

Last time we saw that to be a citizen of heaven means that you press on through all earthly trials, that you might attain (by any means possible) the resurrection from the dead.

Because “one thing I do”

I’m pursuing the resurrection, to make it my own,
because Christ Jesus has made me his own!

And as Paul turns to his conclusion, 4:1 functions as a hinge verse,
pointing both ways:

4:1 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

Not the “crown of life” (James 1:12/Rev 2:10) or the “crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:8), which scripture speaks of as belonging to all believers who persevere through suffering until the end.

But perhaps something closer to the crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4) that Peter says will be given to faithful elders at Christ’s coming, or that Paul refers to in 1 Thess. 2:19 –
“my crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming”

Paul has used the image of the runner pressing on – pursuing the goal – the prize – and now he uses the image of the crown – the victor’s wreath.

The crown is the public sign – the visible evidence – that Paul has not labored in vain (2:16).

4:1 functions as something of a bookend with 1:27, where he had urged the Philippians to let their “manner of life be worthy of the gospel” so that he might hear that they were “standing firm in one spirit.”

Now he concludes with the same exhortation to stand firm at the end of his epistle.

But he has some concluding exhortations to deal a problem in the Philippian church. And the problem is that the “mind of Christ” that he has been expounding is not evident in the church at Philippi!

1. The Problem: the Mind of Christ Is Not Evident (4:2-3)

2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. 3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

The problem is that Christians are being selfish.

I want you to think about what Paul is doing.

Paul is singling out these two women – by name –
for rebuke.

This is a public shaming *unparalleled* in Paul's other epistles.

Moises Silva points out that Paul is demonstrating great confidence in the Philippians
and in these two women.

He is confident that they will respond well to this public shaming,
and will do precisely what he says.

“As you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence
but much more in my absence,
work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,
for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Paul said that in 2:12-13.

Now he expects them to do it!

Plainly he thinks very highly of these women.

He says that they have “labored side by side” with him in the gospel,
“together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers,
whose names are in the book of life.”

This word, “to labor side by side,” is used earlier in 1:27
when Paul says that he wants to hear that the Philippians are
“striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.”

We have seen throughout his epistle

that Paul is concerned for the leadership of the church in Philippi.

He addressed the saints with the Bishops and deacons in 1:1.

His general concern with grumbling in 2:14
is now coming out in a particular application.

So how should we think about this leadership battle in Philippi?

Are Euodia and Syntyche leaders in the church?

The problem with the question is that we have a different model of leadership today!

There is no evidence in the apostolic churches for an “egalitarian” model of leadership.

Such a model would be highly implausible in the ancient world.

From patristic evidence, it appears that many churches had deaconesses –
and perhaps Paul's reference to Phoebe as a deacon in Romans 16
indicates that there was an apostolic root to this –
but they did not serve on an egalitarian “deacon board.”

Rather, in the early church deaconesses ministered to women.

I am not concerned about names and titles.

But I am concerned about the substance of this.
We need to have wise women who exhort and teach the women of the church.

Apparently, two of these women in Philippi were squabbling.
And Paul's exhortation to these women speaks not only to women today,
but to all of us:
I entreat Euodia
I entreat Syntyche
to have the same mind in the Lord.

This is that word "phronew" that we looked at last week,
when Paul said in 3:15,
*"Let those of us who are mature think this way,
and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you."*
He is not just asking them to "agree" with each other.
He is calling them to have the "same mind" that he spoke of in chapter 2.

And having the same mind does *not* mean that Euodia needs to agree with Syntyche –
or that Syntyche needs to agree with Euodia.

Paul does not choose sides here.
He tells them both to have the mind of Christ.

No doubt Euodia was thinking:
"Paul, you've got to show Syntyche that she's the problem!"
And no doubt Syntyche was thinking:
"Euodia just doesn't get it!"

But Paul doesn't fall into their trap.
How often does a pastor hear:
"Pastor, you've got to fix my husband!"
"Those people over there have got a real problem!"
Now, it's probably true – your husband needs to be fixed!
And yes, those people have a real problem.

But my heart sings for joy when I hear a man say,
"Pastor, I've got a problem –
I'm not loving my wife like I should."
I'm not glad that he's failing in his love for his wife!
But I rejoice to hear that he understands "I need to change" –
"I need the mind of Christ."

Likewise, Paul here sees that there is a problem among the women in the church at Philippi:
It's not just 2:12-13 that rumble in the background of these verses –
but also 2:14 –
"Do all things without grumbling or questioning."

Euodia, Syntyche –
 you are grumbling.
You are complaining about each other –
and your griping demonstrates that you are not thinking with the mind of Christ.

And Paul calls upon an unnamed “true companion” –
 as well as Clement and the rest of the church –
 to help these women.

Paul reminds us here that when we see our brothers or sisters quarreling,
 we must not remain silent.
The church must speak up and intervene in the dispute and call both parties
 to think with the mind of Christ.

Remember that!
 Don’t assume that you have to take sides!
 In fact, taking sides is usually the worst thing you can do!

But how do you help?
 I would suggest that Paul’s comments in verses 4-9 provide us with the solution:

2. The First Response: Rejoice in the Lord Always! (4:4-7)

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

There are three sets of imperatives in verses 4-6:
 Rejoice ... and in case you didn’t get it the first time, rejoice!
 Let your gentleness be known
 Do not be anxious, but make known your requests to God

It may seem odd to follow up an exhortation
 regarding the *failure* of the church in Philippi to demonstrate the mind of Christ,
 with a command to “rejoice” –
 but if it seems odd to you,
 then you haven’t yet grasped Paul’s point here in Philippians!

Think back over what Paul has been doing with joy in his epistle:
 Paul rejoices that the gospel goes forth – regardless of circumstances (1:18).
 Paul rejoices even to be poured out as a drink offering
 upon the sacrificial liturgy of their faith (2:17)
 and calls them to rejoice in this as well (2:18).
 Rejoicing in the Lord does not mean “putting a happy face on” –
 it means that you are glad and joyful because you have the mind of Christ!

Moises Silva points out that Paul’s call to joy seems a bit odd:
 “The threat posed by their opponents (1:28, 3:2, 18),
 their solicitous concern for the apostle in prison (1:18, 19; 4:10),

the trauma created by selfishness within the church” (Silva, 223)
all seem to fly in the face of “joy.”

How can we possibly rejoice in the middle of our circumstances?

But the reason for our joy is that Jesus has been raised from the dead
and seated at the right hand of the Father!

And that is why the joy that you should have is a joy “in the Lord.”

It is a joy in the Lord Jesus.

And note that the return of the Lord is also essential to this mentality:

5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;

The idea of “reasonableness” in verse 5 (or “gentleness” as some translate it)
is bound up with the idea of contentment that Paul moves toward later.

It is not that the word *means* contentment.

Epieikes means “reasonable” or “equitable” or “gentle.”

But the point here is that when you have the mind of Christ,

then you are not concerned with your own rights – your own agenda.

And so even when you have been treated unjustly,

you will humble yourself –

you will not worry about whether *you* are being treated fairly –

but whether you are treating *others* fairly.

You are not concerned that *others* treat you with “gentleness” (fairness) –
but with whether you treat others that way.

In other words –

this is *precisely* the same point that Paul was making in 2:2-4.

And besides, Euodia and Syntyche, what is the point of your rivalry?

What is the point of your contention and grumbling?

“The Lord is at hand.”

All through Philippians Paul has been referring to “the day of Christ.”

If “the day of Christ” is “at hand,”

if the coming of the Lord is near,

then why are you seeking your own interests?

What is the point of that?

And this emphasis on the Lord’s return then drives the final imperative:

*6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with
thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

Do not be anxious, but pray!

Do not be anxious – even about Euodia and Syntyche!

God has promised that he will complete his good work in us in the day of Christ.

So I'm not worried about Euodia and Syntyche.

God has promised!

So I press on – I pursue the goal.

When you have an eschatological mindset –

when you have the mind of Christ –

when the *one thing* that you pursue is the resurrection from the dead –

it is awfully hard to get riled up over the imperfections of life.

Because the one who has an eschatological mindset –

the one who has the mind of Christ –

knows Christ.

And if you know Christ,

then your response to the “everything” of life is to pray!

And how should you pray?

1) the root imperative here is “let your requests be made known to God.”

Tell God what your requests are.

Why are you worried?

Your God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ –

the same Jesus who has been given the name above every name –

the same Jesus whom you *know*,

and to whom you are being conformed.

So why are you worried?

2) “in everything, by prayer and supplication...”

In everything – in every situation you face – you should come to God.

Whether you face persecution, conflict, or anything else –

Pray.

3) “with thanksgiving”

Don't forget this part!

Indeed, if you forget this part, then you have forgotten the point!

If you neglect thanksgiving in your prayers and supplications,

then your prayers are simply another form of worrying!

Remember that what is driving your prayers (and what is driving the rest of life)

is the mind of Christ – this cruciform life of humility

that is driving relentlessly towards the resurrection.

And if his mind is driving you,

then you cannot possibly pray without thanksgiving!

Because if you are found in Christ –

if you *have* the righteousness of God that comes by faith in Christ,

if you are coming to know *him*, and the fellowship of his sufferings,
and if you are eagerly anticipating the resurrection of the dead,
then your prayers *must* be characterized by thanksgiving!

And when you have this mind –
this way of thinking – and indeed, this way of *praying* –
then truly,

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

I want you to think about this “peace of God.”
Notice first what this peace is doing:
it is *guarding* your hearts and minds.
That’s a strange thing – is it not?

The Peace of God will guard your hearts and minds.

In the Roman world, the *pax romana* (the Peace of Rome) was preserved by a powerful emperor who maintained such a powerful army, that no one dared challenge him.

Paul here proclaims the *Peace of God* –
Please understand that Paul is not talking about a sense of inner tranquility!
The Peace of God is not a subjective *feeling* –
it is an *objective reality!*
The Peace of God is the objective reality
that has resulted from Jesus being seated at the right hand of the Father.
Of course, the Peace of God does not *look* like the Peace of Rome!
It does not appear to the outward senses that Christ has triumphed!
Indeed, the outward senses would indicate that the *world* has triumphed –
and that Paul and his little band of Christians are out of their minds.
That is why this is called a peace *which surpasses all understanding*.
In light of Paul’s emphasis on *thinking* and *knowledge* in Philippians,
this is an important point.

As Moises Silva puts it:
“God’s peace transcends our intellectual powers
precisely because believers experience it when it is unexpected,
in circumstances that make it appear impossible:
Paul suffering in prison,
the Philippians threatened by quarrels within
and by enemies without.” (226)

And because this peace is an objective reality –
because Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father,
as King of kings and Lord of lords –
therefore we *should* have the subjective *experience* of that peace.

After all, that (*objective*) peace of God
guards our (*subjective*) hearts and minds

3. The Final Solution: Think and Do (4:8-9)

Verses 8-9 then conclude our passage with an exhortation to “think” (v8) and “do” (v9).
“think about these things” (v8)
“practice these things” (v9)

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Plainly, Paul says that thinking is *essential* to the Christian life –
but if thinking never results in *action* –
if you never get around to *practicing* these things –
then you are missing the point!

But again, notice how he starts with the thinking:

he starts with six “whatevers”
whatever is true
whatever is honorable
whatever is just
whatever is pure
whatever is lovely
whatever is commendable.

These six things would cause the Philippians to think of their Roman concept of virtue –
and in fact the word “virtue” (*arête*) is the word translated “excellence”
(if there is any excellence).

But while Paul uses the language of Roman virtue,
he is fleshing out what it means to be a citizen of heaven.

In effect, he is saying,
“you know what your culture thinks of as the highest pinnacle of attainment:
being a virtuous man – an honorable citizen –
well, I am calling you to something higher:
the virtuous and honorable life of a heavenly citizen!

“if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise,
think about these things.”

Consider these things – mull over these things.
I could go through them one by one:

whatever is true
whatever is honorable
whatever is just
whatever is pure
whatever is lovely
whatever is commendable,

but Paul's point here is not to get into particulars.

His point here is the big picture:

think about what is *good*.

Let your mind be filled with truth.

If you are filling your mind with lies –
that is bad!

If you are meditating on things that are impure –
that is a direct assault on the Peace of God.

If you say, "I'm not experiencing peace!"
then probably you are not thinking about what is true, just, and pure!

What are you filling your mind with?

When you have "spare time" in your life, where does your mind go?

What do you fill the odds and ends of your days with?

If your reply is, "I don't have spare time!"

Then let me ask – are you filling your life with things that are just,
pure, commendable, lovely, true, honorable –
from the standpoint of the kingdom of heaven?

You see, "think about these things"

is ultimately no different than "have this mind among yourselves."

The mindset of humility and self-sacrificial love

is still the mindset that determines what is just, pure, honorable, and true.

And, what is more,

it is not enough just to "think" about these things.

Otherwise he could have said merely "what you have heard from me."

But he says "what you have *learned* from me" –

this comes from the same root as the word for "disciple" –

the point of "learning" is not just an intellectual study.

The idea of "learning" here engages the whole person.

And the following three verbs reinforce this:

what you have learned

and received (not just that you listened to it – but that you received it –

let me ask you: are you just listening to what I say?

Or are you receiving it?

Does it become part of you?)

and heard

and seen (it is not enough for me to say it – I also have to live it!).
But what you have learned, received, heard and seen in me –
Paul says –
You are to practice these things.

You are to *do* them.

Look at the wise and faithful Christians that you have known over the years.
Think about what you have been taught.
Do what you have seen.

And Paul says that when you think about these things –
and when you put them into practice,
then the God of Peace will be with you.

Not just the “Peace of God” –
not just the objective new reality of Christ’s kingdom
(as glorious as that is!) –
but the God of Peace himself!

You see, the point of our salvation is not that someday we get to be like Jesus.
No, the point of our salvation is *God with us*.

Now, by his Holy Spirit –
the God of Peace is already with you!
And as you walk by the Spirit –
as you think and do according to the pattern that you have learned –
the God of Peace will be with you

Yes – there is a warning here!
As the Philippians have discovered!
If you grumble and quarrel and forsake the mind of Christ,
then the Peace of God is broken –
and the God of Peace will have to come and rebuke you!
But if you humble yourselves and take up your cross in love for Christ and others,
then you will find that the God of Peace has taken up his abode in you,
and his peace that passes understanding will guard your hearts and minds
in Christ Jesus.