

A Christ Mindset

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[0 : 00] That's Philippians chapter 4, starting at verse 2. I plead with Iodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me, put it into practice and the God of peace will be with you. Brilliant. Well, good evening. Let me have my welcome to Jack's. It's great to see you all.

[1 : 44] We're almost at the end of our series in Philippians this evening, and we're going to see how Paul starts to tell this church to put all that they've heard in this letter into practice together.

And we're going to specifically look at what it means to have a Christ mindset as a church together. So before we get into this, let me pray. Father, speak to us as we open your word this evening.

By your spirit, help our hearts and minds to focus on you. Help us to understand and share the mindset of Christ as you guide and teach us. Amen.

Amen. When you believe the gospel, it shapes every part of your life, or at least it should. Knowing the truth about who God is, the salvation that we have through Christ on the cross, and of course, all that the Spirit has done in our lives changes not just our actions, but also how we feel and how we think.

The gospel doesn't just shape what I do, it shapes who I am. And Paul, for this letter, has been calling this church in Philippi to have the mindset of Christ, not just to do Christian things, but to have a Christian worldview.

[3 : 01] Now, this makes sense to any one of these Greek Philippians. They've had to shift their entire understanding to factor in this God of the universe that they didn't know before. Every part of their life and every part of their world has been altered, because now they see God's fingerprints absolutely everywhere.

Having the Christ mindset means the gospel becomes the lens through which they see absolutely everything else. This Christ mindset was made clear in chapter 2, when they were told to have the mind of Christ, and that meant to live in obedience to God by following Christ's example, giving up their own importance and status in order to live and serve others.

This isn't a command lived out in a vacuum either. We know that the Philippians faced significant pressure and persecution, and Paul himself is writing this letter from prison. Living a life worthy of Christ isn't going to be easy.

Taking on that mindset is going to be a real challenge. But as Christ has already given himself for them, so they will be able to live patiently serving him in their lives together as a church.

So the question I have for us tonight then is, if all this stuff about the mindset of Christ is true, how do we put that into practice here? Well, we'll launch straight out the gates from verse 1.

[4 : 21] Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown, stand firm in the Lord this way, dear friends. The last verse of the passage we looked at last week is that wonderful reminder that actually the relationship between Paul and his church is incredibly warm, one of real love.

So what does Paul want for these beloved brothers and sisters in one of his favorite church plans? Well, we're going to see the mindset of Christ working out in three ways. Having a Christ mindset in our church will mean, will bring unity in conflict, peace in trial, and discernment in our culture.

So having a Christ mindset together will give us unity in conflict, peace in trial, and discernment in our culture. So our first point then, having Christ's mindset brings unity in conflict.

Now, of course, we know that as we walked through the church this evening, we immediately felt totally connected to everyone in the room, and there was no aggro, and there's never been any division between us whatsoever. Yeah, not really, let's face it, that's not true.

Now, we are united in Christ. All who call each other believers here are united, but it's just not as easy as that. The God of the gospel is real, the gospel is true, and church unity takes real effort.

[5 : 46] Put a load of sinners in the room together, you just get conflict. That doesn't mean there's something wrong with the gospel, it just means there's something wrong with us. Living this out is hard, it takes real effort.

But the good news is that in this Christ mindset, we have powerful unity. Now, imagine you're in the church in Philippi, and this letter from Paul is being read out publicly.

Euodia and Syntyche are sitting at either side of the church, arms folded, kind of shooting each other the odd slight glance from across the room. And all of a sudden, they get to chapter 4, and someone literally says their names out loud.

Imagine the shock, getting this letter from Paul, and someone saying your names, just like bolt upright, going, what is he about to say? Oh my word. And yet, they're called to reconciliation.

Now we might think, isn't this a bit harsh, really? Singling out these two poor women for their spat. But again, hear the words that Paul writes, and hear the tone of this letter.

[6 : 46] This is a loving reconciliation of two people that Paul has a deep care for, rather than a harsh rebuke. What's interesting is that this isn't two cantankerous busybodies bickering over the biscuit queue.

This is servant-hearted church members, leaders of the congregation in Philippi, who are being called to reconcile. Paul makes it plain, saying in verse 3, that these two women have contended at his side for the gospel in Philippi.

They are co-workers whose names are written in the book of life, as Rob reminded us. This isn't a conflict with a persecuting power. This isn't problematic paganism.

This is conflict within the church between two sisters in Christ. And look at the love with which Paul calls them to reconcile. First notice, he doesn't take sides in this conflict.

He just says, I plead with Eodia, and I plead with Syntyche. Same language exactly. He's been talking through this letter about being united in our view of Christ.

[7 : 48] And he calls them to something that by this point in the letter they should already know. And not only that, he calls someone else in the church to go and help them to reconcile with one another.

Known only in this letter as my true companion, it's not said who, but someone's told to go and help them reconcile. And Paul reminds these women of who they are, sisters in Christ, forgiven by the same Lord, called to work together in the same body.

They must put down their personal agendas and take up Christ's agenda together to share his mindset. Because of the gospel, they must reconcile. But because of the same gospel, they have something to reconcile around.

Something that unites them way beyond their ability to just make an effort to love and care for one another. Now, it's only two verses, and it may not seem like much. But hopefully this is a great encouragement to us here in our church.

Conflict does arise between fellow believers. And that's just what happens when you put two or more sinners in the same space. Conflict is inevitable. But it matters how we deal with it an awful lot.

[8 : 59] The Christ mindset in the church means reconciliation is necessary, but also possible. We have something that we unite around that is far bigger than whatever divides us.

Now, we all come from different places, from different backgrounds, have different loves, hates, desires, political views, preferences, everything. And there's no way, let's face it, that this group of people assembled here would have ever met outside of this building.

But remember that what unites us is far greater than what divides us. Unity is costly, but it is wonderful. And at some point, we're all going to be in Euodia and Syntyche's shoes, in need of reconciling with another believer.

Some of you may be in that situation now, in which case, for the sake of us all, please share the mindset of Christ. You must reconcile with one another around the gospel. That's unity that Christ died for.

But for all of us, we must be reconcilers. Paul highlights the need for reconciliation and then delegates that task right into the church. This isn't Paul fixing someone from the outside.

[10 : 08] This is someone within that church getting alongside these two women and helping them to reconcile. Being a reconciler is hard. Reconciliation itself, however, is wonderfully, wonderfully possible because we see Christ setting aside his own glory to serve.

And taking on his mindset means we put aside our own glory of comfortable church situations and easy conversations in order to serve other people. This revolutionary mindset, then, is the one we must have between one another.

Do the hard thing today, because the glory of God is coming. The reason that we reconcile is because of who Christ is and who he has made us to be, one in his body.

So having the mindset of Christ in the church brings unity in conflict. Now, the next section of our passage is a bit like a hall of fame for out-of-context verses, like the ones that get put on tea towels and coasters and cups and desktop backgrounds and posters, all that, right?

Now, this is understandable. These verses are brilliant. We love them. But ripped out with the moorings of Philippians, they're not very much of use to us. They tend to just go rogue. Now, if we haven't clarified what these verses mean and see them in context, and we take them out of context and apply them badly, we can cause real harm.

[11 : 33] Verses 6 and 7 say this, do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

That is the kind of verse that gets lazily frisbeed at people who are suffering, as if it's just a magic word that just fixes you. And it's often little help because it's been taken away from the context that gives it life and breath.

And when we see it in its context, we'll find out how wonderful that comfort really is to those who are anxious and those who are suffering. So our second point then, having the Christ mindset in the church brings peace in trial.

To get this right, we must remember where Paul is and what's happening in Philippi. Paul is in prison and the Philippians are suffering persecution for the gospel. Are there reasons for anxiety?

Of course there are. Many thousands of reasons for anxiety. Life is unpredictable if you live in Philippi. Living as a Christian is costly. But let me then say that that makes verse 6 all the better news.

[12 : 44] This isn't written from Paul on a beach with a cocktail in his hand to people in penthouses. This is written to a suffering church from a man in prison. This is real and it just assumes that our world is full of reasons to be anxious.

Written to where people he knows are struggling. Paul doesn't give them bland Christian platitudes or accuse them of a lack of faith for worrying. As always, he's pointing the anxious believer along with the rest to Christ.

You see, if the Philippians were just to move their eyes down, focus on the earth and their own circumstances, or Paul to just look at his own situation in prison and nothing else, through their own eyes alone, well, they would have every reason to panic.

Only reasons to be anxious. And so what Paul does, unsurprisingly, is lift their eyes upwards to the sovereign Lord. Well, so how does he do that? Well, first he tells them verse 4 absolutely empathically to rejoice.

Rejoice in the Lord always, Philippians. No, seriously, always rejoice. If the Philippians look down to the earth and their own circumstances, life will just get smaller and smaller and more and more narrow until they just feel trapped.

[14 : 01] But when they actively choose to rejoice, it just forces that wide open. Circumstances may be bad, but our God is big. He loves us. He has given his only son for us, and all of a sudden my situation seems a lot bigger.

Rejoicing actually shapes our minds. It puts God in the right place. It says, he is the one in his control and he is good and is worthy of my worship.

In fact, we can say with total confidence, if we ever don't know what to do as a Christian, rejoice because it will literally always be the right answer. There will never be a moment in your life in which you can't rejoice in who the Lord is and what he has done.

That doesn't mean the situations are immediately fixed or that the source of anxiety is just riven away. But right in the middle of those things, God is still good and our challenge is where are we going to focus?

Are we going to become bound to the here and now or lift our eyes to the Lord our God? And the rest of all of verses five to seven float on that idea of rejoicing in the Lord.

- [15 : 09] Now the Lord is near to the Philippians, says verse five. And in every situation, they can bring their lives and struggles and fears no matter how big or how small before the Lord.
- And they're told to rejoice as a command because there are going to be people who need to rejoice before they then bring all of the things that are happening to them to the Lord in prayer.
- And it's on resetting their eyes on the Lord above that they live out an active expression of dependence. The peace of God comes because he is dependable, not because their situations are fixed.
- He is the solid rock in absolutely every way. So let me ask, is that where you go when you're struggling? When you're anxious and you don't feel like you're in control?
- I know that over my life it's been a real battle for me to keep Christ as the focus when I'm struggling. Coming to the Lord in prayer seems to be to be honest the last thing I end up doing most of the time.
- [16 : 10] It doesn't come naturally to me. My basic mode is to try and fix something myself, stress out when I can't fix it and remain thankful when I can. And it's a real discipline to get into going to the Lord first and praying first and not going for my own strength first.
- Now I bring things before the Lord in prayer dependently saying that he is the one whom before I live and he is the one who is in control with all the anxieties and struggles of life for the uncertainties of our culture and our world I can say he is above them he sees into them and is in control over them and he is a dependable solid rock.
- This is the good news for everyone who believes in Christ. We have a God who is big enough and good enough to bring us peace even when we don't understand what's going on. If I'm only ever as comfortable and as stable as I feel in control of my life and I fix my eyes firmly on the here and now I should expect to feel that my life is riddled with anxiety and never really know peace.
- But if I know that whether or not I'm in control of my situation a God who is good who gave his son for me then I can genuinely know peace. And of course that transcends my understanding.
- It's the exercise of faith to follow the Lord in thanksgiving when I don't have all the answers but there is a God who is dependable and who even when I don't understand I can bring everything before.
- [17 : 37] Now as you read through that passage from verses 4 to 7 notice you get these things that are emphasized so much words that are comprehensive rejoice in the Lord always do not be anxious about anything in every situation transcends all understanding.
- Christ's mindset is comprehensively good enough for every occasion for all anxiety and will always shift our eyes upwards. We have a God who is more in control than I can understand and that is brilliant news for the days that I just feel like I can't face and those days will come.
- This doesn't mean all the situations are just fixed in a moment it's not like in the next verse we realize that Paul was just teleported out of prison or that the persecution just stopped. No, they fix their eyes on the Lord their God in the midst of all trials.
- I wonder what it would mean for you to apply that to your life tonight whether your family situation feels tense and hard to reconcile when your finances are stacking up and you're struggling with debt and beginning to worry when your own health is frail and weak when you're caught in a tough situation and you don't know what to do will you lift your eyes to the Lord your dependable father and trust in him and let me say if you're here and you're not a Christian where do you look for your comfort in a confusing world?

What if there is a God who is in control? How would you feel if he really both did know you and loved you? As Christians we don't have a God who we fully comprehend but without Christ we can't begin to have this comforting mindset at all.

[19 : 17] So let me ask if you don't know him what's stopping you finding out and if he really is like this why wouldn't you come to him? So Paul is confident and clear of the Philippians that having the Christ mindset in church brings peace in trial.

Now I recently went to see a film called The Farewell. Now it's a Chinese film about a family who found out that their grandmother has cancer and then refused to tell her. In the film the granddaughter the girl on the left there keeps arguing with her family saying we really should tell her why aren't we telling her this doesn't seem fair because she loves her grandmother and the whole film is about a family trying to deal in different ways with grief it's just fascinating.

For what it's worth it's much cheerier than I just described it right it's worth saying. But whilst it never says this out loud the film is always in the background asking this question is this good or bad?

Is what this family is doing justified or unjustified? Should they tell the grandmother or not? Is it okay to live a more comfortable lie rather than living with an uncomfortable truth?

Now it's a lovely film it's really beautiful and it demonstrates a real compassionate love for family members in the face of suffering and loss but it's a film of a world view that is trying to tell you something.

[20 : 40] Now it's good because it's a film that tries to ask you questions rather than force you to believe a thing. But all media every film every book every game every TV show every political broadcast comes with a world view trying to tell you something and not all of it is good and certainly not all of it is neutral.

As Christians we can't passively absorb culture but we must be able to understand it. We must grow a Christian world view get good at being able to read our culture and understand it rather than passively reject it and become separate from the world forever doomed to live in a Christian subculture or even worse passively absorbing it and just becoming part of our culture about knowing it.

So our third and final point then having Christ's mindset in the church brings discernment in culture. Verse 8 is yet another Christian coaster verse but what Paul tells the Philippians is that they must view the world the whole world through the lens of the gospel.

It must shape their thinking and they must grow in discernment of what is good and right and true. Now the main way we do this of course is very clear as it has been through the whole book knowing Christ and knowing the gospel and that has not changed to verse 9 says right there to follow Paul's example and his whatever he has taught them whatever they have learned or received from him put into practice.

Very very clear. But it also means they must be able to understand that the Christ mindset shapes the way they view the whole world and let's face it Philippian culture is not an easy culture just because it's in history doesn't mean everything was straightforward.

[22 : 23] They live in a Greek culture there's pagan gods absolutely everywhere everything is changing and there's so much going through their minds.

They need to be able to look into their world and not just say as a Christian that is all terrible and everything in here is fine in their church. That is not how they read the world around them.

There's more to it than that. They remember that they live in a world made by a good creator and though that world is fallen they should be able to see his fingerprints all over that creation.

Good things that point them continuously back to a good creator because our world is suffused with his goodness and filled with his images. Every person is made in the image of God.

So they need to be able to discern what they see what they hear and what they do with that information. And I think that points us to being able to do the same thing.

[23 : 19] We need to cultivate a gospel lens through which we see our world and discern the good things that God has made from the fallen world that displays it. The gospel is the script that underwrites all stories.

Do we see the character of Christ in the things that we read and the things that we watch? Where are the good things that we see of him the redemptive aspects of the culture we connect to? C.S. Lewis once said this, I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen not only because I see it but because by it I see everything else.

The gospel shines a light on culture and we begin to see just reflections and refractions of God everywhere. So we must see the world as full of the goodness of God.

Not fully, the world is fallen and is a broken and a dark place much of the time but the goodness of God is not absent. And we must get good at seeing it. We can't just minimize it to what we do in church on a Sunday.

It's not that the only good music ever is Christian music. Clearly not. There's a lot of good music out there. No offense Greg. We just can't reject or passively absorb culture.

[24 : 29] We need to be able to be discerning to see those things that are good and right and praiseworthy and honorable and true. In the original letter here some of those words are specifically Greek words that other parts of the church wouldn't know.

The implication is there are things in that culture that reflect God in some way. If culture is the water that we swim in then we have to understand it. So next time you watch a film, a TV show, a YouTube channel, play a video game, anything, ask what is it trying to say to me?

What is it trying to make me believe? Where are the things that are true and noble and right and lovely and admirable and excellent and praiseworthy and where are the things that conflict with that and how do I discern between the two?

Now of course we must be careful. No culture is neutral and not all things are good things to think about. It's very, very clear. Paul says think of what is good. The implication of that there are some things if you think about them will start to be corrosive and unhelpful.

So we must assess and figure out what is influencing us. Whatever it's positive or corrosive, remember that no culture is only purely bad even though all of it is fallen.

[25 : 44] Doing this is a learning process. Taking on the Christ mindset in all things is hard but it does make sense of an otherwise entirely confusing world. Now if you want to leg up with that go read Plugged In by Dan Strange.

The entire staff team has been reading it. Apparently it's brilliant. Go enjoy that and it will help us to be able to see what is going on in our culture. So the last part there then the Christ mindset in the church brings discernment in culture.

But there we are from lots of different angles as Paul says put my letter into practice. We get the Christ mindset impacting unity and impacting how the Philippians live through trials and impacting the way they view the whole world around them.

The Christ mindset is comprehensively good for every single part of our whole reality and existence. So the challenge for us then is are we going to put that into play? View this world through a gospel lens.

See the things that are good and right and honorable and true and discern them for what is false and bad. Are we going to live in a world where we call others to do the same and through that call them to do wonderful good truth of the gospel?

[26 : 51] The Christ that makes sense of all of this and the God behind him who loves us. Let me pray. Thank you.