflict, we could say it this way, I didn't spend much time phrasing these questions as much as I could have maybe, but what about false teaching? Let's address it this way, are you tempted to a sense of spiritual pride because you think you're keeping the right rules spiritually? Are you tempted to pride and self-righteousness? You can look around and see a lot of people

that you're better than because you're kind of doing the right thing? Well, that's not good. That's not spiritual thinking. The answer even to that is Christ. The answer to that is Christ. Paul in Philippians 3 had described how he had all of these spiritual credits in his account, humanly speaking. He was the right kind of Jew. He had been zealous for the law. He was circumcised at the right time at the nation of Israel, verse 5, "Hebrew of Hebrews. I was a Pharisee. I was zealous and in the righteousness that the law requires, I was blameless." He was and had done everything right according to the rules of Judaism. He was a Pharisee of Pharisees. He was a Jew's Jew. He was a man's man. Human righteousness and what does he say about it all? He jettisons it. It's like he's on a boat and he's just throwing cargo overboard so that the ship can rightly sail and he says in verse 7, "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ." Do you see it again? "For Christ, for Him, I count all of that, I don't cling to that as being that which would make me righteous. In fact, I disown it all. I count it all as so much manure," he says in verse 8. He says, "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ." "Rubbish" is a very crass term there. We'll look at it when we get to it. It's a very stark term maybe is a better way to say it, but this is only so much dung compared to Christ. And for those of you, those of us that are tempted to think that maybe we are somehow just a step above, we've found the higher life, we're in the deeper life, the idea that there is some kind of perfection, sanctified perfection that a person can find in this life is so demolished by Paul's attitude here. He says, "Everything righteous about me is rubbish compared to Christ," and Christ becomes the answer to spiritual pride and self-righteousness.

Look at it there in verse 9, he says, "I don't want to talk about those things. That's not what I rest my hope upon at all." He says in verse 9, "What I want, I want to be found in Him." If I had gone through and counted the pronouns, the "Hims" that refer to Christ would probably would have tripled the references that I opened with. "I want to be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to him in the power of His resurrection." You see, beloved, here's the thing, Paul just set up everything about his own claim to self-righteousness and pushes it off the platform, puts it behind the curtain where it shall not be seen in order to say, "What I want is Christ. I want His righteousness. His righteousness is what matters here." And some of us, I'll use the inclusive "we" rather than the second person, some of us are just so quick to be critical and judgmental of others and in that indicating that we're not quite getting what Paul's talking about here in chapter 3; elevating ourselves, being better than them, has no place in this vertical mindset that is focused on the person of Christ. My righteousness is nothing compared to his and therefore I want to forget about that, I want to set behind, I want to set aside the things that would be a credit to me. I discount it all. I write it off, to use accounting terms, I write it off for the sake of the vertical righteousness of being in Christ and in him alone. You see, Christ answers the hidden sins of your proud heart. He's the answer to those things.

Well, let's keep going. Are you preoccupied with the things of earth? Prone to discouragement? Look up and see Christ. Chapter 3, verse 20, "our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory." He says, "Whatever else is happening here on earth, we're just passing through. This is just a temporary home for us." Where our affections are, where our citizenship is, where we really belong is in heaven and that's where Christ is going to come from, that's where Christ is, that's from which he will come, and that changes the whole perspective when earthly things are not going your way. "Oh yeah, I just remembered something. I'm not living for this world. It's okay. It's okay." Yeah, sometimes there is material loss, sometimes there is relational loss, physical loss, sometimes there are personal betrayals that you never saw coming that sting a lot, but beloved, don't you see that that's not what we're living for? That where our ultimate hope and affections lie, what the fulfillment of our life is going to be is Christ and our citizenship in heaven, and that's what we're eagerly waiting for even while we deal with the transient setbacks of this life. Beloved, Christ is the answer to your preoccupation with earth. You can say, "No matter who leaves me, no matter who withholds their affection from me, I have Christ and therefore I have it all." The flipside of that doesn't bring any hope, does it?

Fifthly, are you unsettled? Are you anxious? Your preacher this morning is certainly not exempt from that. Well, what does Paul say in one of the best-known passages in this book, right? I want you to see this. Verse 6, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Now beloved, we need to be people of earnest prayer, yes, but the answer to your anxiety is not contained in the simple four corners of that verse because you could take that and just say, "Well then, what the answer to my anxiety is that I just need to pray more and I need to pray harder," and if you do that, if you take that approach, then you're missing the whole context of the book of Philippians which is the grace of God coming to us in the person of Christ, you're missing the focus on Christ throughout the book and, beloved, you're even missing the point in the whole context of that very verse because Christ is wrapped up in that command as well. Look at it there in verse 7, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds," where? I ask you, answer me, where? "In Christ Jesus." In Christ Jesus. Not viewing this command not to be anxious and to, you know, to steadfast prayer, oh, that's all good but you must understand it's in the context of who Christ is, who he is and who he is to us. He is our all and to rest in him as you devote all things to him in prayer is where the peace is. It's not a peace that is apart from Christ and somehow rooted in your efforts to pray harder. That doesn't work. There is no comfort in that because you know implicitly that your prayers are inadequate, your prayers are often cold and lifeless just like mine are. Sometimes you're not even praying and so the peace couldn't possibly rest upon your devotion and attention to the act of praying, it has to be in Christ first and foremost as the foundation upon which you stand, and as you are loving Christ and knowing him, then these other things flow.

Finally, are you afraid of the future and what may happen to you? Chapter 4, verse 19, "my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

There is no aspect of your life that Christ has overlooked. Let me say that again. I realize I talk so much and it's hard to keep equal attention on everything that I say. Christ has taken into account every aspect of everything that is important to you when he saved you. Every disappointment. Every sorrow. Every opportunity. Every success. All of it is wrapped up in the glorious grace by which he saved you and promises to be Lord and Master over you over all things. He has it covered. He will supply what you need. Now you may feel need for a time but that's the whole point. The need, the sense of need drives you to greater dependence upon this one who faithfully cares for his own.

So and we could have said a lot more, throughout all of these things it's Christ, it's Christ, it's Christ, it's Christ, it's Christ, it's the person of Christ. Beloved, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, more than a change in circumstance you need Christ. Christ is the answer to your uncomfortable circumstances and so you are to seek him not just his blessings.

What does that mean and what does that look like? Maybe you're here and you're not a Christian and you say, "Well, how do I tap into that then?" And why is it that Christ would hold such a preeminent place in our affections? By what prerogative does he assert himself as the Master and the sole object of our final affections in life? By what right does Christ do that? Well, it was Christ, wasn't it, that was crushed for our iniquities. It was Christ who bore the penalty of God's wrath against our sin. It was Christ who stood as our substitute at the cross in order to take away our sins. It was Christ who in love voluntarily gave himself up for that. It was Christ who in love laid down his life for you, even a sinner like you. We have no greater friend than Christ and all of our spiritual comfort, all of our spiritual hope, all of our spiritual satisfaction is found in him, not in what he can do for you. Oh, he'll do plenty for his true followers but that's not what we're talking about here this morning, we're talking about loving him first regardless of what he might do for us. So we think of Christ, Christ, God Incarnate, Christ humbled, Christ crucified, Christ resurrected, Christ ascended, Christ coming again, and all of that wonderful truth about who Christ is and his power and his ability and his intention to work out the eternal plan of God in redemption and to include you in the process, in that is everything that your soul needs.

So how do we tap into that? How do you receive him? How do you receive forgiveness of sin? How is it that you as a believer enter more fully into the satisfaction that is ours in Christ? Beloved, it's through faith. It's by trusting him. What is faith? Let me just define this for you real quickly in a conversational way, not in a technical lexical way. What is faith? First of all, you must know these things to be true, you must know them from Scripture and say, "Those things are true whether anybody believes them or not. This is what's true about Christ. Christ, God Incarnate. Christ humbled. Christ crucified. Christ resurrected. Christ ascended. Christ coming again. Christ the sin-bearer for His people. Christ the gracious One who sustains His people. Christ the righteousness of God given to me." You have to know those things. You must believe them. You must agree that they're true. Say, "I know this fact and I'm also persuaded that it's true. I know Whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. I know it and I agree with it."

Then finally, you commit yourself to him. Faith is not an emotional response or just a mere mental thought in the direction of Christ. It's not a sentiment, "Oh, I like these stories about Jesus." That's not it. Faith includes this aspect of consciously yielding yourself to the person of Christ in love. "Lord, I give myself to You. I give my affections to You. I love who You are. I love what You've done. That's what I want to live for. I am Yours. Take me and make me what You would have me to be." That's the sense of faith, a total commitment of your person to the total person of Christ.

So I ask you this morning, have you come to him like that? I realize that the working out of it in your life is imperfect as it is in mine, I get that but that's not what we're talking about here. What we're talking about here is do you recognize Christ like that? Do you own him like that? Do you receive him like that? Do you see him as the sole and final object of your highest affections? That there is a throne in your life that belongs to him that no one else could ever ascend to? That you love him more than you love life itself? That you love him more than spouse or children or grandchildren or money or whatever else it is that motivates you in life? Do you love him like that? That's what it means to know him. That's what it means to have faith in him and in the gracious plan of God, that kind of faith, that kind of response to Christ does this for you, it links you to him. It joins you to him. It unites you with him in a way that makes all of his love and all of his righteousness and all of the merit of his shed blood to belong to you and so that everything in Christ becomes that of personal possession to you, communicated to you through faith and believing in this Christ and loving and receiving him.

Now beloved, if in the eyes of God you carry credited to your account his righteousness and the forgiveness of all of your sins, you have everything that you need. If you are in the hands of a sovereign Christ who loved you like this, the answer to all of the dilemmas of life are found and resolved in that. "I don't know how these individual situations come out," you say to yourself, "but I belong to Christ. It has to come out well. Every aspect of it has to come out well in the end even if I don't see how that could possibly be true from where I sit."

So beloved, I have like two more sentences to say. This changes the whole way that you think about Christian salvation. You don't come to Christ for salvation and then move on to better things and move on to other things. "Oh, okay, I'm not going to go to hell now. Now I can live life like I want." We are going to see this so plainly as we go through these two verses again in the coming weeks. You don't come to Christ for salvation and then move on to better things, move on to Jewish rituals as though they could add something to Christ, move on to better higher affections, move on to other motivations in life. No, no, you come to Christ and you found your all-in-all and you have in Christ an inexhaustible fountain from which to drink continually day after day after day to find the satisfaction for your soul. Him, not what he can do, him. Him. Him. Him. Christ and his grace. And when you understand these things, beloved, then Christ, remember the six questions we walked through, I won't rehearse them again here, those are just representatives samples, and then to help us see that Christ in a vertical focused

perspective on him now determines how we think and live in response to everything.
Christ and him alone.

Let's pray.

Father, may it be so in each of our hearts beginning with mine. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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