

Stronger

Week 4 Devotional

This is the last week of our “Stronger” message series from Philippians. But rather than looking at just chapter 4, I want to take a birds eye view of what we’ve looked at so far. And what I really want to focus on is the guidance, or instruction, that Paul give to each of us as brothers and sisters in Christ in these chapters. I’m sure there are more, but following are a few verses that I’ve pulled from Philippians 1-4 that I think illustrate that point.

And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. – Philippians 1:14

“Have this mind among yourselves [“looking to the interest of others”], which is yours in Christ Jesus,...” - Philippians 2:5

“...but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.” - Philippians 3:12

“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. - Philippians 3:14

“Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. - Philippians 3:17

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. - Philippians 4:4

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” - Philippians 4:8

“...for I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content.” - Philippians 4:11

In these verses Paul tells the Philippians, and us, to be confident and speak with boldness, to have the mind of Christ, to press on to the goal, to imitate those who walk rightly, to rejoice always, and to be content in all things. Like I said before, this is by no means an exhaustive list, but it still seems like a lot, that we, as Christians, should be doing. So, for me it brings up an old question that I, from time to time have asked, and I’m sure Christians, and maybe even non-Christians, have asked through the ages. That is, if Christ did it all for us, why does it feel like we have so much to do?

Because I’ve asked it from time to time, I’ve had to answer it as well. And it’s really not that difficult of a question, but it is one that each of us must answer for themselves. Christ did

do it all for us on the cross because He was the only one that could. And because of that he offers us the free gift, the grace, of our salvation. But, like any gift, it must be received. And through these verses in Paul's letter to the Philippians, he's trying to show us how we should be receiving His gift. I think Jesus is doing the same thing when in Matthew 16:24 he says to his disciples, *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."* Even though Jesus has done the ultimate work of the cross, we are called to take up our cross on a daily, a continuous. Basis. And I think both Paul's and Jesus' words are leading us to the same place. A place of denying ourselves. A place of placing the interest of other above ours. A place of humility.

Years ago, I was reading a book on humility and I wanted to share one of the chapters with a prayer group I was leading at the time. In my preparation for the prayer group, I decided to look up a secular definition of humility. So, I pulled out my college paperback dictionary, which meant it was almost new, and looked up humble and humility. There were several entries, but the one I liked the most said simply, *"to take a lower posture."* I remember as I read it, I was surprised. I couldn't help but think, for a secular definition, it could have come from the book I was reading. It could have come from The Bible. Because isn't that what we are called to? To take a lower posture in our relations with others. And to take a lower posture before our Lord and our God. And so, in all things, may we be willing to *"take a lower posture."*