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This week we properly started our Autumn series in Philippians. We began the letter by noting, from 1v1-11, that the Day of Christ shapes the way Paul seeks to encourage and pray for the church in Philippi.

We began the series last week by thinking through how Paul is able to find his joy in any and every situation, because his joy is in Christ - what he has done in the gospel, and what he is doing through his people. Paul's emphasis on Christ's return is striking because it is often largely absent in our thinking. Perhaps because it's absent we get duped into only finding joy in the present - in the circumstances and trimmings - and squishing all we can into now - because now is all there is.

We noted how Jesus' return impacts how Paul seeks to encourage them

1. A joyful confidence of completion for the Day of Christ.

Paul's joy in their partnership was explored last week, especially perhaps their partnership as believers (see Acts 16), as sufferers (again Acts 16 but also Phil 1:29) and as financial givers (Phil 4:15-16). He's also joyful though because he is confident that Jesus will finish and complete the job he has started. This is a huge comfort and encouragement for people like us - God is Sovereign and at work.

2. A church increasingly ready for the Day of Christ.

The second aspect of the importance of Jesus' return is in his prayer from v9-11 in that he wants the Philippians to increasingly be shaped now, by what they will be then. He prays initially that they would be abounding in love for one another (perhaps in response to the divisions he sees eg Euodia and Synteché start of ch4) - but not a mushy love, rather a thinking practical love. The 'knowledge' he mentions is knowing God, and the 'insight' wise living in God's world. When we know God better, we know how to live in His world better. The outcome of this is then is to 'discern what is best' as we make choices.

The promise from Paul is that, when Jesus returns, the Philippians will be *filled* with righteousness - full of righteous deeds. When we are despairing or cynical about our

current sin, and God's work in us - remember it is not through our own efforts and works - but his work in us - v11. And it's all for his glory and fame.

As always, feel free to use and adapt these questions as you see fit.

Recap from the previous week – what do you remember we thought about?

How has your joy been?

How much do you think the return of Jesus affects your life? When did you last pray in light of it (before Sunday!)?

Why do you think it often feels so distant or unreal?

What would you say to encourage a doubting Believer or non-Believer who does not believe Jesus will return?

Why does the return of Jesus matter?

Why is Paul joyful as he considers the Philippians?

Can you associate with this kind of Joy?

Why does it matter that he will complete the work he has started?

Who is this a particular encouragement to?

How does the return of Christ shape Paul's prayer in v9-11?

What does Paul actually pray for? Why?

Split into pairs and put his prayer into your own words...

What is the practical out working of his prayer?

How does Paul's prayer make you feel!? Why?

Do you pray these kind of 'big picture' prayers?

Why do we often find these prayers hard?

How can we be increasingly shaped by the Day of Christ - as individuals and as a church?

How can we help each other to do this?