



“The righteous . . . shall grow
like a cedar in Lebanon”

Psalm 92:12

Reading Companion
to the Book of
Philippians

*“So they read in the book in the law of God . . .
and caused them to understand the reading”*

Nehemiah 8:8

By
Bill Daniels

Preface

The contents of this book were part of a course taught in the Bible College at New Germany Baptist Church in 2008. In order to present these materials in a form more readily available for further class use we have kept the class divisions used in the course. Therefore listed separately on the following Contents page you will find the starting pages for the 10 class portions as well as for the 4 chapters of the book of Philippians.

May the Lord take you far beyond what I ever could through my feeble efforts, in stirring and encouraging your heart through the study of Paul's powerful epistle to the church at Philippi. God is both able and willing to bless as we earnestly pursue Him in His eternal words.

*“My son, if thou wilt receive My words,
and hide My commandments with thee;
So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom,
and apply thine heart to understanding;
Yea, if thou criest after knowledge,
and liftest up thy voice for understanding;
If thou seekest her as silver,
and searchest for her as for hid treasures;
Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD,
and find the knowledge of God.” (Prov. 2:1-5)*

Bill Daniels

Our **Reading Companions** are simple commentaries, covering various books of the Bible, providing easy to follow help in understanding what you read in your Bible, without becoming overly technical. These Bible study books are earnestly taught, practically applied, and have been a blessing to many.

Reading Companions are available in this series on;

Genesis
Joshua
Ruth
I Samuel
II Samuel
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon
Isaiah
Daniel
Jonah
Habakkuk
Haggai
Zechariah
Romans
I Corinthians
II Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
Hebrews
Revelation

As well as; “Through the Beloved Book of Books
A Survey of the New Testament”

Contents

Classes

Class 1 – Introduction	1
Class 2 – 1:1-11	15
Class 3 – 1:12-26	33
Class 4 – 1:27-2:8	51
Class 5 – 2:9-18	67
Class 6 – 2:19-30	83
Class 7 – 3:1-10	99
Class 8 – 3:11-21	117
Class 9 – 4:1-9	135
Class 10 – 4:10-23	153

Chapters

Chapter 1	15
Chapter 2	56
Chapter 3	99
Chapter 4	135

“For to me
to live is Christ,
and to die is gain”

(Phil. 1:21)

Class 1 – Introduction

This book of Philippians is the epistle of rejoicing. *“The brightest and most joyful of all Paul’s writings”* was Irving Jensen’s comment. We find the words “joy” or “rejoicing” 17 times within the 4 short chapters of this book. Obviously an important theme. And truly happy is the one who digs deep into the treasures of this little gold mine and *“getteth understanding”* thereby. Jesus said of the truth of God’s words, *“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them”* (John 13:17). Great and happy answers to great questions of life come through the knowing and doing of what is available within these pages. The joy and contentment offered here is really the essence of what every soul on earth is seeking.

Another key phrase in this book of Philippians is *“in Christ”*. The same is true of Ephesians. True rejoicing is only found *“in Christ”*, and every trouble, trial, and trauma of every unsaved existence is designed to press that soul relentlessly toward the discovery of that happy hiding place.

This is another of the four Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon). So again, the time of the writing of Philippians, as with all four Prison Epistles, was during the days of

Paul's first prison term in Rome, falling within the last 16 verses of the book of Acts. It was about 61 A.D., with Paul about 65 years of age. In this we see such a brilliant example of a true Christian experience, that Paul could write this, his brightest and most joy-filled letter, while an old man in detention at Rome under threat of possible death and surrounded by enemies! Any place on earth becomes a house of praise when our heart is as Paul's was, "*in Christ*" and in pursuit of Christ. Satan might have the ability to change a man's status. It might be granted him to "deteriorate" a man's condition, as Paul's, keeping him in bondage, denying him freedom to travel, clipping his wings for a time physically. But Satan never has the power to change a man's state of mind or position in Christ as a more-than-conqueror. Status and condition, yes. State and position, no! These are matters between a soul and his Saviour, untouchable by any earthly source. Satan has no power over these except what a man gives him, a man fearing things other than God alone.

The City

Paul wrote this epistle "*to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi*" (1:1). Philippi was a city of the Roman province of Macedonia on that famous ancient highway called the Via Egnatia, or

Egnatian Way. Luke referred to this city as “*the chief city of that part of Macedonia*” (Acts 16:12). Consider how Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus were all chief cities of their areas as well. Paul tended to concentrate his work in the main city centres of the provinces in which he worked. Philippi was apparently a wealthy city, known for its gold and silver mines and possessing exceptionally fertile soil. There was a reputable school of medicine located there as well, perhaps having something to do with Dr. Luke’s residence in that city.

The Church

The church at Philippi was the first church established directly by Paul and company on the continent of Europe, and this during his 2nd missionary journey. That beginning in Europe was through the clear direction of the Holy Spirit as revealed in Acts 16. Doors were closed to Asia and to the east as Paul and his team moved westward across Asia Minor, until they came down to the coast at Troas on the Aegean Sea. There the Lord spoke to Paul through a night vision of a man calling for their help across the sea in Macedonia, the famous “Macedonian Call”. It seems likely that that vision was followed up in the morning with Dr. Luke knocking at the door, there to ask for Paul’s help over in Philippi. Compare the Lord’s approach

with Peter in Acts 10. We can see from subtle indications in the Acts account that Luke lived in Philippi and joined Paul's company there in Troas before they sailed across to begin work in his city;

- Acts 16:7-13 – Luke join's Paul (*"they"* to *"we"*).
- Acts 17:1ff – Luke stays behind in Philippi (*"they"*).
- Acts 20:5-6 – Luke rejoins as they pass through Philippi again (*"us"*).

The record of the formation of this church and of its charter members is found in Acts 16;

- Acts 16:14-15 – Lydia with her household. Lydia was a business woman (seller of purple dye) from Thyatira and a Jewish proselyte. The Lord opened her heart to believe the gospel when Paul addressed a Sabbath prayer meeting by a river side soon after their arrival there. This Sabbath meeting outside of town probably indicates there was no synagogue in the city. This perhaps because there was not a large enough Jewish population there to warrant the formation of one. The generous way of this first convert in offering her home to the missionaries was carried into the way of this church into the future.

Note that there was no delay in baptism when Lydia believed on Jesus.

- Acts 16:16-18 – Demon-possessed girl. An unnamed slave girl lost her supernatural ability to tell the future when Paul cast a demon out of her. Apparently she was also saved. Those profiting from her demonic ability, in anger for their loss, falsely accused Paul and Silas before the magistrates. The two were beaten and imprisoned.
- Acts 16:25-34 – Jailer with his household. The unnamed jail keeper was shaken, with the prison house, by a midnight earthquake. He was rescued through Paul's words from certain death, to life and then to life eternal.

Can you imagine how this bright and happy letter written by Paul from prison must have affected that jailor? He himself was saved through Paul's joyful midnight hymn-sing in the jail at Philippi. He had seen first-hand that neither beatings nor bonds could rob the rejoicing of a truly Spirit-filled believer.

- As mentioned earlier, Dr. Luke must have been involved from the beginning stages of this church as well.

It seems Paul maintained an especially close

relationship with this church throughout the remaining years of his life. Unlike so many in Galatia and Corinth, the believers at Philippi were never persuaded away from their first love for Paul. They were very given to helping Paul with financial gifts and had done so repeatedly (4:15-16). This church would have been among those “*churches of Macedonia*” Paul held up to the believers at Corinth as examples of generosity in II Cor. 8. And when they heard that Paul was in a Roman prison they again sent aid by the hand of Epaphroditus, the occasion that gave rise to this letter. A good turn of gracious giving resulted in an epistle of greatest blessing throughout the age.

Purpose

There does not seem to have been any significant need of a negative nature for the writing of this epistle, no serious problem needing Paul’s urgent counsel. The letter rather comes across as a simple, friendly expression of his love. The following general purposes are evident;

- On the surface it was a thank you note for their gift and thoughtfulness (4:10-19). It seems a man named Epaphroditus carried their money gift to Paul in Rome. While there his life was threatened by a very serious

illness. When he had at last recovered Epaphroditus carried this epistle, Paul's word of thanks, back with him to Philippi.

- Paul used the occasion to attempt to iron out a small dissension (4:2-3). Compare the great focus on unity through humility (1:27-2:3). Satan, that prince of pride, ever seeks to sow discord in God's church. "*Only by pride cometh contention*". How very opposite the lowly nature of Christ.
- Paul informed them of his plans (2:19-24).
- He gave instruction and examples in;
 - o A life lived for Christ (1:20-21; 3:7-14). "*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (1:21).
 - o A life lived for others (chap. 2). "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*" (2:5), striking a blow at the core cause of most church troubles.
 - o All Scripture was written for our instruction and correction (II Tim. 3:16-17).
- As always Paul did not miss the opportunity to lift up Jesus Christ. In relating Christ's example Paul succeeds in holding Him high

before his readers. Jesus is presented as the lowly yet exalted One in chap. 2. He is shown as the supreme Object of search for the holy heart in chap. 3. In godly quest of Christ self is soon forgotten and the glory of God and good of others become the highest purposes of the saints. Such will result in;

- Delight in the gospel preached, no matter who, how, where, or why (chap. 1).
- A humble servant attitude (chap. 2).
- Godly aspirations (chap. 3).
- Right and healthy thinking (chap. 4).

Survey

Chapter 1 – Testimony of a Life Lived Above the World.

The key verse of the book and theme of Paul's life is 1:21, "*for to me to live is Christ*". There is no triumph or rejoicing outside of Jesus Christ. Paul was surrounded by trouble (captivity, enemies, threat of death), yet above it all he arose as on wings of eagles;

- Still loving (vs. 3-8).

- Still praying (vs. 9-11). Paul's prayer for them was not just an occasional thing ("*every*", "*always*", "*every*", "*all*", vs. 3-4). His requests were specific;
 - Abounding love (vs. 9).
 - Excellent choices (vs. 9-10).
 - Sincere and blameless (vs. 10).
 - Fruits of righteousness to the fullest (vs. 11).
- Still preaching (vs. 12-18). The gospel was not hindered but furthered by his bonds, through himself and others. Compare Acts 28:30-31. God is able to turn every stumbling stone of sin and Satan to a stepping stone. The situation referred to in vs. 15-16 seems to speak not of wrong *message* or *method* but only of wrong *motive*.
- Still encouraged, even in the prospect of possible death (vs. 19-26).
- Still passionate (vs. 20). His one consuming passion was that Christ be magnified in his body.

Chapter 2 – Examples of Lives Lived for Others.

There is strong focus on *unity* (from 1:27) and *servanthood* in this section. These virtues arise out of genuine humility.

- 2:6-11 – Christ’s sacrifice;
 - His *humiliation* (vs. 6-8). He didn’t have to be seen for who He is. Look for six steps down here.
 - His *exaltation* (vs. 9-11). God exalted Him in due time. Quoted from Isa. 45:23.
 - This is a key portion on the doctrine of Christ. Literally “He emptied (kenosis) Himself having taken the form of a servant”. Emptied Himself of what? Some think Jesus emptied Himself of deity in His 1st coming. Some think He surrendered the use of some of His divine attributes. The King James translation (KJV) is good in that He “*made Himself of no reputation*”. “He emptied Himself (of His evident deity) having taken the form of a servant”. The point is Jesus gave up His visible, evident, obvious glory, all that became visible on the Mt. of Transfiguration. He didn’t have to be seen for who He is.

Here is the principle of humility or meekness.

- 2:19-22 – Timothy’s service. He didn’t have to
run his own programme. His only purpose was to serve. And he received for this the praise of both God and man.
- 2:25-30 – Epaphroditus’ sickness. He didn’t have to live for his own best interests. Again, for this he received the praise of both God and man.

Chapters 3-4 – Exhortations.

Chapter 3 – Paul’s purposes;

- *“That I might win Christ”* (vs. 8). True reward! He cast off all that men might consider important and sought only the praise of Christ.
- *“That I may know Him”* (vs. 10). True sanctification. Here is the right and proper use of our God-given minds (compare Rom. 1).
- *“That I might apprehend”* (vs. 12). True follower. Paul was the first to admit that he had not “arrived”, but he was a most earnest

pursuer.

Here are the secrets of the heart of a true spiritual giant. Compare Moses (Ex. 33). Compare David, that man after God's own heart. Contrast the heart of the natural man, who will not even retain the remembrance of God (Rom. 1).

Chapter 4 – The power of the right use of our minds (the great battlefield). The true test of what a man is and will become is not so much a matter of what he says or does, but what he *thinks*! If we are obedient to the Lord's command, keeping our minds fixed on right things, we ensure that the peace of God shall keep our minds (vs. 7) and the God of peace shall be with us (vs. 9). Virtue and praise will fill and flow from such well-kept hearts, rather than bitterness and anxiety. Compare Prov. 4:23. And here is precisely how Paul himself comes out the end of this epistle; with rejoicing (4:10), thanksgiving (4:14-18), contentment (4:11) and praise (4:20). In Christ Paul was *sufficient* in all things (vs. 11) and *able* for all things (vs. 13).

Note that we don't have a blanket promise to all in 4:19. The promise was spoken to those who were given to the Lord and giving to others. The promise assumes both *givenness* and *giving*. Compare II Cor. 9:6ff.

.....

Another thought on viewing this book of Philippians;

- Chap. 1 – Christ is our everything – In life and death.
- Chap. 2 – Christ is our example.
- Chap. 3 – Christ is our endeavour – To win, know, and apprehend Him.
- Chap. 4 – Christ is our enjoyment – Our rejoicing, peace, contentment is in a mind stayed on Him.

.....

Note well Paul's unalterably positive attitude;

Chap. 1 – Soaring above all obstacles.

Chap. 2 – Selfless toward others.

Chap. 3 – Seeking only Christ.

Chap. 4 – Satisfied always.

Paul was such a happy man!! Compare II Cor. 11:23-29. No circumstance removed his joy.

.....

Note three things surpassing (huperecho);

- A surpassing *interest* – others (2:3).
- Surpassing *knowledge* – Christ (3:8).
- Surpassing *peace* – yours? (4:7).

Class 2 – Philippians 1:1-11

Bible scholars tend to see the 13 epistles of Paul arranged according to themes;

- Romans, I & II Corinthians, and Galatians given to a prevailing theme of salvation (soteriological).
- The Prison Epistles of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon with the particular theme of Christ (Christological).
- The two books to the Thessalonians strongly oriented toward future things (eschatological).
- The three Pastoral Epistles of I & II Timothy and Titus relating particularly to matters of the church (ecclesiological).

During Paul's months in a Roman prison, and in writing four of his epistles from there, his mind was ever stayed on Jesus Christ. Again, his most joy-filled communication in this book of Philippians was written while under Roman bondage. The load of hard times was lightened and even lifted through a heart focused aright.

- 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:*
1:2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
-

Chapter 1

1:1-2 – Greetings.

Vs. 1 – “*Paul and Timotheus*” – Timothy was that young man enlisted by Paul for the Lord’s service from the area of Lystra and Derbe on Paul’s 2nd missionary journey through Asia Minor and beyond. Paul was given to collecting and training such faithful men along the way, gradually working them into leadership positions. Timothy was a young man (I Tim. 4:12), a timid man (II Tim. 1:7), and a faithful man (Phil. 2:19ff). Though Paul was a man greatly used of God, he never stood aloof from fellow labourers but rather gave much of his time to the nurturing of future leaders. In this Paul becomes a model for older servants in the Lord’s work, taking a personal interest in less experienced though faithful younger servants. Compare Moses with Joshua and Elijah with Elisha.

Paul usually mentioned his apostleship in his

opening greetings, holding up to his readers his God-appointed authority. Not so in this epistle, apparently because of the very personal and bright occasion for writing, without mixed feelings of grief or concern and thus without need to highlight his authority in order to bring correction.

“The servants of Jesus Christ” – *“Servants”* here is the Greek word *doulos* or slave. This is not one who is hired but one who is owned, purchased with the precious blood of Jesus Christ and thus gladly owned by Him. Compare Ex. 21. In response to the grace of God in Jesus these *“servants of Jesus Christ”* had renounced all right to their own will and were wholly given to His. *Happy service!*

“To all the saints in Christ Jesus” – *“Saints”* is the New Testament (N.T.) term for all believers in Jesus. It does not describe any special class of believer but all who are “set-apart” for God through faith in Jesus Christ. The term refers only to the believer's *position* before God rather than his *practice* before men. *“In Christ Jesus”* is that very common N.T. expression describing our happy position of salvation and safety. At the moment of every soul's salvation he is baptized with the Spirit into the body of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 12:13), placing him *“in Christ”*. This after the image of Noah and family

1:3 *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,*
1:4 *Always in every prayer of mine for you all making*
request with joy,

safe *in the ark* from the fearful storm of God's judgment outside, or as a Jewish family safe *in the house* under the lamb's blood on the door at Passover, without fear of the death angel's strike.

"With the bishops and deacons" – Here are the two officers appointed to the N.T. church. The bishop (*episkopos*) is an overseer as the Greek word implies. He is also referred to as an elder (*presbuteros*) and one shepherding God's people (I Pet. 5). Deacons (*diakonos*) are servants of the church, as the word behind implies. They are men given to the care of more practical concerns, but their position rises to spiritual ministry as well. Compare Acts 6. The qualifications for both of these leaders are given in I Tim. 3.

1:3-11 – Gratitude, Love, and Prayer.

Vs. 3-4 – Paul was a happy man. In no other epistle does that become more evident than in this one. He was happy;

- In prayer for the saints (vs. 4). Prayer was no

drudgery or heartless list, but Paul's pleasure and privilege. For him it was truly a "Sweet Hour of Prayer".

- In the preaching of Christ (vs. 18). Regardless of motives.
- In the unity of the church (2:2).
- In his own personal sacrifice (2:17).
- In Christ Jesus (3:3).
- In the fruits of his ministry (4:1; I Thess. 2:19).

I have always been so very impressed with the Lord's work in and through this happy man. In Paul's love and appreciation for believers we see a reflection of God in His care for the saints. The prophet Zephaniah said of God, "*He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing*" (3:17). Even so God was doing the same through this apostle for those saints at Philippi. "*Every remembrance*" of them brought a sense of gratitude. This was not just an occasional thing. Many years had passed since he had been with them, yet still they held such a prominent place in his thoughts. Again this is a reflection of God. This is God's kind of persistent, pursuing care. There is such love and thoughtfulness in Him

for His own. The all inclusiveness of Paul's words ("every", "always", "every", "you all") expresses detailed, individual, personal interest in each one. Through all the years of ministry since leaving them Paul carried those people in his heart and on his lips in prayer. See in this loving apostle the shadow of Jesus ever living to make intercession for His saints (Heb. 7:25).

Not only does Paul give thanks for them and pray for them, but he seems to find great joy in telling them about doing so. In the same wonderful way the Lord delights to bless His children, *and* He delights to bless them with the knowledge and promise of His blessing. It's what God's prophecies are all about. Filling the saints with hope right now in their great confidence upon good things future. As well, not only did Paul feel deep emotion for these people, He wasn't shy about telling them. He loved them, and he loved them out loud!

Now look well at a man so full of joy and ask yourself why. Is it not because he was so focused upon others as the servant of all? *"The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends"* (Job 42:10). Selfishness attempts in vain to hold onto joy. But such a response to life only robs one of joy. True joy and deliverance is found only in the

*1:5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day
until now;*

selfless service of others. When you're unhappy there is something you can know. You're running on the selfish track in some sense.

Vs. 5 – *“For your fellowship in the gospel”* – Paul refers to many vital Christian things by this little phrase *“fellowship in the gospel”*. He rejoiced in their partnership in the benefits of the gospel, their inclusion in Christ's body and all that is ours in Him. There was no shred of exclusiveness in Paul. As he said to the Thessalonian believers, his hope and joy and *“crown of rejoicing”* was *“ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming. For ye are our glory and joy”* (I Thess. 2:19-20). Every gain was a fight. Therefore every gain was delight! Just as with those churches where Timothy was nurtured, even so these believers at Philippi were not born into God's family without a most painful struggle, as Acts 16 relates. But every caring mother soon loses sight of the pain of childbirth for the gain of that child born into the family.

“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing

his sheaves with him” (Ps. 126:5-6).

But as well, by their *“fellowship in the gospel”* Paul referred to their sharing with him financially from the beginning of their spiritual birth. Within a matter of weeks after their salvation this church had *“sent once and again”* toward Paul’s needs in the next city in which he was working (4:16). They were given to care and hospitality toward God’s servants from the point of their new birth and ever after (see in Acts 16 the hospitality of both Lydia and the jailor). It’s what the writer of Hebrews is talking about when he says, *“But to do good and to communicate [fellowship or share] forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”* (13:16).

Then they had fellowshiped or joined with Paul in sympathy, coming up alongside of him in his bonds. They were aware and there with him through their messenger, Epaphroditus, again with a care package of financial help from them in his hand. They lived God’s words, *“Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it”* (I Cor. 12:26). *“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds”* (Heb. 10:34). *“A brother is born for adversity”* (Prov. 17:17).

Finally they had fellowshiped or joined with Paul

1:6 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:

in the furtherance of the gospel, they themselves taking the gospel further to those around them as well.

So they had joined with Paul in salvation, in financial support of his ministry, in sympathy for him in his time of trial, and in the spread of the gospel (salvation, support, sympathy, and sowing). In all of these types of “fellowship” we must take part as well. You must be in Christ. You must support His work. You must care for His saints. You must forward His message. H.A. Ironside wrote, “An assembly of saints walking together in the fear of the Lord, exercised about holding forth the Word of Life to the unsaved, is likely to know more of real fellowship than a company of believers occupied chiefly with their own affairs, their own blessings – all about themselves”.

Vs. 6 – “*He which hath begun a good work in you*” – Paul was convinced of the faithfulness of God. He speaks of “He which”, not “that which”, as if referring to some inanimate power or law or principle. Our assurance rests squarely upon the

faithfulness of God to do as He said. Nothing else! If God were not faithful to His words we would have no hope. In I Cor. 1:7-9 Paul spoke of *“our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful”*. In Heb. 12:2 Jesus is described as both *“the Author and Finisher of our faith”*. He finishes what He begins. In Jude 24 we read of *“Him [not us] that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy”*. Paul founded his hope on the faithfulness of God, because *“Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds”* (Ps. 35:5), and *“He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself”* (II Tim. 2:13), and *“great is Thy faithfulness”* (Lam. 3:23). When folks believe we can lose our salvation, in what or whose faithfulness are they trusting? We cannot be faithful, and God cannot be otherwise! So what are we saying when we suppose our salvation could be lost?

“Will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” – *“Perform”* here is in the sense of accomplish or perfect or carry through to completion. God begins nothing without intending its completion (Lk. 14:25-33). When has He ever done things by halves? His very name is *“Alpha and Omega, the*

beginning and the ending” (Rev. 1:8). Not only will He never leave nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5), not only can we not possibly perish (Jn. 10:28), but God will bring His work in us through to completion and perfection (*“faultless”*), for this He has promised. God has the wonderful ability to see people as they will be when His work in them is done, a foresight we are wise to seek to develop. Barnabas had this capacity. He saw a valuable soldier of Christ in a redeemed Saul of Tarsus. We too often fill our vision with the present imperfections in others and lose track of the future possibilities. We must be as the sculptor who sees the beautiful statue in the rough-cut rock, or as the landscaper seeing beyond the barrenness and dirt mounds to the flourishing lawns and plantings which will come in time. In *“the day of Jesus Christ”* all will be conformed to the image of His dear Son. But today we are all still in a state of becoming, the grass still growing, and the plantings only just beginning to shoot up.

On the other hand we must be careful to avoid that common bumper sticker attitude, “Please be patient. God isn’t finished with me yet!” I’ve always considered this a rather excusing kind of mentality, like “keep your personal concerns and judgmental comments to yourself! I’m still enjoying my carnality for the moment, thank you!” It’s an

- 1:7 *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 defence and confirmation of the
gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.*
- 1:8 *For God is my record, how greatly I long after you
all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.*
-

attitude inconsistent with a sold out longing to deal with every fault in us for the glory of our God. Perhaps a better statement (if we need one) would be, “Please be gracious to help me see where God hasn’t finished with me yet.”

Vs. 7-8 – Paul expresses a special union between himself and the believers at Philippi; because they had so thoughtfully come to him in sympathy and tangible help in the trial of his bonds, bonds he was suffering only because of his “*defence and confirmation of the gospel*”, because they had made themselves sharers in his suffering in ministry, therefore they would be sharers in his grace as well. He seems to speak of their share in rewards for his earthly service for Christ. What he would one day receive from God they would have a part in as the partners they had made themselves to him in their care.

“How greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ” – There was such a powerful, tender

*1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more
and more in knowledge and in all judgment;*

yearning in him for them. “*Bowels*” refers to the seat of affections, as we might today speak of the heart. When yearning in love for another we feel it in the core of our being. This yearning love for them Paul associates with or attributes to Jesus Christ. We don’t naturally love others in a selfless way. When God’s kind of love is in us it has arisen from Christ in us. Paul recognized that it was Christ within him who was loving others through him.

Do you see how the apostle comes without any trace of the dictator, never lording his authority over the flock? He comes rather as the passionate caring shepherd. See Jesus in the way of this man. More praying and yearning than demanding in sternness.

Vs. 9-11 – “*And this I pray*” – As Paul commonly does in his epistles, he now begins to relate the nature of his caring prayers for them.

Vs. 9 – He prays for their abounding love – He prays not only that their lives would be characterized by

love, but love expanding in abundance. This is *agape* love. A volitional or decision oriented love. And therefore it's the kind of love that can be and is commanded. It's not so much sentimentality or emotional attachment or warm appreciation. Rather it's a love that seeks the very highest good of the other regardless of response, or lack of it. It's the love commanded of husband for wife (Eph. 5:25) and of believers for others (Jn. 13:34), even for enemies (Matt. 5:44). It's the love defined in I Cor. 13 as long-suffering and kind, not given to envying, boasting, pride, impropriety, self-seeking, irritability, assuming bad, or delighting in unrighteousness. Instead this love is given to delighting in truth, pardoning faults, and believing and hoping for the best.

“In knowledge and in all judgment” – “Judgment” here in the sense of perception, insight, or discernment. Paul would not have their love to be without discrimination, but intelligent and discerning; a love that loves what God loves and hates what God hates. God's wisdom informs us that there is both *“a time to love, and time to hate”* (Eccl. 3:8). The modern view of love leaves out this bit, this knowledge and discernment part, leading us to believe it doesn't matter what one believes as long as he loves. Abounding love does not exclude

1:10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

discerning and demanding right in others. Paul was no less loving when he rebuked Peter for his drift (Gal. 2) or Elymas the sorcerer for his resistance (Acts 13), nor was Peter resisting the Spirit's work of love when condemning Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5).

Vs. 10 – Excellent choices – “*That ye may approve things that are excellent*”. That you all might approve after testing things differing. That you might always make the best choices when it comes to differing options. Not the secondary but the primary choices. No rabbit trails or red herrings, but the main trail the Master would have us pursue. Beyond just rights and wrongs this speaks of the Lord's *perfect* will over His *permissive* will. We simply do not have time for life's neutral things, or even for things relatively good. Lord lead us to discern and dedicate to the very *best* choices. Christ came for one purpose, “*to do Thy will, O God*” (Heb. 10:7), His *perfect* will. In Heb. 5:14 God speaks of a training of our senses to be able to “*discern both good and evil*”. Such discernment only comes through the daily application of God's

1:11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

words, making a watchful, intent, careful, prayerful study of God's words and ways, grasping quickly every morsel of truth concerning His pleasure, and speedily making application of it to our own life situation.

"That ye may be sincere and without offence" – The idea behind *"sincere"* is to be found unsullied when unfolded and examined in the light of day. As an x-ray passes through the covering skin and muscles at once making a fracture visible. That the x-ray of God's searching eye (or that of others) should find no sub-surface flaws in our character. Why pray for less than perfection?

"Without offence" speaks of having nothing about our life or character which might cause another to in any way stumble. Not emboldening anyone by our lives to enter into anything they may not be able to handle, and thus fall to sin.

Vs. 11 – *"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness"* – These are Christian fruits that spring from the righteousness given to us by God in

salvation. These are fruits of the Spirit that are not by our own doing, but rather *“which are by Jesus Christ”*, through the Spirit of Christ dwelling within. And as we intently hold to Christ the Head, the Vine, even so the fruit *“which is by”* Him shall form on the branch of our Christian experience in a supernatural way.

“Unto the glory and praise of God” – The source of every fruit of righteousness is God’s working in us. Therefore the *end* of all such fruit is God’s glory, not our own. *“Herein is My Father glorified”* Jesus said, *“That ye bear much fruit”* (Jn. 15:8).

“According to my
earnest expectation
and my hope,
that . . . Christ shall be
magnified in my body,
whether it be by life,
or by death”

(Phil. 1:20)

Class 3 – Philippians 1:12-26

*1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;
1:13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;*

1:12-18 – Christ is Preached.

Vs. 12-13 – Effects Among the Unsaved.

“Unto the furtherance of the gospel” – Paul was desirous that his brothers at Philippi understand that what had happened to him in his years of imprisonment had not hindered the advancement of the gospel. He wanted them to know for their own encouragement that the actual results were quite the opposite of what might have been expected. For years Paul and company had been very active in church planting throughout the areas of Syria, Asia, and across the Aegean in the provinces of Greece. And in those endeavours God had used this apostle to greatest effect and benefit. Obviously Paul’s gifts were most greatly used in this way. But things began to close in around him. God’s enemies were becoming more determined. They were laying for

him in Corinth toward the end of his 3rd missionary journey, forcing him overland through Macedonia (Acts 20). Paul said his goodbyes to the Ephesian elders because he knew through the Spirit's revealing that much trouble awaited him in Jerusalem (Acts 20:23-24). He pressed on, so greatly desiring an opportunity to speak to his rejecting people there, not counting his own life dear. He was discovered and attacked by the Jews in the temple at Jerusalem, they quite determined to kill him (Acts 21:27ff). Rome then stepped in and became Paul's deliverer and keeper and would remain so for the next several years. Perhaps it was Paul's stubborn determination to move against the Spirit's best course for him that brought this bondage. Perhaps it was the Lord's purpose to remove Paul from circulation for a time for his own preserving. Perhaps a bit of both. He was first tried before the Jewish Sanhedrin in Jerusalem (Acts 23), this quickly disintegrating into a fool's picnic. He was delivered from a plot against his life to Caesarea (Acts 23:12ff). There again he was tried before Governor Felix (Acts 24). Though no crime could be found in him he was kept there for 2 years while Felix hoped for a bribe (Acts 24:26-27). Festus then became governor in the place of Felix and Paul was again tried before him (Acts 25). Being a Roman citizen Paul had the right to appeal

to Caesar if he felt he was being handled unfairly. He played this card when Festus considered sending him back for trial in Jerusalem to please the Jews. While sailing to Rome they ran into a great storm at sea and were shipwrecked on the island of Malta through the winter (Acts 27). As we come out the end of the Acts account Paul had finally arrived in Rome and remained in custody there at least two more years.

From the perspective of these believers at Philippi and others looking on, Paul's string of hard luck might have seemed most unfortunate. Why would one so gifted in establishing and edifying churches be kept out of circulation for nearly half a decade of his life? These believers who so loved Paul and had so closely followed and supported him in his ministry having heard of his finally landing in Roman imprisonment likely assumed that Paul might be a bit discouraged, and that the gospel through him was now bound or restricted, certainly greatly curtailed. There was surely some suspicion in them that the spirit of this dynamic apostle might be dampened with his wide-ranging, energetic ministry. Yet again, what is one of the most prominent themes of this book to the church at Philippi? Joy or rejoicing! Was Paul discouraged then? No! And was the Lord's work through him

1:14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

restricted? Perhaps in some of the ways the Lord had previously been using him. But in other ways his ministry had excelled and expanded, and he would have them know this. You see, God was fulfilling His word to Paul from the beginning of His calling (Acts 9:15-16). He had been appointed to “*bear my name before . . . kings*”, to stand for God before both king and commoner. Though he might not have access to the Roman provinces at that time, he now had greater access to the Roman palaces. Compare vs. 13 with Acts 28:30-31. It seems Paul’s “*own hired house*” became something of a centre where much of the Roman guard heard the gospel. “*And in all other places*”, or perhaps as the Bible marginal note suggests, “to all others”. It seems there was a path beaten to Paul’s door in that day and place. Shades of the fruit born in the life of the Philippian jailer through Paul’s brief imprisonment at Philippi but on a grander scale. The capital city of the great Roman Empire was hearing the gospel through a prisoner given liberty to preach. And like that jailer at Philippi, many Roman guards in bondage to the slavery of sin were being set free.

Vs. 14-18 – Effects Among the Saved.

Vs. 14 – “*Many of the brethren*” – Fellow believers in the city and beyond were lifted to confidence in Christ through Paul’s steadfast endurance and courage. Among the believers there, as with any group of Christians, many were too fearful to come right out in the open and speak up for Christ. But the sold-out example of this one now among them was a good influence for them. Many Christian brothers were becoming (literally) “more abundantly daring to boldly be speaking the word”. It’s the same example and ministry you and I are meant to have in our own day and workplace and family as well, for “*we are ambassadors for Christ*” on this earth (II Cor. 5:20). The Lord places upon every blood-bought believer, every receiver of God’s grace, the obligation to boldly speak the good news of Christ’s death for sinners. Every child of God recognizes this duty. The constraints of love demand it. But most simply refuse to speak. Yet look at the powerful effect of even one so bold to speak for Christ, though in trouble because of it. The influence of a brave witness is immense! It’s what our church has been in a measure through the bold, sound application of God’s words through our pocket sermon booklets sent out to the community. And previously reticent believers have

*1:15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife;
and some also of good will:*

stepped forward, moved by our courage, and have said, “Yes! That’s right! I stand with you. Thank you for your courage to say it. You’ve help me out of my spiritual paralysis!” We might naturally expect the very opposite effect, that Paul’s suffering for his preaching would lead other believers to silence. “Look where his preaching got him! No thanks!” But history confirms just what we see here. Instead of making believers more timid, the persecutions and trials of the faithful always rids the church of dead wood and moves her to greater boldness of conviction.

Perhaps the effect of which Paul speaks was not only there in the area of Rome. It may be that many felt about Paul and company as some tend to feel about spiritual leaders today. As long as Paul was out there free to conduct his ministry then others didn’t need to feel pressed to get involved. “Somebody’s doing the work and making a better job of it than I ever could.” But with Paul now removed from circulation, many others felt the burden of obligation weighing upon them. Gifted men who had held back before because of the presence and work of one “more gifted” were now

*1:16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely,
supposing to add affliction to my bonds:
1:17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the
defence of the gospel.*

feeling the constraints of pressing need. The Lord still does the same today. He removes leaders in order to raise up leaders.

Don't miss the important lesson here. Wherever life may land us opportunity for the Lord's service abounds. We are never so hindered by any circumstance that ministry for Christ is really stifled. Every shutdown is an open door. Every setback a stepping stone. Every stoppage a new start. To sit and bemoan any condition is to miss the dawning of some new day. We speak of "under the circumstances" as if hampered or even squashed under their weight. But as Joseph of old, Paul never allowed himself to be squashed by circumstances, only pushed and spurred on and directed by them.

Vs. 15-18 – So long as Christ is preached. Paul now relates two types among those made bold by his imprisonment. There were those active for Christ out "*of good will*" and "*love*" (vs. 15, 17), labouring for the Lord "*in truth*" and sincerity (vs.

1:18 *What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*

15-16). These latter were in some sense promoting themselves or their own cause. And part of their cause was to “*add affliction*” to Paul’s bonds through their activity in Christ’s name. It appears these imagined themselves to be enhancing Paul’s frustrations in some way.

Vs. 18 – “*Whether in pretence, or in truth*” – Whether through sincerity or not Paul rejoiced when Christ was being preached. It’s not that a different message, Christ, or gospel was being proclaimed. If this were so Paul would have spoken anathema upon them (Gal. 1:6). We’re told that from both groups “*Christ is preached*”. The concern here is *motive* rather than *message*. It’s not that a different *method* was being used other than the one the Bible promotes, the “*foolishness of preaching*”. The concern here is *motive* rather than *method*. It’s hard to discern all that was moving this insincere crowd. And it’s clear that they were envious, likely of Paul’s authority or position or fruitfulness. Shades of the sons of Korah with Moses perhaps (Num. 16). It’s clear that they were contentious, esteeming small the unity of Christ’s body, seeking

to advance their cause or win over a following now that Paul was “down” and under some measure of state censor. There still often arises such jealousy between good Bible preaching churches and leaders. All would say that they’re serving Christ and doing what they do for Him. But too often there exists between Christian ministries an underlying competitiveness borne out of pride and a touch of personal kingdom-building. When Christians get into the mentality of *“measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves”* God has already taken their measure and given the accounting. Such folks *“are not wise”*! (II Cor. 10:12). Listen well to Wisdom’s counsel to *“let thine eyes . . . look straight before thee”* (Prov. 4:25). Look more to the *“Author and Finisher of our faith”* than to making comparisons with fellow soldiers around you. Look more to lifting Him than to lifting yourself or your sect.

“Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice” – When heresy, Paul condemned. When a less than perfect preaching of Christ, Paul rejoiced. Though there lacked a full Christian truth or a true Christian spirit, yet the true Christ and gospel was preached and Paul was happy. We may not be able to find full unity with every ministry. But we can still find

*1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation
through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of
Jesus Christ,*

joy in the message of Christ proclaimed. Be careful being too hard on a Christian work if Christ is indeed preached. For through such a work souls are likely being saved regardless of secondary issues that may not fully honour the Lord.

We are wise to learn the lessons from the life of this happy man. In Paul there was such a complete absence of self-seeking. Such an absence is an ornament of grace on the neck of any true servant of the Saviour. The same was expressed so well in the words of John the Baptist when he said of Jesus, *“He must increase, and I must decrease”*. Paul could not be bothered with those who wished to add to his frustrations. He had no frustrations to be added to! Their efforts were confounded by Paul’s persistent, consistent, self-less joy in Jesus Christ exalted. These who viewed others through the lens of their own prideful self-seeking presumed Paul would think and respond in the same way they would and be frustrated by their advancements. But they succeeded only in his encouragement.

1:19-26 – To Live is Christ.

1:20 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.

Vs. 19 – *“This shall turn to my salvation”* – Paul’s attitude is very different here from his second epistle to Timothy, written from another Roman prison. He was expecting to be released from this first imprisonment (vs. 25-26), while he was expecting to die in that last of his writings.

Vs. 20 – *“According to my earnest expectation and my hope”* – Paul’s expectation and hope was the same as that of all believers. *“Our Saviour Jesus Christ”* in His *“glorious appearing”* is *“that blessed hope”* of the church (Titus 2:13). The literal sense behind *“earnest expectation”* is to watch with the head erect or outstretched. One writer said of this word that it “indicates watching something with the head turned away from other objects . . . which ignores other interests”. Some thought they might frustrate Paul by their efforts, until they realized he wasn’t even really looking in their direction. For his eyes were fixed where theirs should have been, on the *“blessed Hope”*.

“Christ shall be magnified in my body” – It’s been

said that one quality of good servanthood is the ability to make those we serve under look good. Here was Paul's one consuming passion, to magnify or make great his Master. Paul would serve as the telescope, making He who is great in the heavens but appearing small to dim earthly eyes to be seen as great and as near as He really is to man. Compare I Cor. 10:31, "*Do all to the glory of God*".

Vs. 21 – "*For to me to live is Christ*" – You finish the sentence; "*To me to live is . . .*" Be honest! What are your goals, desires, or motives? Where are your real interests, attentions, and strengths spent? Would your answer, honestly given, have something to do with;

- Fleshly pleasure?
- Financial freedom?
- The accumulation of wealth and property?
Jesus has told us that "*a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*" (Lk. 12:15).
- Prestige, power, or position?
- Your family, spouse, or children?

- Honesty? Integrity? Uprightness?

There are many words folks might use to complete such a purpose statement. Some of them good and respectable answers. But when it comes to *“things that are excellent”* Paul settled for nothing short of main vein. For him *“to live”* was to hold absolutely nothing in reserve for himself, but rather to give everything he had, was, and wished to be, over to Jesus Christ. Remember Christ’s warning, of the man who should gain the whole world and lose his own soul.

“To die is gain” – Paul’s interest in death was no morbid or suicidal thing. Compare II Cor. 5:8-9. Consider that if a man’s life is given over to the acquisition of things, to the concerns of this life only, then dying could never be gain. It could only be loss or a leaving behind. For where your treasure is that’s where your heart is. And if our earthly life is realistically only a few more years and we’re gone, and that one to come an eternity, then how could we live for this life as if we could somehow hold it forever? But if Christ is all, as He was to Paul, then to leave is to leave far lesser things for the presence of He who is life itself. Where your treasure lies that’s where your heart leans. Death is no enemy for the one to whom

1:22 *But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.*

Jesus Christ is all. “*Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth*” (Col. 3:2). Let all that is truly dear to you be there in that One who has gone before. Be not as the “*men of the world, which have their portion in this life . . . they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes*” (Ps. 17:14). Look well to the example of the Psalmist, who could proclaim, “*As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake with Thy likeness*” (Ps. 17:15).

“O think! To step on shore,
And that shore Heaven;
To take hold of a hand,
And that God’s hand!
To breathe a new air!
And find it celestial air!
To feel invigorated,
And to know it Immortality!
O think! To pass from storm and tempest,
To one unbroken calm;
To wake up,
And find it glory!”

Author Unknown

Vs. 22-23 – “*I am in a strait betwixt two*” – Paul was

1:23 *For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:*

perplexed and pressed from two sides by very strong opposing desires. How sorely he wished to depart in death for the “*far better*” prospect of being with Jesus. Paul laboured hard and suffered long in living for his Saviour. He gave some record of what he had faced in portions like II Cor. 4, 6, 11. Life was neither easy nor comfortable for him. Though it was a good thing to labour in Christ’s pasture Paul knew it would be “*far better*” to rest in His presence. And therefore he longed for this. Perhaps we could not say with Paul “*to die is gain*” because life is too good for us?

.....

On the Side

Things to notice about the way Paul refers to death here;

- Death is a *departure*, not an ending. Much like moving house, or a ship casting off to set sail. Compare the same word in II Tim. 4:6.
 - “*To be with Christ*” implies conscious awareness after death, not soul sleep.
-

*1:24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful
for you.*

*1:25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall
abide and continue with you all for your furtherance
and joy of faith;*

Vs. 24-26 – “*Nevertheless to abide*” – Though “*to die*” would be good and gain for Paul, “*to abide*” was gain for those who remain. And for them and their good Paul knew he must remain while he could. In fact, as if the stating of it somehow solidified in him the certainty of it, Paul now spoke of “*confidence . . . that I shall abide and continue with you*”. It was like him to care more for the good that he could bring to others than the gain he might know personally in the Lord’s presence. It’s like God to care for the same. How sorely the Father would wish for the Son’s presence, yet for us they parted for a time that in Christ we might come to live with them.

I remember seeing a funny car in a parade when I was a boy. Every wheel was severely off centre, and to ride in it was a little like riding a bucking bronco. The sight of it moving along was funny because it was ridiculous. Many Christians have lives just like that. Lives appearing ridiculous to those looking on for the wild flights from peaks to valleys. Because their lot is too much pegged to conditions here upon

*1:26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in
Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.*

this changeable earth. But when for a soul to live is Jesus Christ, all things here below fall away from dominating, oppressive control. Circumstance is robbed of its erratic influence on a man's conscious happiness. Everything falls into proper perspective and we sail on a more even keel through the waves of life.

“Let this mind
be in you,
which was also
in Christ Jesus”

(Phil. 2:5)

Class 4 – Philippians 1:27-2:8

1:27 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 together for the faith of the gospel;

In review of what we've seen so far;

1:1-11 – Greetings, Gratitude, Love, and Prayer.

1:12-18 – Christ is Preached. Paul was neither discouraged nor hindered in his ministry by his imprisonment. Saints were being both made and moved there in Rome.

1:19-26 – To Live is Christ. Paul's one consuming purpose was the manifestation and magnification of Jesus Christ through his life.

.....

1:27 – 2:4 – A Worthy Walk.

Vs. 27 – Focus on unity. Behind the phrase “*let your conversation be*” (KJV) is one word (verb) in the Greek. The Greek word for city is *polis*, from which we get “police” and “metropolis”. The verb form of

this is here, meaning to conduct oneself as a citizen of a city or country, to act as one pledged to a country. Paul's plea is that believers might conduct themselves as worthy citizens of the gospel, as if truly a part of Christ's country. If we are happy to enjoy the *privileges* of citizenship we must be willing for the *responsibilities* of good citizenship. Paul is concerned that God's children behave in a manner befitting those who bear the name of God's family, with a particular focus on the message ("*the gospel of Christ*") issued from the courts of that celestial country. In other words we must proceed in a manner consistent with the message we're carrying. Noah received a message from God and responded in a manner of life consistent with that message, both in practical preparations and in persistent proclamations (Heb. 11:7; II Pet. 2:5). Now can you picture Noah taking God's warning to the world through a Christian rock concert "ministry"? Would that have been a manner worthy of the message? Can you picture Noah taking the message of the end of the world to the pub, drinking and swearing with the boys and swapping dirty jokes in an effort to have an in and therefore an audience with them? Would this have been a way worthy of the message? How about if he began a gospel theatre, or a puppet show with a glass fish tank filled with water to illustrate what was coming, or a social programme

of help for the poor and needy? Are these approaches worthy of the kind of word of warning he carried? Of course not! Noah instead wisely adopted Wisdom's method. He cried without; he uttered his voice in the streets; he cried in the chief places of concourse, in the openings of the gates; in the city he uttered his words (Prov. 1:20-21). He proclaimed, he printed, he posted, he published the simple warning of God to his world. It's the only method worthy of the message.

"The gospel of Christ" is a message of grace as well, of a God who is willing to love the unlovely and dearly sacrifice in their behalf. Such a message must be carried with the same graciousness and kindness of the Sender, with the same willingness for sacrifice. Abraham's servant illustrates this in going in the very same gracious and giving nature of his master, with greatest concern in the fulfilment of the task as if Abraham himself were there (Gen. 24). *"We are ambassadors for Christ"* (II Cor. 5:20), approaching the world in Christ's stead. And therefore we must go in the spirit of Christ, approaching in the gracious, giving way of our Master.

We come as well with a gospel that calls souls into one body, the church, therefore the oneness expressed here. There is *one* family in Christ. So

*1:28 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.*

we must come with a humility that does not exclude wherever possible. This too is part of living as a citizen of the Christ's gospel.

Vs. 28-30 – Endurance under opposition.

“In nothing terrified” – Not just a general statement of courage here, but a command against fear in *any* and *every* circumstance. The message of the gospel is at its core a message of ultimate victory. Therefore faith in it requires a response of confidence in the sure promises of God. To respond in fear to a threatening world is to not walk worthy of the nature of the message we've received. *“Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul”* (Matt. 10:28).

“Which is to them an evident token of perdition” – Compare II Cor. 2:14-16. The fearlessness of true faith communicates to the unsaved world. It suggests a confidence or victory even over death itself, the most feared enemy of mankind. Such confidence is not natural to man. It is supernatural! And thus the presence of genuine

1:29 *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*
1:30 *Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*

fearlessness in the face of death indicates some connection with the supernatural. It indicates a breaking free or release from that bondage to which all men are subject *“all their lifetime”* (Heb. 2:14-15), a liberation only God can give. Compare I Pet. 3:6, literally *“not fearing nothing in terror”*. Compare Ezekiel’s call in Ezek. 2:6-7; 3:7-9 to not be afraid of them, of their words or of their looks. *“The fear of man bringeth a snare”* (Prov. 29:25). Had Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel responded in fear of man they surely would have fallen into a snare. Can you picture King Nebuchadnezzar’s face so *“full of fury”* at the disobedience of the three in Dan. 3? He was king of the world in their day. Yet they stood confident there in their God against the king’s demand, and by that means began the winning of even the cold, lofty heart of Nebuchadnezzar. *“For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken”* (Prov. 3:25). Peter’s fear of men led him into a snare of denial of His Lord (Matt. 26:69ff). Compare Isa. 51:7-8, 12-13.

2:1 *If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,*
2:2 *Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

Chapter 2

2:1-4 – Humility.

Vs. 1 – What Paul now begins to propose is all toward the encouragement, comfort, love, compassion, and tender feelings of the saints. It's vital lessons here on maintaining the caring, united family spirit of a church.

Vs. 2 – *“Fulfil ye my joy”* – Again a return to the matter of unity. There was no greater joy for Paul than to know the saints to be united in spirit and love and mind. Unity borne out of a commitment to care is a prominent theme here. Compare Rom. 12:10ff.

Vs. 3 – *“Let nothing be done through strife”* – Never with a party spirit, seeking to promote distinctions (I Cor. 1). Never running according to our own programme rather than joining ourselves to God's programme. His team must become our team.

2:3 *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

“Or vainglory” – Vain or empty glorying speaks of one who boasts or promotes self, yet void of any valid reason to do so. The absence of pride is the key to unity. The love God commands *“vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up”* (I Cor. 13:4). Compare Prov. 3:34, twice quoted in James 4:16 & I Pet. 5:5.

“But in lowliness of mind” – Here is sincere humility, the esteeming of ourselves small, leading to unselfish responses. “A deep sense of one’s (moral) littleness” is the way Thayer defines humility in his lexicon. To think small of ourselves is not the wrongness of *low* self-esteem, but the rightness of *no* self-esteem. It is our honest recognition of our insufficiency in and of ourselves and of our deep dependence upon God and sufficiency in Him alone.

“Let each esteem others better” – The word translated *“better”* here is the same used of *“higher powers”* in Rom. 13:1 and *“the king, as supreme”* in I Pet. 2:13. These are the only two times the word is used outside this book of Philippians. We are to see others as superior and ourselves their servant. Compare Rom. 12:10. Christ’s words still hold and

2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

are illustrated again here by His own example, *“Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many”* (Mk. 10:44-45). Yet there still remains in us that insidious tendency to hold ourselves above others in our thinking, over other cultures, races, and individuals. Remember who are the chosen ones of God from I Cor. 1:26-29; the *“foolish”, “weak”, “base”, and “despised”* things, the *“are not’s”* or insignificant ones of life. In so choosing them the Lord would force all to recognize that no praise goes to lofty human instruments, *“that no flesh should glory in His presence”*.

Vs. 4 – Don’t have regard or care only for your own things, but treat others as you would have them treat you. Not that we should leave undone our own responsibilities. But our world of concern must take in more than just thoughts for ourselves. It’s about becoming like God. For His way is to take careful thought for the needs of others and then to take action to help. The Spirit’s way is to glorify the Son (Jn. 16:14), and the Son’s way is to glorify the

*2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ
Jesus:
2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not
robbery to be equal with God:*

Father. Even so our way must be. Though the serving of others is out in our modern world and self-serving decidedly in, yet our way must be different, must be God's way, to glorify God and others.

2:5-8 – Christ's Example of Humility.

Vs. 5 – *“Let this mind be in you”* – Paul gives command here concerning the kind of attitude that should be in us, that we must develop the same intent or habit of thought as was in Jesus. He's telling us how to think!

Vs. 6 – *“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God”* – The word translated *“robbery”* in the KJV suggests something prized or seized or held fast. The point here obviously centres on the matter of *“form”* or appearance. Though Jesus is God in essence, and was God in evident appearance before He became flesh, yet He did not consider His visible manifestation as God something to be held fast and carried with Him to

2:7 *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

earth. He was willing to relinquish the outward form or show of who He is in His quest for the souls of men.

Vs. 7 – “*Made Himself of no reputation*” – Behind this phrase is the word *kenosis* meaning “to empty”. Of what did Jesus empty Himself? The context clarifies that He laid aside His outward appearance of deity, taking instead upon Himself “*the form of a servant*” and humble “*likeness of men*”. His glory was veiled in a measure and for the time of His earthly ministry (Jn. 17:5; 1:14; 2:11). It’s not that Jesus surrendered any attribute of deity. It is that He voluntarily restricted the independent use and display of some aspects of His deity. He emptied Himself as well in leaving behind all of the richness and sweetness of heaven (II Cor. 8:9).

What compelled Him to give up so much for so long and for those of such low degree? He sought to give glory to the Father (Jn. 13:31-32; 17:4). And compassion moved Him to give up privileges, comforts, and rights in His coming. He saw our desperate need and knew He Himself must do

2:8 *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

something to help. He had what we needed and could not refrain from bringing it, just as we have what the world around us needs and must not refrain from bringing it. He came as the ultimate Missionary. It's the same mind that still moves people today to give up their privileges, comforts in things familiar, and rights for the sake of others. It is the same mind that still moves some to endure the discomforts of the unfamiliar to bear the message of hope to those in need. Compassion for lost mankind and the wish to glorify God are at the heart of Christ's mission and at the heart of missions. ***“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus”***

“Took upon Him the form of a servant” – The word behind “servant” here is again *doulos*, suggesting the idea of possession. As Paul and Timothy had given themselves to the service of Jesus (1:1), so Jesus had given Himself to the service of His Father before them. Remember the Father's prominent term, “*My Servant*”, used to describe Messiah in the O.T. (Isa. 42:1; 52:13).

Vs. 8 – *“Being found in fashion as a man”* – Behind the word *“fashion”* is the sense of habitus, a word ranging wider than just the actual visual form, but speaking of “everything in a person which strikes the senses, the figure, bearing, discourse, actions, manner of life, etc.” (Thayer). Jesus was a man not a manikin, every bit a part of humanity as you and me.

“He humbled Himself” – This parallels “emptied Himself” in vs. 7. The example Paul highlights in Christ is His humility, in His complete absence of prideful vain glory that might insist on being seen for who He is or what He has. We who tend to live for vain glory find this kind of humility hard to fathom;

- The boy must display his muscles.
- The girl is compelled to show her shape through tight and short.
- The man must display his enviable qualifications, rich investments, or flashy possessions.

“Even the death of the cross” – Not only His evident deity laid aside, not only allowing Himself to be lowered to humanity, and not only willing to become subject to death, but to die in the very worst and

most humiliating of ways imaginable! Death on a cross or crucifixion was a form of capital punishment borrowed from the Phoenicians and perfected by Rome. It was a cruel way to die, generally reserved for the worst of criminals. Jesus on the morning of His death was shoved from shame to disgrace to indignity. His crucifixion among thieves was the ultimate humiliation (but even there He bore His fruit among the humbled thief dying beside Him). Though He had taken upon Himself *“the likeness of men”* yet He was beaten so brutally that He was disfigured beyond human likeness (Isa. 52:14). Though He should rightly have been clothed in majesty yet He was publicly stripped of His robe and garments. Though He hid not His face from shame (Isa.50:6), yet He despised the shame (Heb. 12:2). In the Jewish way of thinking it was the very greatest indignity to publicly hang up the dead body of one executed (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13). The horror of crucifixion did not even allow the condemned the privilege of dying before his body was publicly hung in disgrace!

Not only did Jesus lay aside His evident deity and lower Himself to humanity. Not only did He allow Himself to become subject to death. But He allowed Himself to appear to the people of earth as if a criminal of the worst kind, and to die a humiliating

death as such. In speaking of Jesus to an old Jewish friend recently he suggested Jesus was nothing but a common rebel against the government of His land. It's the way the Jews still view Him to this day.

Ponder Points

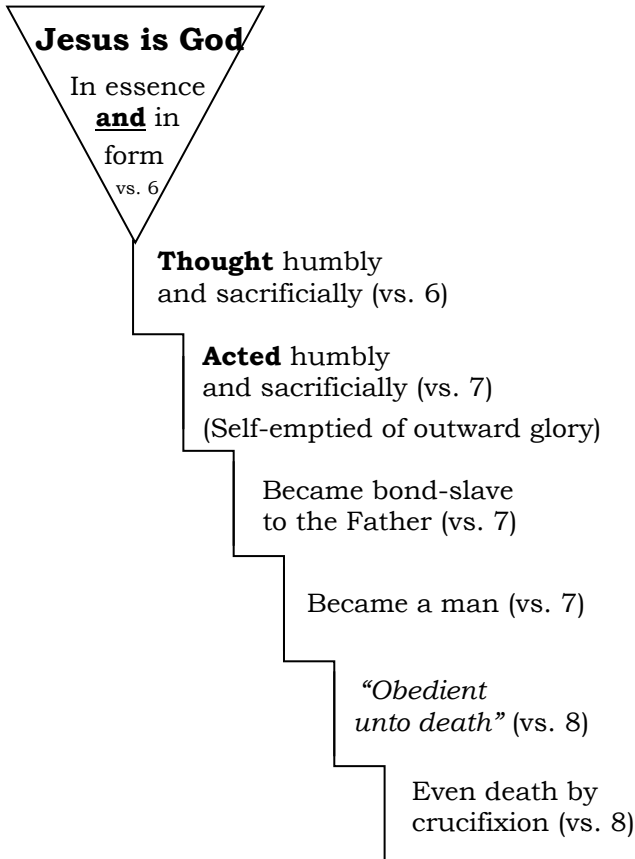
Note the similarities in Christ's example in this portion with His humble washing of the disciples' feet in Jn. 13;

- As He *"riseth from supper"* there (Jn. 13:4), so He arose to come to mankind in his need.
- As He first laid aside His robe there in the upper room (Jn. 13:4), so He laid aside the robe of His royal splendour, the evident glory of His deity (Phil. 2:6-7).
- As He wrapped Himself in a towel, adorning Himself in the garb of a lowly servant (Jn. 13:5), so He *"took upon Him the form of a servant"* (Phil. 2:7). In both cases it was a service of humility, a stepping down.
- As He served the disciples in washing their feet, so He came to serve believers in washing them of their sin.

- After His humble service He again took His robe and clothed Himself as before (Jn. 13:12), even so after His earthly service He is clothed again *“with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was”*.
- He then sat back down at the table (Jn. 13:12), even as He is now seated again at the Father’s right hand (Phil. 2:9).
- Jesus then told the disciples they do well to call Him *“Master and Lord”* (Jn. 13:13), even as *“every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord”* (Phil. 2:11).
- Jesus proclaimed happiness upon those who follow His example (Jn. 13:17), even so joy is the very theme radiating around the nucleus of Christ’s example of humiliation and exaltation in Phil. 2.

Humiliation of Jesus Christ

Phil. 2:6-8



Class 5 – Philippians 2:9-18

Review;

2:1-4 – Humility – Note again the great focus on how we are to be “minded”;

- Vs. 2 – “*That ye be likeminded*” – That you all should be minded the same.
- Vs. 2 – “*Of one mind*” – Being one-minded.
- Vs. 3 – “*In lowliness of mind*” – Lowly-minded.
- Vs. 5 – “*Let this mind be in you*” – A command to have the same mind or attitude as Jesus.

God commands concerning our thoughts, opinions, and attitudes.

2:5-8 – Christ’s Example of Humility – Special focus on the “*form*” and “*fashion*” in which Jesus was willing to appear and be seen. He did not have to be evidently known for who He is.

.....

2:9-11 – Christ’s Exaltation.

Vs. 9 – “*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him*” – “*Wherefore*” expresses result. Christ’s

2:9 *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:*

voluntary humiliation as the servant of God and man resulted in His exaltation. And God did not just exalt Jesus, but *“highly exalted Him”*. For His humble service Jesus has been raised to supreme majesty, exalted to the very highest place of honour.

“Given Him a name which is above every name” – As the angel Gabriel prophesied of Jesus to Mary at the first, *“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest”* (Lk. 1:32). *“The Highest”* is the N.T. version of God’s O.T. name El Elyon, the *“Most High”*; the Highest High One or Strongest Strong One; He who is *“Possessor of heaven and earth”* (Gen. 14); He who *“Ruleth in the kingdom of men”* (Dan. 4:17, 25, 32). That Jesus is the *“Son of the Highest”* shows that He as the Son is of the same nature as the Father, and as *“the Highest”* shares His name above all.

N.B. the happy results. Rather than selfishly holding close the glory that was His, Jesus gave up all right to evident honours. And yet in the end He received back all that was His, and more. He lost nothing but gained all in the end! This same

*2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things
under the earth;
2:11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus
Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

principle is true for us as well. We lose nothing in all that we give up for God and others. God ensures that all comes back to us. The way up is down in God's economy. *"He who would be chiefest, let him be the servant of all"*. The way to greatness in God's sight is lowliness. The way to true and lasting glory is through the selfless service of others.

Vs. 10-11 – *"Every knee should bow . . . every tongue should confess"* – These are words loosely quoted from Isa. 45:23, there concerning Jehovah God and here applied directly to Jesus Christ. It is one of those comparisons for the Jehovah's Witnesses, for there is simply no getting around the obvious, that Jesus is none other than Jehovah Himself. The Lord's assurance there in Isa. 45 of the certainty of appropriate human responses to the only Lord of glory could not be more strongly stated. *"I", Jehovah, who cannot lie, "have sworn", pledged, given My solemn word, "by Myself", after the Hebrew practice of swearing or vowing by something greater than the one swearing. Compare Heb. 6:13, Gen. 22:16. Here is absolute, unquestioned*

assurance of ultimate certainties!

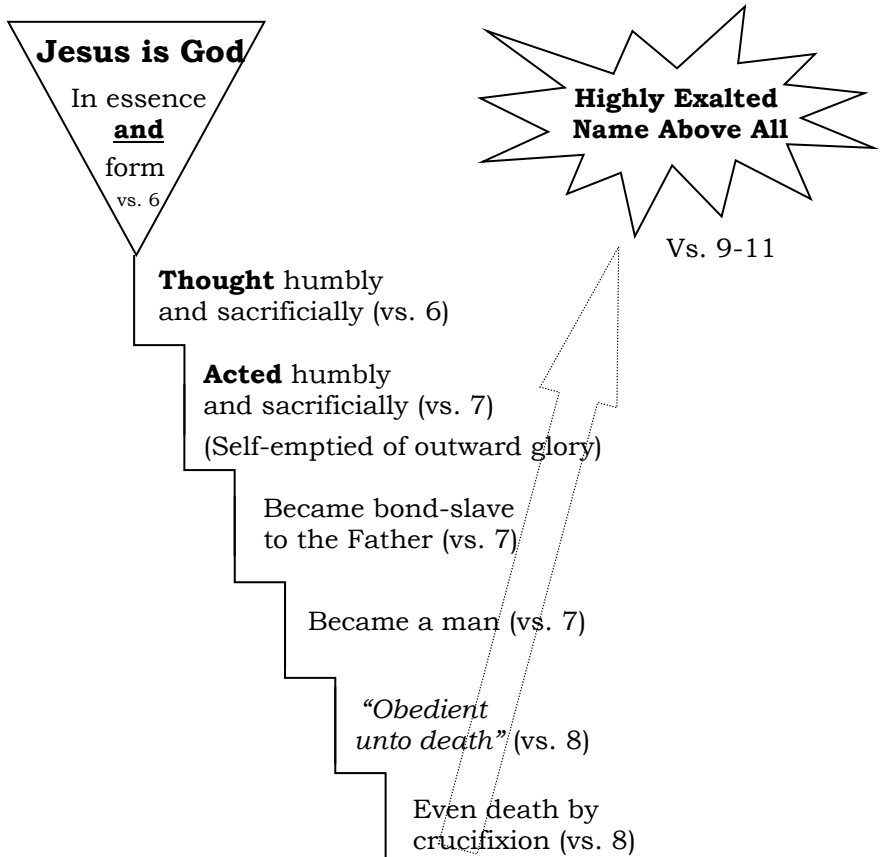
The principle applied here to us is total yieldedness to Jesus in every area of our existence. The same absolute obedience Jesus demonstrated with the Father. This implies as well the most complete earnestness to know what His will is in everything! Are we there? Do we even care? In Luke 6 Jesus asked a searching question; “*Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*” (vs. 46). Why do your life and mouth go in two different directions? The principle here is continual, daily recognition of Jesus Christ’s reign over our lives, in our actions, decisions, thoughts, desires, visual interests, meditations, magazines, television viewing, entertainments, etc, etc.

“*Things under the earth*” – This can only refer to the souls of the dead in Sheol. Even they must ultimately be forced to admit the truth concerning Jesus, for He must “*be Lord both of the dead and living*” (Rom. 14:9). How much wiser to willingly bow to Him now rather than forcibly then when eternal destinies are fixed.

“*That Jesus Christ is Lord*” – Absolute worldwide submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ is in fact the very purpose for which Jesus came (Rom. 14:9).

Humiliation & Exaltation of Jesus Christ

Phil. 2:6-11



The Bible uses the term "Lord" far more than "Saviour" in referring to Jesus in the N.T., *150 times more!* Saviour? Yes, but Sovereign as well! He who redeems? Yes, but He who reigns! For *"He is Lord*

2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

of all” Peter preached (Acts 10:36).

The two basic movements seen in this portion are Christ raised to the highest in God’s exaltation of Him, and mankind brought low in bowing acknowledgement of who Jesus is. Consider how God’s way marked in these two movements is the very opposite of man’s way. Humanism is the arrogant self-exaltation of man, lifting human worth, significance, ability, cleverness, creativity, and opinion, while ignoring and diminishing He who is truly worthy. Jesus Christ, humbled by proud man yet exalted high, will see proud man humbled before Him in the end.

2:12-18 – Lights in a Dark World.

Vs. 12-13 – Present Salvation. “*Wherefore*” again looks back, this time to the example of Jesus in that He “*became obedient*” even to death on the cross (vs. 8). Jesus was obedient to His Father, “*wherefore*” you be obedient to your Father.

“As ye have always obeyed . . . now much more” – Paul, in God’s stead, appeals to believers for their careful listening and obedience in his absence, as if he were there with them. We too should be just as quick to listen and respond to God’s words as if He were right here with us speaking His words directly in our hearing. It is only for our own good. For again, such complete obedience led not to Christ’s loss but to His greatest glory and gain. “Obedience” and “submission” are dirty words in our modern, humanistic, man-centred society, so given to self-worth, self-assertiveness, and personal significance. But the Lord has not moved with the societies of man. The way of obedience remains the way to blessing before Him to this day.

“Work out your own salvation” – This is a command to be working out to completion the salvation already ours in Christ. Paul does not speak here of working out our salvation in the sense of earning it, for God does not contradict Himself. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works”* (Eph. 2:8-9). Salvation from the *penalty* of sin is a gift of God in entirety. Salvation from the *power* of sin on the other hand is a matter in which we must take part. Paul speaks here of realising the truth of our salvation in our practice, practicing what we *are* in

essence, working out our full potential in Christ. As if I've inherited a gold mine, and now I must mine what is mine. I must work it, work out the gold, if I would make the fullest use of what I've received. Otherwise I don't put it to much good use. Even so we must put to good use our salvation. We must extract precious nuggets of godly character from the gold mine of redemption. We must adorn ourselves with them and pass them on to others. We must apply ourselves to a bolder testimony, a sweeter temper, a keener service, a cleaner life, a wider helpfulness, extended patience, etc. The past buried, the present changing, the future ensured. *All glory to God!* Don't miss the contrast between "*work out*" (vs. 12) and "*worketh in*" (vs. 13). It is our privilege to have God at work in us. Therefore it is our responsibility to work out in our practice what He works in us. He is working, therefore you be working with Him.

Don't miss the mention of the great possession of "*your own salvation*". It is what God purposed and planned and put into effect for you though great the cost, the price of Calvary's blood! It is our greatest privilege to have so great a salvation from God. Therefore it is our great responsibility to live as one who is saved, to live as one appreciative of His wonderful gift of love. "*The gift of God is eternal life*"

2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

through Jesus Christ our Lord". Could it be that you are still without this wonderful possession?

"With fear and trembling" – This speaks of the most intense earnestness to do right by our God. Not in order to avoid falling from salvation, but in order to avoid disappointment in our Master or damage to His cause. As well, this speaks of no real self-confidence, but of God-confidence, of assurance in *"Him that is able to keep you from falling"* (Jude 24). *"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"*.

"For it is God which worketh in you" – Interesting the contrast here between vs. 12 & 13, describing the true balance in the Christian life. How often we see such seeming tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. There is indeed some mystic marriage of the two, which no man is fully able to trace. Compare Jn. 6; Heb. 13:20-21 (in a context of commands); I Cor. 15:10; Jude 20-25.

"Both to will and to do" – He deals with our will,

what our heart wishes or purposes to do, leading on to our working out of those good and right wishes in our actions. God is involved in both our will and our work, both in our purposes and practices. Yet we are never instructed to wait until the right desire arises in us to do right before we're responsible to do it. God does not support the common notion to "love God and do as you please". He would have us to love Him and do as *He* pleases even if not especially to our liking, with the assurance that He is at work in us to bring our right will to meet our right works.

"Of His good pleasure" – What a wonder, that we as His children can actually give Him pleasure through our will and works! Compare Heb. 11:5; Dan. 9; II Tim. 2:4.

Vs. 14 – *"Do all things without murmurings"* – How many things? Understand that this is written as a direct command from God. He does not suggest this as an option. *"Murmurings"* are muttering, secret expressions of displeasure. Not the blatant outward denials of an overt rebel, but the behind-the-back groushings of a more covert rebel.

2:15 *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;*

“Disputings” are the contentious, doubtful questionings of a chronic fault-finder. Such doubtful mutterings can be levelled;

- *Against God* – As if finding in God an enemy, He who gave His very best for us. Compare Prov. 19:3, where a man finds fault in God for the results of his own folly. As Adam, who was caught red-handed in the folly of his own perverse choice and then subtly blamed God for the blessing of *“the woman whom Thou gavest to be with me”* (Gen. 3:12). As David, who ignored God’s instruction on how to transport the ark and then seems to fault God for the death of Uzzah (II Sam. 6). We’re never wise to blame our woes, the results of our own sins, on God.
- *Against others* – Compare James 5:7ff. James too pleads for patience with one another, not grudging or grumbling, expressing irritable, critical feelings *“one against another”*.

What God is looking for is just a simple, faithful,

willing cheerfulness in relation to His commands and those of others in authority.

Vs. 15 – “*That ye may be*”;

- “*Blameless*” – Without fault or defect, unblamed.
- “*Harmless*” – Free of guile, innocent, simple. Literally “unmixed”, without any measure of evil or disturbing elements mixed in.
- “*Sons of God without rebuke*” – Without blemish, the absence of anything unworthy of God’s children.

“*In the midst*” – Though we are not to be “*of the world*” yet God has ordained that we be “*in the world*” (Jn. 17). And right “*in the midst*”, mainstream. As God put Israel in the middle of the nations of earth so He would have His children “*in the midst of*” their generation that the impact of their witness be most potent.

“*Ye shine as lights in the world*” – Every generation is equally crooked and corrupt. Natural man without God is characteristically darkened in his “*foolish heart*” (Rom. 1:21), “*having the understanding darkened*” (Eph. 4:18), and this from

the day Adam first plunged mankind into the darkness of sin. Yet God has ordained that His children walk through our generation as shining *“lights in the world”*. For *“God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all”* (I Jn. 1:5). It is His very nature to be light and to dispel or drive away darkness. And the way He means to do this is by diffusing His own brilliance through the earth-based reflectors of His children. We are merely globes through which the heavenly power source displays His energy. To allow our lives to become sullied with any corrupting, harmful influence worthy of blame and rebuke is to allow the intensity of our light to diminish. In the factory our print shop took over there was a carpenter’s shop for years. It appeared as though they never cleaned their lights, for the globes were caked with dust when we cleaned. Can you imagine the difference in brightness and brilliance with lights completely unhindered, free to fully give their light? God’s purpose for us is that we be utterly free of any compromise, without any admixture of the evil of earth. He seeks an unhindered glow from each and every one of we who are His. Can you picture a globe brightly glowing in a little box or in a small storeroom while the factory is dim for lack of lights? A light must be both clean and in the midst of the business of the world if the world is going to see clearly to perceive the truth.

Compare Deut. 32:5 from which Paul quotes here. In that context the Lord through Moses looked ahead to Israel's future, to a day when their mark ("spot") would no longer be God's mark. Through compromise with evil God's mark of ownership upon them became stained with worldly corruption (Deut. 32:10-22). They lost their identity or distinction, the clearly recognisable evidence of God's character in them. They adopted Gentile ways, making God jealous. Therefore He would make *them* jealous by adopting the Gentiles rather than them (vs. 21). If they would adopt Gentile ways then He would adopt the Gentiles. His people became like the world and thus their testimony was distorted. The nation of Israel came sweeping into the Promised Land as God's blazing torch. They entered into the very midst of a crooked and corrupt generation of Canaanites bringing the light of God's character into pagan darkness. It was God's purpose to stamp out and keep out the darkness. Yet instead that light was gradually extinguished and darkness overtook God's own people. Israel became essentially no different from the pagan world. It is the very same direction Satan subtly seeks to move the church. In contrast the Lord calls us to never lose our identity, to maintain our distinction, to keep our light brightly shining.

2:16 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.

2:17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

Vs. 16 – *“Holding forth the word of life”* – As if holding forth a lamp in a dark place. This Paul bids them to continue doing. If he could leave behind him light-bearers among the Philippian believers and others when leaving this life then he would know his life had counted for something, that he had not been running and labouring for nothing. He could enter into Christ’s presence with good cause for glorying.

“That I may rejoice in the day of Christ” – There’s a gentle request here, that they might invest their lives with an eye to Paul’s honour and reward and rejoicing before the Lord, due to their follow-through in shining Christian testimonies. What they chose to become would affect Paul’s measure of joy before the Lord.

Vs. 17-18 – Broken and poured out. Paul adopts the imagery of the O.T. drink offerings poured out in sacrifice. If his life poured out as a sacrifice to the Lord should bring a harvest of faith in others then it was all his joy to be so spent. As the

2:18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

precious spikenard poured out on the Lord, so Paul would gladly pour out for Christ what was most dear to him. As seen earlier in Christ's example, every sacrifice for God turns to exaltation at the last. Again, *nothing is lost* when spent in God's service. These are not sad things or cause for sorrowing.

"Ye joy, and rejoice with me" – In every hardship that came upon him in the service of Christ Paul was happy and more than happy for it. And he would not have his good friends at Philippi to be mourning for him, but rather to join in the celebration of his trials.

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Ye are the salt of the earth . . . ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:11-14).

Class 6 – Philippians 2:19-30

2:19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

It's an array of examples the Lord through His apostle puts before this most faithful of Paul's churches (and us) in this 2nd chapter of Philippians. First the crowning example of Jesus Christ. Because of His willing humiliation and self-denial God the Father has highly exalted Him above all. Then Paul in applying the divine example to us in our earthly walk offers himself as a pattern of the same in vs. 17. Without regard for himself he was quite willing to be poured out as a sacrifice in the service of others.

2:19-24 – Timothy the Selfless Shepherd.

Vs. 19 – *“I trust in the Lord to send Timothy shortly”* – As we know from the 1st verse of the book Timothy was there with Paul in Rome. The life of this man is the story of a quiet young servant wholly given to the Lord and wholly given to the service of Paul as well. In collecting what we know of Timothy it seems he was a gifted shepherd, a pastor of pastors.

His was not the bold, strong, sparkling personality of Paul, or perhaps Titus. He was not the dazzling, silver-tongued orator as Apollos. Timothy seems to have been more the reserved, timid type (II Tim. 1:7). But he was a man folks could count on for steadiness and readiness for service. Some might use the excuse of a more reserved nature to avoid commitment to the Lord in ministry, even as they might use a tendency to sickness, as Timothy was given to as well (I Tim. 5:23). I tried at first to excuse myself from ministry because of a more shy, retiring personality. But this man never excused himself from ministry due to perceived lacks. True love for God and man is never so easily put off or diverted. Timothy was willing to leave his home and family and things familiar to join Paul on dangerous missions, to be sent to difficult tasks, to remain ever obedient and cooperative, to sacrifice his personal preferences, to remain to the very end Christ's loyal servant. Tradition says Timothy continued as bishop of Ephesus until he died a martyr's death under Domitian or Nerva.

"That I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state" – Paul was anxious for an assessment of how the believers at Philippi were doing, an assessment he could trust Timothy to accurately ascertain, and a report Paul was quite confident

2:20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

2:21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

would bring him “*good comfort*”.

Vs. 20 – “*I have no man likeminded*” – Timothy was of a kindred spirit to Paul like none other. He was a man Paul could trust to read things exactly as he would, and to care and conduct himself just as Paul would in person (Prov. 25:13). Young Timothy was a rare and valuable gem.

“*Who will naturally care for your state*” – “*Naturally*” expresses the genuine sincerity that was in Timothy. He was all faithfulness with nothing fake. The word translated “*care*” here is the same used in 4:6 for “*be careful*”, in the sense of anxious concern. It’s a strong word with a good measure of intensity. Timothy’s was a true shepherd heart given to unselfishly promoting the best interests of others as earnestly as he did sincerely, making him another of the same stripe Paul holds up for our consideration in this chapter.

Vs. 21 – “*For all seek their own*” – There is generally in all of us the tendency to serve self in some

measure, even in ministry for the Master. It's a very natural leaning to selfishly pander to our own ease and preferences and preservation and such. As H.A. Ironside wrote, "It is quite possible to be an admired teacher, upon whose words thousands hang, or an eloquent evangelist with eager multitudes flocking to listen with delight to his messages, and yet to be a vain self-seeker, using the very gift that God has given, for personal aggrandizement, or to obtain wealth, even while professing to care little or nothing for money". It was the self-seeking way of the returned remnant in Judea that brought the Lord's rebuke through the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. It's Wisdom's subtle warning in Prov. 20:6 that "*Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?*" The spirit of true godly leadership is always more willing to sacrifice its own interests for the sake of others. Moses prayed for erring Israel, "Please blot me out of Your book instead of them" (Deut. 32:32). Paul said of the blind Jewish race, "I would be willing to perish if Israel could be saved" (Rom. 9:3). Where are the true godly leaders, carrying in their hearts something of the self-sacrifice seen in these? Such are men and women who have made a lasting, significant imprint on their generations. Only this kind really can. Though the way of all is to

2:22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

“naturally care for . . . their own” things, “not the things which are Jesus Christ’s”, Timothy was a man who lived according to 2:4, and more. He didn’t only look “also on the things of others”. Seems he tended to look only there.

Vs. 22 – *“Ye know the proof of him”* – Timothy was of course with Paul when they first arrived in Philippi. He was a young man in training then, having just been collected by Paul in passing through southern Galatia, because he was so *“well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium”* (Acts 16). So the church at Philippi knew Timothy well for the sincere servant he was.

“As a son with the father” – Timothy was saved under Paul’s ministry on his 1st missionary journey, becoming Paul’s own son in the faith. It’s why Paul later refers to him as *“Timothy, my dearly beloved son”* (II Tim. 1:2; I Cor. 4:17). But beyond this there developed an enduring closeness between them in their ministry years together as well. Timothy became one of Paul’s most constant companions. No fellow-labourer is mentioned more often in Paul’s

2:23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

2:24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

writings than Timothy. Much closer than mere fellow servants, these two had become as if father and son. It's evident that Paul loved this young man and greatly admired him for his outstanding character and faithfulness. While others had forsaken the Lord and Paul over the years, Timothy ever remained and remained ever the same. Of all abilities with which this man was gifted his *dependability* was his greatest. Paul knew he could count on him.

It seems Timothy's primary work became that of strengthening fledgling churches. Paul would leave Timothy behind for a time while he moved on to begin the next work. He was especially gifted at comforting and teaching and nurturing new believers as a true shepherd of God's flock. Timothy's most significant contribution to Christ's church seems to have been at Ephesus (II Tim. 1:4). He was still ministering there when Paul knew it was the end and urged him to come quickly (II Tim. 4:9, 21).

*2:25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you
Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in
labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and
he that ministered to my wants.*

Vs. 23-24 – “So soon as I shall see how it will go with me” – After four interesting years under Roman arrest it seems Paul’s trial or the decision from it was expected soon as he wrote. Again we see confidence in him that he would be released (1:25). Tradition teaches that Paul was freed from this 1st imprisonment to a few more years of ministry. It’s not known where or how far his travels took him before he was arrested again and for the last time.

2:25-30 – Epaphroditus the Selfless Servant.

This Epaphroditus is known to us only from his mention here in this epistle, and precious little we have. But enough is here to reveal a truly dedicated servant, and therefore another example in keeping with Paul’s current theme. It’s clear that Epaphroditus was a member and “messenger” of the church at Philippi and that he was sent by them to Paul with a money gift and/or supplies for Paul’s aid (4:18). It seems as well that he came with the intention, or perhaps commission, to supply Paul with any additional needed service on behalf of that

2:26 *For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.*

distant congregation who loved him so dearly and wished to communicate their loving regard through the services of their representative.

Vs. 25 – “*I suppose it necessary*” – Is there a note of reluctance in Paul’s words? Was he wishful that he could keep Epaphroditus a bit longer? Godly character can be annoying to the unsaved but it is most attractive to the godly.

Vs. 26-27 – “*He . . . was full of heaviness*” – While there in Rome Epaphroditus was near death with some serious illness. We’re given no details as to what this sickness was or whether it resulted from his journey to or labours there in Rome. But we’re given enough to get the measure of the man. And obviously he was down with it for quite a while, for there was time enough for word of his sickness to reach Philippi and for word of their sorrow to return. The mechanics of how these messages got there and back are unknowns as well. Yet amazingly Epaphroditus’ distress was not for himself in his sickness but for his church family in their sorrow over his sickness. He, like Paul, like

God, was one with such a burden for the well-being and comfort and encouragement of his church. Again we're confronted with a thoroughly self-denying nature in this one as well. We see the work of God's Spirit in men such as these, all displaying the same kind of sacrificial love, so consumed with the good of others. And through them we therefore catch a glimpse of the God at work in them, in His intense care for His church on earth.

Do you see the pattern here four times over?

- Jesus Christ denied Himself in service to God and man, even to death on the cross.
- Paul rejoiced in being spent for the cause of faith in others.
- Timothy emptied himself of any promotion of self that he might be the sincere servant of others.
- Epaphroditus was so unsparing, so emptied of selfish concerns, and so full of concern for Paul and for his church that he nearly paid the ultimate price for his service.

Don't miss the general drift, coming gradually closer to home;

- Jesus Christ is indeed our supreme example.

Yet what He did we would expect of the infinite love of the divine Son of God. But we're quite finite!

- Paul was a wonderful example of faithfulness and humility as well. But he was a man so marvellously saved and commissioned and gifted. Schooled in the wilderness by Jesus Himself. In view of God's wonderful revelations to and through him, how could he not be faithful? Thus perhaps he too might still be considered by some a bit out of reach of us commoner sorts.
- Timothy was more of a regular guy and thus down a bit closer to where we live. Yet still he was among the most cherished disciples of the great Apostle, his name mentioned many times throughout the N.T.
- But Epaphroditus was without doubt one of us. He was just a common, relatively unseen and unknown servant. One with whom we can all quite easily identify. None could find cause to not personally apply his example.

All of them exemplify the same fundamental characteristic of lowly humility and personal givenness. And all of them were rewarded for allowing the lowly mind of Christ to be in them.

2:27 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.

“Lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow” – Paul would have suffered deepest sorrow in the death of this fellow-labourer, even though he knew that death for him would be gain. Of course Paul’s sorrow would not have been as men of the world who have no hope. But just because we know where the soul of a believer is going in death this does not mean we suffer no sorrow in our loss. Nor does it make us wrong to feel pain and shed tears in the death of those we love. Jesus even wept over Lazarus though He knew He would raise him to life. Perhaps we should be more concerned when there’s no sorrow or feeling. Oh Lord teach us to feel!

.....

On the Side

Step back and look at the situation there with Epaphroditus. Here was a man for whom the Apostle Paul dearly cared and who was near death through some physical sickness while with him, threatening *“sorrow upon sorrow”* for Paul should he die. And yet there is no indication that the apostle provided miraculous healing for

Epaphroditus. Why? It seems the man returned to health through a normal healing process, involving many days, perhaps weeks. It would therefore seem that such divine ability to heal a man with a word was not at every moment available for even one such as Paul. That he *did* not heal Epaphroditus could only mean that he *could* not. So even there in that apostolic era it seems the divine gift of healing was less a common capability and more an uncommon ability for special occasions and purposes. There is no indication that Paul considered it his right to demand of the Lord physical healing for this man, even for so faithful a labourer as Epaphroditus. Paul understood this man's long-term restoration to health as due only to the merciful choice of God to restore him. It had nothing to do with some supposed saints' rights, or spiritual birthright privileges, or some imagined "healing in the atonement". The Apostle Paul never taught such foolishness, nor does he display it here.

Note as well that there is not the slightest indication that this sickness was due to some unconfessed sin in the man's life or lack of faith in the man to be healed. Quite the opposite in fact. As with Job, Epaphroditus suffered as a result of his *godly* character rather than *ungodly* character. In the case of this man it seems his sickness was due to

2:28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

his self-denying labours on behalf of others.

Note as well that Epaphroditus' sickness was in no way attributed to the work of Satan. No attempts at rebuking or binding or praying against the evil one are in evidence here.

It's interesting to note that we never read of Paul or his fellow-labourers miraculously, momentarily healing each other. Paul struggled with some physical ailment he was called upon to endure (II Cor. 12). Timothy was advised to avoid water for his stomach troubles rather than receiving divine healing for them (I Tim. 5:23). Trophimus was left by God's apostle sick at Miletum (II Tim. 4:20). And Epaphroditus here went through a normal process of convalescence in his recovery.

.....

Vs. 28 – *"I sent Him therefore the more carefully"* – Paul was the more diligent to speed Epaphroditus on his way when he was well enough to travel, for he too was greatly concerned for the comfort of his

2:29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

friends to the east.

“And that I may be the less sorrowful” – His joy was hinged to theirs. The more he could ease them of their anguish the better he himself would feel. Again, see the Lord in such an amazingly, intensely thoughtful nature. So what’s wrong with you and me? We are only unlike this in Christ to the degree to which we allow our sin to chill the love of God in us, to the degree we are full of ourselves rather than full of the Spirit, frustrating the Spirit’s work in us. Remember that the first and primary fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal. 5:22).

Vs. 29 – *“Therefore . . . hold such in reputation”* – Such a choice gem should be highly valued or prized, for such are the kind of men and women the Lord delights to honour. It was not a man who considered himself worthy of honour that the saints are called upon to recognize. It was a man willing to take the lowly station, to eagerly do the menial tasks. It was a man who had no thought for himself or his own things. Epaphroditus, like Jesus before him, made himself a servant, as one of no

2:30 *Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.*

reputation. And because of his lowliness he was to be held in honour. Such are the kind the Lord Himself will lift high in time. *“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up”* (James 4:10).

Vs. 30 – *“Not regarding his life”* – The Greek word behind *“not regarding”* is an interesting one. It comes of a combination of two words, *para* (παρά) meaning beside or aside, and *ballo* (βάλλω) meaning to throw. The term arose from a Roman form of gambling involving the throwing or dropping of sharpened stakes. Thus the notion here is gambling or taking risks or exposing one’s life to danger. Epaphroditus put his life on the line for Paul. Perhaps he kept pushing himself though sick, demonstrating a willingness to sacrifice his own life for the good of others. What we might call foolish Paul highly praised and used as an enviable example. Notable comparisons;

- David’s brave men, who broke through enemy lines to fulfil the wish of their king for water from the well of Bethlehem (I Chron. 11:15-

19).

- Esther, who put her life on the line for the sake of her people in Persia (Esth. 4).
- Those praised by the writer of Hebrews, who “*became companions*” of those who were “*made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions*” (Heb. 10:33), and who “*had compassion*” on the writer while imprisoned (vs. 34).

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Prov. 17:17).

“To supply your lack of service toward me” – Paul does not imply that they should have been there. Only that their humble representative had ably supplied for him on their behalf.

Paul stresses again and again in this context the vital Christian principle of *others*, putting others first, living more for others than for ourselves. It is the way to happiness. But vastly more important, it is God’s intention for His children. It is God’s way *for* us because it is God’s way *with* us. When God calls a man to His ministry He does not demand wide influence, phenomenal abilities, or spectacular results. He requires faithfulness, loyalty, and self-sacrificing servanthood.

Class 7 – Philippians 3:1-10

Chapter 3

The Apostle Paul in his writings had a common tendency to leave the main track of his argument and run off onto a sidetrack for a while before sliding back over again to the main direction of his thrust. He seems to do this here in chapter 3, only returning to the main drift of his teaching in chap. 4. It's not a case of bad literary form or undisciplined thinking or inability to keep himself focused. Paul was writing under the Spirit's inspiration and therefore the tendencies we see in him can only be indications of the Spirit's way of dealing and reasoning with man. Perhaps after the example of Phillip in Acts 8, who was suddenly called away from an active ministry in Samaria to meet the Ethiopian Eunuch travelling home to Africa. And then snatched away again to ministry in Caesarea. He was moved (physically) with the Spirit's moving, according to the need. Compare the same sensitive movements of the angels in Ezek. 1, moving freely according to the Spirit's promptings. "*Whithersoever the Spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go*" (vs. 12 & 20). Even so Paul was moved this way and that, now main theme, now parenthetical side thought,

3:1 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.

now picking up the main thread again as the Spirit moved him in his writing. His themes had been givenness, humility, and unity coming out the end of chap. 2. With 4:1 this trace seems to be picked up again.

3:1-3 – Wrong Focus of Self-Confidence.

Vs. 1 – “*Rejoice in the Lord*” – This is written as a command, the Greek verb behind expressing ongoing or continuous action. Again, no suggestion here. We must conclude that to respond otherwise is to respond in disobedience. Paul writes from prison with his own heart full of joy and demands the same of his readers. It’s the way God often deals with us in this book, commanding our joy.

Thoughts on Biblical Anthropology

We must neither miss nor forget the vital lesson here. Rather than accommodating any tendencies in us, physical, mental, sub-conscious, or otherwise, which are presumed beyond our ability

to cope with, the Lord simply gives command concerning things often thought to be of a more involuntary nature. Things such as;

- Our joyful attitude (3:1; 4:4; 2:18, five times commanded to rejoice).
- Our way of thinking (2:5; 3:15-16; 4:2, 8). Note that there is not the least discussion here of whether I am *able* to be so minded, or *why* I am not or cannot be so minded. There is no fixing in me or counselling suggested before I am able to be so minded. Only the command to be thinking appropriately. Proud man is so given to diverting responsibility from himself, always poking things (excuses) in the way of simple obedience. God makes no allowance for such.
- Every hint of worry is strictly forbidden (4:6). It appears we *can* help it! Sherman Nagel once made the statement, “More people worry themselves into their graves than work themselves there. Worry is the interest we pay on trouble before it is due. God sometimes says ‘wait’, but He never says ‘worry’”.

God deals with us on the basis of what we choose to think and do, not why we think and do what we do.

3:2 *Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.*

He commands concerning our entire being; opinions, attitudes, thoughts, motives, and emotions(?), as well as actions. What else can we call it but rebellion to respond other than His prescribed way in this regard? If God so commands us then all argument or allowance for circumstance, heredity, or hormones becomes irrelevant.

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (II Cor. 10:5).

.....

Now Paul’s heart turns to the busy enemies of the Lord and of His people who would seek to rob us of joy through their deceit.

“To write the same things to you” – Though Epaphroditus, and later Timothy would speak *“the same things”* to them, Paul wanted to be sure they were sufficiently warned of some vital concerns.

Vs. 2 – *“Beware of dogs . . . evil workers . . .*

concision” – The Jews used the term “dog” of things despised. Gentiles and homosexuals for example were referred to in this way (Deut. 23:17-18). Paul speaks here of those who were preying upon the Christian congregations. The Philippian believers, as all Christians of every age, would have been plagued by such false teachers. Like ravaging packs of dogs Paul suggests. It’s a fitting description of the cults still so busy in the same way today. Paul’s comment here especially applies to the Judaizers, those false teachers who sought to combine faith in Christ with legalistic bondage to the law. They would come professing to be ministers of Christ but were in truth “*evil workers*”, seeking to lead believers back into law keeping. 7th Day Adventism is one modern expression of this same error. How ironic that Paul in writing here to the Gentiles applies to the Jews a term (“*dogs*”) the Jews used of the Gentiles.

“*The concision*” is a term Paul seems to have coined himself in referring to such legalistic false teachers. These insisted that believers must observe circumcision according to the Law of Moses in order to stand fully accepted before God, just as 7th Day Adventists make an issue of Sabbath-keeping today. But instead of using the word circumcision (*peritome*, περιτομή), meaning to cut around, Paul

3:3 *For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

instead speaks of “concision” (*katatome*, κατατομή), meaning to cut up or cut off or mutilate! Those who insist upon such law-keeping only succeed in mutilating the liberty that is in Christ.

Vs. 3 – “*We are the circumcision*” – Paul would not permit the idea that circumcision of the flesh is true circumcision. True circumcision since Christ’s finished work on the cross is now that of the heart. It is that removal of sin found only in the Saviour. It is that inward mark of our relation to Him. And there alone, in Christ alone, our confidence resides.

“*Which worship God in the spirit*” – This heart transformation to the very core of us in Christ is what leads to *true* worship and rejoicing or boasting “*in Christ Jesus*” rather than “*in the flesh*”. In Christ we no longer put confidence in the flesh or in physical practices or ceremonies. Every form of religion focused on legalistic externals always loses track of the spiritual truths symbolized by those outward ordinances. In fact it has never been within the power of externals to put one in right relation to God. It is and always has been that

3:4 *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:*
3:5 *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;*

genuine call upon Him in faithful confidence in His promises that brings God's deliverance to a soul. Though God's standards of purity are important they have never possessed the power to win righteous standing before Him. Compare vs. 9.

3:4-11 – Right Focus of Christ Confidence.

Vs. 4 – *"I might also have confidence in the flesh"* – In view of those who pushed the need of reliance upon outward forms and credentials and such Paul now holds himself up as one most eligible by such earthly standards, and therefore one able above all to speak on the matter. If any man might be accepted above through the proper arrangement of matters below it was Paul. From a human standpoint he had much in which to glory, more than all in fact. He was more eminently qualified than any among *"the concision"*. If any among them could think himself confident in the flesh, *"I more"*.

Vs. 5-6 – *"An Hebrew of the Hebrews"* – Paul was no

3:6 *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

“stranger to the covenants of promise” but was born among the chosen Jewish race. He bore in his body the sign of his covenant people from the 8th day of his life in strict accordance with the law. He came *“of the tribe of Benjamin”*; a descendant of Jacob through his favourite wife, of that tribe that never revolted against David’s dynasty, but remained true to Jerusalem and the temple and David throughout Israel’s history. To be of Benjamin’s tribe was something special, a bit like the inner circle of the twelve. While many of the Judaizing false teachers would have been Gentiles converted to Judaism, Paul’s heritage ran right back to Jacob himself. And not only was he a Jew by birth he could not have been more strongly a Jew by conviction as well in his early years. Paul had never been as some who might call themselves a Christian or a Catholic, but not a practicing one. Paul had been saved out of the most active practice of his Jewish religion, *“more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers”* than all others (Gal. 1:13-14). And having himself been *“a Pharisee”* he had been among those of the nation most eagerly orthodox. *“After the most straitest [strictest] sect of our religion I lived a*

*3:7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted
loss for Christ.*

Pharisee” (Acts 26:5). And even as one so zealously “*persecuting the church*” Paul had shown himself a Pharisee of the Pharisees, practicing his religion to the most rigorous degree among his people before his conversion to Christ.

Vs. 7 – “*But . . .*” – With this little word “*but*” comes to mind all of the wonder and turmoil of Paul’s conversion to Christ and growth in Him. When that stern, highly self-disciplined, self-righteous, unyielding champion of his religion at last met Jesus and came to the truth concerning Him the most complete transformation took place within him and he was never the same again. Paul realized in the moment of his conversion God’s meaning in Isa. 64:6, that all of his righteousnesses were as filthy rags. What happened to Paul was no mere exchange of religions. In Christ he indeed became a new creation. As if the man, Saul of Tarsus, died right there on the Damascus road and came back to life as a different man, an inwardly transformed man. And so suddenly all of the things Paul had considered such gain, such advantages before God, things he had been trusting to secure

3:8 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, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

his eternity, things he had been building his hopes upon, things that set him in good standing before the eyes of his fellows and he presumed in the eyes of God as well. Suddenly he saw all those things at last as God sees them. *Worthless!* As polluted garments wholly unfit to cover him before the eyes of a holy God. These things Paul was quick to shed as the vile garb of the grave from which he had been raised in Christ.

Vs. 8 – *“That I may win Christ”* – This ever after became the core quest of Paul’s existence. He cast off all that men might consider important and sought only the praise of Christ. *True reward!*

Note how repeatedly the word *“loss”* comes up in vs. 7 & 8. And more than just loss, even sliding into the pit of things revolting, as animal dung or rubbish. Don’t miss the all important point here. Christ alone is our goal, our quest, our surpassing interest. Christ alone meets the need of every soul. All things earthly are worthless in comparison. Not only had Paul counted all loss for Jesus Christ on

the road to Damascus when he first saw His glory but the long labour-filled years since had brought no change in his disposition. All was still of no worth compared to the beauty and wonder of his Saviour. A well-meaning man drew me aside and warned me soon after my salvation to not throw too much away for Christ. Though the interest in Christ may be intense in the early stages of one's salvation I was warned that this soon wears off. The unfortunate fact is that that man was right in the case of many believers. Though they be fervent and self-sacrificing in their first love for Christ, they soon allow the worthless world in its subtly insinuating way to creep in and become too important, drowning out their love for Jesus Christ. Never did Paul turn back to things worthless, for he had found the pearl of greatest price.

.....

On the Side

There's something Paul doesn't even mention here in this list of things of which he might boast if he were so minded. Paul was taught in his Jewish religion "*at the feet of Gamaliel*", one of the most celebrated Jewish teachers who ever lived (Acts 22:3). Gamaliel was an eminent doctor of the Jewish law and the first man ever to receive the highly respected title, Rabban, a title of highest

3:9 *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:*

qualification referring to one greater than a Rabbi or master. Only seven Jewish teachers have ever received this distinguished label. For Paul to be so trained was comparable to a degree from the finest university of the land. But he *doesn't even mention* this feature here in listing the earthly credentials he trashed when his eyes were finally opened in salvation!

In a day when the matter of educational accreditation in ministry training is so desperately important to many, in a day when “qualified” men are quite given to tagging their academic credits to the end of their name, we’re wise to look to the example of Paul. Didn’t even mention it! And if he had, it would only have been to cast it to the same manure pile into which he pitched the rest of his credentials.

.....

Vs. 9 – “*Not having mine own righteousness*” – In the matter of salvation it is never a question of what

3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

we've done or accomplished here below. It is ever a question of where we have been placed by God. Are you *"found in Him"*? Are you safe *"in Christ"*? No soul can be there in that blessed place of safety, no soul can stand accepted before God without first being clothed in God's righteousness. And no soul can be so clothed by means of his own righteousness. Every soul must have that *"righteousness which is of God"*. Here again is the great Bible doctrine of justification (Rom. 3-4);

- That God freely gives the righteousness to a man that fits him for heaven.
- That that righteousness can only be received from God as a gift, without any earning on our part.
- That God's righteousness can only be received *"by faith"*, *"that which is through the faith of Christ"*. God's righteousness can only be received by trusting God's promise to give it if we would believe Him for it.

Vs. 10 – *"That I may know Him"* – Here is true sanctification. And here is the right and proper use

of our God-given minds (compare Rom. 1). Paul longed to know, with his head and by experience;

- The Person of Jesus Christ.
- *“The power of His resurrection”*.
- *“The fellowship of His suffering”* – Paul was willing, even wishing, to know by experience the pain and heartache of the sufferings his Saviour endured for him.
- Even *“being made conformable to His death”* – Paul wished not only to die with Christ, but fully to die to his old nature in Christ. He wished not only to be raised with Christ, but to be raised to complete newness of life in Him. Compare Rom. 6.

Listen well to the great purposes of a true man of God here and learn what goes into the making of such a one. Is spiritual growth a matter of inheritance? Is one born with such a tendency? Is it a matter of personality types? Does greatness for God depend on one's salvation experience? Is it a sensational conversion that thrusts one more firmly into spiritual maturity and leadership? Are the heights to which one might attain determined by the depths from which one has come? It's not until you get into the secrets of the heart of a godly soul that you find clues as to why they are what they

are. Only when you get a feel for the genuine longings and deepest appetites of such will you know why they become great ones for God. Paul tells us in Rom. 1 that the natural leaning of unsaved man is to not even wish to retain God in the remembrance but to put Him out of the mind. And in Jer. 2 the Lord complains that even His own people had *“forgotten Me days without number”* (vs. 32). Yet compare the life of Moses. That man of meekness did not just happen as one greatly used of God. Look well how he appealed to God in Ex. 33 and learn from his ways. Even in that situation of greatest threat the craving of Moses to know the Lord comes to the surface (*“that I may know Thee”*, vs. 13, 18). And Moses received there such a wonderful revelation of God (vs. 19-23). But it was not that revelation or experience that took Moses to spiritual maturity or greatness. Many with great spiritual experiences have failed to go on to maturity. What made Moses great was that he was greatly useable by the Lord. And what made him useable was his great appetite for God in evidence here. How greatly David was used of God as God’s prophet and as *“the sweet psalmist of Israel”* and as one of the greatest kings of his people. Yet see again in that man his great appetite for God in portions like Ps. 42 & 63. Here was the heartbeat of a man after God’s own heart. David attained to

the heights of blessing and influence for God because of his overwhelming desire for God. *“Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”* (Matt. 5:6). Compare Ezra with the good hand of his God upon him for his earnest searching after the Lord in His Word (Ezra 7:10). Don’t miss how it’s at times of persecution or trouble that a heart cries most intensely after God (Ps. 42 & 63). Don’t shun or run from such, but rather rejoice in such times for the advantages they bring (Matt. 5:10-12).

Even so it was with Paul. What made him so great for God? Was it his background or his discipline or his breath-taking conversion experience or his personality or naturally zealous nature? No, no, no! It’s right here in Phil. 3:10. For herein is expressed the very same driving quest of men like Moses and David and Ezra. *Here is appetite for God!* Where before the Law of Moses had been Paul’s consuming passion now it was the person of Jesus Christ, to know Him, to win Him! When a baby bird has an appetite its mouth is wide open. And when a baby bird’s mouth is open and chirping his mother fills it. Even so when a child of God has a hunger for God, his heart, his ears, his eyes, his mind, his will are open and reaching and longing. And God is faithful to fill open hearts and lead on to spiritual maturity

and greatness.

“I am the LORD thy God . . . open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Ps. 81:10).

Without God’s feeding there can be no growth. Great men and women of God are not *born* that way, they *grow* that way, out of a consuming appetite to know God, to walk with Him, to learn His ways, to reflect His nature, to be pleasing to Him alone. There can never be a truly great and godly soul without great appetite for God!

“I press toward the mark
for the prize
of the high calling of God
in Christ Jesus”

(Phil. 3:14)

Class 8 – Philippians 3:11-21

Our study of this book of Philippians brings us now to one of the most challenging passages in all of Paul's writings. We are recipients and heirs of many wonderful privileges and promises in Christ. One such promise is the glorious change predicted of believers at Christ's coming for His church (I Thess. 4:13-18). In this coming moment not only will believers be caught up to be with Him but they shall be forever changed;

- We see the promise of that change in I Cor. 15:52, *"At the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound . . . and we shall be changed"*.
- We see the timing of that change in I Jn. 3:2, *"When He shall appear we shall be like Him"*.
- We see the nature of that change in Rom. 8:29. We are predestined *"to be conformed to the image of His Son"*, involving even a measure of glory (vs. 30).

It is toward that image of Christ-likeness that we are to be striving now. Paul's earnest example of this pursuit is what comes through so strongly in this portion.

3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Review;

3:1-3 – Wrong Focus of Self-Confidence. Great warning is given of those who would lead God’s people from the freedom of their confidence in Christ to the bondage of self-confidence in law-keeping.

3:4-10 – Right Focus of Christ Confidence. Paul cast away all confidence in human qualifications in his earnest quest to know and to “*win Christ*”.

.....

3:11-14 – Pressing Toward the Mark.

Though we are at rest and confident in Christ we are never to be idle or complacent. Though in Christ there is no need to aspire to salvation there is very much the need to aspire to sanctification. This is now Paul’s thrust in this portion.

Vs. 11 – “*If by any means I might attain to the resurrection*” – Though the initial reading of vs. 11 might seem to imply the earning “*by any means*” of

3:12 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.

resurrection to eternal life the context keeps us straight. Not only the broader context of Paul's writings, which make it clear that our justification or being made right with God is by faith alone and "*not by works of righteousness which we have done*" (Titus 3:5), but also the immediate context here comes to our aid in this difficult portion. In vs. 9 Paul has stated again that to be found in Christ is not a matter of "*having mine own righteousness, which is of the law*", but that which is through faith in Christ. As well, the verses following (vs. 12-14) show that the idea being related here is not one of acquiring salvation and the resurrection by our own efforts, but aspiring to the heights of Christ-likeness and blessing in Him. The apostle's driving purpose was to be lifted in this life to the perfection that will characterize us in our resurrection.

Vs. 12 – "*Not as though I had already attained*" – Paul made no claim to have arrived at the perfection of holiness in his practice. There is good instruction here for folks of a "holiness" persuasion (Wesleyans and Nazarenes) who teach that believers

can and must receive from God a state of sinless perfection in their practice. We must be careful to make distinction between our *position* and our *practice*. In our position in Christ we have been freely given the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. But in our practice or experience we have not been given such perfection. We cannot achieve sinless perfection in this life. If any man might be able to say he had “arrived” it would have been the Apostle Paul. But even he could not admit to such. And this Paul repeats in vs. 13 for emphasis. To believe that we can attain perfect holiness in practice leaves us open to great discouragement when we discover that our sin nature is still active within us. Only when we are at last glorified in the Lord’s presence will we arrive at sinless perfection in our practice.

“But I follow after” – Though Paul *had* not arrived and in fact *could* not arrive at a perfect life, that did not discourage him from striving for it.

“If that I may apprehend” – The Lord Jesus Christ came down to us to meet our greatest need through His death, to “*apprehend*” or take hold of believing mankind by this means. And He came personally to Paul on the Damascus road. There He “*apprehended*” or seized Paul’s heart with His

*3:13 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,*

gracious hand. And now Paul's purpose was to fully take hold of the Lord or make Christ his own, even as the Lord had made Paul His own. This man longed and laboured for nothing less than the prize of Christ's complete pleasure. In this he becomes a wonderful example to us.

Vs. 13 – *“But this one thing I do”* – Literally “but one thing”. Not only what he did, but what he thought, sought, and taught; where he lived and breathed and had his being. Paul had boiled the Christian experience down to barest simplicities. It is all Jesus Christ, all focus upon Him, all about becoming for Him. *“Christ is all, and in all”* (Col. 3:11). Whatever else Paul was or did in the past, whether pluses or minuses, whether laurels or low points, victories or defeats, he would not allow these to affect what he might still be for the Lord. Some folks live in the past, bemoaning what they've done or might have done. But Paul was all about what he might yet be for Jesus. And all else he just let the current carry off downstream as he kept himself pointed up river, struggling on against the flow. He

3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

does not refer here to wrongs he might have done, for wrongs of course must be put completely right before we can move on.

“Reaching forth onto those things which are before” – Behind “reach forth” is a strong word, picturing one striving or stretching himself out toward a goal. It’s after the image of a foot race that Paul seems to speak. Having rounded the final turn it’s running with the flat-out intensity of a runner in the home stretch, with eyes fixed intently on the tape and nothing held back.

Vs. 14 – *“I press toward the mark”* – Paul’s words speak of ongoing rather than momentary action. It was his continued way to be pursuing that distant mark. Though living here below it was the calling up above that Paul prized above anything. Having turned from all the vanities of earth Christ and His pleasure was the one object before his gaze. Paul had put aside all concern for how he had run previously in the race. It was all out for the mark before him!

Perhaps there is something of a continuation here of an earlier theme in this chapter. Those false legalistic Judaizers depended upon the energy of the flesh to make them acceptable to God for salvation. Their approach involved comparing themselves with others and with an attainable external standard. And once they reckoned they had attained to it they could relax in the satisfaction of having arrived. Yet Paul would not be satisfied with comparing himself with others or with any notion of normal Christianity around him. He was not given to comparing himself with man or with the law, but with Christ. He was not concerned with pleasing his society but with pleasing Christ. His goal was the perfection of Christ. He would not be satisfied with status quo!

The lesson of Paul's example is evident. Don't ever be satisfied with status quo! Be all you can be for your Saviour. Learn all you can learn of Him and of His world. Be capable of all you can be capable of. And all for Him, not for others here below. Don't ever settle for a mediocre, average, run-of-the-mill sort of Christian existence. The difference between greatness for God and average is;

- The goal focused upon.
- The energy expended to obtain.

3:15 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.

- Dependence upon God as our resource.

Most Christians have the goal of averaghood, just fitting in nicely with their particular Christian society. To arise beyond this might draw attention and even scorn. But Paul's personal goal, and the goal he presses upon us, is nothing short of perfection; to spare nothing and fear nothing in being what God would have us to be. Let those around raise their eyebrows and mutter their uneasiness. By God's grace;

- I will count for Christ!
- I will not live in ruts!
- I will not tolerate perfunctory!
- I will be passionate in pressing toward the prize!

May the Lord be pleased to draw followers after us.

3:15-21 – Exhortations.

Vs. 15 – “*Let us . . . be thus minded*” – Again God

3:16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.
3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

commands concerning our attitudes and thoughts. You “be being minded” in the same way Paul has described his own passion for Christ. In fact all who are “*perfect*” or spiritually mature will be walking with something of the same attitude.

“If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this” – God is busy with the preservation of His church. He exposes both those who are false among us and falsehood within us in His great work of pruning His vines unto greater fruitfulness.

Vs. 16 – *“Let us walk by the same rule”* – Rather than living by the law in order to in any way secure our salvation, we are running after Christ in order to by any means secure His pleasure. Focus upon the law of God is *“done away”* in He *“which remaineth”*. He who is *“much more . . . glorious”* than the law ever could be is now all our focus (II Cor. 3).

Vs. 17 – *“Be ye followers together of me”* – The word behind *“followers”* is mimic. Not only are we to

3:18 (*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:*

imitate Paul in his *attitudes* but in his *actions* as well. Compare 4:9; I Cor. 4:16; 11:1; II Tim. 2:1-2. Our actions and attitudes of course go hand-in-hand, each in turn influencing the other.

“Mark them which walk . . . as an ensample” – God talks to us here about our heroes, those we look up to and seek to emulate. And again this is no suggestion but a command. Who are your heroes, and who are the heroes of your children? What posters have you allowed your children to hang on their bedroom walls? Some surf louse, famous for time-waste on the water? Some hot-shot TV celeb, the current flavour of the month? Some tactless rock star with hair all afluff? Oh for a generation whose Lord is God and whose heroes are the godly!

Vs. 18 – *“For many . . . are the enemies of the cross of Christ”* – As Paul has told us to mark the examples to follow, so he now warns of examples of an altogether different kind, examples to shun, those who *do not* live in a way that pursues or even honours the Lord. Compare Rom. 16:17-18. There were *“many”* such dark types, the lives and beliefs

of these so wrong that Paul calls them “*enemies*”, and his heart so broken concerning them that he cannot speak of them without tears. This wasn’t the first time Paul had given warning concerning these, but he had told of them “*often*”, fearing that these brothers whom he loved so dearly might be led to follow such. Though the *words* of such bad apples may seem to assure us that they are believers, their actions prove them “*enemies of the cross of Christ*”.

So it would appear to be a wise and important aspect of Christian leadership that we be willing to pinpoint the bad examples of those who do not stand true to Christ’s cross and to speak warnings concerning them, and even to speak *often* in this manner. And this even though we are sure to be considered quite negative and divisive in doing so.

Notice that it’s not enemies of *Christ*, but enemies of “*the cross of Christ*”. In what ways can men be “*enemies of the cross of Christ*”? In the cross of Jesus Christ we find the *perfect* sacrifice on our behalf providing a *completed* redemption, for the work of our salvation was finished on Calvary! We have now only to believe on Jesus to secure our eternity. But when some then add human works to Christ’s finished redemption they make themselves

“enemies of the cross”. For they suggest the sacrifice of Calvary was insufficient to complete our salvation, implying that Jesus did only a part-way job there. Therefore they feel the need to add some law-keeping to complete the job. In effect they deny the sufficiency of the cross. Suppose the king of the land chose to honour you with a gift one day by freely giving to you a gem that is absolutely unable to be reckoned for value. It’s not that you are a citizen particularly deserving of such an honour. He gave it purely out of his grace. But you, being overwhelmed with his generosity, respond with, “Oh no, no! I feel I must pay for this!” And you scamper off to your home and scrape together all you can spare and manage to come up with R121.23. And so you return to the king and with a flourish you count out your payment into his royal hand. What is his response likely to be? *Insult!!* “I in grace have given you a *free gift!*” says the king. “Not only do you make my priceless gift no gift at all by your needless determination to pay, but how you *cheapen* my gift by this paltry pittance of a sum in my hand! If indeed you must pay me for it you’re going to have to do a whole lot better than that! If you are to pay then I must hold you a debtor to pay the rest. Either you receive it as a free gift or you pay the *whole* of its value!” Even so through Christ’s sacrifice we have received a free gift by

3:19 *Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly,
and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly
things.*)

faith, as priceless as it is essential. For one to insist upon earning it or even contributing toward it through the worthless pittance of his righteous efforts is only an insult to God. To believe and promote such a dangerous doctrine makes one an enemy of the cross, cheapening what Jesus did there, essentially making Christ's priceless sacrifice no gracious gift at all.

As well, those who refuse to countenance the shameful, messy death of Christ on the cross make themselves enemies. For such a cross doesn't agree with their "nicer" version of Christianity. These insist upon a smoother, cleaner religion than what the Bible presents. In practice they want the benefits of the cross without the shame, without the suggestion that they are so bad as to require the butchery and bloodshed of Calvary. These too make themselves enemies.

Paul now continues with interesting further descriptions of these enemies.

Vs. 19 – *"Whose end is destruction"* – Don't worry

that God's enemies seem to prosper for a time in this life, for we are assured that their "*end is destruction*".

"Whose god is their belly" – One's god is what comes first in his life and thoughts, that which he most wishes to please. For these it was their appetite. The word "*belly*" is obviously bigger than just appetite for food but takes in all physical appetites. These lived only to gratify their physical, sensual desires. They were "*lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*" (II Tim. 3:4). When one gives himself to satisfying his earthly appetites without heavenly restraint he has made a god of those appetites or desires. And in so doing he has denied the true God of glory.

"Whose glory [boast] is in their shame" – Because these with deadened conscience are so callous toward God's will they glory or boast in things, practices, words, suggestions, films, parties, entertainments, jokes, etc. which should make them ashamed (Rom. 1:32). They pride themselves in their appreciation of such things, shielding their conscience from the pricking of God's Word.

"Who mind earthly things" – Such folks as these are so earthly minded they're of no heavenly good. All

who are so minded are so completely absorbed with the rubbish of earthly pursuits and interests that they have little thought for God. Oh they might speak of heavenly things now and again, and perhaps even enjoy the odd television programme about angels or the Dead Sea scrolls, but the prevailing focus of all of their thinking is of things earthly rather than God's things. Compare Lot, who made his decision for Sodom based upon earthly values, and he lost everything! (Gen. 13 & 19) Compare Esau, who chose according to immediate appetite, and wept bitterly when he lost everything important in the end (Heb. 12). Compare Moses, who made his choice according to God's promises, refusing the pleasures and treasures of Egypt, and was so greatly rewarded (Heb. 11:24-27).

How to become enemies of the cross;

- Add something (anything) to the finished work of Calvary.
- Avoid what the cross represents;
 - o The shame of our sin.
 - o Sacrifice or loss for the sake of others.
- Demand your own will, pleasures, and

*3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence
also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*

appetites gratified now.

- Choose the things of earth over things heavenly.

Vs. 20 – *“For our conversation is in heaven”* – The word here, as in 1:27, is citizenship or commonwealth, referring to that heavenly country to which we belong more than we belong here. Because in Christ we have died with Him and risen to newness of life in Him we are therefore called to *“seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God”* and to set our *“affection on things above, not on things on the earth”* (Col. 3:1-3).

“From whence also we look for the Saviour” – There is an underlying anxious expectancy in that word *“look”*. We look for Christ’s return with the expectancy of a wife scanning the horizon for her returning husband. We look with the expectancy of the bride of an eastern wedding earnestly awaiting the arrival of her bridegroom to take her to his father’s house.

3:21 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.

Vs. 21 – *“Who shall change our vile body”* – The translation for which we earnestly wait is in vs. 20. The transformation for which we earnestly wait is here in vs. 21. It will actually be the second time around for both. In the moment of our salvation we were translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col. 1:12-13), and at the same moment we were transformed into *“a new creation”* (II Cor. 5:17). But Paul now speaks of another translation to come, of Christ to earth in His return and of we to His earthly kingdom. And he speaks of another transformation to come, of redeemed man’s mortal body to immortality (I Cor. 15:53-54). Bodies *“like unto His glorious body”* we shall receive. Bodies no longer subject to sickness, weakness, disease, pain, or death. Compare Isa. 25:8; Rev. 7:17; 21:3-5. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour of our entire being, inward and outward, soul and body. The Immortal became mortal that mortals might gain immortality. Jesus became what we are that we might become what He is. He who has power over all, able to bring all into subjection under Him, is quite able to bring it to pass.

“Rejoice in the Lord alway:
and again I say, Rejoice . . .
Be careful for nothing”

(Phil. 4:4 & 6)

Class 9 – Philippians 4:1-9

Chapter 4

4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

4:1-3 – Euodias & Syntyche.

Vs. 1 – “*Therefore . . . stand fast in the Lord*” – “*Therefore*” looks back. In light of the great truths and sterling examples spoken of previously;

- Of salvation in Jesus of both soul and body (3:21).
- Of a Saviour coming again (3:20).
- Of our heavenly citizenship (3:20).
- Of the example of Paul’s passion for Christ and pursuit of perfection in Him (3:7-17).
- Of the selfless examples of Jesus, Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus (chap. 2).

“*Therefore*” carry on with tenacity in the daily realization of God’s purpose for your life and body.

4:2 *I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.*

“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (I Cor. 6:19-20).

“My brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and my crown . . . my dearly beloved” – Listen to the passion for people in this one with such passion for Christ. We will not have the reality of the one without the reality of the other. How greatly Paul cared for these saints and how openly he expresses it. Though he now has words of tender reproof to bring, see how he so carefully couches his corrections in words of tender care, *“as a nurse cherisheth her children”* (I Thess. 1:7).

Vs. 2 – *“I beseech Euodias and . . . Syntyche”* – We’re forced to read between the lines a bit here. It seems the two women named were a part of the church there at Philippi yet for some unknown reason they were not getting along and were refusing reconciliation. It was a disunity Paul has perhaps been leading up to and now meets head-

on. We don't know who these two were or how they had been involved in ministry with Paul prior to this writing as his words imply. We find no other mention of them in the N.T. The fact that they had been involved in ministry suggests that they were not immature believers. Yet isn't it sad that the only thing we know about these two is that they couldn't get along over some issue and wouldn't reconcile. What will the record say of us I wonder? See how spiritual maturity does not remove all possibility for the works of the flesh. And even model churches as this one at Philippi are not perfect.

Note some of the details of the Lord's approach to problems through Paul;

- He first prepares the hearts of his hearers for unity based on humility and commitment to others, giving good examples of those who let no self-interest hinder the Lord's work through them.
- He calls out the individuals by name. He names both without implying one more at fault than the other.
- The attitude of his approach is earnest pleading or urging rather than stern commanding or demanding. No harsh lording

“over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock”. He does not belittle or embarrass them publicly.

- He does not even mention the cause of their dissension. Perhaps because it does not really matter what had embittered their relationship in the church. Any mention of the cause would turn attention again to the merits of the arguments and away from the resulting rift. The Lord quietly overlooks what they might have considered matters of main import, the reasons for their disunity, and simply points to the wrong of their disunity.

The point is that the Lord through Paul insists that they put the matter to rest whatever it be. In the same way He would insist that we put right any matter of dissension within our church family. It probably doesn’t matter what the reason for the disunity. *“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men”* (Rom. 12:18).

“That they be of the same mind in the Lord” – Not that these at odds with each other must think exactly alike against their convictions, but that they must come to an equal determination to be

4:3 And I intreat 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.

agreeable. They must be minded the same;

- As Jesus, who emptied Himself of all that He might have cherished for our sake.
- As Epaphroditus, who poured himself out in the service of others at risk of his own life.
- As Paul, who cast aside all of his earthly merits in pursuit of Christ.

Paul does not speak here of refraining from strong convictions in the name of unity, as the compromising church of our day would advise. But there must ever be in us a willingness to consider the views of others, and genuine care must ever remain for those with whom we disagree. We need always to weigh carefully what is at stake and how vital the matter over which we may disagree with others. Standing disunity in a church is no small concern.

Vs. 3 – *“I entreat thee also, true yokefellow”* – At this point Paul turns from plural to singular in the Greek and addresses some particular individual

there at Philippi. Perhaps it was the leading elder or pastor of the church, one to whom Paul speaks with respect, referring to him as his sincere colleague. Interesting that the name of this one is not even given. Seems it doesn't matter who this servant was. His service to the Lord was all the issue. Who we are and what our status or qualifications or abilities may be are irrelevant matters. Our service for the Lord in His church is all that counts. This man Paul strongly encourages to loving involvement in helping these two women to unity.

How Paul loved and longed for the best for this congregation. He could tolerate no breach, no beginning of decay among them. So intense was his concern for the good and growth of others that it was something like a life or death matter to him. *"Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord"* (I Thess. 3:8). For the Apostle John there was *"no greater joy"* than word of his children walking in truth (III Jn. 2-4). At the Judgment Seat of Christ such fruit of ministry will be the *"joy and crown"* of God's servants (I Thess. 2:19-20). Our greatest joy in that coming day will be others standing beside us, redeemed and rewarded as a result of our ministry. It will be our glory to bring our sheaves with us, both sower and reaper rejoicing together before the

Lord. Their progress was Paul's joy and reward, their fall into spiritual disinterest and divisions his grief and shame. He could not lightly dismiss their troubles to their own choices. He cared too much to not get involved. And so with fear and trembling he deals with those walking in error. Again it's the heart of God we see in Paul here.

In our own dealings with each other do we demonstrate the same careful healing cut of a skilled surgeon or the surgical delicacy of an assassin? Satan ever seeks to promote dissensions within Christ's body, even in the way we pursue good ends. This he does by fostering in men those vices so close to his own evil heart, pride and selfishness, the very opposite of that lowly selflessness featuring so wonderfully in the Lord.

"Whose names are in the book of life" – This is that divine record of those written among the saved. It's a reminder that though believers may falter in their responses, as these two women, they do not lose their standing among God's own children.

4:4-9 – Key for Anxiety.

4:5 *Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.*

Vs. 4 – “*Rejoice in the Lord always*” – Here is another continuous command to make rejoicing our lifelong, moment-by-moment habit (3:1). Paul speaks with great emphasis through repetition (“*again I say, Rejoice*”). And again this is to be practiced “*always*”. Why is this command to rejoice placed here? Because only in unity can there be true rejoicing (Ps. 133). When there is not rejoicing in us it is the indicator that *something is wrong* in our way with God and others.

Vs. 5 – “*Let your moderation be known unto all men*” – The word behind “*moderation*” is an interesting one. It has been variously interpreted yieldedness, consideration, forbearance, gentleness, reasonableness, or even “sweet reasonableness”. It appears to express the very opposite of an unyielding, harshly dogmatic attitude which fosters division. Compare the way of the true “*servant of the Lord*” in II Tim. 2:24-25. Compare the qualifications of a bishop in I Tim. 3:3, describing one neither abusive nor quick to quarrel. There should rather ever be a happy agreeableness about us.

4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

“The Lord is at hand” – Literally *“The Lord is near”*, with no clarity as to whether this refers to proximity or time. Likely both thoughts are meant to carry. The Lord is right here with us always, looking on, seeing our actions, hearing our words, knowing our every thought. *“The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good”* (Prov. 15:3). And as well, *“we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ”* from heaven (3:20). He’s coming again, perhaps soon. Certainly in comparison to eternity His return is *“at hand”*, and the change mentioned in 3:21 will certainly come to reality. Compare James’ command to *“Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the Judge standeth before the door”* (5:9). In both of these portions the hope of Christ’s soon coming is meant to affect our relations with each other.

Vs. 6 – *“Be careful for nothing”* – As mentioned previously, the word used here speaks of *anxious* care or worry. And again, we have an ongoing command. We are called upon by God to develop the lifelong habit of never giving ourselves over to anxious care or fret. Compare Christ’s repeated

command to “*take no [anxious] thought*” in Matt. 6:25-34. Compare the repeated command in Ps. 37 to “*fret not thyself*” (vs. 1, 7, 8). Though this may seem an impossible demand, our God is the God of the impossible. And deliverance begins by acknowledging precisely what He expects of us. This is part of the perfection for which Paul so earnestly strove.

“*But in everything*” – Don’t miss the contrast of all-inclusive terms here. “*For nothing*”, in no respect are we to give ourselves to anxiety, while in place of this, “*in everything*” we are to give ourselves to God in depending prayer. Turn your anxious care to urgent prayer. Both the continual putting off of worry and the putting on of prayer are commanded by God. We are to repent of the one and replace with the other.

“*Prayer*” is a general term for our communication with God. “*Supplication*” refers to requests for particular benefits. “*Thanksgiving*” for God’s past blessings must not be left out in our communication with Him. Though of course our God knows all, still He insists that we make our requests known to Him in living dependence upon Him. Here is the God-ordained replacement for our every troubling thought, “*casting all your care upon*

Him” who cares for us the most.

“Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” (Ps. 55:22).

Oh He may not sustain us just the way or when we would prefer. His answer to His people crying to Him in the wilderness was not to remove the poisonous serpents, but to make a way of escape for those who would believe Him for it in looking to the brass serpent on the pole (Num. 21). Even so He may not provide the physical deliverance for which we ask, but He may use our circumstance to bring spiritual answers we never knew we needed.

That we are to *“take no thought”* does not mean we must be thoughtless concerning the future. Thought, yes. Anxious thought, no. Forethought is a mark of prudence (Prov. 14:15; 22:3; 27:12). It’s only a question of what we do with those things in our thoughts, a question of who carries the burden of them. One man said, “You can’t change the past by all your worrying, but you can sure ruin a perfectly good present by stewing about the future”. A large industrial concern once discovered that 9 out of 10 cases of worker inefficiency were caused by worry. A life insurance company once found that 4 out of 5 nervous breakdowns began not in

4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

actual events but in worry. A medical clinic's analysis of its patients showed that 35% of all illnesses on its records started with worry.

Vs. 7 – *“The peace of God, which passeth all understanding”* – What is this? Isn't this a promise? Such simple trust that responds according to faith in God's assurances rather than according to our understanding, the way things appear on the ground, will receive from God a peace that is beyond understanding, a peace that does not make sense to those looking on. It did not make sense that Hannah's spirit could be lifted just because she prayed (I Sam. 1). It was a peace surpassing understanding. How could Abraham's confidence in God's promise of a son not waver when his wife became too old to even have children? It was a peace surpassing understanding.

Vs. 8 – *“Think on these things”* – Here is the great battlefield! Here is the key to right-hearted Christian living. Right actions are ever the product of a right use of the mind. Solomon wrote in his wisdom, *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of*

4:8 *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.*

it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23), and “as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). Above all your keeping be sure to guard your heart, for out of it issues forth what you actually are and will soon be practicing. “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things” (Matt. 12:35). The true test of a man is what he thinks about when he doesn’t have to think about something.

We are so bombarded with constant temptations to evil through the media (T.V., radio, newspaper, adverts, magazines, etc.) in an effort to influence our thinking and attitudes. We live in a world that is busy reassessing all of the old values, as to sexualities, legalities, honesty, and what constitutes integrity. Until society descends to the point where every man does *“that which is right in his own eyes”* (Judges 21:25), to the point where men put *“no difference between the holy and profane”* (Ezek. 22:26). Until far-out becomes fashion and evil is in

and rather ordinary. There is an unceasing, relentless, daily battle raging for control of the minds of men, and of believers among men. Therefore God's clear directive here in vs. 8, "You be thinking on these things". Be meditating here. Be dwelling on such as these. Keep your continual attention here and directed away from earthly evils. Compare the instruction of Ps. 1. How can the righteous soul find deliverance from "*the counsel of the ungodly*"? Through the safe-keeping power of pre-occupation with God in His Word. "*In His law doth he meditate day and night*". To meditate is to dwell on or chew over something bit by bit, and ultimately to appropriate or adopt the things mulled over. So we're given a representative list of things right and proper to be thinking on, a filth replacement list.

"Whatsoever things are . . .";

- "*True*" – The Greek word here carries the notion of "unconcealed". Things up-front. Things thoroughly honest and openly so.
- "*Honest*" – Things noble or dignified. The opposite of shamefully unspeakable works of darkness (Eph. 4:11-12)
- "*Just*" – Things conforming to God's standard of right or holiness. Not tainted by evil or

shady in any way.

- “*Pure*” – Things morally undefiled or sacred. In contrast to a world that insists we join them in desiring things impure and forbidden.
- “*Lovely*” – Things pleasingly attractive in a good sense.
- “*Of good report*” – Things spoken with goodwill toward others. Contrast slander with its subtle intent to hurt.
- “*Virtue*” – Things morally excellent.
- “*Praise*” – Things commendable.

Precise definitions are difficult here and tend to overlap. The obvious point is that all things consistent with the true beauty of God’s holy nature are to fill our thoughts rather than things consistent with the darkness of man’s sinful nature. This takes conscious effort. Here is the track to which God requires our “*every thought*” to be brought “*into captivity*” and obedience (II Cor. 10:5).

Though Paul speaks of the inward thought patterns of all of us here, it’s likely that part of his aim was still toward the trouble brewing between Euodias and Syntyche. The rift that had developed there

would surely have involved negative thoughts on the part of both toward the other. There is a very natural tendency in us for the same, to dwell upon the *failures* of others. Yet every child of God possesses something true, noble, pure, some evident virtue. If we all chose to think on these instead of dwelling on the short-comings of others we might be amazed at how much more precious our relationships here in this church, how much more unified, peaceful, restful, and encouraging an environment this would be!

As well, we must never permit our minds to feed on the wicked, filthy things of the flesh, like pigs relishing their stinking slop. Like maggots feasting on things rotten. God's command is to cast such things out. Refuse to think them. Deny such thoughts a settled dwelling place within. Replace them with thoughts from the list. Quote to yourself Bible texts that relate to that temptation when harassed by it. Refuse to feed that habit through what we look at, listen to, or those with whom we hang out. It's a natural thing for the carnal mind within us to run after such filth in our thoughts. It's a constant choice we make whether to allow Lord Carnality or Lord Christ to dominate. Pentecost wrote, "God's standard for His children is that we should sit in judgment upon every thought

4:9 *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.*

that flickers through our minds”; or that flickers across the T.V. screen, or that presents itself in books or magazines or song lyrics.

Vs. 9 – Again Paul holds himself up as a worthy example to follow (3:17). Now the command relates to our *practice* rather than to our *thoughts* as in vs. 8. First God deals with our attitude and thoughts, then with our actions.

.....

Ponder Points

Nine commands in nine verses. All but one referring to continuous action;

- Vs. 2 – Thus be standing firm in the Lord.
- Vs. 3 – Be helping those women.
- Vs. 4 – Be rejoicing in the Lord always.
- Vs. 4 – Again I say, Be rejoicing.
- Vs. 5 – Let your reasonableness be known by all men.
- Vs. 6 – You all be being anxious in no respect.

- Vs. 6 – Be letting your requests be made known to God.
- Vs. 8 – Be thinking on these things.
- Vs. 9 – These things you all be practicing.

Class 10 – Philippians 4:10-23

In Paul's closing words of this epistle to the church at Philippi he does not fail to express his thanks for the gift they had sent to him in the hand of Epaphroditus. These were the people so quick to see to this kind of care for Paul more than all others. They were ever generous to the one who brought Christ to them, to that one to whom they owed the knowledge of the truth that had set them free. From the first we see hospitality in both Lydia and the jailor, from the moment of their salvation (Acts 16). And then when Paul moved on to cities to the west, within three weeks they sent two gifts to help with his needs. In their giving the Philippian believers became examples Paul could hold up to others (Rom. 15:26; II Cor. 8:1-5). But a few years had now passed since they had sent anything to him. For he had been two years across the sea in Roman custody in Caesarea on the coast of Palestine, and a winter was spent on the island of Malta. But now at length they caught up with him again through their messenger Epaphroditus when Paul landed in Rome within striking distance.

4:10-20 – Philippian Generosity.

Vs. 10 – *“But ye lacked opportunity”* – Their gift, the

4:10 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.
4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

evidence of their continued care, lifted the apostle to rejoicing in the Lord. Though it had been quite some time since they had sent to him Paul expressed his recognition that it was not through any slackness or fault on their part. He knew that they were ever mindful of him and wishing to help but had simply not been able. And he would put them at ease, letting them know that he understood.

Vs. 11 – *“Not that I speak in respect of want”* – Paul wanted them to understand that it’s not as though he had really suffered in the Lord’s hands in the absence of their help. He had come to the place where his contentment was independent of his outward situation or circumstance.

Vs. 12 – *“I know how . . .”* – Paul had learned through the Lord to walk in joy regardless of whether the river of earthly supply was running low or spilling over its banks. Having much did not spoil him and having little stirred no inward chafing

4:12 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.

in him. It seems Paul was just as contented with nothing as he was with plenty. *“And having food and raiment let us be therewith content”* (I Tim. 6:8). It’s a matter of true submission, whether we are truly bowing to our Father’s will to the very core of our being, whether He is indeed our Master. For *“no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon”* (Matt. 6:24). Happy is the man whose love is the Lord Jesus Christ and who needs nothing else, who allows no other god!

Paul had learned the secret of contentment. It’s been suggested that Paul may have come from a wealthy background. His education under Gamaliel was a privilege available to only a few, representing the finest education a Jew could receive. Such would not have come cheap. But then Paul at last found the Pearl of greatest price and sold all that he might have Christ. He turned his back on position, prominence, authority, affluence, earthly security, and opportunity for Jesus of Nazareth. (There must

have been some very unhappy family members in Paul's background who felt he had thrown away a world of opportunity. Yet notice that the feelings of none of these are ever even mentioned in God's Word. Seems such unredeemed concerns just don't even matter in God's reckoning.) When Paul was commissioned with Barnabus at Antioch to take the gospel to the Gentiles they likely left with little more than the prayers of God's people. Paul went with the ability to make tents and used this skill when needed to keep himself fed. What a come-down to a life of "*hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness*" (II Cor. 11:27). Yet again, in Christ he had found contentment! As one writer said, "Happiness isn't so much a matter of position as it is disposition". It's a matter of faith really, a faith victorious over the world. The story's told of a mighty king who was stricken with a strange disease for which the physicians could find no cure. A sooth-sayer then told the king that if he wore the shirt of a happy man he would recover. With fresh hope the king ordered the country searched for his happiest subject. But alas, when they found him, he owned no shirt!

Though Paul might have expected financial support as his right from those he had helped, this he chose not to demand or expect (I Cor. 9:6-15). Yet how

4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

very thankful he was when help came. Though he might have become bitter about some who should have been helping in his material needs, yet he never allowed himself to fall to this. He never complained or presumed. He simply and wholly handed it over to the Lord knowing that He never neglects or forsakes or forgets. The Lord is with us always, and never as an uninvolved or unconcerned spectator.

“Every where and in all things” – The literal statement behind this is “in everything (sing.) and in all things (pl.)”. It’s the same phrase repeated, but first in singular and then in plural. The indication is of life conditions both in the particular details and on the whole. The Lord, working through Paul’s faith applied to his experiences, had disciplined the man to easily endure both the larger compounding of factors and the individual details of life. This evidently was not a disposition Paul had always possessed or came to suddenly. The words used speak of a process of learning.

Vs. 13 – *“I can do all things through Christ”* – Paul

refers to “*all things*” within God’s will here, not “*all things*” within man’s whim. In Christ and according to His will Paul was equal to anything, including even contentment in life’s lowest moments. Compare the similar statement in Rom. 8:37, “*In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us*”. To be conquerors is quite enough. To be “*more than conquerors*” is right over the top, enough and to spare.

“*Which strengtheneth me*” – Paul would not state “*I can*” without qualifying with the “*through*” of Christ’s strengthening work. This is no personal boast but a boast in Christ. Paul understood that it was Jesus working in him, interceding in his behalf, transforming his nature, working both Paul’s will and way into the practice of God’s good pleasure. And it was this confidence that made him able to stand up to whatever life brought his way.

Don’t miss the circle of success described in this chapter, beginning and ending with dependence;

- Vs. 4-6 – Refuse anxiety and replace with dependent prayer.
- Vs. 8 – Choose to be thinking right.
- Vs. 9 – Choose to be practicing right.

- Vs. 11-12 – Learn to think content.
- Vs. 13 – All things possible in dependence on Christ.

Paul had learned his utter helplessness without the indwelling empowering presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in him. But he had learned another great truth as well, that with the indwelling, empowering presence of the Lord Jesus Christ he could do *anything*, anything required of him by the Lord! Note the balance;

- “*I can*” – As if all depends on me. My own godly resolve is a part of doing “*all things*” as I should.
- “*Through Christ*” – As if all depends on Him. For without Him I cannot do anything at all.

Anything the Lord asks or expects of us we are quite capable of doing with His abiding presence and transforming power. Without Him there is no help and nothing accomplished of any lasting significance. With Him even the impossible is possible. When those 5,000 were in the wilderness place and Jesus would see them fed He first commanded the disciples to feed them (Matt. 14:16, “*Ye give them to eat*”). It didn’t take them long to figure out the impossibility of the task. And did the disciples feed the multitude in the end? Yes they

did. But not without first appealing to Christ and drawing upon His miraculous supply. Many saints throughout the ages have discovered that there is nothing God cannot accomplish through His people. Abraham discovered the God of the impossible. Though his wife, Sarah, was barren and then well past the ability to bear children, and though Abraham himself was “*as good as dead*” in his old age, yet God still did the impossible through them in the surprising miracle of Isaac’s birth. He did not tell Abraham, “You will produce a son”. He said, “*I will . . . give thee a son also of her*” (Gen. 17:16). Moses discovered the God of the impossible as well. When the Lord at last had compassion upon His people languishing in the slavery of Egypt He sent Moses to demand the release of His people, Pharaoh’s entire slave force. *Impossible* that Pharaoh should give them up at the bidding of Moses! Moses knew himself utterly unable to convince Pharaoh of such, or even to lead so great a company of people in the wilderness. God’s reply to the objections of Moses was essentially, “You misunderstand Me, My friend. I did not say that *you* were going to do it. **I** will deliver them, through you”. And so He/he did. In the same way God has worked through many of those recorded in the Book “*who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the*

4:14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

mouths of lions”, etc., etc. (Heb. 11).

Paul said “*all things*”, which includes our own personal impossibilities as well, if within God’s will. Is it really impossible to heal a troubled or broken marriage? Is it really impossible to live on one salary to avoid the day-care, surrogate mothering of our small children? Is it really impossible to hold to righteous standards in a corrupt business world and survive? Is it really impossible to remain morally pure for your future marriage partner? Is it really impossible to lovingly use a rod like you mean it in disciplining your children? Is it really impossible to walk away from a bad habit or into a good one? “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*”.

Vs. 14 – “*Ye did well*” – Paul assures his friends there that it was a good thing they did in “communicating” or sharing with him in their gift and in sending the service of Epaphroditus. He would not have them to think that their gift meant little to him with his explanation that he was equally content with nothing. Paul was in no way

unappreciative.

Understand that by God's reckoning we always do well to remember those who serve in His work, to help such servants with the tangible means God has made available to us. For to help them is to encourage them in their ministry for the Lord, and to do so is to minister to the Lord. Compare III Jn. 5-8; Gal. 6:6; I Cor. 9:14; I Tim. 5:17-18. We should always be mindful to minister well to those who minister well to us. To not do so demonstrates a low value placed on spiritual things and the ministry of the Word in our lives and family. To do so is a step of faith in God's words. The unsaved world, so blind to spiritual realities, would tell you it's throwing good money to the wind to give it away to God (They may tell you this through lips pinching a cigarette. If ever there was good money thrown, or blown, to the wind!). As well, we are commonly encouraged to care for Christian brothers in need (Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:16; I Tim. 6:17-18; Gal. 6:10). Don't let such opportunities to do good pass you by. Why not make conscious financial preparations to be able to help so that when opportunities suddenly present themselves you're ready to step in with help? Compare the kind deeds of that wealthy woman of Shunem in Elisha's behalf (II Ki. 4). How greatly God blessed her for all she sacrificed. It's

4:15 *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.*
4:16 *For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.*
4:17 *Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.*

been said, “Personal consecration is purse-and-all consecration”. “Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35).

Vs. 15-16 – “*No church communicated with me . . . but ye only*” – As before mentioned, these Philippian believers were immediate and earnest in their thoughtful contributions to Paul in his ministry. It was an encouragement Paul never forgot.

Vs. 17 – “*Fruit that may abound to your account*” – In his selfless interest in their best Paul was more zealous for their heavenly reward than for his own earthly benefits. The reality of God’s accounting comes clear here, that He does indeed remember and reward us for our contributions to His cause on this earth. Consider how often Jesus confirmed the same;

- In His Luke 16 parable He told of an unjust

steward who squandered his master's goods. (Haven't we all?) The steward was discovered and confronted by his master and his days as a steward were numbered. There then followed a brief period while the man remained a steward before he was actually removed from his stewardship. During that interim he worked quickly in using his master's goods to relieve the burdens of those around him in reducing their debts. He hoped to appeal to them when his income ceased. Not only did that steward receive the praise of his master for his shrewdness but he also invested into his future provision by relieving the financial hardships of others. The principle suggested seems to be that the using of his master's goods for himself threatened his livelihood and brought his master's condemnation. But the wisdom of giving out his master's goods provided for his future and brought commendation.

- In Christ's parable of the talents the wise servants invested the master's talents, gaining a return and personal reward, while the fool, who simply held close his master's talent, was condemned (Matt. 25:14-30). None of what we own do we really own. We are ever only stewards or administrators of

4:18 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, wellpleasing to God.

the Master's goods. And the investment of our Master's goods in others accrues to our account and wins His praise while the hoarding of it for ourselves draws only His reproof and makes us more fool than wise.

- Jesus told us to *"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven"* (Matt. 6:19-20). How? By not laying up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but rather tending to distribute to the benefit of others and God's work on this earth.
- Christ's answer for the rich young ruler as well was to sell out and give, *"and thou shalt have treasure in heaven"* (Matt. 19:21).

There is treasure to be had for the truly wise investor.

Vs. 18 – *"Wellpleasing to God"* – Not only did their giving bless and please and encourage God's servant, but Paul announced their act as something greatly pleasing to God as well. Look and learn!

*4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to
his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
4:20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever
and ever. Amen.*

Giving to God's service out of love for God and others touches Him.

Vs. 19 – “*My God shall supply all your need*” – Here is one of those verses human self-interest finds easy to misuse. Many have sought to obligate God by this verse to come through for them in their need, wrenching it out of its context and trying to use it like a counterfeit note. And then faulting God when He doesn't act “on His word”. We must read this verse in its context. The same word is used in both vs. 18 & 19. When Paul said “*I am full*” in vs. 18 behind it is the same verb translated “*shall supply*” in vs. 19. As the Philippian believers had filled Paul's needs to the full through their generous giving even so Paul assured them that his God would do the same for them. So this promise is spoken as God's response to their gracious giving. “As you have done to me, so my God will do to you”. We cannot find licence here for financial irresponsibility, thinking that God has obligated Himself to bale out every Christian. The simple truth is that God has obligated Himself to reward

the one who gives to Him. The one who never worships God in cheerful giving will never know the joy of seeing God give back. Compare the example of Israel. When the children of Israel let go of all security in Egypt and cast themselves wholly upon God to take care of them in the wilderness, what happened? Their God provided for them completely and from the most unexpected sources (water out of a rock and bread from heaven). A *“table in the wilderness”* is the way the Psalmist described it, a banquet in the desert. God provided for millions in the most unbelievable ways and circumstances because they trusted Him and believed His words and followed His guidance. God has obligated Himself to take care of a life given to Him, stepping out in trust upon Him. And a given life is a giving life. Therefore God’s promise to take care of those giving believers at Philippi.

Don’t miss the fact that before Israel could receive any of the promised benefit out in the desert they had to step out by faith and obedience to God’s words. They had to first step out of their security. Had they remained in Egypt they would have seen no provisions from God’s hand. Don’t bother praying “Oh Lord, give me a million and I’ll surely give a tenth to You”. If you’re giving no percentage on your every increase now you’d give none then.

God will not be mocked. To demand of God the fulfilment of His promise here without first givenness and giving to Him is presumption. *“Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed”* (I Sam. 2:30). Again, as we do to Him so He does to us.

Compare as well the example of the prodigal son in this regard (Lk. 15). When he left his father’s service his resources soon dwindled to nothing. But, by his own admission, while he remained in his father’s service he ever had *“enough and to spare”* (vs. 17). Compare Lk. 6:35-38; Prov. 3:9-10; Matt. 6:1-4.

Personal Testimony on Giving

My first two years of secular university training cost my parents little because we were able to access financial grants available in our state. Then I was saved and called to ministry and headed off to my first year of Bible college training. The costs of this first year I was able to cover with my own savings. I was still able to give a portion toward the Lord’s work as well while giving my heart and life to Him for His service. By the end of that first year nothing was left of my own resources. Toward the end of that first year of Bible training I was challenged to

continue training at another Bible college and to trust God for the funds to do so. When I spoke to my Dad about it he was a bit concerned that I had given away some of my own funds. But though he did not fully agree with the new direction in which I was wanting to go he felt he must agree to help with costs because my education had cost him so little up to that point. He had spent much on the university costs of my older sisters and so it seemed only fair that he cover the cost of my second year of Bible training. That circumstance was of the Lord to provide in this way for my further training. The following year it worked out that I was able to help my Dad build a house during the summer. The income from this together with a campus job during the school year covered the costs of my third year. Throughout this time I was always careful to honour the Lord in support of His work and in helping others in need from what He provided me. The summer between my third and final year of college I managed to get a job on an oil drilling platform off the Louisiana coast. This job provided more than enough for my final year by a huge margin. And so I came out the end of my years of training debt-free and with the ability to help other struggling students as well. We have always been careful to honour the Lord with our increase, and He has always honoured us in return, with “*enough*

*4:21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren
which are with me greet you.*

and to spare”.

.....

4:21-23 – Closing Greetings.

Vs. 21 – “*Every saint in Christ Jesus*” – Paul begins and ends his book with this happy phrase. All that belongs to the saints in this current church age are “*in Christ Jesus*”. Every blessing begins and ends there.

“*The brethren which are with me greet you*” – The Christian brothers there in Rome with Paul included Aristarchus who was also a prisoner for some cause (Col. 4:10), and others who were there in support and ministry, such as Timothy (1:1) and Epaphroditus, Tychicus, Onesimus perhaps, Mark, Jesus Justus, Dr. Luke (Col. 4:7-14), and perhaps others. Even in prison there was a body of like-minded men gathered around this happy man, sending their greetings. It didn’t matter where Paul was, friends and followers were raised up around this old saint of God and opportunity was there to influence them for the Lord.

4:22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.

4:23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

God's way of raising up leadership has always been the same, to get younger saints up close to older saints for a time. Joshua had his Moses, Elisha his Elijah, the School of the Prophets their Samuel, and the disciples had Jesus. It speaks caution to us of the kinds of tracks we're leaving through our generation. *"Make straight paths for your feet lest that which is lame be turned out of the way"* (Heb. 12:13).

Vs. 22 – *"Chiefly they that are of Caesar's household"* – So there were saints even in Caesar's house, among his servants and soldiers. As Paul had said at the beginning, *"my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace"* (1:13). That he was imprisoned for his commitment to Christ was evident to all. Paul's presence and personality and spirit were attracting attention there. There was growing intrigue among some who were finding answers in Jesus Christ.

Paul bloomed wherever he was planted. He would not be silenced just because he was a prisoner. He

was a servant always at his work, the Lord's work, and results came. And how else could this man have ever gotten this kind of an opening into Roman royalty than through the "tragic" unfairness of his imprisonment?

