

Philippians 7

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[0 : 00] Amen. Now as we continue our progress through the letter to the Philippians, we have looked in the first part of chapter 3 how Paul is dealing with what we might call the Judaizers, those who are seeking to be, for want of a better word, legalists, as though somehow you could improve on the gospel by following certain outward rules and regulations and seeking, as it were, to gild the lily of the good news of Christ with outward legalistic observances.

And Paul is saying, oh, you've got to rejoice in Christ. You've got to rejoice in the Lord. And when you rejoice, it's because the victory is complete. And we looked at that last Lord's Day and how he himself could out-hebrew the Hebrews for all that he himself had the credentials of being one of the Jewish elite in his day and in his circumstances.

And yet he counted all these things to be but refuse, to be cast away in comparison to the glory that is in Christ Jesus. That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

He's quite content to die to self so that he might know the new life as it is in Christ Jesus. And then we begin at this verse 12 tonight. Not as though I had already attained.

Either were already perfect. But I follow after. He keeps, as it were, chasing, going after this vision, this promise, this hope. Not because it is an unreachable or uncatchable kind of will-o'-the-wisp sort of promise.

[1 : 44] But because the prize is in front of him and he knows there is yet further to climb. It is as though if you were hill walking and you get a certain distance up the hill and you stop for a breather and you look down into the valley and you see how much ground you've covered, you don't just sit on a rock and say, oh, that's great, I've done really well.

I've done so much well than I used to be. I think I'll just have my sandwiches now and then I'll stop and go back down. And oh, you can see there is more to climb. And you get on up and maybe there's always a false top, of course, whenever you're hill walking, you think you've got the top and then it's just a crest and there's more to climb.

And you get so far and you get so far. And he says, there's always more to be done. I may have reached high, but I've got to press on because I haven't reached the summit yet. Not as though I had already attained.

Either were already perfect. But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that, for which also I am apprehended in Christ Jesus. He is following after.

And there's so many different aspects of the scripture which point us to this. You know, in the Song of Solomon, remember, it says in chapter one, verse four, draw me, we will run after thee.

[2 : 56] The king hath brought me into his chambers. And there again, you see, you've got the idea of the beloved running to where our lover is. And yet at the same time, the king has already brought her into his chambers.

I follow after, if I may apprehend running after him, that for which I am apprehended in Christ Jesus. It's the two-way thing we were looking at this morning in the relationship of the beloved.

The one who asks, the other who responds. The one who seeks, the other who desires to be found. Draw me. We will run after thee. The king hath brought me into his chambers.

We will be glad and rejoice in thee. We will remember thy love more than wine. The upright love thee. Not because I am already perfect. Now this word perfect, this can be something of a problem to us.

Although Paul is saying he's not already perfect, but rather, you know, how could we ever be perfect? We have, in English, this word, which is of course originally a Greek word, it means

something different to what we translated as.

[4 : 02] We tend to think of the word perfect as meaning, you know, unimprovable on, absolute perfection. It can't be made, but spotless, stainless, singless. You know, we might say to one another, don't know why you're saying that to me.

You're not perfect. In other words, you're not without fault. And this is how we have tended to understand the word perfect. Without fault. Now, that's not inaccurate. But it's not the sense of what is meant by the original here.

The original is essentially, it's a perfection of a functional word. It's like if you're seeking to screw in a particular, screw into a piece of machinery, and you haven't got the right screwdriver, so you search through your toolbox, and then you find the right one, and it's just perfect for the job.

If you're needing a particular light bulb for a particular fitting, and you find the right one, it's perfect for the job. It's also in the sense of fully formed, fully matured, in the sense of the master craftsman is perfected.

He's fully trained. He's fully experienced. The apprentice is not yet, nothing wrong with his work. It's just that he's not yet fully graduated up to master craftsman status.

[5 : 17] If you've got a sapling of an apple tree planted in the ground, it's not yet fully formed. But you've got your old, fully formed apple tree with its strong branches, and it's bearing lots of ripe fruit.

It would be said to be perfect in that sense of fully formed, fully matured, the finished product. And because it is the sense of the fully prepared, the fully formed, this is what it means.

It's perfected. It's made mature. It's right. Now, Paul goes on to speak in terms of pressing on towards the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Again, he doesn't mean that he's perfect. An athlete, if you take that illustration, he's not perfect if he hasn't won the prize yet. And Paul says he hasn't got the prize yet.

But it's like an athlete who's spent his years training. He's fit. He's done all his dieting. He's done all his exercising. It's like he's waiting on the starting line with the other athletes and he's sort of bouncing on his toes and he's all tingling and he's fired up and he's all tense.

[6 : 22] And he is as prepared as he possibly can be. He is perfectly trained, perfectly ready to shoot off the minute the gun goes off. He is ready in the sense that if, you know, somebody like me yambled up alongside and said, hey, I can run alongside you.

Look, I've got the shorts. I've got the singlet. I've got the number on my chest here. I'm just as ready as you are. No, I'm not. He's fit. He's ready. He's tense. He's well-hardened, muscled.

He's all athletic and prepared. And I'm just moseying out of my home and just putting down my cup of tea and just ready to give it the best I can for about ten paces and so on. But he's fit.

He's ready. This is the sense of it. I'm not already perfect but I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

He has already done it but we want to strive towards that perfection. It's like 1 John says, chapter 4, verse 19. We love him because he first loved us.

[7 : 23] It's not a contradiction in terms. It's a response. I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Likewise, 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 5.

We who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. It's God who keeps us. God apprehends us.

But we want to apprehend what he's apprehended in us. He's already knowing us perfectly. Now we want to know him and plumb the depths of that love.

That's what Paul is saying here. There's also, if you notice, a slight distinction here that if I may apprehend, there's the possibility, the hope, that for which also I am apprehended in Christ Jesus.

There's the certainty, the fact. The one is a desire, a hope, a pressing on. The other is an accomplished fact. It's rather like if you're the first one across the line, let's say you're competing in the Olympics, there's two or three of you in the same team, and you get across the line and you've got the gold medal, but your other team members are coming on and you're really urging them on and you want them to cross the finishing line too and maybe get silver or bronze or whatever.

[8 : 43] You are the accomplished fact. They are the hope. They are the pressing on. They're seeking still to finish their course. This is the sense. Christ has done it all.

We desire now to reach that completion that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended in Christ Jesus. Now this, for the believer, should be great comfort.

The certainty of what Christ has done so that all our efforts and we try, yes, to obey him and to keep his laws and commands out of love and to show our love for him by how we try to live and witness and we know that we fail and we often fall and we often stumble but this is like the safety net for the trapeze artist.

We know that we fall but he is there to catch us underneath of the everlasting arms. He has done it and it's not that he's done it just in case we don't manage to do it perfectly.

We won't manage to do it perfectly but our salvation is not dependent on our stumbling efforts. Our salvation is dependent upon what Christ has already accomplished that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

[10:03] If you are saved, friend, you are saved because of what Christ has done for you and what he did on the cross 2,000 years ago long before you were born and what he decided was going to be done for you from all eternity long before this world was created.

That's how certain and deep and set in the mind and the heart of God is the salvation of those who will come to him by faith. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended.

I'm not finished here. I haven't yet gone to the prize but this one thing I do forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth onto those things which are before.

Now of course there is a sense in which there are some things we should never forget. We should never forget what Christ has done for us. We should never forget the bondage from which we have been delivered if we are trusting in Christ.

We should never forget what our state was before. You see the children of Israel when they were wandering in the wilderness they forgot what the bondage was like in Egypt.

[11:13] They forgot the misery from which they had been delivered. And as a result he said oh if only we could go back to Egypt. We remember all the different kinds of food we used to eat there.

We remember the fish and the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the yuns and the garlic and how tasty the food was and we sat by the flesh pots in Egypt and here we got nothing but this manna.

And they forget that the Lord has delivered them from that bondage because they cried to him for it. And he feeds them every day and he gives them water from the rock and he provides for them.

But they forget that. They forget their old sin and they forget their deliverance. Some things we should never forget.

What Christ has done for us and the debts in which we have been delivered. But what the sense of it means here is we shouldn't be resting on any supposed lawless.

[12:09] We shouldn't think well you know I did lots of good works you know three years ago and I'm entitled just to sit and take it easy now you know I don't have to try if you are to get across this finishing line you know I'm okay I'm no worse than anybody else I can just take it easy forget whatever you may have done in the past that you think was good.

Whatever you may have done as a Christian think well I was a good Christian you know if that's in the past still used to you now. It's like you know it's like somebody saying well I cooked a brilliant meal for you three weeks ago why are you still hungry?

We have to keep eating. We have to keep feeding our bodies and we have to keep feeding our souls day by day forgetting those things which are behind. You see if you don't forget the things which are behind.

If you keep looking back you keep on looking behind you thinking oh if only I was back there if only I was back in those days. Remember Lot's wife remember how in Genesis 19 you know she looked back to Sodom because she longed really for the old life there was turned into the pill of salt.

Remember what Jesus said about the one who putting his hand to the plough and looking back Luke chapter 9 verse 62 is not fit for the kingdom of heaven. The greatest the best that the Lord has for us is ahead it is before us whatever may be in the past yes the Lord blessed you with that great many blessings and many good things the Lord has done.

[13:35] These may be cause for thanksgiving they may be cause for encouraging us to know that God doesn't change and as he has provided he will provide. We should never forget his deliverances.

But we cannot keep looking back as though the good days were always behind us. It is like Ecclesiastes says you know all these thousands of years ago say not in thy heart what is the cause that the former days were better than these.

Well I was not inquired wisely concerning these things. It's part of human nature to say oh I remember when I was young things were better than they are now and they seem to be the case. It doesn't seem to be the case for those who are younger than us now. For them this is the best time there's been and the future opens up. We may look increasingly to the past as we get older because a greater portion of our life is there but the best of our life is yet ahead of us if we are in Christ.

I can't not myself go to apprehend it. I haven't got to the summit yet brother. I may be three quarters of the way up. I may be within sight of the care but I haven't got there yet.

[14:48] this one thing I do forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Now some commentators would say that here what Paul is doing is he is speaking against what is called the antinomians. Now that's a big long word. It means those who are anti any kind of law. The word nomos is from what means law like Deuteronomy means literally second law in the book of the Bible. It's really reiterating much of what you have in Exodus.

So nomos is law. Antinomian is people who don't want any kind of law. We're saved in Christ. We can do as we like now. We don't have to worry about commandments. We don't have to worry about doing this or doing that just because God said it once in his word.

We're free in Christ. We can do whatever we like. I'm my own boss now that I'm saved. I do whatever I like. I'm saved by grace. God loves me anyway. Nothing that I do is going to put me beyond God's love.

[15:53] God is going to forgive whatever I do. So I just do whatever I want. This kind of easy believism that doesn't make any demands of the believer that lets him just sort of float along downstream and say hey I'm going to have a eat anyway.

It's all nice and easy ozy. Paul says this is not what it's like. It's a striving. It's a pressing on toward the mark. You notice how previously in the chapter he's been dealing with the legalists you see. Those who think oh no the gospel alone isn't enough. Christ alone isn't enough. No you've got to have the laws. You've got to have the commands. You've got to have these things. That's how you please God.

No what Christ has done has pleased God. These extra things we do we do out of love. We do out of obedience and desire to please him to show our love for him but he has done it all already.

The antinomians those whom Paul is speaking against now they say hey it doesn't really matter. The legalists don't worry about that. We just do whatever we want. We just go with the flow.

[16:57] Both these extremes are wrong. Christ has done it all. We are apprehended of Christ and now we want to apprehend him. But to do that, that takes all that we are pressing towards the mark.

Think of the athlete again. Quite often in the Olympics you see them as they get near the tape, especially if there's a bunch of them getting near. You see them pressing on them, pushing their necks forward and their arms behind so that their neck or their chest will be the first one over the tape.

And if somebody's just running upright, the guy's straining forward, he'll get over the tape first.

They're straining every nerve and sinew to get over the line to get there first.

This is what it is. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He was clawing it through the air. And sometimes they say about Eric Liddell, the old Scottish runner in the twenties, that when he ran, he ran really ungainly, not with any kind of slick, smooth, streamlined motion.

And as he got nearer and nearer to the tape, he would go like this, as if he were clawing the air and windmilling his arms to get himself over the finish line. Now he won his races, of course, so you can't say, oh, what a rotten technique.

[18:15] You can't slag off the guy who gets the gold medals. But it wasn't a streamlined technique, it was all sort of like this, all rough and windmilly like that. Now he's like, he's clawing at the air to try and get himself over the line.

This is the sense of it. If this is the highest prize that heaven and earth can offer, then it is worth clawing the air for.

It is worth pressing on with every fiber of our being that everything we do is in some way devoted to Christ, devoted to the Lord.

We don't obey the law because, oh, we're afraid of putting our foot wrong and, oh, we live in fear of a big tyrant God that'll just zap us with a bolt of lightning if we step over the lines of some commandment.

We seek to obey the law and to love. It's like if somebody says, oh, thou shalt not commit adultery, but if you happen to be besotted with the love of your life and our man, you don't have to worry about being tempted by somebody else.

[19 : 19] If you're completely loved up with the person that you happen to be with, adultery is not a problem because you're not tempted with somebody else. You want to give yourself completely to that person.

You want to love them with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. When God commands things, if we love the Lord, we desire to do these things out of love for him and every part of our being, Paul says, we press towards the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, and again, back to this word perfect, it means fully grown. those who are matured in the things of the Lord.

Those who are, perhaps he's talking about leaders in the church, perhaps he's talking about those who are mature, senior Christians. He means to fully grow, be matured in Christ.

Be thus minded. But we have to strain for this Christ. And if in anything you get otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Now what he means is there might be those of you who are genuine, sincere, honest Christians, but who perhaps in reaction to the legalists and the Judaizers have said, no, we mustn't go down the route of trying to keep the law and everything.

[20 : 43] So we go to the other extreme. We don't do any of it. We just forget any kind of laws or commands. They say, look, we can see that your heart may be honest and genuine, sincere, but you're revering way too much to the other.

It's like, you know, if you're trying to avoid cars coming towards you, so you veer too much to the left and you end up with one wheel in the ditch, that's not safe driving either. So you've got to avoid both extremes.

And if you're tempted one way or the other, if you're sincerely asking the Lord for guidance, God will reveal even this to you. He'll show you the safe way, which is to focus on Christ.

And focusing on Christ will keep you faithful to God. It will keep you faithful to his commands without even knowing it almost. It will keep you desiring to honour the Lord and his house and his worship and his word and his day.

It will keep you in the love of Christ if you truly are asking the Lord to guide you. God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, where to we have already attained, let us walk by the same road.

[21 : 52] Let us mind the same thing. We may have differences of opinion, he says. We may have a, some may veer one way, some may other, different tastes or desires within the church of Jesus Christ.

But we've come this far together. And what he's saying is when he says walk by the same rule, mind the same thing, it's almost like a military analogy. We've had the athletic kind of analogy before.

Now this is a military one. It's like soldiers walking, marching in step. Sometimes you might see on TV like, you know, the Trooping the Colour or whatever. You see the guards all in their ranks and their immaculate footwork and turning this way and that way all together like a machine.

He says, that's the kind of footwork. They can march in step. Let's keep together. Mind the same thing. Walk the same rule. Mind the same thing.

So that we keep together. Whatever differences we may have, let's keep together as far as we have gone thus far and see that we try and do so in love for one another.

[22 : 53] Brethren, be followers together of me and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example. Now, that's a big idea. That's a heavy one.

There's not many preachers who would have the courage to say, listen everybody, if you want to know how to be a true Christ, look at me. Look at what I do and follow my example.

We would all think, James, I wouldn't dare to say that. I would say, yes, you can trust the truth of what I say, but my life isn't exactly that which would be a suitable example.

But if you think of it, it ought to be. All of us ought to be so living as if others were to look at us and say, well, that guy's a Christian, that woman's a Christian, you know.

Then say, yeah, well, I can't actually find anything in them that's really at fault. Like saying, well, they do this, so they do that, but it doesn't actually say in the Bible that you can't do these things. It doesn't actually say these things are a sin, but, you know, we ought to be able to be living advertisements for the gospel.

[23 : 55] And Paul is obviously confident in himself. You know, and he turned to chapter 4, verse 9, those things which ye have both learned and received and heard and seen in me do, and the God of peace shall be with you.

Now, on the one hand, to us, that sounds, well, that sounds a wee bit conceited, doesn't mean, it sounds a huge kind of claim to make, but all he's really meaning is in the absence of, you know, people didn't have Bibles in their pockets in those days.

The scriptures that they had were the Old Testament scriptures in parchment, scroll, form, which most of the synagogues had. They might have copies themselves, or they might have portions of letters written by apostles, or portions of gospel accounts, but they didn't have much.

They really had to rely on the faithfulness of the oral teaching of the apostles, handed down, unchanging, from the apostles, from Christ to the apostles, and so on to the church.

It was vital that that oral spoken teaching was not diluted or mixtured with the paganism around them. And Paul is really just saying, look, if you want to know how you should live, do as I'm doing.

[25 : 18] And we think that still sounds a wee bit kind of conceded to us, but no, think of the context. People are anxious, they're confused. How should we live as Christians? What should we do and not do?

He says, well, how about if we do this? He might say, well, look, I'm the guy that brought Christianity to you. I'm the guy that brought the gospel to Philippi. Do you see me doing that? And they would say, well, no.

Is that a problem? Well, no. You do what I do there. And if he's very particularly diligent saying, devotional life or public worship or whatever, and they say, well, do we really need to do all that?

You say, well, do you see me doing it? Well, yes, we do. Okay, fair enough. Do as I'm doing. If you want to know what the example is, I'll set you the example. You follow my example.

Now, this is not just a conceited claim. It's Paul, if you like, disciplining himself and recognizing that people are looking to him, not only for teaching, but also for their living example.

[26 : 21] Well, if we don't know whether we should do it or do it or not, or maybe we should or maybe we shouldn't, what did Paul do when he was here? What was his example? What was his kind of witness?

And they didn't come up with things like, oh, yeah, but you know, times have changed and things have moved on and so on. What did Paul do? It is the everlasting gospel.

There is the unchanging truth. Yes, some things have to adapt to the outward situation, but the core truth doesn't change. God's command doesn't change.

Putting Christ first doesn't change. Where to we have already attained? Be followers together of me and mark them which walk so as he have us for an example.

What he means is look around. Look around at your church leaders and look at us. Look at me, Paul, and those who taught you the gospel and take us for your example.

[27 : 17] Now, the next couple of verses are in brackets and remember what we said about parentheses, brackets in the past. The sentence has to make sense even without the brackets.

brackets. So, the flow of what is taught would be going straight from verse 17 to verse 20. We'll come to verse 20 in a minute. But really what it's saying is, brethren, be followers together of me.

Mark them which walk so as he have us for an example. For our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the Savior, the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. So, that's the flow of it.

But, he breaks in the middle just to say, many walk of whom I've told you often and now tell you we can be the enemies of the cross of Christ. Now, the first thing we need to see here is there are many who are going the wrong way.

Paul is not appealing for majority consensus here. He's not saying, well, all sit down and we'll take a vote on it and whatever the church decides that must be the will of God inspired by the Holy Spirit.

[28 : 19] No, he says many are walking to the contrary Now, Exodus talks way back in the law. In Exodus chapter 23 verse 2 it says, thou shall not follow a multitude to do evil.

Neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to rest judgment. Just because there's a majority doesn't make the majority right if they are departing from Christ, if they are departing from

what he has taught.

Many walk of whom I have told you often now tell you weeping they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Notice though also after the many it's to walk their manner of life which is at fault.

He's not saying the stuff they're teaching, it's heresy. Their words really dodgy. Listen to all the poison coming out of their lips. That's not what he's saying. Let's go back again to chapter 1 where he says, many of the brethren, verse 14, in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds, but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.

[29 : 42] He is not saying anywhere, some of them, their teaching is really dodgy, they're coming out with all manner of heresy, ignore what they say. Clearly what is being taught, what is being spoken, is the truth, but the manner of life doesn't back it up.

Many walk, of whom I have told you often. Many in their life deny what they supposedly believe, and this again is the problem, the danger.

Paul was dealing with particular heresies that come into the church, some of which were focused on a group called the Gnostics, which claimed to have a superior knowledge, and there were two different sort of groupings in these people.

Some took the line, or you could say three groupings, one divided into two, that the body was bad, the body was physical matter, the spirit was what mattered. So if the body, the flesh is bad, then it doesn't matter on the one hand, whether you starve it, or whether you're real ascetic and just sort of constantly are fasting and going on pilgrimages or whatever, and long times in prayer, just neglect the body altogether, because the body doesn't matter.

It's just matter. Matter doesn't matter. Sorry, no pun there, I'm telling the repetition intended there. But as far as the other side were concerned, the body doesn't matter, flesh doesn't matter, so you can feed it, you can glut it, you can indulge it, you can do whatever you like, because the body's just flesh, it's just going to die and melt away.

[31 : 17] It's the spirit that really matters. So this was part of the danger, that their walk did not reflect the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. The honour that Christ had put upon the physical body by becoming flesh, they ignored.

And also the godliness with which they were called to walk, they ignored that as well. There was another more sinister element that believed that in order to be a fully formed human being, you had to experience all the good that life had to give and all the depths of evil.

You had to plumb the depths of every depravity and sin and corruption so that you could experience it. Now I think this is partly what is meant by one of the, I can't remember which offhand, it might be Thyatira, but the offhand of the seven churches in Revelation.

This talks about those who have known the depths of Satan, those who felt that they had to plumb the depths of corruption so they could say, well, yep, I've experienced that now, what's the next thing?

Tick the box. Find out what else has to be experienced to make me a full human being. Now a human being is complete in Christ. Not in the depths of depravity or sin or indulgence or a world, a man or a woman is made what they were designed and intended to be when they are complete in Christ.

[32 : 46] And outside of him, they are incomplete. And all the sin and indulgence of the world will not compensate for being out of Christ. And it's like, you know, if you've got some new electrical appliance, whether it's a blender or a kettle or a post or whatever, yeah, oh, look at his name, lovely, shiny, new, it's just brilliant, this is going to be so good.

But you never plug it in. And you never get the power source. So the kettle never boils the water and the toaster never makes toast and the blender never blends because it is not plugged into the power source.

It's not able to do the thing that it was designed to do. It was only ever going to be able to do that if it was linked up to the power source and switched off.

So likewise, we are only ever going to be complete when we are complete in Christ. We are only going to be the fullness of manhood, of womanhood, of humanity when we are complete in Christ, plugged in to the power source, the ultimate power source, switched in to that which Christ alone can give.

Many walk of whom I have told you often. Remember what he said in verse one. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord to write the same things to you.

[34 : 07] To me indeed is not grievous but for you it is safe. In other words, I've said this again and again and again. I've warned you often and I now tell you again even weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly.

In other words, the feeding of the flesh, they're just sort of indulging the flesh, whose glory is in their shame. You would think they would be ashamed of the things that they are proud of. Now we see plenty of that in the world.

We see plenty of it sadly in some branches of the church. That which ought to be the ultimate shame becomes the glory of some people saying look at the things that we embrace.

Look at how tolerant and broad-minded we are. Surely we are showing the love of Jesus in embracing all these things with our inclusive love.

They are the enemies of the cross of Christ. What does it Jesus means when he says take up the cross? It means that you put these things to death, these old sins, these old ways.

[35 : 13] Christ is calling us to a newness of life, to a purity, a fullness of humanity, of manhood, of womanhood, which we have only in him.

They are the enemies of the cross of Christ because they don't want a cross at all. They just want the indulgence in the world and enjoy the good things of the world and indulge the flesh to the full and all the good things of this world and at the end of the day we'll just toddle into heaven and the door will be thrown wide open and say come in, yeah, welcome because you just took it on trust and you enjoyed all that I gave.

The Lord loves you, brother. Now Christ does not call us to such indulgence. He calls us to the giving up of ourselves completely to Him, to that straining and striving for the prize whereby all these other things that clutter and weigh us down have to be put behind us.

It's like the athlete. If I'm standing next to the athlete who is trim and hard muscled and slim and fit and healthy and I'm standing next to Him and I'm looking up a sort of mid-riff that's sort of jelling a bit and he's really slim and hard muscled and he's got his abs and toned body and everything.

What is it that he's got that I don't have? He has shed the softness, the jelly, the indulgence, the laziness so I'd say of my way of life to His.

[36 : 45] His athletic discipline, His self-discipline, and His giving up of the easier life so that he can devote himself to his intended goal.

The prize is before him. The prize is just an additional bonus to me in my unfit state but this is the case here you see. The end is destruction because they think that, you know, that godliness is just sort of indulging the world and the flesh whose God is their belly.

They just want to satisfy the flesh rather than the spirit. Whose glory is in their shame remind earthly things as though this world is the main world and eternity, well, you know, we don't really have to believe in that and we don't really believe what the Bible says because it's all just kind of myth and it's sort of a deep human truth that's being expressed in an imaginative way and so on whose end is destruction remind earthly things.

this earth, as we said in the morning, is passing away. It is the temporary thing which is finite.

Immortality, eternity is that which lasts and Paul says if you want to know how to live, look at us for example because our citizenship, our conversation, and that's what the word means, citizenship, is in heaven.

From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, this term citizenship, this would have rung a bell instantly with the Philippians because they were a colony of Rome.

[38 : 25] That's what we found when we looked at the background to Philippi at 16. We sailed, chapter 16, verse 12, from thence we sailed to Philippi which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia and a colony and we were in that city abiding certain days.

A colony wasn't just a sort of little plantation of foreigners in a faraway land. For the Romans, a colony was planted at strategic locations, at crossroads and at ports and at main centres and what they did, as we mentioned a few weeks ago, is they would take retired soldiers who'd served their maybe 21 years in the services and then they'd be granted Roman citizenship and there they'd be plumped and they would build Roman buildings, they would dress in Roman style, they would make a Roman environment, they'd all speak Latin and they would completely Romanise the entire city.

It became a colony in the sense that it became a little piece of Rome. Wherever they were throughout the Roman Empire, from Carthage to Carthage in North Africa or from Scotland to Syria, it would be the same little kind of replica of Rome with its citizenship and its colony and they were expected to conduct themselves as though they were in Rome itself.

By Roman laws, with Roman speech, Roman dress, Roman culture, everything. It was a little piece of Rome wherever it went. Now this is the kind of citizenship of Rome.

They were equal citizens of Rome just as those who lived physically and geographically in Rome. Our conversation, our citizenship is in heaven. In other words, although we're not there yet, we are like this little Roman colony.

[40 : 16] We're a little colony of heaven. You think, wow, James, that's a bit of a heavy claim. But no, we are meant to live as those who glorify, serve, and love the Lord do in heaven.

Well, James, what's your justification for saying that? Jesus is. This is what he taught his disciples to pray. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

This is a little chip off the old block. A little piece, not of Rome, but of glory, is what the Lord's people are meant to be here upon earth.

They are like little shards of light having been chipped off the sun of righteousness. descending into the earth where they make little pinpricks, little dots of light in the darkness where we show the light of God's love.

It's what we're meant to do. We're meant to live as those who are heavenly minded, whose citizenship, whose belonging is not here. We may be in a far-flung country like Philippi in comparison to Rome, but really our citizenship is in a far greater city than Rome.

[41 : 31] Our citizenship is in heaven. For whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is our Caesar. This is our emperor, our king, who will come again to receive us unto himself, who shall change our vile body.

The word we have translated as vile, it doesn't mean icky, it means in the sense of cheap, worthless. Now, it's not that our body is worthless because it is that in which we will be raised, but rather, if you think of how many of your problems are bound up with your physical body, if you have aches and pains, if you've got sore knees or joints, if you have trouble with your skin or with your breathing or with your eyesight, if you have difficulties of old age or of childhood or if you have a leftover complaint from an illness you had long ago, all of this is because of the fallenness, the decay, the difficulties, the limitations, the imperfections of the body.

Now, that is the sense in which this body is just a whole bundle of trouble. It is essential as the receptacle for the soul, but at the end of the day, when we slow it off, when we receive at last our resurrection body, which will be perfect, how many of these problems we just won't have.

We will be free of the constrictions and difficulties of this body. We shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.

This is the body in which we have endured our humiliation, our lowness here upon earth. But we will have like his glorious body, his resurrection body, perfected, beautified, made whole, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

[43 : 38] All things. There's nothing in heaven or earth or hell that Christ doesn't conquer. he conquers the devil who has the power of death. So we read in Hebrews 2 verse 14, for as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, which we are, he also himself, Jesus, likewise took part of the same.

He became flesh and blood. That's what Bethlehem is about. That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death. That is the devil.

The devil has the power of death, but Christ destroys that. He overcomes that. He doesn't just overcome the one who has the power of death, he overcomes death itself. 1 Corinthians 15 verse 54, so when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Or we read at verse 26 of that same chapter, the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself, even death itself.

[45 : 05] this is the prize. This is the thing that is worth striving for, the crutch, the fulfillment, the goal, the objective of it all, to strive for it, to put all other things behind us, and to work on towards that, and that anything that gets in the way of that has to be put behind us.

Anything that obstructs, or that complicates, or gets in the way, has to be pushed aside, that we may strive on for this prize, this fulfillment, this glory, which is worth having, worth having now in this time, worth having forever in eternity.
Let us pray.