

Philippians 3:1-14 "Toxic Change and Godly Growth"

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[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's pray. Father, thank you so much that you sent Jesus to be our Savior. Thank you that you love us and care for us. Thank you, Father, that you have made us to love, to love many things in many different ways.

We ask, Father, that you would have great mercy upon us and teach us and help us to order our loves in a way which is good, that brings glory to you, is good for the world, and is healthy and whole for us.

[1 : 42] And I ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. When I went to university a hundred million years ago, I was used to, you know, in high school, they take attendance. The attendance goes home to your parents. There's lots of assignments. Your parents, you know, anyway, there's all this stuff. I go to university. Nobody takes attendance. Nobody seems to care whether you go to class or not. And so for, I have to confess, for my first term, I went to next to no classes, and I spent lots of time in the coffee house and in the pool hall.

In my first term of university, I became quite good at playing pool. I mean, which is, of course, why everybody goes to university, of course. And the result was, I had been used to the fact that, you know, I was smart enough that in high school, I'm not boasting or anything, I was smart enough in high school that I could just get things done at the last second and get what, to my mind, was an acceptable mark. Like, why work harder to get a better mark? And so I come to university, and all of a sudden, at the end, as December's rolling around, out of the five, and in that university, all of the courses were, like, from September to April. I guess they'd call it a full course, not a half course. And I was failing three of my five courses in December. In fact, one of the courses I was failing so bad, to my shock and horror, I realized there was absolutely no way that I could redeem it. I had to drop it and take a half course. I was a very bad student. And that was a big wake-up call to me. I had to work really, really hard the next term to try to turn things around. And I was able to do that. I mention this because, you know, one of the most common human problems, one of the things which people come and talk to a counselor about, talk to their friends about, it's the sort of thing that people wish that somebody would talk to the person about, is we usually use the word, getting our priorities straight. But a better way to understand it is, actually, is to getting our loves properly ordered and straight. That we love the things that we should love in a bit of a hierarchy. You know, so, for instance, I'm watching a series right now on, you know, I'm not going to tell, I'm not going to have free advertisement for the thing, but I'm watching series, and it's like a very, very common problem. There's a constant stress and tension in this particular case between the wife loving her job and how she loves her family, and the order that the husband is loving his job and his family, and there's great conflict. And at this point in time, I'm not sure if the marriage is going to end. Because in this particular case, the wife who wants to put her job above her family has just demanded that he has to just get on the program with that or walk away. You know, that's the type of show I watch. There are also killings, because, you know, I like to watch shows with other adventure other than this. But it's a very, very common problem. Like for me, I realized that I had my, it had to have a higher priority of passing than playing pool, which is like for most people like a duh, of course, right? But it's a far more complicated issue than we think, getting our loves ordered in a right way. This text that we're going to look at today, which at first doesn't look like it's talking about this at all, and in fact, for many people, it might be a bit of a like, what on earth is he talking about this? Did he really just call people dogs? And what's this about mutilating the flesh? It doesn't look like it talks about this, but one of the things that helps to set forward is a very wise biblical perspective about how you need to start to order your loves. In other words, to have the right priorities in your life. So I invite you to turn with me to Philippians chapter 3, verses 1 to 14.

Philippians chapter 3, verses 1 to 14. And this is how the text goes. And just in terms of the context, this was originally a letter written while Paul was in jail. Later on, Paul is going to say he's lost everything, and you need to understand that when he says he's lost everything, he has lost everything.

He was a person who had very, very, very, very high prestige within a subculture, mind you, the Jewish subculture, but he had very, very high prestige. He was very well educated. He would have been well respected, apart from his Jewishness in the Roman world, which they thought they were weird. But he would have been very well respected because he's obviously very well trained in rhetoric. In a sense, he would have had two PhDs, a PhD in Jewish studies and a PhD in pagan studies. So he could outdo the pagans in understanding rhetoric and paganism. And he loses everything. He's in house arrest, all because he believes that Jesus rose from the dead. And so this is part of the letter, and here's how it goes.

Actually, I'm going to say a geeky thing. Okay. Those of you who are a bit of nerds, just here's where you get to nerd out for the rest of you. Just try to hold your attention for like 30 seconds. The nerdy thing is this. We're going to read from verses 1 to 14, but you don't understand what goes from 1 to 8, and you don't understand what goes from 10 to 14 unless you understand 9.

[7 : 04] Like for those of you who are geeky and reading documents, like 9 is the thing that turns it all around. And if you want to read the whole book, as I've said time and time again, Philippians 2, 5 to 11 is what illuminates everything in the book. Okay. Geeky moment over. Let's read.

And it starts like this. Remember, it's going to eventually get to the topic of how do you begin to order your life in a way which leads to human flourishing, is good for other people, and well, in this particular case also brings glory to God. And it begins like this. Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord to write the same things to you as no trouble to me and is safe for you.

Look out for the dogs. Look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh. Now, just pause. They didn't like dogs back then. Like my, one of my daughters just got a puppy, six weeks old, I think, seven weeks old. She is absolutely adorable. If they could ever genetically manufacture an animal that always stayed seven weeks old, they would sell a hundred trillion of those.

They're really adorable. But the ancients saw dogs as scavengers, garbage eaters, vomiters of the garbage. Okay. And so you might be saying, look out for the dogs. Verse two, look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh. And I'll tell you what that means in a moment. Like why is Paul talking about this in such strong language? Especially after he's just talked about joy. And then it goes on, verse three, for we are the circumcision, what on earth that means? Who worshiped by the spirit of God and spirit, as you can see, is capitalized and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. So what's going on here? Is this like, is he being a little bit anti-Semitic? Like why is he talking about where the, the real circumcision and is no confidence in the flesh? Like, does that mean he doesn't like the body? Like, and then verse four, though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh. Also, if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of

Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church. And then you're wondering, like, good grief, like, why would anybody think that persecuting people is a sign of you're a good guy? And as to righteousness under the law, blameless. And this, this is just like a weird list. Like if, just think about it for a second, like, I mean, put your hand, no, you don't have to put it around. How many people, if I went and read this as in a coffee shop, as like the best accomplishments in the world, how many people do you think would put up their hand and say, well, that's really an impressive list? Like nobody, zero.

[9 : 59] Like, and that, by the way, is part of God's longer-term point about the whole thing. The things that often people think of as marks of somehow superiority and excellence to other people, or at least very shortly afterwards, people are just thinking that's pretty lame, okay?

But verse 7, but whatever gain I had, whatever good things, in a sense, I had, I counted as lost for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as lost because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish. And the word there is actually, it's, you have to understand, he's just, this is the equivalent in his day of me dropping an F-bomb right now. Okay, for people reading this back then, when he uses the word rubbish, he's just dropped the equivalent of an F-bomb on them. And it's like, he's saying that everything that he's had, all the things, he counts them as, you know, crap, stuff that comes out of the one part of your body that has to be buried or dealt with that you don't want to smell. Like, that's what he's saying. In order that I may gain Christ. So, what is, like, what on earth is going on here in this text? Is he, is he really just saying that every good thing he's ever done, every good deed that he's ever done is just like human or animal excrement? Is he saying that we should think this way, that we should value Christ in such a way that we feel everything else is just like complete and utter garbage? Like, does it mean that you can never just say, boy, chocolate milkshakes are really good?

Or, you know, gosh, I really like having a nice steak. Like, is, like, if I love my child, like, what on earth is Paul saying? And then we come to verse 9, and it's when we come to verse 9, I'll read the end of verse 8 again and then verse 9. That's when, if we understand what's going on, we'll start, we can go back and understand what Paul's actually saying. And it says, that I may gain Christ, in verse 9, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law. And here he means what our Jewish friends would call the Tanakh, and we would call the Old Testament. But that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. So, what's going on here? Well, just to help us to begin to understand what's going on here, I'm going to have to give, so, here's the thing. Did you know this? That Paul uses the phrase in Christ, union with Christ. Paul, in his letters, uses this over 160 times. Over 160 times. When I've, over these last few weeks, when I've talked about in Christ being important, not minor, it's important because that's, that's the main way that Paul describes what it means to be a Christian. In fact, nowhere in Paul's writings does he ever refer to anybody as a Christian. The word Christian only appears three times in the New Testament. Two of them are by non-Christians mocking Christians.

And the other one is in, in 1 Peter. And in fact, so if, if, you went back in time, and Paul had to fill out a census, and he saw the list of things that he could be called, and he might seize the word Christian, and then they give a blank other, you know what he would probably write? A man in Christ.

That's how he'd probably describe himself. A man in Christ, in union with Christ. So this idea of union with Christ, which I've talked about before, I'm going to say some more about it, that there's lots of different aspects to this profound reality and profound mystery that, you know, in a sense, a better way to understand who I am other than the word Christian, because the word Christian is so debased, is I am a man in Christ. That's where I'm found. That's my spiritual and heart location.

[14:08] So let's get a metaphor about, try to get one way to try to understand this mystery. You need several metaphors. They don't all fit together, but they're all trying to get at this, this same analogy.

Let's say you wanted to go to Vancouver, and you're going to go to Vancouver by plane. So how do you have to relate to the plane if you're going to get to Vancouver? I got this analogy, I can't remember the name of the priest, but he's a priest in Sydney Diocese in Australia.

So how do you, if you want to get to Vancouver, and the plane is going to be important, how do you relate to the plane? Well, if somebody says to you, well, I'm going to follow the plane. Good luck for that. That's not going to work. If you say, I'm going to imitate the plane, well, that's not going to work. If you say you're going to learn from the plane, that's not going to work. If you want to be under the authority of the plane, that's not going to work. If you want to be inspired by the plane, that's not going to work. What do you have to do?

You got to be in the plane. And wherever the plane goes, that's where you go. Whatever happens to the plane is what's going to happen to you. And in the same type of sense, we need to be in Christ.

If the goal is to be connected to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, we need to be in Christ. If you are in Christ, located in him, found in him. Look at verse 9 again, right? In verse 9, it says, and be found in him. If you want to end up being in Vancouver, you got to be found in the plane. Get into the plane at some point in time, and then in Vancouver, you're going to be there. Whatever happens to the plane happens to you. Wherever the plane goes, you go. And we need to be located in Christ. And that's the fundamental image to try to understand. And so all of the other things, I mean, there are different ways, of course, where we follow Christ and under his authority. But those things only make sense if we're actually in him first. So what's going on then in these things?

[16 : 16] If you start to understand this, you get a bit of an idea. I periodically have Instagram on my phone, and true confessions, if I have Instagram on my phone, I can waste 40 minutes scrolling.

And so I have to take the app off, because it's hard to have the willpower once you start scrolling, for me at least, to start. Anyway, one of the things you'll see on Instagram, I'm not on TikTok, you'll often see things of, you know, bad passengers in planes. You know, maybe somebody's taken another person's seat and refuses to get off, or somebody who's banging the seat, and they'll have things, what do you think about this, right? So imagine you get on a plane to go to Vancouver, and as soon as the plane has reached a certain altitude, people get up, and they're big, huge, tough-looking men and women, lots of, you know, tattoos, huge steroid muscles, and they say, every male on this plane, now that you're on this plane, you all have to be circumcised without anesthetic.

Well, if you think there's outrage over banging a seat, if this was filmed, I mean, obviously, the whole thing's completely and utterly ridiculous. You don't need to be circumcised if you're already on the plane. It has nothing to do with getting to Vancouver, right? Well, what Paul here is saying, if you're in Christ, that is what is going to make you right with God and get you to heaven.

And if you're already in Christ and you want to get to heaven, people who now say you have to be circumcised, they're evil.

In fact, the mutilator of the flesh, the analogy there is that it's, is that not only are you just, it's not a, you see, for the Jewish people, circumcision is a mark that the, for only male circumcision, female circumcision is not a Jewish thing, but the Jewish scriptures, the Old Testament, which are also Christian scriptures, would find the whole idea of female circumcision completely abhorrent. Female circumcision is a way to oppress women, plain and simple, and it would never be tolerated. But for a man, it's a sign of the covenant that you belong to Yahweh or Jehovah.

[18 : 33] But if you are in Christ and now you think you need to be circumcised, all you're doing is mutilating your flesh and showing that you have not, that you're not in Christ. That's what he's saying.

And then, and then you think about it for a second. You know, I, I, I sometimes like watching, I don't watch zombie movies too much. I don't watch plague movies and end of the world. I, I sort of like certain types of end of the world movies and all of that. But, you know, if, if there's a play, if there's zombies sweeping through an area and there's planes that are, that have come to rescue people who aren't infected by the zombies and, and, and they're going to be taking off and they're going to go to a place where it's safe or a place where it's safe from the plague or whatever it is. If there's somebody at the, at the door saying, just so you know, if you get on this plane, all of the men are going to be circumcised.

That would be horrific. Good grief. They're zombies. They're going to kill me. They're going to, the plague is going to kill me. And you're saying I can't get on the plane unless I'm circumcised without anesthetic. So for spiritual movements that claim to be Christian, that claim that you have to do these types of things, what is it going to do? I have, I want to have nothing to do with it.

I'm not going to get involved with it at all. In fact, it's, it's something evil. If in fact, the plane is something that's not just going to take you to Vancouver, but is in fact going to help you to, to, to go into, into safety. So that's, that's, that's partly what Paul is doing when he's talking about it in this, about looking at verse two, looking out for evildoers. You know, and then when he says, for we are the circumcision who were verse three, for we are the circumcision to worship by the spirit of God and glory in Christ and put no confidence in the flesh.

And then he goes and gives all of these types of lists. So one of the other things I need to say now, I might not have said this, I might not have said this two years ago, but ever since October 7th, 2023, it has been revealed how many people in Canada are deeply anti-Semitic and hate Jewish people.

[20 : 46] And it is at the point right now in Canada that, and I'm trying to figure out how to write a blog on this to help people. Christians need to consciously not allow themselves to be formed by anti-Semites.

Most of the discourse, I'm going to be a bit political here right now. I'm not being political, I'm being moral. Most of the discourse around what's happening in Gaza right now, the people who are talking about it are worried about not offending anti-Semites.

And so it changes how they speak. And we need to be very careful that we are not formed by anti-Semitism. It is a profound and great evil. And so there's a way of maybe people looking at this and saying, oh, it looks like Paul is rejecting Jewishness. That's not what he's doing at all. In fact, if you just go down to verse 5, circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. What he is saying is, nobody loves the Jewish people and Judaism more than me. I love the people. I love the language. I love the food. I love the songs. I love the land.

I love it. That's what he means when he says a Hebrew of Hebrews. So what's going on here in this text? Well, there's two different things that are going on here with the text. The first one is, and this is something that it's more talked about in other places. Because, you see, Paul, everything for Paul changed. He really was profoundly and deeply Jewish, even to the point of if he thought people were going to hurt his people, he would do whatever he could to stop them. That's what he meant by persecuting Christians. He thought that they were going to actually hurt the Jewish people, and he would do whatever he could to stop the Jewish people from being hurt. And so everything changed, though, when he actually saw the risen Jesus. He knew the grave was empty. He knew that the grave clothes were there. He knew that they never found the body. And good grief, he actually sees the risen Jesus and talks to the risen Jesus. And everything in Paul's life goes completely and utterly different when he is confronted with this profound fact and truth of the resurrected Jesus.

Everything changes. And one of the things that he comes to realize is that the law is completely good. The Old Testament law, the Tanakh, is completely and utterly good. But it's a mirror that shows you that you need to be cleansed. Now, here's the point.

[23 : 39] If you have a mirror and it shows you that you need to be cleansed, you don't use the mirror to clean yourself. That's ridiculous. If you look at it, have a mirror and it make you look all drawn and tired and you realize that maybe you're a bit dehydrated and need to be fed. You don't use the mirror to feed yourself. The mirror reveals your condition and your need. But the mirror itself is not what is going to clean you or feed you. For that, you need Christ. That's the first thing that's going on here. But there's a far more common and more profound issue here for us that aren't probably very tempted to go out as adults and be circumcised without an aesthetic. We are always bedeviled by the super spiritual.

Christians are always bedeviled by the super spiritual. Gosh, you know, look at that guy. You know, I'd be honest, George, I'm trying to learn the habit of reading my Bible, you know, but gosh, George, I just while following this guy on Instagram, and gosh, he reads 50 chapters of the Bible a day.

And he's now four-fifths of the way through memorizing the entire book of Psalms. Like, and he just talks about that. If you want to be a real Christian and really be blessed, that's what you've got to do. And then maybe somebody else is saying, George, I just was watching this guy, and he's living like it's subsistence poverty. And he says, if you want to be a real Christian, if you want to really claim the promises, if you really want to know Christ, you've got to give away 80% of all the money you earn. And gosh, he does it, George. And I, like, I'm just feeling like I'm such a loser compared to them. Or somebody else is saying, I've had these profound spiritual experiences. Or I've been able to fast for all of these lengths of times. Or, you know, whatever it is. And there's always movements that are going through the Christian church where we are supposed to be completely and utterly impressed by how spiritual people are. And spiritual people always work at externals. It always has to do with having a more powerful mind. They don't put it that way, but a mind that can master more things. Or a will that can deal with, you know, maybe being in frigid waters, or wearing horrible clothes, or, you know, like, in terms of the make you itchy. Or, you know, it's always about your will. It's always about your mind. It's always about having better emotions. It's always about these types of things. And it doesn't matter if you're in the evangelical world, if you're in the charismatic world, mainstream Protestantism, you know, Catholicism.

There are always these people who are to be to us the exemplars because they are super spiritual. And you go back in time of that, what's going to prove people more than anybody else? And if you really want to be spiritual and you're a 40-year-old man, you've got to go out and get circumcised.

Everyone's going to say, wow, that guy's serious. That's a serious Christian. Like, maybe I'm not a very serious Christian. And what does Paul say? It's all rubbish.

[26 : 54] Ignore it. Forget about it. Be found in Christ. You see, in a sense, the first eight verses up into verse nine are trying to tell you, warn you, like, if I had three points for the sermon, the first thing is that the first eight verses tell you that counterfeit spiritual growth is toxic and deadly.

Counterfeit spiritual growth is toxic and deadly. The middle part, verse nine, is that if you're found in Christ, you are made right with the triune God. And the third part is verses 10 to 14, which describes what gospel growth looks like in the real world. And the real world is already not yet. So what's he saying when he talks about everything of his loss? Like, look at verses, verse eight. I count, no, verse seven. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as loss. He goes beyond the Jewish type of stuff to just every type of thing. Count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as human and animal excrement in order to my gain Christ. So is Paul here saying that, you know, even though I was very kind to my elderly love, my elderly mother, even though I'm very, very, very generous to, you know, to young families with children, even though I'm, you know, I've prayed and I've read the Torah, it's all completely human excrement. Is that what Paul, no, Paul is not saying that at all. It all has to do with having ordered loves. One of the things I like about in apocalyptic movies, you know, where some type of But after everything falls apart, if you read that, watch the Quiet Place 3, for instance, they try to give people money. And the guy says, what use is money? Like given where we now are, what use is money?

We all understand that, right? And so what Paul is saying, it's going to, and we're going to see it a little bit more in the next few weeks as the book of Philipppians comes to a close. Paul is just saying, you know, listen, none of those things, if your goal is to actually be with God in heaven, none of those things are going to get you there. You got to be found in Christ. That's what you got to be found in.

You got to be found in Christ. It's only if you're found in Christ that you will be made right with God. And if there really is a God that does exist, if there really is a God that does exist, if Jesus really did rise from the dead, and if he really did rise from the dead, there is no person better than him who can tell you what that God, the true God, is like. It vindicates and authenticates him as the one that we should listen to.

[30 : 07] He is the one who helps us in secular, in Canada, to understand that if Jesus really rose from the dead, the way we normally frame the world and the discourse we have from the world has to be adjusted to take into account the reality of the risen Jesus.

Jesus. And if there really is a triune God that exists, it is very obvious that human beings are estranged from him and separate from him. And it is surely wise to think that if there is a triune God that really does exist, that we should be in union or at peace or reconciled to him.

Because every single one of you will die. So will I. And so if there really is a triune God that does exist, the most important thing you must, the most important love you must have, the highest priority you should have, is to be reconciled to him and to know him.

And the Bible here isn't saying that there aren't any other loves you have. In fact, the message of the Bible is this. So you just think about it. You know, Stephen Covey wrote a book quite a few years ago, but what he came about with the seven habits of highly effective people, it continues to be present in lots and lots of the books on productivity. And it's the very fundamental message that you begin with the end in mind. And if you begin with the end in mind, you put first things first. So one of the things I try to do with pastors is to say the most important thing that they do in their week to feed people and lead people is their sermon. And so you need to fight the busyness of pastoral life and say that you're just going to work on your sermon with the little cracks and pieces of your life, because all these other things are important, but they're not actually as important in the pastoral ministry. And so if that's the big thing that you can do week in and week out, it has to be the first thing you put into your schedule, not the 53rd thing you put into your schedule, or the 15th thing, or even the second thing. It has to be the first thing you put in your schedule, because that's just wise. If you don't get the first thing first, all the other things are going to be out of order. And so if you don't put loving God and being reconciled to him as first thing in your priorities, all the other priorities are going to be out of whack. You've got to get the first thing first. You've got to begin with the end in mind. That's just common sense if you think about it. And so what the Bible, the big message of the Bible is that it's as you first you get that thing set. And by the way, this is very hard. Like when it comes to children, the easiest thing in the world is to think the high priority is piano lessons, sports lessons, dance lessons, this lesson, this lesson, this lesson, and Christ comes way down.

When it comes to how you're going to use your time, it's really important you do this and this and this and this and this and this, and serving Christ goes way down here. When it comes time to money, what is it that most of us want to do? We want to put, well, you know, I need to pay this, I need to pay this, I need to pay this, I need to pay this, I need to pay this, I need to pay this, and if there's anything else that's left, I'll give that to God. But that's not, those aren't the right priorities. Those are messing up your life. You've got to get the first thing, the highest things high. And so the message of the Bible is not going to be that you're just the love of God and all other loves are obliterated. The message of the Bible is you love the greatest thing the greatest amount. You love small things a small amount. You love medium things a medium amount.

[34 : 03] You put things bigger than medium, bigger than a medium amount. But you get there by putting the first thing first and then realizing that these other things, and the other thing is it's not just a matter of priorities. There's a person, like look at verse nine again. Verse nine, it says, and be found in him. So it's as if every day I wake up and I say, okay, where am I? And it's not just that I wake up every day and say, okay, I'm in Ottawa. I'm at home.

It's I'm in Christ. That's where I find myself. I'm in Christ. Okay, how's my day going to work now that I'm found here? That's where I am. Every day, find yourself in Christ. Remind yourself throughout the day, okay, where am I? Where am I? Yeah, yeah, I'm at the Bible house working or I'm at the coffee shop working, but fundamentally even deeper, I'm find myself in Christ. I need to find myself there that you see. And here's part of the beauty of this analogy. And this is where the plain analogy breaks down for what it means to find in Christ, that when you give yourself to Christ, he enters into you and you enter into him. And it's not now that you're in Christ and he is distant.

Jesus is closer to you than you are to yourself. He is closer to your mind than you are to your own mind. He's closer to your breath.

He's closer to you than your breath is to you. That's how close he is. That's where you are found. And what does that mean in terms of how you live? Well, it's not going to mean you don't kiss babies and think puppies are adorable, but it definitely doesn't mean you have your whole life centered around those types of things because you need his help to order your loves and order your priorities and to trust him in prayer that he's going to do that. And go on again in verse 9, and be found in him not having a righteousness. And righteousness here means being right with.

And it also has not just that you're right with something, right? Like, you know, if Louise and I have had a fight, and then the question can be, okay, are we right with each other?

[36 : 18] And the word here of righteousness includes not only being right with, but it also has a word of, it has a sense of intimacy, and it also has a sense of covenant, of an ongoing relationship of mutual responsibilities. And so it says, and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes because I'm really good at doing things. The only way I can be right with God is that which comes by putting my trust in Christ.

And then he's the one that makes me right with God, and he makes me right with God, and I am in union with him at the same time. How much do you have to know to become a Christian?

You have to deal enough with your doubts, and you have to deal enough with your longings, that you make an internal change in who you are, that you'd come to realize you trust him.

You trust him. You want to be in union with him. And that doesn't mean you don't have questions. You can have questions. You can have doubts. You can have all sorts of things.

But at some point in time, you just realize, you know what? I think I now trust him. I think I've passed from not trusting him to trusting him.

[37 : 41] And then one of the best things you can do is just to claim that in prayer. Lord, I don't know how it happened, but I now trust you that you're my savior. Be my savior. I want to be found in you and have you in me.

This is just very briefly in terms of the... Remember, I said the three big parts are the counterfeit growth is toxic and deadly. That's the first eight verses.

Then verse nine is found in Christ and made right with God. And then the last things is gospel growth in terms of the already, not yet. And here we get more of this aspect of intimacy. Just look very briefly at verses 10 and following.

It says that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. And what this is just meaning is this, is that, you know what?

That's where if you go back to Philippians 2, 5 to 11, and everything from Jesus' birth to his death to his resurrection, when you are in union with Christ, you are in union with all of that.

[38 : 41] All of that. And that is this profound truth. It means when you go through hard times of suffering, Jesus has suffered. When you go to start to begin to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he walked through the valley of the shadow of death and even death itself.

And he is with you. You are in him, in union with him. Even when you suffer, he is with you. I mean, one of the things which is so beautiful about this set, which is all messy, is that every single one of us, even the most put together, internally is a mess, and he is with you in your mess.

Amen? Amen? He is with me in my mess to make something which is beautiful. And then it says here, verse 11, that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection of the dead.

And that's just him being very humble. That's not saying that he has doubts about attaining to the resurrection of the dead, but he's just, it's a type of verbal posturing to, not posturing in a bad sense, a verbal posture that it's all completely because of him.

My hope in resurrection from the dead has nothing to do with me, all to do with him. And then it says, verse 12, not that I have already obtained all these glorious things. And when it says here already perfect, that there's a telos word there, or that I'm already in heaven.

[40 : 05] I'm not obviously in heaven. I'm still here, and there's mess, and I'm a mess. But I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

That's my confidence in dealing with the mess in my life. He's got a hold of me. It's worth it to repent. It's worth it to be generous. It's worth it to stand for Christ in your workplace.

It's worth it to be opposed to the anti-Semitism in our culture. It's worth it to be opposed to the culture of death. He's got you. He's got me. Verse 13, brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind.

In other words, not being worried about all those things, and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Every day when you wake up, God is saying, George, I want you to remember that you're found in Christ. George, I want you to remember that there's mess in your life that needs to be worked on as you're found in Christ.

[41 : 14] I want you to remember every day that the final word about you will not be how many people came to church. I want you to remember that the final word about you is not going to be the mess in your life or how much you're suffering or even your pain or even as you come to the hour of death.

I want you to remember that the final word about you is you will be in glory with me. I invite you to stand.

Bow our heads in prayer. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you love us.

We thank and praise you that you have for your children. For those, Father, who are your lost sheep, who haven't yet come to a faith in Christ, you are calling them by name. You are calling them to come to you.

That's your constant call. Your constant call, Father, is that they would hear Jesus say, come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

[42 : 18] Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly of heart and you will find rest for your soul. Father, we know that is what you call all to, but especially those who are not yet in Christ.

And Father, for those of us who are in Christ, we thank you so much that your constant call to us is that we might know that we are found in him, in union with him, that he has us.

That the mess in our life and the pain in our life and even the accomplishments of our life, those aren't the final words about us, Father. Our final words are in you. And so, Father, we ask that you would, by your Holy Spirit and by your gospel and by your word, that you would help us, Father, to make Christ the highest thing.

Not that other things are not important, but that he will be supreme in us and with him, that you will help us to order all of our other loves, order our friendships, order our jobs, order our relationship with money and time, order our politics, order all that we are, all of our loves and all of our affections, Father.

We ask that you would order them in a way that is going to bring us true flourishing, flourishing, is good for our city and our world, and brings you glory. And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior, and all God's people said, Amen.