

**An Informal Study of**  
**PHILIPPIANS**

A Dispensational Approach

by **R. B. Shiflet**

AN INFORMAL STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS—  
A DISPENSATIONAL APPROACH

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## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to our children, Vera Mae and Richard Stilwell; Estha and Robert Shiflet; and Susan and Randy Shiflet. They, and our grandchildren, are a rich blessing from the Lord.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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# AN INFORMAL STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

## A Dispensational Approach

### Preface

In order to understand the historical background of this charming little epistle, we must go to the inspired record in the Acts of the Apostles, where in chapter 16, verses 12 to 40, we are given the history of what happened about ten years before the writing of the letter to the Philippians.

For reasons unknown to us, the Holy Spirit had forbidden Paul and Silas to preach the gospel in Asia, hindered their going to Bithynia (16:6-7), but sent a special vision to beckon them to come to Macedonia. Without benefit of organization, publicity committees, advance men or advertising in the news media, Paul and his companions began the first “evangelistic crusade” on the continent of Europe.

This campaign consisted of a meeting with a few devout Jewish women in a rural area outside the city of Philippi. Apparently even the Jewish population in this pagan city was small, for Jewish tradition required that any city with ten or more Jewish families must have a synagogue.

Imagine how these three Christian men must have felt when they realized they were in a metropolis with no other Christians and with fewer than ten families (because there was no synagogue) who knew the God of Israel; we say *three* Christian men, for it is apparent from the “we” in Acts 16:10ff that Luke joined them at this point. What did these men do? They **PREACHED THE WORD**. What did the Lord do? He opened the heart of Lydia, a wealthy woman who had moved to Macedonia from Asia, and she received the Lord Jesus as her Savior. She then opened her home to the evangelists and it became the center of Christian witness in the city of Philippi.

Other notable converts during Paul’s visit were the poor demon-possessed girl who made a living for her masters through her fortune telling, and the jailer who almost committed suicide. What a strange nucleus for a new Christian church: a wealthy Jewess who had migrated from Asia; a poor Greek slave girl from the lowest socio-economic level, probably a worshiper of the pagan god, Python; and

a Roman jailer from the middle class, one who probably had been a worshiper of the Emperor. Truly, God was about to demonstrate our oneness in Christ Jesus.

Persecution caused the Apostle Paul to spend only a short time in Philippi. He did not see his beloved fellow-Christians in this city for another five years. His second visit was brief (Acts 20:1-6), and still another five years rolled by before he wrote this inspired letter to the Philippians.

Many Bible teachers have called attention to the treasures contained in the epistle to the Philippians. We quote from a few in the hope this will stimulate the reader to dig deeply into the little letter and make these riches their own.

Dr. John Walvoord, President of Dallas Theological Seminary, wrote:

Although not the longest or the most important of the Pauline epistles, the letter to the Philippians has its own peculiar charm and important place among the epistles of Paul. Written with Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon as one of the prison epistles, it breathes the rare perfume of Christian joy and peace in a context of suffering. Combining the practical with the theological, the triumph of the life in Christ—even for one who is in great suffering—is offered for those who have the life of Christ.

In a modern world overrun by secularism, unbelief and materialism, and too often satiated with the unparalleled luxuries of modern life, a letter written by a prisoner in chains may seem at first glance to be irrelevant to our contemporary scene. A careful study of this epistle, however, revealing the amazing triumph of the apostle even though in great suffering, soon removes the veneer of modern superficiality from our present world, and brings the reader face to face with ultimate spiritual values, which satisfy the heart and bring joy and peace in a way that no modern convenience or pleasure could duplicate. For those seeking depth in spiritual things, a real intimacy with Jesus Christ, and a life that counts for eternity, this epistle offers infinite treasures (TRIUMPH IN

CHRIST, pp. 7 and 8).

Dr. W. Graham Scroggie says: “The Epistle is about the Christian life as God intends it normally to be lived, life by Christ, in Christ, and Christlike. This is a life joyful, lofty, devout, and unique; it is a life restful, steadfast, energetic, and serene” (UNFOLDING DRAMA OF REDEMPTION, Volume III, p. 207).

Dr. J. Sidlow Baxter concludes his notes on Philippians with the following statement:

What a triumphant little document this Philippian epistle is! Chains are clanking on the writer’s wrists and ankles, but he makes them sound like bells of heaven! In the very first paragraph he speaks of “grace”, “peace”, “joy”, “love”, “glory”, “praise”! And the bells ring right through all four chapters until they give a triumphant final peal in the last paragraph: “But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” What more need be said after *that*? All that is needed is a doxology; and that is just what Paul adds in verse 20: “Now unto our God and Father be the glory unto the ages of the ages. Amen” (EXPLORE THE BOOK, Volume VI, p. 194).

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## **Introduction, 1:1-2.**

The introduction of the epistle makes known the writer, the Apostle Paul, and Timothy his companion, presenting them as bond-slaves of Jesus Christ. The addressees include all of the saints in Philippi with their spiritual leaders. As members of the body of Christ in this dispensation of grace, we know we too are included as recipients of the message of this great epistle. In fact, someone has well said that every believer in America who traces his ancestry back to Europe, in a real sense traces his spiritual heritage back to this Philippian congregation!

The usual apostolic greeting is given, “Grace and peace”, and then the apostle gets right into the message of his letter.

## **I. THE EXULTATION IN THANKSGIVING, 1:3-8.**

“I thank my God” — What an unusual way to begin a letter written in prison by a faithful messenger of Christ who is no longer free to travel and establish churches as he had been doing for many years. Surely he is a living example of the admonition he himself gave us, “In everything give thanks” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

He gives thanks for:

### **A. Fond Memories (1:3-4)**

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.” Some scholars interpret this as meaning, “I thank God for you every time I think about you.” Others believe he is saying, “My thanksgiving is based upon my whole remembrance of you.” The two ideas are not exclusive to each other so it would seem both are included in the statement. Paul could look back upon the ten years of his relationship with the Philippians as a basis of his thanksgiving to God. He surely rejoiced in praise to God, too, when he remembered his experiences in preaching the gospel to Lydia and her friends, when he remembered the joy of seeing the slave girl freed from the

demon spirit which bound her, and when he remembered the jailer who turned from his religion of Emperor worship to serve the King of kings and Lord of lords!

## **B. Faithful Fellowship (1:5,7)**

As Paul continues to enumerate his causes for thanksgiving he mentions their fellowship in the gospel. This is the first of five references to the *gospel* in this chapter (see 1:5,7,12,17,27). He expresses concern for fellowship in the gospel (1:5), furtherance of the gospel (1:12), and the faith of the gospel (1:27).

This fellowship he had enjoyed with them across the years was not only a sharing in receiving the gospel, but also a partnership in defending and establishing the gospel. Listen to Paul's expression in chapter 1, verse 7, from the New International Version: "It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart, for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me."

## **C. Full Assurance (1:6)**

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The Jerusalem Bible gives us: "I am quite certain that the One who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the Day of Christ Jesus comes." What assurance! Paul did not expect the saints at Philippi to "hold out faithful to the end" by their own strength or through their own good works. He had complete confidence that the Christ who saved them would also keep them. The evidence of the genuineness of their profession of faith would be, of course, in their living soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

Let the reader who lacks the assurance of the saving and

keeping power of our Lord carefully and prayerfully read John 5:24; John 10:28,29; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 5:11-13; Jude 24,25; and *believe* the message.

Paul used the words “begun” and “perform” together in two of his other epistles. Note Galatians 3:3: “Are ye so foolish? Having *begun* in the Spirit, are ye now *made perfect* (same word as “perform” in Philippians 1:6) by the flesh?” The obvious answer is the “flesh” could not save us and the flesh cannot keep us. Clearly, the same power of the Spirit that brought us our salvation from the penalty of sin is likewise the provision for our present salvation from the power of sin and the guarantee of our prospective salvation from the very presence of sin and the possibility of sinning! We can only exclaim with the hymn writer Philip Paul Bliss, “Hallelujah, What a Saviour”.

The words “begun” and “perform” are also used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:6, “Inasmuch that we desired Titus that, as he had *begun*, so he would also *finish* in you the same grace also.” It is evident the same agent (Titus) who began the ministry here would finish it.

#### **D. Firm Commitment (1:8)**

“For God is my record (witness) how greatly I long after you all in the bowels (affections) of Jesus Christ.” The Apostle desires so strongly to assure the saints at Philippi of his interest in them, and his love for them and his commitment to them in their joint-venture of getting out the message, that he calls upon God Himself as his record or witness to the truth of this statement. Paul uses this expression in Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:23; and 1 Thessalonians 2:5,10. No firmer commitment of a Christian leader to his loved ones in Christ could ever be made. So pure were his motives and so sincere his love that he could call upon God to verify it.

## II. THE EXPRESSION OF PRAYER, 1: 9-11.

The transition from praise and thanksgiving to prayer and supplication should always be a smooth one as Paul here demonstrates. After his time of thanksgiving to God for past and present blessings, the Apostle petitions God in regard to certain basic needs for the present and the future. He is concerned about:

### A. Sound Doctrine (1:9)

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in *knowledge* and in all judgment.” The Philippian Christians were allowing the love of God which He had shed abroad in their hearts to reach out to one another. Paul prays this might increase. The word “pray” comes from a word suggesting two ingredients: the request is made to a definite PERSON, and it is for a definite PURPOSE.

Christian love is wonderful. But even Christian love needs to be guided by the teaching of the Word of God. The Apostle Paul would never sanction the teaching that it does not really matter what one believes as long as he is sincere and has love in his heart. Some of the liberal denominational leaders have stressed love to the neglect of truth, while the Apostle Paul admonishes us to speak the TRUTH in LOVE. His petition here is that “your love may yet more and more overflow, but at the same time be kept within the guiding limitations of an accurate knowledge” (Wuest translation).

The word which the Holy Spirit uses for *knowledge* means “full knowledge; precise, accurate knowledge.” It refers to doctrine in the heart rather than mere mental assent to some creed. It has been defined as “residual doctrine.” The word is used twenty times in the New Testament. Paul uses it fifteen of these twenty times (sixteen if he wrote the epistle to the Hebrews). Dr. A. T. Robertson suggests the Apostle Paul prays their love may keep on overflowing, but with limitations, as river banks direct the flow of a river. In this sense

one “bank” for the believer is full, precise, accurate knowledge (doctrine as taught in the Word) while the other is discernment or discretion. This is surely the answer to the believer who thinks he should “ignore doctrine and preach love.”

## **B. Sensitive Discretion (1:9)**

Closely associated with a full knowledge of the Word is discernment and discretion in the application of this knowledge. The word translated “judgment” in the King James Version is rendered “discernment” in the Revised Version. The New International Version and the New English Bible both give us “insight.” A good lexical definition is “perception.” A. T. Robertson says the word means “a delicate spiritual perception.” Kenneth Wuest defines it as “sensitive moral and ethical tact.” He comments:

How often we saints mean to be loving to others, and say the wrong words or do the wrong thing. We lack that delicate sensibility, that ability to express ourselves correctly, that gentle, wise, discriminating touch which would convey the love we have in our hearts to the lives of others. But this can be ours if we but live in close companionship with the One who always exhibited that sense of delicate tactfulness in His life (WORD STUDIES IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT, Volume II, p. 36).

## **C. Sane Division (1:10)**

Paul expresses the need for recognizing dispensational differences with the words, “that ye may approve the things that are excellent (literally, test the things that differ).” This knowledge and discernment enable the believer to approve things only after they have been tested. The word was used in secular Greek for testing or certifying, such as is done today for lawyers, doctors and other professional people. The application is twofold; testing the fine points of Christian conduct

in order to know God's will for our walk and testing the things that differ in various dispensational settings in order to rightly divide the Word of truth. This twofold application is surely legitimate.

The word translated "rightly dividing" (*orthotomeo*) in 2 Timothy 2:15 is used in the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament) in Proverbs 3:6 which is translated "direct" in our King James Version. It says literally, "and He shall rightly divide thy path." We are taught we must rightly divide the Word of truth. We are also taught that if we trust in the Lord with all our hearts and lean not to our own understanding, but in all our ways acknowledge Him, that He will RIGHTLY DIVIDE our walk! He will lead us to choose His will and His way in our lives. If we do not rightly divide the Word we cannot know His perfect will for our lives in this dispensation, and we will not know how to walk in ways pleasing to Him.

Many examples of this can be seen in the followers of legalistic Christian sects that put their people back under the Old Testament law. They can never know the joys of our liberty in Christ while trying to live up to the dietary laws of Leviticus, the Sabbath rules of Exodus and other Old Testament passages, or the various rituals of Israel's religion. We must test the things that differ and walk according to those things revealed in the dispensation given to us through the Apostle Paul.

#### **D. Sainly Deportment (1:10)**

Conduct always follows creed, behavior follows belief, deportment follows doctrine. This is clearly seen when Paul says, "that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ."

The word "sincere" offers a good example of an intriguing word study. The English word comes from the Latin *sine*,

meaning “without,” and *cere*, meaning “wax.” The thought involved is genuineness or perfection. It was common practice to mend cracks or cover flaws in ceramic works by using wax. Some repair jobs were good and not easily detected. But the flaw was still there. A genuinely good article was one “without wax” or sincere.

The Greek word Paul used is “heilikrines,” from “helio,” the “sun,” and “krino,” “to judge.” Again the combination of words gives us a clear picture. A “sincere” article was one which could be judged in the sunlight—and thus proven to be without a flaw. Imperfections might be overlooked in dim, artificial light, but they would be discovered in sunlight.

Paul’s prayer is that our lives might overflow through a channel bounded on one side by full knowledge of the Word and on the other side by a sensitive perception as we use the Word. This is so we might rightly divide the Word and allow God to rightly divide our walk. And how important that in all things we might be “without wax,” open to examination by the powerful insight of the Word!

The word “sincere” is linked with yet another word, translated “without offense.” This word means “not stumbled against” and reminds us, believers ought not be stumbling blocks to others. The verb is used in the active voice in 1 Corinthians 10:32: “Give none offense (that is, become without offense) neither to the Jew, nor to the Greeks, nor to the church of God.”

The duration for the need of these things petitioned in this prayer is clearly given. We need this prayer answered in our lives “till the day of Christ,” or until the time when we are called out of this earth to meet Him. If the Philippians required these things in the first century, how much more do we need them as we see “the day” approaching!

The result of this knowledge and discernment is a life well

pleasing to God. This life is described in verse 11 as being “filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ.” The expression “fruits of righteousness” comes from the Old Testament (Proverbs 11:30 and Amos 6:12) and is used by James in 3:18. We agree with Bishop J. B. Lightfoot:

The Apostle means “righteousness in Christ” as contrasted with “righteousness by the law” (comp. 3:9). Only so far as the life of the believer is absorbed in the life of Christ does the righteousness of Christ become his own. Thus righteousness by faith is intimately bound up with the life in Christ: it must in its very nature be fruitful; it is indeed the condition of bearing fruit.

Concerning this fruit, Dr. Lehman Strauss comments:

The glory of a vine is its fruit. How solemn a thought that the Lord is depending on us for a display of His glory! The fruit of righteousness is a godly life as seen in that nine-fold cluster of the fruit of the Holy Spirit: “Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (or self-control)” —Galatians 5:22-23. The fruit of righteousness is that person whom, by our godly living and personal testimony, we influence to Jesus Christ.

Paul’s prayer is that these things might fill our lives, for they constitute the fruit of righteousness; and all are the result of our abiding in Christ and are unto the glory and praise of God. Our apple tree neither counts its own apples nor boasts in their quality: it merely produces them. “Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:8) (DEVOTIONAL STUDIES IN PHILIPPIANS, p. 64).

Dr. John Walvoord summarizes the opening verses of Philipians by saying:

In this introductory section to the epistle, Paul has underscored two important aspects of Christian faith and life. The first is the assurance of salvation, and the certainty of glorification based on the grace of God and the finished work of Christ, although manifested experientially by a contemporary work of grace in the lives of Christians. The apostle is, first of all, rejoicing in the salvation of the Philippian Christians. Second, satisfied as to their supernatural salvation, he is burdened that now they will go on to achieve the full fruit of the Christian life and the fruit of the Spirit, including love, joy, holiness and service. They had attained much, but there was still more to be realized in their Christian faith. (PHILIPPIANS, TRIUMPH IN CHRIST, p. 33).

Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost echoes the prayer of Paul when he says,

May we be a people characterized by the love of Christ. May we be a people devoted to the things of superior value. May we be a people whose lives are without reproach before God and men. May we be a people in whom the life of Christ produces the fruit of righteousness to the glory of our Father” (THE JOY OF LIVING, p. 28).

### **III. THE EXHIBITION OF GOD’S PROVIDENCE, 1:12-18.**

This section of the epistle is a divine commentary on the practical realities of Romans 8:28. In his earlier epistle Paul had written, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Here in Philippians he is showing his readers how God has used his imprisonment experiences to “work together” with the other “things” in his life so as to result in the furtherance of the gospel. Humanly speaking, his imprisonment sounded like the end of his usefulness in preaching the Word, but God worked things out so it really served to advance the gospel. He assures

his readers that what has happened to him is a manifestation of God's providence.

### **A. In the Spread of His Message (1:12-13)**

Paul expresses an ardent desire for them to become aware that the circumstances which seemed to be such a hindrance to his ministry had resulted in a greater advance of the good news of God's grace. The word translated "furtherance" comes from a word meaning, "to cut before." Wuest tells us it is thought to have been used of a large company of wood cutters in ancient times who would precede the regular army clearing out impenetrable forests, thus preparing the way for their advancement.

Paul used his prison cell as a pulpit. We who love the message of grace and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery can, in retrospect, thank God for this prison ministry of the Apostle. Through it we have the full revelation of our position, our hope and our calling as members of the Body of Christ.

In all probability Paul was chained to his guards; this was the Roman custom. As each new guard came on duty he would hear Paul's testimony of the saving grace of God. Some of them became believers and were the saints in Caesar's household who greeted the Philipians in this letter. Paul could never have witnessed to these men had he remained free. Therefore the providence of God is evident.

### **B. In the Sharing of His Message (1:14-17)**

Not only did Paul's imprisonment result in a pioneer advance of the gospel throughout Caesar's household, but there was a revival of preaching throughout the entire city of Rome. The New International Version states, "Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fear-

lessly” (1:14).

The word translated “many” in our King James Version is literally “the most.” Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost remarks that a second result of Paul’s imprisonment was “timid brethren were emboldened to preach.” These brethren were not preaching as long as Paul was free, but his imprisonment and bold witness in his cell motivated them to preach the Word. To pinpoint the matter, it was not the actual circumstances of his incarceration, but his response to the situation that spurred these believers on to a more consistent preaching of the Word. Is there not a lesson here for us?

After having stated most of the brethren were now preaching the Word boldly, Paul lets it be known the preachers were divided into two groups. These groups had different motives for their preaching. Some were preaching Christ, not of love for the Lord and His Word, but simply to add to Paul’s problems. They had, for various reasons, turned away from the Apostle Paul and were actually trying to make his afflictions more severe. The other group loved Paul and the message God had given him. They preached out of love for the Lord Jesus Christ and for His prisoner.

While it is possible (and this writer once thought it probable) that Paul is referring to the Judaizers who were propagating their legalistic message, it is difficult, in the light of his Galatian letter for example, to imagine Paul saying he rejoiced over that message being preached! On the contrary, he branded this as “another gospel” and pronounced an anathema on those who were preaching it. So it seems it was not the MESSAGE these folk preached which was wrong, but rather their MOTIVE in preaching. He seems to be saying their motives were improper. Nevertheless, he can still rejoice in the fact Christ is being proclaimed.

Perhaps there is a parallel today. It is always possible a pastor or evangelist might be in the ministry not because of a divine

call and not because of his love for the Lord and His Word, but for money, prestige, attention, or any one of many other reasons. Still, if he is really preaching the message of grace, we can rejoice that Christ is being preached, while leaving the judgment of the man's motives to the Lord.

In a similar vein, we know there are denominations which preach salvation by grace and point men and women to the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on Calvary as the only means of salvation. When their hearers accept the Lord Jesus as Savior and unite with the denomination, they find themselves thereafter enmeshed and bound by all kinds of ceremonies and human traditions. This grieves the heart of the believer who is taught the doctrine of his completeness in Christ. Surely, we could wish the excess baggage of chur-  
chanity, traditions and ritual could be thrown overboard and replaced with Bible study and right division of the Word. But we have to say, "Thank God, they *do* preach Christ as Savior." Even the imperfect message and wrong motives are better than no message at all.

We must make it very clear that we are not suggesting we ought to thank God for the message of the cultists who deny salvation by grace, the deity of Christ and the inspiration of the Scriptures. We must *not* have fellowship with any who proclaim these false doctrines; we are not even to invite them into our homes, nor to encourage them in any way. If we do, in the eyes of God, we are partakers with them in their evil message (See 2 John 10,11).

### **C. In the Stand for the Message (1:17-18)**

Paul says his imprisonment and his response to it have been used of the Lord to prove his stand for the gospel. He is set, or appointed for the defense of the gospel. The word "defense" means "a word for, or in behalf of." Does the gospel need us to defend it? In one sense, it does not, for it is a part of God's Word and will stand forever. However, in the

sense Paul meant, it does indeed need our defense today. In this age in which the real message of grace is so rarely given, there is a tremendous need to “speak a word” for the good news of God’s grace.

We need to tell those with whom we come in contact that Christ has died for their sins, the just one for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. We need to tell them we are saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work. We must make it plain that this salvation is by faith and faith alone as far as our part is concerned. It is *not* “by grace through faith PLUS church membership, plus good works, plus baptism, plus walking down a church aisle and shaking hands with a preacher.” It is BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH we are saved and continue to be saved! We need to “plead the cause for the good news,” as the Twentieth Century New Testament puts it.

We could wish the majority of the church from its early days would have accepted the message of Paul. This is not the case. The vast majority turned away from Paul and grace to the yoke of legalism and works religion. Today, believers who proclaim the message Paul preached in his prison cell are surely in the minority. Let us be faithful in DEFENDING the Gospel. Let us stand without compromise, without fear or favor. But let us never become so self-centered as to think we are the only ones preaching Christ. May we, like Paul, rejoice when Christ is preached, regardless of the motive of the preacher. They will have to answer for their motive and we for ours. Praise the Lord for every message which gives Christ the place of preeminence!

#### **IV. THE EXPECTATION OF DELIVERANCE, 1:19-26.**

##### **A. The Assurance of Deliverance (1:19)**

###### ***1. The Prayers of Believers (1:19a)***

The Apostle is certain of deliverance from his present condition. Hear the confidence in his, “For I KNOW (instinctively) that this shall turn to my salvation (deliverance).” He is not speaking of his eternal salvation, but of his deliverance from his present limited ministry. He also knows this deliverance will come about through the prayers of his friends.

We cannot forget James was put into prison and beheaded. When Herod saw this pleased the Jews, he imprisoned Peter and planned for the same fate to befall him after the Passover. “But prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him,” (Acts 12:5). And Peter was DELIVERED!

We find ourselves wondering, from a strictly human viewpoint, if James might not have lived longer and had a fuller ministry had the church prayed for him! While realizing such things are in the hands of a sovereign God, we cannot overemphasize the role of prayer in accomplishing God’s purpose in our lives.

## **2. *The Presence of the Spirit (1:19b)***

Prayer represents the believer’s part; the Holy Spirit’s supply is God’s answer. Paul was depending upon the prayers of the saints. He knew, in answer to their prayers, the Holy Spirit would “make a way of escape” from this dismal cell.

## **B. The Avenues of Deliverance (1:20-23)**

- 1. *Life*** — Paul was confident he was going to be released from the prison. He was not sure how this would be accomplished, but he mentioned two possibilities: life and death (verses 20 and 21). We are reminded of the same faith expressed by the three “Hebrew children” in Daniel 3:17. They boldly told the king their God was able to de-

liver them from the burning fiery furnace, and “he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.” They knew, whether by life or by death, they would be delivered from the power of this monarch. Paul also knew “whether by life or by death” he would be delivered.

His concern was not as to which it would be. Rather, he desired Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. He knew it was important for the believers and churches of that day for him to remain alive. Yet he would not make a choice as to whether he should live or die, only that Christ might be honored.

2. **Death** — To Paul, “to live is Christ,” for Christ lived in him, and the life he lived in the flesh, he lived by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). He enjoyed living because of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, and because of opportunities to witness for Him, and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the Mystery (Ephesians 3:9). He did not fear death. In fact, he said “to die is gain.” This is true because Paul knew that to die was to “depart and to be with Christ.” He assures us this is “far better.”

It is difficult to see how the people who teach “soul sleeping” (regardless of whether they use that terminology or not) get around this Scripture. The doctrine of soul sleep maintains that when an individual dies, believer or unbeliever, he becomes unconscious or asleep and knows nothing until the resurrection. Some even maintain there will be no resurrection for the unbeliever. He is annihilated at death and that is the end. Others teach the unbeliever will be resurrected only to be then destroyed or annihilated. They teach that believers remain unconscious or asleep until they are resurrected and only then receive eternal life. If this were true, does it not seem strange for Paul to say, “For to me to live is Christ, but to become unconscious is far better?” The very idea is ridiculous and repulsive.

To get around this, some have claimed Paul is dealing with three possibilities; life, death, and the “appearing” of Christ. They tell us Paul was not desiring to be with Christ by means of death, but “to appear with Him in glory” at His appearing (Colossians 3:4). Paul said, “I am in a strait betwixt TWO” (1:23), and they are LIFE or DEATH (1:20).

The word “depart,” which Paul uses to describe the death of a believer, is a fascinating word. It is *analuō* and literally means to “unloose or undo.” It was used in classical Greek literature to describe the farmer as he would loosen and remove the yoke from the oxen at the close of a hard day’s work. It was also used to describe a ship as its moorings were loosed, freeing it to sail from one port to another. It was used of the philosopher who unravelled a difficult problem. It was used of the soldier who broke up the encampment, striking his tent after his assignment was completed to move to another area. Paul used the noun form of the same word when he spoke of his own death in 2 Timothy 4:6, “the time of my DEPARTURE is at hand.” To Paul, death meant going into the presence of the Lord where his yoke would be lifted, where he would see the solution to all of his problems, where he would leave behind his earthly tent (2 Corinthians 5:1-8) and arrive home to be with the Lord.

## **C. The Aims of Deliverance (1:24-26)**

Nevertheless, Paul was just as willing to continue to live and be used of the Lord in this life. He expressed three objectives that his continuing to live would accomplish:

### ***1. Personal Presence with the Saints***

The Holy Spirit used Paul the Prisoner to give us some of his richest epistles. Yet Paul desired to see the saints and to be with them in person. When he spoke of his coming

to them in verse 26, he used the word which meant “personal presence.”

## **2. *Progress and Joy of the Faith***

Paul knew how important it was for him to remain alive as far as his fellow believers were concerned. He had confidence he would abide and continue “for your furtherance and joy of faith.” This is a reference to the progress these believers would make under the ministry of Paul. Dr. Kenneth Wuest comments, “While Paul had no active choice in the matter, yet he believed that *the servant of the Lord is immortal until his work is done.*”

## **3. *Praise to the Lord Jesus Christ***

The progress of these believers would result in a greater rejoicing, and the rejoicing would be “in Jesus Christ.” The word “rejoicing” literally means “boasting.” Christ Jesus would receive praise because He is the source of the blessings, Paul was merely the channel or instrument for the blessings. This desire for praise or boasting in Christ is in keeping with the Apostle’s expression, “that CHRIST MIGHT BE MAGNIFIED.”

Dr. Lehman Strauss challenges believers with these words, “May God grant that all of us may have more joy in our labors, thereby increasing the rejoicing of others. Make up your mind today to lay aside your personal preference, and for the glory of Christ and the sake of others, magnify Christ in your body.”

# **V. THE EXHORTATION TO FAITHFUL LIVING, 1:27-30.**

## **A. The Pattern for a Sanctified Walk (1:27)**

In the earlier verses in this chapter, Paul acknowledged he had a desire to depart and be with Christ, which was far bet-

ter, but he recognized their need for him to continue to live in order to minister to their needs. On this basis he expected to be released from prison. The word “only” which begins verse 27 points back to these facts and expresses Paul’s concern that they give heed to his doctrine. The remainder of the letter deals with the spiritual needs of these believers and how these needs are met by Paul’s teaching.

Following the word “only” in the Greek New Testament is the Greek word *axios*, or *worthily*. It is translated “as becometh” in the King James Version. It is the word “worthy” of Ephesians 4:1 and always suggests a pair of scales which balance a known weight against an unknown mass in order to determine its weight. In Ephesians 4:1 our walk is to balance (weigh as much as) our high calling; in Romans 16:2, we are told to show hospitality to our fellow saints in a way that balances our being saints; here in Philippians 1:27 our way of living should balance the gospel we preach.

The word “conversation” is the imperative form of a verb (middle voice), which means “conduct yourselves” or “behave yourselves.” Its basic connotation is *to live*. Bishop H. C. G. Moule says it may be translated as “live your citizen-life.” It means to live, not in the sense of mere existence, but so as to follow a course of principle and order. The reference to “citizenship” in the word (found again in 3:20) is likely because Philippi was a *colony* of Rome and its citizens enjoyed all the privileges of Roman citizenship.

Paul uses this fact to illustrate our heavenly citizenship. The Philippians lived in Philippi, but they were considered citizens of the capital of the empire, Rome. This gave them all of the privileges and responsibilities of living as special citizens of Rome itself. Similarly, we are living in the world, but our citizenship is in heaven. This gives us all the privileges of heavenly citizenship, and all the responsibilities of living as heavenly citizens as ambassadors for Christ should live. The present tense of the verb denotes this should be a continuous

action.

## **B. The Plea for Spiritual Unity (1:27,28)**

### **1. *Stand Firm***

The purpose in asking them to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ is so they might “stand firm in one spirit.” We are to “stand fast” (or firm) in the faith (1 Corinthians 16:13); in freedom from legal bondage (Galatians 5:1); in the Lord (1 Thessalonians 3:8; Philippians 4:1); in the Apostle’s teaching (2 Thessalonians 2:15); and in one spirit (Philippians 1:27).

### **2. *Strive Together***

We are not only to take a firm stand in one spirit, but we are to “strive together with one soul in the faith of the gospel.” The expression “strive together” is the same as we find in Philippians 4:3, “labored with.” It is our word for *athlete* or *athletics*, with a prefix meaning “together with.” We are to work together with the same zeal, enthusiasm and cooperation an athletic team shows. There is no room for laziness and loafing, no place for loners looking for glory for themselves. It must be a team effort, and the goal is “the faith of the gospel.”

### **3. *Show Courage***

Paul told the Philippians they must not be “frightened in any way by those who oppose you” (1:28). The word translated “adversaries” in our Authorized Version literally means “those who are standing against you.” This implies they were facing persecution. Paul encouraged them to show courage, not fear. This persecution and suffering might appear to the unbelieving world to be punishment from God because of His disapproval of their lives, but believers know persecution from the world is

often evidence of a life in fellowship with the Lord, one which has His approval. Paul himself had endured the same type of persecution, as they knew quite well (1:30), and it was the result of his standing firmly and striving together with other believers for the faith of the gospel.

### **C. The Privilege of Suffering (1:29,30)**

Dr. Lehman Strauss in his DEVOTIONAL STUDIES IN PHILIPPIANS shares the following timely thoughts (pp. 100-101):

This verse (1:29) simply tells us that the privilege has been bestowed upon us to suffer in the place of Christ. We know it is not possible for any sinner to share in our Lord's expiatory sufferings which He experienced at Calvary. But we can suffer for righteousness' sake, even as He suffered. Faith in Christ and suffering for Christ are inseparable experiences. The very fact that a man identifies himself with Jesus Christ will result in his suffering for his Lord. Jesus said: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20).

Paul wrote a little later: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

To believe in Christ in our day means the very opposite of hardship and suffering. It has come to mean that the believer now has a place in a church pew where he can sit snugly and smugly. But when the child of God takes his place in the battle against evil, the devil will see to it that he has plenty of opposition. Paul speaks of such suffering as a favor granted of God. Actually it is a part of the *grace* of God bestowed on Christians when we are called to share the sufferings of Christ. The apostles realized this when called upon to suffer. "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were

counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41).

Suffering may differ today in meaning from its meaning in the early days of the Church. By that I mean that it may not mean bodily torment, imprisonment, starvation, and even a torturous death, but it will always be the price one pays when he sincerely and uncompromisingly identifies himself with Jesus Christ. To stand, to strive, to suffer always has been the experience of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. It was Paul’s personal experience when he wrote this Epistle, and it is his plea to each of us.

Alfred L. Greenway, in *THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS, A STUDY MANUAL*, puts it quite to the point when he states on page 31, “The Christian who continues to attract the antagonism of the world because he proclaims the message of salvation will suffer in the place of Christ who is in heaven.”

In his book, *LETTERS FROM PRISON*, Stuart Allen comments (page 200):

Such suffering then did not come by accident. The Lord was in control, and rather than being a mark of His displeasure, it was one of His approval. And moreover, the Lord identified Himself with the suffering of His children, as Paul doubtless remembered from the words of the Savior when He arrested him so dramatically on the road to Damascus and said, “I am Jesus, Whom thou persecutest” (Acts 9:4,5). Paul reminds the Philippians they were not only being tested, but he himself was sharing in their sufferings, in his Roman prison. This he emphasizes by the word “same” (1:30) ... They were engaged in a common struggle, in part of which they had seen him involved in the early days at Philippi.

And the veteran Greek scholar and teacher, Dr. Kenneth

Wuest, in his PHILIPPIANS IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT, page 54, says:

He has left with the Church the message of salvation, the preaching of which draws the antagonism of the world. Thus, as the saints suffer for righteousness' sake, they substitute for their absent Lord not only in the task of preaching the message He has given them but also in suffering for His sake and in His stead.

## VI. THE EXHORTATION TO UNITY, 2:1-4.

In the closing portion of the first chapter (1:27) the Apostle made a plea for unity among the Philippians. He warned them a faithful walk might entail suffering, but in the midst of the warning we find an appeal to stand together. He seems to have come upon a weakness in the Philippian assembly. As we begin chapter 2 we note what was extended as a plea in 1:27 becomes a strong urge in 2:1-4. Bishop H. C. G. Moule comments:

... there was a tendency towards dissension and internal separation in the Mission Church; a tendency which all through the epistle betrays its presence by the stress which the Apostle everywhere lays upon holy unity, the unity of love, the unity whose secret lies in the individual's forgetfulness of self.

### A. The Appeal (2:1)

It is an appeal based on:

1. *Consolation* — “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ ...”

The word “if” carries the thought of “since” rather than raising a doubt. Dr. Kenneth Wuest says, “The word ‘if’ is the translation of a conditional particle referring to a fulfilled condition. One could translate ‘since,’ or ‘in

view of the fact.”

“Therefore” points back to 1:27 and is the bridge linking the plea with the strong exhortation.

The word translated “consolation” in the King James Version of the Bible is one of those Biblical words which is inexhaustible in its riches. It is from the word translated “Comforter” in the gospel of John, where it refers to the Holy Spirit; it is translated “Advocate” in 1 John, in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. In its verb form, it is translated “beseech” in Romans 12:1 and other places. Literally it means “to call to one’s side, or to one’s aid.” Dr. Wuest expresses it well when he says of the word “consolation” in Philippians 2:1.

The word “consolation” is the translation of a Greek word which has various meanings; “imploration, supplication, entreaty, exhortation, admonition, encouragement, consolation, comfort, solace,” the meaning to be used in any particular case being determined by the context in which the word is used. What these Philippians needed right here was not consolation but exhortation, in view of the lack of unity among them. Our translation reads, “In view of the fact that there is a certain exhortation, admonition, encouragement in Christ.”

Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost explains the word in its context as follows:

The relationship of the believer to Jesus Christ is established by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit at the moment of belief. This unites him to Christ as a member of His Body; by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit he is placed in Christ. Paul says,—if we may paraphrase—“If your experiences in Christ speak with any persuasive eloquence; or if your experience

of being in Christ appeals with any force, then complete my joy.” The relationship we have with Jesus Christ is an eloquent appeal to the believer to be like Christ and to manifest His love.

2. **Comfort** — “if any comfort in love ...”

The word rendered “comfort” in this verse is so similar in meaning to the word translated “consolation” that we find some versions of the Bible giving us “comfort” for the first word and others translating the second word “comfort” also. Dr. Kenneth Wuest says:

The word “comfort” is the translation of a Greek word which means literally, “a word which comes to the side of one to stimulate or comfort him.” It speaks of persuasive address. Lightfoot translates it by the words “incentive, encouragement.” It is almost equivalent to the word rendered “consolation,” but has an element of tenderness and persuasion involved in its meaning.

3. **Communion** — “if any fellowship of the Spirit ...”

The word for “fellowship” is the Greek word *koinonia*, and it is a word the Holy Spirit has lifted from the ordinary and raised into the very heavenlies. Its root meaning is “common.” It meant what was common or ordinary, not extraordinary. From this it came to mean that which was shared by all, sharing in common. The Holy Spirit has lifted this to mean that which one believer shares with another, and which we share individually and corporately with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Paul’s third appeal for unity is from the reality of their fellowship in the Spirit. Some scholars do not believe this refers to the Holy Spirit because there is no definite article before “pneuma,” Spirit. But the context surely indi-

cates the reference is to Him. Moule says in a footnote, “With a word so great and conspicuous as ‘pneuma’ it is impossible to decide by the mere absence of the article that the reference is not to *the* (personal) Spirit.” Dr. Pentecost paraphrases, “If there is any such thing as communion with the indwelling Spirit, or if your consciousness of fellowship with the Holy Spirit within is a reality in your life, and it most certainly is, then fulfill my joy by your love for one another.”

#### 4. *Compassion* — “if any bowels and mercies ...”

This is an exact and literal translation. People of Paul’s day referred to the “bowels” as the seat of the emotions. Even today physicians know there is a strong link between emotions and the digestive tract. Doctors tell us most stomach or duodenal ulcers are caused by worry or negative emotions.

To express Paul’s thoughts in contemporary language we might say, “if any tenderness and compassion,” or, “if any compassion and pities.” If these virtues are present in the lives of believers, they are able to live in peace and harmony with each other. They will not “major on minors” but will overlook little differences and work together to heal estrangements which may come about. Murmurings and debates will disappear. The unity of the Spirit will prevail. This can only come through a knowledge of our position in Christ (one body in Him), the incentive of divine love, the fellowship in and control by the Holy Spirit, and the display of the fruit of the Spirit, namely, compassion and pity.

### B. The Approach (2:2)

#### 1. *Be Likeminded*. This involves:

a. *Unity of Affection* — Paul defines “likemindedness”

under a dual unity, affection and accord. To be like-minded, Paul says, is to have the same love one for another. This needs no explanation.

- b. *Unity of Accord* — “being of one accord.” This phrase translates a rather strange word in the Greek. It literally means “soul with soul,” or “one in soul.” The New International Version gives us, “one in spirit and purpose.” Dr. Wuest translates it “being in heart agreement.”

## 2. *Be Singleminded*

This is a literal translation. It involves a repetition of the imperative, “be likeminded,” using an even stronger expression.

### C. The Antitheses (2:3-4)

#### 1. *Expressed Negatively*

Paul continues his exhortation to unity by drawing certain contrasts or antitheses. He says nothing must be (done, or even thought, the word is supplied, and we can only speculate) through strife, or a sectarian spirit. The apostle says if he is to have full joy there must not be competition among the saints based on a party spirit. He also says nothing must be done through vainglory. This is personal vanity, pride, or self promotion. It deals, not so much with what is done, but with the motive for doing it.

#### 2. *Expressed Positively*

Here Paul appeals for consideration of others, “in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves.” Dr. Pentecost has well expressed it, “Love properly manifests itself when the one doing the loving becomes a channel through which God loves someone

else.” This is a solemn reminder that believers should be more like the One Who is “meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:28,29). He concludes the positive portion of the admonition with the words “each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” If believers had obeyed this injunction, the history of the church and our society might be quite different.

## **VII. EXAMPLES OF VICTORY, 2:5-30.**

### **A. Victory Through Sacrifice (2:5-16)**

We have in these verses an outstanding illustration of the grace of God in using a problem situation in a local assembly of the first century as a starting point to give to believers throughout the church age one of the most detailed expositions of the sacrifice of Christ in laying aside His glory to become man, and to be our Redeemer.

#### **1. Humiliation (2:5-8)**

##### *a. The Essence of His Humiliation — Self-Abnegation (2:5-7b)*

The humiliation of the Lord began with His MIND in eternity past. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” This mind was concerned with our needs and planned the riches of grace for us before the foundation of the world and continued to motivate Him during His earthly sojourn when He said, “The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

##### *(1) His Essential Deity*

“Who being in the form of God”—This is a state-

ment of the fact of Christ's eternal deity. He was in the form of God, that is, of the very essence and nature of God. Bishop Moule says He was "*seeming* divine because He *was* divine, in the full sense of Deity." Dr. Kenneth Wuest comments:

Our Lord was in the form of God. The word "God" is without the definite article in the Greek text, and therefore refers to the divine essence. Thus, our Lord's outward expression of His inward being was as to its nature the expression of the divine essence of deity. Since that outward expression which this word "form" speaks of, comes from and is truly representative of the inward being, it follows that our Lord as to His nature is the possessor of the divine essence of Deity, and being that, it also necessarily follows that He is absolute Deity Himself, a co-participant with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in that divine essence which constitutes God, God.

## (2) *His Equality With God*

"Thought it not robbery to be equal with God." We do well to look at these words in several other translations. The New International Version gives us, "did not consider equality with God something to be grasped." Dr. Wuest's expanded translation reads, "... who did not after weighing the facts, consider it a treasure to be clutched and retained at all hazards, this being on an equality with deity." Weymouth translates it, "He did not reckon His equality with God a treasure to be tightly grasped." He did not consider equality with God something He had seized. He did not feel it was something to be grasped and held at all costs. He

did not grasp after something which was not truly His. He was with God, and He was God (John 1:1).

(3) *His Emptying of Himself*

“He made Himself of no reputation.” This expression literally means He emptied Himself. Theologians have long debated over what was involved in this “kenosis,” or self-emptying. We may be sure He did not lay aside His Deity but only the outward expression of His pre-incarnate glory. Some have seen an analogy in His laying aside His outer garment to wash His disciples’ feet as a servant (John 13:1-17). In becoming incarnate, He laid aside the “outer garment” or outer manifestation of His deity in order to become a servant. Pastor Charles F. Baker said it well in his *DISPENSATIONAL THEOLOGY*:

He divested Himself of the *form* of God and of the independent exercise of His divine attributes. He did not divest Himself of His divine Person. He was just as much a divine person while incarnate on earth as He was before or as He is now at the right hand of God.

b. *The Expression of His Humiliation — Incarnation (2:7b)*

“Was made in the likeness of men.” He took the very essence of humanity, apart from sin. Dr. Lehman Strauss expresses it beautifully:

He took upon Him a body like ours and faced a limited human existence on earth. The world has never witnessed a truer expression of self-renunciation. When we ponder that God became

Man, labored with His hands, faced life in every respect as Man, served, sorrowed, and suffered, we stand in holy awe and wonder at so great condescension. The Sovereign of all became the Servant of all.

c. *The Extent of His Humiliation — Crucifixion (2:8)*

“And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Our Lord, though equal with God the Father, “humbled Himself,” brought Himself low in a voluntary humiliation. He became obedient unto death, that is, He deliberately chose to die for us. This was the way He proved His triumph over death. Greenway says, “If the innocence of the cry of the Babe in Bethlehem announced His arrival to take the form of a servant, it required the submissive cry of the Man in Gethsemane to reveal His obedience.” He willingly chose to die, and chose a form of death reserved for the worst of criminals, death by crucifixion. Dr. Strauss reminds us, “It was a long way down from Heaven’s throne to Calvary’s cross. Do we catch a glimpse of what true humility is? Let this mind be in you.” Dr. George Williams, in his *STUDENT’S COMMENTARY ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES*, summarizes our Lord’s humiliation in these words, “The first Adam exalted himself and was humbled; the Second Adam humbled Himself and was exalted.” We must remember the Holy Spirit led Paul to write this doctrinal truth because of a practical need. In exhorting the Philippians to renounce their selfish interests, He brings to their attention this greatest of all Examples.

## 2. *Exaltation (2:9-11)*

### a. *Past Exaltation (2:9a)*

“Wherefore, God *hath* highly *exalted* Him.” The verb “exalted” is in the aorist tense, which indicates a completed action in the past. God, after Christ finished His work here on earth, lifted Him up above all that can be known. Ephesians 1:20-23 describes this exaltation, “... which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but, also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”

### b. *Present Exaltation (2:9b)*

“A name which IS above every name.” Literally, His is THE NAME (there is the definite article in the Greek) ABOVE every name. How many song writers have given us songs about that Wonderful Name. He is presently exalted as Head over all things to the church which is His body, and His name fills Heaven and earth!

This name of exaltation, we believe, is not JESUS. That was the name of His earthly humiliation. Over and over in the gospels He is referred to by this earthly name, Jesus. After His ascension to Heaven the Apostle Peter announced to the people of Israel, “... that God hath made that same Jesus, Whom ye have crucified both *Lord* and *Christ*” (Acts 2:36). We do not give Him His due respect when we refer to Him merely as Jesus. He is the LORD JESUS

## CHRIST!

### c. *Promised Exaltation (2:10,11)*

When our Lord returns as King of kings and Lord of lords, EVERY KNEE shall bow, and EVERY TONGUE shall confess JESUS CHRIST IS LORD! This does not indicate universal reconciliation, but the universal power and Lordship awaiting our Risen Head.

### 3. *Application (2:12-16)*

“Let this mind be in you.” Having given us the wonderful truth about the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord, Paul goes back to his injunction to believers to practice this humility, and then shows us how it can be done.

#### a. *The Power — Divine Personality*

God working in you (2:12,13). Dr. Norman B. Harrison says this is “not imitation, but implantation.” He calls attention to:

##### (1) *Divine Enablement (2:13)*

It is God that worketh in you, that energizes you. Only the living God can energize us by His indwelling Holy Spirit and enable us to live the Christ-like life. The tenses are present, indicating a continuous operation.

##### (2) *Human Responsibility (2:12)*

But we are also taught we must “work out” what God has worked in. We cannot work *for* salvation, but we must work *out* the salvation God has worked *in* us. We are not saved *by* works, but we

are saved *unto* good works (Ephesians 2:8-10). This salvation is to be worked out with fear and trembling, that is, a genuine concern about pleasing God.

b. *The Product — Divine Performance*

“do all things”

(1) *Harmony in Conduct*

“Do all things without murmurings (mutterings) and disputings (doubtings).” The first of these words indicates moral rebellion against God. It refers to under-the-breath murmurs of disgruntled people. It is a word used many times of Israel’s rebellions in the wilderness. The disputings, or doubtings, have to do with intellectual rebellions; attempts to reason out events while leaving God and His revelation out.

(2) *Holiness in Character*

We are challenged to be (literally, *become*) blameless and harmless ... without rebuke. This implies Christian growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior. As we behold Him in the Word we become more like Him. The word “blameless” means “faultless.” “Harmless” means “unmixed, unadulterated, pure.” “Without rebuke” means “unblemished in reputation and reality.”

(3) *Holding Forth in Consecration*

We are to appear as luminaries, holding forth the Word of Life. The expression “holding forth” strongly suggests we must first of all give heed,

hold on to the Word ourselves, as our source of strength, and then hold it out to others, as we would hold out food or drink.

c. *The Prospect — Divine Praise*

Rejoicing in rewards for faithful service at the Judgment Seat of Christ. “In order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing” (NIV). “That will give me ground for boasting on the day of Christ, because neither my career nor my labor has been a failure” (Williams).

**B. Victory Through Service (2:17-24)**

In these verses, three references are made to “service.” The words used, though indicating different types of service, are interesting in the light of the context out of which these verses grew. Paul is giving us examples of victory through allowing the mind of Christ to be in the believer. He speaks of the “service” of the Philippians (2:17). The word used here refers to a worship service and gives us our word “liturgical.” In verse 22 he reminds them of the manner in which Timothy *served* with him in the gospel; he “entered into bond-*service*” for the furtherance of the gospel. In verse 25 we are told Epaphroditus “ministered” or did *service* unto the needs of Paul. This verb is closely related to the noun “service” in verse 17. Taking all of these into consideration, we see:

**1. *The Service of the Philippians (2:17-18)***

Paul mentions the sacrifice and service of their faith. The word “sacrifice” is used uniformly in the New Testament to mean “the thing sacrificed.” The word for service means a priestly work. It is the word used in the Septuagint for the ministry of the priests and Levites. Thus we find another word in one of the prison epistles showing even as members of the body of Christ we are, in a sense,

“priests” rendering a “priestly service.”

Upon this sacrifice and service of the Philippians Paul considers his own possible martyrdom as merely the libation or “drink offering” poured out upon their offering. The background of this is the Old Testament drink offering referred to in such passages as Exodus 29:38-41 and Leviticus 23:12,13. It is a testimony to his humility that Paul considers his own sacrifices, not as the main offering, but merely the wine poured upon it, or around it, as the drink offering. He uses the same word “drink offering” in 2 Timothy 4:6. Dr. Kenneth Wuest tells us this could be translated, “For my life’s blood is already being poured out.”

## 2. *The Service of Timothy (2:19-24)*

Paul tells the Philippians he is about to send Timothy to visit them. They knew Timothy well, having had him in their congregation on at least three earlier occasions (see Acts 16:1-13; 19:22; 20:3ff). Paul reminds them of:

### a. *Timothy’s Care*

He tells them Timothy’s coming to them will make Paul’s state one of good comfort; literally, “good souled,” or of “good cheer.” He says he has absolutely no other “like minded” or “like souled” or “of equal character” with Timothy. According to verse 21, apparently Paul attempted to send several others to Philippi, but they all found excuses not to go. But Timothy was willing to go; the only one it seems. He is described as one who will “naturally care for you.” The word “naturally” means “truly” or “sincerely.” It comes from a word meaning a genuine son in contrast with an illegitimate child.

The wording is very strong and it may be paraphrased

as, “I have no man—not even one—of equal character with Timothy; he is one who will naturally, genuinely and sincerely take anxious care about your circumstances. For all the rest—the whole of them—are seeking their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ.” The pastor today who has tried to persuade someone to assume a responsibility in the Lord’s work and has heard all the excuses that are given can surely identify with Paul in this situation. But Timothy is not only one with a burden of care, he also has the background for such an assignment.

*b. Timothy’s Credentials (2:22-24)*

Timothy has proved himself; he had been put to the test and passed it. The Philippians, knowing him well, recognized this fact. As evidence of Timothy’s credentials, Paul reminded them Timothy had worked with him as a son with a father. Paul does not say “as a son with a father, Timothy served me,” but “as a son with a father, Timothy served *with* me,” thus making their service a co-working.

So many times we find Timothy serving with Paul by going places Paul was unable to go, or finding out about the saints in different places to ease Paul’s mind. Paul sent him to the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 4:17), he sent him to see about the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 3:2,6), and now he is sending him to minister to the Philippians.

When Paul had to flee from Thessalonica to Berea and finally to Athens, he sent for Timothy to come to him at Athens “with all speed” (Acts 17:15). Even though Timothy was apparently weak and sickly (1 Timothy 5:23) and may have had a tendency to be timid and fearful (2 Timothy 1:6-8), he surely was a faithful co-worker with Paul and had the background

or “credentials” for the mission upon which Paul was sending him.

### **C. Victory in Sickness (2:25-30)**

Paul moves from the example of Timothy to that of another brother who was dear to his heart and to the hearts of the Philippians. His name, Epaphroditus, means “charming.” It is derived from the name of the goddess Aphrodite (Venus), and thus speaks of his pagan background. He had been sent by the Philippian church as their messenger to their beloved Paul, and he is the one who brought their love gifts to him. He had become quite ill. In fact, he almost died. The Philippians heard of his illness, but they did not know he had recovered. The fact they knew about his ill health and were worried about him was the main cause of his despondency. We learn he was distressed in mind, diseased in body, but divinely raised back to health.

#### **1. *The Designation of Epaphroditus (2:25)***

- a. Brother* — This speaks of their common cause for Christ, their membership in His body and their relationship in Him.
- b. Companion in Labor* — This refers to their common service for the Lord; they were fellow-workers.
- c. Fellow Soldier* — This is a reminder of the common dangers they shared as soldiers in the Lord’s warfare.
- d. Your Messenger* — Literally, he was their apostle to Paul, the Lord’s apostle.

#### **2. *The Depression of Epaphroditus (2:26)***

“He longed after you all, and was full of heaviness.” This can literally be rendered, “he was homesick and deeply

oppressed,” or “sorely depressed.” The reason for this depression was his concern for their worry about his sickness. How many of us could take a lesson from Epaphroditus! When we are sick in body we *want* people to fuss and fret over us and we get our feelings hurt if they don’t. But Epaphroditus did not want them to worry over him. His knowledge of their worry was the cause of his depression.

### 3. *The Disease of Epaphroditus (2:27)*

We do not know what had caused the illness of this man of God. Some think the long journey from Philippi may have been too much for him. This is based on verse 30, “for the work of Christ, he was near unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.” Paul literally says, “he gambled his life” to supply your lack of service toward me. He is not rebuking the Philippians for not sending him more. He praises them for their generosity. Rather, he is saying, “he did the service which you could not do, thus completing your loving purpose in regard to your fellowship with me in the gospel.”

### 4. *The Divine Healing of Epaphroditus (2:27)*

Paul’s explanation of Epaphroditus’ recovery is that “God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” There is nothing to indicate a sign healing, or even an instantaneous healing. The implication is that he had a very serious, possibly a very long illness. But God, in accordance with His will, raised him up.

This is how divine healing works today. During the transitional period recorded in Acts, healings were a part of the program of signs. With the setting aside of national Israel, the sign program ceased. Nevertheless, God still

heals the sick when it is in accordance with His good and acceptable and perfect will. The believer today who understands God’s program for this dispensation can truly say, “I believe in *divine healing*, but I do not believe in *divine healers*.”

## VIII. EXPECTATIONS IN THE LORD, chapter 3.

The Apostle moves from his series of examples to present Christ as the object of our faith and hope. He introduces this section of the letter with a warning of the danger of religious systems that lead their adherents to trust works, law, religion, ritual or recitation of prayers instead of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### A. Proper Reminders (3:1)

When Paul says “finally,” he does not mean he is almost through. The word could be translated “as for the rest.” He uses the word to introduce a rather long section on a very dangerous doctrinal defection these believers are facing. He has declared in Colossians 1:18 our Lord Jesus Christ has the right of preeminence in all things. Here in Philippians 1:21 he has declared for himself to live is Christ. Now he must warn these Philippians of a philosophy being propagated by some who call themselves believers. This philosophy would make the believer himself the center of life, rather than keeping Christ in the center. Every humanistic credo since that day has tried to accomplish the same objective. In issuing some thoughts on precautions, Paul tells them to:

#### 1. *Look Up (3:1) — Rejoice in the Lord*

“Rejoice in the Lord.” Paul admits he is repeating himself, but he says it is not boring for him to do so. Furthermore, he tells them their safety lies in this repetition. The word translated “rejoice” means to greet, delight in, be glad. It is a combination of the thought “farewell” with a

wish for the enjoyment of life. Literally, it may be translated, “keep on continually rejoicing and being glad in the Lord.” The false teachers Paul was warning against were rejoicing and being glad in man and his accomplishments, but Paul said he would glory only in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Please read carefully Galatians 6:12-14.)

## 2. “*Look Out!*” (3:2) — *Resist the False Teachers*

“Beware!” This word carries with it the idea of being on the lookout for danger and of constantly observing in order to avoid the recognized danger. He calls upon them to look out for and avoid:

- a. “*Dogs.*” This is Paul’s term of reproach for the Judaizers. They, being Jews, considered all Gentiles as dogs (Matthew 15:26); Paul says they are really the dogs. He may have had in mind the passage from Isaiah 56:10,11 in which he calls the false prophets “dumb dogs.”
- b. *Dangerous Workers*, or “evil workers.” These were the Judaizers who with the zeal of the Pharisees described by our Lord (Matthew 23:15) were still working diligently to win the untaught. They were evil workers because they were *working* with all diligence to accomplish their purpose, but this resulted only in evil, because it took an individual from liberty to bondage.
- c. *Dead Works* — “the concision.” Paul is now calling the “circumcision” party a group of mutilators. He is playing on the word “circumcision” and is saying they are not only mutilating their own bodies, but also mutilating the gospel.

### 3. *Look Within (3:3) — Reckon Yourselves Dead*

Paul had written the Colossian believers that in Christ we have experienced a “circumcision that is made without hands” (Colossians 2:11). Ours is a spiritual circumcision. In this text he takes it a step further and says, “we *are* the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” The people who were troubling the Philippians had called themselves “the circumcision” and had insisted only those who had experienced this rite were really saved. Paul tells them *we are the circumcision*; even though our bodies may not have had the literal rite.

May we note in passing this is another of those Scriptures which tears down the theory that “before Acts 28” the epistles of Paul were largely Jewish, and “after Acts 28” and the setting aside of national Israel we have nothing Jewish. Believers today, even though members of the Body of Christ, have a heritage from Israel; we *are* the circumcision who worship God in Spirit. Three things are said about us in this role:

#### a. *We Worship in Spirit*

The word for “worship” is from *latreuein*, a verb which had come to be used in a very special sense to denote the service rendered to the Lord by His peculiar people, Israel (see Romans 11:4). Paul seems to say, “not only are we the true circumcision, but we possess the true service; a spiritual worship, not a service of external rites.” Some have interpreted this verse to mean, “we have a spiritual worship.” Others interpret it to mean, “worship God by the Spirit.” Dr. Kenneth Wuest says, “the best Greek texts have ‘worship by the Spirit of God.’”

b. *We Glory in Christ Jesus*

The Lord has spoken through Jeremiah the prophet to tell us:

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord who exerciseth lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord (Jeremiah 9:23,24).

Paul quotes a part of this passage in 1 Corinthians 1:31 and in 2 Corinthians 10:17. Paul tells the false teachers to go on rejoicing or glorying in their religion if they choose, but true believers can only glory in Christ Jesus our Lord. This gives us a glimpse of the high spiritual level of the apostle's life.

c. *We Refrain from the Flesh*

Paul expresses this in the words "we have no confidence in the flesh." The word "confidence" refers to a coming to a settled persuasion regarding something. The Judaizers liked to glory in the flesh. Paul told the Galatians this same philosophy had prompted the false teachers of Galatia to desire their disciples to be circumcised in order that they might glory in the flesh (Galatians 6:13). He also spoke to the Corinthian church about those who glory in the flesh (2 Corinthians 11:18). But he declares he has come to a settled persuasion; a firm conviction, that we must glory only in the Lord and have no confidence in the flesh.

Not only is circumcision of no avail, but anything pertaining to the flesh cannot be involved in spiritual

worship. It is vital to conclude the old nature is carnal, whether it refers to the physical, the intellectual, or the ceremonial. “The flesh profiteth nothing” (John 6:63); “that which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6). We cannot worship God in the energy of the flesh. We cannot be saved by fleshly ordinances. We cannot convert the flesh. It has been crucified with Christ. We cannot crucify it, we can only reckon it to be dead because of what Christ has done (Romans 6:6-11) and live by the controlling power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

## **B. Proud Religion (3:4-6)**

The legalists who were so antagonistic to Paul’s teaching of salvation by grace insisted, in addition to faith in Christ, it was necessary to be circumcised and to keep all the law in order to maintain their salvation. To them, Christianity was merely a branch of the Jewish religion. In the verses we are about to consider Paul uses his own religious background to prove if a religion based on works could save, he would have been saved. He was very proud of the perfection of his religious practice, until he met Christ. Then he saw whereas religion is man’s effort to work himself up into favor with God, Christianity is God’s reaching down to sinful man and saving him on the basis of the work of Christ. Christianity is unique in this message. It is not a religion but a revelation of God’s way of making man righteous.

Dr. Lehman Strauss has done an excellent job of outlining Philippians 3:4-6, and I am going to borrow his outline as a basis for a few thoughts on the pride Paul the Jew took in his religion:

### ***1. He Was Proud of Its Ritual (3:5)***

Paul was “circumcised the eighth day.” This ritual marked him off as a son of Abraham. He could point to

Genesis 17:14, which states, “And the uncircumcised male child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people.”

## **2. *He Was Proud of His Relationship (3:5)***

He was “of the stock of Israel.” He was a direct descendant of Abraham through Jacob, whose name was changed to “Israel.” He did not come through Ishmael or Esau. He was in the direct line of promise. He was very proud of his ancestry!

## **3. *He Was Proud of His Respectability (3:5)***

He not only was a descendant of Abraham through Jacob, he was a descendant of Jacob through his son Benjamin. He took special pride in being able to say, “I am of the tribe of Benjamin.” This was the tribe always associated with loyalty to the throne of David. It was the only tribe to be associated with Judah in the Southern Kingdom.

## **4. *He Was Proud of His Race (3:5)***

He was “a Hebrew of the Hebrews.” He was associated with the faction among the Jews maintaining their peculiar “Jewishness.” Some of them had given up the Hebrew language and customs for the Greek culture of their day. Some had even laid aside the dietary laws associated with their religion since the days of Moses. There was a small segment, however, who, because of their devotion to God, were extremely strict about their entire manner of living. Paul was proud to be of this “strictest sect.”

## **5. *He Was Proud of His Religion (3:5)***

He was “as touching the law, a Pharisee.” He is setting himself over against the Sadducees, the liberals of his day, who denied the existence of angels, spirits and the

resurrection. He is disassociating himself from the Herodians, who had given up the promises of Israel's future glory and had decided to become Romans. When he stood before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem he reminded them of his heritage as a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). When he was brought before Agrippa he made the same profession (Acts 26:5). He was a "fundamentalist" in every respect.

#### **6. *He Was Proud of His Reputation (3:6)***

He could honestly say, "concerning zeal, persecuting the church." He was as sincere when he was persecuting the Christians as he was when he was writing to the Philippians. The only difference was the persecuting of Christians was a blind zeal, done in the energy of the flesh, whereas the letter to the Philippians was a divine revelation, preserved by divine inspiration.

Today's counterpart is the man who works hard at his religion and measures his religious zeal by his hatred of communicants in other religions. Jew-Arab hatred in the Middle East and Protestant-Catholic strife in Ireland are examples of the suffering which can come when misguided men take pride in a religious relationship priding itself in the persecution of others. With all of his zeal and fervor, Paul was outside of Christ and a lost sinner.

#### **7. *He Was Proud of His Righteousness (3:6)***

He could honestly say, "touching the righteousness which is by the law, blameless." Paul is not claiming sinless perfection in these words. He is simply stating the acknowledged fact that his observance of the demands of the law was so meticulous his conscience was clear on all of its points.

If anyone could hold his head high, and say like the Pharisee in our Lord's illustration, "I thank Thee that I

am not as other men,” Paul could do so. He was meeting the religionists on their own ground. But he was doing more than that. He was using his own record as a good Jew to show them and the rest of the world religion is not enough!

### C. Provided Righteousness (3:7-9)

In a moment of time on the road to Damascus some thirty years before Paul wrote these words he had come face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ. There he came to see the only righteousness God accepts is the righteousness He Himself provides. He became convinced this God-provided righteousness is the Lord Jesus Christ; He is our Righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). Through Him we are declared righteous (Romans 3:24). Through Him we are enabled to have fulfilled *in* us (not *by* us) the righteousness *of* the law (not *by* the law) (Romans 8:1-4).

Bishop J. B. Lightfoot points out when Paul is referring to his “gains” under his religion he uses the plural, but when he speaks of them as “loss,” he lumps them altogether into a single loss. He paraphrases it, “All such things which I used to count up as distinct items with a miserly greed and reckon to my credit—these I have massed together under one general head as loss.”

The word translated “dung” in 3:8 was used not only of excrement but also of table scraps. Paul is saying, “Now that I have tasted the provision made by the Lord Jesus Christ, I can never again be satisfied with the table scraps, the leftovers, of a legalistic religion.”

Paul’s new-found faith can be summarized in two words: “IN HIM.” He wants to be found IN HIM; not having his old religious righteousness, but the RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT CHRIST PROVIDES! We do well to pause for an application here.

Multitudes of people today are relying on church membership, baptism, good deeds, or any one of a dozen other means to make themselves acceptable to God. These are the most difficult people to reach with the gospel of grace. There is no better place in the Scriptures to establish the two-fold truth that the most zealous religionist cannot please God (Philippians 3:4-6), but any sinner, religious or irreligious, can be counted righteous in the sight of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the precious doctrine of our standing by His grace. We are made to be accepted in the Beloved. We are complete in Him. We are to be found in Him. The phrase “in Christ” or “in Him” occurs in some form or other more than 160 times in Paul’s epistles.

The greatest things that can ever happen to a religionist is for him to give up the table scraps of his religion and feast at the table prepared for him by the Father. Bishop Lightfoot expresses it well when he says, “the meats served to the sons of God are spiritual meats; the ordinances, which the formalists value so highly, are the mere refuse of the feast.”

#### **D. Powerful Relationship (3:10-14)**

In verses 7 to 9 Paul has acknowledged his total dependence upon Christ for salvation from the penalty of sin and for the only righteousness God will accept. He has told us, “I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” He is obviously referring to his coming to know Christ as Savior, and the resulting position which became his in Christ by the grace of God.

Far too many believers have stopped at this point. They are persuaded this salvation from the penalty of sin is God’s goal for His children. But in verses 10 to 14, Paul shows this is the BEGINNING, not the END of God’s working in the believer. Paul is not satisfied in knowing Christ as Savior. He desires to know him as Lord of all. The verses before us express Paul’s burning desire.

## **1. *The Power of His Resurrection (3:10)***

Paul cries out, “that I may KNOW HIM.” The verb “to know” is defined by Dr. E. W. Bullinger in his CRITICAL LEXICON AND CONCORDANCE as “to perceive, observe, obtain a knowledge of or insight into.” He further states, “it denotes a personal and true relation between the person knowing and the object known, i.e., to be influenced by one’s knowledge of the object, to suffer one’s self to be determined thereby.” It is this kind of knowledge Paul desired. He was not content in merely knowing about Him. He did not stop at knowing Him as Savior. He wanted to come to know HIM and the POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION.

In the light of the context, Paul is not looking backward and saying, “I want to know more about the power which brought Christ out of the tomb.” Nor is he looking forward and saying, “I want to be sure my own body will experience resurrection power.” He was looking at the present and saying, “I want the power I know raised the body of Christ from the tomb, and I know will one day bring my own body forth. I want that power to be mine now by experience. I want to know in a practical, experiential way what it means to appropriate the resurrection power of Christ in my own life. I have been raised with Christ (Colossians 3:1), and I want to live in the power of that resurrection.”

## **2. *The Partnership in His Sufferings (3:10)***

Paul is not asking to experience a literal crucifixion. He is not supposing his sufferings will in any way add to the finished work of Christ. He is asking that he may come to know experientially what it means to have fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. The Lord told Ananias on the occasion of Paul’s conversion God would “show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.”

Paul wrote the Corinthians in an earlier letter (2 Corinthians 1:5), “for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” In his last letter he told Timothy, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him” (2 Timothy 2:12).

### **3. *The Pattern of His Death (3:10)***

Here Paul asks to “be made conformable unto His death.” The New International Version translates this, “becoming like Him in His death.” The Jerusalem Bible gives us, “reproducing the pattern of His death.” Paul is not asking to die in the same way Christ died. Rather, he is expressing a desire he may come to know in a practical way that which was already his positionally.

He knew in the sight of God when Christ died, Paul died with Him (Romans 6:6). He wanted to realize this positional truth in practical daily living (Romans 6:11). He makes reference to this practical truth many times in his epistles (see 1 Corinthians 15:31; Galatians 2:20; Galatians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 4:10, etc.).

### **4. *The Practice of His Resurrected Life (3:11-13)***

This portion of the epistle is admittedly difficult. Some have made this to teach salvation from the penalty of sin is by grace, but salvation from the power of sin, and the possibility of our salvation from the presence of sin (in a glorified body), come though our own effort. Some have made it to teach not all believers will share in the blessed hope, but only the “overcomers.” And we are at the mercy of the interpreters as to the identification of the “overcomers.” Some have made it to teach a “split rapture,” with the “overcomers” going *before* the tribulation period and the remainder of the body of Christ going *after* the tribulation. Some would have us believe only those who subscribe to a certain system of dispensational

frontiers will share in the “blessed hope,” while other believers will have to wait for some second-class rapture. Still others insist it takes a “charismatic experience” of “speaking in tongues” to qualify the believer for the hope described here.

Since none of these theories can stand the test of “all truth,” it becomes easier to say what the passage does NOT teach than to determine what it does teach. We can know positively Paul was NOT expressing any uncertainty concerning his future resurrection. He had believed in the resurrection of the body even when he was a Pharisee. He is speaking here of an “out-resurrection, out from among the dead ones” which he is now pursuing or striving after. In other words, Paul is pursuing, desiring, to live IN THIS LIFE in day by day experience, the RESURRECTED LIFE OF CHRIST. I agree with Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost when he says:

Paul is not doubting here the fact of the resurrection of the body. The resurrection of the body does not depend on one’s service here or one’s sanctification while in the body. The resurrection is the final victory and triumph over Satan because of the cross of Christ. Paul has quite a different thought in view when he says, “I want to attain unto the resurrection.” We may read it this way, “I want to realize in my daily walk what it is to have been resurrected with Christ.”

To realize this, the Apostle admits he has not yet achieved this goal, he has not reached the finish. The word “perfect” refers to maturity or to finishing a goal.

He sees the need to FORGET the great mistakes lest they discourage him. After all, Christ has forgiven him ALL his trespasses. He sees it just as necessary to forget his past spiritual victories, lest he become complacent in the idea he has already done enough and can “retire” from

Christian service, or lest he develop spiritual pride in his victories. He has as his one aim in life to reach forth, to stretch himself forward as in a race, for the prize set before him.

Anytime we find the language of the athlete in Paul's writings we can be sure he is speaking of rewards for believers; he is NOT speaking of the salvation of the lost. It is trite but true, salvation is by grace while rewards come through acceptable service. For parallel passages note 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 3:9-17; 2 Timothy 2:1-13; Hebrews 12:1,2.

### 5. *The Prize of the High Calling (3:14)*

We are again in an area in which there is great lack of agreement among sound Bible scholars. Some interpret this to mean "the prize associated with the heavenly calling," while others believe it means "the prize—that is, the 'calling on high'—that is, the rapture." These are two of the many conflicting ideas as to the meaning of this statement. We can be sure God is not making the blessed hope a prize for which we must strive. We can also be sure when a prize or reward is in view Paul is not speaking of salvation but of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Could he not be referring to an immediate as well as a remote realization of this goal? For Paul, TO LIVE IS CHRIST. The PRIZE Paul sought *in this life* was conformity to His death and a sharing in His resurrection living. Ultimately, Paul was striving for reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. In his last letter he spoke with great assurance when he said, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day." This will be the full and final realization of Paul's reaching forth for the prize.

We can praise the Lord this prize was not Paul's alone, for he adds, "and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7,8).

## **E. Perfection: Relative (3:15-17)**

"Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." These words from the Apostle Paul begin the section we now consider. The first thing we notice is the seeming discrepancy between these words and what Paul had written in verse 12, "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." He seems to say in verse 12, "I have not yet attained perfection," and in verse 15, "I am now perfect." When we check the original language we find he is using the same basic word in both verses. Knowing, of course, God's Word is true and contains no contradictions, and realizing even apart from inspiration Paul would not contradict himself within a few sentences, we need to look further. We can see in verse 12 he is saying, "I have not yet attained the full and complete perfection that will be mine in the consummation of my salvation," while in verse 15 he is saying, "Let the mature ones think in this way."

### **1. *Maturity (3:15a)***

"Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Bishop H. C. G. Moule translates and paraphrases this as follows, "Let all us perfect ones, with the perfection not of ideal attainment but of Christian maturity and entirety of experience, be of this mind." The word "perfect" in verse 12 is in its verb form and in the perfect tense. Therefore, considering the negative in the sentence we may paraphrase, "I have not yet reached a state of once for all perfection," but "I am following after (present tense) or pursuing this." In verse 15 the word "perfect" is not in the form of a verb but an adjective, and it is describing not one who has in a practical way attained sinlessness in this life but one who is mature, in

contrast to a babe in Christ. This same contrast is made in such similar passages as 1 Corinthians 2:1-6; 3:1-4; Hebrews 5:14-6:1.

Dr. John Walvoord explains this passage in his book entitled PHILIPPIANS, TRIUMPH IN CHRIST, page 93:

Having given his own testimony, he now makes the application and exhortation. He addresses this to those whom he describes as “perfect.” “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.” Here Paul uses the adjective in contrast to the verb which appeared in verse 12. By “perfect” reference is made to being “mature,” as it is translated in the Amplified Bible. Muller interprets the perfection of verse 15 as “principal perfection,” which all believers in Christ possess, in contrast to “the ethical perfection towards which all must constantly strive, and of which no one can boast that he has already attained it.” Vine, considering perfection in verse 15 as maturity, quotes Augustine as saying that believers may be “perfect travellers, but not perfect possessors.”

## 2. *Mental Attitude (3:15b)*

“... and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.” In this gracious sentence Paul is saying to those who are not in agreement with him, who have other attitudes and opinions regarding the subject, that God will reveal the truth to them. Turning again to Bishop Moule’s translation and paraphrase (the italicized words being his translation and the words not italicized his paraphrase) we see:

*And if you are diversely minded in anything, if in any detail of theory or statement you cannot yet see with me, this also God shall unveil to you.* Sure I am that “the Spirit of God speaketh by me,” and that ulti-

mately therefore you will, in submission to Him, see as I have taught you. But I am not therefore commissioned in this matter to denounce and excommunicate; I lay the truth before you, and in love leave it upon your reverent thoughts.

Surely there is a lesson here for us. This is putting into practice his admonition to the Ephesians to “speak the truth in love.”

### 3. *Motivation (3:16)*

#### a. *The Reach*

“Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained,” or “what we have succeeded in reaching” refers to the condition in which we now find ourselves on this scale of Christian maturity. Paul is here recognizing degrees of growth and development; “Wherever you find yourselves now, I have a message which will lead you to further growth.”

#### b. *The Rule*

“... let us walk by the same rule.” The verb “to walk,” Vine tells us, is used metaphorically of walking in relation to others, rather than the usual word for the individual walk. The Greek word *stoicheo* is used in Galatians 5:25 and 6:16. Dr. Lehman Strauss explains it quite well in these words:

The knowledge Paul had and the progress he made were the result of walking the royal road of divinely-revealed truth. Now he calls upon his own soul and exhorts the brethren to “walk by the same rule.” In other words, the present duty of every believer is to obey the light God has given him. As Christians we must be of one mind in be-

ing true to the light we have already attained. Paul exhorts all those who, along with himself, would pursue the course of pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus to continue on in the race, to live unitedly the great truths that had been learned. When two or more persons walk by the same measuring rod they are in step with each other (STUDIES IN PHILIPPIANS, p. 196).

*c. The Responsibility*

Paul adds one more injunction, “Let us mind the same thing.” Most commentaries omit this clause because they tell us the best Greek manuscripts do not contain it. Surely, however, the exhortation is in keeping with the context and is an expansion of “the rule” above. If we are to “step in the same path,” we must be of one mind, we must have our minds on the common goal or prize. The only way we can do this is to have the mind of Christ.

**4. Model (3:17)**

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them who walk so as ye have us for an ensample (example, type, pattern).”

*a. Mimic*

“Be followers together of me.” These words from the pen of the Apostle Paul surely deserve our close attention. He is not boasting in himself. He is magnifying his office and attempting to establish the Philipian saints.

The root of the word translated “be followers together” is a word meaning “imitators” or “mimics.”

In fact, the transliteration of this word gives us our English words “mimic” and “mimeograph.” But in this text the Greek word *mimetes* has something extra; a prefix meaning “together with” or “jointly.” The thought carried by the word is, therefore, “be fellow-imitators,” “joint-imitators” or “imitators together.”

Furthermore, the verb “be” in the passage is not the verb “to be,” but rather the verb “to become.” It is in the present tense, thus signifying, “keep on becoming imitators (joint-imitators) of me.”

We can only speculate and wonder as to what Christianity might be today had believers in every century given heed to this one imperative and been followers together with Paul, fellow-imitators of Paul, in his doctrine and manner of life. Just as surely as Moses was God’s key man in the dispensation of the Law, Paul was His key man in the dispensation of Grace (Romans 11:13; Ephesians 3:1-10; 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; etc.).

Under the Law, there was swift judgment against those who disobeyed. When Miriam rebelled against the authority of Moses, for example, she was smitten with leprosy (Numbers 12). When the sons of Korah rebelled against Moses, the earth swallowed them (Numbers 16). We can only observe if this were not the dispensation of Grace, when God is withholding judgment, there would be a fantastic number of leprosy clinics and a multitude of people buried alive, for Paul’s authority in this dispensation is just as real as Moses’ authority in the earlier dispensation.

There is no doubt the message of grace and the truth of the mystery Paul preached so faithfully and yet so graciously during his lifetime were lost to Christendom for hundreds of years. Professed believers for-

sook the message of Paul, refusing to be “fellow-imitators.” They accepted a watered-down “Christianity” that professed to be a spiritualization of Israel’s religion. Even after the Reformation and many years of more enlightened Bible teaching, the majority are still unwilling to follow Paul as he follows Christ, and to recognize the distinctiveness of his message and his ministry. The world and the church suffer as a result.

*b. Mark*

“Mark them who walk so as ye have us for an example.” The word “mark” was generally used by the Greeks in a negative sense; mark in order to beware or avoid. Paul used it in this way in Romans 16:17. The word is translated “take heed” in Luke 11:35 and “consider” in Galatians 6:1.

It is interesting to note with all of the positive uses of this word in Scripture, a contemporary “non-sectarian” group has made great use of this word to indicate “excommunication.” In their assemblies they are very quick to “mark” anyone who disagrees with them. This “marking” means other members of the assembly are forbidden to speak to the marked one, or to have anything to do with him.

Here, on the contrary, Paul is urging the Philippians to make a deliberate effort to look for those who are faithful in following him. He is instructing them to watch for those who are true to his message in order to walk in the same path with them. The “us for an example” he mentions would include not only himself, but possibly Timothy, Epaphroditus and other faithful co-workers.

We realize the place of Paul was unique. He was the

vessel through whom God made known the truth called the “mystery.” It is through him we know our position, our hope, our calling, and our standard of conduct as members of the body of Christ. It is true in a real sense, however, that God has saved you and me to also be examples or patterns. Timothy was not inspired to write any portion of the Word, as was Paul, yet Paul exhorted him to be an example to other believers (1 Timothy 4:12-16).

Dr. Kenneth Wuest translates Philippians 3:15-17 as follows:

As many therefore as are spiritually mature, let us be of this mind. And, if (as in the case) in anything you are differently minded, and that, in an evil sense, this also will God reveal to you. Only one thing, so far as we have come, let us keep our lives in the same path. Become imitators of me, brethren, and observe attentively those who conduct themselves in a manner which reflects the example which you have in us.

### **C. Perdition: The Reason (3:18-19)**

“For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things” (New International Version).

These verses are usually taken to describe unsaved people whom the Apostle is pointing out in contrast to the ideal Christian. The majority of standard commentaries assume this to be the case. These “enemies of the cross” are taken to be the Judaizers who are preaching salvation through the law rather than through the work of the cross. This whole passage, then, is a warning against the *doctrinal* error of the le-

galism of the Judaizers. And this may very well be the intent of the Apostle.

Bishop J. B. Lightfoot, however, takes issue with this and suggests it may be a refuting of the *practical* error of the Antinomians rather than the *doctrinal* error of the Legalists.

These words (enemies of the cross) do not in themselves decide what persons are here denounced; for the enemies of the cross may be twofold: (1) Doctrinal. The Judaizers, who deny the efficacy of the cross and substitute obedience to a formal code in its place; compare Galatians 5:11; 6:12,14. (2) Practical. The Antinomians, who refuse to conform to the cross (3:10; 2 Corinthians 1:5,6) and live a life of self-indulgence; compare 1 Corinthians 1:17. If the view, which I have adopted and which the context seems to require, is correct, the latter are here meant. (Lightfoot, THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS, p. 153).

Pastor Charles Welch raises a most interesting question in his commentary on Philippians. He suggests the persons described here may very well be believers who have not grown in grace, and who, while accepting the work of Christ on the cross for salvation, have never accepted the doctrine of the place of the cross in sanctification. He deplores the limiting of the doctrine of the cross to initial salvation, or the evangelistic aspect of the doctrine, and shows that:

Paul uses the doctrine of the cross to counter the fleshly wisdom of the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:17,18; 2:2), he teaches the Galatians that by the cross the world and its boasting are repudiated (Galatians 5:11; 6:12,14), and that the emancipation of the believer together with the complete reconciliation of the one body, are accomplished by the Cross of Christ (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20; 2:14) (THE PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING, p. 173).

This quotation will certainly bear further study. It can be clearly seen to be an application we as believers can use, regardless of the interpretation of the passage. Let us analyze the persons described here.

### ***1. Their Guilt***

They were enemies of the cross. Surely those who reject the gospel of the grace of God and try to please God through their own works, religion or merit are “enemies of the cross.” The world is full of such enemies and religion is led by such enemies. But must we not ask, “Can a true believer ever be an ‘enemy of the cross of Christ?’”

To answer this question we must remember the doctrine of the cross is revealed to Paul and found in his writings in a way far beyond any other portion of God’s Word. One has only to contrast Peter’s early Acts sermons with Paul’s “cross” passages to see this. Peter condemns his fellow-Israelites for the crime of crucifying their Messiah and asks them to repent of this great sin. Paul glories in the cross, and teaches that **BY THE CROSS** we can overcome the world and the flesh! Can the believer who has trusted Christ and His finished work at Calvary for salvation, but who depends on himself and his religious works for living the Christian life, be an enemy of the cross, at least so far as the walk of the believer is concerned? Surely many who are saved through hearing the gospel on the radio or in some evangelistic crusade find themselves in churches which never teach the full doctrine of the cross and are “seeking victory” through charismatic experiences, rules for holy living, or other fleshly means.

Even our reconciliation into one body is by the cross, according to the Apostle Paul, and those who have tried to make known the mystery across the years have surely found believers who are enemies of this part of the doctrine of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## 2. *Their Goal*

“Their end is destruction.” It might at first appear this is an unbeliever, for no believer, regardless of his knowledge of the doctrine of the cross or his failure to appropriate the cross in daily living, has as his end or goal “destruction.” But the word “destruction” or “perdition” does not mean annihilation.

It is the word translated “waste” in Matthew 28:6, “But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this *waste*?” This, of course, was the statement made following the anointing of the feet of our Lord with the costly ointment. Vine tells us the word means “loss of well-being, not of being.” He believes it is used in Philippians 3:19 of professing Christians. The word is used in Hebrews 10:39 as a warning to the readers of the epistle not to go back to this perdition or waste, but to go on to perfection (Hebrews 6:1). While realizing the unbeliever’s destiny is waste and eternal destruction in the lake of fire, believers must take this as a warning of the danger of loss at the judgment seat of Christ.

## 3. *Their God*

“Whose god is their belly.” This surely calls attention to the carnal nature of the devotion of these people. Dr. Lehman Strauss gives us a thought-provoking, conscience-smiting comment on this passage:

Their principle (sic) aim is the gratification of their own pleasures and the pampering of their own appetites. “For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:18).

There are more gluttons who make gods of their

stomachs than will admit it. There is more truth than fiction in the saying, “We dig our graves with our teeth.” That which contributes to the gratification of the flesh, whether in what we eat or what we wear, means more to some professing Christians than anything else in their life. Herring says: “The golden calf has been cast into a different form today.” One look at our gorging, our garments and our gadgets and a voice says: “These be thy gods” (Exodus 32:4) (DEVOTIONAL STUDIES IN PHILIPPIANS, pages 204, 205).

#### **4. *Their Glory***

“Whose glory is in their shame” is another clause Paul uses to describe the people against whom he is warning the Philippians. Paul gloried in the cross (Galatians 6:14). These enemies of the cross were glorying in the things of which they should have been ashamed. Hebrews 12:2 tells us our Lord Jesus, “for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.” The people of whom Paul spoke were despising the cross and glorying in their own shame. Nineteen hundred years have not improved the situation. With religious organizations today preaching “the new morality” or “situation ethics” many of us are constantly offended to hear people, in the name of Christ, glorying (boasting) in perversion, promiscuity and permissiveness who are in total opposition to the revealed will of God. Surely, these are glorying in their shame.

#### **5. *Their Grossness***

“Who mind earthly things” is another description of these enemies of the cross. It seems this is another reason to think these words are spoken of believers who are out of fellowship with God. Unbelievers have no choice; they MUST mind earthly things, because they cannot compre-

hend heavenly things. Believers, however, may, and all too often do, mind earthly things. If all believers were at all times minding heavenly things, why was it necessary for Paul to admonish the Colossians, “Set your affections (minds) on things above, *not on things on the earth?*” (Colossians 3:2). Someone has well said believers here on earth should not become so heavenly minded they are no earthly good. The reverse is also true, and perhaps this opposite warning is needed much more. We can, even though we have been seated with Him in the heavenlies, become so earthly minded we lose the joy of our heavenly citizenship, and lose our perspective so far as our Christian growth and Christian goals are concerned.

In summary, may we say these verses surely describe a false teacher, an unbeliever who may have professed faith in Christ, but is not a possessor. But they also come so near to being the description of some who are truly saved but are carnal, ignorant of the truth of the Word, untaught in the principles of right division, and unaware of the message for this dispensation, that their example is a warning and a challenge.

## **G. Perfection Realized (3:20,21)**

### ***1. The Citizenship***

“For our conversation (citizenship, commonwealth) is in heaven.” Bishop H. C. G. Moule translates the word “city-home” and comments:

I thus attempt to give the meaning of *politeuma*, so far as I understand it. The R.V. renders it “citizenship” and “commonwealth” in the margin. The usage of the word in Greek literature amply justifies either, and either well suits the general context. The Apostle means that Christians are citizens of the

heavenly City as to their *status*, and are therefore “obliged by their nobility” to live, however far from their home, as those who belong to it and represent it (PHILIPPIAN STUDIES, pp. 202,203).

Without agreeing with Bishop Moule in identifying “heaven” with the “heavenly city,” which he undoubtedly thought to be the same as the “heavenly city” of Revelation, we can see the meaning of the word “conversation” or “citizenship.” Dr. Kenneth Wuest says:

The stability and security of the citizen under Roman law filled the thoughts of the time with high conceptions of citizenship and its value. Philippi, being a Roman colony, and its citizens therefore Roman citizens, thought in terms of citizenship. Paul seizes this fact as a good opportunity to illustrate to the saints their heavenly citizenship with its privileges and responsibilities. What a contrast between those mentioned in 3:18,19, who were citizens of this earth, and those spoken of in 3:20,21, who are citizens of Heaven (PHILIPPIANS IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT, p. 102).

Dr. H. A. A. Kennedy gives us this exposition:

This world has a characteristic spirit of its own. Worldliness is the common bond of citizenship in it. There is another commonwealth, not of the world ... which inspires its members with a different tone of life. They “seek the things above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God” (THE EXPOSITORS GREEK NEW TESTAMENT, Volume III, p. 462).

The verb “is” is not a part of the verb “to be,” but rather a word which should be translated “is even now.” While getting ready to point to the Blessed Hope, Paul is reminding his readers even now, today, our citizenship is in

HEAVEN. Because we are citizens of heaven, we are to set our minds on heavenly things. We are to rejoice in all spiritual blessings which are ours in heavenly places!

## 2. *The Coming*

“From whence also we look for the Savior.” This is an expression of the expectancy that should be in the hearts of believers. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head over all things to the church which is His body, is now in heaven. We are taught to LOOK for His coming. Dr. E. W. Bullinger says in his *A CRITICAL LEXICON AND CONCORDANCE TO THE ENGLISH AND GREEK NEW TESTAMENT*, “looking for” as, “to wait out, i.e., to wait long and patiently, to await ardently.” The word occurs seven times in our New Testament. Five of those times it is translated “wait for.” The word is a compound of three smaller words meaning “to welcome, or receive,” “off” and “out.” When these words are combined they make a very intensive form, which Bishop Lightfoot translates, “we eagerly await.” It is translated “waiting” in 1 Corinthians 1:7; Romans 8:18,23 and 25, where we are said to be waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of the body. It is translated “look for” in Hebrews 9:28, where these believers are looking for Christ to come. Surely, knowledge of our heavenly citizenship makes the blessed hope more real and precious to us.

## 3. *The Change*

The One for Whom we eagerly wait is the One “who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.” The word “change” literally means “to transform.” It is so translated in 2 Corinthians 11:13,14 and 15, where it refers to Satan and his ministers as being transformed into angels of light. It is translated, “I have in a figure

*transferred*” in 1 Corinthians 4:6.

The body of the believer, while being the temple of the Holy Spirit, is “of the earth, earthy” (1 Corinthians 15:47). It is subject to aches and aging. The sin nature is still present as long as we are in these bodies. All of these things make them unfit for the eternal joys God has prepared for them that love Him. This makes the change necessary. The New American Standard Bible gives us a clearer translation, “Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory.”

We know so little of what the glorified body will be like, but we do have glimpses. The resurrected body of our Lord, in His appearances between the Resurrection and Ascension, shows us a body free from all of the limitations of time and space. He could enter a room with the doors being shut. He could appear wherever He chose from one location to another, seemingly without the ordinary processes of travel. But all of these wonderful abilities were His in a resurrected body not yet glorified. Rather than speculate as to just how these bodies will be, let us rest and rejoice in the fact they will be “like His glorious Body,” or like “the body of His glory!” Is this not sufficient for now?

How will this great change be accomplished? “By the exertion of the power He has even to subject all things to Himself” is the way the NASB translates these assuring words in Philippians 3:21. What a bright and blessed hope! Paul uses a variation of the same word “looking for” when he tells Titus to be “looking for (expecting, awaiting) that Blessed Hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

## IX. EXAMINATION OF PROBLEMS, chapter 4.

### A. The Problem of Friction and Discord (4:1-3)

#### 1. *The Plea (4:1,2)*

As the great apostle introduces this section dealing with discord in the congregation, his very approach is an example of grace. As an Apostle, he could have commanded and demanded things be changed. But he begins by appealing to them in a general way as “brethren” and “dearly beloved,” his “joy and crown.” He pleads with them to stand fast in the Lord and repeats the title of “dearly beloved.” The verb he uses in his plea is the word “beseech” (*parakaleo*), which literally means, “I call you off to one side to implore, to warn, to encourage, to exhort.” It is indeed a gracious appeal.

#### 2. *The Persons (4:2,3)*

It seems the two people in the church who were having friction were two ladies, Euodia and Syntyche. We do not know who these sisters in the faith were. They were mentioned nowhere else in the Scriptures. Apparently they were prominent women in this congregation which was originally the outgrowth of Paul’s ministry to a group of Jewish women in a Sabbath prayer meeting (Acts 16). We only know they had differences they could not reconcile, and these differences had apparently developed into factions in the church. This is the reason Paul appeals to them in this public letter. It is a sad commentary on the power of the old nature to hinder the work of the Lord that the only thing we know about these ladies is they could not get along with one another.

Paul is very careful not to take sides. He simply tells them to “be of the same mind IN THE LORD.” This is the only way we can be of the same mind one with an-

other. Dr. Lehman Strauss comments on this passage in words worth sharing:

He is not telling them they must think alike in everything and see eye to eye on every issue. There is always room for difference of opinion and originality of thought due in part to one's environment, education, and influences. But how then can they be of one mind? Of course, such a condition could only come to pass if they come together "in the Lord." There may be diversity without division, a difference of methods without a disunity of minds, disagreement without departure. Individual subjection to Christ and His Word will save the brethren from dissension and division. Diversity can be a good thing, but disunity will destroy a testimony for Christ. Beware! And remember, there is but one way to settle any disagreement; the right way is "in the Lord."

He appeals to someone whom he designates "true yoke-fellow" to help those women. Many times a Spirit-controlled believer can be used of the Lord to help settle differences between two other believers. We do not know for sure who any of these persons were, but we know the problem was a burden on Paul's heart.

## **B. The Problem of Fear and Dread (4:4-7)**

After dealing with the problem of friction between the two sisters, Paul turns to a more general problem; anxiety, or fear and dread. He deals with this problem in a very logical way. The key to a life of peace is found in the "formula" he gives us in these verses. He begins by telling us the preparation we need to have the peace of God keeping our hearts. He then stresses the importance of prayer. Finally, he unfolds the wonder of the peace that can be ours.

## 1. *Preparation (4:4-6a)*

### a. *Be Cheerful*

“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.” Paul certainly practiced what he preached. No less than eleven times in these four short chapters he uses the word “rejoice,” and the word “joy” is there five times. Guy King reminds us Paul was rejoicing in spite of his fetters and in spite of his future. The reason this prisoner could rejoice in the dismal dungeon was his rejoicing was IN THE LORD.

We cannot always rejoice in circumstances. They may bring heartache and disappointment. We can, however, always REJOICE IN THE LORD. This is the place to begin. When we feel our world has fallen in and nothing can bring us cheer, we can remember our position in Christ, our being blest with every blessing that is spiritual in the heavenlies, and we can rejoice in the Lord!

### b. *Be Gentle*

“Let your moderation be known unto all men.” “Moderation” means *gentleness* or *forbearance*. It suggests a spirit of sweet reasonableness which causes one to be satisfied with less than his due. It involves yielding one’s “rights” for the sake of peace and harmony. It should be noted at this point Paul is not dealing with compromise on doctrine. We cannot forget his stand when principles of doctrine are at stake. “To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour,” was his evaluation of the situation recorded in Galatians 2:5. The yieldedness he asks for here is, as Bishop Moule brings out in his paraphrase, “your selflessness, the spirit which will yield in *anything* that is only of self, for Christ’s sake.” This spirit

of forbearance must not be lip service, but rather a reality in everyday life.

c. *Be Mindful of Christ's Presence*

“The Lord is at hand.” This is often taken to mean, “The coming of the Lord is at hand.” While we certainly believe in the imminent coming of our Lord, I am not sure this is the message Paul is giving here. Instead I think he is reminding those Philippians, and us, Christ is present with us now! If we were always mindful of the presence of the Lord, and of His omniscience, we would live very differently. How many of our conversations would be different if we really believed the motto we sometimes see in homes, “Christ is the Head of this house, the Unseen Guest at every meal, the Silent Listener to every conversation!”

d. *Be Anxious About Nothing*

“Be careful for nothing.” This literally means, “Stop being unduly anxious about anything.” The comment of Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost is both timely and easy to understand:

The apostle begins with a command. “Be careful for nothing.” This is not simply an exhortation, something optional that would be nice to do if we decide to do it. This is a command. Perhaps the force of this command is lost because of the translation. Read literally the verse says, “Do not under any circumstances worry about anything.” The word translated “be careful” has in it the idea of an anxious, distressing care. It is the kind of worry that ties the stomach into knots so that we can't eat. It is the kind of worry that puts a crease in our brows. It is the kind of care that makes us

irritable and hard to get along with because of the pressure that has built up inside. The apostle recognizes that there is reason for worry, but he forbids the child of God to fall into sin. The command is given, “Do not under any circumstances worry about anything.”

It was reported a few years ago that a physician had analyzed a group of “worriers” and had discovered the following statistics:

40% worried over things that never happened

30% worried over past matters they couldn't change

12% worried over *imaginary* health problems

10% worried over family or neighbors, with no basis for their fears

8% worried over things that appeared to have some basis for concern

## 2. *Prayer*

“In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” Note the words for prayer in this statement:

### a. *Prayer*

The Greek word is *proseuchē*, which means a fervent prayer. It is prayer addressed to God as an act of worship or devotion. It has been defined as “prayer on fire.” It includes bringing EVERYTHING TO GOD IN PRAYER, as the old hymn suggests.

### b. *Supplication*

This is the part of prayer involving one's bringing to God specific requests for personal needs.

c. *Requests*

This literally means your “objective asking.” Bishop Moule translates it “specific petitions.”

d. *Thanksgiving*

This is often the most neglected part of prayer, but a vitally needed part. The other parts of prayer are to be offered out of thankful hearts.

3. *Peace*

“And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” There is, of course, a peace which is quite understandable. When things are going our way, when we have health and our needs are being met abundantly, we say we are living a quiet and peaceable life. The peace spoken of in this verse, however, is quite different.

All believers have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). This comes with justification by faith and is our permanent possession. But the peace which passeth all understanding, while it is a gift from Christ (John 14:27) and the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), can only be realized in a practical way in our lives as we are *careful for nothing, prayerful for everything, thankful for anything*.

When our hearts are prepared according to Philippians 4:4-6a, we will have this peace that passeth all understanding standing like a sentinel (for this is the meaning of “keep”) over our hearts (emotions) and minds (thoughts). We can only pause to realize how far we live below our privileges, confess this to God, and look to Him for grace to know this garrison of peace which is our heritage.

## C. The Problem of Fantasy and Dreaming (4:8,9)

### 1. *The Believer's Attitude*

The thoughts of a believer's heart and mind are extremely important to God. We are told as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7). Our Lord said, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). Paul exhorted the Colossians to set their minds on things above, not on the things on the earth (Colossians 3:1).

After dealing with the problems of friction and discord and of fear and dread, the Apostle now deals with the danger of the wrong use of the mind; the danger of fantasy and daydreaming, if you please, instead of occupying the mind with wholesome thoughts. Note the list of Christian graces believers are urged to make the subject of their reflections rather than the sensual things that strive for our attention each day.

#### a. *Whatsoever Things Are True*

This implies not only the true as opposed to the false, but that which is true in character. It speaks of things that conform to reality. In an age of make-believe, it is refreshing to meditate on things that are real. It is also used of persons and carries the meaning of being unconcealed, nothing hidden, actual, true to fact.

#### b. *Whatsoever Things Are Honest*

This is not repetition. The word translated "honest" was used in secular Greek writings to mean "honorable, worthy of respect, meriting reverence." Bishop Moule lists as synonyms such words as "serious, sacred, venerable, self-respectful." Again, instead of idle fancies and dreams, the believer should

think on what is honorable.

c. *Whatsoever Things Are Just*

The word “just” means “righteous.” Moule paraphrases it, “all things that are righteous, as between man and man in common life.” Dr. Lehman Strauss reminds us, “Thought must be given to that which is right or righteous, both by divine and human standards.”

d. *Whatsoever Things Are Pure*

Our Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Again we turn to Dr. Strauss for a timely comment, “The peace of God will replace wrong thoughts with pure thoughts, impure motives with pure motives, and impure acts with pure acts.” Paul’s word for “pure” means uncontaminated or stainless. It describes that which is undefiled and therefore morally pure. The word was used of ceremonial purity describing what had been cleansed from defilement and was therefore fit to be brought into the presence of God and used in His service.

e. *Whatsoever Things Are Lovely*

Here the word indicates amiable things or things producing peace, rest and harmony. Any attention to thoughts which would produce strife, personally or with another believer, should be crowded out with lovely thoughts. This is the real inner beauty of the believer. The word has been translated “winsome” and “attractive.” The mind of the Christian, then, should be set on things calling forth love!

f. *Whatsoever Things Are of Good Report*

The word means “gracious.” Translated literally it means “fair-speaking.” Someone has paraphrased it, “Whatever things are fit for God to hear.” Instead of thinking of ugly, impure words the believer should keep his mind on things “fit for God to hear.”

g. *If There Be Any Virtue ... (or) Praise, THINK ON THESE THINGS.*

This is the admonition to fill our minds with pure, honest, true, lovely, winsome and right thoughts. The best way to get victory over evil thoughts is by thinking good, wholesome thoughts. The best way to “mind not earthly things” is to be occupied with heavenly things. And the only way to do this is to “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.” The Word and only the Word is true, honest, just, lovely, of good report and full of virtue and praise. Dr. Dwight Pentecost has well said:

Transport yourself to the pasture, consider the cow chewing her cud, and learn that lesson from nature that the psalmist learned. Your delight must be in the Word of God, and in His Word you must chew your cud day and night. If the battle is lost, it is lost because you do not meditate on these things.

2. *The Believer’s Action*

“Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do, and the God of peace shall be with you.”

After stressing the importance of our mental attitude, Paul takes up the need for action, “DO.” This moves us

from the realm of doctrine to the arena of deportment. It moves from dogma to deed, from position and precept to practice. It is not enough to “think” on these things, we must DO the things that are right. We look once more to Dr. Strauss for a pointed paragraph:

Noble thoughts are of little value unless they are translated into deeds. Living surpasses learning; practice outshines preaching; living supersedes learning. As we conform to orthodox thinking in our daily living, we have the sweet assurance that “the God of Peace shall be with you.”

Maturity in the Christian life is not measured by a believer’s knowledge, but by his walk. It is true the only way to have a satisfactory walk is through a knowledge of the Word. But Paul is speaking here of the ability to use the Word so as to determine the course of the believer’s life. Dr. Pentecost remarks, “Until what we know and have been taught is translated into action and into life, it avails nothing.”

### 3. *The Believer’s Assurance*

“The God of Peace shall be with you.” John Nelson Darby, early leader among the Plymouth Brethren, comments, “In trouble, we shall have the peace of God (4:7); in our ordinary lives, we shall have the God of peace.” Bishop Moule paraphrases, “and so the God of peace, Author and Giver of peace within and harmony around, shall be with you, your Companion and Guardian.”

When we remember Paul was experiencing the peace of God and the presence, power and purpose of the God of peace while in a Roman prison, we are aware of how much more we should be able to know the reality of this assurance in the midst of our troubled world today! Indeed, “our sufficiency is of God” (2 Corinthians 3:5).

## **D. The Problem of Finances and Donations (4:10-19)**

This is a sensitive spot in the hearts of most people, even dedicated believers. So great has been the departure from giving according to the grace principle laid down in the church epistles that believers respond only to pressure and gimmicks in most congregations today. This is true because they have been conditioned to respond only to these tactics. The longer the practice continues, the greater becomes the need for more pressure and newer gimmicks.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer told of the child in Sunday School class who, when the teacher asked, "What does the shepherd do for the sheep?" replied, "He gets their wool." Denominational organizations have become great machines, veritable bureaucracies needing more and more "oil" from the collection plates of their churches in order to keep them running. More and more dollars designated for the mission field are spent in support of larger and larger home administrative staffs.

A veteran pastor in a large denomination recently expressed sorrow in his heart that smaller churches in his group were being looked upon as little more than a source of revenue to keep the denominational organization well supplied with funds. Add to this the fact more and more television and radio "pastors" bombard their followers with pleas for money, sending them on "guilt trips" if they do not send it in. With their offers of "blest handkerchiefs" and "gifts" for those who send in \$10 or more they siphon off support which should be going to local churches or dedicated missionaries.

What makes the matter even more distressing is even fundamental, dispensational, Bible-believing groups are rapidly following the example of the large denominations and worldly organizations in this pressure and clamor for more and more funds. The average pastor and active Christian today cannot go to the mail box without being deluged with

appeals of every kind to support this organization or that one. Each letter appeals to the emotions, to a sense of responsibility, etc. Each letter tells of some new project, some new employee, some new venture that the recipient *must* feel obligated to support.

Even though these may be worthwhile ministries, the recipient of these appeals sometimes feels like giving up. If he has not been taught the responsibility of giving under grace, in contrast with the law, he is bewildered. Pastors cannot keep from feeling as though they are never consulted when decisions are made for these new projects, but they are always there to be pressured into supporting them.

Brethren, these things ought not to be so! How we need to return to the method that Paul taught us in his epistles. Let us be “Pauline” in the matter of finances as much as we are in the matter of doctrine!

Contrast the methods of the world today with Paul’s teaching as we note:

### ***1. Care***

“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your *care* of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.” The word “careful” is from a word having to do with the act of “taking thought of” and is not a contradiction of 4:6. Their taking thought of Paul had, in the words of Bishop Moule, caused them to “blossom out” with this generous gift. In other words, their giving was out of a heart of love, sympathy, sincerity, and purely GRACE, not from the pressure of legalistic tithing nor pleas for pledges. Giving is inseparable from grace in the revelation given to us through the Apostle Paul. We are taught to give CHEERFULLY, NOT OF NECESSITY and we are given the example of Christ Himself (see 2 Corinthians,

chapters 8 and 9 for details).

The sooner we learn and preach and practice this truth, the sooner we will see our message reaching out to the ends of the earth! This kind of giving is not only a gift to God's work or God's workmen but to God Himself! (Note Philippians 4:18.)

## 2. *Contentment*

“Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, in this to be content.” What a far cry from modern day appeals for money! Thank God for faithful missionaries who have served the Lord in foreign fields for many years with this same attitude! “Want Lists” seem to be the order of the day in the minds of some novice missionaries who expect to take to the field many items home churches have struggled for years to obtain. But the Apostle Paul had no “want list!” He had long ago made commitment to God that allowed him to be content with whatever state was his lot.

Apparently he had not always had this peace of mind. The grammatical construction tells us he had “come to learn” to be independent of external circumstances. What an education! The learning of this lesson can come only through a commitment to total dependence upon Christ.

There is also a great lesson here for those of us who stay at home and SEND missionaries. We live in a society glutted with gadgets we call “conveniences.” If WE can learn to be content with fewer of these THINGS we will have more to give to those faithful missionaries who have left all of these comforts to take the Word to foreign lands. Do we really know how to be CONTENT in “whatsoever state” we find ourselves?

### 3. *Commitment*

“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed (literally, “have been initiated into the secret”) both to be full (sated, as a fattened animal) and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.” Here is Paul’s secret! Here is the reason he could accept love gifts from the Philippians but could never send them a “want list.” He had no “wants;” he could do ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST. His strength, his power, his entire life was from Christ. He is assuring the Philippians Christ was day by day, moment by moment, infusing him with the strength necessary for whatever he faced.

### 4. *Communion*

“Notwithstanding, ye have well done, that ye did *commu- nicate* with me.” This introduces a paragraph on the importance of giving. We cannot “outgive” God. When we sow sparingly, we reap sparingly. When we sow of necessity, or under pressure, we lose the joy that should be associated with giving. If pastors today would return to the Bible doctrine of giving for our dispensation and would be willing to give up their unscriptural systems, we could know more of the Biblical practice of giving as communion — fellowship — sharing!

What has happened to the young believer, assured of God’s calling to the ministry, who is willing to begin in a simple, humble way; teaching a home Bible class, working with his hands to supplement the love offerings from the budding congregation? Are we teaching our young people the fledgling pastor should step out of school into some “First Church” with a high salary, lovely parsonage, fringe benefits, etc.? How many of the so-called “grace” churches today trace their origins to a home Bible class!

Where are the beginnings of future churches today? Can it be a failure to teach that the fellowship of sharing and the willingness to be content with ALL THINGS, even small things, is responsible for our lack of growth?

## **5. Confidence**

“But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Most of us can remember when we thought this was a promise God had given to preachers, especially to those who were in a “faith ministry.” A careful look at the context, however, will reveal this is a promise to believers who have given cheerfully to the needs of a “faith minister.”

The Philippians had given generously to meet Paul’s need. Now, because they had done that, he assures them they may rest confidently in the goodness of God to supply for them. “You have supplied my needs by giving cheerfully and sacrificially; now MY GOD is going to supply all of yours!” That is the thought in this passage. It becomes still another Scriptural motive for Scriptural giving.

## **Conclusion, 4:20-23.**

This precious little letter concludes with a three-fold note. We can summarize it with these familiar Biblical words:

### **A. Glory**

“Now unto God our Father be GLORY forever and ever” (4:20). This doxology bursts forth out of Paul’s gratitude for God’s provision. He realizes all the praise and glory go to HIM.

## **B. Greetings**

“All the saints salute (GREET) you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household” (4:21,22). The believers who were with Paul in his Roman prison had never met the believers in Philippi, yet the tie of the Holy Spirit bound them together. Similarly, many of the readers of these words have never met this writer face to face, but because we are believers and fellow members of the body of Christ, we greet one another and feel a closeness one to another.

## **C. Grace**

“The GRACE of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (4:23). And so with this closing, which Paul tells us is his “hallmark” (see 2 Thessalonians 3:17,18), he ends his little epistle of rejoicing. May God continue to bless our hearts with its truths.

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