

Living the Gospel Life

Thanks/Intro Comments

1. Introduction

(i). Reading Well

- Half time team-talk; the real game is out there
- Our pastors get us ready for the game Sunday after Sunday. This is not the main thing, this is getting us ready for the game of life that we play with Jesus everyday.
- As Christ followers though we can be encouraged to get back into the game on Sunday but to keep playing, to keep running we need to take the responsibility of being equipped.
- APC has a rich culture of the ministry of the Word & Spirit . An emphasis on reading and studying the Scriptures so that by 'remaining' in the Word and having the word 'remain' in you, you can grow even more fruitful in your life with Jesus Christ.
- May I additionally suggest that in your reading and study please consider doing whole books at a time? A helpful resource that you may want to get is 'How To Read the Bible Book by Book' by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart.

My wife Manju tells the story about the time we were engaged 22 years ago. This was the pre-internet and

mobile era so all we had were letters and a weekly phone call. When she'd get my letters she'd excitedly open it up to read what I'd written. But the bulk of my letter would be full of stuff I was learning from the Bible and wanted her to get hold of too. And at the end I'd express some personal comments and affection. Soon she began to read my letters differently. Now as soon as they arrived and were opened, she goes straight to the personal comments and affections at the end and then reads the spiritual stuff!

Sometimes we may read the Bible piecemeal like that. That is not the most profitable way to read the Bible.

- With that in mind I want in the time allotted to me to work through a NT letter – you'll be pleased it's not Romans or 1 Corinthians – but Philippians.
- This letter like all letters needs to be read and studied as a whole. It won't help you understand a letter if you read only bits of it.

(ii). Partners in the Gospel

Philippians was written to the church in Philippi which is situated in modern day Greece. This was the first church that the apostle Paul started in mainland Europe and you can read the story in Acts 16.

- Begins with a dream from God that leads the team in a new direction
- Begins with one lady
- Begins with another supernatural encounter as Paul delivers a young demonised girl
- Begins with trouble – being beaten and imprisoned
- Begins with another supernatural intervention of God in an earthquake and the miraculous coming to faith of the jailor and the adults in his family.

Because of the trouble Paul and Silas have to leave this infant church very early but the church never lost their connection with their apostle as they continued with Jesus. In this letter we read of that when Paul says,

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. (1:4-5, NIV)

This letter written many years later is essentially a thank you letter. The church had heard that he was in prison and were concerned for him. So along with the gifts they'd sent Epaphroditus to care for Paul.

But the apostle can't just say a simple thank you – he will write three and a half of chapters of precious encouragement before he gets to his thanks in chapter 4 and verse 10 for the 'concern' the church has shown in sending him financial gifts and the assistance

of Ephaphroditus for the work of the ministry.

(iii). Gospel Life

In writing this long thank you, Paul also urges them to:

“conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27)

This was an urgent and important need then and it remains so today. To live in a way that is worthy of or in keeping with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What is the gospel?

Primarily it is the person, work and words of Jesus Christ the unique and singular Saviour of all men. It is the message of His life, death and resurrection and how that work provides forgiveness from sin, restoration to relationship with God and membership in His global family where we live this gospel out (Php 2:12).

What is this life like? What are the aspects of this life that we need to pay attention to?

Due to the time we have we can't get into every detail of the way of life that Paul holds before his dear friends by way of reminder.

What aspect of this life can we identify in this letter? And by doing this perhaps also have a framework for understanding this letter and hopefully develop similar ones for other books of the bible.

Allow me to put before us a few snapshots of this 'Gospel Life' from this letter itself. This is by no means an exhaustive list of this theme from this letter.

Snapshot # 1

Life in Community

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (1:1-2)

Three communities are presented to us in the opening verses:

- Community of authors – Paul and Timothy
- Community of recipients – saints, overseers and deacons – the church!
- Divine community – God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

At the start of this letter, through this letter, in every NT letter and indeed the Scriptures there is a great emphasis on 'community'.

- God makes Adam & Eve
- God gathers a people, a nation, a community
- He is the One who puts the solitary in families (Psa 68:6)
- The Messiah is coming for a people. Jesus, the Messiah promises to 'build His church' (Mt 16:18)

Its always about community, about doing life with others for as John Wesley remarked, 'there is no such thing as solitary religion'.

When we read these letters we import our normal template of

being addressed to as individuals and so we think this letter is written to me – actually it was written to a church, and therefore

- it speaks primarily to our life together
- the encouragements are to us together.
- the application is also to us together

Which is why our key verse is calling us saying, 'conduct yourselves'. It's in the plural, to the community together. Its together that we can do this. We truly need each other.

Therefore if you are not doing life with others you can't really apply the life lessons of this letter. For community is the context in which these lessons have to be worked out.

- This here on Sunday is not the community for you can't do genuine gospel life with so many people at the same time. It's usually a smaller number. And the Life Groups are probably the best context for this.

➤ Are you part of one? Are you doing this life with that group?

Snapshot 2

Confident Life

Because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear. (1:14)

How do chains in Paul produce confidence in 'most of the brothers and sisters'?

The answer is in the previous verses:

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. ¹³ As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. (1:12-13)

Its this gospel life that Paul has lived that produces confidence in himself and others.

- What has happened to you Paul? In prison; that's hard. No, actually this has helped to 'advance the gospel'
 - How? Well I have a captive audience, chained as they are to me and as they take turns I've had a chance to share the gospel with the whole Palace Guard (these elite guards, Black Cat Commandos!). And we have brothers amongst them now!
 - Because in all things God works for our good (**Rom 8:26**)
 - So no matter what happens we can live with this conviction that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (**Rom 8:38**)
 - It's what happened to Joseph (**Gen 50:20**)
 - And to Moses
 - It what happened at the start of the church in **Acts 16**
 - And Jesus on the Cross
- None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 **Cor 2:8**)

¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross (Col 2:15)

- What hardship are you currently facing? Difficult spot you are in? In the way God worked out good for Joseph, Jesus and Paul He will for you to. Be confident in God's ability. Stand still and see His salvation.

Snapshot # 3

A Life that is Consumed with Christ

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (1:21, NIV)

According to the Times of India¹, over the last decade India has become the world's largest consumers of antibiotics growing at an eye-popping rate of 62%.

Take another unwelcome fact of India: the per-capita consumption of alcohol according to a WHO report² increased by @ 50% in a ten year period.

Evidently for these antibiotic and alcohol consumers, they answered the question, "what is life about?" in possibly these words:

For me to live is an antibiotic

For me to live is alcohol

¹ <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-becomes-worlds-largest-consumer-of-antibiotics/articleshow/38251650.cms>

² <http://www.mid-day.com/articles/alcohol-consumption-in-india-on-the-rise-who-report/15299173>

For Paul what is life about?

It is only Christ

To live is Christ. To die is gain, because I get more of Christ. This is the third aspect of the gospel life. It is a life that is consumed in and focused laser-like on Christ.

Without becoming a hermit and taking up sanyas – everything in life can be seen through the grid of Jesus Christ thus making life all about Christ.

Paul, a bi-vocational and marketplace minister spent some time making and selling tents.

Yet for him his life was consumed with Christ: To live is Christ!

- What is life for you?
- What do you think of most? Dream of? Spend your energies most on?
- What is your greatest ambition, your dearest hope?
That is what life is for you now. If needed ask the Lord for grace to make the recalibration to make life all about Christ.

A Cross-Centered Life

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. (2:5, NIV)

- I've spent 32 years learning to be a disciple; still learning – that's my # 1 reason to be here this morning!
- Started this life as a consumer thinking the Lord was a BIG ATM Machine – “ask and you will receive”.
- It took several years before I learned that the core discipleship issue for me was:
“And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”
(Luke 14:27, NIV)
- What does that mean? It means to have this Cross-centered mindset of Jesus:
“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
(Mk 10:45, NIV)

It means to live life for others. That my default posture in life is always – what can I give, not what can I get?

We join a community, a church not because of what we can get but because the Lord has placed us there to spend our lives for the benefit of others.

We have too much of this 'me' centered mentality and we even bring it to church(!):

- I was blessed by the service this morning
- The worship songs and prayer weren't directed towards my needs
- This is a different community – I have other needs
- I feel good in this place; I like your music and teaching

That is not a gospel mindset. It is not a Jesus mindset. Jesus' mindset was on others. How can I spend my life serving others? How can I make others great?

As a father and husband my ambition is to equip and release my wife and children into the call of God for their life.

- They are not here to support my vocation/work/ministry.
- My #1 calling is to serve them to fulfill theirs!

That is the mindset of Jesus. That is living a Cross-centered life.

- What about you? Who is in the cross-hairs of your life?
Yourself or others?
What is your life orientation – yourself or others?
Any recalibration needed?

A Life of Carrying the Message of Christ

But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. (2:22-23)

- Lots of movement
 - Paul had been moving around starting and encouraging churches
 - Now that he is constrained – others are on the move. Epaphroditus had come was soon to return. Timothy will also be sent shortly
 - For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church. (1 Co 3:17, NIV)
- Core of gospel expansion requires mobility on the part of God's church
- Rooted in the greatest mobility that we have just passed – even though He was equal with God, Jesus did not hold onto that but put that aside for the benefit of sinners – moved to take on the form of man.
- At heart the gospel is possible because of movement and Christ's great Commission is anchored in that great command to get mobile: Go!

- We go where we live and work. We go where the Lord sends us. We are all missionaries. Everyone, Everyday, Everywhere.
 - What about you? Are you called to make a fresh movement out of your comfort zone? Do something that requires fresh grace and courage?
 - What holds you back, if anything?
- Gospel power is available for gospel advance!

Snapshot #6

A life of **Chasing** the Grace of Jesus

One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (3:13-14)

The great evangelist D L Moody once remarked³,

“Give me a man who says this one thing I do, not those fifty things I dabble in.”

On a few occasions the Scriptures narrow our focus on ‘one thing’:

- One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. (Psa 27:4, NIV)

³ <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/d/dwightlmo140907.html>
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- “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴²but one thing is necessary. (Lk 10:42-43, ESV)

What is the one thing? Two things actually here in Php 3:

- forgetting what lies behind
- pressing on to take hold of what lies ahead

But because it needs to be done simultaneously Paul can honestly say it is one thing. Also because you can't do one properly, without the other.

- You can't forget if you don't have something in front of you to attract you
- You can't get hold of what lies in front of you if you don't deal with the baggage of your past.

For Paul (& us) we must forget the life of legalism, of being accepted by God based on the merit of our performance and to chase after a life that is acceptable to God based on the performance of Christ alone.

- OT Sacrifice – perfect lamb; at the time of inspection attention is on the lamb not the sinner
- In the same way we are to live with our attention on Jesus
- We have to merit outside of Jesus. We are saved by grace through faith. (Eph 2:8-9)
- We are what we are by grace and whatever we do we do by the grace He supplies (1 Cor 15:10)

- So chase after this life of grace. Of living on the merit of and by the power of Jesus alone.

Snapshot #7

Contended Life

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (4:12-13)

vs 13 is possibly one of the most misused verses of the bible. Christ followers regularly take it out of its context and use it for all kinds of application. Paul used it within the boundaries of this gospel life in Christ and particularly in the context of living content with what he had, when he had it.

- It's a secret he learned. Evidently this
 - is a secret – not something that is easily understood or grasped. Most likely he learned it both through instruction and experience
 - requires attention & application. It needs to be done through the strength of Jesus. Not on our own.
- Its to be applied both in plenty and want. How come? Because both those who have much and those who have little – want more.

- Lack of contentment is a dangerous thing:
“But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

(1 Tim 6:6-10, NIV)

Consumerism is at all time high. And contentment is the enemy of consumerism.

- Contentment says you can manage with that 13 year old motorcycle, consumerism says, 'go and get the new one'.
- Contentment says you can increase your giving in light of the salary increase by living at the same level. Consumerism says what new gadget can I buy with the expected pay hike?
- Contentment says use your wealth to make kingdom investments – go and adopt a baby, give her a home (like the outstanding story we heard at APC-Central two Sundays ago). Consumerism says, invest in a second home for a secure future.

Remember Jesus said,

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” (Mt 6:24, NIV)

- Who will be your master? Jesus who gives ultimate contentment or Mammon who feeds the consumerism of our marketplace?

After all this Paul will say thank you!

Before he does that he calls us to *“conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ”*. We’ve had snapshots of this ‘gospel life’. As you hold these seven snapshots before you anchored in the seven key-words

- Community
- Confident
- Consumed
- Cross-Centered
- Carriers
- Chasing
- Contentment

what re-calibration do you need? What changes to fit once again into this gospel way?

Take just one area where you may need re-calibration or even some fine-tuning. You're doing it but know can do better. Let's pause with that before the Lord. Let's ask Him for grace and mercy, for power and strength, for help to make the necessary changes.

Let's pray....



USEFUL RESOURCES



Watch our online Sunday Church service live stream every Sunday at 10:30am (Indian Time, GMT+5:30). Spirit filled, anointed worship, Word and ministry for healing, miracles, and deliverance.

YOUTUBE: <https://youtube.com/allpeopleschurchbangalore>

WEBSITE: <https://apcwo.org/live>

Our other websites and free resources:

CHURCH: <https://apcwo.org>

FREE SERMONS: <https://apcwo.org/resources/sermons>

FREE BOOKS: <https://apcwo.org/books/english>

DAILY DEVOTIONALS: <https://apcwo.org/resources/daily-devotional>

JESUS CHRIST: <https://examiningjesus.com>

BIBLE COLLEGE: <https://apcbiblecollege.org>

E-LEARNING: <https://apcbiblecollege.org/elearn>

WEEKEND SCHOOLS: <https://apcwo.org/ministries/weekend-schools>

COUNSELING: <https://chrysalislife.org>

MUSIC: <https://apcmusic.org>

MINISTERS FELLOWSHIP: <https://pamfi.org>

CHURCH APP: <https://apcwo.org/app>

CHURCHES: <https://apcwo.org/ministries/churches>

WORLD MISSIONS: <https://apcworldmissions.org>