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This Sunday morning at Magdalen Road we continued our series in Paul's letter to the Philippians. Paul beginning the chapter by again urging us to 'rejoice in the Lord' 3v1.

However by 3v2 his focus seems to have moved onto more opponents who seem to be undermining Paul's gospel. An initial glance might consider the progression from v1-2 as being slightly random - in reality Paul is seeking to protect the Philippians joy. At the heart of the passage we see Paul urging the Philippian Christians to take their focus off themselves, and rather to put them on Christ.

### **Take your eyes off self**

The reason Paul attacks his opponents is fundamentally that they are seeking to find their 'righteousness' in themselves, rather than in what God has given to us. They think God is happy with them because of who they are and what they can do. It's a 'Jesus plus' scenario. Jesus plus 'circumcision'. The problem with 'Jesus plus' is that it says 'Jesus only' is not enough and we always end up trusting in the 'plus' bit (whatever that ends up being)

They are thus described by Paul with pointed and offensive terms dogs, evildoers and mutilators of the flesh. Unclean. Outside. Paul could have claimed these external things for himself - he had an extraordinary past - but now they are disgusting to him. He considers them loss for the sake of Christ - found in him - with a righteousness from God on the basis of faith (rather than performance). Rather than fixing their eyes on self, he longs they would fix their eyes on Christ.

### **Fix your eyes on Christ**

From v10-14 we see Paul's single-minded mission and focus for life. His desire is to know Christ more and more (v10-11) - his resurrection power at work in him. But also to follow in the pattern of Christ's death - to participate in his sufferings. The danger can be that we skeptically think we're done - either because we're in the race and that's enough or else thinking that's we won't ever change. So, keeping his eyes on the goal and straining ahead Paul perseveres to reach the prize - to fully and finally know and to be conformed to, the one whom we are to run for.

***Here are a few questions to start your group off. As always feel free to adapt, add to or ignore as you see fit.***

Overview question. List all the ways in 3v1-14 that Paul speaks of Christ. What false things does the world put confidence in before God. List specific examples if you can.

Why do you think Paul transitions from v1-v2? Why does he describe the opponents in v2 in such stark terms? How might they rob us of joy?

What could Paul find confidence in if he wanted to? V5-6. How does Paul see those things now? V9. Why? What does he now have?

What (good) things do we put confidence in that we ought not? How can we count them as 'garbage'?

From v10-14 what does Paul want for his life? Why? What does that look like? How does that compare to us in our culture?