

Enemy of the Cross

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

Have you noticed the English language, or more specifically, us speakers of that language have a habit of taking certain words and repurposing them for alternate uses? Anyone notice that? Youth tend to do it a lot, but we tend to all do it.

God is awesome. The cheesecake is maybe delicious, but probably not awesome. I'm guilty of calling things awesome.

Regularly. When I was in youth ministry, yell it out, Ben, what's... In a minute, I'll ask you what the classic word is these days.

But the surf was frothing when it was good. Everything is frothing. And so, you know, I used to think, well, it's at the top of a cappuccino froth.

Of course, for years since the 80s, people have been calling good things sick. You get what I'm talking about. We re-purpose the language.

What's the current one? Yeah, lit. So it's good.

It's lit. So another one is perfect. What about perfect?

Leanne and I were organizing a holiday with a flight involved in it a few years ago. And I was talking to this helpful lady at Flight Centre. And everything I said in answer to her questions, she would say, in a sort of a high-pitched voice, perfect.

Which made me feel good every time I got a perfect score, every time I gave an answer, she said, perfect, perfect. And I thought, this is a great way to upsell people. Just keep telling them that it's perfect.

What does perfect mean for you? Well, I think it's an obvious question. It's hard to beat without fault, 100%.

Your finger wants to do this as long as you don't go, look like an American president. Perfect, today's message is entitled perfect Christians.

Perfect Christians, and you'd think when I say perfect Christians, that the next thing you're going to say is, there's no such thing.

Because it feels like there's no such thing, but today we want to look at this passage that Evan read for us, where Paul wrote, all of us who are perfect, should take such a view of things. That's what the Greek word there, translated mature means.

All of us who are perfect. So we want to unpack that. And we will see that perfect Christians do two things and don't do one thing.

They die daily, that's a tick. Live as enemies of the cross. We don't want to do that, that's a negative.

And look through the cross to the resurrection. That is a tick.

So number one, perfect Christians die daily. Paul wrote, All of us then who are mature or perfect should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that to God will make clear to you.

Only let us live up to what we have already obtained. Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters. And just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.

The Greek word for mature is teleos, which comes from tel, which is telescopic. And it really means like the glass, the looking glass that the pirate used, it's extended out to its end.

So teleos, all of us who are teleos, is we've reached the end of our journey. We've reached maturity, perfection in Christ. Well, that's okay for Paul to say it.

What's weird about it is that he's just literally said the opposite in verse 12. In verse 12, he said, not that I have already attained all this.

I haven't actually extended my life to the end of maturity or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. And this little verse has been in conjecture for hundreds of years.

It's been heavily debated over the centuries. In the 1700s, John Wesley taught that we can have sinless perfectionism. So Wesleyan turned into Methodists who became the uniting church.

The roots of the uniting church go back to John Wesley, and he taught sinless perfectionism, and it came from a verse like this. Be perfect. Jesus said, Matthew 5, be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.

So, you know, we are called to this perfection. Most of us would be familiar with the Reformation, and the Reformers taught that that's not the way it works. We couldn't live a second without grace.

Anything but perfect is what humans are. Well, what do we do with that? I think we find the middle ground as we teach at NorthernLife.

We can't do anything worthy of perfection or holiness without the grace of God. Amen. But we are called to live a holy life.

We're called to exert effort in that pursuit. So, I think there's a balancing act here, and we've talked a lot about it with spiritual formation, that we're called up to something more, not just failing every day and trusting in grace.

Grace empowers us to live a holy life. So, I think the translators, as you'd expect, have done a good job in translating teleos to maturity. But for the agitation value, I'm going to keep referring to perfect Christians.

So, I think that idea is worth us thinking about. Perfect Christians die daily. It's what Paul says to the Philippians.

Paul has spent the best part of Chapter 3, so we're coming to the end of Chapter 3, but he spent the best part of Chapter 3 saying, we can never earn God's favour through outward righteousness because he was pretty righteous and Ben did a great job

last Sunday morning of unpacking a few verses back in Chapter 3, where Paul wrote, circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews in regard to the law, a Pharisee as for zeal, persecuting the

church as for righteousness based on the law faultless. So we looked at the fact that on the outside, if you were trying to be perfect, Paul had done a pretty good job, but he then said, I consider that all garbage, refuse compared to the surpassing

greatness of knowing Christ. This is the lead up to today's verse. And then he explained that the great goal of his life was to know Christ. And we looked at that last Sunday night.

To know Christ was to know the power of his resurrection and to know the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.

So in other words, perfect Christians, perfect Christians understand that knowing Christ and his resurrection power comes through cross fellowship. There is a cross to bear. There is suffering.

We don't earn anything through the suffering, but it's just the cruciform life. It's the way of the master. Before we find resurrection power, we have to die on that cross.

Not the same cross as Christ, but our cross, the cross that Jesus talked about in Luke 9. Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. So we talked about that last Sunday night.

To repent and believe the good news that Jesus has paid for my sin is to turn away from the life that I've been living, trusting in my own achievements, my own strength, my own goodness, my own resources, my own routines for success and fulfillment,

but rather to trust in all that Christ has done for me. I'm sort of preaching to many of the converted, I know. And trusting that God will do a better job living his life through me. This is Christian perfection.

I die daily to the sinful desires of self so that I get out of the way and Christ can live his life, the good life, through this body of mine, through this life, all for his glory. This is the cruciform life.

And Paul says, I've been setting you an example of this, dying daily, joined together in verse 17, joined together in following my example. Just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.

So Paul, he suffered, he received power from God, but it was on the other side of dying daily. And in Philippians 2, we know that Christ actually died on the cross before the resurrection.

So he's saying, people at Philippi, I want you to follow my example and I want you to follow the example of Christ. But dying daily is sort of a curious concept. It's very Christian, isn't it?

Die daily, what does that even mean? I think the simplest way to talk about dying daily is to say, I can be the Lord of my life today, or Jesus can. What do you reckon?

I mean, how do you die daily? It's saying, I'm laying down the reins of my life, the driving steering wheel of my life, and saying, you live through me.

I choose today to deny myself and potential inordinate desires, so that you could live your life through me. And we're promised that that life will entail and give access to resurrection power. What do you reckon resurrection power is like?

It's powerful and perfect. I'm not trying to patronize you, I'm just asking. Resurrection power flows off the tongue, but I'm thinking there's maybe not a greater power in the universe than the power that raised Christ from the dead.

Certainly, I don't know what's going on in the universe, but certainly in this world, the cosmos that we understand, there is nothing like a power that could defeat death.

People have come back from the dead, but they've been resuscitated, they've never been resurrected. Christ completely conquered death, and in conquering death, he conquered sin.

He conquers in the resurrection death and sin, which causes death, and he conquered the accuser, the one whose power is death and sin, the devil, Satan. He conquered all three, amen, in the resurrection.

When he rose from the grave, he conquered sin, death, and the devil. That's the power that's available to you and I. But it's a tension we hold, isn't it?

Like, praise God that Rachel just had her ankle healed. This morning, I had probably the worst time preaching of my life because my ear was popped and it never came good. So I was just popped.

All the sermon, it's an awful feeling. And I knew I was going to be preaching on the power of the resurrection. And I was like, Lord, I just need an ear cleared.

I just need an ear cleared. But it never came. 1.30 today it did.

I'll go see a doctor tomorrow, work out what's going on. But I say that because there are people in this room that want the power of the resurrection, believe the power of the resurrection could change everything in their lives.

But you're not seeing it. Is anyone with me? Anyone know what this is about?

Look, this is the pain of life, the now and not yet. But I think it's part of the package that there's a cross that we die on. And so part of the cross is actually saying, Lord, the timing of the power of the resurrection in my life is up to you.

I don't get to choose, but I'm going to ask and I'm going to believe for it. This power that raised Christ from the dead is what Paul wants to know in knowing Christ. And perfect Christians get that, that there is a power available to them.

Perfect Christians live as enemies of the cross. That's a cross. That's a don't.

Don't do that. For as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of this cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction.

Their God is their stomach and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. They are not dying daily.

Those that Paul is talking about. There are members of the church at Philippi who seem to be claiming to be Christians, but they refuse to do what just we've been talking about. They refuse to die daily.

They refuse to humbly submit to the Lordship of Christ. They refuse to say no longer I that lives, but you, you are the Lord of my life. I could be Lord or you could be Lord.

I have to deny one. They're not denying themselves. They're saying no to the Lord Jesus.

You are not the Lord of my life today. And this is devastating for Paul. He's writing with tears.

He's weeping. No one wants to sit in judgment on another human being. I don't think anyone who's ever preached surely wants to do that.

And Paul is challenging them, saying you need to do something about this. It's devastating. What grieves Paul is that some of these so-called Christians at Philippi, who are called to embrace the Cross of Christ, are doing what Peter did to Jesus.

Remember, Jesus said, I have to go to the Cross. And Peter said, never, never will this happen. And Jesus is like, get behind me, Satan.

I need to go to a cross. We have to die daily. And when you or I say, no, I'm not going.

I'm not going to a cross. I'm not dying daily. That's a bad thing, amen?

Because we're called to die daily. Perfect Christians are not enemies of that cross. Both the cross of Christ and the cross that we're called to die on daily.

That's what they're doing in Philippi. And so Paul says, their destiny is destruction. Their destiny is destruction.

So he says, people who refuse to bow their knee to the Lordship of Christ, their destiny is destruction. The Bible is really clear. I don't know if you know this, but I feel the burden of making it clear tonight.

The Bible is clear. Not everyone goes to heaven or goes to the new earth after heaven. Not everyone does.

The Bible is very clear. It is those who have faith in Christ, who receive eternal life and have their sins forgiven. And the reward is heaven and a resurrected body and a new earth to live on.

For John 3.16, so many of us know this verse. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. Those who do not believe perish.

Now, the Bible talks about hell. It seems like there's the imagery of fire, but there's also imagery of darkness and destruction. So what we do know is when we say no to God, there is no other life that's eternal that you can find without God.

It is a destiny of death because Christ is life. Christ is life without Christ is death. And God is a gentleman.

No one's gonna get to God without him drawing them. The Bible says that, but he does want to draw us. And so if you want to say, God, get out of my face, leave me alone, you know what?

He's a gentleman. He will honour your wish for eternity. He wants you, he wants you to know him through Jesus by faith.

But it's important for us to state this clearly. If you say no to God and what he's done for us in Jesus, that's an eternal decision. That's an eternal decision.

I remember Mike Dennis, who was a guy who's gone home to Glory, and he was a Baptist pastor at our church here for some years. And he was probably 40, 50 years in ministry.

When we were first here, seven years ago, Leanne and I and our family, we were at a funeral service that Mike was running. And I was, he knew the person and I was doing the sound. And they, everything was going well.

And then they started singing this song, when we all get to heaven, what a day it will be, what a day it will be, when we all get to heaven. And Mike became very agitated and he stood up.

And I was sort of surprised at the intensity that he said, that's a lie. What we just sang, there's a coffin at the front of the church. It's a full funeral service.

He says, that's a lie. We're not all going to heaven. And he told the truth from the Bible's point of view.

It's not automatic. Many live as enemies of the cross. And Paul writes here, their destiny is destruction.

Their God is their stomach. And we're not sure what that means. It could be that he's just written to the church at Corinth about the rich people who were literally hogging all the food in the Lord's Supper.

It might have been something to do with that, but we don't know for sure. But I think he's saying, perfect Christians have a control over their bodily desires.

That's what it is to die daily, to say, look, it's just not whatever I want to be a mature Christian. It involves regulation by God's grace of body desires. Paul says, those who are enemies of the cross, their glory is in their shame.

I think we're living in a time in history that is relatively unique, where society is approving that which I believe, and many, many evangelical Christians would believe, the Bible says is wrong.

And we are condoning sinful behaviour as acceptable, and people glory in their shame. They glory in their nuanced understanding of scriptures. That which should be shameful is seen as a badge of honour.

When sin is condoned, Romans 1 says, when sin is condoned and enshrined in law, it's a very sad day for society. Enemies of the Cross, let their God be their desires. They glory in their shame, and their mind is set on earthly things.

What are earthly things? Well, these are things that we're meant to be putting to death. That's what it means to die daily.

There's this putting to death. Colossians 3, Paul writes, Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature. And what are those things?

Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived, but now you're different, you're changed.

You must also rid yourself of all such things as these. Anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips, this is by God's grace that this is done. But it involves effort, intentionality.

Do not lie to each other, because you're called to be perfect, by God's grace. Since you have taken off your old self with its practices and put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator.

To be a perfect Christian, and of course, when we keep saying perfect Christian, that is what you are if you're clothed in Christ, amen? But you are actually perfect. Perfect because he's perfect.

We're clothed in him. We take off the junk ourselves, we die to that, and we put on a perfect outfit of righteousness.

To be a perfect Christian, to experience the power of the resurrection, chain breaking power in life, in our relationships, there is some dying to self. Some putting to death of the old person, the old man.

To allow this new creation that we have been given by the Spirit of God, by faith in Christ, to become all that it's meant to be. And to do this, our mind needs to be set on heavenly things. Heavenly things.

Has anyone ever said to you, you're of, what is it? You're too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good. Some of you more senior people have, Daven's never heard it.

My parents said that to me once. It was probably completely fair, mom, if you're watching, because it was probably because I hadn't done my, cleaned my room or done my chores, but I was off praying or doing something.

It's hard to be actually too heavenly minded. That's what Paul is saying. Perfect Christians are heavenly minded.

They're focused on something different than the earthly things.

Perfect Christians do die daily. They don't live as enemies of the cross. And they do look through the cross to the resurrection, verse 20, but our citizenship is in heaven.

Now, when you say citizenship to a Roman colony, they get it. They're thinking, wrong citizenship. I know what my Roman citizenship gives me, a whole lot of benefits.

So Paul's like, but our citizenship, it's more than Roman citizenship, it's in heaven, Philippian Christians. And we eagerly await a savior from there. Eagerly await a savior from heaven.

That's talking about the second coming of Christ.

We eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Christianity is a way of life that embraces an eschatological hope beyond the grave. Eschatological sounds like a fancy word, but it just comes from eschaton, which means the bringing together of all things at the end.

Christianity has a hope that goes beyond the grave, in fact, beyond the end of this world. Every now and then, you'll hear or watch on the news or read on the internet a world leader who makes a reference to Armageddon.

It's coming close to Armageddon, and there's a reference to the end of the world. Climate change certainly has put an extinction event as a conversational piece, isn't it? An extinction event.

Some of you might be a little bit anxious about it. Nuclear war, like what's gonna happen with climate change if maybe you don't believe it. A lot of us do.

The Christian word for that end of world event is resurrection. That's what we're looking for if you're a Christian. Resurrection, the transformation of our lowly bodies so that they will be like unto his glorious body.

Jesus rose again from the dead. Wasn't resuscitated with the same human body, completely different body. The body set for heaven and the new earth.

That's what we're gonna get after we die when we have a faith in Christ and we get to live forever. That is the hope of Christianity. Yes, resurrection.

And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, if the resurrection doesn't happen, we're sort of stuffed like it's pretty awful for us Christians. Like it's a waste because we're suffering here. We're dying daily.

What dying daily? Yes to you, Lord, no to me. That means I get to go without.

I'm trying to live for the glory of God and the one who apparently rose from the dead, Jesus. And in doing that, I'm going to love others and make them more important than me. So there's a cost.

I'm going to give my resources and my time and my talent to serving this gospel. That's all about a cross that ended in a resurrection. That is a way for anyone who would believe in Jesus to live forever.

I mean, it's enormous. But Paul says it's all contingent on Jesus rising from the dead. The resurrection matters.

Would it matter to you in your life if the resurrection was proved false? Do you have skin in the game? My best mate for 20 years, we went through Bible college together in our 20s, and he was really full on, full on for Jesus.

In his 40s, he had an unborn again experience, and he abandoned his faith. And what struck me was the words that he said. He said, I have urinated my life down the toilet.

It was Paul who was talking about refuse. So we have a good example of such language. But he used a different way to say that.

He said, I have, I have urinated my life down the toilet, believing in the resurrection. It's cost me my jobs, my career, my study, all the money I've poured into all these books, this training, it's garbage.

I still pray that he comes back to Christ. I still do. But I was proud of the fact that he had taken his Christianity seriously.

There was a cost. Because if Jesus doesn't rise from the dead, we should be pitied more than anyone else. But I want to say, which many of you believe, Jesus did rise from the dead.

And because he rose from the grave and no one has been able to prove that he didn't, thousands, in fact millions, probably billions at this point of people would testify that they believe he did rise from the grave.

And that's the pinnacle event in history. It's historically verifiable. From eyewitness accounts, I won't go into all of that.

But Jesus rose from the grave. And I want to encourage us today with the story and the encouragement that Paul gave the Philippians, we need to have our eyes set on that resurrection. Because life will bring some crosses to bear.

It's tough. We need to look through the suffering, through that cross, to the resurrection on the other side that we can enter into because of faith in Christ. In Christ, Paul says, we have a heavenly citizenship.

We're different. We're wired for something more than just what we see here, but it doesn't mean we disconnect completely. We're real people and authentic and present in this world, but we're not part of it.

We know we belong somewhere else. Paul is saying, perfect Christians, people on that journey to perfection, have an eye looking through the mystery of this life. They never take their eye off that prize of resurrection.

And that's what will happen to us. The Bible is really clear that, if you weren't sure what the Bible said, the Bible teaches that everyone will die and everybody will be raised to life.

Everyone gets a resurrected body, whether you have faith in Christ or not. Everyone gets a resurrected body. So however it ends, the world ends, we get resurrected out of our graves, and we face Jesus Christ as the judge of all the earth.

And there's a simple question, who pays for your sin? Because you have sinned, everyone sinned, and sin leads to death, eternal death. So at that point, he says, who pays for your sin?

And if you say, I do, sir, he says, okay. And then you go into eternal death, into a place of eternal punishment, where God is not, and you can't find anything good where God is not. Amen.

And those of us who by no great merit of our own, only because of the glory and grace of God, we say, I have put my faith in Christ who died for my sins. The Bible says, that we will be saved. That will be the ultimate salvation.

That we will then move into heaven, and in the wisdom of God, the new earth, where there will be no more sickness, tears. Sometimes it's hard to go, how could there not be tears if there are people like, I don't know, we don't know that.

But it's what the Bible says. There will be no power of contrary choice. We get this idea that freedom is to have any choice you want, but that's not freedom.

Freedom is to do only what gives God the glory. In heaven and the new earth, there will be no chance to sin. That will be disconnected, and that will be a glorious thing.

Revelation is the book that talks so much about the eschaton, about the end, the end times. It talks about stars falling from the sky. It talks about hail that's coming down.

And I look at that and read Revelation, I think. I guess if you saw a nuclear missile coming or an asteroid, it would be hard to describe what that looked like in the first century.

It talks about in Revelation, in the end times, what will happen at the end. Islands disappearing into the sea. It's interesting, isn't it?

We are watching sea level rise. We're watching countries losing their land. And it says there will be earthquakes and famines and plagues.

And we're watching wars and rumours of wars. I say that all to, I guess, put the wind up us all. It's not fear mongering.

The world will end and you and I will die. We will die. It's ridiculous to think you won't.

But if you're banking on life turning out a certain way beyond the grave, what's that based on? Is that? Yeah, I'm going with that one.

Honestly, what is it based on? When Jesus takes his church into the new order of things, the new creation with resurrected bodies, will you be there?

Genuine question. Will you be there? Not will your mother be there?

Your father be there? Your grandparents be there? Will you be there?

Because you have to have faith in Jesus yourself. Nothing has changed since Peter's first sermon after Pentecost. Jesus died, rose again.

He went back to heaven, Acts says. And then the Holy Spirit was sent, empowered the church and Peter stood up and preached. And he said in Acts 2.19, I will show wonders in the heavens above, this is God.

Signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke, the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

That's good news, isn't it? Everyone. This is talking about us today.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord. They cried out to Peter and said, what must we do to be saved? And he says, call on the name of the Lord, repent and be baptized.

That's good news, folks. Salvation is available for all of us. Not for the churches, not for the people who had entitlement growing up and got to do all the whatever fancy things.

It's just, it's for everyone. No one deserves it. Peter says, repent.

That means turn away from the way you've been heading. Put your faith in Jesus. Repent and be baptized.

You don't, that's a baptism pool in there, behind those walls. No one gets saved because of the baptism, as though it's magic. But it's a symbol of being washed clean of your sin, by faith in Christ, and also dying to the old life.

We talk about die daily. I've died, and I'm going to live my life in resurrection power, because Jesus, you rose from the grave. That's what baptism means.

Repent and be baptized, every one of you. What do you reckon? What do you reckon online?

It's tonight, the night, November 20th, the night you give your life to Jesus and say, well, I'm in, thank you for dying for me. I want to live forever. I want to tell everyone I can, that God made a way to fix the problem of sin.

And it's good news. Perfect Christians die daily because we're not perfect. We stop trying to be and we trust in God's grace.

We don't live as enemies of the cross. And we look through that cross to the resurrection. So I want to ask you again, online and here, will you call on the name of the Lord to be saved today?

And ABC is a good way to remember calling on the name of the Lord. It's simply, admit you need a Saviour, believe that Christ has died for your sin, and commit to follow Him as Lord of your life.

Admit you need a Saviour, believe that Christ has died for your sin, and commit to follow Him as the Lord of your life. And you will be saved. That's what the Bible says.

And all the glory will go to God. Lord Jesus, you're the one who seeks and saves the lost, and I pray that you would do that work. None of us are deserving of eternal life.

None of us know it all. None of us understand completely. But I know, Lord Holy Spirit, you're speaking to hearts and minds tonight.

And I pray, Lord Jesus, you would draw to yourself those you want to receive eternal life tonight by faith in you. Only you can do it, Lord. I pray you draw people to you.

Set them free from their sin, from habits that are just causing carnage in relationships and in their life. Set them free from all that yuck stuff that we do to ourselves, like hiding and blaming and shaming ourselves. Thank you, Lord.

You've given us a resurrection hope to look forward to, but thank you that we don't have to wait that long, that we can have life now. It's the good life, knowing you, knowing how to make purposeful decisions with what we do with our lives, Lord.

We're so grateful that you make available life in its fullness.