

# Notes from Assistant Pastor Steven Driver's am sermon on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2022

## Series from Philippians "To Live is Christ" – Part Three "The Christian Life"

### Scripture references from the ESV

To live is Christ pt 3 – The Christian Life - Steven  
references from the ESV

Scripture

**Philippians 3:1-17** Finally, my brothers,<sup>[a]</sup> rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

<sup>2</sup> Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.

<sup>3</sup> For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God<sup>[b]</sup> and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— <sup>4</sup> though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:

<sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law,<sup>[c]</sup> blameless. <sup>7</sup> But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— <sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us hold true to what we have attained. <sup>17</sup> Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

Being a Christian is about more than knowing the basics and then just getting on with it, but it can seem like hard work hard to turn up for church on Sundays, read your Bible daily, come out to prayer meetings on a weekday evening and spend time in fellowship with other Christians. Paul shows us what living for Jesus looks like, how to do it and most importantly why it is worth it.

#### 1. What does living for Jesus look like?

Dwayne Johnson is a Hollywood superstar who has built his reputation around his physique, which is iconic. You might think that he doesn't need to work on his body anymore, but he knows that is not the case. Ahead of a full day's filming, he gets up 4 hours earlier than usual and goes to the gym to train. He does this because he is passionately pursuing his goal of being the ultimate Hollywood superstar and to do this, he knows that he needs to pursue and maintain his image.

Paul speaks of having the same passionate pursuit, but his goal is very different (vv12,14 above). Here he uses a word for 'pressing on' that comes from the same root as the word he used in v6 (above) to describe his zeal in persecuting the church earlier (Acts 8:1-3 see p4). He was at the centre of the persecution of the early church, until Christ revealed himself to Paul on the road to Damascus. Because of the work of Christ in his life, that same zeal has now been transformed into a passion for a different prize.

**Paul is passionately pursuing the ultimate prize.**

That ultimate prize is to have an entirely perfect fellowship and closeness with the Lord Jesus (vv10-11 above). Paul wants to know for himself the power that raised Christ from the dead. That is the prize that Paul is pursuing, despite knowing that this may come through sharing in the suffering of Jesus. Paul does indeed suffer for the gospel, but through all this hardship and self-denial, in the strength God gives him, he will know the power of Christ better. It will be the only thing left to him. Through this, he will become more like Christ.

**Paul knows he is not perfect but rather is a work in progress and so he passionately pursues Christ.**

**We should all be passionately pursuing the ultimate prize of fellowship with Jesus (v17 above)**

Paul is calling us all to put in the hard work, to know Jesus more and to be captivated by his power. He calls us

- To be willing to deny ourselves and perhaps even suffer due to our distinctive Christian lives, so that we fully rely on Christ's power and know Christ better
- To be in intimate fellowship with Christ so that we are fully aware of our need for him, and he becomes like the air we breathe.

**The Christian life should be full-on, going all-out for Jesus, not a half-hearted bare minimum.**

**2. How do we get started on that life (v13 above)?** Paul shows us what underpins his life, and this is the same for all Christians, regardless of the ministry they are called to.

**a) Forget our old self.** Paul has not forgotten his past. In fact, he details much of it in vv5-6 (above). However, he is saying that he is leaving it behind. He is not letting his old sinful life define him. We, too should act on this, yet forgetting our old self is incredibly hard to do because

- We have built a life of ungodly habits

- Our lives are informed by the culture that our old life was brought up in, and in which we still live

Paul knows he isn't perfect and still sins, but he doesn't hold on to his sin. He learns from it but he doesn't let the return of his old self define him.

**In whatever role we are serving God, we are called to forget our old self and not to let it define us**

**What do you let define you?**

- Where can you see yourself still being defined by how you were brought up, your culture and the people around you?
- Where are you still letting past sins take control of your life now? It might be something you thought you had dealt with, or that God would deal with but somehow it has regained dominance.

Paul shows us that we need to work hard and continually put those things behind us.

**b) Forgetting our old self and straining to what lies ahead (v13 above)** What lies ahead is the ultimate prize of knowing the fulness of Christ, the power of Christ and the intimacy of Christ. As Paul forgets his old life, he looks forward to the coming glory. All of his life is shaped by that looking forward. He makes massive adjustments to how he lives because he is focused on the ultimate prize. The future is what defines him now, and he is straining towards it. It is hard work!

The means of grace – going to church, reading the Bible, going to prayer meetings and so on – are hard work, but these are the things that help us to keep our eyes on the prize of full fellowship with Christ. We need to do what Paul is doing:

- straining toward the future, working hard, forgetting our old life and defining ourselves by what is to come.

We do this, not just by attending church, but by helping one another grow (v17 above).

We become examples to one another. At prayer meetings, for example, we learn to rely on the power of Christ to help us pray and this will encourage others to do the same.

Above all we get the view of this ultimate prize in the word. It is good to read the word as early as

possible in the day, so that you can fix your eyes on Jesus and have fellowship with him.

Then that is what defines your day, rather than what the world throws at you.

**3. Why do we do work hard at this?** The answer is because Jesus Christ has made us his own (v12 above).

**Paul knows that nothing in life is comparable to the worth of Christ.**

He had pursued many other things (vv4-6 above). He was a Pharisee held in high regard in his society. Not only did he follow the law, he also made others follow it. He was the epitome of Jewish culture, yet he counted it all rubbish

**because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord.**

Paul understood that no amount of work in his old life counted for anything. It is all loss.

You may remember seeing Arnold Schwarzenegger in his heyday. Then, he was Mr Universe, but no matter how much he has tried to maintain the same physical shape and fitness, the fact is that his body has decayed.

**Anything we pursue other than Christ will only end in loss.**

Our hobbies, talents and careers will all end. Anything we pursue that isn't Christ will never amount to much in the grand scheme of eternity. No matter what we have achieved, or feel we have achieved, the reality is that it is not worth as much as we think it is.

- Ask yourself what you consider to be success. It might be your family, sporting achievements, success in exams, or maybe your career.

None of these things are bad in themselves but they all count as loss or rubbish when compared with the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus. Paul understands that it is only

- because of Christ coming down from heaven to the lowest of the low
- because of Christ dying on the cross for all who trust in him
- because of Christ taking the place of all humanity

that he (Paul) is seen as righteous in God the Father's eyes and is granted eternal life with him forever. It is only because he is in Jesus. Paul knows that this is done simply by trusting, putting faith in Christ to know him for himself and knowing what he has done for him.

That is why he begins this passage with the command '**Rejoice**' (v1 above). We are to rejoice because Christ has gifted to us the ultimate prize – to be in fellowship with him for all eternity. It is not by our works but

**Because Christ Jesus has made me his own (v12 above)**

Paul passionately pursues Christ to make him his own because Christ has pursued Paul and made him his own. Jesus calls us to him to accept his free gift and grace. Jesus has done all the work and now wants us to accept this gift.

We need to let him envelop every facet of our being, killing off our old self, putting it behind us day by day, forgetting it. Instead, let us strain forward, looking to Jesus every day, in the knowledge that we will gain the ultimate prize of the glory of full fellowship with Christ. We will dwell with him, enjoy him and love him.

**We need to pursue Christ, to love him and to recognise that he is the only thing worth pursuing.**

**We give thanks to God that he has made us his own.**

**Acts 8:1-3** And Saul approved of his execution.

And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

<sup>2</sup> Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. <sup>3</sup> But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.