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AI Summary

Chapter

Action Items

I Well, I want to invite you this morning to take your Bibles and let's turn to the book of Philippians chapter 1. And as always I ask you to pray for me that my voice will hold out and that my issues that I have sometimes it just disappears.

So we pray we will not do that this morning. And if it does I'll have Mike come up here and finish the message. All right? If you'll stand please for the read of God's word. I'm going to read Philippians chapter 1.

Begin in verse 20. We'll read verse 20 through 23. The Apostle Paul is the author of this short book. According to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing shall be ashamed but that with all boldness as always so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body whether it be by life or by death.

For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh this is the fruit of my labor yet what I shall choose I wot not for I am a straight be twix to having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.

I'm going to pray in just a moment. I also wanted to mention as far as countries are concerned I believe it'd be good for us to remember the country of Israel this morning. If you've seen the news you know what's going on there.

It's terrible situation. Many many Scott I think you said 500 this morning. 600 600 have had their lives taken there and of course their lives being taken on both sides. We need to pray for the families that the Lord will bring comfort.

All this is still not a very good situation. So we need to pray for Israel, the peace of Jerusalem this morning. Alright, let's do that. Our Father, we come to You, throne of grace, to ask for assistance that Your Holy Spirit will help us this morning to be able to deliver this message.

I pray that it will be a message that will make a difference in all of our lives. Father, we pray for Pastor Mark and Violet as they'll be traveling up this afternoon. We do pray that You will bring them safely back, bring them safely back.

Pray for the services tonight, the Bible study, and as we begin the study of the doctrines. We pray also, Lord, very special prayer for the country of Israel. Dear God, there's so much turmoil in that land.

Always has been, seems like there always will be, until you come again. We pray for those families that have been bereaved, please comfort them. And Father, we just commit this matter to you. The only thing we can do from here is to pray, to pray for Israel, the peace of Jerusalem.

And Father, we'll just commit that to you right now this morning. Bless this message. Speak to our hearts. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen. All right, please be seated. I'd like to begin by asking you a question this morning, as you see from your study sheet.

What does it mean to be a Christian? If someone asked you that question, what would be your answer? Follow the teachings of Christ. Follow the teachings of Christ. All right. How many of you know what homographs are?

I think I pronounced that correctly. Homographs, is that what it is, Tim? Homographs? That sounds close, right? All right. Homographs are words that are spelled the same way, but have different meanings.

For example, the word bear, B -E -A -R. Well, that word could mean to support or to carry. Bear is also an animal. That's a homograph. How about the word, L -E -A -D, lead? That means to go before or to show the way, but then lead, which is spelled the same ways, the type of metal.

How about the word fast? Think about that one for a minute. He is a fast runner. She broke a six -day fast. The train track was fast to the ground. In other words, it was fast and secure. The baby fell fast asleep.

The boy pulled a fast one. It means to play trick. An unfair trick to practice deceit. You know words mean different things to different people. When I say the word car, what's the first thing that comes to your mind?

A vehicle. Any particular model of car? What about the word bread? What comes to your mind when I say that word? Or the word pie? If you know anything about me, I love... Cherry pie. Okay? No, so remember that for next week's fellowship.

All right. How about the word cheese? Or the word love? What does that mean to you? Now, what about the word Christian? What does that mean to you? You know, if you were to ask 10 people, what does it mean to be a Christian?

I believe you'll probably get that many answers, right Scott? However, many people today do not know what a real Christian is, nor have they ever met one. Here in America, in 2023, well, to some people it means being a good moral person or living by the golden rule and doing the best that you can.

I've had many people say to me, preacher I'm doing the best I can. To some it means being a member of a certain denomination or church. Down through the 45 years of ministry, I don't know how many people I've had to say that to me.

Well, I'm a member of a certain religion. I go to a certain church. To others it means being christened or baptized. To some it means being religious. You know, the word Christian has been so watered down that it has lost its true meaning, like the word saved.

I read once about a horse that was saved. For instance, here are some responses that we might get if we ask them on that question. Are you a Christian? Listen to some of the responses. Yes, I made the decision to accept Jesus into my heart.

There's only one problem with that. You'll not find that in the scriptures. You'll not find that anywhere in the Bible. Nowhere does it say to accept Jesus into your heart. Doesn't say it anywhere. New Testament, the Old Testament.

Here's another response. Yes, of course I'm a Christian. I walked down the aisle during the invitation and I prayed the sinner's prayer. I've had some people in my ministry, in our ministry, prayed that prayer supposedly many times.

Yes, of course I'm a Christian. I'm a member of Yellowstone Baptist Church. Yes, I know I'm a Christian because I have the date of conversion written down in my Bible. Of course I'm a Christian.

I was born a Christian. I've had people actually say that. Or I was baptized into the Christian faith. I've always been a Christian all of my life. Of course I'm a Christian. I'm a Republican. By the way, did you know that there aren't going to be any Democrats in heaven?

There aren't going to be any Republicans either. Because there are no political affiliations in heaven. That's not what's going to get you to heaven. I'm a Christian because my parents and my grandparents are Christians.

I know I'm a Christian because I had a religious experience. And I felt something. I remember getting a tingly feeling all over my body. I'm a Christian because one night I had a vision of Jesus as he stood by my bed.

I'm a Christian because during World War, during one of the wars, I was in a fox hole. And I asked God if he would get me out safely, I would dedicate my life to him. I'm a Christian because I pray. I read my Bible.

I go to church every Sunday, sometimes twice on a Sunday. I'm a Christian because I love my neighbors and I treat them right. I pay my taxes, I vote, I'm involved in my community, I contribute to my church or to charity.

Many years ago, here's another one. Sure, I'm a Christian. Look at the cross I'm wearing. Now look at my tattoo. It says Jesus loves me or I love Jesus. Is that what makes you a Christian, folks? You know, many years ago, we were stationed in Columbus, Mississippi.

And Melody's mother came to visit us and she brought her friend with her, had the opportunity to share the Lord with her. And I asked her one day, I said, are you a Christian? And her reply was this, yes, of course, of course I'm a Christian.

I'm British. I'm not a pagan. Those were her exact words. You know, all of these responses sound good, but is that what it really means to be a Christian? So where does one go to find an authoritative answer?

Certainly not to religion with its multiplicity of gods and creeds and beliefs. If we want to know what it means to be a Christian, we must go to the one source that gives us the answer, the Word of God.

The Bible. God's precious word. In our text with just a few words the Apostle Paul tells us that to be a Christian is summed up in the Lord Jesus Christ period. He wrote this letter to the Philippian Christians while in prison during his first imprisonment in

Rome and the church at Philippi was it was the first Christian church founded in Europe by Paul during his second missionary journey.

The book of Philippians is a very practical book and it's the central theme of this epistle is rejoicing. All the way through Paul speaks about rejoicing in the Lord. In the four chapters of this book we learned that regardless of the circumstances in life we can be sustained by joy and experience the joy of living the Christian life.

In 2 Corinthians Paul also said this 13 verse 5 he said examine yourselves. He didn't say examine each other we're not to examine each other we don't know each other's heart. He said examine yourselves whether you be in the faith prove your own selves know you're not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you except you be reprobates.

My message this morning is about a call to examine ourselves and to help us do that let's ask the Apostle Paul. Paul what does it mean to be a Christian? And the first thing you'll notice on your lesson sheet to be a Christian is something personal.

He says for me for me for me to live is Christ. You see there must be a personal acceptance of Jesus Christ and we find the Apostle Paul's testimony in Acts chapter 9, when I go there and read it sometime, where one day he had a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ.

On a personal note, I became a Christian on March the 19th, 1972, while stationed in Keflavik, Iceland with the Air Force. And while attending a Bible study in the home of a Navy Chief, I heard the Gospel.

I heard that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he went to the cross and he died for my sins, my sins. And if I would repent of my sin of unbelief and receive him as my personal Savior, receive Lord and Savior, he would save me and give me eternal life in heaven.

And that's exactly what I did. I forgot my religious background. I forgot how I was brought up in a certain religion. I was born in France and that tells you a little bit something about the background, the religious background of France.

But I heard the gospel clear and plain and one must hear the gospel, the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. You don't become a Christian by proxy. Someone else can't be saved for you.

It's not good enough that your parents or your grandparents or your wife or your husband or your children are Christians. And that's wonderful. It's wonderful if they are. But you can't get to heaven on their salvation.

You don't get saved by joining a church. You don't get saved by being baptized or christened or by any ways mentioned in the examples that I gave. You must be born again and receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

But as many as received him, it's not a matter of receiving church membership. It's not receiving baptism. It's receiving a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. But as many as received him to them, gave him power or the authority to become the sons of God.

Even to them that believe on his name. Take your Bibles and turn to John. Would you, the gospel of John, and listen to what Jesus said to a very, very religious man. John chapter one and verse 12. But as many as received him to them, gave him power to become the sons of God.

God, even to them that believe on his name. Verse 13, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. In chapter three, verse one through three, there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

And the same came to Jesus by night and he said to him, rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him. And listen to what Jesus said to this religious man.

Jesus answered and he said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again. He cannot see the kingdom of God. You must be born again. John Bunyan, you've heard Pastor mention him several times, he's the author of Pilgrim's Progress.

He was an old tinker in England, not a sninker, an anchor, a tinker, somebody who fixed pots and pans. He commented that after he read Romans 8 and verse 13, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

And John Bunyan said that he knew that verse was meant for him personally. Because if the verse had said, for if John

Bunyan shall call upon the name of the Lord, he shall be saved. Well, John Bunyan said he would have wondered if God meant him, or maybe some other John Bunyan who had lived prior to him, or would live in the future.

But when he read for whosoever, he knew that God meant him. And that was the same for me, for the Gabe. And verse set for whosoever, and I put my name in there, for if Jean Paul Escalara shall call upon the name of the Lord, he shall be saved.

Put your name in there. Not only, pardon me, must there be a personal acceptance of Jesus Christ, but there must be personal accountability to the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, folks, when you and I stand before God, we will only have to give account for one person, me, and you.

You won't give account for your husband, wives, or your wife husbands, or your parents, or your children. We will give account for ourselves. We will not be able to blame our parents, or our spouse, or the preacher, or someone else for our failing to become.

a Christian. No one else will be responsible for the way that we live or didn't live for the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 14 verse 12 says, so then every one of us, every one of us here shall give account of himself to God.

And then there also must be not only accountability but there must be personal allegiance to Jesus Christ. You see, he must have our loyalty, our devotion, and our faithful commitment. He must have first place in our lives.

Does he have first place in your life? Colossians 1 -18 says, and he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence.

And that word preeminence means first place. Jesus must have first place in our lives. We have an allegiance to him. And then secondly, Paul says that to be a Christian is something practical. Notice he says, for me to what?

What does he say? To live. For me to live is Christ. That's practical. Every moment of life must be spent for Jesus Christ. C .T.. Studd was a British cricket player who became a missionary to China, India and Africa.

Anyone said this, maybe you've seen the little plaque. Some may have it in your home. Only one life to soon be passed and only what's done for Christ shall last. When it's all said and done folks, that's all that really matters.

It doesn't matter who you were as far as your personality, your prestige, doesn't matter about what you possessed in life. Only one life and only what's done for Christ will last. You see to be a Christian is to have Jesus Christ living out his life from within the heart of the believer.

You have your hymnal there? Turn to page 415, would you please? 415. I thought about this verse last night, this hymn. 415. Moment by moment. How many of you know this hymn? Anybody? Alright, good.

Dying with Jesus by death reckoned mine. Living with Jesus, a new life divine. Looking to Jesus till glory does shine. Moment by moment. Oh Lord, I am thine. Moment by moment. I'm kept in his love. Moment by moment.

I've life from above. Look into Jesus till glory does shine moment by moment, oh Lord, I am thine. We're to live for Jesus every moment of our day, every moment of our life. To be a Christian is something practical.

In Galatians 2 and verse 20 he said, Paul said, I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

See to be a Christian is to live in obedience to Jesus Christ, because he said in John 14 15, if you love me, keep my commandments. Notice what Paul said in verse 20, Philippians 1 and verse 20. According to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all bonus as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified or shown forth, glorified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.

You see Paul had said that he would not be ashamed of Christ. He would be bold for him and he would magnify him either in life or in death. Paul's Christianity was real and it was practical and he lived what he preached.

Show me a person who says that he or she is a Christian and yet has no time for God nor desires to obey God in his word. And I'll show you someone who may not be a Christian. Show me a person who says that he or she is a Christian and yet never goes to church, never prays, never reads their Bible and doesn't even want to be around other Christians.

And I'll show you a person who may not be a Christian. Show me a person who says that he or she is a Christian and cusses, takes God's name in vain, gets drunk, is unfaithful to their spouse, steals, lies, cheats and is dishonest.

And I'll show you a person who may not be a Christian. He said, well, let's go there. That's pretty harsh. No, that's Bible. It's only a person who says that he or she is a Christian and yet lives like the devil and I'll show you someone who may not be a Christian.

You see Paul said, for me, living is Jesus Christ. That's practical Christianity folks. Amen? You're allowed to say amen here I think. I've been here a year and I know there's something we do. And not only every moment but every matter of life must be shared with Christ.

You see so many people claim to be a Christian who claim to be a Christian. They live and act as if Jesus Christ did not even exist. He's not in their lives. They go on living never asking the Lord for direction for his will for their lives.

They think he isn't concerned about what goes on in their life. and that he doesn't care what happens to them. But dear friend, he does care. The Lord does care. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 5, 7, Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.

Your friends may forsake you. Your parents may forsake you. Your siblings may forsake you. But Jesus will never forsake you. He's always there. David said this, cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.

Your life matters to Jesus Christ. You're just not an accident in this world. Jesus has a plan for you. And you know what? We can share not only our burdens, but also our disappointments and our discouragements, our heartaches, our trials, our every area of life because he cares for us.

Third, Paul, what does it mean to be a Christian? Well, to be a Christian is something possible. He says, for me to live is Christ. That's possible. You know, sadly, there are many today who would rather say something like this.

Well, for me to live is money. Give me wealth and give me a big account. Give me a 401k and a great retirement portfolio. Someone else says, well, for me to live is worldly pleasure. Let's just eat and drink and be merry.

Now just live it up and go for the gusto. Well, but live it up today. For tomorrow we die. Someone else says, for me to live is self-gratification. I'm looking out for old number one. And it doesn't matter who I step on to get what I want.

Someone else says, well, for me to live is prestige. It's promotion. It's power. I want people to know who I am. For me to live is to have possessions and money. A big house, a big boat, a big car, and the list goes on and on.

Folks, every Christian should be able to say, as Paul did, for me to live is Christ. That's what it means to be a Christian. He's all that matters. In our Bible class this morning, we studied the book of James chapter three, which just begun, again, back in James.

And we sung to him, Jesus is all the world to me. You know what I think? That I have to ask myself, is he really, is he really all the world to me? In Acts chapter 11 verse 26, we're told, and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

You see, a Christian is someone who belongs to Christ. The word Christian actually means to be like Christ. To belong to him, don't use that word loosely if you're not living for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, you see the unbelievers they saw how the Christians lived. What do our friends and our families and our neighbors see in our lives? Did you know that someone's watching you every day? Your family is watching you, your friends are watching you, your foes are watching you.

And me? Do they see Jesus or someone who claims to be a Christian but is living just like they are? Doing what they do, acting like they do, talking like they do. The Christian life is available to all.

And one day, again, a very religious man came to Jesus seeking some answers and Jesus told him in John 3 .16, we all know that for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believed in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

You see folks, eternal life is available to everyone who will repent of their sin of unbelief and receive Jesus Christ as their Savior. John 10 .28 Jesus said, and I give unto them eternal life. 2 Peter 3 .9 the word of God says, the Lord is not slack concerning his promise.

As some men count slackness but as long as suffering to us, word, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. The Christian life is available. The Christian life is also attainable to all by all.

Some people say, well, you know, that's impossible. It's impossible. I've had people say this, pretty sure it's just impossible for me to live a Christian life. In frustration, they say, I've tried to live a Christian life and I just can't do it.

You know what I say? You're right. You can't do it on your own. That's why you need Jesus Christ in your life to live in you and through you. Only Jesus makes it possible to attain the Christian life.

And then number four, to be a Christian, Paul said, is something permanent. To die is gain. You see, to be a Christian is eternal. It's permanent. It's forever. If you place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, then when you die, you will spend eternity in heaven.

Eternity. Think of that. There are some people who believe that you can lose your salvation. I used to think that until I learned from God's word that my salvation was eternal. It's forever. You can't lose Jesus Christ.

And you know what? They don't have the assurance in their heart that they are eternally saved. I had another message that I thought of bringing this morning on the matter of blessed assurance. If you're saved this morning, you have eternal security.

That means you are saved forever. When Scott and I began going to Baptist Church, friends said, don't go to Baptist Church, they're all wacko. And they believe you can be saved once and you're saved forever.

Well, I found out that from God's word that was the truth. It's forever. It's eternal, John. They don't have assurance of salvation in their heart that they are eternally saved. And if you're not sure, then get it settled today.

Get it settled today once and for all. Eternity is permanent. And if you die without Christ, the Bible says, God says that you will spend eternity in hell. Eternity. You know, I can remember back to March, the 1972 I can remember shortly after that, speaking to some of my family.

And I remember some of them saying that my experience wouldn't last when I shared my testimony with them. Some said, but you are already a Christian. You were taken to church when you were a baby. You were you were christened.

You have made your first Holy Communion. You went to confession every week. Surely you're a Christian if anybody is. Paul knew, beloved, that when it was time for him to die, that he would gain far more than what he had lost.

He would gain Jesus Christ in heaven itself. He knew the person he would be with. with first of all, listen to what he said in verse 23, for I am straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.

He was hard pressed and torn between staying with these Christians or going to heaven. Verse 24, what about you? Are you looking forward to going to heaven? I can't imagine what how Paul felt. I mean, he wanted to stay with these believers and yet he wanted to go to heaven.

I remember during our first ministry in England, we were there for four and a half years, let that church started off with one young man, let that church to call a pastor four and a half years later.

And the hardest thing for me to do is to leave those people, to leave those believers. They didn't want me to leave. Of course, I wasn't going to heaven yet, but they didn't want me to leave. Can you imagine what Paul must have felt like?

Being torn between these two of going to heaven or staying behind for a while. Some people say there's no such places heaven or hell. Some believe in soul sleep or in isolation when you die. The truth is that either you go to heaven with Christ for all eternity or to hell to be with Satan and all God haters of Jesus Christ and rejecters of Christ for all eternity.

And then the last point. Not only did Paul know the person that he would be with but he also knew the possession that he would gain. Turn if you would please to 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy chapter 4 or jot this down if you want to look at it later.

2 Timothy chapter 4 and look at verse 7. Paul said, and this is the end of his life. This is the last epistle that he wrote. He said, I fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith.

Henceforth there's laid up for me a crown of righteousness. Which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me on that day.

Not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing. Paul had nothing to lose and everything to gain, didn't he?

Philippians 3 .8 he says, Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, refuse that I may win Christ.

And the word win simply means to gain. He knew that to be a Christian meant that Christ in heaven were his and would be for all eternity. He knew that it was a wonderful place and one day would be his permanent home.

There's a little chorus we saw and we learned years ago to youth camp. Heaven is a wonderful place. Anybody know that one, Sterling? Heaven is a wonderful place filled with glory and grace. I want to see my Savior's face for heaven is a wonderful place.

You know it now. What does it mean to be a Christian, folks? To be a Christian is something personal to me. It's for me. I don't know your heart. So have you ever seen yourself as a lost sinner on your way to hell?

And you repented of your sin when you heard the gospel. That Jesus loved you and died for your sins. Did you repent of your sin of unbelief? And place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Are you saved, folks?

One more verse here. Romans, the scholars tell me how much he loves the book of Romans. Carries it around with him and reads it all the time. Romans chapter three. And it's important that you look at these, mark these verses.

Romans chapter three, verse 10 and 11. And as it is written, there's none righteous. No, not one. Don't tell me that you're not a sinner. You were born a sinner. You were born a liar. So Psalms tells us there's none that understandeth.

There is none that seeketh after God. Look at verse 23. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Every one of us. Look at chapter five and verse eight. But God commended his love toward us and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Chapter six and verse 23. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And then one more verse chapter 10 and verse 13. For whosoever that's you this morning shall call upon the name of the Lord.

He shall be saved. Come to Jesus Christ this morning. Repent of your sin of unbelief. Ask him to be your Lord and savior to be a Christian, something personal. To be a Christian is something practical.

It's to live the life of Christ. To be a Christian is something possible to live as Christ. Are you trying to live the Christian life in your own strength? To be a Christian is something permanent. To die is gain.

Do you have the assurance in your heart friends, that you are saved and that you will spend eternity in heaven? I trust that you do. Can you say as Paul did? For to me, Paul Escalera, for me to live as Christ, to die is gain.

Here's a closing and final thought. Life is brief, but eternity is forever. Where were you spending it? Every head bow please. Let's pray together. Our Father we've tried to follow the Scriptures to preach the word.

I pray this message will make a difference in everyone's life. I pray that you would help us to do as Paul said, to examine ourselves. No one else can examine our heart, but we can examine ourselves in the light of Scripture.

Father, there may be some here this morning who may be a member of this church. But they've never ever repented of their sin. They've never trusted you as their Savior. They think that by being a member that they're going to heaven There may be some here who have been christened or baptized thinking that they may I'll be on their way to heaven Dear Holy Spirit, would you convict hearts this morning?

Help every person today to truly examine our hearts to see whether we be truly in the faith. Thank you for the Apostle Paul. Thank you for his Epistle to the Philippines Thank you for this text this morning. Lord, may you be glorified in our lives. And we ask all this in Jesus name. And God's people said Amen, if you're here this morning, you're not sure about your salvation.

You're not sure if you're really truly born again. Would you speak to me? Would you speak to me or someone here this morning? Let us show you from the scriptures. We've tried to do that already how you can know for sure that you are saved that you've been born again and that you're on your way to heaven. Amen.