

# Transformed in Christ

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Good morning. I am part of the Oikos in the Oaks Friday Women's Group, the Women Reading Women Group, and I'm also an elder here.

Today's scripture reading is from Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 3, verse 10 through chapter 4, excuse me, verse 1 is printed in your liturgy.

A reading from Paul's letter to the Philippians. I want to know Christ, yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this or have already arrived in my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, but one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

[ 1 : 27 ] All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things, and if at some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.

Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.

For as I have often told you before and now tell you again, even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their God is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame.

Their mind is set on earthly things, but our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies so they will be like his glorious body.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends. This is the word of the Lord.

[ 2 : 34 ] Thanks be to God. Good morning, Christ Church. Let's pray. Let's pray. O Lord, what we know not teach us, or what we have not give us, and what we are not make us.

Give me clarity of mind. Give me conviction of heart. Give me concision of speech, Lord, that give all of us a capacity to receive from you.

What it is you want to say to us in this moment. And we pray all this in Christ's name. Amen. So, Pastor Andrew and I have been trying our best, not sure if successfully, but we've been trying our best to help us as a church fall in love with the Apostle Paul.

Because Jesus is in love with the Apostle Paul. And gave Paul to the church, gave all these letters of Paul to the church, particularly this beloved letter of the Philippians.

It's a letter of affection, a letter of friendship. It's a letter of joy. It's an amazing letter. And what I want to invite us to do as we just approach it one more time today, I want you to just imagine in your mind the Apostle Paul as he's writing this letter.

[ 4 : 09 ] And remember that Paul is in a Roman prison cell. Remember that Paul is chained to two Roman soldiers on his right and on his left.

He's with them day and night. Remember that Paul is waiting a trial in which he'll either be acquitted and released or he'll be condemned and executed.

And it's from this place, right, it's from this context that Paul writes his happiest letter. It's from this place that Paul tells us these words, rejoice and joy.

They're repeated 13 times in this letter. He clearly wants his friends in Christ. He clearly wants the church in Philippi and all the churches to share in his joy and to rejoice with him.

And I want to be clear as we get back into this that Paul is not inviting us, he's not inviting the church to bury its head in the sand and ignore the fact that the Roman Empire is oppressive, right?

[ 5 : 29 ] That could be the entire theme of his letter. He's also not encouraging us or encouraging the church in Philippi to ignore her problems, right?

To ignore all the opposition and all the difficulties that are coming to them now that they've begun to follow Jesus. And in fact, that's why Paul has to tell them what we just heard.

You need to stand firm in the Lord, right? But what I think Paul is doing in this letter is he's outflanking his problems.

He's outflanking all the church's problems, all those pressing issues of imprisonment and persecution and impending execution by raising their eyes to something better, right?

He's raising their eyes from earthly sorrows up higher to heavenly joys, right? And that's what our Sunday gatherings are meant to do.

[ 6 : 34 ] They're meant to shift our attention from where they are Monday to Saturday, immersed in the things of this earth, immersed in this realm where sin and death are ruling.

And to have at least one day in our week where we focus and we ponder on the things of heaven where Jesus rules, right?

Here on earth is where sin and death rule. Heaven is where Jesus rules. And Paul says, set your minds not on earthly things but on the things of heaven. Does that make sense?

It's critical if we're going to understand what Paul is doing in this letter. Now, we're going to continue where we left off last week. I actually want to encourage you to take out your pew Bible in front of you.

And we might range a little bit as we explore Ephesians or Philippians chapter 3, one of Paul's most beloved passages. You can find this on page 592.

[ 7 : 35 ] Or sorry, 952. 952. 952. I'm a little doped up on cold medicine this morning. So that's why the page numbers are not coming out right.

But 952. And Paul is, I think, asking us, posing in this text three questions for us.

Number one, who are your models? Number two, what is your mindset? And number three, where is your hope? Okay, so who, what, and where?

Who are your models? What is your mindset? And where is your hope? First of all, who are your models? Paul says in verse 17, he says, Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters.

And just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. The question for us is, who do we look up to? Right, of whom would you say, you know, when I grow up, I want to be like this person?

[ 8 : 37 ] You know, when I was a teenager, it was like, when I hit my 20s and 30s, I want to be like that guy. Now I'm like, okay, when I hit my 50s and my 60s, I want to be like him.

Who's that person where you say, that is the paradigm. That is the pattern of how I want to live. I want to imitate their life. I want to follow their example.

I want to walk in their footsteps. Maybe you think of a family member. Maybe you think of a coach or a teacher or a camp director, a camp counselor.

Maybe a campus minister that you had in college. A mentor that you had along the way. It might even be a historical figure. For me, a guy named John Stott is the guy that I love.

Maybe a fictional character, Samwise Gamgee would be another person for me, who I'd like to become when I grow up. But, you know, without explicit and conscious models, we can so easily drift into subconsciously following just any old person that our algorithm serves up to us, right?

[ 9 : 43 ] And why is it that we need a model? Why do we need an example to follow? Because a model is a person whose values, whose behaviors, whose accomplishments you admire and you want to emulate in your own life.

And this is crucial for personal growth and personal development to find such people because they show you a real, embodied, in the flesh life that says, look, it is actually possible to live this way and not like everybody else is living, right?

It's possible to live with excellence. It's possible to live for the glory of God. It's possible to live for the good, not of yourself, but of other people. And Paul is giving us a heads up and he says, look, there are plenty of bad models out there.

And he says, actually, there's plenty of bad models in the church. Here's what he says in verse 18. Now, why does this cause Paul to weep?

Because these are people who profess to be Christians, right? And yet they're not at all mature, but they're setting themselves up as models for people in the church to follow.

[ 11 : 10 ] You guys ever read about people like this in the news, right? Where people claim to be Christian with their lips, but they're not at all Christians with their lives.

None of you ever read about this in the news, okay? This is not a new problem. And Paul is wanting to warn us to guard against these anti-models of professing Christians.

And he says, first of all, they're enemies of the cross of Christ. And what that means is that in their attitudes and their behaviors, they repudiate all that the cross stands for.

Right? They're living for themselves, but what the cross stands for is not living for yourself, but giving yourself away for the sake of others. He says, secondly, their destiny is destruction.

Destruction, they think they belong to Jesus and to the household of faith, but they're actually not living a life worthy of the gospel. They're not living in line with Jesus. And so, Paul says, their future before God is actually pretty bleak.

[ 12 : 18 ] And then he says, their God is their stomach and their glory is in their shame. And what that means is that they've ordered their loves around their bodily appetites.

Right? They've ordered their loves around appetites for food and for sex and for amusement and for material goods. As if these desires that come from within them, as if these desires are divine.

As if this is what they should give their time and their money and their precious energy to. Paul says, this is what they glory in. And ultimately, this is what is going to bring them shame when they stand before God.

And then the fifth thing Paul says, he says, their mind is set on earthly things. And that is that the primary focus that they have is on the earth in this realm of where sin and death rule.

And they're not really very focused on heaven where Jesus rules. And the Apostle Paul is really wanting to protect the church that he's planted in Philippi.

[ 13 : 23 ] And so he says, please do not make these professing Christians your models. And then Paul is bold to say in verse 15, he says, look, if you want to be mature, think the way that I think.

If you want to be mature, live the way that I'm living. Again, in verse 17, he says, join together in following my example, brothers and sisters. And just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.

He goes on in chapter 4. He says in chapter 4, verse 9, whatever you have learned from me or received from me or heard from me, whatever you've seen in me, put that into practice.

Now, I don't know if we have anyone here who's a gymnast or a golfer. I know we have some tennis players in the room.

Maybe you're a dancer. Maybe you're into martial arts or you paint or you play the piano or the violin. Maybe you're a singer or you're an actor. Or if you do any of these things, you know how important it is to have a real person show you how it's supposed to be done.

[ 14 : 39 ] Somebody who can give you the visual form. Somebody who can demonstrate to you the timing and the flow and the rhythm and all the moves that you need to mirror and that you need to imitate.

And that's precisely what Paul is giving to the church in this letter. Right at the very heart of this letter, if you turn in your pew Bible to page 951, you'll see in Philippians 2, Paul gives us this Christ hymn in which he holds up Jesus as the model human.

He says this is the model of what a human being is supposed to be. And he says this in verses 6 through 10.

He says, King Jesus was not grasping at his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant. He humbled himself. And he became obedient to death on a cross and God exalted him.

And what Paul says there is, he says, notice this V-shaped pattern of Jesus' life. This V-shaped movement of his life of humility and then exaltation.

[ 15 : 51 ] Humiliation now, exaltation later. Suffering now, glory later. He says, that is the paradigm. That is the pattern for all who want to follow Jesus and imitate Jesus and be conformed to the image of Jesus.

And then immediately following that, if you'll notice in chapter 2, verse 19 and following, he says, here is Timothy. And he puts Timothy before us as a model who is following the model.

And he says, look, Timothy does not look out for his own interests. No. Timothy looks out for the interests of Jesus. He looks out for the welfare of the church. Like Jesus, he's not grasping for his own advantages.

Rather, he's emptying himself. He's humbling himself to take the form of a servant. And then right after Timothy, Epaphroditus is put before us in chapter 2, verse 25 and following, as a model who is following the model.

And Paul says, Epaphroditus is this honorable soldier of Jesus because he risked his life and he almost died humbling himself and pouring himself out in sacrificial love like Jesus in order to fulfill the church's mission.

[ 17 : 08 ] And having given us this big model of Jesus and having given us these many models of Timothy and Epaphroditus, now all of chapter 3 is Paul saying, I too am a model who's following the model.

And Paul is diametrically opposed to these professing Christians and false teachers whose minds are set on earthly things. He says in verse 20, our citizenship is in heaven.

Paul says, look at the heavenly way that I view things. I live as if I belong to the kingdom of heaven and to the king of heaven. And so Paul says, keep your eyes not only on my model and on the model of Timothy and Epaphroditus, and of course on the big model of Jesus, but he also says in verse 17, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.

On those who in their heavenly citizenship, those who in their Christ-like attitudes and behaviors are showing you what it means to say to live is Christ and to die is gain.

And the question for us this morning is, who is living like this? Who do you know who's living like this? Who's living out this Philippians 2, Jesus-shaped pattern of humbling themselves in order to be exalted by God?

[ 18 : 34 ] Of suffering for the sake of others in order that they might be glorified by God. Who are the people that you look to and say, you know what?

They're living not with their minds set on this earthly realm of sin and death, but they're living with their minds set on heaven.

They're living with their minds set on their citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. They're living with their hopes set on the kingdom of God, breaking in from heaven down on the earth.

And the question for those of us, if you're like me, you've been baptized for a little bit, you've been following Jesus for a little while, is do we have a life worth imitating? Right?

Do we have a life that's worth someone else following after us? And if someone were to look at you or someone were to look at me, would they say, ah, that's what it means.

[ 19 : 36 ] That's what it means to pattern your life on the model of our humble and self-giving servant king, Jesus, and all of his cruciform, cross-bearing love.

Man, I don't know about you, but I've got a long way to go. Are you intentionally pursuing a life where Paul would say of you, keep your eyes fixed on her? Keep your eyes fixed on him because they're living as we do.

They're living as Jesus did. And if you're like me and you say, you know, I'm not really there, but I want to be, then follow me now because I want you to think about the kind of mindset and the kind of hope of such a model.

Okay, so who are your models? Second question is, what is your mindset? What is your mindset? A mindset is a key word in this letter.

Just like joy is a key word in this letter, Paul uses this word mindset ten times in this letter. And in verse 15, he says, all of us who are mature should take such a view of things.

[ 20 : 46 ] In the Greek, he says, all of us who are mature should have this mindset. In verse 19, he says, their mind is set on earthly things, but in verse 20, implied is that our minds is set on our citizenship in heaven.

Paul says, your mindset, your attitude, your thinking, your orientation, this is what affects your entire disposition and your entire direction of life.

If your mind is set on the wrong thing, you're going to be living the wrong way. If your mind is set on the wrong thing, you're going to be going in the wrong direction. And so he says, what is your mindset?

And Paul is telling the church, he's saying, if your mind is set on earth, if your mind is set on this realm where sin and death are ruling as sovereigns, as sovereigns, then he says, you need to change your mind.

The Greek word for change your mind is repent. You need to change your mind. And you need to set your mind on something else. You need to set your mind on your citizenship in the kingdom of heaven where Jesus is ruling.

[ 21 : 58 ] Right? Where your true identity lies and where you really belong. It's your citizenship, not here on earth, but your citizenship in heaven.

And what happens when the whole church, not just a few people in the church, but the whole church, decides to set their mind on the kingdom of heaven?

I mean, last week we saw in verses seven to nine, when Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, it changed his mindset.

Right? Paul said, it reversed all of my accounting of my whole life. All of my former gains, I now count as loss, Paul says.

I now count it actually as garbage compared to the gains of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ as my Lord. He says, when I look at all of the righteousness that I used to try to produce on my own, and I compare that with the righteousness that God has provided for me in Jesus, it's infinitely superior.

[ 23 : 05 ] I've had to change my entire mindset on what it even means to be righteous. And then he goes on in verse 10 and he says, he says this, he says, I want to know Christ.

Yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death and so somehow attaining to the resurrection of the dead. What Paul says there is, I already know Jesus.

but I don't know him enough. I already know Jesus, but because he's changed my mindset, I want to know him more and I want to know him better.

I already know Jesus, but because my mind is set on heaven, I want to know this king who rules from heaven. I want to know the only person who's ever gone through death and come out the other side alive.

I mean, if that happened, I want to know him more. Paul says of Jesus in Colossians 2 verse 13, he says, in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[ 24 : 13 ] I want to know him. How could we ever get bored with Jesus? Paul says. He says, if you set your mind as a citizen of heaven on the king of heaven, then you set your mind on a few different aspects of knowing Jesus.

And if you have a pen, I want you to underline a couple of these aspects in verse 10. He says, first of all, power. You want to know his power. Underline that word power.

I want to know his power. Paul says, if you belong to the resurrected Jesus, then you've been united to his empowering presence. That the same Holy Spirit who raised Christ from the dead is now living in you, and that means that he can release his resurrection power in you and through you.

Well, to what purpose, for what end would he give you his power? Underline the next word, participation. participation. This is part of knowing Jesus' participation.

You need the life-giving power of the resurrected Jesus so that you can participate in Jesus' sufferings. And that means that on a daily basis, you're asking for his power that you might bear your cross just as he bore his cross to suffer for the sake of loving other people.

[ 25 : 43 ] That's why you need his power so that the sufferings of Jesus, of sacrificial, self-giving love can be manifest through you to the world.

You don't just need power. You don't just need participation. Part of knowing Jesus is next word, becoming. Underline that word, becoming. If the resurrected Jesus empowers you to suffer with him in sacrificial love, then you are becoming like him in his self-giving on the cross.

Your life is being shaped into the form of his cross. That's part of knowing him. And then the last thing Paul says is part of knowing him is attaining him.

Underline that word, attaining. Attaining Jesus means that one day you're going to fully and finally know him and hold on to him in the final resurrection from the dead.

And we'll talk about that in just a moment. But what Paul is saying here is he says, I set my mind on a daily basis on knowing more and on knowing better the crucified yet risen Lord Jesus.

[ 27 : 00 ] And I want to know my Messiah. I want to know my King to such a degree that the shape of his life becomes the shape of my life. That he is daily giving me his resurrection power to live out the sacrificial and suffering love of his cross so that when people see me, when they encounter me, when they experience me, they say, wow, that's a citizen of heaven who's just like the king of heaven.

Does that make sense? And Paul's asking, is that where your mind is set? Is that where your mind is set? Now, of course, Paul can't leave it there and like most pastors, he has to give a sports illustration.

And so, he gives this illustration of a runner in the Olympic Games. The Olympic Games, by the time Paul wrote this letter, has been going on for about 800 years. And so, Paul writes in verse 12, he says, not that I've already obtained all this or have already arrived at my goal, but like a runner in the Olympic Games, I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, but one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

A runner is someone that has one burning ambition.

[ 28 : 44 ] A runner is somebody who has intensely set their mind on one desire. They've set themselves in one direction.

They've given themselves one goal, which is to finish the race and to win the prize. Now, Adidas had an amazing ad campaign many years ago where they had these incredible pictures and the caption said, runners, yeah, we're different.

I don't know, anybody remember that ad campaign? It was absolutely amazing. Basically, you had these runners going by and all the onlookers, like the normal people over here were baffled and bewildered at all the weird things the runners were doing.

Right? A guy is standing in line at the bank and he's like stretching his hamstrings and his calves and everybody's like, who is this guy? A woman is running with her baby in the jog stroller past all the other moms and their kids at the park and they're all looking at her like, what are you doing?

Runners, yeah, we're different. Paul is saying, no one shows up to the Olympic Games to jog.

[ 30 : 08 ] Paul is saying, a complacent runner is a contradiction in terms. Paul is saying, a runner is somebody who's intense.

A runner is somebody who is continuously giving strenuous effort. They're straining every muscle, every fiber, every nerve, every moment of their day.

They're pressing all the oxygen out of their lungs in order to attain a goal. A runner's not somebody who allows themselves to get distracted by lesser things.

A runner's not somebody who's looking over their shoulder at other runners. runners. A runner's not somebody who's fixated on the past and the first half of the race that I tried to run. No, Paul says, a runner is someone who has a singleness of purpose.

somebody who's disciplined and dedicated and determined on one thing. And Paul says, the one thing, if you're a Christian, the one thing is knowing Christ.

[ 31 : 19 ] That's what a citizen of heaven wants. They want to know the king of heaven. And Paul says, is that your mindset? Now, who are your models?

What is your mindset? Finally, where is your hope? And I don't have much time on this, but Paul ends here, and so I'll end here as well. You know, it's pretty clear increasingly in our late modern world that people are living with an increasing sense of hopelessness.

And so, if the church can have a clear sense of what our hope is, then we've got good news for the world, right?

Because the world doesn't have much hope, but we have an incredible hope. And here's what Paul says is the Christian hope, and just a hint, the Christian hope is not to go to heaven when we die.

Paul says this in verse 20. He says, but our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

[ 32 : 44 ] Paul says, a Christian who has hope is someone who's earnestly expecting Jesus to come as the Savior and to complete his work of saving a people for himself.

And what Paul says is that we will not so much go up to heaven, but the King, Jesus himself, will come from heaven to earth to transform this world. And what will the final work of the Savior be like?

Well, Paul is confident. He says, what started with Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday will be completed when he returns in the resurrection of all his people. Right?

He says the King has tremendous power. He's triumphed over death, right? He has the power of life. And Paul says that King Jesus is going to exercise that power to the Greek word is *metaschematizo*.

Okay? What Jesus is going to do is he's going to *metaschematize* you. He's going to so reorder you. He's going to so transform you and his people and the whole world that we will be raised up to share in his glory.

[ 34 : 07 ] He says he's going to take these lowly bodies bodies that are subject to humiliation. Right? Subject to sin and suffering and sickness and injury and suffering.

Bodies that are subject to cancer and to dementia. Bodies that are subject finally to death. And he says our hope the Christian hope is that King Jesus is going to *metaschematize* us.

He's going to so transform our bodies that they'll be conformed to the body of Jesus' glory. That just as on Easter Sunday Jesus' body went from being corruptible to being incorruptible.

From being a weak and mortal body to being a strong immortal body he says so your body will be reordered to share the glory of Jesus' resurrection body.

That's the last act in the drama of God's redemption. And Paul says we the church wait for it eagerly because this will fulfill the plan of the creator God all along from Genesis chapter 1.

[ 35 : 18 ] It has been the design of God from the beginning that through the agency of his image bearing people that God's heavenly rule that God's heavenly reign will be put into effect on the earth and bring the whole creation to life.

And Paul is straining toward this hope beyond death. He's pressing to take hold of this future resurrection life of the new creation and to have it even now.

And it's this hope that enables Paul in his Roman prison cell chained up to those Roman prison guards it's what enables Paul to think through all the complex challenges that are facing him and facing the church.

It's this hope that enables him to endure and to persevere through that which is beyond his control. It's this hope that enables Paul to live in the present and light of the coming glorious future.

future. And it's this hope that enables Paul to encourage the church to be a colony of heaven. Right?

[ 36 : 30 ] To be a preview of coming attractions. To be a small working model of what the new creation is going to be when the Lord Jesus returns as our Savior to transform not just our lowly bodies but the whole world to share in his glory and to share in his rule and his reign over the earth.

So friends as we come to this table my question for you my question for me where is our hope? Have we been putting our hope in the wrong place?

Might we need to put our hope back where it rightly belongs? death has been defeated. Our relationship with God has been restored for eternity.

Your body even though it's declining and decaying now will be transformed to be like the gloriously incorruptible body of Jesus. This world will be redeemed and renewed so that nothing bad will ever spoil it again.

good will defeat evil love will overcome hate life will triumph over death your story and my story and the story of this world is going to end happily ever after.

[ 38 : 00 ] That's the hope that King Jesus that's the hope that citizenship in the kingdom of heaven has given to us it's the hope that our world needs is the hope that all of our friends most desperately need and so I want to close with Paul's words in chapter 4 verse 1 therefore my brothers and my sisters you whom I love you whom I long for my joy my crown stand firm in the Lord in this way my dear friends in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit Amen