

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 15, Boasting in Christ, Philippians 3:7-4:1

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This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 15, Boasting in Christ, Philippians 3:7-4:1.

Welcome back to our Biblical Studies lecture series on prison epistles. We have been looking at Philippians and you've seen how we've developed the discussion of Philippians.

I would just like to go back to refresh your mind quickly on how Paul actually asked the church to develop the mindset of Christ and use Christ as a model in chapter 2. As you recall, as we come to the end of chapter 2, he also introduces two key figures that should serve as models for the church: Timothy and Epaphroditus. In chapter 3, after establishing the issue with chapter 3, verse 1, I drew your attention to Paul's stern call for vigilance in the way he called the opponents dogs, mutilators of the flesh, people who are stuck in their own ways and characterized as evil workers. Paul goes on to tackle one particular part of their lives and actually points to the fact that these are people who like to boast about things of the flesh, but if anyone has any reason to boast in the flesh, he is the one who has such reason to boast.

He spelled out with clarity why he could be the one to boast as such. He actually reminded us of the privileges he received by birth and the ones he earned. It was in that context that I ended the last lecture by reading verse 7 to you, from verse 7 to 9. But whatever gain I had, Paul writes, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as a 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 rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ. Just let's take a quick look at this passage carefully.

Whatever gain I had, referring to the privileges he mentioned earlier on, his national identity and religious status as a Pharisee, blameless, in terms of zeal for persecution, he calls himself one of these zealous persecutors. If that is a badge of honor for someone to refer to, he counts them as loss. Not because they are insignificant, but compared to knowing Christ, they do not compare.

Paul is making a strong point here to the church in Philippi. The value of knowing Christ surpasses all that the world has to offer, and all that the things of the flesh can provide. For him, another way of putting it, he would rather take the robe of pride from his background as a Jew, from his education and religious standing; he would

take all that off and, in obedience, take the humble position to be who Christ wants him to be.

There is no cause for boast because, indeed, there is something worth knowing. And he calls, he explains that as the surpassing value, surpassing worth of knowing Christ and experientially knowing Christ, not only cognitively or intellectually.

Knowing Christ personally, in a close relationship with him, he will suffer all things lost to the point that he uses the word. He counts those fleshly and worldly privileges as rubbish. But that brings me to the question: what is that word? What does it mean? The word Paul uses to refer to rubbish; I don't think in America if you are following these lectures in America, we use the word rubbish a lot; we use the word garbage more.

Sorry about that. What he calls rubbish can be translated in these terms; I want to be a little bit more graphic so that you can get it. It can be the word that is used for excrement, alias poop.

Or it can be the word for dung. Or it can be the word for waste food, for dogs. As you can see with the vivid images I am giving you here, it really doesn't matter which one of these you think the word should be.

None of them is good. Paul says if he looks at the pride he should have as a Jew if you look at all the credentials of a Pharisee, this is a guy who was educated in Tarsus; we are told he was educated under a Pharisee Rabbi Gamaliel in the book of Acts. He says he counts all this as excrement, rubbish, waste.

By the way, that is what ancient dog food would look like. Dogs don't get food from the shelf; dogs at a time will get food from leftovers, or you send them out to go and find some mouse or something to catch and feed themselves. Paul says he counts all those as loss.

And if loss is not enough, he counts them as rubbish, as excrement, as waste. It is important to note that Paul is not here by one minute, suggesting that his Jewish identity and all that he gained do not matter. He is not by any means suggesting that all his achievements are irrelevant.

He is saying that comparing to knowing Christ, they don't compare. How would I apply this to our lives? How do you compare your achievements, your degrees, your job titles, and all the things you refer to for personal pride and prestige compared to knowing Christ? For Paul, there is a surpassing value of knowing Christ. It surpasses all things; it is in that context that all those privileges are counted as rubbish.

One scholar will put it in his own words. Only Paul's example should be followed. For that matter only, his Christian example should be followed because he left behind what the Judaizers would offer to the audience at Philippi in order to gain Christ.

He put all of them behind. So, for Paul, there is actually a good cause for boasting. First thing, past achievements are not rubbish.

But when compared to Christ, they are rubbish. You want to know that. Two, knowing Christ is a good cause for boasting.

Why don't you boast in Jesus Christ? And Scholars have raised the question if indeed Paul has all these things to say, and has all these wonderful things about his privileges and all that, and he says, I count their rubbish. Why is it that Paul is not telling us that he was suffering with issues of the law because he said, on the matters of the law, I am righteous, I am blameless, and all this stuff? Well, the fact remains that Paul is not interested in indicating his struggles before he became a Christian.

Paul is not also saying when he is blameless that he never faulted other laws. In fact, elsewhere, he argues that he strived to meet the law's demands, always reminding him that he fell short. As I read to you from Josephus, even society knew these Pharisees that Paul belonged to as virtuous people, and society held them in that high esteem to the point of being deemed blameless if I had put Josephus' words differently.

So, Paul is not saying anything that ancient historians did not know about the Pharisees. It doesn't mean that personally, as a Pharisee, he never deemed his obedience to the laws, at some point, some form of struggle. He did.

Romance was dealing with one set of issues. Paul here wants to highlight reasons for boasting, what he chooses not to boast about, and what he chooses to boast about. And the language he uses here is only one scale that comes into play here in determining what he chooses to boast about, what is of surpassing worth or surpassing value.

And for him, Christ comes at the top. He will boast in Christ Jesus. Witherington, in trying to explain some of this, will say that this entire discourse is a matter of appealing to good examples of faithfulness and obedience, even unto death.

A life lived at the end in a manner worthy of the good news. The story about Jesus' life, retold in Philippians 2:5-11, is about sacrificial behavior that produces unity in the body. In light of our ongoing discussion in Philippians 3:7-9, the test should be seen as a further point supporting the larger argument that, indeed, it is important to have a good example to follow in obedience to Christ.

I'd like to show you a quick chart that one scholar put together that I think quite illustrates the departure from the old to the new. Moses Silva shows a departure from a spiritual bankruptcy from verses 7-8 in these terms. He actually shows how the old Paul said, this I have reckoned a loss.

I reckon all things lost. I have lost all things. And I reckon them dank or rubbish.

But when it comes to the new life, he always makes a contrast. I have reckoned them a loss in my new life for Christ. I reckon all things loss for the value of knowing Christ.

I have lost all things for whom? For Christ. I reckon them dank so that what will happen so that I may know Christ. I think this particular imagery illustrates quite well how Christ is at the center of what Paul teaches the church in Philippi.

Again, studying Paul is interesting for me because Paul will let you know that if you take Christ out, you take Christianity out. Christ is the center of it all. And I am quite pleased to see how some of these things are developed in terms of spiritual bankruptcy.

Someone like Moses Silva will utterly show us that this spiritual bankruptcy is developed into a very nice theme. He tried to read systematic theology into some of this, but I think it still works fairly well—verse 9. And Paul says, befalling him, not having righteousness on my own, that has come through the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ Jesus, righteousness from God that depends on faith.

Moses Silva says, oh yeah, this is a theology of justification. Righteousness is not on my own, but the righteousness that is received or God gives me through faith in Christ Jesus. He goes on to say that verse 10 makes another theological, important theological point for sanctification.

That I may know in my sanctification the power of his resurrection and may share in his suffering, becoming like him in his death. Well, one may say Silva is pushing it, but if you want to think about it in those terms, you can actually see how it plays out, even in verse 10, thinking about glorification that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share in his suffering, becoming like him in his death.

That by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead, talking about eschatological error. Silva raised this point to remind us about the theological framework. I'd like to move quickly from that conversation with Paul to actually Paul's new point, where he will illustrate and bring in military and athletic imagery to call the church more, even stronger commitment and responsibility.

From verse 12. Not that I have already obtained this. I am already perfect, or I am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the price of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Paul will bring out this wonderful imagery to show something about a calling. Paul doesn't want any misunderstanding in the process here. He has talked about how he left all things to know Christ.

He has talked about all these conditions that begin to look like he has it all together. He has actually made a strong statement soon after this line that there is one thing that he seeks to know. He wants to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and in the fellowship of his suffering.

But he doesn't want the church to think that he has actually had all the spiritual maturity on blessings there is. So, he needs to clarify that he has not attained it all, and that is the point he makes here. He makes it using vivid imagery that is actually known to a Roman colony in Philippi, military activity in Philippi, and athletic activity in Philippi.

He evokes something that they share. He is in jail in Rome. And they are in a Roman colony.

They know all this stuff. So, he can now use that to actually make his point. He actually shows how pursuing the course of the gospel should be seen as more of pressing forward.

I press on, he said. The gospel life is purpose-driven. Now, don't go to Rick Warren.

In other words, the idea that Christianity is so loose that within Christianity we don't have any boundaries, we don't have any goal, we change things as we go. And in fact, sometimes there is a notion that the way the world goes should change our Christian values. There are Christians who don't know the goal and the purpose of our calling.

Therefore, anything that comes in can be invited to contaminate what defines as Christian values or virtues. Paul says, no, Christian work is purpose-driven. There is a goal to it.

So, Paul says, I press on towards the goal. In fact, I give you this imagery. Think about this guy trying to press on towards the goal.

Think about Athletics. Has the World Cup right there standing. And this guy says I am going for it.

But it is not an easy journey. But let's make no mistake. There is a goal being pursued.

The goal is clearly defined. And the pursuers must keep their focus. Paul says I press on towards that goal.

And then in Athletic Parents, he said, I do all this with discipline so that I might obtain the prize. Friends, I put a trophy there. And maybe you have some trophy on your shelf for some little league that you played when you were in fifth or sixth grade or something.

That's not what I'm talking about. That's not a prize I'm talking about. I'm talking about the prize of being where God ultimately wants you to be with Christ.

Paul says I press on towards the goal. I am ready to grind it out if need be. I'm ready to press through and struggle.

I am ready to even know Christ in His suffering if that is what is required so that I may ultimately be with Him in the end. Wow.

Wow. Verses 15 and 16 never cease to challenge me. Paul comes back to the mindset idea.

We need to develop a heavenly mindset. Think about this. If you knew that your dad who had traveled if you were a little girl or a little boy and you knew that your dad who had traveled out of town, was expecting you to do all your chores well and his condition is if only you did all your chores, he was going to buy you your dream gift on this trip and he's going to come in and deliver it.

What would be your attitude towards your chores when Dad is away? Would you say, well, by the way, this is so burdensome? I don't want to do that. Maybe I'll do it.

Maybe I will not do it. Or maybe it's too difficult and complex for me. Or would you say, every morning when I get up, I want to make sure I put my hours in?

I do my chores. I want Mom to be able to verify. I want my siblings to attest to the fact that I have done all my chores because I know my dream gift is on the way.

There is something being expected that is of value to you. And that expectation naturally builds the motivation to accomplish what you need to do. Paul says there is a price in the end to attain, and just keeping that price in heaven with a heavenly mindset, having that expectation should serve as a motivation in one's walk with God.

Until recently, I've spent half of my time pastoring and teaching. Half time. I should say, when I say half time, it means two full times.

Doing the pastoral side of my work will send me to hospitals very often to visit and to pray for the sick, to be with someone in the last days of their lives. I never cease to be amazed at what happens, especially when people come close to death, and God and the medical officers help them, and they recover. Their view about life changes.

Their perception of things of God is different. I have seen men whom you can describe as hardened-hearted become soft-hearted. I've seen people who are almost lukewarm in their walk with Christ being serious with their walk with Christ.

Talking about how much they know that life is not all about those things out here. They have to come close to death to realize the essence of the true life of Christ. Paul says that is not what you need to do.

In fact, at this very time, you can develop that heavenly mindset and let that drive you, motivate you to understand that in fact, in reality, we are strangers on this earth. This is not our home. And yet, we cannot adopt an escapist attitude to run away from the world.

In the previous lecture, I reminded you that he challenged the church to shine in the world and to make a difference in the world. But he is calling them to develop the mindset that will give them the motivation, the oomph factor, to press on towards the goal. I don't know how you understand what Paul is doing here.

But I want to outline three key things to help you understand what Paul is trying to avoid. He wants to avoid some degree of misunderstanding that people are likely to have about his spirituality. He has not arrived at spiritual perfection.

They need to know that. The fact that he has forsaken all condom rubbish and pursued Christ with all intensity does not mean he has arrived. They need to know that.

He also wants them to know that spiritual perfection is an ongoing pursuit. He is pressing on. He is not cruising on.

Hey, he is not walking all the way to that place. He is pressing on. Perhaps some five years ago, I learned that word, grinding on.

I always get excited when I get one or two English words that help me to explain exactly what I am trying to explain. He is pressing on. It's a battle.

It's not light. He is doing his best to make it happen. He wants them to know that the journey is intense.

It is as intense as a military person on the front line, using the language used in Greek, or as intense as the athletes in competition. Have you ever been involved in some kind of athletic competition? Well, I was involved in soccer, and I have to tell you, it had to take me years to learn how to lose well. I was not a good loser.

Maybe that should give you a clue about my sense of competition on the pitch. I want us to win. And I had to mature to the point of trying to understand that sometimes, people I'm playing with are actually friends.

So, it's okay sometimes to lose a while. But Paul is not suggesting losing as part of the proposition here at all. The point is that the motivation and the drive for someone who wants to win in a battle, moving forward, or an athlete who wants to win the crown, playing hard, working hard to win, is the kind of attitude to be adopted.

I wish I could tell you that as an athlete, it is easy to start a match and know that you win the match. No. The athletic rules are always such that the team you are going to play is likely to be a team that is compatible with your team, and so you are not able to predict with 100% certainty what happens.

Statistics sometimes work in your favor, but statistics are often proved wrong in sports. Striving, working, discipline, and focus all come into play, and Paul says the Christian journey should be perceived as such. It is in this context that Paul, in trying to bring the discussion of chapter 3 to a close, begins to focus on some key issues from verse 17.

Brothers, join in imitating me. He'll write, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the examples you have in us. Whoa, that sounds pretty arrogant, isn't it? Join in imitating me. For many of whom I have told you and now tell you, even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross.

Their end is destruction. Their God is their belly, and their glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But note verse 20, and I'll come back to that verse later.

But our citizenship, even though you are in Philippi and you think you have dual nationality and you have everything to be proud of, our citizenship is in heaven. With

minds set, our citizenship is in heaven, and from it, we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Wow. Imitate Paul. Paul says in verse 17, imitate me as if what he's been trying to do from verse four is not enough.

As if what he's saying, I was this, I was this, I was born this, I was all that, is not enough. Now, he's laying out, revealing, and disclosing his rhetorical strategy by using key people, including himself, as an example. And now he says, just in case you didn't get the one I talk about with Christ, just in case the example of Timothy and Epaphroditus is confusing to you, just in case you didn't get what I was doing when I told you about my own background and my own pursuit and discipline, now I want you to know that I am asking you, learn from me.

But stop there and think about it. How many leaders today do you find in Christian work that will pause and say, imitate me as I imitate Christ? In fact, the ones I have found are likely to say something to this effect. I am not Christ.

Look up to Christ, and don't look up to me because I am not perfect. I am only a sinner saved by grace. It's true that the Christian life is a struggle.

But, in that challenging work with God, Paul is saying, as a leader, as an apostle in the chain, he could, with strong affirmation, refer to a people, not the evil workers, a people he would call brothers and sisters. That is how he begins verse 17. Brothers and sisters.

He would call them brothers and sisters and say, hey, siblings, learn from your older siblings and learn from others who have done what is right in the eyes of God. Many of whom, he writes, I have told you and I'll tell you even with tears, are working as enemies of the cross of Christ. But you should not do that.

You should imitate other good examples apart from him. Not the enemies of the cross. Because the enemies of the cross are as described.

They are enemies of the cross. They have no clear intention or desire to see the things of God work well. Paul is concerned that, as a church, people are not confused about this.

If they get confused about this, they will get distracted and do that, which is actually, in a way, contracting the work of Christ. Yes, is someone called an enemy? Should Christians call somebody an enemy? Paul says it's not enemy to Paul. They are enemies to Christ.

And look at verse 20. But our citizenship is in heaven. And on the citizenship, let me read what this scholar has to say here.

F.F. Bruce As citizens of a Roman colony, they were expected to promote the interests of their mother city and maintain its dignity, so citizens of heaven in an earthly environment should represent the interests of their homeland and live lives worthy of their citizenship. Paul would say if we have been talking about citizenship and if you have been so interested in this subject of citizenship, I want you to understand where true citizenship lies. I have drawn your attention to how Paul uses citizenship political language to appeal to the fact that these people are based in Philippi to make them think about what matters most.

Their sense of pride, in other words, is all being put aside. I have lived in places where if you are an American citizen, you are a champion. One of the great things that Americans generally may not even know is how many countries you can go to with an American passport without a visa.

And what a lot of them don't even know is what it takes to get a visa to some of these countries. Sometimes, you have to wake up at 3 am and be in line only to get a chance to enter the embassy at 8 o'clock. So, citizenship is a pride.

In some of these places, being an American citizen or a British citizen should give you some sense of pride. Even if you are a Canadian citizen, that is the best because Canada doesn't like war, and they don't have a lot of enemies out there. You get to go to all these places, and so it becomes this huge sense of pride.

So, imagine an American citizen, a Canadian citizen, or a British citizen, and imagine a place where your greatest sense of pride is your citizenship. And in a church setting you receive a letter from one of the key Christian leaders and say we live in a world that is crooked and filled with all sorts of evil. We need to show the world how Christians live and we need to press on towards the upward goal with a heavenly mindset in obedience so that we can attain the crown.

But let's do this: stripping off our citizenship, playing down our greatest source of pride, and developing a mindset that our true citizenship lies in heaven. How would you feel if you were an American citizen? Canadian citizen or British citizen? Would you feel as though Paul is trying to rip off your true sense of identity? That is what he's doing to the Philippians here. Your true citizenship, your greatest source of pride, is not your Roman citizenship.

You are a citizen of heaven, and citizenship comes with obligations. One of the greatest obligations of every citizen is to actually represent their country, live with all the pride and dignity, and represent the values of their country. Paul says citizens in heaven have to live up to that, too.

Our citizenship, not only your citizenship, as brothers and sisters in Christ, is our citizenship, and our citizenship is in heaven, and from it, we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are waiting for a savior. For Paul, this is clear.

Christ is coming again. He's coming from heaven, and he will take his own to be with him. That is where our true sense of identity belongs and that is where our aim and our goal should be focused.

So that as we live life here, we live life as pilgrims in this dark world of sin. Nowadays, talks about heaven and about Christ coming almost sound strange, if like, a stupid concept that only the naive believe. For Paul, by the way, Paul was not a naive person, and Paul was not an uneducated person, but for Paul, it was real.

It is real that Christ is coming. It is real that Christ is coming from heaven, and so it is on that basis that citizens of heaven should develop that mindset and commensurate attitude. On that note, he calls them to avoid the pursuit of the enemies of the cross.

The enemies of the cross are destined for destruction. The enemies of the cross, their God is their stomach or their belly. I mean, Paul used this word a few times here and there.

We scholars try to figure out what he is trying to say. Is he trying to say these guys would do everything to be able to put food on the table? In other words, would they compromise whatever they need to do to be able to put food on the table? Or is it that they just like food? What kind of expression is this? I mean, there are so many ways you can read that, but what is clear is that their God is not the capital G-O-D, the God in whom we have believed and through Jesus Christ to whom we can reach through Jesus Christ. No! Their God is their stomach.

They worship their belly. They like their food. Maybe they compromise to be able to make an estimate.

Maybe they are like the biblical account that we have when somebody is ready to sell his birthright for what I call Big Mac on the McDonald's menu. Their God is their belly. Enemies of the cross.

But is it not true in today's western world as someone who is still spending my life trying to do ministry during summer months in different parts of the world, is it not true that in our western world, people will almost, almost crucify Christ, really shamelessly denounce Christ so that they can retain friends and make people be able to give them some recognition, acceptance, or something that will help them make ends meet? How easy in our western world, as one of my Arab friends said, what is Christianity in the worst? When some of our friends and relatives are losing their

lives every day for the sake of Christ, only to see as if Christ means nothing to them in the context in which you work. I think that is a true challenge to us. The enemies of the cross, their God is their belly, and today, we still have enemies of the cross.

They will betray Jesus like Judas Iscariot for pennies. The Enemies of the Cross: Sorry about my pause here. The enemies of the cross their glory in their shame.

Their glory in their shame means what is shameful; they have no sense of embarrassment whatsoever in a context where honor and shame are big things, where what you do that is worthy of shame is such a big issue and a stigma. They talk about what is shameful as a badge of honor. And they will talk in the public arena; they will behave in the public arena and make it look like what they are doing is honorable when, in fact, it is deplorable.

Have you ever met a drug addict who is high? I have met one and maybe more than one in a few places. They think they are champions in the world, and normally, they talk as if they are the smartest people in the world. They like to explain to you that they are the happiest people in the world. They are just involved in what is shameful, what is embarrassing, and I mean they cannot live their lives just have satisfaction in their life except to bring drugs into their system to destroy themselves.

Have you gone to a nightclub and seen people the way they are dressed and behaving in such an embarrassing way, and yet they think that is cool? Glowing in their shame. Enemies of the cross have no sense of shame.

Have you ever heard Christians talk about Christian values and sometimes talk about vices as if they were virtues? Things that should be embarrassing to talk about. Have you found nowadays in modern churches arguing on all kinds of issues and making it oh it is no longer an issue anymore while glowing in their shame? Is it not a new thing?

It was then, and so it is now. The enemies of the cross have a distinct feature in terms of their mindset. Their mindset is on earthly things.

Their mindset is on earthly things. Earthly things here can include impressing other people in the world, obtaining the status and things that the world says are valuable, and trying to meet certain standards of recognition that the world requires, which Paul calls rubbish. Their mindset is on earthly things.

But for those who are in Christ who are not enemies of the cross, they are able to count all things as loss for the sake of knowing Christ. It is in this framework that Paul will make his appeal. Looking at verses 20 to 21, do all this, remembering that you are citizens of heaven and keep the hope that you have in Christ.

Quickly, I would like to give you three things to think about that Paul hints as the results of these Christians will adopt what he is teaching. One, Christ is coming. And Christ's coming will be a day of reckoning.

And he just hopes against hope that the church will be found brimless. And that will make him very happy. Paul also wants to make clear that the life that is lived in these lowly bodies that is exhibited among the enemies of the cross will not lead to the desired goal.

And three, recalling Philippians 2:15, like Christ, Paul is trying to highlight that humility and obedience will lead to an exalted position with the exalted Christ in the end. Wow! If they capture all this, then it is very, very important for them to understand how Paul is going to put verse 1 of chapter 4. It is on the basis of this, and remember, in your Bible, if you look at your Bible division carefully, some translators divide verse 1 to go with the end of chapter 3, and some start as a whole verse beginning chapter 4. So let me try to highlight how it will read if you read it along with verse 1. So Paul will say, on the basis of all that he has said so far, therefore, my brothers, he uses that language again, whom I love and long, my joy and my crown stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. Sounds very romantic, isn't it? Paul is almost using some kind of romantic language here.

But let me try to just break it down quickly for you here. If you read it either as the end of the chapter along with the end of chapter 3 or the beginning of chapter 4, this verse will serve as an inference from the previous discussion. In this verse, Paul underlines their relationship with the church.

They are beloved brothers. They are people Paul longed for, and he calls them his beloved. If you are a young man, I caution you.

Don't write a letter to a young lady who is in the church and use this kind of language. These days, if you use this kind of language, you could be in trouble. But Paul is unreservedly expressing his deepest sense of emotion, feeling, love, and affection for the church.

He also wanted to express his strong sense of gratitude. He wants the church to know that they are his joy and his crown. Wow! The crown here is something he has achieved.

Sorry about this. We are not sure, and anything we have to say about this is speculation. Whether his joy and crown is referring to now, his joy and crown to be referring to will be his joy and crown in the day of Christ or whether they are both in there.

If you give me the chance, I will say both. I like it both ways. Because it will make sense to me that Paul is saying that as he sees them, they are actually his joy.

Their presence fills him with joy. They are his crowns because he can see them in front of them, and one day, they will complete his joy and actually help him attain the ultimate prize. Not all will agree with me.

But I want you to know that some will say it refers to the present, some will say to the future, some of us will say maybe both. Then Paul makes a strong admonition here in the way they need to be able to hold on to all that he has been saying so far. They should stand firm.

They should remain steadfast. And they should do this in the Lord. In the Lord.

Wow. So, so far in Philippians, what we have been covering for chapter 2 all the way to chapter 3 and how we have come in these particular lectures, if you remember, I showed you how Paul calls for this radical obedience in the walk with Christ and then starts setting up examples. As he sets the example beginning on these lectures with Epaphroditus, he has gone on to set his own example and shows that he counts all things rubbish, if you remember then.

Then we began with his athletic imagery, how all these things should play, and the need to develop a heavenly mindset. I don't know what you are gathering from this discussion with Paul, but I want to draw your attention to the fact that Paul is interested in unity in the church, and he's interested in the walk of obedience, of which humility is a key part. He calls the church to vigilance.

He asks them to be aware of the potential for Judaism to come into the church. He then goes on to challenge them about the need to develop this heavenly mindset and the accompanying way of conduct that will make their very presence reflect God's people. Chapter 4, verse 1, when he begins with Therefore, his main admonition there is to stand firm.

When Paul calls to stand firm in his lectures, he has already alluded somewhere to the potential to drift away. There's a potential to yield to some form of teaching, behavior, or something that will lead you contrary to God's stance. Whether it is referring to the enemies of the cross or pressures from society, stand firm.

I hope you will heed that call, the last call of Paul in this particular lecture, to stand firm. It is difficult to stand firm for the cause of Christ in the kind of world we live in now. But if we only develop a heavenly mindset and ask for the grace of God to help us, we will be able to stand where God wants us to be.

We will live lives that bring glory to Him. And we hope and trust that one day we shall be with Christ, and our fight, our struggle, our efforts, and our dedication will not be in vain. I hope you are not only following lectures but you are also thinking about your walk with Christ.

Because that's what I do, and I hope that together we shall grow together. And let me call you a brother.

Let me call you a sister in Christ. Don't give up. Let's stand firm.

And together, we shall make it. Thank you for joining our Biblical Studies lecture again. And I hope that in the course of our studies, you are growing in your walk with Christ.

And you are not giving up learning and learning to know more about this faith called Christianity and these scriptures called the Bible. Thank you. Thank you indeed.

This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 15, Boasting in Christ, Philippians 3:7-4:1.