

LIVING LIKE JESUS IS COMING

Philippians 4:1–9

Introduction

Is there a way in which life should be lived?

We must never separate our present life on earth from our future existence in heaven. God has designed life to affect eternity. Paul connected his life with eternity. Paul's present joy was in view of his prospective crown (4:1). There is a way in which God has designed the Christian life to be lived. Some believers have the mentality that life is to be endured so they can get to heaven that is to be enjoyed. These people have the "Hang On" mentality and walk through life trying to survive instead of making a difference. This "Hold the Fort" line of thinking is not found in Scripture. God's people are to be advancing.

How does salvation affect life?

The salvation that Jesus Christ purchased for you on Calvary does not only affect eternity. It should also affect our time on earth. Salvation is not something to endure on earth and enjoy in heaven. Salvation brings something to this life just as it brings peace with God for eternity. Salvation is more than hell-insurance. It is more than providing a comfortable eternity. Salvation has a purpose.

MPT (Main point of the text) Paul was writing to the Philippians believers encouraging them to live in light of the immanent return of Jesus Christ.

MPS (Main point of the sermon) Are you living like Jesus is coming?

The Second Coming of Christ is no figment of our imaginations. It will take place. I Thessalonians 4:16-17 says, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” **Believers are to live with the hope of the Second Coming of Christ.** The old-timers used to say, “ Our hope is not in the Second Coming of Christ but in the Christ of the Second Coming.” A believer’s hope is not found in a trial ending. Paul held on to this hope in the midst of trials. Hope is not found in heaven beginning. If it did, then hope would be in a place and not a Person. Our hope is found in Jesus Christ. The hope of Christ’s return has been dimmed in past generations; but in generations that it has come to light, revival takes place.

The phrase “*The Lord is at hand*” could refer to two aspects of His presence. If referring to His spiritual presence, then the Lord is always near. Jesus Christ is omnipresent (Always present everywhere in the same degree). If it is referring to His physical presence, then it is referring to the soon approaching Second Coming of Christ. Considering the language of II Thessalonians 2:2, we can conclude Paul is referring to the physical presence of Christ although application could be made to both. Jesus’ presence will affect our actions.

II Thessalonians 2:2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Transition

How would Jesus tell His children to live on earth? It is one thing to live like Jesus has come but quite another to live like Jesus is coming. We find that Jesus is intensely

concerned with how we live our life on earth. The instruction we find came *through* Paul, but it came *from* God. What does it mean to live like Jesus is coming?

1. We are living under the ruling presence of Jesus and before the perceived presence of men (1-5)

Living under the ruling presence of Jesus is not an option for a Christian. I have found myself saying I wish I could just simplify life. If I could get life down to just God and I, all would be well. My distractions and responsibilities would be eliminated. The truth of the matter is, it is simpler than just God and I. God and I are one in Christ Jesus. Living under the ruling presence of Jesus is having Jesus rule in your life and heart on earth.

- **The brethren should be of the same mind but not necessarily of the same opinion (1-2)**

Verse 1

Although we have a heavenly citizenship, we have brethren that we are sojourning with on earth. God has commanded that we love the brethren (Hebrews 13:1). Even those that are unlovable. It has been said that we have a command to love the brethren but not to like the brethren. I am not sure if we can draw a clear line of distinction between the two but I understand the thought. Christians need to realize that wherever there are people, there will be problems.

Verse 2

There were two ladies in the local church at Philippi who apparently had a disagreement. Paul addresses each lady in the same manner to show no favoritism to either. This disagreement was not doctrinal. If it was doctrinal, Paul would have addressed it. It was personal. Paul did not waste time taking sides. Paul just told them to be of the same mind in

the Lord. He did not tell them to be of the same opinion. They could differ on their dress and have the same mind, they could differ on their activities and have the same mind, and they could differ on the way they conduct their finances and have the same mind. The goal is not uniformity of preferences but uniformity of mind.

Believers cannot say they love God but hate/dislike other Christians. You cannot love the Father but hate His children. Jesus Christ is the Head of the church and we are His body on earth. Believers cannot love the Head but hate the body. Could you imagine a husband saying to his wife, "I love your head, but I hate your body?" A golfer would never tell his friend on the golf course, "I love you, but I hate your wife." You cannot love the head and hate the body. Some Christians try to kiss the head (God) and kick the body (brethren). God has commanded us to love the brethren even if they arrive at a different opinion than the one we hold.

Have you ever considered that there will be people in heaven that you did not care for on earth? You will sit at the table with someone in heaven that you would have never sat with on earth. You will drink out of the same cup in heaven but never on earth. Maybe you thought they were fakes or were putting on an act. People will not see eye to eye on every issue but there can be diversity without disunity.

In every congregation there will be someone (a Euodias or a Syntyche) that wants to argue over petty things. If we are living like Jesus is coming, we do not have time to argue over differences of opinions.

- **The Brethren should be bound together by a common thread (3)**

There is something that runs through the life of every person in this passage that binds him or her together. How can two people that are so different be bound together? How

can I be bound to someone who dresses completely different? Clothing does not bind us. Age or activities do not bind us. The gospel is the gold cord that binds us together. The gospel should not divide us but unit us. The Word of God unites us and does not divides us.

There are three individuals or groups of individuals mentioned in this verse. The true yokefellow (unidentified friend of Paul) mentioned is believed to have been the pastor of this local assembly or, as some believe him to be, a layman; either way when the name was read aloud in the local assembly, everyone looked at the true yoke fellow. The local church at Philippi had no questions about identifying this man.

- This man was true. He was true to God and true to the people. He could be trusted. He did not live true *for* the perceived presence of men but *before* the perceived presence of men.
- He was a yoke fellow. He did not mind getting under the load and lifting it up. He took some pressure off the congregation or off the pastor.
- Very rarely do you find someone who is both; usually they are one of the other.

This man had the ministry of reconciliation. Jesus said blessed are the peacemakers. Innumerable are the people that can cause division but few are the people who can bring unity. The true yokefellow was to bring unity in the midst of division.

The second group mentioned in this verse is the women Paul refers to as “*those women.*” This designation probably refers to the women in the previous verse. These women could have labored with Paul in Acts sixteen when the Church at Philippi was founded. They could have been laborers with Lydia.

The third group of individuals is the fellow laborers. Among them you will find Clement. We know nearly nothing of his life, but he was a laborer in the gospel. These fellow

laborers names are not only in the Book of God (Bible) but also in the Book of Life. You can find them on the imperishable page.

- **The Brethren are to dwell together in unity (4-5)**

You find in these verses Paul's passionate plea for unity. Paul draws attention to the fact that all will dwell in unity in heaven. There is room for diversity in the family of God. Just because there is diversity does not mean that there cannot be unity. Disunity in the family of God breaks the heart of God. It is no wonder that Jesus often prayed we would be one. It is sweet to God for believers to have a harmony about them. **Psalm 133:1** Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Verse 4

Paul says, "*Rejoice in the Lord always.*" This is a book of joy. Some form of the word *joy* is found sixteen times in the book. Philippians has been called the Epistle of joy. There is nothing wrong with the title; but before it is about joy, it is about Jesus. Paul does not say rejoice in the brethren. Although the brethren can often times take away the joy. Nothing can take away your joy like disunity among the family of God. Division will drive out joy every time. Bickering among the brethren will drive out joy.

Paul is not speaking of happiness. He is speaking of joy. The difference between happiness and joy could be described in the difference between the water at the surface of the ocean and the water in the deep depths of the ocean. The water at the surface of the ocean can be calm one minute and quickly whip into a storm the next minute. The circumstances of the weather can change the condition of the water. If a storm comes upon the ocean, the waters at the surface will quickly become turbulent; but the waters in the deep depths of the ocean will not be disturbed. Although everything is turbulent on the surface, deep down there is

calmness and the water is still. The same is true of joy and happiness. Happiness is the water at the surface; any circumstance or storm of life can come and quickly take away the calmness. The water down deep is the joy of a Christian. Storms may come on the surface, but it does not take away the stillness, the calm, and the deep abiding joy that a Christian has from knowing Jesus.

This verse does not say rejoice in the Lord sometimes. It says rejoice in the Lord always. Paul is serious. Did you hear him repeat himself: “*and again I say, rejoice*”? This is not a suggestion from Paul but a command from God. This command is not contingent on circumstances. This is not a health, wealth joy—this is a joy that supersedes even the struggles and difficulties of circumstances.

Verse 5

Paul commands that the moderation be known unto all men. The word “moderation” means *gentleness, forbearance, and willingness to yield for the sake of unity*. We are never to yield right principals. Some believe that if they yield then they cannot stand (1, 5). Yielding is standing in the Lord. Your gentleness should be made known. You should not try to push your opinion or agenda. The brethren will take advantage of your gentleness—after all, they did with Jesus. The meek shall inherit the earth. Elbowing your way through the church to get your way is not gentle. Gentleness is difficult to show toward all men especially those that show force towards you. Have a gentle spirit and not a critical spirit.

Transition

Living like Jesus is coming is learning to live under the ruling presence of Jesus and before the perceived presence of men. Is it possible to do this and enjoy it? You can enjoy it if you are living with heaven’s environment while facing earth’s troubles.

2. Living with heaven's environment while facing earth's troubles (6-8)

Developing the mind of Christ in view of worrying (6)

Prayer and supplication are not synonymous. Prayer has to do with worship and supplication has to do with a specific request. Thanksgiving is praise. Let your prayers and worship be mingled with thanksgiving. Are you given to worry? The Philippians were quick to worry. Paul says to stop it—it is sin. You cannot be prayerful and “worryful” at the same time. Faith ends where anxiety begins.

Paul tells the Philippian believers to be careful for nothing. The word “careful” means *anxious*. We are to be worried or anxious about nothing. It does not say be careful about large things, financial, or family issues. How can one go through life without worrying about anything? Physically, you are on earth; but spiritually, you are living on another level. “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 2:5).

Developing the mind of Christ in view of God's peace (7)

There is a difference between the peace of God and peace with God (Romans 5:1). Every believer has peace with God, but not every believer has the peace of God. Paul says the peace of God will “*keep*” your hearts and minds. The word “keep” has the thought of guarding. It is a “military term.” Philippi was guarded by a Roman garrison, and its citizens were accustomed to seeing soldiers protecting the city. How would one receive this peace of God? The God of Peace (9) is the only source from which it can be obtained.

The peace of God passes all understanding. It would be understandable if it brought money, positions, or fame. It is unexplainable when it comes to those who are hurting. It is unexplainable when one who is sitting in the church pew with terminal cancer and is speaking about joy.

Developing the mind of Christ in view of my thought life (8)

Paul gives spiritual food for thought. Paul said, “*Think on these things.*” Paul is not promoting positive thinking or probability thinking. Positive thinking puts you in a utopia that does not exist. It ignores what is really taking place. Paul is not asking these believers to be optimistic. This is a bankrupt substitute for the peace of God. Probability thinking is human effort to work your way out of the problem. Paul is referring to developing the mind of Christ not simply thinking a different way. Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

What are these things we are to think about? They are not material things. They are not temporal but lasting. Paul told them to think of eternal things. Paul identifies the lasting things: true things (“*Thy word is truth*”), honest things (“*honorable things*”—II Corinthians 8:21), just things (“*God is just*”), pure things (purity that comes with salvation—Is. 1:18), lovely things (our lovely Saviour), and a good report (things of good repute). Verses 6-7 tell us how to get the peace and verses 8-9 tell us how to keep the peace. We do not have to wait for the Prince of Peace to come in the clouds before we can have the peace of God.

Transition

In the midst of facing earth’s troubles, it is easy to be distracted by secondary issues. If we are living with the mind of Christ, we will seek to do those things that are dear to Christ. Life is not meant to be a playground; it is meant to be an investment. We are stewards of the time God has given us.

3. We are living life as an investment in eternity (9)

Paul lived a life like Jesus was coming. We find in this verse not only inspired instruction but an inspiring example. Believers are too busy themselves with the right

activity. Will you connect the word “*heard*” and “*do*” because Paul connects the two. James 1:22 “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” The greatest distance that can be measured is the distance between knowing truth and living truth.

- **Discipleship is more than a transfer of information it is also a transfer of life.**

There are four words used to describe what Paul gave the Philippian believers. There are two words of distance and two words that are up close and personal. “*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*” (Philippians 4:9). The first word is “*learned*.” You can get this information while sitting in the multitude. The second word is “*received*.” You can get this while being a close companion with someone. The word “*heard*” has the thought of anyone in earshot, and the word “*seen*” means *to inspect up close*. Two of these you could get while sitting in the pew, and two you could get while sitting across the dinner table. Paul allowed the Philippian believers to get close to him. He did not try to put on an air. He allowed them see in his life, all the doors were opened. They saw him in his strengths and weaknesses.

- **Disciples are not mass-produced but individually molded one relationship at a time.**

God’s work is people. He could have chose trees to evangelize the world, but He chose people. When you invest in people, you invest in eternity. There has been a change in the last century on what discipleship is. Some believe it is conveyer belt work. If we put people on our thirteen-week program and send them through it, then they will come out on the other side as disciples.

Application

The goal in life is not to live like you were dying. It is to live like Jesus is coming. Life is an investment in eternity. What have you laid up in store for eternity? We are the managers of the assets God has entrusted—not given—to us. You cannot take it with you, but you can send it ahead. The Christians' goal is not to complete a bucket list before he dies, but to invest in eternity before Jesus comes.