

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

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THE EARTH QUAKED...AND THE GRAVES WERE OPENED

Scott Dykowski

God is a declarer. When God created all things, He was declaring (Ps. 19:1). When He flooded the world, He was making a statement (2 Pet. 3:5-7). And God’s loudest statement is the cross (Jn. 3:16). As Jesus yielded up His spirit on that cross (Matt. 27:50), God made several loud statements (Matt. 27:51b-53).

“**The earth quaked.**” God was declaring a change of kingdom (Hag. 2:21-23, Heb. 12:26-27). Jesus’ death began the transition from the physical kingdom of the Jews to the spiritual kingdom of the church (Heb. 12:18-24). This points to Jesus as *the* king of this church.

“**And the rocks were split.**” God was declaring a change of law. Just as the confession of Peter is the foundation of the church, the Law of Moses was the foundation of the Old Covenant. When God split the rocks at Jesus’ death, He was declaring the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34, Col. 2:14). This points to Jesus and His Word as *the* foundation of the church (1 Cor. 3:11, Eph. 2:19-20).

“**And the graves were opened.**” When Jesus rose from the dead, an angel rolled the stone away from his tomb (Matt. 28:2). When Jesus died, God did the same for some nearby graves. Even as Jesus breathed his last, God was declaring power over death itself.

“**And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.**” After Jesus rose, these saints (in this context, faithful keepers of the Old Testament) went into Jerusalem and “appeared to many.” Their purpose was to be miraculous evidence and confirmation (Mk. 16:20) of what the apostles

would soon preach: the resurrected Jesus.

These resurrected saints are the key declaration. God desires to raise more than just Jesus. He has the ability and desire to resurrect all of His saints. A saint, then, is one prepared for bodily resurrection (1 Thess. 5:23, Rom. 8:28-30). What a statement God has made!

God has always wanted His people to look beyond this life, to anticipate a resurrection of the body. Even in

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NOVEMBER 2025

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FROM THE EDITOR:

“THERE WAS DARKNESS OVER ALL THE EARTH...”

Ross Haffner

Imagine a sun that refuses to shine at high noon. From the sixth hour to the ninth—twelve o'clock to three—the sky over Jerusalem turned midnight black while the Son of God hung bleeding on a Roman cross. This was no eclipse, no storm; it was the Creator pulling a curtain across the heavens so the world might glimpse the weight of its own guilt.

God has always spoken through the heavens. He once draped Egypt in a darkness “that could even be felt” (Ex. 10:21-23). He froze the sun in its tracks so Joshua could finish a battle (Jos. 10:11-14). He made the shadow on Hezekiah’s sundial retreat ten degrees as proof that death would not claim the king (2 Kgs. 20:9-11).

On the day the Lord died, the sky itself became the sign. The same week Passover lambs were slain for the sins of Israel, the true Lamb bore the sins of the world, and creation mourned. For three hours the light of the world was extinguished, and the world sat in shadow.

The juxtaposition of the cross is staggering. In one sense, the brightness of God’s grace through His redemptive plan shines clear across all of human history since that fateful day. The world has never been the same. In another sense, there has never been a darker day. The Son of God was nailed to a tree He created, by those whom He created, to save a rebellious and wicked race.

God has power over all of His creation. “He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, And has stretched out the heavens at His discretion” (Jer. 10:12). When a Christian sees what God can do in the skies of the earth he should be in awe of His glory and enjoy the blessed assurance that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

That midday blackout was heaven’s verdict on the crowd shouting, “Crucify Him!” (Luk. 23:21. Peter later

thundered, “This man... you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death” (Act. 2:23). The darkness on the day of Jesus’ crucifixion reminds me of the darkness of my own sin and encourages me to repent lest I perish (Lk. 13:3).

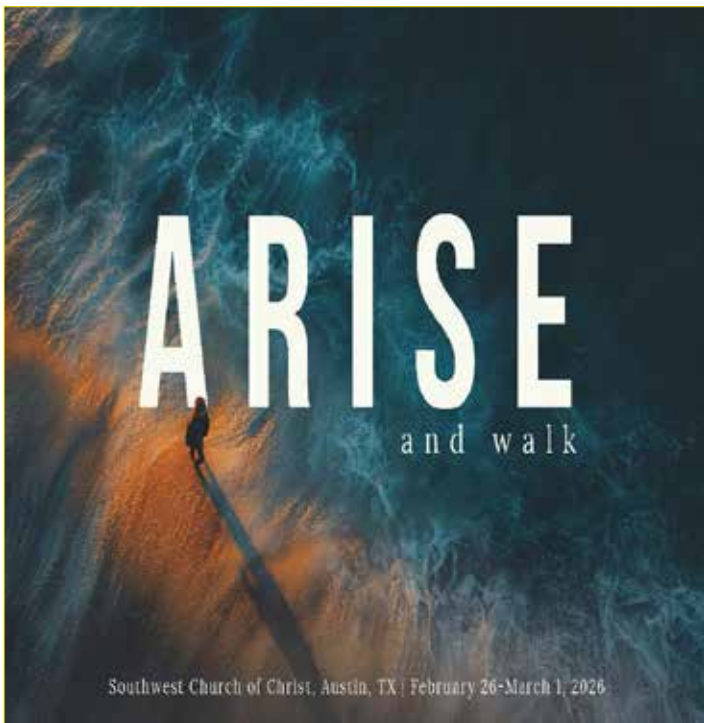
Sin looks especially dark in view of the cross. The selflessness of Jesus can help us to overcome our selfishness. The obedience of the Savior to the will of the Father makes my rebellion seem so small. I should also consider that any sins such as lying, hypocrisy, lust, envy, hatred, idolatry, and drunkenness essentially put Him on the cross since He died for the sins of the whole world (1 Jn. 2:2).

Yet that darkness is overcome by the light of His resurrection (Mat. 28:1). Because of His sacrifice, God’s wrath can be appeased on my behalf (Rom. 3:25). Though there was darkness over all the earth on that day, it does not have to be dark for me today, because of the light of the Savior (Jn. 8:12).

The three-hour midnight at noon was not the final word. When the veil of the temple tore from top to bottom (Mat. 27:51), the darkness began to lift, and the Light of the World stepped out of the tomb alive forevermore. That same power that blackened the sun now quickens dead hearts and turns midnight into morning.

CW





“THEN THEY CRUCIFIED HIM...”

Justin Hopkins

The crucifixion of Christ is the central event of the Gospel, and of world history. Yet, it is also one of the most adamantly denied events in all of history. Some religions teach that Christ was never crucified, others that His crucifixion was a mistake, or that it was a surprise to God, who then had to come up with a “plan B” until Jesus could come back and try again to establish His Kingdom on earth. Yet, Scripture is very clear as to both the reality of the crucifixion and God’s foreknowledge of it.

All four Gospel writers lay out this fact very briefly, with an understanding that the first century readers would know all the horrors involved in crucifixion; so all four writers simply say, “...they crucified Him” (Matt 27:35, Mk 15:24, Lk 23:33, Jn 19:18). While this event was not at all what the disciples were expecting, our Lord had clearly foretold its coming and done what could be done to prepare them for it. As He sat down with them to the last supper, He told them plainly, “Ye know that after two days is the feast of passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified” (Matt 26:2).

Just a few days prior to that, when Mary broke open the alabaster box to anoint Jesus’ feet He said, “...*She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying*” (Mk 14:8).

Jesus had been clear all along that this death was central to His mission. As Jesus made His final journey to Jerusalem, He plainly said that he would be betrayed to the Jewish leaders, who would condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Romans, who would mock, scourge, and crucify Him, and then He would rise from the dead on the third day (Matt 20:17-19). Nevertheless, because it was so far from their expectations, the disciples failed to understand what He meant (Lk 18:34).

Christ’s foreknowledge and prediction of His own crucifixion is consistent with what is seen in Old Testament Scripture as well. The Psalms are quite explicit in their prophecies concerning the Messiah. Psalm 22:1 is quoted by our Lord as He hung on the cross. Since this Psalm was memorized and regularly repeated by faithful Jews, the verses that followed would have flowed through the minds of those who were witnessing the scenes of the crucifixion. “*They pierced my hands and my feet ... They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.*” (Ps 22:16, 18). Isaiah 53 similarly foretells the crucifixion in detail. There are many other prophecies that can be pointed to, which show that the crucifixion was foreknown as a part of God’s plan. “*They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son*” (Zech 12:10). Just as Peter said on the day of Pentecost,

Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. (Act. 2:23).

When one considers the fact that God is all-knowing, His foreknowledge of the crucifixion is no surprise. There is nothing that God does not know, nothing He does not see or hear, and nothing that could ever take Him by surprise or be hidden from Him.

LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether (Ps 139:1-4).

That means that God knows me and He knows you. He knows all my sins, all my failures, all my imperfections. I

may be able to put on a good act and fool even those closest to me, but God sees right through it, and knows the whole truth (Heb 4:13). As troubling as that ought to be, it is also wonderful and amazing.

It is precisely because God knew from before time that I would need a savior that He formed a plan and sent His Son to pay the price that I could never pay (Rom 5:8-10).

How wonderful to think that our God is so loving, so wise, and so powerful, that He knew all the ways I would fail Him and betray Him, yet He chose to love me anyway. He knows now where I stand, and where you stand. He knows our weaknesses and our fears, and in that knowledge, through the blood of His Son, He offers of hope, healing, and forgiveness.

CW

“THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE WAS TORN ...”

Chase Green

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split. (Matt 27:50-51).

When one thinks of the miraculous events surrounding Jesus’ crucifixion, perhaps the veil of the temple being torn is not the first one that comes to mind. That said, this event is highly significant in that it symbolizes some very important changes that took place as the new covenant was ushered in, with the old covenant fulfilled.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 promised that the days of the old covenant would come to an end:

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to

them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

One only need to read the book of Hebrews to see that Jesus indeed did establish this new and “better” covenant, enacted after His death (Heb. 8:6, 13; 9:16-17).

To examine the significance of this event, and that it symbolized the total transition from old covenant to new, think about the tabernacle (and subsequently the temple) of the Old Testament. The tabernacle and the temple consisted of an outer court, an inner court known as the Holy Place (containing the lampstand, the table, and the showbread), and an innermost chamber called the Most Holy Place (or Holy of Holies, containing the ark of the covenant, where the glory of God rested). Between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place was the veil, separating the two (Exo. 26:3-34, especially verse 33 cf. Heb. 9:1-5). Only the high priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place, and this once a year to atone for the sins of himself and the people on the Day of Atonement (Exo. 30:10; Lev. 16:1-34); the priesthood otherwise conducted lesser sacrifices in the Holy Place throughout the year (Heb. 9:6-7).

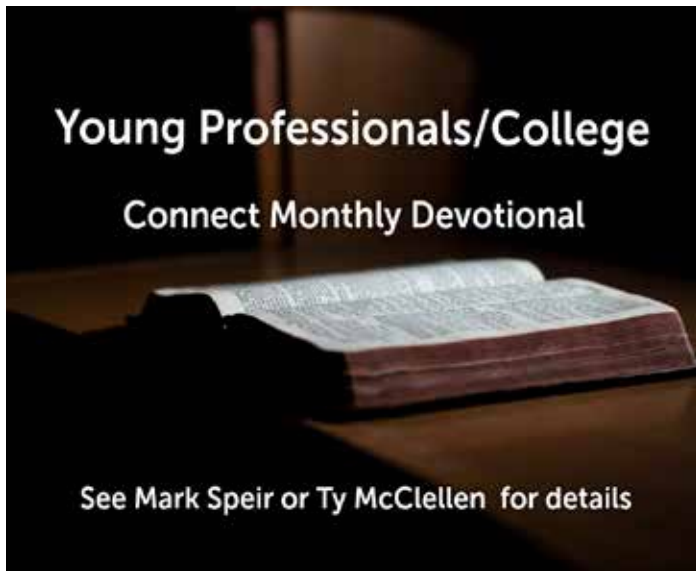
All of this in the Old Testament was symbolic of what our ultimate High Priest, Jesus Christ, accomplished when He entered the Holiest of all (heaven), having sacrificed Himself on the cross for our ultimate atonement (Heb. 9:8-28). The difference between the Old Testament high priest and Jesus Christ is that the Old Testament high priest had to make offerings for his own sins, while Jesus never sinned once (Heb. 4:15). Also, as stated in Hebrews 9:25-28, Jesus did not have to enter the Most Holy Place multiple times (as the old covenant high priest did every year), but “was offered once to bear the sins of many.” Thus, Jesus is “the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15).

The veil of the temple being torn in two represents the fact that Jesus accomplished forever what the Old Testament

high priests could never do: full and absolute atonement. The child of God today is not left waiting for next year's Day of Atonement. Instead, we look back to the ultimate fulfillment of the Day of Atonement in Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. There is, then, a sharp distinction between old covenant and new, just as promised in Jeremiah chapter 31. Christians must note that there can be no going back to the old once we have been blessed with the new, which incidentally is the theme of the book of Hebrews.

While other miracles surrounding the crucifixion of Christ perhaps come to mind first, Christians really should not overlook the significance of the rending of the temple veil. We really should ponder often the significance of what Christ's sacrifice accomplished: complete atonement for sin, once and for all.

CW



“WHILE HE WAS STILL SPEAKING, THE ROOSTER CROWED”

Garrett English

It happens every morning across the world. A rooster crows in the early morning as the sun rises—this is as normal and natural as God created it to be. However, there was a morning 2,000 years ago where a rooster's crow was a miraculous fulfillment of prophecy. It was the

morning of Jesus' crucifixion. Remember, Jesus had spoken to His disciples in the upper room about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom and told them each one would fall away that very night. Then, the often-boisterous Peter, spoke up against the words of His Savior, claiming he was ready to die for Jesus. At that moment, Jesus turned to his follower and close friend, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.” It was those words which resonated in the mind of Peter at the alert of the rooster that fateful morning—he realized that his arrogance had led him to fall prey to temptation. With this account in mind, what can we learn about the dangers and deceitfulness of sin?

First, we must recognize that God knows when we sin. Even before we sin, God knew we would (Heb. 4:13). Though we will not have the specific instance revealed as Jesus did for Peter on that night, we do have the words of the Apostle John, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 Jn. 1:8). We are saints who stumble at times, and it's often due to our lack of focus. Though Peter was literally following Jesus, he lost focus. He, of course, had limited knowledge at the time but he did have what Jesus revealed to Him in the upper room just hours before. God is knowledgeable of our sins, even before we commit them.

Second, like Peter, we must also consider how seriously God views sin. Sin put our Savior on the cross. Jesus faced betrayal, mocking, striking, scourging, and ultimately, death by crucifixion—all because of the sins of humanity. Sin must not be taken lightly or dismissed. Instead, every Christian must be “watchful” for the roaring lion who continues to prowl (1 Pet. 5:8). Peter knew of sin's deadly effects, yet in his arrogance to prove Jesus his loyalty, it caused him to forget until the moment the rooster crowed. We must be careful to avoid an arrogant attitude toward sin, because we know that “pride goes before destruction” (Prov. 16:18). His arrogance caused him to forget God's omniscience. Let it never be the case for us that we run ahead of God or question His knowledge.

Third, we must repent of our sins to begin our return to God. How did Peter respond to his sin? Luke reveals, “Peter went out and wept bitterly” (Lk 22:62). He wept with not just sorrow but a great remorse for his vehement denials of His Savior because he knew how bad his errors were. The Apostle Paul revealed the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow—actions of repentance. Peter not only wept but acted much differently the next time he was faced with the same temptations. If we merely weep over

our sins but do not change, we have not repented, and our spiritual state is in jeopardy.

Finally, we learn of the restorative joy provided by God when those who express true, godly sorrow “bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Matt. 3:8). Peter’s actions along with God’s character, led him to have a renewed relationship with his Savior. We can have this, too, when we understand the pain our sin causes God and seek to make amends in God-appointed ways (1 Jn 1:9). We should want to model our repentance after Peter’s. He used his failings to become a better follower of Jesus Christ, one who stood as a “pillar” in the Church. Let’s make the determination to not let our failings define us. Instead, let our steps follow our Savior and His Apostles.

CW

“HE TOUCHED HIS EAR, AND HEALED HIM”

John Garza

In the Garden of Gethsemane, a moment of chaos unfolded that would forever illustrate the difference between earthly conflicts and the divine mission of Jesus Christ. As a mob armed with swords approached to arrest Jesus, Peter drew his sword and struck the high priest's servant, Malchus, cutting off his right ear (Matt. 26:51). Amid the tension, Jesus chose not to retaliate but to respond with compassion: “He touched his ear, and healed him” (Lk. 22:51). This act was more than a display of His supernatural power; it was a declaration that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. Through this viewpoint, we see Malchus—and every sinner—not as an enemy to be defeated, but as an opportunity for God to extend grace, restore a relationship, and expand His eternal kingdom.

Later, Jesus told these words to Pilate:

My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here. (Jn. 18:36).

Jesus clarifies that His rule would not be established through military might or political revolution. Instead, His kingdom is a spiritual realm where transformation happens through the gospel. The “battle” in Jerusalem was not against Roman

soldiers or Jewish leaders; it was against the forces of sin and darkness which separate humanity from God. As Paul explains in Ephesians 6:12,

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Malchus, as the servant of the high priest Caiaphas, was part of the religion opposing Jesus. Jesus could easily have seen him as an adversary, but He treated Malchus as a soul in need of mercy. This ought to shift how we view sinners: not as threats to be condemned, but as individuals God longs to save. The Bible affirms God's desire for man's redemption. In 2 Peter 3:9, we read,

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

God's patience extends to those who actively resist Him, offering them a chance to turn from sin and embrace salvation in Christ.

This opportunity is universal. No one is beyond reach. A sorcerer, who claimed to be the power of God, became a follower of Christ (Acts 8). Paul, once a persecutor of Christians, became a pillar of the faith (Acts 9). Even Malchus, though the Bible does not record his response to Jesus, was given a tangible encounter with divine mercy, inviting him to reconsider his allegiance.

As followers of Christ, the church inherits His mission: to engage in spiritual warfare rather than earthly strife. In Matt. 28:19-20, Jesus commissioned His disciples,

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.

Jesus sends us to make disciples through proclamation, not through coercion or violence.

History shows the danger of confusing this commission with physical battles; crusades and holy wars distorted the gospel. The early church grew under persecution, not through physical power, as believers loved their enemies and prayed for those who spitefully used them (Matt. 5:44). The church fights spiritual battles with the whole armor of God: the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

(Eph. 6:11-18).

In today's world, we must address social issues like injustice and division, not with hatred or force, but with compassionate evangelism and service. We must remember that sinners are opportunities for God's glory. The church's victory comes not from cultural dominance but from souls redeemed and fellowship restored by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The healing of Malchus' ear challenges us to examine our own responses to opposition. Do we reach for the “sword” of anger and division, or extend the touch of God's grace? Jesus' miracle reminds us that His kingdom progresses through spiritual means. As we navigate our spiritual battles, we must prioritize prayer, truth, and love—transforming enemies into brothers and sisters in Christ. In doing so, we fulfill the church's eternal mission and imitate the Savior, who healed even as He headed to the cross.

CW

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ancient days, He left clues. God “took” Enoch, implying there was some other place for people to go to (Gen. 5:24). Some noticed God's clues. Abraham concluded God could raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19). Job anticipated a time when he would, in his own flesh, see God even after his skin had been destroyed (Job 19:26). And these men lived *before* the burning bush, when God implied a bodily resurrection (as Jesus proved in Matt. 22:23-33, cf. Exod. 3:6). Of course, there are also the examples of temporary physical resurrections, both in Old Testament times and throughout Jesus' ministry.

God accomplishes all of this through Jesus. He is our everyday reason for living (Phil. 1:21). He offers the best possible life on earth (John 10:10). But Jesus' gifts extend beyond this life (1 Cor. 15:17-19, 1 Tim. 4:8). Jesus is *the* way to the final resurrection and eternity with God (John 14:6). He is *the* resurrection and *the* life (John 11:25).

At the final resurrection, Jesus *will* return for us. The spirits of the faithful dead *will* reunite with their bodies. The living faithful *will* be lifted into the air to meet them (1 Thess. 4:16-17). Jesus *will* transform these flawed, physical bodies into everlasting spiritual ones (1 Cor. 15:51-53). “And thus we shall always be with the

Lord,” (1 Thess. 5:17).

Put it all together: the clues, the earthquake, the split rocks, the open graves, the resurrected saints. What was God declaring? It was time for a new, spiritual kingdom of people prepared for a bodily resurrection. Therefore, we have hope (Rom. 8:23-25). We anticipate eternity and life beyond this earthly one (1 Thess. 4:13-18). We are promised a reward so great that we have every reason to keep trying (1 Cor. 15:20-58, *esp. vs. 58*).

Those saints who rose from the dead with Jesus knew of the reward firsthand (at least in part). After all, they returned to earth from Paradise. We can imagine, then, that they did not return to earth to focus on physical things. They came for one purpose. Declare the good news: Jesus lives again. There were declarers just as God is a declarer.

Like those resurrected saints, we are not here to focus on the physical. We are here for one purpose. We bring God glory (Matt. 5:16). We spread the good news (Matt. 16:15).

We declare (2 Cor. 4:13).

Don't forget your purpose – your hope – today.

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“To Know Jesus and...make Him known”

From the Director's desk



Trent Kennedy
Director
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From his place of detention in Rome, the apostle Paul, through the Holy Spirit, called on the Christians in Philippi, and by implication Christians throughout the ages, to be perfectly minded saying, “Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded...” Philippians 3:15. In this great epistle that calls us to have a specific mind geared towards eternity (Phil. 2:2-5, 4:2), the author details those things which make for a perfect mind. In chapter one, the idea of perfection is seen in a christian who acknowledges heaven as gain and this life as one dedicated to His service (Phil. 1:21-23). Chapter two notes that the perfect mind thinks like Christ in its humility and selfless action (Phil. 2:2-5). The following chapter discusses perfection as one who counts this world and its glory as a personal loss for all things pertaining to Christ (Phil. 3:7-8). The final chapter explains perfection as a christian who finds contentment despite present circumstances (Phil. 4:11-12).

The English “perfect” in Philippians 3:15 (ASV 1901 and KJV) can sometimes cause confusion because it brings to mind sinless perfection; this simply is not the case with the original word. A further explanation of this perfection can be seen in an alternate translation of Philippians 3:15 where the NKJV translates the same word “mature.” If we wanted to dig deeper into this word, we would study 1 Corinthians 13:9-11 and Ephesians 4:12-14 to see that the word perfect or mature is compared to adulthood. To be perfect or spiritually mature is to be a spiritual adult, to put off childish things, to become a man (or woman), to be stable, to be steady, to be like Christ. God wants grown ups (Hebrews 5:11-14)!

Philippians 3:15-16 calls on us to have spiritual maturity and the entire chapters helps the Bible Student know how to be spiritually mature: Spiritual maturity is

1. Awareness of potential dangers (3:1-2, 17-19)
2. Confidence in the glory of Christ (3:3-6)
3. Sacrifice of self (3:7-8)
4. Dependence on the righteousness of God (3:9)
5. Hope of an eternity in heaven (3:10-11, 20-21)
6. Persistence in reaching for the heavenly prize (3:12-14)

When God calls us “perfect,” He gives us the mind or mindset we should have to accomplish it. We should not be content to remain stagnant or childish (cf. 2 Peter 3:18). As Christians, let us strive for spiritual maturity!

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