

Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Philippians

Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Philippians

Zack Meaders Guess

Pastor

**Grace Chapel Primitive Baptist Church
Memphis, Tennessee**

2017

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2. Dedication

This volume is dedicated to my darling wife, Judy Carol Machiavello Guess. She is devoted to Christ first, and then to her husband and children. (We are blessed with eleven living children and, as of October, 2017, with thirty living grandchildren). On August 23, 2017 we thankfully celebrated forty-eight years of marriage. This book would have never been completed without her continual encouragement. She is truly a virtuous woman who has done her husband “good and not evil all the days of her life,” Even now “her children arise up, call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.” (Prov. 31: 12, 28).

It can truly be said of her that she is the “handmaid of the Lord.” (Lk. 1: 38). I, her husband, acknowledge that “a prudent wife is from the Lord.” (Prov. 19: 14). I also acknowledge that “whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.” (Prov. 18: 22).

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4. Original Preface

Several years ago, while pastoring Trinity Chapel Primitive Baptist Church (Since renamed Clinton Primitive Baptist Church) at Clinton, Kentucky, I decided to study and preach through Paul's Epistle to the Philippians. This was one of the most joyful projects I have ever undertaken. Study was hard work, but at the same time it was sheer delight! I began to appreciate, as never before, the marvelous Koine Greek in which God had given the New Testament to His people. Hours were spent in fruitful and delightful word studies.

As I studied and preached, I committed the entire epistle to memory. I have run this glorious letter from God through my mind thousands of times to my great spiritual benefit. I have since preached through Philippians several additional times. I have had a virtual "love affair" with this wonderful book.

As I studied, I took extensive notes and began to write a commentary, more for my use than for anyone else's. I have received such a blessing from what I learned that I want to share it with others. My dear wife has continually encouraged me to do this. She has typed the manuscript onto stencils as we have run the commentary in serial form in *The Abundant Life*, a periodical of Grace Chapel Primitive Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee. (This was back in the old days when stencils had to be typed to be used in a mimeograph machine. Corrections had to be made by using correction fluid and then typing in the corrections after the fluid had dried! This was tedious work and was for Judy a real labor of love!)

Elder Mark Green, a dear fellow-servant in the ministry of the gospel and pastor of the Paris, Arkansas, Primitive Baptist Church (Now the Six Mile Creek Primitive Baptist Church of Caulksville, Arkansas), has also been a tremendous help to me in this project. He has encouraged, exhorted, and volunteered to type the entire manuscript. I could not type in those days and the original commentary was written out by hand! They say that you cannot teach an old dog new tricks, but this old dog learned to type when he was fifty-two years old!

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I thank my God for the enabling grace to complete this project and I trust Him to use it in any way He sees fit for His glory and the benefit of His people.

Zack Meaders Guess
February, 1984

5. Preface

After many years I have decided to revise the commentary on Philippians. I want to revise the original, add to it, and properly footnote it and include a bibliography. I believe these changes will make it more readable and more useful.

As I do this I plan to preach through the book one more time. At present it is my blessed privilege to be the pastor of Grace Chapel Primitive Baptist Church. This wonderful group of saints has a great respect for the word of God. If something is in the Scriptures they will embrace it. They are studious and follow the pattern of the “noble Bereans” of whom it is written: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” (Acts 17:11).

I believe that Grace Chapel has great potential to be used of the Lord to propagate the “glorious gospel of the blessed God.” (1 Tim. 1: 11). That is because they are open-minded to the Scriptures. I have a desire for this little church to be a combination of the churches of Antioch of Syria and of Philippi. Both of these churches were very evangelistic-minded and they were used of the Lord. The Syrian Antioch church was the one from which the Apostle Paul initiated most of his evangelistic journeys. This was in spite of the fact that Syrian Antioch, the third city of importance in the Roman Empire (behind only Rome and Alexandria), had a very licentious culture, and was noted for immorality and related sinful pleasures. We today live in a similar, vulgar, even pornographic, culture. The same God that enabled the saints in the beginning of the gospel age to faithfully proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, can enable His people to do the same today, in spite of the fact that iniquity abounds and the love of many waxes cold. (See Matt. 24: 12).

The church at Philippi also had an evangelistic mind set as we shall see as we go through the book. The Philippians were evidently quite poor, but they were extremely generous. They were eager to contribute financially and in other ways to the work of evangelism from their very beginning as a worshipping congregation. They were consistent and faithful in their giving.

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The great Apostle Paul had a great affection for them. He wrote this epistle as a “thank you” love letter.

Those who love the Lord Jesus today and who are privileged to be members of true gospel assemblies, would do well to emulate these two churches in their work of propagating the gospel.

My prayer is that this little commentary will stimulate the readers to be among those spoken of in Psalms 68:11, "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it."

Zack Meaders Guess
November, 2010
Grace Chapel

Additional Note

As one can note from the dates, this project has been a long time in completion. I noted before how Elder Mark Green typed the original manuscript from my handwritten copy. Now I want to express appreciation for Elder James Taylor of Crosbyton Primitive Baptist Church of Crosbyton, Texas for readying the manuscript for publication.

Zack Meaders Guess
October 2017
Grace Chapel

6. Introduction

The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians is one of the most interesting and most delightful letters in the New Testament. It can be said, without contradiction, that the Philippian church was one of Paul's favorite churches, if not his very favorite. He had no strong rebuke to deliver to this church.¹ He mainly exhorted them to increase in the graces which they already possessed. (1: 9). He did warn against Judaistic legalism (3: 2), but this was a warning, not a rebuke. He mildly admonished two sisters who had some differences to "be of the same mind in the Lord." (4: 2).

The two most prominent words mentioned in the epistle are *gospel* (mentioned nine times) and *joy* or *rejoice* (mentioned sixteen times). This fact is remarkable. The gospel is good news of glad tidings. Joy expresses strong positive emotions. These notable words are used repeatedly by a man who is in prison!

The setting of the letter is the city of Philippi. This metropolis was located in Macedonia, a province in northern Greece. It got its name from Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. Philip conquered this territory in the 4th century B. C.

Philip went on to further conquests and his son, Alexander, carried on where the father left off and conquered vast territories. This all happened, of course, in the providence of God. Speaking of the conquests and empire building of Philip and Alexander, William Hendriksen writes: "It has been truly said that if Philip and Alexander had not gone East, Paul and the gospel which he proclaimed could not have come to the West. For, these conquerors brought about the *one* world of Hellenistic speech that made possible the spread of the gospel to many regions."²

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Contrast his letters to Galatians and Corinthians.

² William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Philippians, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, originally published, 1962), p. 5.

Macedonia was taken over by the Romans in 168 B. C. In 42 B. C. a famous battle was fought at Philippi. Antony and Octavian defeated the forces of Brutus and Cassius. Afterwards the town was greatly enlarged and achieved the status of a Roman colony. Becoming a colony meant that the city was given unique citizenship privileges. It became like a miniature city of Rome in the Middle East. The colonists of Philippi enjoyed the same rights and privileges as if they had lived in the city of Rome, itself. Allusion to this status of a colony is made in Acts 16: 12.

In 31 B. C. the very important battle of Actium was fought in the plains about Philippi. In this battle, Octavian, the future Augustus Caesar, defeated the forces of Antony and Cleopatra. After this battle, many more Roman colonists settled in Philippi.

The Founding of the Philippian Church

The founding of the church at Philippi is recorded in Acts 16: 9-40. Paul was in Asia Minor when, in a vision from God, he received a call to come into Macedonia. He and his companions (Silas, Luke, and Timothy), set sail from Troas, a port in Asia Minor, located on the Aegean Sea. They sailed to Neapolis, the port nearest to Philippi.

The first converts to the faith were Lydia, a business woman, and her household. Paul met Lydia at a women's prayer meeting. There were evidently not enough Jewish men in Philippi to form a synagogue because Paul normally went to the synagogue first to preach when he came into a new city.³

God opened Lydia's heart to the gospel, and she and her household were baptized. She immediately opened her home to Paul and his companions, and they used her home as a base of operations from which to spread the gospel in the city.

The next converts were the Philippian jailer and his family. Paul and Silas had been cast into jail. The Lord sent an earthquake, and the fearful jailer, who had no doubt been impressed with the preachers' joy in the midst of persecution, asked them what he could do to be delivered from his

³ See Acts 13: 14; 14: 1; 17: 1, 10, 17; 18: 4, 19, 26; 19: 8.

desperate situation. Paul preached the gospel to him, and he and members of his household were baptized.⁴

Paul soon left Philippi, but the little church immediately began to send him financial assistance as he preached the gospel in other places. They even sent him help in the first stop he made after he left Philippi.⁵

The generosity of the Philippians was remarkable. We can learn much about this from a reading of 2 Cor. 8: 1-5. There Paul was stirring up the Corinthians to make a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem. To do this, he set before them the example of the Macedonian churches, one of which was the church at Philippi. We learn here that the Macedonian churches were suffering affliction, which probably consisted of persecution. They were also in “deep poverty.” In spite of all these problems, they willingly gave very generously and even wanted to give more than they were able to!

Paul had been gone from Philippi for ten years or so when he was cast into prison in Rome. His imprisonment was a kind of household arrest. He was guarded continually by Roman soldiers, but he was allowed to live in

⁴ Those who believe in baptizing (and by this they usually mean sprinkling, which is not baptism) infants, often use the “household baptisms” of Lydia and the Philippian jailer as examples. They are in error, however. There is not a command or even an inference in the Bible that infants should be baptized. There are only four examples of “household baptisms” in the New Testament and in none of them are infants even implied. In three of them they are emphatically excluded. In the example of Cornelius in Acts 10 it is expressly stated that he “feared God with all his house,” (v. 2) and that “are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.” (v. 33). It is further stated that the ones who were baptized spoke with tongues and glorified God. (v. 46). None of these things could be true of infants. In the case of the Philippian jailer it is written that he “rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” (Acts 16: 34). Those who were baptized were all believers. It is recorded by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:16, “And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.” There is no indication that there were any infants in this house. Any inferences are unwarranted. It is also true that infants cannot have been included as can be seen in this further statement concerning this same house→ 1 Corinthians 16:15, “I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)…” Infants cannot addict themselves to the ministry of the saints.

⁵ Acts 17: 1; Phil. 4: 15, 16.

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his own rented house.⁶ He was allowed to receive visitors and continually preached and taught the gospel of Jesus Christ for a period of two years. During this period of imprisonment, Paul wrote the “Prison Epistles” of Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon.

When the Philippians heard of Paul’s imprisonment, they sent him a financial gift, carried by a messenger from their church, Epaphroditus. This wonderful letter before us, Philippians, is a thank-you letter from Paul to the Christians in Philippi. He sent Epaphroditus home with this letter.

It must have been a joy and a thrill to the Philippians to read these gracious words from the great apostle. It has also been a tremendous blessing to God’s people for over twenty centuries. Though this letter was written by Paul, Paul only wrote as he was directly inspired by God. If you, dear reader, are a lover of Jesus Christ, regard this as a personal love-letter to you from Him!

Written from Rome

Almost all conservative scholars believe that this letter was, indeed, written from Rome. Paul had earlier expressed a desire to visit the saints in Rome. He wrote this in Romans 1:10, "Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you." The Lord granted this request, but not in the way Paul had probably envisioned it. In the course of his travels Paul came once again to Jerusalem (Acts 21: 17). While there some Jews from Asia made some false accusations against him and he was almost killed by an unruly mob. He was rescued by Roman soldiers and taken into custody. When the Romans were made aware of a plot by the Jews to assassinate Paul, they took him by night, under heavy guard, to Caesarea. There he was imprisoned for at least two years under corrupt Roman officials such as Felix and Festus.

The Jews tried to get the Romans to transport Paul back to Jerusalem, with the secret intention of killing him while he was en route. Paul refused this attempt and appealed to be taken to Rome to have his case tried before Caesar (Acts 25: 10, 11). In God’s marvelous providence, Paul had been born a Roman citizen (Acts 22: 28). One of the privileges that Roman

⁶ Acts 28: 30, 31.

citizens had was to appeal to Caesar as a court of last resort. Paul invoked this privilege and Festus, the Roman official in charge at Caesarea, had no choice but to grant Paul's request. After a waiting period, Paul was placed on a ship under heavy Roman guard and sent to Jerusalem. This journey, which is recorded in Acts 27, was filled with drama and adventure. Eventually Paul reached Rome and was placed under household arrest.

Here, as we read Acts 28 and the Prison Epistles, we can piece together something of the nature of this imprisonment and how the Lord used it to further the cause of the gospel. Soldiers guarded Paul while he was in a rented house (Acts 28: 16, 30; Phil. 1: 13, 14). Under these circumstances he had the freedom to receive visitors (Acts 28: 30; Phil. 4: 18). He was allowed to teach and witness concerning the gospel (Acts 28: 31; Phil. 1: 12-18; Col. 4: 2-4; Eph. 6: 18-20).

As we get into a study of the epistle, we will appreciate the infinite wisdom of God Who orchestrated all the events that got Paul to Rome and Who used this imprisonment in a remarkable way for the spread of the gospel right under the nose of the wicked emperor Nero. Yes, Paul had indeed had a "prosperous journey" to Rome; furthermore he had a prosperous ministry while he was imprisoned there!

7. Philippians Chapter 1

“Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons...” (v. 1)

Paul usually followed the practice of beginning his letters with the name of the writer, the name of the ones written to, and a greeting. This form of writing was not peculiar to the Biblical epistles. Paul followed the custom of the day in the form of his letters. As we study the Bible it is very important that we note who the writer is, who is being written to, the occasion of the writing, and the subject under consideration. A failure to do this can result in a serious misunderstanding of what is being taught.

Paul had two names: “Saul,” his Hebrew name meaning, “to ask or pray,” and “Paul,” his Gentile name, which came from Latin, meaning “small or little.” It was common for Jews at this time to have both Hebrew and Gentile names. The Bible indicates that Paul’s personal appearance was certainly not impressive (2 Cor. 10:10). This may have been the reason for his Latin name. He was a man of prayer and thus lived up to his Hebrew name (Acts 13: 9).

The name “Timothy” is a combination of two Greek words, which together mean “dear to God” or “he who honors God.” Timothy had a very devout mother and grandmother who were, no doubt, responsible for naming him and for providing the religious training that he received very early in life. These good women had taught him the Old Testament Scriptures from the time he was a small child (2 Tim. 3: 15). Timothy’s mother was married to a Greek unbeliever who had evidently refused to allow him to be circumcised when he was a baby. (Acts 16:3). This should be an encouragement to those who are married to unbelievers but who nevertheless want to rear their children to serve the Lord. Probably Timothy’s mother had some great difficulties, but she did the best she could under the circumstances. God honored her efforts and her son became a great evangelist. I would surmise that Eunice did not usurp authority over her unbelieving husband and did not try to be the “head of the house.” Rather, she undoubtedly submitted to her husband, and constantly prayed for wisdom while she did the best that she could in her difficult circumstances.

19 When Timothy grew to manhood, he exhibited the results of his childhood training to such a marked degree that Paul was attracted to him and desired him to become a co-worker in the spread of the gospel. (Acts 16: 1-3). This wonderful example should be a great encouragement to all who desire to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). This is a marvelous illustration of the promise that if we “train up a child in the way he should go...when he is old, he will not depart from it.” (Prov. 22:6). The thing believers should most desire in their children and grandchildren is that they be used in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is much more important than that they acquire wealth or worldly honor. If those who believe in the Lord Jesus want this for their children, they must start while the children are very small and follow the diligent example of Lois and Eunice. The case of Timothy provides a remarkable example of the proper role of grandparents. Instead of opposing her daughter, Eunice, grandmother Lois cooperated with her and reinforced her efforts to rear Timothy in a godly way.

If Eunice could be so blessed of God to train Timothy in the Scriptures, what an even greater responsibility rests on a husband and wife when both are believers!

It is also true that for those who wish to be used of the Lord, it is vitally important that their conduct should always be exemplary. People are watching us, and much more importantly, God is watching us! Paul first met Timothy at Derbe and Lystra. He soon found out that Timothy’s mother was a believer, but his father is described only as a Greek, with the strong implication that he was not a believer. However, it was said of Timothy that he was “was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.” (Acts 16: 2). Paul immediately recruited Timothy to go with him on his next evangelistic journey. If Timothy’s well-deserved reputation for piety had not been brought to Paul’s attention, he almost certainly would not have taken Timothy with him.

Paul was, of course, the sole writer of the epistle. Timothy was his companion who served with him in the gospel as a “son with the father.” (2: 22). Probably the reasons Paul included Timothy in this greeting were because Timothy had been with him when he first preached at Philippi, and because Paul was about to send Timothy to the Philippians.

Paul refers to Timothy and himself as “servants of Jesus Christ.” The word translated “servant” is doulos. It means “a slave, servant, bondsman.”

20 metaphorically, the word is used of “one who gives himself up wholly to another’s will.”⁷ (See 1 Cor. 7: 22). Christians are bondservants of Jesus Christ by right of purchase. They have been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ and do not belong to themselves (1 Cor. 6: 19, 20; 7: 23). As servants of Christ they are to live their lives as He would have them to in every respect (Eph. 6: 6).

The doulos had no right of personal choice, but rather was required to do what another would have him to do, and to refrain from doing what his master would have him not do. The word, doulos, describes a “relation of absolute dependence in which the total commitment of the doulos on the one side corresponds to the total claim of the kurios [lord] on the other.”⁸

Men are servants before they are brought into personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. They are servants to sin (Rom. 6: 17), to uncleanness and iniquity (Rom. 6: 19), and to lusts (Titus 3:3). They are so controlled by these things that they can do nothing that is not within their sphere of influence. Theologians call this truth the doctrine of **Total Depravity or Total Inability**. Man has no power to rescue himself from this awful condition. If he is left in this state and dies in his sins, he will go into eternal perdition.

After man has been rescued from the bondage of sin, by the **New Birth**, according to the sovereign purpose of God, he becomes bound to the Lord Jesus Christ. What a sweet bondage this is! Paradoxically, true liberty is only found in being completely bound to the Lord.

The bondservant not only stands ready to do his master’s bidding, but he also lives in complete dependence upon his master. When the master bought him, He took upon Himself the obligation of caring for the slave in every way.

Paul referred, no doubt, to himself and Timothy as “servants of Jesus Christ” not only “as all saints in common are; being bought with the price of Christ’s blood...but as ministers of the word and preachers of the

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J. H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), p. 158.

⁸ Gerhard Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 9 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans’s Publishing Co., 1964), 2: 270.

21 gospel..."⁹ Even in the Old Testament the word "servant" in many places includes the idea of a special calling and function. For example, the expression "my servants the prophets" denotes this special calling.¹⁰

A quotation from Kenneth Wuest will very appropriately show the force of the word "servant" here: "Paul's will was at one time swallowed up in the will of Satan. Now his will is swallowed in the sweet will of God...Paul served Satan to the detriment of his own interests. Now he serves the Lord with a reckless abandon, not regarding his own interests."¹¹

The name "Jesus" is a transliteration of the Hebrew "Joshua" and means "Jehovah is salvation." The name was not given accidentally. It was given at the direction of an angel of God. The name described His mission in the world: "for He shall save His people from their sins."¹² The deity or Godhood of our Lord is contained in this word. That this was intended by the sacred writer can be easily seen by reading Matt. 1: 20, 21. Notice that Matthew does not say, "He will **try to save** His people from their sins." He does not say, "He will make salvation possible." Matthew does say, "He shall save His people from their sins." He did just that! He actually saved all His elect children from their sins. All this and much more is contained in the blessed name, "Jesus." Jesus is not a failure. He is not a would-be Savior. He is the Successful Savior! He came to save His people (the elect, the sheep, the children, the sanctified) and He did it. Jonah understood long ago that "Salvation is of the Lord."¹³

The name "Christ" is the English form of the Greek Christos which is the translation of the Hebrew word meaning "Messiah" or the "Anointed One." The Messiah was the coming King whom the Jews expected to be the savior of their nation and the author of their greatest happiness and well being. The Lord Jesus confessed to being the Christ before the high priest.¹⁴ Peter plainly proclaimed Jesus as the Christ on the great Pentecost.¹⁵

⁹ John Gill, An Exposition of the New Testament, 2 vols. (London: William Hill Collingridge, 1853), 2: 461.

¹⁰ Jer. 29:19.

¹¹ Kenneth S. Wuest, Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), 2:26,27.

¹² Matt. 1: 21.

¹³ Jonah 2: 9.

¹⁴ Matt. 26: 63, 64.

¹⁵ Acts 2: 36.

22 The blessed Christ came as a much different kind of King than most of the Jews were looking for. He came not as a mighty military leader who would throw off the yoke of Roman bondage, but as the meek and lowly Servant of His Father. He lived a life of complete obedience to the Father, was crucified, was raised from the dead, and now, as the exalted Christ, sits on a throne at the right hand of the majesty on high.¹⁶ He sits there as the triumphant Savior of all His chosen people, Jew and Gentile.

In the name “Christ” we have the Messianic office and royal dignity of our Lord.

Paul is writing to the “saints.” This is a plural word. In the singular it means “holy,” so Paul is literally writing to the “holy ones.” This expression is used of all believers—not just those of exceptional holiness. The Roman Catholic Church and others have perverted the Scriptural idea of “saints..”

God’s children are not “saints” because of some intrinsic virtue in their lives. They are so because the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ has been imputed to them. This reminds me of the experience of an Old Baptist preacher, Elder Charles Talley, who has gone on to be with the Lord. Brother Talley was once on a hospital elevator with a Roman Catholic priest. He asked the priest if he had ever heard of Saint Charles. The priest replied that he had not. Brother Talley then extended his hand and said, “Shake hands with him!” All God’s blood-bought children are saints.

2 Thessalonians 1: 10 identifies the saints with “them that believed.” All believers in the Lord Jesus are saints. The word “saint” has the meaning of “set apart.” The Greeks set apart buildings such as temples and consecrated them for religious purposes. Thus the word, “saints,” as applied to people, refers to those who have been set apart from sin to holiness. The saints have been set apart from common use to God for the purpose of fellowshipping with and serving Him.

The essential work of sanctification is done by the Holy Spirit when the recipient of God’s grace is born from above.¹⁷ After he has been thus born again, the believer is constantly influenced by the in-dwelling Holy Spirit to separate himself from evil people, things, and ways. This work is a life-

¹⁶ Acts 2: 30-36; Heb. 1: 3.

¹⁷ 1 Pet. 1: 2.

23g process and is God's will for His people.¹⁸ When we can understand that the words, "saint," "sanctify," and "holy" all come from the same Greek root, we can see the great importance of living a **separated life**. "A saint, then, is a person to whom the Lord has shown great favor and upon whom, accordingly, there rests a great responsibility."¹⁹

The expression "in Christ Jesus" is a very important one. The saints are holy only in consequence of being "in Christ." The saints were chosen **in Christ** before the foundation of the world.²⁰ Union with Christ is the foundation for all spiritual blessings. The saints have been blessed with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places **in Christ**."²¹

Because of the eternal covenantal decree of election, God the Father has always viewed His elect people as being in Christ Jesus. As such Christ was their Head and Representative in His life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Father. Even now the saints "sit together" in the heavenlies **in Christ Jesus**.²² We draw all our spiritual blessings, indeed, our very minute-by-minute life from our living union with the exalted Jesus Christ.

The word "bishop" is the translation of a Greek word that was used in secular life. It referred to an "overseer." This might be an official in charge of repairing a temple or an officer in the army. The word in the verb form means "to look upon." The bishop is to "look after, inspect, superintend, oversee." He is to shepherd the flock of God. He is to minister sound doctrine, promote Biblical discipline, and preserve the flock from error and heresies. Paul uses "bishop" for the same ones that he refers to as elders. "Elder" is the title of the office so far as **status** and **respect** in the church is concerned. "Bishop" is the title that indicates the **responsibility** and **activity** of the office. The titles "bishop" and "elder" are brought together as designating the same person in Acts 20: 17, 28.

The word "deacon" is the English spelling of a Greek word that means "servant." Here it refers to a distinct office in the New Testament Church. The origin of this office is probably recorded in Acts 6: 1-6. The function

¹⁸ 1 Thess. 4: 3.

¹⁹ William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Philippians, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, originally published, 1962), p. 46.

²⁰ Eph. 1: 4.

²¹ Eph. 1: 3.

²² Eph. 2: 6.

²⁴the deacons is described by the phrase “to serve tables.” This would necessarily include the minister’s table and the table of the poor. The appointment of the deacons left the apostles free to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

There was “no other order of offices or officers, in a Christian church of divine institution, but pastors and deacons; whatever else is introduced is without warrant, and comes from the man of sin.”²³ Further scriptural information on these two offices is found in 1 Timothy 3.

It is very interesting to note that in every church of which there is any information given in the New Testament there was a plurality of elders. (See Acts 13:1; 14: 23; 15: 2; 20: 17; 21: 18; Tit. 1:5.). “Of course one of these preachers would be selected as pastor of the congregation, but all the preachers would help in the work, each according to his gifts, in teaching, preaching, and overseeing the work of the church.”²⁴ It seems that James assumed this position of “pastor” in the church at Jerusalem. (Acts 15: 13-22; 21: 18).

“Grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

(v. 2)

The word “grace” is such a rich and basic word it is difficult to give an adequate meaning in a short exposition. Properly, the word means, “that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness.”²⁵ The word in its use among the pagan Greeks referred to “a favor done by one Greek to another out of the pure generosity of his heart, and with no hope of reward.”²⁶ The favor was done to a friend, not an enemy. In the case of God, however, He bestowed grace upon His bitter enemies. “Grace” contains the idea of “kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved.”²⁷ Grace is a free gift on the part of God. In the Scriptures it is contrasted with **debt** (Rom. 4: 4), with **works** Rom. (11: 6), and with **law** (John 1: 17). To sum up the predominant New Testament usage of “grace,”

²³ Gill, Exposition, 2: 461.

²⁴ B. H. Carroll, An Interpretation of the English Bible, Galatians, Romans, Philippians, Philemon, (Reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1973), pp. 223, 224.

²⁵ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 665.

²⁶ Wuest, Word Studies, 2: 29.

²⁷ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 665.

25s “that kindness by which God bestows favors even upon the ill-deserving, and grants to sinners the pardon of their offenses.”²⁸

The word “peace” in classical Greek meant, “to bind together.” Thus the word denotes being “reconciled, harmonious, bound together, whole.” Peace between God and man was shattered by sin. God brought peace to His children, by Jesus Christ, because of His grace. God’s children are thus “bound together” with God and there is restored harmony.

Paul was, no doubt, praying that the Philippian believers would experience more of this peace as a present reality. Thayer has a beautiful definition of this laying hold of the peace of God. He says it is “the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is.”²⁹ This is precisely the state of mind that Paul wanted the Philippians to be in.

“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 5: 1). We experience the fulness of this peace to the extent that we exercise faith in the truths contained in the word of God. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing...” (Rom. 15: 13).

“Grace” expresses God’s love to His people; “peace” expresses the condition that results from this love.

The expression, “God our Father,” denotes the beautiful filial relationship between God and His children. God is our Father only because He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1: 2). The saints are blessed because the Father sees them only in Christ.

The grace and peace are from God the Father, Who is the fountain of all blessings.³⁰ The grace and peace are also from the Lord Jesus Christ, Who, as Mediator of the Covenant of Grace, is the channel of all spiritual blessings to the saints.³¹ The blessings are from God the Father, but in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The title “Lord” is from the Greek word Kurios and signifies one who has power and authority. It signifies **ownership** and **absolute authority**.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 666.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 182.

³⁰ James 1: 17.

³¹ 1 Tim. 2: 5; Heb. 12: 24.

26us Christ is the absolute Lord of His people. After Christ's resurrection, Thomas acknowledged Jesus as "my Lord and my God."³² As Lord, He has absolute authority to direct the lives of the saints in every detail.

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy... (vs. 3, 4)

Verse three is rendered in the English-Greek Interlinear: "I thank my God on the whole remembrance of you."³³ The total impression made upon Paul by his experiences with the Philippians was one which called forth thankfulness. There were no regrets in any of Paul's relationships with them. This fact is remarkable when we consider that Paul had to deliver stinging rebukes to the churches of Galatia, to the Corinthian church, and to others. Every New Testament church today should strive to be like the one at Philippi. As this epistle unfolds it will become plain what were the characteristics of the Philippian church that evoked this great thankfulness on the part of the Apostle.

Furthermore, Paul constantly used the expression "**my** God," showing his supreme confidence that God was his.³⁴ David expressed this same confidence that God was his in Psalm 18: 1, 2.

This **assurance** that God was his and that he was God's explains Paul's great spiritual strength and courage. It is impossible for one to be strong in the Lord unless he has this same confidence that he belongs to God and God belongs to him. This makes it very important for the child of God to seek the assurance of his gracious relationship with God. Satan knows how powerful the spiritual strength is that results when the saint is assured of his relationship with his God. Therefore, Satan does everything he can to disrupt the fellowship that exists between God and His people. The saint must seek constant fellowship with His heavenly Father by "walking in the light as He is in the light."³⁵ A saint that **knows** that God is his God cannot be defeated! He is not defeated even in death. This is why Peter exhorted his readers to "make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall..." (2 Peter 1:10). The verb here is in the middle voice

³² John 20: 28.

³³ George Ricker Berry, The Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament : With the Authorized Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. 512.

³⁴ See e.g. Rom. 1: 8; Acts 27: 23; 1 Cor. 1: 4; Philem. 4.

³⁵ 1 John 1: 7.

27 the meaning is to “make your calling and election sure to yourself.” It was already sure to God. This verse is not about *obtaining* salvation; it is about the *assurance* of salvation.

Alford renders verse four, “Always in every prayer of mine making my prayer for you all with joy.”³⁶ The sense seems to be that every time he prayed for them he joyfully made intercession for them. It was easy to pray for these Philippians! The word “request” is from deesis, which is “supplication.” It denotes an entreaty for the satisfaction of a specific need. The word usually refers to “prayer imploring God’s aid in some particular matter.”³⁷ When Christians intercede for each other, they should be as specific as possible in their prayers. However, it is not possible for someone to be specific about the needs of others unless he knows them and their needs. Church members should be so closely knit together that “whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”³⁸ Christians must make the effort and take the time to be acquainted with each other and with each other’s needs. If they do not do this they cannot properly pray for each other. They cannot, for example, pray properly for their pastor if they do not know his needs. Paul besought the Thessalonians to “know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord...”³⁹

Paul prayed with “joy.” Joy gives animation and vigor to prayers! Christians pray with joy when they realize that they pray to a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God. “Joy” means “gladness, delight, happiness, great pleasure.” To be full of joy is to “rejoice.” Joy is the characteristic feature of this epistle. “Joy” and its verb form “rejoice” are mentioned sixteen times in this epistle. This is noteworthy when we remember that Paul was in prison when he wrote this epistle. Paul was strong in the Lord even when he was in adverse circumstances. Surely “the joy of the Lord is your strength.”⁴⁰ In God’s presence is “fulness of joy.”⁴¹

These verses reveal Paul as preeminently a man of prayer. He was constant at the throne of grace. He besought God continually on behalf of

³⁶ Henry Alford, The Greek Testament, 4 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), 3: 153.

³⁷ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 126.

³⁸ 1 Cor. 12: 26.

³⁹ 1 Thess. 5: 12.

⁴⁰ Neh. 8: 10.

⁴¹ Ps. 16:11.

28the churches. What a revival God might bring to His churches if all saints prayed as Paul did!

“For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now...” (v. 5).

The word “fellowship” is koinonia. It means “communion, fellowship, sharing in common, a joint-participation in a common interest and activity.” Paul was supplicating for the Philippian saints because of their joint-participation in the preaching of the gospel. They supported Paul with their **prayers** and **finances** as he spread the gospel in Philippi and in other places. They had done this from “the first day” when Lydia had opened up her home as a headquarters for Paul and his companions (Acts 16: 15), until the moment when Paul was writing this letter. The church at Philippi contributed to Paul when he was in Thessalonica (Phil. 4: 15. 16), in Corinth (2 Cor. 11: 7-9- Philippi was in Macedonia), and now, while he was in prison in Rome.

The zeal of the Philippian saints to help spread the gospel is evident from the fact that they sent financial help to Paul at least two times while he was in Thessalonica (4:16). Paul had gone to Thessalonica immediately after he left Philippi! (Acts 17:1-9). At this time the Philippian church had just been founded. They were not wealthy; on the contrary, they were afflicted and poverty-stricken (2 Cor. 8:1-3). Considering all this, it is no wonder that Paul remembered these zealous and self-sacrificing Christians with joy!

On this same evangelistic journey, Paul eventually reached Corinth.⁴² While there he did not find it necessary to burden the Corinthian saints with his financial needs because they had been supplied by “the brethren which came from Macedonia,”⁴³ which certainly included the Philippians.

Even though most of these Philippians were not called to preach the gospel with the special calling that Paul had, they were, nevertheless, partners with him in this work. Would God that we had more churches like this one today! Fausset beautifully called this fellowship “holy liberality.”⁴⁴

⁴² Acts 18: 1.

⁴³ 2 Cor. 11: 9

⁴⁴ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments, 6 vols. (American ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman’s Publishing Co., 1967), 6:424.

These saints who helped the preacher had an “investment in all his work of which they could not be robbed. They preached through Paul, and shared his glory and reward. What a lesson here to those who are not preachers.”⁴⁵ Jesus Himself said, “He who receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward...”⁴⁶ It wasn’t the money that Paul was interested in as such. He was interested in what the gifts represented. It was “only a symbol of a far deeper concern for the propagation of the gospel.”⁴⁷ Since the Philippians were exceedingly grateful for their salvation, they wanted to give their all for the Lord!

A truly successful church is a *team*. While it is true that only God-called preachers actually publicly proclaim the Word, every member of the church is valuable and necessary for the assembly to properly function. There are financial needs and prayer needs, as well as a need for people to carry messages and to perform other necessary functions. Housing and food are real needs. In the contemporary world people are needed to maintain web sites and operate recording equipment, in addition to other similar tasks.

One time Elder Bobby Poe, a dear minister friend, drew the analogy between a church and an aircraft carrier. He pointed out that while even a large carrier might not have over one hundred pilots, these large ships have several thousand men that are needed to accomplish the ship’s mission. There are those who operate the ship. There are mechanics, cooks, doctors, and those who fuel and arm the airplanes. The pilots could not operate without the assistance of all these who perform specialized tasks. Neither can a minister of the gospel properly function in his calling without the help and cooperation of many of the saints, both men and women. For example, Lydia was a joint-participant in the work of the gospel when she opened her home for Paul and his fellow preachers to use as a base of operations.

One way each church member can cooperate in the spread of the gospel is by making every effort to live in peace and unity with the other members of the church. When there is strife in a church, the preacher can be demoralized and distracted. The goal to work together in peace and unity is beautifully expressed in Romans 15:6; “That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Each church

⁴⁵ B. H. Carroll, p. 224.

⁴⁶ Matt. 10:41.

⁴⁷ Everett F. Harrison, ed., The New Testament and Wycliffe Bible Commentary (New York: The Iverson Associates, 1971), p. 758.

30ember should be "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (v.6).

Paul here expressed his settled confidence that these Philippian believers were indeed the "born-again" children of God. He was just as certain that the work of regeneration which God had begun in them by the sovereign operation of the Holy Spirit would be continued until their bodies were glorified at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The words "being confident" are the translation of a perfect participle and have the idea of settled persuasion. Paul was as certain of the fact that the Philippian saints possessed eternal life as he was of anything. It is wonderful when we can be confident of our salvation and of the salvation of others. While we must never judge the hearts of others, it is nevertheless true that "by their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 7:20). When we can see someone consistently bearing the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5: 22, 23) in his life, we can be assured that he possesses eternal life.

The "good work" was the giving and maintaining of eternal life. This work was begun in the actual life of the individual with regeneration (the new birth), and will be consummated in glorification when the saved sinner will stand "holy and without blame" (Eph. 1:4) before God. When God begins a work He always properly finishes it. He is both the "author and finisher of our faith."⁴⁸

The work of regeneration in saved persons is based on the works of election, which took place before the world began,⁴⁹ and redemption,⁵⁰ which was secured on the cross by the Lord Jesus Christ. Only those whom the Father elected, who are the only ones for whom Christ died, are the recipients of the new birth or the "good work" which is referred to here.

God had to begin the good work, and He has to complete it. Man could not begin the work because he was dead in trespasses and sins.⁵¹ He had no spiritual life or ability. He could neither save himself nor cooperate in his

⁴⁸ Heb. 12:2.

⁴⁹ Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9.

⁵⁰ Eph. 1:7.

⁵¹ Eph. 2:5.

31salvation. Regeneration is done by a direct, immediate act of the Holy Spirit. The gospel plays no part in regeneration. However, after an individual has been born again, the gospel is indispensable in the work of “conversion.” This is when the work of God done in the soul is manifested and comes to light.⁵² The work of regeneration is sometimes referred to as **Immediate, Holy Spirit Regeneration.**

Even saved or born-again men and women still remain sinners. They can no more keep themselves saved than can they save themselves to begin with. The saints are “kept (guarded) by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”⁵³ “If the same God who begins the good work did not undertake the carrying on and finishing of it, it would be forever unfinished. He must perform it who began it.”⁵⁴

The word “perform” is epiteleo. It means “to bring to an end, accomplish, perfect, execute, complete.”⁵⁵ The fuller meaning is ‘to accomplish perfectly.’⁵⁶ The saved people still have many imperfections as they live their earthly lives, but God has not finished with them and will perfect them all the way unto glory!

This work will continue “until the day of Jesus Christ.” This refers to the Second Coming of Christ, when He shall raise the bodies of His saints who have died in the Lord and “who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”⁵⁷ Other Scriptures that speak of “the day of Jesus Christ,” “the day of the Lord,” “that day,” or “the day of Christ,” are 1 Thess. 5:2,4; 2 Thess. 1:10; 2:12; 1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:14.

“Paul never sets the time for the Lord’s return, but he is cheered by that blessed hope.”⁵⁸ So, also, the saints today should be constantly cheered by the certain prospect of His glorious Coming!

⁵² 2 Tim. 1: 10.

⁵³ 1 Pet. 1:5.

⁵⁴ Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible. 6 vols. (Reprint ed., Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.), 6:725.

⁵⁵ Thayer, p. 244.

⁵⁶ W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words 4vols. (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1940), 1:22.

⁵⁷ Phil. 3:21.

⁵⁸ A. T. Robertson,, Word Pictures in the New Testament. 6 vols. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), 4:436..

32 The wonderful doctrine of the **Final Preservation of the Saints** is plainly taught in this verse. Other terms used to describe this glorious principle are, **The Eternal Security of the Believer** and **Once Saved, Always Saved**. Additional Scriptures which substantiate this precious truth are John 6:37-40. 10:27-30; Jude 1, 24.

This Scripture-based teaching refutes the erroneous teaching that a sinner who has once been saved can fall from grace and go into eternal perdition.

“Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.” (v. 7)

The reason for Paul’s confidence in the Philippians’ salvation was their faithfulness to him as a servant of Christ as he ran into difficulties in the spread of the gospel. The word “meet” is dikaios, which means “justly, righteously, in accordance with what is right.” Paul thought that in view of their faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ it was perfectly right for him to be confident of their salvation.

He added, “I have you in my heart.” The great apostle had a deep and abiding affection for these faithful saints. Their being willing to sacrifice and suffer for the sake of the gospel caused Paul’s heart to constantly swell with love for them. “The pastor who, like Paul, holds his people in his heart will find them holding him in their hearts.”⁵⁹

The way the Philippians demonstrated their faithfulness and gave evidence of their salvation, was by supporting Paul in the “defense and confirmation” of the gospel. These two words were legal terms in current use when this epistle was written. The word translated “defense” is apologia, which means “a verbal defense.” It refers to a lawyer verbally defending his client before a court. It is the same word translated “answer” in 2 Tim. 4:16 where Paul wrote, “At my first answer no man stood with me...” Paul was thus making a verbal defense of the gospel. He was constantly either privately or publicly defending the truth of the gospel.

Each Christian is required to always be prepared to verbally defend the faith. Of course, it is also true that Christians must as well defend the faith

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶³living lives that are consistent with their verbal defense. This same word is used in 1 Pet. 3:15, where Christians are instructed to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

The result of a successful defense was that the gospel would be confirmed. This means that it would be “authenticated, established, its claims shown to be true.” In Paul’s bonds, and in his defense and confirmation of the gospel, the Philippians were “fellowpartakers” or co-sharers with Paul. They were this in the sense of the “fellowship” of verse five. They supported Paul with their prayers, messengers, and finances. In doing this, they were just as much a part of the work as Paul was.

Paul was defending the “gospel.” The word for gospel is euangelion. We get the English word “evangel” from it. This means “good tidings, glad tidings, good news.” In the New Testament the word can be defined as, “the glad tidings of salvation through Christ; the proclamation of the grace of God manifested and pledged in Christ.”⁶⁰ “If we were to sum up the content of the gospel in a single word, it would be Jesus the Christ.”⁶¹

Among the Greeks the word was a technical term for “news of victory.”⁶² It will be well to give an instance of the secular use of this word so that we will be better able to appreciate the way that it came to be used spiritually:

The messenger appears, raises his right hand in greeting and calls out with a loud voice: “Rejoice...we have conquered.” By his appearance it is known that he brings good news. His face shines, his spear is decked with laurel, his head is crowned, he swings a branch of palms, joy fills the city, thanksgivings are offered, the temples are garlanded, an assembly is held, crowns are put on for the sacrifices, and the one to whom the message is owed is honoured with a wreath.⁶³

It is easy to understand why the Greeks could become so excited about the news of victory in battle. If they lost they would be led away captive. Many if not all the men would be put to the sword. The women and children would become slaves. The women would become forced concubines of

⁶⁰ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 257.

⁶¹ Kittel, 2: 731.

⁶² Ibid., p. 722.

⁶³ Ibid.

34ir captors. Some of the captives might be tortured. Families would be permanently separated. Their entire way of life would be devastated. All of this would be avoided by victory. No wonder the Greeks rejoiced at the news of victory.

If a group of pagan Greeks could get this excited about news of victory in a military battle, how much more should Christians become excited about news of victory by Christ Jesus their Lord over sin, Satan, the world, the demons, hell with its everlasting torments, and all other enemies!

The importance of this news of victory in battle to the ancient Greeks can be seen in the following quotation:

Because of the importance of the message, the messenger exerts himself to be first. If another arrives before him, his reward is less. A slow messenger can be punished for his dilatoriness, for he deprives the recipients of their good fortune.⁶⁴

A messenger of the good news of Jesus Christ should exert himself even more strenuously to deliver the message of victory than did these Greek runners. The Greeks won a decisive victory over the Persians in 490. B. C. on the plain of Marathon. The Greeks sent a runner to Athens with news of the victory. The messenger ran nonstop the distance of 22 miles, gasped out his message, "We have been victorious!" and fell dead.

The gospel is a proclamation. It is never an offer. It proclaims **accomplished facts**. It declares that Christ "shall save His people from their sins."⁶⁵

Paul said these Philippians were "partakers" of his grace. There are two possible meanings for this expression. It can mean the Philippians partook with him in the grace of suffering for the gospel. It certainly is a gift of grace to be granted the privilege of suffering for the Lord. The expression can also be legitimately translated "partakers with me of grace."⁶⁶ This would mean that the faithfulness of the Philippian saints proved that they were the recipients of the grace of God as well as was Paul. This grace resulted in their (he and them) being willing to suffer and to sacrifice for the sake of the gospel. This latter interpretation is probably the

⁶⁴ Kittel, 2:723.

⁶⁵ Matt. 1:21

⁶⁶ Gill, Exposition, 2:463.

35 intended. “There is no need to limit it to the grace of apostleship or to that granted to him in his trials and sufferings.”⁶⁷

“For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” (v. 8)

The word for “record” is martus. It means, “witness, one who bears testimony.” The word was often used in the legal sense of one who testifies before a court.⁶⁸ Paul was calling God as his witness as to the truth of the statement he was about to make. This he did in the form of a most solemn oath. Paul used such statements on rare occasions when he wished to emphasize the importance of what he was saying. This was a very important statement.

“How greatly I long after you all.” The words “long after” are from an intensified form of the verb that means, “to desire earnestly, to have a strong affection for.” As a spiritual father to these Philippians, he had a great desire toward them. This love between Paul and the church at Philippi is beautiful to behold and should characterize the relationship between each church and pastor. Every genuine pastor has experienced this longing. He used the word “all” to emphasize the fact that he longed after every individual in the church with this intense longing.

He longed “after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” The word “bowels” referred to the intestines, but here it is used in a figurative sense, much in the way that we would use the word “heart.”⁶⁹ Paul was referring to the very seat of his emotions. He thus described “his longing, not as his individual emotion, but as Christ’s longing, as if the very heart of Christ dwelt in him.”⁷⁰ Paul was so close to the Lord that he identified his emotions with those of Jesus Christ. “The great apostle lived so close to the Lord Jesus, and he had so shared the sufferings of his Lord for righteousness’

⁶⁷ Robertson W. Nicoll, ed., The Expositor’s Greek Testament. 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman’s Publishing Co., 1967), 3:420..

⁶⁸ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p 495.

⁶⁹ H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon, 7th ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 740.

⁷⁰ Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman’s Publishing Co., 1965 Reprint), 3:417.

36e, that his heart was very tender, and beat as one with the heart of Jesus.”⁷¹ This amazing oneness with Christ can be seen in Galatians 2:20.

In his great compassion for these saints, Paul was following the example of the Lord Jesus who demonstrated great compassion in His life while on earth in His humanity. A verb that is akin to the word “bowels” in this verse describes the compassion of Christ. This verb means, “to be moved as to one’s inwards, to be moved with compassion, to yearn with compassion.”⁷² This verb is used of Christ in Matt. 9: 36; 14:14; 15: 32; 20: 34; Mark 1: 41; 6: 34; 8: 2; Luke 7: 13.

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.” (v. 9)

Paul’s specific prayer for the Philippians was that their love might be increased. This presupposed that they already exercised love and presumed that their love needed to grow. This is amazing when it is considered that these Christians already had a tremendous degree of love which they had proved by their works. “Spiritual love can’t be exceeded in; there’s no going to an extreme in the exercise of it.”⁷³

God is the source of love.⁷⁴ He produces love in the heart of the child of God by the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵ Agape, the Greek word translated “love,” always eventuates in action. See, e. g. John 3: 16; 1 John 4: 9, 10. In fact, this kind of love had already been demonstrated by the Philippians as they fellowshipped Paul in the gospel.

This love is not drawn out by any excellency or beauty in its objects. See e.g. Rom. 5: 8. “Christian love, whether exercised toward the brethren, or toward men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered.”⁷⁶ “It does not in itself exclude affection, but it is always the moral affection of conscious, deliberate [emphasis added] will which is contained in it, not the natural impulse of

⁷¹ Wuest, Word Studies, 2:34.

⁷² Vine, Dictionary, 1: 219.

⁷³ Gill, Exposition, 2: 464.

⁷⁴ 1 John 4: 7.

⁷⁵ Rom. 5: 5.

⁷⁶ Vine, Dictionary, 3: 21.

37 immediate feeling.”⁷⁷ This love is described and analyzed in 1 Corinthians 13.

The word translated “abound” is perisseuo, which means, “to exceed a certain number or measure, to be over.” To this Paul adds the powerful phrase “more and more.” However, he didn’t want their love to just abound in an indiscriminate way; he wanted it to abound “in knowledge and in all judgment.” This knowledge and judgment would act as safeguards on the way the Philippian saints exercised their love. These safeguards or limitations would act much like the banks of a great river holding it in bounds.⁷⁸

“Knowledge” is epignosis. This word is intensive and has the idea of “clear and exact knowledge.” It also has the idea of knowledge gained by experience. “It expresses a more thorough participation in the object of knowledge on the part of the knowing subject...a knowledge which very powerfully influences the form of religious life.”⁷⁹ This knowledge was gained as the Philippians learned the word of God and put it into practice in their daily lives.

“Judgment” is aisthesis. It means “discernment, delicate spiritual perception.” “Discernment selects, classifies, and applies what is furnished by knowledge.”⁸⁰ When Christians use what they learn from God’s word as they put it into practice in their daily lives, they develop the ability to discern. Their spiritual “senses” (Heb. 5: 14) are developed by means of habitual use.

“That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.” (v. 10)

The reason that the saints were to abound in knowledge and judgment was that they might be in a position to approve things that were excellent. “Approve” is from dokimazo. This word means, “to test something for the purpose of approving or rejecting it. To see whether a thing be genuine or not.”⁸¹ The word was used widely to designate the testing of precious

⁷⁷ Herman Cremer, Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek, 4th ed. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1895), p. 11.

⁷⁸ Robertson, Word Pictures, 4: 437.

⁷⁹ Cremer, Lexicon, pp. 159, 160.

⁸⁰ Vincent, Word Studies, 3: 418.

⁸¹ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 154.

38tals, coins, etc. “It was used of the standing of candidates for the degree of doctor of medicine, who had passed their examinations. They were certified physicians.”⁸²

Christians are to test all things in their lives and then to put a hearty stamp of approval on those things that pass the test. There are many activities to which a Christian can devote his life, many of them good in themselves. However, the Christian is to embrace only those activities that are “excellent.” It has been well said that “Good things are the enemies of the best.” Many a Christian has wasted his life because he has devoted himself to good causes and not to the very best. Many organizations, for example, are good, but the most excellent is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a man walks close to the Lord, he will be able to discern what are the excellent things. “The result of intelligent love is a right sense of values.”⁸³

The word translated “excellent” is translated “of more value” in Matthew 10:31 and “much better” in Matthew 6:26. In pagan Greek the word was used in the sense of “superior” and “most vital.”⁸⁴

Putting all this together Paul is saying that Christians should approve those things that are “excellent, of more value, much better, superior, most vital.” When it is considered that Satan is continually trying to divert the attention of God’s children from the service of God, it can be readily understood that only spiritual discernment can prevent them from wasting much of their lives on Satan’s counterfeits or “second bests.”

Spiritual discernment will enable us to separate the “important from the unimportant...the things that really matter, in preference to those that are either bad or of little importance...to prefer the good to the evil, and the essential to the trivial...that sense of true values which always chooses whatever is best.”⁸⁵

Our lives are too short to be spent on pleasures and hobbies that will “perish with the using.” How we need to “number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”⁸⁶ We have a very limited amount of time

⁸² Wuest, Word Studies, 2:37.

⁸³ Wycliffe, p. 758.

⁸⁴ Wuest, Word Studies, 2:37.

⁸⁵ Hendriksen, Commentary, pp. 60-64.

⁸⁶ Ps. 90:12.

39e on earth and we must use it in a way that will insure that we do not have many regrets at the end of our lives. What will we be most glad we have spent our lives pursuing when we face death?

After his conversion, Paul spent a life of diligently pursuing the most “excellent” things. He did not waste his time and energy pursuing fame, wealth, or pleasure. He gladly suffered and “burned his life out” for God. As he faced death he could say, “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”⁸⁷ Could you say this, dear reader, if God called for you right now?

After the good things are approved, then they are to be laid hold of and our lives are to be devoted to their pursuit. They are to be “approved above thousands of gold and silver, and esteemed more than our necessary food...and all to be highly valued and abode by, and held fast.”⁸⁸

“Sincere” comes from a Greek word that means “unmixed, pure.” The word may be derived from two words that mean, “found pure when examined by the sun’s light.”⁸⁹ A sincere person, then, is free from hypocrisy and falsehood. His motives are pure.

“Without offense” means not causing others to stumble.

The “day of Christ” is the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” (v. 11)

“Discerning love will also result in a bumper crop of uprightness.”⁹⁰

Fruit is a **product**, not a **cause**. When a person bears righteous fruit he is showing the result of the righteous nature that was wrought within him in regeneration. Jesus said, “Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit.”⁹¹ “The fruits of righteousness are the evidences and effects of our

⁸⁷ 2 Tim. 4:7,8.

⁸⁸ Gill, Exposition, 2:119.

⁸⁹ Cremer, Lexicon, p. 378; Thayer, Lexicon, p. 175.

⁹⁰ Wycliffe, p. 759.

⁹¹ Matt. 12:33.

40ctification; the duties of holiness springing from a renewed heart.”⁹² A good catalog of these fruits is to be found in Galatians 5: 22, 23.

We are to be “filled” with these fruits. “It is much for the honor of God, when Christians not only are good, but do good and abound in good works.”⁹³ The Father is glorified when we bear “much fruit.” (John 15:8). See also 2 Peter 1:8. We should strive to be like the piece of good ground, described in the Parable of the Sower, which brought forth an hundredfold.⁹⁴

These fruits can only be borne “by Jesus Christ.” Much more literally than we usually realize, without Him we can “do nothing.”⁹⁵ No man can come to the Father except “by” Him.⁹⁶ We receive the atonement “by” Him (Rom. 5: 11). If we have faith, this is something that we did not manufacture by our own efforts- we received it “by” Him.⁹⁷ If we are raised from the dead it will be “by” Jesus. (2 Cor. 4:14). If we are able to offer up spiritual sacrifices of any kind they are acceptable to God only “by Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet. 2: 5).

In fact, it is even impossible to be thankful to God except “by Jesus Christ.” See Col. 3:17; Heb. 13:15. This was demonstrated graphically in the life of John Warburton, a Particular Baptist minister who lived in England in the 1850’s. Warburton was a very poor man with a large family. One time he was heavily in debt and in danger of bringing disgrace on the cause of Christ. The Lord suddenly provided for his needs in a marvelous way. He decided to go into the chapel and give thanks to God for this wonderful deliverance. However, he found that he was unable to thank God and instead wished that He had sent him even more money. He hated himself for having these thoughts and begged God for a thankful heart. However, he found that his heart remained hard and, as he put it, “so that I found that thankfulness was a gift that cometh down from above.” A few days later, at an unexpected time, Warburton was so blessed with a spirit of thanksgiving that his heart was overcome with gratitude to his God. He found that we can do absolutely nothing except it be “by Jesus Christ.”⁹⁸

⁹² Henry, Commentary, 6:726.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Matt. 13:23.

⁹⁵ John 15: 4, 5.

⁹⁶ John 14:6.

⁹⁷ Acts 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:21.

⁹⁸ John Warburton, Mercies of a Covenant God (Swengel, PA: Reiner Publications, 1974), pp. 103, 104.

41 The goal and motive of all fruit bearing is to render “glory and praise” to God. We don’t bear fruit in order to earn eternal life nor to gain the praise of men. Everything we do and say should be calculated to glorify God.⁹⁹ According to 1 Pet. 4:11, God, in all things is to be glorified through Jesus Christ.

The word “glory” primarily signifies “an opinion, estimate, and hence, the honour resulting from a good opinion.” God is glorified in our lives when His character and ways are “exhibited through Christ to and through believers.”¹⁰⁰

“Praise” denotes “approbation, commendation.” Praise it to be ascribed to God in respect of His glory (the exhibition of His character and operation). God’s glory is reflected in the “fruits of righteousness” and praise is thereby rendered to Him.

“But I would you should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” (v. 12)

Paul, of course, was writing this letter while in prison in Rome. The Philippians were evidently concerned that his imprisonment would hinder the spread of the gospel. Some of the weaker ones among them might have been troubled in their minds, thinking that if this work were really of the Lord, Paul would have not been in such trouble. Some of them might even have been afraid of continuing in the gospel, fearing that similar troubles might come to them. Paul wrote to assure them that the gospel had not been hindered by his troubles. On the contrary, the gospel had been greatly advanced by Paul’s Roman imprisonment. Such was the mysterious and wonderful providence of God! Just how this had come about will appear plainly as this epistle unfolds.

Paul referred to the Philippians here and five other times in this letter as “brethren.” This term of endearment and belonging demonstrates the strong family ties that unite the saints as brothers and sisters, with God as their common Father. Peter similarly exhorted the saints to “love the brotherhood.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ 1 Cor. 10:31.

¹⁰⁰ Vine, Dictionary, II, p. 153.

¹⁰¹ 1 Pet. 2:17.

42 The word “furtherance” is prokope. It literally means “a cutting forward.” The word was used of a pioneer cutting his way through brushwood.¹⁰² It is thought that the word was used of men cutting a way before an army and so furthering its march.¹⁰³ Paul was saying here that the things which had happened to him had provided for a **pioneer advance of the gospel** into areas where it had not previously gone.

Carroll beautifully says, “They may bind him and confine him, but they can’t put chains on the gospel. The shackles become wings to the gospel, just as the blood of the martyr becomes the seed of the church.”¹⁰⁴ See also 2 Tim. 2:9. Persecution has often resulted in the spread of the gospel. See, for example Acts 8: 1, 4; 11:19.

“So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places.” (v. 13)

Paul was not in prison because of some crime he had committed. He was there for preaching the gospel of Christ. Therefore it soon became openly manifest that his bonds were “in Christ.” His very captivity proclaimed Christ! “Paul’s sufferings made him known at court, where perhaps he would never have otherwise been known; and this might lead some of them to enquire after the gospel for which he suffered, which they might otherwise have never heard of.”¹⁰⁵

The word translated “palace” is praitorion. It refers to the Praetorian Guard who were stationed at Rome and who served as bodyguards to the emperor. These soldiers guarded prisoners such as Paul. They took turns guarding him, with one of them continually having his wrist chained to Paul’s wrist. As soldiers took their turns they heard Paul’s conversations about Christ with his visitors. For two years they heard him preach and pray. They listened as he dictated his epistles.¹⁰⁶ No doubt, Paul talked to these Roman soldiers about the welfare of their own souls. The guards, doubtless, returned to their barracks and talked with their fellow-soldiers about what they had seen and heard. Probably many of these soldiers were converted to Christ. In this wonderful way God spread the gospel to many of “Caesar’s household.” (4:22).

¹⁰² Vine, Dictionary, II, p. 135.

¹⁰³ Vincent, Word Studies, III, p. 419.

¹⁰⁴ B. H. Carroll, p. 226.

¹⁰⁵ Matthew Henry, Commentary, 6:727.

¹⁰⁶ Acts 28:30.

“And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” (v. 14)

Paul’s courageous example of Christian boldness even when he was in bonds, stirred the Christians in Rome to boldly proclaim the word of the Lord. Evidently they had been silent because of fear. They were encouraged with the way the Lord had sustained Paul, and were heartened by the spread of the gospel among the Roman soldiers who were guarding Paul.

“Many” means “the more part” and indicates that the majority of the Christian brethren began to speak the word. When we dare to witness in difficult circumstances, we never know when we might influence others to do the same, being inspired by our example.

“Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:” (v. 15)

These gospel witnesses were divided into two groups. Both groups were preaching the truth. However, their **motives** were different. “Two things make a good Christian, good actions and good aims.”¹⁰⁷ The motives were influenced by their different attitudes toward Paul. One group preached because of “envy and strife.” The word translated “envy” means “the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others.”¹⁰⁸ Envy is “resentful dislike of another who has something desirable.”¹⁰⁹

This group was envious of Paul’s courage and skill in preaching and of his reputation in the churches. They were guilty of personal and petty jealousy. Now that Paul was imprisoned they exerted themselves to gain influence. Their motives were vainglory and popular applause. So, Paul suffered from false friends as well as from open enemies.

But the other group preached Christ of “good will”—good will towards Christ and Paul. Their motives and actions were pure.

¹⁰⁷ John Trapp, Commentary on the New Testament, (Evansville: Sovereign Grace Book Club, reprint edition, 1958), p. 603.

¹⁰⁸ Vine, Dictionary, II, p. 37.

¹⁰⁹ Webster, New World Dictionary of the American Language (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1958), p. 486.

“The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds.” (v. 16)

The jealous preachers were preaching Christ “of contention.” This word has the idea of “a desire to put one’s self forward, a partisan and factious spirit.”¹¹⁰

They were not sincere. “Sincerely” here means “pure in the sense of chaste, free from admixture of evil.”¹¹¹ By their preaching they supposed to add afflictions to Paul’s bonds. They probably thought that it would grieve him that they were “stealing the show” while he was in prison. They, being petty, didn’t realize what a great unselfish and humble spirit he had.

Trapp, quoting Luther, says, “From vainglorious and contentious preachers the Lord deliver His church.” Luther also counseled preachers to see that these “three dogs” didn’t follow them into the pulpit—“pride, covetousness, and envy.”¹¹²

“But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.” (v. 17)

The other class of witnesses had pure motives and preached out of love to Christ and to Paul. They also realized that Paul was “set” for the “defense” of the gospel. “Defense” was a legal term used in the law courts and spoke of a verbal defense made by a lawyer in behalf of his client. “Set” is a word that means, “to be (by God’s intent) set, i. e., destined, appointed.”¹¹³ Thus Paul was appointed and destined by God to make this verbal defense of the gospel. See Acts 23: 11.

What then? Notstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.” (v. 18)

This verse beautifully reveals Paul’s great heart and his pure motives. He was not jealous of those who were preaching. It made no difference to him who preached just so long as Christ was preached! The gospel was

¹¹⁰ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 249.

¹¹¹ Vincent, Word Studies, 3:422.

¹¹² Trapp, p. 604.

¹¹³ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 343.

45ng advanced, even though the motives of some of the preachers were not pure.

“Pretence” is from a Greek word that has in it the idea of an ulterior motive. It means “alleged reason, pretended cause.”¹¹⁴

It is important to note that these self-serving preachers were proclaiming Christ and not “another gospel” as the Judaizers in Galatia had been (See Gal. 1: 6-8). The chief error of these Christians in Rome was their false motives—not false doctrine. If there has been vital error Paul would not have rejoiced.¹¹⁵

“For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ.” (v. 19)

The word “this” refers to the fact that Christ is being preached even though Paul is imprisoned. The encouraging development would result in Paul’s “salvation.” The word translated “salvation” is soteria and means “deliverance, preservation, safety.”¹¹⁶ The word is used in a wide variety of ways in the New Testament. In Hebrews 11:7 the word refers to the salvation of Noah’s family from dying in the flood. In Acts 27:34, where the word is translated “health,” the idea is that of physical well being. From the context of the present passage the salvation under consideration is evidently Paul’s spiritual well being. Paul was being saved from being ashamed of Jesus Christ and the gospel. This will be clearly seen when we consider the next verse.

God is going to bring this salvation to Paul by giving him a bountiful supply of the Holy Spirit. “The Holy Spirit is meant; called the Spirit of Jesus Christ, because through the Spirit, Christ communicates Himself to His people.”¹¹⁷ The Holy Spirit is to strengthen Paul and make him strong to testify in behalf of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is going to be supplied to Paul by God in response to the prayers of the Philippians. It would be hard to overestimate the power

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 552.

¹¹⁵ Note: Having the same great love for the gospel that Paul had, ministers today should rejoice when God calls men into the ministry who are better qualified and more able than themselves.

¹¹⁶ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 612.

¹¹⁷ Vincent, Word Studies, 3: 422, 423.

46 the prayers of the saints in behalf of the ministers of the gospel! We must remember that Peter was delivered from prison through the incessant prayers of the church for him.¹¹⁸

“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.” (v. 20)

The words “earnest expectation” are from the Greek word apokaradokia. It means, “a watching with outstretched head” and “signifies strained expectancy, eager longing, the stretching forth of the head indicating an expectation of something from a certain place.”¹¹⁹ It has the idea of “earnest, fixed, or strained expectation.”¹²⁰ The verb form is used in the Greek classics to describe the watchman who looked intently into the darkness for the first gleam of the distant beacon light that would signal the capture of Troy.

Paul is so absorbed in his desire to magnify Christ that he ignores all things that might hinder him.

“Hope “has the idea of “favorable and confident expectation.”¹²¹

“St. Paul stood as it were on tiptoes to see which way he might best glorify God, by life or by death.”¹²²

Paul did not want to be ashamed by failing to testify on behalf of Christ because of fear or cowardice. He wanted to be bold in the Spirit. The word translated “boldness” means literally “all speech.” It has the idea of “freedom of speech, unreservedness of utterance, confidence, cheerful courage.”¹²³

The word “magnify” means “to make great.” The whole life of Paul was a magnifying of Christ, and he wanted his death to be that as well. “Herein he sees the meaning of life.”¹²⁴ He wanted to magnify Christ in his

¹¹⁸ Acts 12. Other Scriptures which have to do with this are Rom. 15:30, 31; 2 Cor. 1: 11; Eph. 6: 19, 20; Philem. 22.

¹¹⁹ Vine, Dictionary, II, p. 62.

¹²⁰ Cremer, Lexicon, p.177.

¹²¹ Vine, Dictionary, II, p.232.

¹²² Trapp. p. 604.

¹²³ Vine, Dictionary, I, p. 135.

¹²⁴ Kittel, 4: 543.

47—in all his ways and words. If he could best magnify Christ by his labors and sufferings, he wanted to live. If he could best magnify Christ by bravely dying a martyr's death, he wanted to die.

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (v. 21)

Paul faced death with courage and confidence. The “to me” is emphatic. Paul was here speaking for himself and was telling what his own attitude was toward life and death. Each person must speak for himself in this regard. Many people don't have the attitude that Paul had. If life means living for money, power, prestige, and carnal pleasure, then death must be a dreadful thing. The carnally minded one suffers great loss at death. He will dread death and will do all that he can to avoid it. How is it with you, dear reader?

For Paul, however, “to live is Christ.” He was saying in essence, “All my life, my energy, my time, is Christ's.” Jesus Christ, and living for Him, constituted the very life of Paul.¹²⁵ An Old Testament saint came to the same conclusion. He said: “Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none on earth that I desire beside thee.” (Ps. 73: 25). Have you reached the same conclusion, my friend? If so, it is well with your soul!

“Paul...is not *self*-centered but *Christ*-centered.”¹²⁶

Because “to live is Christ,” the act of dying and the life after death was “gain” to Paul. “Gain” is kerdos and refers to “gain, profit, acquisition.”

Death makes union with Christ even more complete for the real Christian. It is the end of misery and weakness. It is the daybreak of the eternal day. See 2 Corinthians 5: 1-8.

As H. F. Lyte expressed it:

Hold Thou Thy Word before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee.
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!

¹²⁵ See Gal. 2: 20; Col. 3: 4.

¹²⁶ Hendriksen, Commentary, p. 76.

48 Only the one who can say, “To me to live is Christ,” can say, “To die is gain.”

“But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.” (v. 22)

Paul said here that if he continued to live in his mortal body this would result in fruitful labor for him. The fruit would consist of converts to Christ, in the edification of the saints and in the establishment of new churches. Paul was always interested in bearing fruit for God. He wrote in Romans 1:13, “Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.” Paul had every confidence that in faithful service to God there would be some fruitful results. He knew that his labor in the service of God would never be in vain.¹²⁷

“It is worth while for a good Christian and a good minister to live in the world as long as he can glorify God and do good to His church.”¹²⁸

He would not of himself make the choice as to whether to live or to die. This choice is the prerogative of God! We must all be satisfied to remain on this earth as long as the Lord wants us to. God is sovereign in life and in death. Many a saint has brought great glory to God on a bed of sickness and suffering. We are not the ones to decide what kind of fruit is more to the glory of God. Being cheerful in affliction is certainly to His glory.

There are times in peoples' lives when they do not see *evident* fruit. They cannot know, however, that there has been no fruit. They may have been permitted to sow seeds that will bear abundant fruit even after they have gone on to glory! Speaking of Abel in Hebrews 11: 4, it is said that “...he being dead, yet speaketh.” Peter greatly desired that after his decease, the word that he had taught would still be remembered and bring forth fruit.¹²⁹

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:” (v. 23)

¹²⁷ See 1 Cor. 15: 58; Psalm 126: 5, 6.

¹²⁸ Henry, Commentary, 6: 729.

¹²⁹ 2 Pet. 1: 15.

49 Paul was under such pressure from both sides that he could not make such a decision. On one side was to live and to continue in God's work with the saints. The other side was to go away from this earthly life and to be in the direct presence of Christ.

The word "desire" has in the Greek the idea of "a passionate desire."

The word "depart" is analuo. It refers either to a ship being loosed from its mooring or to a military encampment striking its tents to move on to a new location. This beautifully shows that when a saint dies he is not annihilated. He moves on or departs to his heavenly home. See 2 Timothy 4: 6.

Paul really wanted to depart and "to be with Christ." This plainly shows that the spirit of a child of God after physical death is not senseless and inactive but enjoys the exhilaration of being in the immediate presence of Christ! As soon as the soul departs the body, it is at once with Christ. Jesus told the thief on the cross, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23: 43). Paul, in another place, speaks of being "Absent from the body and present with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5: 8).¹³⁰

Paul says this is "far better." This expression is a doubly strengthened comparative of great force. "By far the best."¹³¹ "Much more better."¹³² This is remarkable when we consider what an exciting life the apostle lived while on earth.

"The partial life eternal is in the interval between death and Christ's second advent: the perfectional at that advent."¹³³ The spirit of the child of God is in the presence of the Lord immediately at death. The body is buried to await the resurrection. At the resurrection, the body and spirit or soul are united and glorification is then complete forever!

"Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." (v. 24)

Even though Paul strongly desired to "depart and to be with Christ" he was willing to remain in the body a little longer for the spiritual welfare of

¹³⁰ Also see Eccles. 12: 7.

¹³¹ Wycliffe, p. 762.

¹³² Vincent, Word Studies, 3: 425.

¹³³ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, 6: 427.

50 Philippians. He was unselfish in this and was living for **Christ** and for **others**.

“And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith...” (v. 25)

“Having this confidence” is literally, “being persuaded” (2nd perfect participle). Paul had come to a settled conviction that his continuance in the body was necessary for the welfare of the Philippians, and maybe for some others. He was, therefore, sure that the Lord was going to keep him on earth until his work was finished. At a later time Paul was convinced that his work had been completed, and that he would soon be with the Lord.¹³⁴

Paul was needed in order that the Philippians might make “joyful progress” in the faith. This progress and joy in the faith should be the goal that each minister of the gospel should set for the flock under his care.

“That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.” (v. 26)

The word “rejoicing” is from the Greek word kauchema, and means to “glory or boast.” These Philippians would glory in the Lord Jesus and make their boast in Him when He delivered Paul from prison, and brought him to them again. Paul’s presence with them would be the immediate cause of their glorying, but their joy would not center in the apostle. Christ would ultimately be the object of their rejoicing. He is the cause of all our blessings and He must be the object of all our praise, glorying, rejoicing, and boasting. We must always look from the **gift** to the great **Giver**!

“Our joy in good ministers should be our joy in Christ Jesus for them; for they are but the friends of the bridegroom, and are to be received in his name and for his sake.”¹³⁵

“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving for the faith of the gospel...” (v. 27)

¹³⁴ 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.

¹³⁵ Matthew Henry, Commentary, 6: 730.

51 The word “only” signifies that what he now exhorts them to is the most needful thing to which they should direct their attention and efforts.

The word “conversation” is from the Greek word politeuo. It means to “behave as a citizen.”¹³⁶ Paul was drawing a spiritual lesson here from the fact that Philippi was a Roman colony. See Acts 16: 12. The Romans established some cities in their empire as colonies. The people in these special cities or colonies were given Roman citizenship. They had special privileges and special responsibilities above those of other cities. They were like miniature copies of the city of Rome planted throughout the empire. The people in these colonies were expected to behave as Roman citizens.

Paul used these facts to teach the Philippian Christians a beautiful spiritual lesson. The Philippians were citizens of heaven.¹³⁷ As citizens of heaven (Ephesians 2: 19) the saints who composed the Philippian church were a **colony of heaven**. There were to engage in “conduct characteristic of heavenly citizenship.”¹³⁸ They had a heavenly **origin**, a heavenly **destiny**, and the responsibility of living a heavenly life on earth in the midst of ungodly people and surroundings. See John 17: 15, 18.

The word “becometh” means “suitably, worthily, in a manner worthy of.”¹³⁹ In the adjective form the word means, “weighing as much as another thing.” The Philippians were to see that their actual lives as heavenly citizens weighed as much as, or were lived in a manner worthy of, their profession of the gospel. When our **life** is contrary to our **profession**, it brings disgrace to our profession of the gospel.

Paul wanted them to live worthy lives whether he was absent or present. Religion must not depend on the presence of a particular minister. Ministers come and go, but Christ is always present.

They were to “stand fast in one spirit.” This is a direct exhortation to unity. Christians cannot properly live as heavenly citizens unless they strive for unity among themselves. See John 17: 21-23. They were to stand fast against all opposition in the common spiritual life which had been given to them by the Holy Spirit. This is strongly taught in Ephesians 4: 1-6. There

¹³⁶ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 528.

¹³⁷ The word “conversation” in Phil. 3: 20 means “citizenship.”

¹³⁸ Vine, Dictionary, I, pp. 193, 194.

¹³⁹ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 53.

52 hint here that the Philippian church was experiencing some problems with disunity.

Standing fast in one spirit they were to “with one mind strive together for the faith of the gospel.” The word translated “striving together” is sunathleo. We get the word “athlete” from the root of this word. It means “to contend along with a person; to strive at the same time with another.”¹⁴⁰ “Paul is exhorting the members of the Philippian church to work together in perfect coordination just like a team of Greek athletes.”¹⁴¹

“Faith” here is used to indicate the revealed body of Christian truth.

“And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.” (v. 28)

The Philippians and other churches of Macedonia were evidently going through persecution on account of their beliefs and teachings. 2 Corinthians 8: 1, 2 certainly indicates this. “Indeed, they commenced their Christian life in a fiery furnace which had never cooled.”¹⁴²

Paul exhorted them to not be terrified by their adversaries. The word translated “terrified” originally spoke of the terror of a startled horse.

The fearlessness of these Christians under persecution was an “evident token” of the perdition or coming destruction o the ones who were persecuting them. This is graphically described in 2 Thessalonians 1: 4-9.

“Evident token” means “demonstration” or “proof.” The word was used in Attic law of a “writ of indictment.”¹⁴³

He who fears God need fear no one else, no matter what is done to him.¹⁴⁴ Paul no doubt felt as a fellow minister, Elder Travis Housley, has expressed himself: “When you’ve heard the voice of God, everything else is just noise!”

¹⁴⁰ Vine, Dictionary, II, p. 304. Thayer, Lexicon, p. 600

¹⁴¹ Wuest, Word Studies, 2: 37.

¹⁴² B. H. Carroll, p. 231.

¹⁴³ Vincent, Word Studies, 3: 427.

¹⁴⁴ See Ps. 3:6; Prov. 28: 1; 29: 25; Matt. 10: 28.

53 “The fearlessness of the Christians was a clear omen to the adversaries that their attempts to thwart the Gospel were futile and only led to their own destruction. It also revealed to them that God was on the other side.”¹⁴⁵

The adversaries may not heed the “evident token of perdition” when they see the consistent Christian behavior of the persecuted ones, but the token is still there and will be brought before them on the great Judgment Day!

One of these adversaries, the Roman Catholic Cardinal, Hosius, chairman of the persecuting Council of Trent in 1560, was compelled to say:

If the truth of religion were to be judged by the readiness and cheerfulness which a man of any sect shows in suffering, then the opinions and persuasions of no sect can be any truer or surer than those of the Anabaptists (forerunners of the Baptists), since there have been none for twelve hundred years past that have been more grievously punished.¹⁴⁶

The Christian must not be frightened by persecution. The condition of the persecuted is far better than that of the persecutor! Persecuting is a token of perdition. Being persecuted for the sake of Christ and the gospel is evidence of “salvation, and that of God.” Our Savior spoke of this is Matthew 5: 10-12.

“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” (v. 29)

The “for,” or “because,” connect this verse with the previous one. The “salvation” and “suffering” are both gifts of God’s grace.

The words “It is given” are translated from charizomai. This word means, “to graciously confer.” The noun form of this word is charis, grace.

The ability to believe in Christ or exercise faith in Christ is the free and sovereignly dispensed gift of God. This is plainly taught in Ephesians 2: 8,

¹⁴⁵ Wycliffe, p. 763.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in C. B. Hassell, and Sylvester Hassell, History of the Church of God, (New York: Gilbert Beebe’s Sons, 1886; reprinted by Turner Lassetter. Atlanta, 1948), p. 504.

54No one can truly believe unless God gives him this ability to believe in regeneration or the new birth. Faith is the work of God in the sinner.¹⁴⁷

“Faith is the gift of God, not wrought in the soul by the will of man, but by the Holy Ghost.”¹⁴⁸

“Faith is God’s gift on the behalf of Christ, who purchased for us not only the blessedness which is the object of faith, but the grace of faith itself: the disposition to believe is from God.”¹⁴⁹

“For faith in Christ...is a pure gift of grace...and this is only given to the elect.”¹⁵⁰

A similar text is found in 2 Pet. 1: 2 where there is a reference made “to them that have obtained **like precious faith** with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” The word translated “obtained” is lanchano. This refers to an attainment that is “not by one’s own effort or as a result of one’s own exertions, but is like ripe fruit falling into one’s lap.”¹⁵¹

In this text in 2 Peter what is being taught:

Is that faith has come to them from God with no co-operation on their part. That faith is the work, not of man, but of God or Christ, is not stated with equal clarity in all parts of the NT, but it must be constantly borne in mind... God does not merely give to both Jews and Gentiles the possibility of faith; He effects faith in them. Eph. 2: 8 makes it especially plain that all is of grace and that human merit is completely ruled out.¹⁵²

But suffering for the sake of Christ is also a gift of grace and should be regarded as such by Christians. See 2 Timothy 2: 12.

Suffering for Christ is a mark of God’s favor. “Suffering was the marriage-gift when they were espoused to Christ: the bounty when they

¹⁴⁷ See John 6: 29.

¹⁴⁸ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, 6: 428. Also see John 1: 12, 13.

¹⁴⁹ Matthew Henry, Commentary, 6: 730.

¹⁵⁰ Gill, Exposition, 2: 473.

¹⁵¹ Kittel, 4: 1.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 2.

55isted in His service, Becoming one with Him they entered into the fellowship of His sufferings. (Phil. 3: 10)”¹⁵³

“The same persons to whom it is given to believe in Christ, to them it is given to suffer for Him; and they all do in some shape or another, though some more, others less.”¹⁵⁴

“Having the same conflict which ye saw in me and now hear to be in me.” (v. 30)

The word “conflict” is agon and referred originally to an athletic contest. It meant “the contest for a prize at the games.”¹⁵⁵ Here it referred to the intense conflict against the adversaries to the gospel in which both Paul and the Philippians were engaged. Our word “agony” comes from this word.

Paul set the example in suffering. The Philippians had been eyewitnesses to his sufferings in Macedonia (Acts 16: 19-40; 1 Thessalonians 2: 2). Now they hear of his sufferings at Rome.

¹⁵³ Vincent, Word Studies, 3: 427, 428.

¹⁵⁴ Gill, Exposition, 2: 473.

¹⁵⁵ H. G. Liddell and Scott, An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon, Abridgement based on 7th ed. (Oxford: University Press, Impression of 1959), p. 10

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies...” (v. 1)

Paul now gave the Philippian church a very strong exhortation to unity. He exhorted to unity on the basis of four very important facts that he stated in this verse. These facts are pointed out in four clauses, each beginning with the word iff.

The word, if, can very well be translated “since” or “in view of the fact.” These four clauses are known in Greek grammar as first class conditional clauses. “First class condition affirms the reality of the condition.”¹⁵⁶ So the four things mentioned here are not hypothetical in nature. They are facts.

In view of the fact that there is “consolation in Christ...” “Consolation” is from paraklesis and in this context likely means “exhortation, admonition, encouragement.”¹⁵⁷ Paul was exhorting the Philippians to unity on the basis of the wonderful example of Christ. He expanded on this fact further down in the chapter.

Also since there was “comfort of love” the Philippians should live in unity. “Comfort” is from paramuthion. It means, literally “a speaking closely to anyone.”¹⁵⁸ Paul said that the example of the love of Christ was speaking to them and encouraging them to live in unity.

In view of the fact that there is “fellowship of the spirit,” the Philippians should live together in unity. The word “fellowship” means “joint-participation.”

The Philippians were all joint-participants in the Holy Spirit Who came to live in the church on the great day of Pentecost. If they would all live Spirit-filled lives there would be no divisions among them. Love is the first

¹⁵⁶ Ray Summers, Essentials of New Testament Greek (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1950), p. 108, 109.

¹⁵⁷ J. H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), 483.

¹⁵⁸ W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words. 4 vols. (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1940), II, p. 207.

57 fit of the Spirit.¹⁵⁹ They were to “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”¹⁶⁰

Since there were “bowels and mercies,” they were to live together in unity. “Bowels” is “kindness, benevolence, compassion.” “Mercies” is “pity, compassion for the ills of others.” If the Philippians would exercise these graces toward one another, there would be no quarrels or divisions in the church. They, and we, should exercise toward each other what the Lord had exercised toward them.¹⁶¹

“Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” (V.2)

Paul already had joy because of the Philippians, but this joy would be “fulfilled” or completed if they walked in complete harmony. True ministers of Christ have their cups of joy full to the point of overflowing when the saints under their care are in unity. They are grieved and distressed by the opposite.¹⁶²

The unity Paul exhorted was very intense. “Be likeminded” is literally “think the same thing.” Then he asked that they have the “same love.” Being “of one accord” is literally “thinking the one thing.” Paul wanted the Philippians to have unity of thought and feeling. Then they would be “like clocks that strike at the same moment.”¹⁶³

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” (v. 3)

If the Philippians thought of themselves in the proper way, they would act toward one another in the right way.

The kind of unity that Paul was exhorting to can be achieved only when there is “true *lowliness* of mind and *helpfulness* of disposition.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Galatians 5: 22.

¹⁶⁰ Ephesians 4: 3.

¹⁶¹ See Psalm 103: 13.

¹⁶² See 3 John 4.

¹⁶³ A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament 6 vols. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), 4: 443.

¹⁶⁴ William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Philippians, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, originally published, 1962), p. 97.

58 Nothing was to be done through “strife.” This word has the idea of factionalism. A person with this attitude would try to win followers to his cause, thus dividing the church. He would be trying to have his own way.

“Vainglory” means “groundless self-esteem, empty pride.” The person infected with this attitude would have an exaggerated sense of his importance and worth. He would want to have a high and important position in the church. Like Diotrephes, he would like to “have the preeminence” in the church.¹⁶⁵

The way to overcome these evil tendencies is to have “lowliness of mind.” This means “the having a humble opinion of one’s self; a deep sense of one’s littleness.”¹⁶⁶ The word is used in a secular document referring to the Nile River at low stage.¹⁶⁷

The way to do this is esteeming “other better than themselves.” Instead of looking at our good qualities and at another’s bad ones, we need to do the opposite. When we look inside ourselves we truly see how little and sinful we are. With this self-knowledge, it should be very easy to esteem our brother better than ourselves. Paul practiced this humility when he referred to himself as “less than the least of all saints” in Ephesians 3: 8.¹⁶⁸

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” (v. 4)

This verse strongly teaches against selfishness. It teaches that Christians should be very considerate of one another. The word translated “look” here is skopeo. We get the English word scope from it. The word means “to look at, consider, implying mental consideration.”¹⁶⁹ Another linguist says it means “to fix one’s eye upon, direct one’s attention to anyone.”¹⁷⁰

It is obvious from these meanings that Christians are not to think exclusively of their own interests. They are to be vitally interested in the

¹⁶⁵ 3 John 9.

¹⁶⁶ Thayer, Lexicon, p.614.

¹⁶⁷ Kenneth S. Wuest, Wuest’s Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), 2: 58.

¹⁶⁸ See Matthew 7: 1-5.

¹⁶⁹ Vine, Dictionary, 3: 14.

¹⁷⁰ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 579.

59cerns of their brothers and sisters in the Lord. This is not a concern of “nosiness” or curiosity. They are not to be “busybodies in other men’s matters.”¹⁷¹ This to be a concern of love that is interested in the temporal and spiritual welfare of others. This verse obligates Christians to be actively interested in one another’s affairs. To fail to do so constitutes a sin of omission.¹⁷²

In trying to be obedient to these Scriptural injunctions, most Primitive Baptists in their church covenants, promise something similar to the following: “We endeavor particularly in brotherly love to pray for each other, to watch over one another, and if need be, in the most tender and affectionate manner, to reprove one another. That is, if we discover anything amiss in a brother, to go and tell him his fault, according to the directions given by our Lord in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, and not to be whispering and backbiting.”¹⁷³

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” (v. 5)

Paul exhorted the Philippians to think as Christ did, especially in the areas of humility, service, and obedience. These areas are clearly brought out in the following verses. In these verses Christ is presented as the **Supreme Example** of humility, service to the people of God, and obedience to the Father. In these things Christians are to follow the example of their Master. We must imitate Christ in these things.¹⁷⁴

“Paul does not give all that is in the mind of Christ in these verses. He selects those qualities of our Lord which fit the needs of the Philippians at that moment.”¹⁷⁵

This verse and the ones following illustrate how Paul preached **doctrine** and **duty**. He never separated the two! When he exhorted Christians to duty, he used the example of the life of Christ to animate them. As the poem goes: “Doctrine without duty is like a tree without fruits; duty without doctrine is like a tree without roots.”

¹⁷¹ 1 Peter 4: 15.

¹⁷² See Romans 12: 15; Galatians 5: 14; Hebrews 10: 24; 13: 3.

¹⁷³ Portion of the Church Covenant of Grace Chapel Primitive Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee.

¹⁷⁴ See Matthew 20: 28; 1 Corinthians 11: 1; 1 Peter 2: 21; 1 John 2: 6.

¹⁷⁵ Wuest, Word Studies, 2: 60.

60 “Our lives should be as so many sermons upon Christ’s life.”¹⁷⁶ As we read of Him in the gospels, we should imitate His words, attitudes, and actions as much as possible. In short, we should follow Him.

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” (v.6)

As we come to these next few verses, we are indeed treading on holy ground. We are looking into the revelation that the Holy Spirit has given us concerning the **Humiliation** and the **Exaltation** of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us tread reverently and beseech the Holy Spirit to “open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” (Ps. 119: 18). Every word here is of the utmost importance and must be carefully considered.

First, Christ was said to be in the form of God. The word translated “being” is hyparcho. Vine says of this word: “The present participle of hyparcho, to exist, which always involves a pre-existent state, prior to the fact referred to, and a continuation of the state after the fact. Thus in Phil. 2: 6, the phrase...implies His pre-existent Deity, previous to His birth, and His continued Deity afterwards.”¹⁷⁷

So this one participle tells us that Christ existed in the form of God before the world was. Even in Modern Greek the word means “I exist, I am.”¹⁷⁸

Next we come to the word “form.” What does it mean? First, we know that it cannot mean a bodily form or shape. God is pure being; He is spirit.¹⁷⁹ God is invisible.¹⁸⁰

The word “form” is morphe. It means “that outward expression which a person gives of his innermost nature.”¹⁸¹ It refers to “the inner, essential,

¹⁷⁶ John Trapp, Commentary on the New Testament, (Evansville: Sovereign Grace Book Club, reprint edition, 1958), p.606.

¹⁷⁷ Vine, Dictionary, 1: 116.

¹⁷⁸ G. C. and C. G. Divry, eds. Divry's English Greek and Greek-English Handy Dictionary (New York: D. C. Divry. Inc., 1974), p. 464.

¹⁷⁹ John 4: 24

¹⁸⁰ See Colossians 1: 15; 1 Timothy 1: 17; Hebrews 11: 27.

¹⁸¹ Wuest, Word Studies, 2: 62.

61 abiding nature of a person or thing.”¹⁸² This being true, the expression “being in the form of God” means that Christ, in His pre-incarnate state, possessed the attributes of God. In plain and simple words the expression means that He “was really and truly God.”¹⁸³ When it is considered that the expression “form of God” is the exact opposite of the expression “form of a servant” in verse seven, it is possible to gain some light from the context. Did Christ actually become a servant? Yes, He as an humble servant, “came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”¹⁸⁴ If He was really a servant, then the opposite expression means that He was really God.

"Being in the form of God" "does not mean that the essential nature of Christ was different from the form, as it were an outer shell or a part played by an actor. Rather it means that the essential nature of Christ is defined as divine nature..."¹⁸⁵

One word of caution must be given: even though the form is the perfect **expression** of the essence, the essence and the form are not the same thing. “This form, not being identical with the divine essence, but dependent upon it, and necessarily implying it, can be parted with or laid aside. Since Christ is one with God, and therefore pure being, absolute existence, He can exist without the form. This form of God Christ laid aside in His incarnation.”¹⁸⁶

It is very likely that the “form” of this verse is identical with the “glory” of John 17: 5.¹⁸⁷ Christ temporarily laid aside His glory, which was the **manifestation** of His Deity, but He never laid aside His Deity! Other pertinent Scriptures are John 1: 1; 10: 30; 2 Cor. 4: 4; Col. 1: 15; Heb. 1: 3.

¹⁸² William Hendriksen, Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, New Testament Commentary series (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), p. 104.

¹⁸³ John Gill, An Exposition of the New Testament, 2 vols. (London: William Hill Collingridge, 1853), 2: 475.

¹⁸⁴ John 6: 38.

¹⁸⁵ Colin Brown, ed., The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 1: 706.

¹⁸⁶ Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965 Reprint), 3: 431.

¹⁸⁷ Gerhard Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 9 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 4: 751.

62 The next expression is, “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” The word “thought” refers to “a judgment based upon facts.¹⁸⁸ The expression “thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” just emphasizes the fact that He **was** equal with God! He did not claim that for Himself that which did not belong to Him. Satan had tried to claim equality with God by force.¹⁸⁹ Man attempted to be like God when he took of the forbidden fruit.¹⁹⁰ These were attempts at usurpation. However, the case was different with Christ. He enjoyed this equality by nature.

This is my view of the expression, backed by the King James translators, George Ricker Berry, Gill,¹⁹¹ Fausset,¹⁹² and B. H. Carroll.¹⁹³

Many commentators think it should be translated something like this: “He did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped or held on to.” By this they mean that Christ did not selfishly hold unto equality with God, but that He became an humble servant. They say that Paul is exhorting the Philippians to manifest a servant’s spirit toward one another.

However, to my mind there is a fatal flaw in this theory. Christ **never** gave up His equality with God. He only temporarily divested Himself of the “form” or “glory” of God. He maintained His equality with the Father at all times as is seen in the expression, “I am my Father are one.”¹⁹⁴ For these reasons I believe the expression is simply emphasizing Christ’s equality with God. Christ **never** emptied Himself of the fulness of the Godhead.¹⁹⁵ When Jesus, while on earth in the body of His humiliation, claimed to be the Son of God, the Jews plainly understood Him to claim equality with God.¹⁹⁶

“But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” (v. 7)

¹⁸⁸ Wuest, Word Studies, 2: 64.

¹⁸⁹ Isaiah 14: 12-14.

¹⁹⁰ Genesis 3: 5.

¹⁹¹ Gill, Exposition, 2: 476.

¹⁹² Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments, 6 vols. (American ed., Grand Rapids” Wm. B. Eerdman’s Publishing Co.. 1968), 6: 429.

¹⁹³ B. H. Carroll, An Interpretation of the English Bible, Galatians, Romans, Philippians, Philemon, (Reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), p. 238.

¹⁹⁴ John 10: 30.

¹⁹⁵ See Colossians 2: 9.

¹⁹⁶ John 5: 18.

The words translated “of no reputation,” are from the Greek word kenoo and mean “to empty.” So Christ “emptied Himself.” Of specifically **what** did He empty Himself? The clauses that follow explain. It is certain that Christ did **not** empty Himself of His Godhood (His divine nature or attributes). This is proven, as has been pointed out, by such Scriptures as John 1: 1, 14; 1 Cor. 2: 8; Col. 1: 19; 2: 9, and many other Scriptures.

He emptied Himself of His glory.¹⁹⁷ His glory was hid or veiled for a while. Before His incarnation He was constantly admired and worshipped in His glory by the heavenly beings.¹⁹⁸ However, after His incarnation, He was despised even by sinful men.¹⁹⁹

He emptied Himself to the extent of coming under the divine law.²⁰⁰

He gave up His riches and became poor.²⁰¹ “So poor was He that He was constantly borrowing: a place for His birth (and what a place!), a house to sleep in, a boat to preach from, an animal to ride on, a room from which to institute the Lord’s Supper, and finally a tomb to be buried in.”²⁰²

He gave up His independent exercise of authority. He became completely subordinate to the will of the Father. (John 5: 30; Heb. 5: 8).

As man He took upon Himself limitations of space; He was, in His body, only one place at a time. As man He even took upon Himself limitations of knowledge, for Jesus “increased in wisdom.” (Lk. 2: 52). However, even in this area, as far as His divine nature was concerned, He never gave up His attribute of omniscience (knowing all things). This is indeed a great mystery but we must bow before the Scriptures.

This is, at best, a very limited discussion of the **infinite condescension** of the Lord Jesus Christ. In humility we must say "Further than this we cannot go. We stand before an adorable mystery, a mystery of power,

¹⁹⁷ John 17: 5.

¹⁹⁸ Isaiah 6: 1-3; John 12: 41; Revelation 4: 3, 8.

¹⁹⁹ Isaiah 53: 2, 3.

²⁰⁰ Galatians 4: 4.

²⁰¹ 2 Corinthians 8: 9.

²⁰² Hendriksen, Exposition, p. 108.

64dom, and love!”²⁰³ However, even with our limited understanding, we can say: “O wondrous humility! astonishing condescension!”²⁰⁴

He “took upon him the form of a servant.” This is the same word used in the expression, “form” of God in verse six. It means that He really and essentially became a servant. He had the characteristic attributes of a servant.

He had been prophesied of as a servant of God (Is. 4: 1. 52: 13). He became subject to the law. (Lk. 2: 21; Gal. 4: 4). He became subject to Joseph and Mary (Lk. 2: 51). He became a servant to His people (Matt. 20: 28; Lk. 22: 27; John 13: 1-17).

He was made in the “likeness of men.” This does not mean that He was not really man. He was really and truly man.²⁰⁵ He hungered and thirsted. He grew weary, slept, and felt pain. However, He was not only man; He was also God! He was born of a virgin, and combined in His Person the divine and the human. He was and is the **God-Man!**

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbles himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (v. 8).

The word “fashion” is schema, which refers to His external appearance. This was His outward guise as He appeared to mankind.

He was “found” in this fashion by men. In their estimation He was a human being just like they were in all respects. However, He differed from them in two vitally important respects: 1.) In sinless humanity 2) In Deity (Godhood)

He “humbled himself.” This was a voluntary humiliation on His part. Paul used His example to encourage the Philippians to humble themselves.

He “became obedient.” He was completely and perfectly obedient from the **cradle to the cross**. He was obedient to God, to His earthly parents, to civil authorities, to the ceremonial law, to the moral law.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Gill, Exposition, 2: 476.

²⁰⁵ John 1: 14; Galatians 4: 4; 1 Tim. 2: 5; 3: 16; Heb. 2: 24.

65 He climaxed His humiliation and His obedience by being obedient all the way to the act of dying. He did this by dying a painful and disgraceful death—“even the death of the cross.’ This was a very shameful death (Heb. 12: 2). This was a death that bore a curse. That was how the Jews regarded it. (Deut. 21: 23; Gal. 3: 13). The Gentiles regarded this death as appropriate for criminals and for slaves. The Roman writer, Cicero, said: “Let the very name of the cross be far removed not only from the body of a Roman citizen, but even from his thoughts, his eyes, his ears.”²⁰⁶

Such a death was “to the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.” (1 Cor. 1: 23).

By this death the Son of God redeemed His people from their sins. Let us say with the song writer, L. B. Leister: “Worldly pleasures once my dream, Tempted by their gloss, Till I saw the scarlet stream, Dripping from the cross.”

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:” (v. 9)

The “wherefore” points back to the preceding verses. Because of His voluntary humiliation, God exalted His only begotten Son. Christ set the example in His own life on earth that, “he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” (Matt. 23: 12). This same principle is taught in Luke 14: 11; 18: 14; James 4: 10; and 1 Pet. 5: 5-6. In 1 Sam. 2: 30 the Lord said “for them that honour me I will honour...” No one ever honored the Father like the Son did, and no one was ever so honored as the Son was by the Father!

Christ was more than merely exalted. He was “highly exalted” or super-exalted.” The Greek word is huperupsoō and is used only here in the New Testament. It means “to exalt to the highest rank and power, raise to supreme majesty.”²⁰⁷ Christ “passed through the heavens.” (Greek of Heb. 4: 14). He was “lifted up above the heavens.” (Heb. 7: 26). He ascended “far above all the heavens.” (Eph. 4: 10). He is, right now, this very moment, at the right hand of the Father: “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.” (Eph. 1: 20-21).

²⁰⁶ Quoted in Hendriksen, Exposition, p. 112.

²⁰⁷ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 641.

66 For other Scriptures that show Christ's exalted position see Mark 16: 19; Acts 2: 33; Rom. 8: 34; Heb. 1: 3; 12: 2.

"He now holds in His hands the reins of the universe, and rules all things in the interest of His church. (Eph. 1: 22, 23)." ²⁰⁸

Strictly speaking, it was the human nature of Christ in which the exaltation took place. The humiliation also took place in the human nature.

The two natures are distinct, but they are not separate. "The human nature is so very closely linked with the divine that though it never becomes divine, it shares in the glory of the divine." ²⁰⁹ "God exalted Christ as Man to equality with God. As God the Son always had it; at the Ascension He was invested, as the Son of Man, with all the glory and power of the Godhead." ²¹⁰

In a sense, Christ assumed glory as Man; He resumed glory in His divine nature. See John 17: 5.

God "gave" (graciously bestowed) Him a name. In His office work as Mediator the Son assumed a certain subordination to the Father. (See John 14: 28). So it was the Father's prerogative to give Him this name. We will consider what name this is in verse eleven.

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." (v. 10)

With us in contemporary North American society (1982), a name is something that we use merely to distinguish one person from another. In the Bible, however, the name often expresses the very nature and character of a person. The name is often equivalent to the person himself. When Jesus said, "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" (Matt. 10: 22), the sense was "ye shall be hated of all men because of me." When Paul said, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26: 9), he meant that he had persecuted the very Jesus who bore this name. (See Acts 9: 5).

²⁰⁸ Hendriksen, Exposition, p. 114.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., The Expositor's Greek Testament, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing Co., 1967), 3: 438.

67 “At the name of Jesus” means, therefore, that all creation will be compelled to acknowledge the sovereign Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ when He shall reveal His power, authority, and majesty. It is the Lord, represented by the name, that will be worshipped.

When He comes in His glory, “All creation will render such homage, whether animate or inanimate, whether in heaven, on earth, or under the earth.”²¹¹ In some glorious but mysterious way, even inanimate creation will glorify the risen Lord. See Psalms 65: 13; 145: 10; Is. 55: 12; Lk. 19: 40; Rom. 8: 19-22.

All intelligent beings will bow the knee to Him. (This expression, “every knee shall bow,” is simply expressive of the rendering of homage. It is obvious that angelic beings and demons do not have physical knees).

Good angels and redeemed human beings will joyfully and willingly acclaim Him as Lord. But fallen angels (demons) and wicked human beings will also be compelled to bow before Him. One of these joyful scenes is depicted in Rev. 5: 8-14. Here the scene of heavenly rejoicing has to do with redemption. There are other similar scenes in Revelation. In Rev. 4: 8-11 the Lord is being worshipped because of His glorious work of Creation. In Rev. 19: 1-7 the multitudes are worshipping Him because He has judged all His enemies and has welcomed His redeemed saints to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

This universal acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ was prophesied of in Isaiah 45: 23.

“And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (v. 11)

Now we come to the name that was given to Jesus at His exaltation. That name, which is expressive of His true nature and position, is “Lord.” Peter, in Acts 2: 36, claimed that God made Jesus “Lord.” Recognition from the very heart that Christ is Lord is what constitutes salvation. (Rom. 10: 9). Such recognition and cheerful acknowledgement is clear evidence of salvation. This is echoed in John 17:3, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” The Lordship of Christ is the very core of true Christianity.

²¹¹ Wuest, Word Studies

“The name ‘Lord,’ has been given Him by the Father, as the Triune God, as a ‘name that is above every name.’ He is, in the universal sense, Lord of all. He has all authority in heaven and on earth and is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.”²¹²

The name “Lord,” is the “equivalent of the Old Testament Jehovah, the highest title that can be uttered. The full significance of the name will only be realized when all the world acknowledges the sovereignty of Christ.”²¹³

The word translated “confess,” means “to agree with someone about something.” Some day, the entire universe will agree with God the Father on the testimony which He has given of His Son.

Christians must acknowledge Him now as Lord of their lives—not merely in words, but in every deed. We must say as Paul did as soon as he received spiritual life, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9: 6).

“The term, Lord, has become one of the most lifeless words in the Christian vocabulary. To enter into its meaning and give it practical effect would be to recreate, in great measure, the atmosphere of the Apostolic Age.”²¹⁴

For other Scriptures on the Lordship of Christ see 1 Cor. 16: 22; Rev. 17: 14; 19: 16.

Christ is to be confessed as Lord “to the glory of God the Father.” The glory of the Father and the glory of the Son are inseparable. When the Son is glorified the Father is glorified; when the Son is rejected the Father is rejected. See Matt. 10: 40; John 5: 23; 13: 31, 32; 14: 13; 17: 1.

This means that all who do not acknowledge the eternal Godhood of Jesus Christ do not truly worship the Father. Christ must be regarded as co-eternal and co-equal with God the Father.

This means that Jews who do not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Christian Scientists, Unitarians, Muslims, and other such sects do not truly worship God the Father.

²¹² Herman Hoeksema, Reformed Dogmatics

²¹³ Expositors, 3: 438.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p.439.

This also means the professing orthodox Christians who acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ with their mouths, but who do not submit to Him as Lord in their daily lives, do not truly worship God in spirit and in truth. Jesus Christ Himself addressed this in Matthew 7:21-23, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but not much more in my absence, work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling." (v. 12)

The "wherefore" refers to the immediate example of the Lord Jesus Christ which has just been mentioned. Christ set the perfect pattern in humble obedience. The Philippians were to follow this example of Christ as they worked out their own salvation.

Paul referred to the Philippians as "my beloved." This term of tender affection shows how warm his love was toward them. This was one of his favorite expressions concerning them. He used the same expression twice in Phil. 4: 1. Paul also set a good example in letting the Philippians know how much he loved them. We need to hear expressions of love from fellow Christians. Since we live in a cold, cruel, heartless world, it does us much good to know that we are loved by those we love and respect.

Paul wrote, "As ye have always obeyed..." He, of course, was telling the truth. The Philippian church had been obedient to God to a remarkable degree. Paul complimented them for this. In doing so he displayed the tact which is found in all his letters. He did not hesitate to preach all the counsel of God. However, in doing so, he never missed an opportunity to commend Christians in areas where they had done well. As the song goes: "A spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down!"

The apostle then exhorted the Philippian Christians to obey God, "not as in my presence only, but much more in my absence." They were not to render "eye service" only when Paul was present. They were not to be men

70asers. They weren't serving Paul—they were serving God. They would each stand or fall before God.

In fact, they were to exercise “much more” diligence in Paul’s absence. Without his physical presence, good example, and constant exhortations, they were likely to get slack in their service to God. Paul wanted the Philippians to learn to lean completely on God whether he was with them or not. (See 1 Cor. 2: 5).

The work they were to be engaged in was to “work out your own salvation.” First of all, the salvation was their “own.” It was not for the Philippians to be judging other people; each of them would have his hands full taking care of himself! This was a lesson the Lord Jesus taught Peter in John 21: 18-23.

Paul exhorted them to work out their own salvation. What did he mean? It is necessary to point out here that this entire exhortation was addressed to those Paul already assumed to be Christians. (See 1: 1, 6). Therefore this was not an exhortation to unsaved sinners to flee from the wrath to come. This exhortation is for Christians to work out the salvation of sanctification.

The salvation which is done outside the sinner for the sinner is the work of complete propitiation by Jesus Christ for all the sins of all He people. (John 1: 29; 1 John 2: 2). The Lord Jesus paid the sin debt for His elect people. The eternal and irreversible work of justification was done by God as an objective work. (Rom. 8: 33).

The subjective work of salvation which is done in the sinner is the work of regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual life in regeneration. This spiritual life is developed in sanctification, and will be perfected in glorification.

Paul, in telling these Philippians to work out their own salvation, was speaking of sanctification. Regeneration is a creation unto good works (Eph. 2: 10). Regeneration is an act of grace. God had to give the sinner life. God also has to sustain life. This sustaining of life is sanctification. God must and will receive all the credit for sanctification just as He does for regeneration. This will clearly be brought out in verse thirteen.

71 The word translated “work out” means “work on to the finish.”²¹⁵ These Christians were to see to it that they made progress in their spiritual lives. They were to do this as long as they lived. They were to aim at spiritual and moral perfection. (See Matt. 5: 48; 1 Pet. 1: 16). They would never reach the goal in this life, but they were exhorted to strive for it.

They were not to work in order to get spiritual life; they were to work because they had spiritual life. They were to “make their calling and election sure.” (2 Pet. 1: 10). Election is sure from God’s standpoint. Election is an eternal decree which shall never be changed. All the elect family of God shall be eternally saved. However, the elect are not to be negligent or lazy because of this. They strive to make election sure to themselves. This is plainly indicated in the fact that the verb translated “to make” here in 2 Pet. is in the middle voice. It is a present infinitive in the middle voice.²¹⁶ They are not striving to obtain salvation, but the assurance of their salvation. They manifest their salvation by the spiritual fruit which they bear. Salvation is demonstrated by its results in the life of the believer.

In doing this they are not robots. They are putting forth spiritual effort. However, this effort is not meritorious. If God did not work in them, there would be nothing to work out. No one worked harder than the apostle Paul. However, he gave God 100% of the credit for all of his work. He made this crystal clear in 1 Corinthians 15:10, “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

This salvation is to be worked out with “fear and trembling.” Salvation is a much more serious matter than most seem to think. “Paul has no sympathy with a cold and dead orthodoxy that knows nothing of struggle and growth.”²¹⁷ The attitude of fear and trembling indicates a very humble frame of mind. See 1 Cor. 2: 3; 2 Cor. 7: 15; Eph. 6: 5; 1 Pet. 1: 17; Prov. 28: 14; Is. 66: 2. Godly fear is a great guard and preservative from evil. In fact, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” (Prov. 1: 7). Speaking of those without Christ it is said that “there is no fear of God before their eyes.” (Rom. 3: 18).

²¹⁵ Robertson, Word Pictures, 4: 446.

²¹⁶ Bagster’s Analytical Greek Lexicon, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 4th Printing, 1969), p. 332.

²¹⁷ Robertson, Word Pictures, ibid.

72 This fear and trembling is “not slavish terror, but wholesome, serious caution. This fear is self-distrust; it is tenderness of conscience; it is vigilance against temptation...; it is a constant apprehension of the deceitfulness of the heart, and of the insidiousness and power of inward corruption. It is the caution and circumspection which timidly shrinks from whatever would offend and dishonor God and the Saviour.”²¹⁸

“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (v. 13)

This verse gives God all the credit for our sanctification. Here is a rebuke to all egotism and empty boasting. God works in His people the willing and the doing. They are willing because they were made so by His power (Ps. 110: 3). They do or work because God motivates and empowers them to do so. This is very encouraging to a child of God who is fighting the battle against the flesh, the world and Satan. The child of God knows that he will persevere in faith and good works because he is preserved by God. He knows that He which has begun a good work in him will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (1: 6).

The will and power to work are, as it were, first installments of the grace of God in him. These installments insure him that God will carry out the work of grace to glorious completion.

A proper understanding of this verse will cause the saint to exalt God’s sovereignty in his life. He will know that even though he is working to please God, in reality it is God working in him. He will say with Isaiah, “Lord, thou wilt ordain peace in us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.” (Is. 26: 12).

This complete lack of confidence in himself, coupled with complete confidence in God, was the secret of the great spiritual strength of Paul, as was shown above in citing 1 Cor. 15: 10. Paul had no problem with reconciling the sovereignty of God with the responsibility of man. He did so in a way that did not make him an irresponsible and unaccountable robot, while at the same time giving all credit and glory to God for his obedience and service to God. This is also illustrated in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the

²¹⁸ Vincent, Word Studies, III: 437, 438.

73 which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

"Do all things without murmurings and disputing:" (v. 14)

Everything that God tells His people to do must be done in the right attitude. This is absolutely essential if Christians are to properly function as the light of the world. "The light of truth and the life of religion are often lost in the heats and mists of disputation."²¹⁹

The word translated "murmurings" has the idea of "mutterings, grumblings, discontented complaining." Those who murmur usually do so secretly, in small groups, and stir up discontent and rebellion in the hearts of others. Christians are not to murmur against God, against their ministers, or against each other. That murmuring is a terrible and dangerous sin can be seen from the fact that many of the people of Israel were destroyed for it by God (1 Cor. 10: 10). The ungodly are called "murmurers in Jude 16.

Murmurings or grumblings lead to "disputings." This word means "to dispute, argue, reason, question." God's people are not to be argumentative, but are to strive to walk in harmony.

"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;" (v. 15)

"That ye may" is from ginomai and can be translated "may become." The sense is that they may become more and more to appear as children of God. That is, that they might manifest themselves to be the sons of God as they demonstrated the fruits of righteousness in their lives. The word translated "blameless" is amemertos and means "deserving no censure."²²⁰ The Philippians were to so conduct themselves before the enemies of the gospel, that these enemies could bring no just cause of blame against them. A church that is quarrelling among herself cannot bear this kind of testimony.

²¹⁹ Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible. 6 vols. (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., n. d.

²²⁰ Thayer. Lexicon, p. 31.

74 The Philippians were also to be “harmless.” This word is akeraios and means “unmixed, pure, guileless, sincere, simple.”²²¹ So they were to be blameless in the eyes of others and without guile in their own inner lives.

They were to be the “sons” or “children” (teknon) of God. They were already children of God by regeneration and must strive to manifest this sonship as their lives were conformed more and more to the life of the Lord Jesus. Paul had in his mind the highest ideal which was to be reached by the gradual process of sanctification. They were to become the sons of God manifestly; they were to appear as sons of God in the sense of John 1: 12. They were to imitate the virtues of their Heavenly Father (Matt. 5: 45, 48).

The Philippians were to live this exemplary life in the midst of a “crooked and perverse nation” (generation, geneas). The word “crooked” is skolias. Metaphorically, as it is used here, it means “morally crooked, perverse.” People who are crooked are “morally warped.” See Matt. 12: 39; Acts 2: 40.

“Perverse” is diastrepho, which means “to distort, twist.” This generation was twisted in their thinking, feelings, and behavior. They were distorted morally and intellectually. They called “evil good, and good evil.” They put “darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.” (Isa. 5: 20). This condition can be plainly seen in the present day in the promotion of sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, abortion (the cold-blooded murder of unborn babies), evolution as opposed to the factual Genesis account of creation, “women’s liberation” (feminism), and in other similar perversions of truth.

In the midst of this crooked and perverse generation, the saints were to “shine as lights in the world.” Noah was righteous in his generation; so must the Philippians be in theirs (Gen. 7: 1). The saints would shine as bright lights in the terrible darkness that engulfed that wicked generation. See Matt. 5: 14, 16; John 17: 18; Eph. 5: 8; 1 Thess. 5: 5.

“Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.” (v. 16)

“Holding forth” means to “hold towards, hold forth, present.”²²² The “word of life” is the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. The church is to hold forth

²²¹ Vine, Dictionary, 2: 196.

²²² Thayer, Lexicon, p. 231.

75 word of life not only as preached but also as practiced. Every Christian is therefore called upon to be a witness in his home, community, place of work, etc. The Christian must teach the word and live the word.

Paul wanted the Philippians to do this so that he would have grounds of “rejoicing” or “boasting” (kauchema) in the day of Christ. This “day of Christ” we discussed in chapter one, verse six. It refers to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul did not want at that day to have his running and laboring judged to have been in vain. “Running” and “laboring” describe Paul’s life of zeal, vigor, perseverance, and strenuous toil in the service of his Lord. The word translated “labor” means “to toil to the point of becoming weary or exhausted.”

Many Scriptures indicate that a person may be saved by the grace of God, but that at the Second Coming of Christ at least part of his works will be judged to have been in vain. This has nothing to do with his salvation which is not by works but by grace. As far as ministers of the gospel are concerned, their faithful converts, who were converts to the truth and were fed from the Word of God by them, will be their crown in some sense. We can go only as far as the Bible allows us in this train of thought, but we are obligated to go that far. A person, especially a minister of the gospel, may not understand completely all that is being taught here, but if he takes the Word of God seriously, these Scriptures will have an effect on his life. It will motivate him to live in the fear of the Lord and to strive to please his Master rather than men. Other Scriptures to be considered are 1 Thess. 2: 19, 20; Phil. 4: 1; 1 Cor. 3: 10-15; 2 Cor. 1: 14.

“Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. For the same cause do ye joy and rejoice with me.” (vs. 17, 18)

The word “offered” literally means “poured out” as in a drink offering. In the Old Testament sacrificial worship system drink offerings were sometimes poured out in connection with other sacrifices. When this was done the other sacrifice was regarded as the major part of the sacrifice and the drink offering as the minor part. See, for example, Num. 28: 7- 10.

Here Paul says that he will rejoice if he is poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of the Philippians’ faith. He very likely had in mind a very literal idea of “pouring out” his life—probably the shedding of his blood in a martyr’s death. He used the same word in 2 Tim. 4: 6.

“Sacrifice” is an offering presented to God. The sacrifice here is the Christian life and conduct of the Philippians, which sprang from their faith. See Rom. 12: 1. The word “service” is leitourgia which means “priestly service.” We get the English word “liturgy” from this word. It is used of the service of the Old Testament priests, as in Luke 1: 23. In the New Testament each believer is a priest of God, offering up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2: 5).

The figure, here, is that of a sacrifice in which the Philippians are the priests, offering their faith to God. Paul’s life is the drink offering poured out in conjunction with this sacrifice. Their sacrifice, offered up with his, constitutes one combined sacrifice. What a beautiful picture this is of the mutual offering of the preacher and the flock to which he ministers!

Paul rejoiced to seal his doctrine with his blood! “Is that not worth our labor which he thought worth his life?”²²³ Paul did not want the Philippians to be sorrowful in the event that he died as a martyr. He wanted them to rejoice with him. Joy is mutual when service is mutual. “If the minister loves the people and is willing to spend and be spent for their welfare, the people have reason to love the minister and to joy and rejoice with him.”²²⁴

“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.” (v. 19)

Paul “hoped” (elpizō) “in the Lord Jesus. As John Gill beautifully wrote, Paul did not hope “in himself, his wisdom, will, resolutions, and purposes; nor in an arm of flesh, in any human aid and power, nor in princes, nor in Nero, the Roman emperor...but in the Lord Jesus.”²²⁵

Paul’s every thought, word, deed, and hope proceeded from his Sovereign Lord.

Paul hoped to send Timothy to the Philippians even though Timothy was a great comfort to him in his imprisonment. How unselfish and concerned for the welfare of others was Paul!

²²³ Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible. (Reprint ed., Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1940), 6: 735.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Gill, Exposition, p. 481.

77 Paul wanted to know how the Philippians were getting along so that he could be “of good comfort” when he knew their condition. The word translated “of good comfort” has the meaning of “to be of good courage, to be of a cheerful spirit.”²²⁶ It is wonderful to observe Paul’s care of the churches, and the comfort he has in their well-being. The comfort and pleasure of true gospel ministers lie in the good of the churches of Jesus Christ. When the churches are doing well the true servants of Christ are filled with joy and comfort. See 3 John 4.

“For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.”
(v. 20)

The word “likeminded” means “like-souled” or “equal in soul.”²²⁷ The word “naturally” means “genuinely, truly, sincerely.”

“Care for” has the idea of “to give one’s thought to a matter, to seek to promote one’s interests.”

“State” is literally “the things concerning you.”

It is best when a person so believes in his work that it just comes “naturally” to him. It is rare to find such an individual. Timothy was such a man. His going to Philippi was the next best thing to Paul’s going there.

“For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” (v. 21)

Surely not all of Paul’s helpers were like this. He was in the habit of sending deputies out to different churches as they were needed. See, for example, 2 Tim. 4: 10-12. Some of Paul’s faithful assistants, such as Luke, must have been absent when this was written. Of those left behind no one was fit for this mission but Timothy. Probably some of those left at Rome were genuine Christians, though not as self-sacrificing as was Timothy. It is sadly true that Paul was disappointed quite often by people who professed to love the gospel, but who proved to be serving for selfish reasons (See 1: 15, 16; 2 Tim. 4: 10, 16).

Seeking our own interests and comfort to the neglect of Jesus Christ is a very great sin, and is sadly very common among Christian ministers and

²²⁶ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 264.

²²⁷ Ibid. p.307.

78 people. Some of the Old Testament saints were guilty of the same sin. See Haggai 1: 4.

Too few ministers have a true fatherly attitude toward the people to whom they minister. As Paul wrote in another place: “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet, have ye not many fathers” (1 Cor. 4: 15).

“But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.” (v. 22)

The word “proof” is from dokimē. It means “approval gained through testing.” Timothy’s reliability was by now a well-established fact to the Philippians. They had observed his character in action. See Acts 16: 1, 2; 20: 3-6.

Timothy didn’t serve Paul; he served with Paul. Christians are not so much servants to one another as they are servants of God with one another (3: 17).

“Timothy’s association with Paul was like that of a child with his father, father and son being intensely interested in the same cause. Willingly, enthusiastically, the younger man had subjected himself, in filial attachment, to his spiritual father, for the latter’s aim was also his own.”²²⁸ This admirable relationship between Paul and Timothy is a wonderful example to elder and younger ministers today.

“Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.” (v. 23)

Paul was awaiting the outcome of his trial before the Roman emperor. As soon as he received the verdict he would send Timothy to inform the Philippians.

“But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.” (v. 24)

Here, again, he used the expression “in the Lord.” All his plans were conditioned by the will of God. His whole life was centered in Christ. See Gal. 2: 20.

²²⁸ Hendriksen, Exposition, p. 136.

It is evident that he expected to receive a favorable verdict. Scriptural evidence indicates that he did receive acquittal at this time, and that he resumed his work of spreading the gospel. Later he was imprisoned the second time at Rome, at which time he wrote 2 Timothy and sealed his testimony with his blood.

“Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.” (v. 21)

Even though Paul hoped to soon visit the Philippians in person and though he soon hoped to send Timothy, he thought it necessary to send Epaphroditus to them immediately. The word translated “necessary” is a very strong word and has the idea of “indispensable, what one cannot do without.”

Next Paul described Epaphroditus according to the several roles that he filled in life. The first description was that of “brother.” Epaphroditus was Paul’s brother because they had the same heavenly Father. True Christians are all brothers and sisters united by faith. Immediately after Paul had been born again by the Spirit of God, Ananias had addressed him as “Brother Saul.” (Acts 9: 17). Peter exhorted believers to “love the brotherhood.” (1 Pet. 2: 17). True brothers will be loyal to one another. The Holy Spirit said by Solomon that. “A friend loveth at all times and a brother is born for adversity.” (Prov. 17: 17).

In 1941 Boy’s Town in Omaha, Nebraska, showing a picture of a boy carrying a crippled younger boy on his back, came up with the slogan, “He ain’t heavy Mr., he’s my brother.”

Epaphroditus was next referred to as Paul’s “companion in labor” or “fellow-laborer.” He labored with Paul in the work of the gospel. The work of the gospel is not for those who are lazy. To live for the Lord and spread His gospel is hard work. However, it is a “labor of love.” (I Thess. 1: 3). The Lord Jesus commanded that His people “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. (Matt. 9: 38). It is Scripturally true that, “the labourer is worthy of his reward.” (1 Tim. 5: 18). Paul could truly say that, “I have laboured more abundantly than they all.” (1 Cor. 15: 10.

80 The next designation of Epaphroditus is that of a “fellow-soldier.” Every Christian is called upon to be a soldier as he fights in defense of the gospel. He must be a soldier as well as a laborer. In the work of the gospel God’s workmen encounter many foes. Those in Nehemiah’s time worked with a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other. (Neh. 4: 17, 18). God’s ministers are to lead in the battle; they are to “endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.” They are to give first priority to this warfare that they may “please him who hath chosen them to be soldiers.” (2 Tim. 2: 3, 4).

Epaphroditus was also the “messenger” of the Philippians to Paul. The word translated “messenger” is apostolos and is the same word translated “apostle” elsewhere in the New Testament. It means “someone sent with a commission.” Several people in the New Testament who were sent on special missions were designated by this word. See 2 Cor. 8: 23. These people were distinct from the apostles commissioned directly by Christ, as were the twelve and Paul. (Lk. 6: 13; Gal. 1: 1; 1 Cor. 15: 8, 9).

Epaphroditus had been delegated by the church to carry out an assignment. That assignment was twofold: 1. To carry a gift of money from the Philippians to Paul (4: 18). 2. To assist Paul in the work of the gospel. The word translated “ministered” in this verse is leitourgos and is used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) to describe the ritualistic service of the Levitical priests. Epaphroditus ministered to the needs of Paul as the representative of the Philippian church. Ultimately, this was sacred service rendered to God Himself.

“For he longed after you all and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.” (v. 26)

Epaphroditus was homesick! He longed for the Philippians. The Greek construction shows that this was not just a momentary desire, but was a continuous one. He was also “full of heaviness.” The word translated by this expression can be rendered “in sore anguish; in deep distress.” It is the same word used of the agony of Christ in Gethsemane (Matt. 26: 37; Mk. 14: 33). Epaphroditus was very disturbed.

The reason he was disturbed is that the Philippians had heard that he had been sick. He feared that they might be very concerned about him. He had a very great concern for their feelings.

81 “We have here an instance of that mutual love, tender affection, and sympathy which were in the first churches, which subsisted between ministers and people; see how they loved one another! But, alas! The first love is left.”²²⁹

“For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” (v. 27)

Epaphroditus had been, as it were, “next door to death.” But God had mercy on him (literally “God merced him,” or “compassionated him”), and spared his life. Paul also considered this as mercy shown to himself. It would have been hard to have given up such a fellow-soldier like Epaphroditus. It is wonderful that God abundantly sheds His mercy on such ill-deserving sinners as Paul, Epaphroditus, and His other children, including us! For the incredible depth of God’s mercy see Ps. 103: 11-17. Such mercy could only be extended toward sinners by the holy God because of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross (Ps. 85: 10).

It is very interesting to note that even in that era, the apostles, with their supernatural spiritual gifts, could not perform healings and other miracles every time that felt inclined to do so.

“I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.” (v. 28)

This verse gives us a glimpse into the heart of Paul. He was vitally concerned that the Philippians would have reason to rejoice at the return of Epaphroditus to them. Paul had been made sorrowful because the Philippians had been sorrowful when they heard of the sickness of Epaphroditus. Now Paul would be made less sorrowful when the Philippians rejoiced! What unselfish concern and self-denying love is displayed here. Paul badly needed the personal presence of faithful men like Epaphroditus, but he ignored his need in behalf of his beloved Philippian brethren.

“Receive him therefore in the Lord will all gladness and hold such in reputation:” (v. 29)

²²⁹ Gill, Exposition, 2: 483.

82 “Receive” is prosdechomai and has the meaning of “to receive to oneself, to receive favorably.”²³⁰ They were to roll out the “welcome mat” for their brother. They were to receive him “in the Lord.” Christ said concerning His servants: “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. (Matt. 10: 40-42).

The Philippians were to hold Epaphroditus “in reputation.” This expression means “to hold one dear or in honor; to value highly; to prize; to deem precious.”²³¹ This is the attitude that we are to have toward God’s faithful servants. To despise them is to despise the God who sent them.

“Because for the work of Christ he was night unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.” (v. 30)

The reason he was to be held in honor was his faithful service in the work of the gospel of Christ. No one knows what the nature of his illness was nor what specifically caused it. But it was “for the work of Christ” that he was “night unto death.” He did not regard his life. The word translated “not regarding” is parabouleuomai. It means “to risk oneself.”²³² Epaphroditus risked his life to serve Christ. Paul displayed this same attitude on another occasion when he said, “neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy.” (Acts 20: 24).

True love for the Lord often calls His people to risk something, even life and health, in His service. “The apostle does not blame him for his indiscretion in hazarding his life, but reckons they ought to love him more on that account.”²³³

When Paul said that Epaphroditus supplied “your lack of service toward me” he was not implying that they had neglected him. He rather referred to the fact that they could not personally minister to his needs because of their long distance from him. Epaphroditus provided this personal ministration. The Philippians had never neglected Paul in their thinking, planning, and praying. (4: 10).

²³⁰ Vine, Dictionary, 3: 256.

²³¹ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 218.

²³² Bagster’s, Lexicon, p. 301.

²³³ Henry, Commentary, 6: 737.

9. Philippians Chapter 3

"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." (v. 1)

The expression "finally" literally means "for the rest." It marks a point of transition in the epistle. Paul encourages them to "rejoice in the Lord." They were not to rejoice in the external keeping of the law as the legalists did. They were not to rejoice in special birthrights as the Jews did. They were not to rejoice in circumstances, either inward or outward. They were simply to rejoice in the Lord.

This is the only safe course of action for any Christian to take. If one rejoices in circumstances there is no real stability because circumstances change. Since the Lord doesn't change, the child of God can rejoice in Him at all times. The Lord remains constant and faithful whether the circumstances of His children be sickness, health, poverty, wealth, life, or death.

It is very important for Christians to maintain their joy in the Lord, for "the more we rejoice in Christ, the more willing we shall be to do and to suffer for Him, and the less danger we shall be in of being drawn away from Him."²³⁴ Truly, "the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Neh. 8: 10).

The Lord is adequate grounds for rejoicing even when everything is crumbling around us. As the old prophet so beautifully expressed it:

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines;
the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat;
the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:
yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.
(Hab. 3: 17-18).

"To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe."

²³⁴ Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible. (Reprint ed., Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1940), 6: 737.

It is not absolutely clear what the "same things" are. It could refer to the first two chapters of the epistle. More likely it refers to other correspondences that Paul had had with the Philippians warning them about the Judaizing legalists who were trying to rob them of their Christian liberty.

In any case it was not "grievous" or "irksome" to Paul to write the same things. Paul was a true teacher and he was not afraid of constant repetition. People are often dull of understanding, slow to believe, apt to forget, and slow to put into practice Biblical truths. Consequently, a good teacher will repeat things over and over. It is a sinful curiosity for God's people to be always desiring to hear some new thing. See 2 Peter 1: 12-15 to see the great importance that Peter put on repeating important basic truths. It was "safe" for the Philippians to be well-grounded in the things that Paul was teaching them.

"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." (v. 2).

These are very strong words and Paul wrote them because there was an extremely dangerous error that these false teachers were trying to bring into the Christian churches. These teachers were the Judaizers. These men were Jews who had nominally become Christians. They recognized Jesus as the Messiah, but as the Savior of Israel only. They insisted that the Gentiles could enter Christ's kingdom only through the gate of contemporary Judaism. They held that only circumcised converts were fully accepted by God. These converts must keep the law of Moses. In effect, the Judaizers attacked the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. They substituted for it a mixture of grace and works or human merit. This amounted to a denial of the true gospel of the grace of God.

These men had succeeded in bringing some of the Galatians into bondage and Paul was trying to prevent this from happening at Philippi. Even though these false teachers had apparently made little or no headway at Philippi, Paul knew that they were tireless and persistent in their efforts to spread their propaganda and to infect the Christians with the bondage of legalism. These Judaizers caused so much trouble that a council was called at Jerusalem to deal with their heresy (See Acts 15). Paul's warning was very urgent— "Beware... beware... beware!" "These three words are, as it

86re, blows of the gavel, signaling for attention.²³⁵The three descriptive terms that Paul uses refer to the same class of men—the Judaizers. First, "dogs." "Dogs" had long been a term of contempt which had been applied to Gentiles by the Jews.²³⁶ Paul turned their own term of reproach back on them. It is the unbelieving Jews which have become dogs. They didn't have true circumcision of the heart (regeneration) even though they had the outward mark of physical circumcision. By their own unbelief they had ceased to be the true Israel of God. Other Scriptures with this concept of dogs are Is. 56: 10, 11; Matt. 7: 6; 2 Pet. 2: 22; Rev. 22: 15.

Paul next called these Judaizers "evil workers." These men ostensibly worked on behalf of the gospel, but in reality their work was evil. The same class of men were called "deceitful workers."²³⁷ They deceived many by "good words and fair speeches."²³⁸ They were not idle. They were workers. But they were evil workers.

Finally Paul referred to these men as the "concision." Paul used this noun as a play on words upon the word "circumcision." These men who made such a fuss about circumcision were merely mutilated. This was so because they were devoid of inward grace. The outward mark of circumcision was a symbol of inward grace or "circumcision of the heart." It was, of course, right that they should have been circumcised because they were descendants of Abraham and God had given circumcision to be observed by Abraham and his seed as a token of the covenant that He had made with him.²³⁹ But the Judaizers had wrongly concluded that the outward rite of circumcision was a means of actually imparting grace in the heart. They had confused the symbol with the real thing. They had made circumcision a work that one must perform in order to be saved. So, with holy sarcasm, Paul says that the fleshly circumcision which these Judaizers had received amounted to nothing more than concision, or mutilation or laceration of their flesh. They had never truly understood the symbolic meaning of the rite of circumcision which God had given to Abraham.

There are people today who hold essentially the same error. These people confuse the symbol with the real thing. This is true of those who say

²³⁵ William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Philippians, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, originally published, 1962), p. 149.

²³⁶ Matt. 15: 26.

²³⁷ 2 Cor. 11: 13.

²³⁸ Rom. 10: 18.

²³⁹ Gen. 17: 9-27.

87t grace is received in water baptism. This error is known as "baptismal regeneration." Water baptism does not impart grace; it is a symbol that the one baptized has already received the saving benefits of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is very strong language that Paul used against these Judaizers. He also used strong language against them in another place when he said that any of those who bore this heresy to "let him be accursed."²⁴⁰ These evil workers had been very persistent and malicious in their opposition to Paul. Their deadly errors were designed to destroy the freedom which the Christians possessed in Christ. They sought to bring God's people into bondage.

Those true believers today who believe in the free saving grace of Almighty God should strenuously resist those who would add any human addition to the saving work of Christ. This is not a point of indifference—either salvation is of the Lord or it is not!

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (v. 3).

True circumcision, of which outward, physical circumcision was a symbol and a shadow, is of the heart (the intellect, will, and emotions); not of the flesh. This circumcision is not performed by man, but by God.²⁴¹ This spiritual circumcision, which is performed by God, is not confined to Jews of natural descent, but is performed in the hearts of all God's people, both Jew and Gentile. When the Gentiles live righteous lives this is evidence that they have been born again or received spiritual circumcision from God. "Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?"²⁴²

All believers in Christ, both Jew and Gentile, are the true children of Abraham. In other words, they are saved by grace in the same way that Abraham was. He is their father in the sense of a prototype, pattern, or model.

Abraham was the "father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father

²⁴⁰ Gal. 1: 8, 9.

²⁴¹ Col. 2: 11.

²⁴² Rom. 2: 26. Read Rom. 2: 25-29.

38raham, which he had yet being uncircumcised".²⁴³ Even though the Jews were the literal descendants of Abraham, Jesus said to the unregenerate among them, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.²⁴⁴ It is in the spiritual realm, therefore, that in the truest sense one can be said to be "a son of Abraham," or "circumcised." "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."²⁴⁵

To further emphasize that many of these Philippians whom Paul called the "circumcision" were Gentiles, it must be remembered that many of the Philippian Christians had never been Jews. The Philippian Jailer and his household were undoubtedly Gentiles.²⁴⁶

In describing this true circumcision, Paul said that they "worship God in the spirit." Spiritual worship is inward (at least it comes from within) and flows from the renewed heart which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual worship is contrasted with legal worship which consists in certain outward acts and is restricted to certain times and places. Spiritual worship is not restricted to certain isolated acts, but embraces the entire life.²⁴⁷ Outward acts of worship are to be performed, of course, but with the proper spiritual frame of soul.

As Christ said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."²⁴⁸ Every professed Christian should examine his motives and methods of worship. Is our worship in form only, with no life in it? Do we worship in truth but not in spirit? Only the truly regenerate can worship God in spirit. Many reprobates go through the form of outward worship all their lives.

The true circumcision also "rejoice in Christ Jesus." The word translated "rejoice" is kauchaomai and means "to boast, to glory."²⁴⁹ True Christians make their boast in the Lord Jesus Christ-not in the law or in their own works of righteousness. As Paul said, "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."²⁵⁰ The word translated "glory" is the same word

²⁴³ Rom. 4: 12. Read Rom. 4: 9-17.

²⁴⁴ John 8: 39.

²⁴⁵ Gal. 3: 29. See also Gal. 3: 9, 6: 16.

²⁴⁶ Acts 16: 23-36.

²⁴⁷ Rom. 12: 1.

²⁴⁸ John 4: 24.

²⁴⁹ W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words. 4 vols. (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1940), III, p. 271.

²⁵⁰ 2 Cor. 10: 17.

89 nslated "rejoice" here in Phil. 3: 3. The true Christian says, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."²⁵¹

Finally, the true circumcision "have no confidence in the flesh." They have no confidence in any earthly descent, such as being of the physical seed of Abraham. They have no confidence in circumcision (as a saving rite) or in the keeping of the ordinances of the law in order to obtain salvation. They have no confidence in anything or anyone but Christ !

"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." (4. 4).

Paul was momentarily putting himself on the same ground as the Judaizers who trusted in the works of the flesh (human merits and attainments) for salvation. Paul did not really trust in his flesh, but for the sake of argument, he was showing that if anyone had good reason to trust in the flesh it was he.

In His marvelous providence, God had so directed Paul's life even before he was born again, that there was no one who could claim more hereditary advantages and personal attainments than could Paul. He frequently listed his natural advantages to shut the mouths of his enemies.²⁵² His enemies could not say that Paul spoke against natural advantages simply because he did not have any, for he had more than any of them! But the humble apostle did not trust in his natural advantages for salvation as the Judaizers wrongly did. There is nothing wrong with natural advantages and privileges if they are used and thought of in the right way.²⁵³ But when any natural advantage is looked upon as a means of salvation, that advantage immediately becomes a disadvantage because it stands between the individual and Christ. This is true of a good education, a good mind, being brought up in a good church and a good home. These are all wonderful advantages, but are no substitutes for Christ.

"Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting th church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." (vs. 5, 6).

²⁵¹ Ps. 115: 1.

²⁵² See 2 Cor. 11: 22-33.

²⁵³ See Rom. 3: 1, 2.

Paul now listed those items that constituted his fleshly advantages. These can be broken down into two broad categories: 1) Hereditary advantages. 2) Personal attainments. The Judaizers trusted in both of these for their salvation. Paul trusted in neither.

He first listed circumcision. He probably mentioned this first because it was the rite for which the Judaizers contended most of all. He emphasized that he was circumcised the eighth day to show that he was born a Jew. He was not circumcised in mature age as were proselytes from the Gentiles.²⁵⁴

He further emphasized that he was born a Jew when he said that he was "of the stock of Israel." He was of the original stock, not grafted into the covenant race. He was not only of Abraham. Even the Ishmaelites could rightfully claim this. He was not only of Isaac. The descendants of Esau could claim as much. But he was of the stock of Jacob or Israel.

He was of the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin had been a legitimate son of Jacob by his beloved wife, Rachel. Within the territory of this tribe stood the city of Jerusalem and the temple of the Lord.

When he referred to himself as an "Hebrew of the Hebrews" he emphasized that he was of true Hebrew parents on both sides of the family. Not only was he an Hebrew by race, but also by language and custom. His parents were not Hellenists (Greek speaking Jews), but they were true Hebrews (Aramaic-speaking Jews).²⁵⁵

Paul then claimed that he had been a Pharisee concerning the law. The Pharisees were the very conservative and orthodox religious party which had arisen among the Jews during the period between the Old and New Testaments. They had arisen as a reaction to the carelessness of those Jews who had been heavily influenced by the language and customs of the Greek-speaking world all about them. They scrupulously observed the law of Moses and even added to it. They were very self-righteous and refused to associate with those who did not adhere to their traditions. They even accused the Lord Jesus of being a sinner.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Gen. 17: 12; 21: 4; Lev. 12: 3.

²⁵⁵ See Act 6: 1.

²⁵⁶ See Acts 23: 6; 26: 5.

91 Paul next mentioned his great zeal. No one worked harder or was more sincere than he. He was, in his sin-blinded mind, even "zealous toward God."²⁵⁷ But Paul was not regenerated at that time. Being sincere does not necessarily mean that a person is saved. Scripture makes it abundantly clear that a man can be perfectly sincere and still not be born again.²⁵⁸ This fact emphasizes the absolute sovereignty of God in matters of salvation. God is completely sovereign in salvation just as He is in everything else. Paul was a self-righteous murderer and blasphemer until the Lord Jesus changed his heart while he was on the road to Damascus.

Paul next referred to his "persecuting the church." He was the leader among the Jews in the persecution of the church from the death of Stephen until his own regeneration.²⁵⁹

He next made the incredible statement that he was blameless touching the righteousness which was in the law. He was blameless, of course, only in the sense that he knew and practiced all the rules of the rabbis.²⁶⁰ He kept the outward letter of the law and was so scrupulous in his observance of it that no one could accuse him of an outward violation. He, like many people today, was blinded to his own wretchedness before the thrice holy God. Being ignorant of his true condition, he thought that he was earning eternal salvation by His own works.

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." (v. 7).

When Paul had his eyes opened by the new birth, he saw that all his righteousnesses were as filthy rags.²⁶¹ All those personal attainments and hereditary privileges that he had considered to be gain he now counted to be loss- not merely neutral, but loss! Anything that interfered with his complete fellowship with and trust in the Lord Jesus were liabilities to him. "Paul is well content to part with a sky full of stars for one Sun of righteousness."²⁶²

²⁵⁷ Acts 22: 3, 4.

²⁵⁸ See John 16: 1-3.

²⁵⁹ See Acts 8: 1-9; 9: 1-43; 22: 1-5; 26: 9-15; 1 Cor. 15: 9.

²⁶⁰ Gal. 1: 14.

²⁶¹ Is. 64: 6.

²⁶² John Trapp, Commentary on the New Testament, (Evansville: Sovereign Grace Book Club, reprint edition, 1958), p.609.

92 The word translated "counted" is in the perfect tense which speaks of a process completed in past time but having present results. After much thought and consideration, Paul had come to a settled conviction with regard to the matter.

"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things do count them but dung that I may win Christ." (v.8).

Paul said that he was counting (present tense) all things but loss for Christ. This shows that his conviction expressed in verse seven was not an impulsive act of the past. He is continually counting "all things" as dung that he may win Christ. All the grounds of boasting in verses five and six, plus all things else are included here. The words "yea doubtless" are translated from five particles in the Greek. A literal translation would read something like "yea, indeed, therefore, at least, even." This shows the tremendous force of Paul's convictions about this matter.

Paul counted all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ and actually suffered the loss of all things on this account. What did he lose? He lost the affection of his family, his good name among the Jews, the comforts of life, material possessions, his prospects for a successful future (in the eyes of the Jews), and much more. He lost all this when he embraced Christianity.

The amazing thing about this is that he did not regret any of this loss in the least! he did not murmur and complain. He did not long to have his old privileges and comforts back. No! He counted all these things as dung (excrement, refuse)! Why? "For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ." Not only were all other things less valuable than Christ but were "in the highest degree contemptible when they came in competition with Him."²⁶³

Paul had been saved for thirty years now, but he still wanted to get to know Christ better!

This excellence of Christ is not knowing about Christ, but is actually knowing Him in an intimate spiritual acquaintance. The Trinity is involved in revealing Christ to the saints. The Father reveals His Son in the saints.²⁶⁴ The Son gives them an understanding to know Himself.²⁶⁵ The Holy Spirit

²⁶³ Henry, Commentary, 6: 739.

²⁶⁴ Gal. 1: 16.

²⁶⁵ 1 John 5: 20.

93he "Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him."²⁶⁶ Life eternal is to know Christ.²⁶⁷

Paul wanted to "win" Christ. That is, he wanted to acquire a greater knowledge of Christ. Paul was already justified and regenerated. He had already made spiritual progress, but he knew there was much more to be experienced.

Paul wanted the knowledge of "Christ Jesus my Lord. Christ belonged to Paul as He belongs to all true believers.

He was Paul's Lord. Paul acknowledged Jesus in his daily life as the One who had absolute right to direct his life in every detail.

A man cannot make other things his gain and also gain Christ.²⁶⁸

It was Christ that Paul wanted both now and in eternity.²⁶⁹

"As before the rising sun the stars fade out, and as in the presence of the pearl of great price all other gems lose their luster, so fellowship with Christ eclipses all else."²⁷⁰

"And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (v. 9).

A contrast is drawn here between works-righteousness and faith-righteousness. Works righteousness is based on the law and involves human effort. Faith righteousness is the free gift of God's grace. What is actually being contrasted here is salvation by grace and salvation by works. Paul had already tried salvation by works and now counted it "dung." He was a recipient of the salvation of God which was given to him on the principle of grace. The expression "faith of Christ," refers to the faith of which God

²⁶⁶ Eph. 1: 17.

²⁶⁷ John 17: 3.

²⁶⁸ Luke 9: 23, 24.

²⁶⁹ Ps. 73: 25.

²⁷⁰ William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Philippians, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, originally published, 1962), p. 163.

94 he author and finisher.²⁷¹ When the elect child of God is born again he is given the gift of faith and he henceforth lives by faith.²⁷²

Christ is the righteousness of the child of God. Even though the child of God stands righteous in the eyes of God long before he is born again (via legal justification), he vitally and experientially becomes a partaker of the righteousness of Christ when he is born again.

When Paul said that he wanted to be found in Christ, he was not speaking of his own efforts as regarded his salvation. "Here he intends a more clear and evident manifestation of his being in Christ."²⁷³ Paul was always looking for more assurance of his salvation. He wanted to bear the fruits of righteousness in his life because he knew that a tree is known by its fruits.

Paul had absolutely no confidence in his own righteousness. He knew that as long as one keeps clinging, even in the slightest degree, to his own righteousness, he cannot fully enjoy the imputed righteousness of Christ.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." (v. 10).

The major passion of Paul's life was to gain more intimate knowledge of Christ by experience. He wanted his life to become entirely ""wrapped-up" in Christ, so that Jesus would truly be "all the world" to him. He did not want to just know about Christ, he wanted to personally know Him. He already knew Christ well and had served Him faithfully for around thirty years, but he wanted to know Him even more perfectly.

This "knowing Christ" involved knowing the "power of His resurrection" and the "fellowship of His sufferings." As concerning the power of His resurrection, he wanted to fully experience the same power which raised Jesus from the dead surging through his own being, overcoming sin in his life and producing Christian graces. The child of God is born again by nothing less than this resurrection power.²⁷⁴ His body will

²⁷¹ Heb. 12: 2

²⁷² Gal. 2: 20.

²⁷³ John Gill, An Exposition of the New Testament, 2 vols. (London: William Hill Collingridge, 1853), 2: 488.

²⁷⁴ Eph. 1: 19, 20.

95 raised from the dead by this power.²⁷⁵ He is able to live for the Lord and overcome sin by this same mighty power.²⁷⁶

Part of knowing Christ consists in fellowshipping His sufferings. Such suffering with and for Christ is a gift of grace.²⁷⁷ It is a great privilege.²⁷⁸ It includes persecution for being a witness for Christ²⁷⁹, and hatred for our sins which caused the Savior's agony. "The agony of Gethsemane, not less than the agony of Calvary, will be reproduced however faintly in the faithful servant of Christ."²⁸⁰

Paul also wanted to be made "conformable unto his death." This includes a daily dying to sin, having the affections, with the lusts, crucified. It also includes a being willing to be constantly exposed to death for his sake, and to be ready to die for Him if called upon to do so. In imitation of Christ, the believer is to be "obedient unto death."

"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." (v. 11).

Here again Paul was not speaking of salvation by works. What he was doing was "hungering and thirsting after righteousness." He was "earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." He was desiring spiritual perfection which will not be completed unto the glorification of the body at the resurrection of the righteous. He was not satisfied or lukewarm with regard to his spiritual attainments. This must be the attitude of every child of God. They desire to fulfill the admonition of God: "Be ye holy; for I am holy."²⁸¹ The true saint will never be completely at home in this body of sin.

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (v. 12).

²⁷⁵ Rom. 8: 11.

²⁷⁶ Co. 3: 1-4; Rom. 6: 4.

²⁷⁷ Phil. 1: 29.

²⁷⁸ Col. 1: 24.

²⁷⁹ Acts 9: 15, 16.

²⁸⁰ A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament 6 vols. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), 4: 454. Here Robertson is quoting Lightfoot. See also 2 Tim. 2: 12.

²⁸¹ 1 Pet. 1: 16.

96 Paul had not already attained the complete Christ-likeness that he was seeking after. He had not attained to "perfect knowledge, nor perfect holiness, nor perfect happiness."²⁸² He was perfect with respect to justification, but not with respect to sanctification. He had not attained unto the fulness of his Lord.

Paul knew nothing of absolute perfectionism in this life as the sudden result of a single experience. He did not experience the so-called "second blessing" or "higher life" that many speak of today.

Sanctification is a difficult and life-long process, completed only at death. Paul said that he "followed after" this conformity to Christ. Here he used the image of the race course much as he had done in 1 Cor. 9: 24. and Heb. 12: 1, 2. The word translated "follow after" is dioko and means "pursue." It means "to run swiftly in order to catch some person or thing, to run after."²⁸³ This expresses his intense yearning and striving for spiritual perfection. Paul was confident but he was not complacent. He pursued with the purpose of "apprehending that for which he was apprehended of Christ Jesus." He had been apprehended by Christ Jesus on the Damascus road. The word "apprehended" is from katalambano. It means "to lay hold of so as to make one's own."²⁸⁴ In the papyri the word referred to the appropriation of land by colonists.

In this apprehension Christ made the first move, as He always does. "We love Him because He first loved us." (1 John 4: 19. "Not our keeping hold of Christ but his keeping control of us, is our safety."²⁸⁵ Christ laid hold on Paul in regeneration on the Damascus road. He laid hold of Paul with the aim of bringing him "holy and without blame before God in love."²⁸⁶

Paul was running with this goal in mind. True, it would not be completed until the glorification of the body, but Paul was, nevertheless, aiming for the goal with all his might. This was not an attempt at salvation by works. The Bible knows nothing of works salvation. This strenuous

²⁸² Gill, Exposition, 2: 490.

²⁸³ J. H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), 153.

²⁸⁴ Thayer, Lexicon, p.332.

²⁸⁵ Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible. 6 vols. (Reprint ed., Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.), 6:740. See also 1 Pet. 1: 5.

²⁸⁶ Eph. 1: 4.

97suit of holiness was a result of regeneration. This pursuit after the righteousness of Christ is sometimes called perseverance. The true child of God will have ups and downs and will periodically fall into sin, but he will be granted repentance and will persevere to the end.²⁸⁷ He will persevere because he has been preserved by God. Perseverance is the evidence of preservation. A good balance of this truth is evident in 1 Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Paul was not a robot, but he still gave God 100% of the credit for his ability to persevere.

Paul persevered until death. "Well might Chrysostom call St. Paul an insatiable, greedy, devouring worshipper of God."²⁸⁸

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (vs. 13, 14).

Paul said that he had not apprehended. He had not yet reached the goal. He who had even been caught up into the third heaven, and had seen the risen Christ on several occasions, had not yet apprehended! He was here striking at the arrogance and vain confidence of false teachers who were teaching that sinless perfection could be attained in this life. "He who counts himself perfect must deceive himself (1 John 1: 8); yet each must aim at perfection to be a Christian at all."²⁸⁹

Paul said that he did "this one thing." His life had a definite purpose. He set priorities. No one ever accomplishes anything when he tries to do too many things at once. We must learn to concentrate our energies towards sanctification, as Paul did. "When all is said, the greatest art is to limit and isolate oneself."²⁹⁰This "one thing" engaged his thoughts, desires, time and labor.²⁹¹ In this day over emphasis on sports, clothes, physical charm, cars,

²⁸⁷ Phil. 2: 12, 13; 2 Thess. 2: 13; 1 John 3: 3; 4: 4; 5: 4.

²⁸⁸ John Trapp, Commentary on the New Testament, (Evansville: Sovereign Grace Book Club, reprint edition, 1958), p. 609.

²⁸⁹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments, 6 vols. (American ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing Co., 1967), 6:434.

²⁹⁰ A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, 6 vols. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), 4:434. Robertson is here quoting Goethe.

²⁹¹ See Ps. 27: 4; Lk. 10: 42.

98 uses, secular education, etc. hinders many a Christian from reaching the goal.

What did Paul do? First, he "forgot." He forgot the things which were behind him-anything that would hinder the race (past sins; past accomplishments). He put his hand to the plow and did not look back. "We forget a defeat in the past when we do not stay whipped in mind, but courageously try another battle...We forget past victories when we do not rest on our laurels."²⁹²

Next, Paul said that he "reached forth." This expression is from epekteino and means "stretching forward."²⁹³ This is the picture of a runner straining and stretching out head, hands, and whole body to reach the finish line.

Paul uses an illustration here of a Greek runner completely forgetting his opponents whom he is leading in the race. Just as a runner's speed is slackened should he think of those behind him, and the thud, thud of their pounding feet, so the Christian's onward progress is hindered should he dwell on the past full of failures and sins, full of heartaches and discouragements. As long as a Christian has made things right with God and man, he should completely forget the past.²⁹⁴

As he reached forward Paul said that he pressed toward the "mark." The word is from skopos (Eng., "scope") and means "goal." It "denotes a mark on which to fix the eye."²⁹⁵ In this spiritual race we must fasten our eyes on Christ as we run and desire to be conformed to Him. He is our blessed goal.

Paul pressed toward the mark for a "prize." He spoke of this prize in other places. In 1 Cor. 9: 24, 25 he called it an "incorruptible crown." In 2 Tim. 4: 8 it is called a "crown of righteousness." John called it a "crown of life" in Rev. 2: 10. Peter called it a "crown of glory" in 1 Pet. 5: 4. James called it a "crown of life: in James 1: 12. In short, all the glory and honor and blessings that the glorified saints will enjoy in the eternal presence of their blessed Savior and Lord constitute this prize. The saints, like their

²⁹² B. H. Carroll, An Interpretation of the English Bible, Galatians, Romans, Philippians, Philemon, (Reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1973), p. 253.

²⁹³ Vine, Dictionary, 4: 82.

²⁹⁴ Kenneth S. Wuest, Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), 98.

²⁹⁵ Vine, Dictionary, 2: 159.

99rior once was, may be humiliated now, but like He is now, they shall someday be gloriously exalted! It is essential that the Christian keep his eye on the glorious prize that is before him as he runs his difficult race. Looking at the prize will motivate and revive him. As the songwriter, Eliza E. Hewitt, expressed it:

Let us then be true and faithful, Trusting, serving ev'ry day;
Just one glimpse of Him in glory will the toils of life repay.

Onward to the prize before us! Soon His beauty we'll behold;
Soon the pearly gates will open, We shall tread the streets of gold.

Every true Christian will someday enjoy this prize because it is a result of the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This effectual call brings the child of God out of darkness into the glorious light of salvation. This call begins at regeneration and is consummated at glorification.²⁹⁶

As another songwriter, W. B. Stevens, put it:

Faithful till death said our loving Master,
A few more days to labor and wait;
Toils of the road will then seem as nothing,
As we sweep thru the beautiful gate.

"Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded" and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." (v. 15).

Here is another exhortation to Christian unity. Paul wanted the Philippians to be united in their fundamental goals and actions. The be "perfect" was to be a mature Christian in the sense of Heb. 5: 14. Paul was appealing to the mature Christians to be "thus minded." so far as the fundamentals were concerned. To be thus minded was to have the same attitude and convictions as Paul had expressed in verses seven to fourteen. His conviction was that Christ was all-in-all. He had renounced all human effort and merit, and now leaned solely on Christ for salvation. He wanted all the Philippians to do the same.

He next told the Philippians that if in anything they were otherwise minded, eventually God would reveal to them that he, Paul, was right. Some

²⁹⁶ See Rom. 8: 30.

100 The Philippians may have fallen into error, but because of their sincere desire to serve God, Paul was convinced that, eventually, God would reveal the truth to them. He was willing to be patient with them until God had given them a better understanding.

This attitude of Paul's is a good example of Christian forbearance. When Christians are agreed on basic principles they should bear with one another when they differ in smaller matters. And they should continually pray for each other that God would give them the light of truth. One thing is certain; a person cannot see the truth unless God reveals it to him.

"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." (v. 16).

In the meantime, while waiting for the revelation of truth sought for, the Philippians must go on together in the ways of the Lord. They must not let any diversity in relatively minor things produce any dissension in their Christian unity. "The exhortation refers to the onward advance of the Christian life-let us go on together, each one in his place and degree of advance, but all in the same path."²⁹⁷

"Walk by the same rule" literally means "march in file."²⁹⁸ This was a very graphic exhortation to unity which would very readily be understood by those in Philippi, a Roman military "colony."²⁹⁹

They were to "mind the same thing." That is, they were to be of one heart and affection toward each other. They were to have the same goals as pertained to the gospel of Christ.

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." (v. 17).

Paul exhorted the Philippian saints to be "followers together" of me. Here again the emphasis was on unity. They were each and every one to follow him and thus they would all be walking together. The word translated "followers" means imitators. They were to watch Paul and to imitate him. They were also to imitate others who followed Paul. They were to become

²⁹⁷ Henry Alford, The Greek Testament, 4 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), 3: 184.

²⁹⁸ Robertson W. Nicoll, ed., The Expositor's Greek Testament. 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing Co., 1967), 3:460.

²⁹⁹ See Acts 16: 12.

101tators of him and do the same also with reference to those other Christians in whose lives they found an example of Paul's own manner of life. As one writer phrases it, "Imitate me and those who follow my example."³⁰⁰

Paul said "mark" those who walk as I do. The word translated "mark" is skopos. It means to intensely watch. We get the English word "scope" from this word. Christians learn from each other. Especially younger Christians can learn by observing the godly lives of faithful older Christians. Solomon taught the same truth in Proverbs 13:20, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

Every preacher should be an example to the flock.³⁰¹ Indeed, every mature Christian should be an example to others.³⁰²

This advice is still pertinent today. Pick the best Christians you can find from the Bible, from church history, and in actual life and follow them as they follow Christ.

"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." (v. 18).

Paul now issued a stern warning to the Philippians to beware of those who posed as Christians, but were really "enemies of the cross of Christ." Paul said that he had often warned about these dangerous people. God's children often need to be warned of the same dangers again and again. Sad to say, they are often "dull of hearing."³⁰³ A true minister will continually warn God's people of danger even if he is accused of being repetitious. Peter said to his readers that he would "stir them up" by putting them in remembrance.³⁰⁴

Not only did Paul warn the Philippians repeatedly; he also warned them "weeping." The danger was so great that Paul displayed great emotion as he dictated this letter. This was not the only time that he was moved to tears

³⁰⁰ Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing Co., 1965 Reprint), 3:451.

³⁰¹ 1 Pet. 5: 3.

³⁰² 1 Cor. 11: 1; 1 Thess. 1: 7.

³⁰³ Heb. 5: 11.

³⁰⁴ 2 Pet. 1: 13.

102 ministered to the people of God.³⁰⁵ Great servants of God are always deeply emotionally involved with the people of God. They care about them! The ministry of the word is not just a profession; not just a job. It is a divine calling.

Jeremiah was such a servant of God. He said, "My soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." (Jer. 13: 17). Jeremiah has been called the "weeping prophet." Paul could be truly called the "weeping apostle."

David said, "Rivers of water shall run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." (Ps. 119: 136).

These men of God were in good company. See the tears of the Lord Jesus on Olivet weeping over Jerusalem. (Lk. 19: 41).

Well did the song writer, Benjamin Beddome write:

Did Christ o're sinners weep?
And shall our cheeks be dry?
Let floods of penitential grief
Burst forth from every eye.

Wonderful is the promise to God's weeping servants: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." (Ps. 126: 6).

Paul described those he was warning the Philippians of as "enemies of the cross of Christ." as verse nineteen indicates these enemies were probably antinomian libertines. They were professing Christians who had allowed their liberty to become license.³⁰⁶ They thought that grace allowed them to continue in sin.³⁰⁷ They bore the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but they were concerned only with their self-indulgence.

They were enemies of the cross of Christ because, in their daily lives, they denied everything the cross stood for.. Paul said, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the

³⁰⁵ See 2 Cor. 2: 4; Acts 20: 19, 31; Rom. 9: 2.

³⁰⁶ Gal. 5: 13.

³⁰⁷ Rom. 6: 1, 12, 13, 15.

103d is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. 6: 14). James said that "whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4: 4). Men are called by grace "unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2: 10).

A person who professes Christ but who lives a life of sinful rebellion calls God a liar.³⁰⁸ The friends of the cross simply do not love the world but the enemies of the cross do.

There are many who are called by Christ's name who are enemies of Christ's cross. Their walk is a more sure evidence of what they are than their mere profession.³⁰⁹

"Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame." (v. 19).

These libertines are described by four major characteristics. First of all, their "end is destruction." Their way seems pleasant now, but death and hell are at the end of it.³¹⁰ Eternal destruction in hell is a horrible thing to think about, but it will be a reality for multitudes who do not know Christ. The Lord Jesus spoke of being cast into "everlasting fire."³¹¹ Jude spoke of those "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."³¹² John speaks of the "lake of fire."³¹³ Speaking of Judas Iscariot, Christ said, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born."³¹⁴ Truly this "everlasting destruction" (2 Thess. 1: 9) is something unspeakably horrible to contemplate! But this was the terrible end of these "enemies of the cross" that Paul was warning the Philippians about.

Secondly, these people were described as those "whose God is their belly." A person's "god" is the supreme object of his concern. In this case the god was sensual indulgence. Gluttony, illicit and perverted sex, a covetous love of money and material goods, a desire to live a luxurious life, etc., are included in this category.³¹⁵ The rich man who went to hell "was

³⁰⁸ 1 John 2: 4.

³⁰⁹ Matt. 7: 20.

³¹⁰ See Prov. 5: 3-5; 7: 6-23.

³¹¹ Matt. 18: 8.

³¹² Jude 13.

³¹³ Rev. 20: 15.

³¹⁴ Matt. 26: 24.

³¹⁵ Co. 3: 5, 6.

104ed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day."³¹⁶ A child of God can enjoy material blessings, but he cannot make them his god.

This sensual addiction also includes unrepented of addiction to alcohol and other drugs.³¹⁷

Thirdly, these people are spoken of as those whose "glory is in their shame." They not only sinned against God but they boasted of it. They were proud of the things they should have been deeply ashamed of. When a person reaches this point, he is very hardened in sin. When an entire society deteriorates to this condition it is ripe for God's judgment.³¹⁸

As this is being written (Jan., 1984) many people in this nation (U. S. A.), and indeed in many other parts of the world, are glorying in that of which they should be deeply ashamed. Jokes are made about drunkenness. Television shows and movie magazines glorify adultery and fornication. Public nudity is quite common. The vile sin of sodomy has come out of the closet of shame and is demanding public acceptance. The most degrading passions (such as sado-masochism) are openly flaunted by rebellious rock music performers. White collar theft is committed by those in high positions.

Finally, these "enemies of the cross of Christ" "mind earthly things." This material world of sound and sense is all they know. They do not have faith so they are unable to endure "as seeing him who is invisible."³¹⁹ They see only temporal "things which are seen," but not the eternal "things which are not seen."³²⁰ They don't have the capacity to "set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth."³²¹

They reveal that they don't have heavenly life by their exclusive minding of earthly things.

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:" (v. 20).

³¹⁶ Lk. 16: 19.

³¹⁷ 1 Cor. 6: 9, 10.

³¹⁸ Rom. 1: 18-32.

³¹⁹ Heb. 11: ,27.

³²⁰ 2 Cor. 4: 18.

³²¹ Col. 3: 2.

105This is a tremendous verse which contains much truth. The word translated "conversation" is politeuma and means "citizenship." In other words, the real citizenship of the Philippians was not on earth, but in the heavenlies. The Philippian Christians would readily understand this concept because of the political situation in which they found themselves. Philippi was a Roman colony.³²²When the Romans conquered a territory they sometimes established special cities, called "colonies" in these conquered areas. The citizens of the colonies were usually retired military personnel. The citizens of the colonies were made full-fledged Roman citizens. To be a Roman citizen was a very great privilege. Only a small number of the people in the Roman Empire were actually citizens. A citizen had special privileges and special responsibilities. The Roman citizen who lived in a colony thought of himself as more of a citizen of the city of Rome than of his own city. Each one of these colonies was like a miniature Rome. The purpose of the colony was to represent Rome in the territory in which it was located. It was to insure that the surrounding territory remained loyal to the mother city. The citizens of the colonies were, in effect, ambassadors of the City of Rome.

Paul applied this concept in a spiritual sense to the church at Philippi. He said that this church (and indeed every true Christian church) was a "colony of heaven!" The Philippians were heavenly citizens and had heavenly privileges and responsibilities. They were to behave as heavenly citizens in the midst of an alien world. They must realize that, in a very real sense, they had much closer ties to the heavenly world than they did to the temporal world in which they now lived. They were to represent God and heaven to the world around them.

Indeed Christ had said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight."³²³ Paul said that born-again Gentiles were "fellowcitizens with the saints and of the household of God."³²⁴ Peter exhorted his readers to "as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts..."³²⁵ Many of the Old Testament saints, including Abraham, plainly declared that they were not citizens of this present evil world, but that their hearts were really with a "heavenly country" and a "heavenly city."³²⁶ Jesus Christ exhorted His followers to

³²² Acts 16: 12.

³²³ John 18: 36.

³²⁴ Eph. 2: 19.

³²⁵ 1 Pet. 2: 11.

³²⁶ Heb. 11: 9, 10, 13-16.

106 ice because "your names are written in heaven."³²⁷ That is where the roll call of their real citizenship was.

To summarize: The Christian is born from above, has his name enrolled in heaven's register, is governed by heaven's laws, has a heavenly inheritance reserved for him,³²⁸ has his thoughts and affections centered in heaven,³²⁹ and knows that many of his friends are there!

As one commentator said, we must "go about our earthly business with heavenly minds."³³⁰

Paul said that we "look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," to come back some day from that heavenly country. The word translated "look for" is a very powerful double compound verb, apekdeckomai, which means "to await or expect eagerly."³³¹

The great American Greek scholar, A. T. Robertson, says that this word "vividly pictures Paul's eagerness for the second coming of Christ as the normal attitude of the Christian colonist whose home is heaven."³³² The word is also used in Rom. 8: 23 and Heb. 9: 28.

Another American student of New Testament Greek says: "The composite word speaks of an attitude of intense yearning and eager waiting for the coming of the Lord to take His bride to heaven with Him, the attention being withdrawn from all else and concentrated upon the Lord Jesus."³³³

The hope of Christ's return has great practical significance for the child of God in his everyday life. There is great sanctifying power in the hope of Christ's return.³³⁴ The more a saint meditates upon the coming of the Lord Jesus, the more conformed to godliness will his life be.

The saints eagerly await the coming of the Lord Jesus as their beloved Savior. The unsaved will have to face Him as the righteous Judge.

³²⁷ Lk. 10: 20.

³²⁸ 1 Pet. 2: 4.

³²⁹ Col. 3: 1, 2.

³³⁰ Trapp, p. 610.

³³¹ Vine, Dictionary, 4: 193.

³³² Robertson, Word Pictures, 4: 457.

³³³ Wuest, Word Studies, 2:102, 103.

³³⁴ See 1 John 3: 3; 2 Pet. 3: 11-14.

"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." (v. 21);

This is another wonderful verse. It deals with the Second Coming of thee Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the saints, and the glorification of their bodies. Paul says that when Jesus comes again He will change our vile bodies. "Vile bodies" is literally "bodies of our humiliation." Sin has subjected the bodies of humans to weakness, mortality, and death. These are very humiliating things indeed. Christ is going to "change" these vile bodies. "Change" is from metaschematizo, "to change in fashion or appearance."³³⁵The change will not be in essential form or substance. The disciples recognized that it was Jesus Himself, who appeared to them in His post-resurrection appearances. It was not a phantom or a spirit that appeared to them, but a real Man!(The same God-Man who was placed in the tomb and raised again on the third day).

The change will be from corruption to incorruption; from mortality to immortality; from weakness to power; from dishonor to glory. As Christ's glorified body was essentially identical with His body of humiliation, so the resurrection bodies of the saints, being like His, shall be essentially identical with their present bodies, yet they will be "spiritual."³³⁶

Christ's transfiguration on the mount was an emblem and a pledge of his glorious body.³³⁷Paul said that the bodies of the saints would be "fashioned like unto his glorious body." The word translated "fashioned" means "having the same form as another."³³⁸What a comforting thought for the storm-tossed child of God, that someday his body will be like the glorified body of Jesus Christ Himself! As John said, "when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3: 2).

The Lord can do this because "he is able to subdue all things unto himself." The word translated "subdue" is hypotasso. It means "to arrange under, to subordinate; to subject, put in subjection."³³⁹ Our Lord is, indeed, Lord over all! He arranges things as they suit Him best.

³³⁵ Vine, Dictionary, 2: 80.

³³⁶ 1 Cor. 15: 42-44.

³³⁷ Lk. 9: 29, 32.

³³⁸ Vine, Dictionary, 1: 227.

³³⁹ Thayer, Lexicon, p.645.

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This doctrine of the resurrection of the actual body is a vital teaching. The body of a saint is very valuable. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 6: 19).

10. Philippians Chapter 4

"Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." (v. 1).

The "therefore" refers back to the last two verses of Chapter Three. In view of their heavenly citizenship, and in hope of the glorification of their bodies, they were encouraged and motivated to stand fast and hold their Christian profession in the face of all obstacles. The very fact that they were exhorted to "stand fast" implies that there was opposition. The true Christian will always have opposition-from the world outside the church, from false professors within the church, and from the corruptions of his own heart. The only way to stand fast is to do so "in the Lord." The Christian standing in his own strength is bound to fall. Remember how David fell into adultery and murder, and how Peter denied his Lord.

In this verse Paul used six terms of endearment. He poured out his affections on the Philippians without any attempt to hold back. He loved them deeply and longed to see them. How wonderful it is when this powerful, godly, affection exists between ministers and the people to whom they minister!

Paul described them as his "joy and crown." They caused him great joy because of their obedience to Christ. They would prove to be a crown to him "in the day of Christ."³⁴⁰ Paul would much rather be in prison and see the fruitful lives of those he had influenced to serve Christ than to be the emperor of Rome! The crown of the Roman emperor was transitory; Paul's crown is everlasting.

"I beseech Euodias and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." (v. 2).

These were evidently two sisters in the church, perhaps energetic and talented, who had clashed on something. The disunity had, doubtless, affected the entire church. The fact that Paul named them in this public letter shows that sometimes preachers have to call names. But Paul did this with the greatest kindness and tact. He besought each one separately. He exhorted them to be of the same mind "in the Lord." This union in Christ is

³⁴⁰ See Phil. 2: 16; 1 Thess. 2: 19, 20.

110asis of union among Christians. These sisters were reminded by this exhortation that their disharmony was harmful to the cause of their beloved Lord.

"And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life." (v. 3).

It is not certain who this "true yokefellow" was. Some think that the word "yokefellow" is a proper name in which case it would be Syzygos. If this is so Paul was making a play on words and was referring to him as "genuine Syzygos," a yokefellow in fact as well as in name. In any case, this was one of Paul's companions who was a man of tact and who could help to reconcile the differences between the aforementioned sisters. A yokefellow is one who can pull well with someone else in double harness. How much needed such people are in our churches today!

This yokefellow was to help those same two women who were named in verse two. He was to be a peacemaker and to assist them in working together again. These good sisters had at one time laboured together with Paul in the gospel. The word translated "laboured" is the same one translated "striving together" in Phil. 1: 7. It has reference to a team of athletes striving together in a unified effort. So at one time these sisters had worked together in close harmony.

They had worked with Paul "in the gospel." They did not publicly preach or teach the word, for that is forbidden to women.³⁴¹ But there were numerous ways in which they helped Paul in the spread of the gospel. They helped him by constant prayer, by financial support, by private teaching of the word in their homes, by carrying messages, running errands, and in many other ways. Women played a very important role at Philippi. They were the first to receive the gospel there and Lydia was the first convert. Paul and his companions used Lydia's house as a base of operations. Evidently the church at Philippi used Lydia's house as a place to meet.³⁴² Women have always been very helpful in the spread of the gospel.³⁴³

These sisters, together with Clement and Paul's other fellow labourers, had their names enrolled in the "Book of Life." This Book of Life refers to

³⁴¹ 1 Tim. 2: 12.

³⁴² Acts 16: 13-15, 40.

³⁴³ Matt. 27: 55; Mk. 15: 40, 41; Luke 8: 2,3; 23: 55; Rom. 16: 1, 2, 6.

11 toll of God's elect people, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Their names were written there in eternity past.³⁴⁴ At the judgment at the great white throne the Book of Life will be opened and those whose names are there will enter into the joy of the Lord. Those whose names are not there will be cast into the lake of fire.³⁴⁵ To have evidence that one's name has been enrolled in the Book of Life from all eternity is cause for great joy.³⁴⁶ How wonderful to have one's name "written in heaven" (Heb. 12: 23). The fact that individual names are written in the Book of Life shows that God's election of grace is not indiscriminate and general. It is personal and particular. Jesus, the Shepherd of the sheep, calls His own sheep "by name." (John 10: 3).

Paul could not see the Book of Life. How then, could he be certain that these Philippians' names were written there? By their faithful lives. Today it is still true that "by their fruits ye shall know them."³⁴⁷

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say Rejoice." (v. 4).

Paul next exhorted the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord. It is both the duty and the privilege of Christians to rejoice in the Lord. We need to be reminded often of this duty and exhorted to it. Satan likes to see defeated Christians who are not rejoicing. Paul wanted the Philippians to rejoice even though they were at that very time suffering affliction for the sake of the gospel. The Christian can always rejoice, no matter what the circumstances may be, because the ground of his rejoicing is not in circumstances but is "in the Lord." A Christian can be joyful within when without all is dark and dreary. "There is always cause and matter for rejoicing in Christ...since He is always the same."³⁴⁸ Since this rejoicing is a Biblical command, it is no less a sin not to rejoice than not to repent.

It was perfectly legitimate for Paul to exhort the Philippians to rejoice. The disposition of spiritual joy can and should be cultivated. This can be done by obedience to God's commands, by believing prayer and by meditating on the proper subjects, as is pointed out in verse 8.

³⁴⁴ Rev. 13: 8; 17: 8.

³⁴⁵ Rev. 20: 12; 21: 27.

³⁴⁶ Lk. 10: 20.

³⁴⁷ Matt. 7: 20.

³⁴⁸ John Gill, An Exposition of the New Testament, 2 vols. (London: William Hill Collingridge, 1853), 2: 156..

112Paul set the example in this rejoicing. He rejoiced even when he remembered his past sins (3: 6), his friends were suffering persecution (1: 28-30), and he, himself, was now a prisoner facing possible death.

"Let your moderation be known unto all men, The Lord is at hand." (v. 5).

The word translated "moderation" is epieikes. It means "forbearance, gentleness, sweet reasonableness."³⁴⁹ The word indicates a readiness to listen to reason and to yield one's rights so long as a Scriptural principle is not violated. The person who always insists on getting what he regards as his just due is not manifesting this quality. "The Christian is the man who reasons that it is far better to suffer wrong than to inflict wrong (1 Cor. 6: 7)."³⁵⁰

The Christian can cheerfully practice this principle because he knows that "the Lord is at hand." This can mean either that the Lord is near in place, emphasizing His being everywhere present and knowing all things, or it can mean He is near in time, referring to His Second Coming, The effect is the same. Because He is near, Christians can yield their rights, knowing that He will right all wrongs. He will repay.³⁵¹ He will judge righteously.³⁵² He is the Judge Who "standeth before the door."³⁵³

This moderation is to be made known "to all men," not just the brethren in the church. The practice of this moderation in the "dog-eat-dog" world is a tremendous witness of the grace of Christ in Christians.

"Be careful for nothing: But in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." (v. 6).

The expression "be careful for nothing" signifies "don't be unduly concerned about anything; don't be filled with anxiety; don't worry; don't fret." Proper concern is not a sin, but worry is a sin. The same word translated "careful" here was used by our Savior several times. He said "take

³⁴⁹ Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words. 4 vols. (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1940), II, p. 117.

³⁵⁰ William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Philippians, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, originally published, 1962), p. 193.

³⁵¹ Rom. 12: 19.

³⁵² 1 Pet. 2: 21-23.

³⁵³ James 2: 8, 9.

11 "ought for your life," and "take no thought for the morrow."³⁵⁴ He used the same word when He said to Martha, "Thou art careful and troubled about many things.³⁵⁵ When we get bogged down in worry we are sinning because we are not trusting God.

The grammatical construction employs the present imperative, which prohibits an action which is already habitually going on. So the Philippians had been worrying. Paul told them to "stop it!" "Stop being anxious," he said.

How do we keep from worrying? Pray! "Care and prayer are as mutually opposed as fire and water."³⁵⁶ So prayer is the best cure for care! "As a sovereign antidote against perplexing care he recommends to us constant prayer."³⁵⁷

When should we pray? When anything burdens our minds we must ease them by going to God in prayer. We need to have regular daily times of prayer and, in addition, we must pray upon every particular situation and emergency. See 1 Pet. 5: 7.

To pray does not mean that we will not work. Prayer will not make one lazy. But when we pray God will show us how and when and where to work. To work without praying is to become frustrated and ineffective. To pray without working usually leads to worry. Lazy Christians are usually worriers. Christians who really pray are usually so busy that they do not have time to worry! It is not work that kills men; it is worry!

B. H. Carroll gives good advice here. "First, never fret or be anxious about a thing you can help. If you can help it, just help it and quit worrying. Second, never fret about a thing you can't help, for fretting won't do any good."³⁵⁸

³⁵⁴ Matt. 6: 25, 34.

³⁵⁵ Luke 10: 41.

³⁵⁶ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments, 6 vols. (American ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), 6:436.

³⁵⁷ Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible. (Reprint ed., Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1940), 6: 744.

³⁵⁸ B. H. Carroll, An Interpretation of the English Bible, Galatians, Romans, Philippians, Philemon, (Reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1973), p. 264.

114 Let us ask a few questions about prayer. What is to be prayed over? Everything. "Nothing is too great for His power to accomplish nor too small for His love to be concerned about."³⁵⁹

In what attitude should prayer be carried out? With reverence. The word translated "prayer" is proseuche, a general word which refers to prayer to God as an act of worship and devotion.

What are we to ask for in prayer? We are to ask for specific needs to be fulfilled. The word translated "supplication" is deesis. It speaks of "imploring God's aid in some particular matter."³⁶⁰ The word "requests" refers to the specific details of the supplication. In 1 John 5: 15 it is translated "petitions." This word emphasizes the objects asked for, the things requested.

We are to speak to God about all our needs. "Use familiarity with God, tell Him as you would do a friend, freely and fully, all your needs, pour out your souls and your complaints before Him."³⁶¹

Paul exhorted the Philippians to let their requests be known "unto God," not to man. When we get in trouble we are apt to go to men for help and advice before we go to God. But we need to cultivate the habit of going to God first. Let us not fly to an arm of flesh." (See Is. 31: 1).

The requests should be accompanied with "thanksgiving." To pray without thanksgiving is to "clip the wings of prayer."³⁶² "Prayer goes up without incense when without thankfulness." Too often we are like the hog who eats the acorns but never looks up to the tree from whence they came.³⁶³ Paul begins nearly every one of his epistles with an outpouring of praise and thanksgiving to God.

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

³⁵⁹ Hendriksen, Commentary, p. 196.

³⁶⁰ J. H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), p. 126.

³⁶¹ Gill, Exposition, 2: 158.

³⁶² Robertson W. Nicoll, ed., The Expositor's Greek Testament. 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing Co., 1967), 3:467.

³⁶³ See 1 Thess. 5: 18; Eph. 5: 20; col. 3: 15; Heb. 13: 15.

115The result of believing prayer is the wonderful peace of God. Scriptures which deal with this precious peace are 2 Thess. 3: 16; John 14: 27; 16: 33; 20: 19, 21, 26.

God's peace "passes understanding." It is simply unfathomable. There is a great sea of it!³⁶⁴ This peace cannot be adequately described but it can be experienced by God's praying children. "Peace" is the soul's calm after it has been stilled by the command of the Savior. When the Lord has spoken peace, the child of God can say with the song writer, Mary A. Baker:

Master, the terror is over, The elements sweetly rest;
Earth's sun in the calm lake is mirrored, and heaven's within my
breast;
Linger, O blessed Redeemer! Leave me alone no more;
And with joy I shall make the blessed harbor,
And rest on the blissful shore.

This peace is a consequence of knowing God in prayer (Job 22: 21) and of keeping the mind stayed on Him in prayer. (Is. 26: 3).

Peace is said to "guard" the heart and mind. "Guard" is phroureo, a military term which means "to keep by guarding, to keep under guard, as with a garrison."³⁶⁵ The Philippians were accustomed to see Roman sentinels standing guard. They could easily picture God's peace guarding the hearts and thoughts of praying Christians, forbidding anxious cares from entering in.

The peace comes about through (lit. "in") Christ Jesus. "The man of trust and prayer has entered that impregnable citadel from which not man can dislodge him; and the name of that fortress is Jesus Christ."³⁶⁶

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (v. 8).

Paul now gives a catalog of the things that should habitually occupy the mind of a saint. He says, "Think on these things." "Think" is from the verb

³⁶⁴ 1 Cor. 2: 9, 10; Eph. : 20.

³⁶⁵ Vine, Dictionary, 2: 183.

³⁶⁶ Hendriksen, Commentary, p. 197.

116omai. It means here to "make these things the subject of your thoughtful consideration" or "carefully reflect on them."³⁶⁷ John Gill comments that the force of the word "think" is to "meditate upon them, revolve them in your minds, seriously consider them, and reason with yourself about them, in order to put them into practice."³⁶⁸

Habitually reflecting on such noble thoughts is bound to be good for mental health. In our sin-sick society far too many Christians are operating at a low ebb because their minds are too occupied with the filthy thoughts of the world. Indeed, Paul said that it was a shame "even to speak of those things which are done of them (i. e. the wicked) in secret." (Eph. 5: 12). The mind must be disciplined in order for it to habitually reject evil and to receive good.

The first thing to occupy the mind of the Christian is whatsoever is "true." This word is from alethes and means "unconcealed, manifest, conforming to reality."³⁶⁹This is opposed to all falsehood, lying, and hypocrisy. The devil is the father of the lie (John 8: 44), and God's Word is the truth (John 17: 17). The Christian needs to look at things and think about things not through the eyes of the world, but from God's perspective. As Jesus said to His disciples, "The truth shall make you free." (John 8: 32).

The next things to occupy the mind of the Christian are those things which are "honest." The word translated "honest" is semnos. It means "a noble seriousness."³⁷⁰ Vincent renders it "a dignity or majesty which is yet inviting and attractive, and which inspires reverence."³⁷¹ Another writer says of this word that it means "grave or venerable in speech, in action or attire, in opposition to levity, frothiness or foppery."³⁷²On the other three occasions where this word is used in the New Testament, it is translated as "grave." (1 Tim. 3: 8, 11; Tit. 2: 2). The person who has this quality "has a grace and dignity not lent him from the earth; but which he owes to that higher citizenship which is also his."³⁷³

³⁶⁷ Vine, Dictionary, 4: 127.

³⁶⁸ Gill, Exposition, 2: 158, 159.

³⁶⁹ Vincent, Dictionary, 4: 158.

³⁷⁰ Expositor's, Testament 3: 468.

³⁷¹ Vincent, Dictionary, 3: 458.

³⁷² Gill, Exposition, 2: 158.

³⁷³ Trench, R. C., Synonyms of the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing Co., 1966 (originally published in London in 1880), p. 346.

117This "heavenly dignity" is a good thing with which to occupy the mind in this irreverent age when sacred things are made light of.

The next quality that should claim the attention of the saint is "whatsoever things are just." "Just" is from dikaios. It denotes righteousness.³⁷⁴ In the practical sense in which it is used here it involves giving to God what belongs to Him, and to man what is his just due. It is striving to have a conscience "void of offense toward God and toward men." (Acts 24: 16). We should be "fair and square" with God and with men. This is a character trait that should certainly be on the mind of a child of God. If he concentrates his attention on the injustices of this present world, he will find himself becoming depressed. It is wonderful to think about the just Judge of all the earth, who does all things right. (Gen. 18: 25).

The saint should also be continually thinking of those things which are "pure." "Pure" is the translation of the Greek word hagnos, which means "pure from defilement, not contaminated, from the same root as holy."³⁷⁵ Purity in words and deeds is in opposition to all filthiness and foolish talking. It stands opposed to obscene words and actions. This is a time of gross moral impurity. The Christian will be degraded and spiritually weakened by focusing his attention on the impure words and deeds with which he is confronted daily.

The "things that are lovely" should occupy much of the thought of God's people. "Lovely" is the translation of prophiles and means "pleasing, agreeable, lovely."³⁷⁶ Wuest says that the word "speaks of that which is adapted to excite love and to endear him who does such things...winsome, pleasing, amiable."³⁷⁷ The idea is very akin to the quality of graciousness. What stark contrast this beautiful quality makes with the crudeness and rudeness with which we contend each day.

Finally, those things which are of "good report" should engage the attention of the saints. This comes from the word euphemos. It means "things spoken of in a kindly spirit, with good-will to others."³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴ Vine, Dictionary, 2: 283.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 3: 231.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 3: 23.

³⁷⁷ Kenneth S. Wuest, Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), 2:111.

³⁷⁸ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 263.

118All these good qualities seem to be summed up in the remainder of the verse, "if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise." "Virtue" is arete and means "moral excellence."³⁷⁹ The word translated "praise" is epainos and means "praiseworthy or that which is deserving of praise."³⁸⁰If the admonitions in this verse were followed conscientiously by all Christians, most of the psychiatrists and professional counselors would be put out of business!

"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." (v. 9).

Paul presented himself as an excellent example for the Philippians to follow. His teaching and his life were both worthy of imitation. he was definitely not one of those teachers who say, "Do what I say, not what I do."

He exhorted the Philippians to "do."This is from prasso, "to practice...denotes a habit."³⁸¹They were to practice the things they had learned from him and had seen him practice. If they did so, he promised that "the God of peace will be with you." God has always promised to be with His obedient children. The presence of God in a person's life insures that he will have peace.

"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." (v. 10).

Paul here begins a new section of the letter in which he emphasizes the reason that initially prompted the writing of the letter. He again considers their "fellowship in the gospel" which he had mentioned in chapter one. The Philippians had sent Paul a gift of money to help with his expenses. He now writes this letter to thank them for their gift.

He "rejoiced in the Lord greatly." Paul knew that he could do nothing without Christ. He here said that even his rejoicing was "in the Lord." Paul showed that he had an attitude of gratitude. The Philippians really owed him much for their spiritual well-being. (See Philemon 19), but he still thanked them for their gift. He graciously did this even though their gift was small in comparison to that which they truly owed him.

³⁷⁹ Vine, Dictionary, 4: 190.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 3: 198.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 1: 330.

He said that their care of him had "flourished again." The word "flourished" is from anathallo and means "to sprout again, to shoot up, to blossom again." It was as if the Philippians had lain dormant in their care of Paul. Just as a tree appears dead and lifeless in the winter, but shoots forth buds again in the spring, so signs of life appeared again among the Philippians in their care of Paul.

It was not because they had forgotten Paul, however, that they had lain dormant in their support of him. They had been "careful" of him all along. This word is in the imperfect tense and may be translated "ye were all along thoughtful." Even though they thought of him, they had "lacked opportunity." Perhaps there had been no messenger available or maybe they had been financially unable. The reason is not specified, but it is worth noting that Paul was very charitable in his interpretation of their failure to supply his needs. He assumed their failure was due to circumstances beyond their control.

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." (v. 11).

After Paul had thanked them for their gift he quickly let them know that he was not overly fond of money, nor did he doubt God's ability to take care of his needs. He made plain in verse seventeen that the reason he rejoiced in their gift was the fact that he knew they would reap a great blessing from giving it.

He did not speak because of circumstances because he had learned to be content in all circumstances. The "I" is emphatic. It has the idea of "I have learned this no matter what others have learned." He had "learned" to be content. This contentment was not some grace that Paul had been endowed with, that had not been given to others. Paul had not always had this sense of contentment. He had learned to be this way. He had learned this in his long experience of walking with and trusting Christ. He had learned this lesson in Christ's school of obedience. This had been, no doubt, a difficult lesson to learn. Paul had probably been reared in the lap of luxury, and had never known want as a young man.

He had learned to always be "content." The word "content" is translated from autarkes and means "self-sufficient, adequate, needing no assistance;

120e, content.^{"382} It means "independent of external circumstances."^{"383}The noun form is used in 1 Tim. 6: 6. The verb is used in 1 Tim. 6: 8 and Heb. 13: 5. The word was used by Stoic philosophers to express their belief that man should be sufficient in himself for all things. They taught that by the power of his will man could resist all circumstances. He should be moved by neither pleasure nor pain.

"But Paul's self-sufficiency was not of the Stoic kind. it was Christ-sufficiency...he found his sufficiency in Christ. He was independent of circumstances because he was dependent upon Christ."^{"384}

Paul learned that the sources of our happiness are never found in external circumstances. Rather, they are discovered in close communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are alright inside, the external things can't disturb our happiness.

"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." (v. 12).

Paul said that he knew how to be "abased." Literally, he knew how to be "brought low." He had been brought low in many ways. He had suffered hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness, physical suffering, mental torture, and persecution among many other things.^{"385} Paul knew how to "take it" in the strength of Christ!

Paul had the ability to keep himself low in respect to the needs of daily life. He knew how to live on a very small income.

He also knew how to "abound." The word translated "abound" means "to overflow." Paul knew what it was to live on a little, and also to have much more than he could use. He had been blessed with plenty on several occasions. See Acts 16: 15, 33, 34; 28: 2, 30; Phil. 4: 16, 18.

³⁸² Ibid., 1: 234.

³⁸³ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 85.

³⁸⁴ Wuest, Word Studies, 2: 11.

³⁸⁵ See Acts 14: 19; 16: 22-25; 17: 13; 18: 12; 21: 28; 2 Cor. 4: 8-11; 6: 4, 5, 9, 10; 11: 23-33.

121It is sometimes harder to learn how to abound properly than it is to learn how to be abased. See Prov. 30: 8, 9; Mark 10: 23-25. As the old adage goes, "In order to carry a full cup one must have a steady hand."

Paul said that he was "instructed" to do these things. This is from the Greek verb mueo. The word was used originally concerning the initiation rites of the pagan mystery religions. It meant "to learn the secret." The secret, of course, an uninitiated outsider couldn't know. Thayer translates this way: "in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled, etc."³⁸⁶This was a far different matter than a pagan religious experience. However, it is true that no one can understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God except those who have been initiated into them by the regenerating grace of God. To those who fear Him God reveals Himself and His sufficiency. (Ps. 25: 14). Those who are not the Lord's cannot understand how it is possible for a Christian to remain calm in adversity and humble in prosperity.

Christ was Paul's Fountain of sufficiency. That Fountain never ran dry, no matter what the circumstances were.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (v. 13).

The word "strengtheneth" in the original is a present tense participle. This denotes a continual acting. It is as if Paul had said, "Through Christ, who is strengthening me, and does continually strengthen me; it is by his constant and renewed strength I am enabled to act in everything; I wholly depend upon him for all my spiritual power."³⁸⁷

The word means "to empower, to pour power into one." Paul had this continual strength so long as Christ kept putting power into him. See 1 Tim. 1: 12; John 15: 5; 2 Cor. 12: 10.

Paul gave Christ all the praise and credit for any good found in his life. See Eph. 3: 16; 6: 10; 2 Tim. 2: 1.

"Notwithstanding, ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction." (v. 14).

³⁸⁶ Thayer, Lexicon, p. 419.

³⁸⁷ Henry, Commentary, 6:746.

122Paul let the church know that he greatly appreciated their gift, even though he was entirely sufficient in Christ. The Philippians had done well in sending him this gift. (See Mk. 14: 6). The words "communicate with my affliction" can be rendered "having fellowship in my tribulation." "It is a good thing to succour and help a good minister in trouble."³⁸⁸

"Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. (vs. 15, 16).

The Philippians had helped Paul financially from the very first time that he had preached the gospel to them. Lydia and the jailer had shown Christian hospitality to him at the very start. (See Acts 16: 15, 34, 40). Then, when he had left Philippi and gone to Thessalonica (Acts 17: 14), the Philippians had sent "once and again" gifts of love to him. Almost before he was out of sight they had more than once sent him help! He had been in Thessalonica for about three weeks after he left Philippi and yet they had sent him financial support more than once in that short period of time!

Later, when Paul had departed from the province of Macedonia (Thessalonica and Berea were in Macedonia), the Philippians proved to be consistent in their support of him. From Macedonia Paul went into Achaia, the province that contained Athens and Corinth. While he was there the Philippians continued to support him as he labored in the gospel. (2 Cor. 11: 8, 9).

Not only did this blessed little church help Paul in his capacity as a minister of the gospel, but they also took up a collection for the poverty-stricken saints at Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8: 1-5). See also Rom. 15: 25-28. The apostles were very concerned that the Christians constantly remember their brethren in need in a tangible way. (Gal. 2: 10).

The Lord gave directions as to how these collections should be made. (1 Cor. 16: 1-4). Many of the early churches were very unselfish and were filled with a liberal spirit of giving. (See Acts 2: 44, 45; 4: 32-37). God is highly pleased with this attitude. The Bible says, "God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9: 7). The great motive of Christian giving should be the love that saints have for Christ, Who gave His all for them. (2 Cor. 8: 9).

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

The word "communicated with me" can be translated "had fellowship with me." The expression "concerning giving and receiving" can be rendered "with regard to an account of giving and receiving." These are financial terms in the Greek language. Paul may have been speaking somewhat humorously, but he also may have been gently reminding the Philippians that, "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" (1 Cor. 9: 11). The whole of the context has a coloring of financial terminology. Paul had bestowed on them priceless spiritual gifts. It was only squaring the account that he should receive material blessings from them.

Paul said that no other church had communicated with him as had the Philippians. But they didn't look around at what others were doing. They simply did what they knew was right before God.

"Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." (v. 17).

While Paul thanked the Philippians for their gifts, he was quick to add that he was in no sense covetous. He was not interested in his own benefit, but in theirs. He was possibly also defending himself against those who slanderously accused him of preaching from a motive of greed.

It was not the actual gift which brought Paul joy, so much as it was the act of giving.

The words "may abound to your account" are terms used in the money markets of that day. They carry the idea of "interest that may accumulate to your account." The gift which they had sent Paul was actually an investment entered as a credit on the divine account. A Christian just cannot out give God!³⁸⁹

Among the fruits harvested by such givers are: a good conscience, assurance of salvation, enriched fellowship with other Christians, increased joy and love, a "well done my good and faithful servant" at the Judgment Seat of Christ. (2 Cor. 5: 10).

³⁸⁹ See Prov. 11: 25; 19: 17; Matt. 5: 7; Lk. 6: 38; 21: 1-4; 2 Cor. 9: 7; Heb. 6: 10.

124"But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." (v. 18).

Paul continues here his use of technical financial terms. The words "I have all are from apecho. This word was regularly used in the time of Paul in the sense of "receipt in full."³⁹⁰ So Paul is saying "I have received full payment and abound. This letter is my receipt."

The Philippians' gift was a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God. When Christians give to God's servants and to God's needy people, they are giving to God! See Matt. 25: 40; Acts 10: 4.

When the designated priests in the Old Testament offered acceptable sacrifices to God, He accepted them as if they were a sweet smell to Him. See Gen. 8: 21; Lev. 1: 9, 13, 17.

All New Testament believers are priests who are qualified to offer acceptable sacrifices. (1 Pet. 2: 5). One of the sacrifices with which God is well-pleased is financial assistance to those who are in need. (Heb. 13: 16). The believer-priests can offer up these acceptable sacrifices only by virtue of their union with the Lord Jesus Christ. The blessed Lamb of God was the sweetest smelling sacrifice of them all! (Eph. 5: 2).

Epaphroditus was the messenger who had brought the gift from the Philippians to Paul.

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (v. 19).

Paul could not repay the Philippians for their kindness but God could and would! Paul was an ambassador of Christ and God would pay all his bills! (Eph. 6: 20). God would repay what had been done for His servant for the gospel's sake. When one befriends a servant of God, or, for that matter, any child of God, he will receive a reward. (Matt. 10: 40-42).

³⁹⁰ Deissman, Adolf., Light from the Ancient East, (Grand Rapids: Wm. Baker Book House, 1965 (originally published in London in 1910), pp 111, 112. Moulton, J. H. and G. Milligan. Vocabulary of the Greek Testament. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997. (Originally published in 1930 by Hodder and Stoughton in London), 9. 57.

125Not only will God supply the eternal needs of His children, but also their temporal needs. He will do so in an abundant fashion. The word translated "will supply" means "will fill up." He supplies the needs of His people "according to His riches in glory." He Who is infinitely wealthy will give to His children accordingly. He will take care of "all" their needs.³⁹¹

This does not mean that the child of God should be lazy. God often uses people as instruments of His blessings to others. Even now God was supplying Paul's needs, and He was doing so through the gifts of the Philippians.

"Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever Amen." (v. 20).

Paul, as we all should, gives God all the glory. He receives none, nor does the church at Philippi. Paul's greatest desire is that the saints continually and perpetually glorify God. Those among whom he is chiefly glorified are those in His true assembly, the New Testament church.³⁹²

The saints will have the happy privilege of glorifying God "forever and ever." The literal translation of this expression is "into the ages of the ages." Eternity simply cannot be adequately expressed in our language, which is linked to time.

God is also the "Father" of His children. We should look upon Him, even in our weakness and fears, not as a tyrant or an enemy, but as our precious Father, Who pities and helps us. (Ps. 103: 13).

This verse is really a doxology. For Paul, doctrine is never a dry, dull matter. Whenever the doctrine of God occupied Paul's mind, it also filled him with praise! So should it do with all of us.

"Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you." (v. 21).

Christians are to lovingly "salute" or "greet" one another. We are to let our brethren know that we are interested in their welfare. Churches should be on a very friendly basis with each other and should help one another when possible.

³⁹¹ See Ps. 23: 1; Rom. 8: 32; 1 Cor. 3: 21-23.

³⁹² See Eph. 3: 21.

"All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household." (v. 22).

Those who were with Paul sent their greeting to the Philippians. Some of them were of Caesar's household. This refers not to Nero's actual family, but to those servants who were connected to the imperial establishment. The reference is to slaves, freedmen, and even highly-placed governmental officials. These Christians had probably been converted through Paul's ministry while he was a prisoner in the praetorian barracks which was attached to the palace.

The apostle had planted the seeds of the gospel in Caesar's household! He has since won more fame than all the Caesars combined. Nero finally executed Paul and shortly afterward committed suicide. Nero's star went down. Paul's star rose and still rises!

These converted pagans, still living in a pagan environment in which many people worshipped the emperor as a god, remained true to their Lord. They spread the gospel to others and helped Paul. They did this in spite of their difficult environment.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." (v. 23).

This is a wonderful benediction that Paul offered on behalf of the Philippian saints. What better wish could we have for our fellow Christians than that the grace of Christ should continually rest on them?

This benediction was the same that Paul used to close all his epistles. He wrote each of these closings with his own hand. That was his "signature" which placed the stamp of genuineness on his epistles, showing that they were actually his.³⁹³

³⁹³ See 2 Thess. 3:" 17, 18; 2 Tim. 4: 22; 1 Thess. 5: 28; 1 Cor. 16: 23; Gal. 6: 18; Rom. 16: 20; 2 Cor. 13: 14; Philemon 25.

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