

4 Gospel Resolutions

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[0 : 00] Well, please do have a seat, and if you have your Bibles there, then please turn back to those verses that James read for us from Philippians chapter 4, and why don't we still ourselves this morning as we come to God's holy, inerrant, and inspired Word.

Let's pray together. So our great God and loving Heavenly Father, we would still ourselves now as we come to your Word, and we ask that you would come by your Spirit, and like those words, those lyrics that we're singing just a short while ago, that you would occupy our hearts, and you would occupy our minds, and you would own it all, and you would reign supreme.

And so we ask this, Lord, for your glory. Amen. Amen. So, I want to get healthy.

I want to get organized. I want to live my life to the fullest. I want to learn a new hobby. And I want to spend less and save more.

So according to Google, these are the top five New Year's resolutions that people in the UK made in January 2017. And now, let's take a show of hands.

[1 : 24] I always love this bit. Any resolve to do any of those things at the outset of this year?

Healthy, organized, have life to the full, take up a new hobby, spend less, save more? Anybody?

Nobody took out that gym membership in January thinking, come on, let's do it.

It's great. Resolutions. Resolutions. The things that we love in this country. The things that we put our minds to, thinking, this is what I want my life to be about.

Well, this morning, as we finish our series in Philippians, we're going to be thinking about some resolutions. Philippians. If you remember this letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to this little church in this city of Philippi.

Well, this morning, we see him closing his letter. Paul's going to finish it. As he thinks about his dear friends in Philippi, and as he thinks about them continuing to live out their faith, what we're going to see this morning is that in these closing verses, Paul is very purposeful, and he's very pastoral.

And he leaves them with four thoughts, four themes, four virtues that he wants them to adorn as they live out their faith, shining like stars for the glory of God in their city of Philippi.

[2 : 48] He leaves them with four gospel resolutions. Before we dive in and to stop us from lapsing into moralism, we must tie these resolutions into what Paul has said previously in this letter.

If you want to flick back a chapter, chapter three. Did God save Paul because he had an outstanding CV? Did God look down on the track of life and see that Paul was running really well and thought, he'll make a great one for my team?

No. God saved Paul and God saved these Philippian Christians simply because he is gracious and merciful and loving. And out of his great love, he sent his son to die on the cross for them so that they could be forgiven, declared right before him and be reconciled to their maker.

It's 500 years we're celebrating this year of the Reformation, the famous Reformation mantra. We're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

God has saved us, Philippians, and he's saved us and he's transforming us now. And he's making us more into the likeness of his son, Jesus Christ.

[4 : 06] He's doing that right now. And so what Paul lays out for them here, these four gospel resolutions, they're the fruits, not the roots, they're the fruits of the new hearts that God has placed in them.

And to tie into the letter, verse 1 of chapter 4, these resolutions are going to help them to stand firm, going to help them be united, help them be together in the Lord.

So this morning, four gospel resolutions. You ready for these? We're going to rattle through them really quickly. You ready for these? Some enthusiasm, please. Great. Great.

Here's the first resolution, verses 4 to 7. It concerns what is ruling their hearts. Look at it with me. Verse 4, what does he say? Rejoice. Now, if you're on the ball, you know that's not the first time that he's mentioned that command in this letter.

And if you're really on the ball, you'll notice that's not the first time that he mentions that command in that sentence, in that verse. Rejoice. Again, I say rejoice. I was trying to picture it this week.

[5 : 12] Paul with his scribe. Paul says, scribe, write it down. Rejoice. Tell them to rejoice. The scribe says back, come on, Paul. Do you not think they've kind of got that by now? Again, I say rejoice.

This is what he wants. He wants this community to rejoice. Rejoice in what? Rejoice in their circumstances. No, rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in what God has done for you in Jesus Christ. You see, Paul wants joy to be a core part of the corporate DNA of this church community. And he wants it to be a distinctive mark of every single individual believer.

Now, how is that joy going to show itself? We'll see Paul in these verses. He first highlights the outward effect. Then he highlights the inward effect.

Verse 5. Let your gentleness be known to all. We've got an ESV there. It says reasonableness. The quality that keeps you from insisting on your own way all the time.

[6 : 21] And what does Paul want for this community? He wants them to be known for being gentle, for being kind, for being hospitable. To be those people who are known for inspiring harmony and unity, both in their church community and out with.

That's the outward effect of joy. I see him outline the inward effect. Don't let lingering anxiety, don't let it rule your heart. Don't let it suffocate your joy.

Don't worry. Now, you can imagine these Christians, just like us, they've got everyday things to worry about. But on top of that, imagine for them, the big worry about what, wearing the Jesus is King t-shirt, in their world that wears a Caesar is King t-shirt, the worry of what that's going to mean for them.

If I keep going with Christ, if I keep going with Jesus, if I keep speaking for him, where is it going to land me? And what is it going to cost me? That's a real worry.

That's a real worry. What does Paul say into that real worry? The Lord is at hand. The Lord is at hand.

[7 : 37] Presumably referring to Christ's return and his very real presence with them now. And because the Lord is at hand, don't let worry cripple you and don't let it sap you of the joy of knowing Jesus Christ as your Lord, your King, and your Savior.

And how you tackle that worry is not by the way of positive thinking. How you tackle that worry is by devoting yourselves to prayer. Look what he writes.

In everything. Comprehensive. In everything, bring the things on your mind to your loving Heavenly Father. Spread them before his sovereign throne and commit them to his loving, fatherly, tenderly care.

And do it with thanksgiving. Just in case you thought this was a one-way thing, God will guard your heart and your mind by his peace.

The scripture, I find, is full of beautiful promises. God's words to his people well, here is a wonderful promise for us to grasp this morning. Paul says, he prays, he wants them to know the peace of God because the God of peace is really with them.

[9 : 03] Deliberate metaphor, I think, from Paul there. God's peace will surround them, will shield them, protect their hearts and their minds. Remember, they're in a Roman colony. Familiar with the things of the Roman army, I'm sure that metaphor speaks volumes, deeply into their lives.

So, resolution number one, be joyful. Be joyful. Let me ask you this morning, what is ruling your heart? Outwardly, what are you known for?

Are you known for exhibiting gentleness? Are you known as one who brings harmony? One who encourages unity? And inwardly, is there a sense of this peace that Paul outlines here?

Are you maybe here this morning and you're allowing worry to dominate you? Is anxiety, is it clouding your soul? I've tried to make it a rule in my own life this week and I've looked really strange as I've walked up Wolfian Road trying to do it.

See, every time I worry and I worry about a lot of things, I worry about myself, I worry about other people, every time I've worried I try to catch it, I just try to throw it up. God, you care, you tell me that you're going to be with me.

[10:16] Take that worry and I take it to the Lord in prayer. Look really strange and I'm not. Sinclair Ferguson writes this, anxiety cannot continue to breathe easily in an atmosphere suffused with prayer.

And in our world where fear and worry seem to be everywhere, what a witness it will be to the watching world that God's people are known as people who are marked by prayer and marked by joy and marked by that sense of peace.

Resolution number one, dear Philippians, be joyful. Second resolution, this is verses eight and nine, concerns what is filling their minds. So what's ruling their hearts, firstly, secondly, what's filling their minds from verse eight.

If you follow it along, Paul outlines what he wants them to be thinking about. Just follow the words, whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy.

So he wants them to fill their minds with the things that are going to inspire them in their worship of God. I was thinking about it this week, I mean, he could have so easily have used the opposite of those words, could he not?

[11:41] Don't think about that which is false. Don't think about that which is ugly, but you see for Paul, simply to resist things that will not cut it. He wants them not just to resist, but to replace.

So not just keep your mind clear of bad things, but fill your mind up with good things. And a nutritionist will tell us there's three kinds of foods that we put into our body.

We put in brain food, food that helps us grow. We put in junk food. From what I understand, junk food, just empty calories, not really good, not really bad, just empty calories.

And they're toxic foods. So the foods that we put into our body, they're just not good for that to be in our bloodstream, not good for that to be in our system. That's what Paul is saying here.

That what is true for your body is true for your mind. So don't just be about avoiding the toxic thoughts, you've got to be about going after the brain thoughts.

[12:39] If you're going to continue to grow. The Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, writing probably a hundred or so years after Paul is writing here, famously said to his men that a man's soul becomes dyed with the colour of his thoughts.

And if that's true for Roman citizens, how much truer is that of heavenly citizens? What does Paul say? Meditate on these things? No, he says practice these things.

You've got to put it into practice in your life. And the things that you've seen from me, the things you've received, the things you've heard, the things that you've seen, fill your mind with these things. Resolution number two, be holy.

Let me ask you this morning, what's filling your mind? What's filling your mind? Living a world, don't we, that's constantly hitting us with images, with words, with pictures, what's going into your mind? Always taking stuff in. Reminded of this recently, we've, Alex and I, we bought Chloe the Gruffalo audio book, if you know the Gruffalo, the kid's story, and she comes up to me recently, Chloe, and she can tell me who the author is, she tells me the name of the author, she tells me the name of the person who narrated it, and she tells me the name of the person who illustrated it.

[13:59] She's taking it in all the time, taking it in from this audio book. Friends, let me ask you, what is filling your mind? Programs that we watch on TV, the lyrics that we listen to, the websites that we visit, the images that we see, do some of us need to say no this morning?

And do some of us need to say yes this morning? Is there not such an attractive message in the city that we live in, that the way to peace, that the way to even perhaps experience something of the divine is found by emptying your mind?

Would you see how Paul is saying here the very opposite? Fill your minds up with truth concerning the God of peace. Fill your minds up with these things that are going to inspire you to worship God. Think about it in your own life. Here's my question for you. How are you going to fill up your mind this week with the things that are going to inspire you to worship God? I think in particular in terms of our relationship with God's words.

How much exposure are you giving yourself to the Lord's word? Think about the what. What resources are out there that could help you? Bible reading notes, podcasts, sermons, audio books, audio Bibles, videos.

[15:22] We've got a plethora of resources available to us, don't we, in this generation. What is going to help you to maximize that exposure to the Lord's words? Think about the what.

Think about the when. How could you redeem that commute to work? Could you listen to something in the car? Could you listen to an audio book before you go to bed?

Could you listen to the Bible before you go to bed? You put on some worship music as you're doing in the dishes. What can we do to be filling up our minds with the things that will inspire us to worship our Lord?

Proverbs chapter 15 verse 14. A wise person is hungry for knowledge while the fool feeds on trash. So gospel resolution number two.

Be holy. And the third resolution verses 10 to 13 concerns what is driving their desires. Verse 10. You see Paul reflects on the gift that he's received from the Philippians.

[16:26] Remember we saw earlier in the letter they've sent Epaphroditus to Paul with a financial gift to support him in his missionary work. But in these verses you see it's strange.

Paul wants them to know that although he's delighted with that gift, he's delighted with their partnership and their support, he's not relying on it. Now why? Because he's learned something. It's really important there that we see that he's learned that. That he didn't just acquire it by default, he wasn't just born this way. That God through the school of experience and hard knocks has taught him and has molded him and he's learned something through that.

What's he learned? Verse 12. He's learned a secret. The secret of what? The secret of being content. You see here Paul has learned to cope with not just the ups and downs of life, but he's learned to rejoice regardless of whatever comes his way in life.

He says, doesn't he, verse 12, that throughout the course of his missionary life, what has he known? He's known poverty, he's known plenty, he's known hunger, and he's known fullness. Those things have been his constant companions as he's gone about his life.

[17:44] And in it all, he's learned. He's learned to be content. How? How has he done that? Remember there was a busker that was at the end of Rose Street in town.

The busker, you need one song. Do you know what the song was? Don't worry, be happy. People loved it. He had one song. Wasn't a massive fan of it. But this was his song. Don't worry, be happy. Is this what Paul's tapped into here? These are the lyrics that he's making his own? No. To see how for Paul, his contentment goes so much deeper and it goes so much wider, so much more purpose to what Paul is saying here.

Verse 13, I can do everything. Look at it there if you've got it. I can do everything. Probably more literally, I can do all this. Refer him back to what he's spoken about previously.

I can do all this through him who strengthens me. See, for Paul, the chorus of his life is not life as a roller coaster, Christians. You've just got to go to ride it.

[18:54] For Paul, his chorus, through Christ who strengthens me. Through Christ who strengthens me.

I'm content because I have all I need in Jesus Christ. When things go well for me, yeah, that's great and I rejoice in that but I have something far better in Christ.

When things go poorly for me, listen, that's okay because I have something far better in Christ. My hope in this life is not based on the facts of my life.

It's based on the facts about Christ and my fellowship with him. My joy is not derived from the changing circumstances of my life.

My joy is derived from the unchanging facts about Christ. Dear Philippians, who I love, I love so much, my joy, my crown, let me let you in on the secret.

[19:59] Come in. What's the secret? If you've got Christ, get everything. If you have Christ, if you know Christ as your saviour, you've got everything.

Resolution number three, be content. Be content. Let me ask you this morning, what is driving your desires? I remember I was so excited last summer I got an upgrade on my iPhone.

Particularly, I looked at it in the magazine for ages, particularly because it had this finger recognition software. Remember for like two days afterwards I felt like James Bond. I felt like Q just slipped me a little phone there.

Two days later, I come across somebody with a newer iPhone. Walking on Princess Street, I walk past the iPhone shop, walk past the Apple shop and I think, I know I only got that one two days ago, but actually, I really want that one.

How long can I, do I have to wait until I get that one? My phone actually, there's an app that tells you how long until your next upgrade. It's not been good for me. But do you know what's coming

after the iPhone 6?

[21 : 07] The iPhone 7. Do you know what's coming after the iPhone 7? It's the iPhone 8. Do you know what's coming after the iPhone 8? It's the iPhone 9. A sinful soul doesn't naturally do contentment.

Doesn't naturally do it and I am encouraged when I see Paul declare here that this is something that he learnt. This is something that he learnt that God, through the circumstances of his life, moulded him and shaped him and taught him stuff about the sufficiency of his son Jesus Christ.

What a great lesson I found this week. It's not true that our world out there is feeding us the story that you'll be happy with more. You're missing out if you don't have bigger.

You'll be better off with newer. If only you went on that holiday, if only you lived in that house, had that job, knew those people, had those clothes, shopped in those places, if only you were living in an attachment area so your kids could go to that school.

This is what the world is telling us. Our world shouts at us, the grass is greener over here. Little wonder that so many people in our nation resolve to save more and spend less this year.

[22 : 23] not only does our sinful souls not do contentment, but we live in a world that doesn't do contentment. And so the question that we have to ask ourselves this morning is do we dance to the world's tune?

Does our joy, does it ebb and flow with the changing circumstances of our lives or is there, whatever comes our way, a deep satisfaction in and a trust in the goodness of our God?

Remember this older man growing up in church? He was called Martin. Martin lost his job. I was only, I remember I was only 10 or so at the time. Martin lost his job.

Wife, two kids, mortgage to pay, serious worry. I remember my mum taking me up with her to speak to him one day and she said, Martin, I'm so sorry.

I'm so sorry. And he looked at her with a smile in his eye and he said, Hazel, it's my mum's name, Hazel, I'm the Lord's, I'm the Lord's and he knows what he's doing with me.

[23 : 29] Amazing is that, a young teenager growing up in church, actually the impression that something like that makes me. Whatever my lot, whatever my lot, you have taught me to say that it is well, it is well with my soul.

Jeremiah Burroughs' famous English Puritan, Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.

Resolution number three, be content. And the fourth and the final resolution, verses 14 to 23, concerns what is flowing from their lives.

So as he thinks about these Christians, it's incredible that what causes Paul most joy is that this church have entered into a meaningful and an ongoing partnership with him.

Not just financially, you get the distinct impression as you get through this letter that the partnership between these two, between Paul and the Philippians, goes a lot deeper than that. In fact, it's almost as if they are yoked together with him.

[24 : 51] Verse 14, sharing in his troubles that they really care about this man, they really love this man and he loves them and they really are willing to stand with him, Macedonia, Thessalonica.

And what he rejoices in most is not the gift that he's got from them, but rather what he rejoices in most is what that gift tells him about what is going on in their hearts.

Here is a gift receiver rejoicing because of what the gift tells him about the hearts of the gift givers. Paul rejoices that the grace of God transforming them is so at work, is so prevalent that it is overflowed in this generous gift.

Paul rejoices that the grace of God is so clearly at work in their lives that not only have they given him a gift, the bigger picture, they've bought into the mission.

[25 : 52] They've bought into the mission. They view their resources through the kingdom lens. Whatever I have, Lord, it's yours, it's from you, I want to use it for your glory. And they're using their resources with a kingdom mindset.

Do you see that? How does Paul describe that? Verse 18, a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

Resolution number four, be sacrificial. Be sacrificial. So let me ask you this morning, what is flowing from your life. What's flowing from your life?

Are you partnering with other Christians? Are you investing what you have in the work of the kingdom? Are we corporately using what we have for the Lord's work in this city and in this world? And I think about it really practically, the missionaries we support as a church, the Leakeys, Michael Gunperts, Jim Burnett, the legs, even Michelle who was up here last Sunday evening gone to work for a year in the mercy ships.

[27 : 00] Do these people know that we're with them? Do they know that we're with them? Even thinking of John Gillen working down in Muir House, do these people know that we are with them? Could they do with some encouragement this week?

Maybe just a text, maybe just an email, whatever it is to encourage them in their work. Wouldn't it be hilarious if they got 60 emails? We're using what we have for the Lord's work here at Brunnsfield. It's a great way to think about financial giving in this place, that everything we have is God's, we're just using it, we're just giving it back to him to use in his service, but we're also investing in the work of the Lord in this place.

The staff team, the building work, the events that we can put on, the 50th, the heating, the lighting, the coffee and biscuits, investing our resources in a way that opens up opportunities for us as a community, to impact this community with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I'm sure you noticed the other day what I found myself reading an article about Bruce Forsyth, a man just about 90 I think. This article was waxing lyrical, but the legacy that Bruce Forsyth has left at that age.

[28 : 10] And it got me thinking about another 90 year old who left a legacy. Many of you will remember, some of you may have come after her, but we used to have a dear sister here called Rita.

And Rita was just an incredible woman of faith. And she went to be with the Lord not long after her 90th birthday. I think it was only a matter of weeks. She went to be with the Lord. And we had a big celebration for her for her 90th birthday party at the bridge just down the road.

And she said for her birthday, I don't want any presents please. I want you to take the money that you would have spent on me and I want all that money to go to starting a fund that will put in a lift. Because this church is growing and this lift will provide and open up so many opportunities for us as a family, as a church family to continue to grow. What a legacy!

And tonight the vision evening, please come along, we're going to celebrate and mark all the work that's gone on out here. Some of you are looking at me funny because your visitors are just through that. We're going to celebrate and mark it.

[29 : 13] Is that not a fantastic legacy a 90-year-old to leave this church family? Investing your resources for the work of the kingdom. Resolution number four, be sacrificial.

Four gospel resolutions. Be joyful, be holy, be content, be sacrificial. Stand firm, Philippians, as you take the gospel to your city of Philippi.

Now one final thought from me and then we're done. I reckon these Philippian Christians would be greatly encouraged by Paul's letter. Do you not? Get this thing? You're reading it out. Yeah, there's challenges but what encouragement.

But if they needed a little bit more encouragement then look how he signs off this letter. It's important, isn't it? We see that a letter is like this all the way through to the end because there's some diamonds at the end.

As we close this morning look at verse 21. Greet the saints. Greet the saints. The brothers who are with me send their greetings.

[30 : 16] And notice this little detail. Especially those of Caesar's household. So Paul wants the Philippians to know that they are Christians at some level or another working for Caesar in Rome.

If you want to think about it like that, it's kind of like the civil service. Is it not thrilling to think that God in his sovereign purposes has his people doing his work in the city of Rome even in this humongous kingdom at the time of Rome?

God's got his people at work in here. God's got his people. And the kingdom of Christ is beginning to penetrate even the humongous kingdom of Rome.

Is it not incredible to think about as we stand here today so many years on that one of these kingdoms you only read about in the history books but one of these kingdoms not only does it advance and grow every day but actually it comes with a cast iron guarantee that the gates of hell will never prevail against it.

Is that not an incredible thought? I wonder what odds you would have got on that when you finish this letter. But it's true. All the more reason Philippians to shine like stars and to resolve to live your lives worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[31 : 38] So spirit come put strength in every stride give grace for every hurdle that we may run with faith to win the prize of a servant good and faithful as saints of old still line the way retelling triumphs of his grace we hear their calls and we hunger for the day when with Christ we will stand in glory.

And so to God our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Let's pray together. Our Father we thank you so much for this morning.

Lord we want to praise you today that we have your word in our language. That what a joy it has been over the summer to spend time in this letter to the Philippians.

And so we ask Lord that you would help us as your people this week as your spirit is at work in us to do what Paul says to these Philippians to practice these things and to do it for your glory and to do it for your kingdom and to do it for the building up of your church in this place we ask.

In Jesus name Amen.