

Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit
Sunday 18 October 2026
Service at Home, Bible Month, Week 3,
Philippians Chapter 3

Prepared by Graham Hepburn

Welcome to our worship today. This is the third of four services during October, following the Bible Month theme of Philippians. Today we look at Philippians chapter 3.

A prayer of approach

Lord God,
as we journey through our lives,
we see glimpses of who you are,
often too deep and unimaginable
to grasp fully the depth of your being.
We pray that what we see and feel,
will spur us on in our journey
to discover more of you.

Amen.

Listen, read, pray or sing along

We begin our worship with Charles Wesley's hymn, My God I am thine (StF 80)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcmzGhGpdPM>

1 My God, I am thine, What a comfort divine,
What a blessing to know that my Jesus is mine!
In the heavenly Lamb Thrice happy I am,
And my heart it doth dance at the sound of his name.

2 True pleasures abound In the rapturous sound;
And whoever hath found it hath paradise found:
My Jesus to know, And feel his blood flow,
'Tis life everlasting, 'tis heaven below.

3 Yet onward I haste To the heavenly feast:
That, that is the fulness; but this is the taste!
And this I shall prove, Till with joy I remove
To the heaven of heavens in Jesus's love.

Charles Wesley, (1707-1788)

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Lord God, each of us is different, each our own being;

and yet you love and care for us all,
you nurture and protect us.
How can we not be thankful to you
for all that the journey with you offers!

We thank you that you guide us,
in unexpected ways, to find the right way in life.

We thank you that when we wander, you draw us back to you,
give us new direction and encourage us to follow where you lead.

We thank you that you know our individual needs and quirks,
and yearn for us to be on the journey of life with you.

We thank you that the pains of life cannot be overshadowed

by the joy of walking with you.

For all these blessings and more,
we give you thanks and praise.

Amen.

A prayer of confession

God of the journey of life,
the mystery of our very being,
we confess that the journey we take
gets disrupted and we get sidetracked.
We go off on wild goose chases that lead us
nowhere,
up blind alleys and into bad and barren places.
We find our way back to you in sorrow for our failings
and in penitence for our wanderings.
May we be enriched by your welcome,
relieved by your forgiveness
and comforted by your all-embracing love.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Reading, Philippians chapter 3 v 1-11

Reflection, Part 1

Preachers have to be careful about using the word, 'finally' in a sermon! What is the longest time you can remember listening to a sermon after the preacher had said, 'and finally'?

Philippians chapter 3, verse 1 was traditionally translated 'Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord,' (King James Version), or, in the New

English Bible, 'And now friends, farewell; I wish you joy in the Lord.'

In reality, Paul is only just beginning the second half of his letter which he is dictating to his scribe. This reminds us about the practice of dictating letters on paper and gives us cause to be thankful because Paul continues in his flow and gives the treasures we can read in the next two chapters.

I would like us to take three points from Paul's message to the Philippians in chapter 3

- firstly, knowing and serving Jesus is the supreme thing, not our religious (or other) background

Paul feels that it is necessary for him to defend himself and his teaching, against those who have clearly called them into question. If that was the situation then, how much more relevant are these words in today's unregulated social media world. Paul's words are a reminder to us that it was ever thus!

Paul writes about circumcision, reflecting the tension between the Jewish members, still bound by old Jewish tradition and rituals, and the new gentile members of the church. Imagine being someone from a Roman or Greek background, coming to church, and being told that to become a member you do not have to go through a series of membership classes, but rather a Jewish ritual involving a painful bodily process.

As both a Hebrew and as a Pharisee, Paul writes his Jewish credentials are impeccable. But all of that fades into nothing, when compared to what he calls, 'the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.' He describes those other things which he gained through ritual and the pharisaic laws, as garbage, in comparison to what he now knows.

Paul writes that he now knows righteousness which has come to him, not through the law, but from God because of the faith which Paul has found in Jesus Christ

- faith in Christ which began for Paul on the road to Damascus
- faith in Christ which he then saw in brave Christians like Ananias who was prepared to take the risk of going to meet Paul.

Paul writes that he wants to know Christ, to know the power of his resurrection and to participate in his sufferings, and in due course, somehow, attain to the power of the resurrection from the dead.

We are all a product of our upbringing, socially, and religiously. Remember that the past is just that, the past. Instead, centre yourself and pin your hopes on Jesus. Embrace his risen life. Paul says that the privileges or problems which we have encountered will not define us as Christians. What will define us is now and what we do as Christians in the future; the path of faith and discipleship that stretches out before us.

Listen, read, pray or sing along

In our next hymn, Graham Kendrick based the words around this passage. We sing 'All I once held dear, built my life upon' (StF 489)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Merf00qcQik>

1. All I once held dear, built my life upon
All this world reveres, and wars to own
All I once thought gain I have counted loss
Spent and worthless now, compared to this

(Refrain) Knowing you, Jesus
Knowing you, there is no greater thing
You're my all, you're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love you, Lord

2. Now my heart's desire is to know you more
To be found in you and known as yours
To possess by faith what I could not earn
All-surpassing gift of righteousness

3. Oh, to know the power of your risen life
And to know You in Your sufferings
To become like you in your death, my Lord
So with you to live and never die

*Graham Kendrick, Copyright © 1993 Make Way Music,
www.grahamkendrick.co.uk*

Now, we read, Philippians chapter 3 v12-21

Reflection, Part 2

Secondly, Paul writes, however much we have done in the past, what is important is what we are doing now and into the future.

I love my daily Peanuts cartoon calendar. Recently, Charlie Brown went out to see his dog Snoopy sitting on his kennel roof, as he does, and Snoopy is typing on his typewriter, as he does (but unfortunately most other dogs are unable to do)! Charlie Brown says to Snoopy, 'I hear that you are writing a book on theology. I hope you have a good title.' Snoopy thinks (of course, as a dog he never speaks, I mean that would just be stupid!) 'I have the perfect title. 'Has it ever occurred to you that you might be wrong?!'

Paul asks no such question of himself, there is no self doubt. The Philippians are urged to follow his example and the example of others who live like him.

Paul writes that he still has work to do. He does not feel that he has yet reached the goal of fulfilling his calling to follow Jesus Christ. Paul talks about pressing on to reach the goal, in order to win the prize for which God has called him heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

Over the years, I hope that we can look back and be justifiably proud of our previous achievements in the church here or in the different places we have been. We have played our part in building on the work done by those who went before us, and hopefully in leaving a legacy for those who follow. We can take pride too, that through our actions, the message of Christ has been and continues to be heard week by week. But however we have done in the past, every day, God continually calls us again to the work that, through his Son, he has called us to do. That may be different to how God called us to work for him in the past, but there is still a role for each of us within God's kingdom. Often a unique job which is for us alone.

Paul reminds us that what matters now is what we do today and in the future.

Thirdly, do not let earthly things distract you from the goal, which is to become a citizen of heaven.

The late Reverend Edmund Banyard was a URC minister. Writing about this chapter thirty years ago, he wrote that Paul's words about those who 'make appetite their god', is highly relevant to the western world and its consumer society. That materialism is a far more dangerous enemy than the over zealous orthodoxy which Paul writes about. Almost without realising it, we demand a certain standard of living with endless updating of our homes being the norm. Yet, Banyard observed, the Christ we are called to serve, is to be found among the homeless, the hungry, the dispossessed, the misfits. Living as citizens of heaven is not the same as having every modern comfort, nor is it any excuse for being blind to the needs of the rest of the world.

Whilst Edmund Banyard actually wrote those words thirty years ago, I think if anything they are thirty years more relevant today than they were when he wrote them.

Amen

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

We dedicate our weekly offering, and all our giving, however it is made, praying for those who will prayerfully decide how it is spent within our Circuit and beyond.

Gracious God, accept these gifts, our money, and all our offerings, and with them our lives, to be used in mission and service through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Prayers of intercession

As we remember Paul in prison writing to the Philippians, we pray for all imprisoned for their beliefs around the world, and for the individuals and organisations including as Amnesty International who campaign for an end to such imprisonments.

**Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the leaders of the nations, be they large and powerful, or small and considered insignificant by the world. Grant them all your wisdom and insight in their discussions and decisions.

We pray now for the areas of the world currently closest to our hearts and our concern.

**Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all displaced people around the world, seeking to avoid persecution, war or poverty.

We pray for an end to the exploitation of the vulnerable by people smugglers and for those whose desperation leads them to climb into small boats to try and cross seas and oceans.

**Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who continue to be impacted by extreme weather conditions. Those still trying to recover from devastating fires and floods.

Those whose homes will never be rebuilt and those whose lives will never be the same. Those whose livelihoods are gone and for all the wildlife in areas of land scorched and destroyed.

**Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are ill. We remember those awaiting, and recovering from, operations.

Those debilitated by long-term conditions. Those who know they are in their last days. We pray for those who journey with them, for all carers, doctors, nurses and health care assistants, and their family members.

**Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer. Amen**

Listen, read, pray or sing along

We end our service with the hymn, 'All for Jesus' (StF 341),

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2M1f_34veo

1. All for Jesus, all for Jesus!
This our song shall ever be:
for we have no hope, not Saviour,
if we have not hope in thee

2. All for Jesus: thou wilt give us
strength to serve thee hour by hour:
none can move us from thy presence
while we trust thy love and power.

3. All for Jesus-thu have loved us,
all for Jesus-thou hast died,
all for Jesus-thou art with us,
all for Jesus crucified.

4. All for Jesus, all for Jesus!
this the church's song must be,
till at last we all are gathered,
one in love and one in thee.

William J Sparrow-Simpson 1859-1952

Blessing

**We go into the world
to walk in God's light,
to rejoice in God's love
and to reflect God's glory.
Amen**

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