

DIGGING DEEPER
PHILIPPIANS



Digging Deeper Philippians

Study Guide

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1

A. Introduction

The city of Philippi had a rich history. The site of the city was northern Greece called Macedonia. When Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, ascended the throne of the Greek empire, he captured the city in 357 BC, enlarged and strengthened it, and gave it his name. Paul and his companions began the church at Philippi on his second missionary journey (**Acts 16:11-40**). This was the first church established on the European continent.

Paul was under house arrest in Rome at the time he wrote this letter; his purpose for writing was to thank the Philippians for the gift they had sent and to strengthen the believers by showing them that true joy comes from Jesus Christ alone. It's interesting to note that the name of Jesus is used 70 times in this epistle. True biblical joy is a fruit of the Spirit and dominates this letter to the believers at Philippi, and it can only be found in a deep, abiding relationship with Jesus Christ. The concept of rejoicing or joy appears 16 times in these 4 chapters and radiates the positive, triumphant message that because of Jesus Christ we can rejoice.

When the Philippian church heard about Paul's imprisonment, they sent Epaphroditus, who may have been one of their elders, to visit and encourage him. Epaphroditus arrived with words of affection from the church, as well as a financial contribution that would help make Paul's confinement more comfortable.

Paul wanted to thank the believers for helping him during his time of need; he also wanted to tell them why he could

be full of joy despite his imprisonment and upcoming trial. He encouraged them to remain strong in the faith, realizing that although he was in chains for the gospel, God was in control and the truth of the gospel remained unchanged. One could understand the church in Philippi writing a letter of encouragement to Paul encouraging him to have joy in the Lord, but here we have the prisoner writing the encouraging letter to the church. We could say that Philippians is a Christian psychology book based on biblical doctrine.

B. Paul's Greeting

Read Philippians 1:1.

- While Paul often used the designation “apostle” in his letters, here he referred only to his and Timothy’s roles as servants of Jesus Christ. The word translated “*servant*” means “slave—one who is subject to the will and at the disposal of his master.” Paul is expressing not only his but also Timothy’s devotion and subjection to Christ.
- “*To all the saints in Christ Jesus.*” The word “*saint*” was a common term designating believers. It did not mean those who were without sin but merely those set apart. The first saint or convert in Philippi was a woman named Lydia. Because few Jews lived in the city, there was no synagogue for Paul to visit when he came. Thus, in Philippi Paul did not face the problem of false teaching from the Judaizers as he had faced in so many other areas where the Jewish population was more significant. On the other hand, the Romans tolerated religious practices of many different kinds but often relegated them to territory outside the city. Thus, these people were outside the city gates beside the river (**Acts 16:11-15**).

- From those humble beginnings began the faithful Philippian church. The church at Philippi was probably about twelve years old when Paul wrote this letter. It had been a significant source of financial support for Paul. ***“And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I have kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so will I keep myself” (2 Corinthians 11:9).*** Paul had often commended this church, holding it up as an example of generosity. ***“Moreover, brethren, we make know to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality” (2 Corinthians 8:1-2).***
- While Paul greeted all the saints and the entire church, he singled out the church leadership for greetings as well. Bishops (also called “elders”) were in charge of the church, watching over, nourishing and protecting the spiritual life of the believers, and being faith-filled examples to the flock. The church in Philippi had elders raised up from within the church membership. Paul had appointed elders in various churches during his journeys (**Acts 14:23**). Paul spoke to the elders in the Ephesian church: ***“Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers” (Acts 20:28).*** The qualifications and duties of elders/overseers are explained in **1 Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9**. Paul knew that God had given him (Paul) unusual spiritual gifts and a special mission, but he also knew the value of a multi-leadership team. Deacons were selected to handle the church’s physical concerns. The qualifications of deacons are spelled out in **1 Timothy 3:8-13**.

Read Philippians 1:2.

- Paul used “grace and peace” as a standard greeting in all his letters. We often undervalue God’s immeasurable gifts of grace and peace and instead focus on the possessions and shallow experiences the world offers. Grace and peace easily become common, religious words, rather than real benefits that God offers to us. Compared to the big and bright packages the world has to offer, grace and peace appear rather insignificant. But when we unwrap them, we discover God’s wonderful, personal dealings with us. Not a single heartbeat or breath occurs outside of God’s grace. We live because of His divine favor. His favor cannot be earned by effort or bought with money. It might be good to consider these words by Lewis Smedes: *“Grace does not make everything all right. Grace’s trick is to show us that it is good and even wonderful for us to be breathing, while at the same time feeling that everything gathering around us is totally wretched. Grace is not a ticket to Fantasy Island; Fantasy Island is dreamy fiction. Grace is not a potion to charm life to our liking...Grace does not cure all cancers, transform all our kids into winners, or send us into the high skies of success. Grace is rather an amazing power to look earthly reality in the face, see its sad and tragic edges, feel its cruel cuts, join in the chorus against its outrageous unfairness, and yet feel in our deepest being that it is good and right for us to be alive on God’s good earth...Grace is power to see life very clearly, admit that it is sometimes wrong, and still know that somehow in the midst of all this, it’s all right...This is one reason we call it ‘Amazing Grace.’”*
- Jesus also calmly spoke of peace as a personal possession that He gladly left to those who were His (**John 14:27**). Another interesting scripture to consider

is **Isaiah 26:3**. The Bible speaks of three distinct types of peace: “*Peace with God*” **Romans 5:1**; here in **Philippians 1:2** we see “*peace from God*”; and in **Colossians 3:15** it’s the “*peace of God*.” Inside this package marked “*grace and peace*” we find an inexhaustible treasure of God’s daily presence in our lives. Using these two words in his greeting to the churches, Paul wasn’t offering something new; he was reminding his readers of what they already possessed in Christ. Thank God for His grace and peace. The phrase “*from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ*” emphasizes the source of all grace and peace.

C. Paul’s Prayer and Desire for His Readers

Read Philippians 1:3.

- In these words, Paul expressed his love for the Philippian believers. The Philippian church had brought Paul much joy and little pain. Some of the churches had developed severe problems and Paul’s letters had focused on dealing with the problems. For example, the churches in Rome and Galatia were threatened by Judaizers who wanted the believers to return to obeying Jewish law. The church in Corinth was plagued by internal strife. The church in Colossae was turning away to a heresy all its own. The church in Thessalonica was dealing with false rumors about Paul, disrespect toward leaders, laziness among the members, and false teaching about the resurrection. Paul’s letter to the Philippians, while mentioning some concerns and giving some advice, could be considered a beautiful thank you note for their unwavering support.
- Paul probably visited Philippi on three separate occasions: on the missionary journey when the gospel

was planted (**Acts 6:12**), on his journey from Ephesus through Macedonia on his way to Greece where he stayed for three months, and on his way back to Jerusalem (**Acts 20:6**). While the length of time of each stay is uncertain, his visits with the Philippians had cemented a strong relationship.

Read Philippians 1:4-5.

- When Paul prayed for the Philippians, he thanked God for them and prayed with joy. This is the first of many times that Paul used the word “joy” in this letter. The focus on joy sets this letter apart from all of Paul’s other letters. Coming from an itinerate preacher imprisoned for his faith, joy would be the last attitude one would expect. Paul had joy despite his imprisonment and the uncertainty of his future. Even though his life was on the line, he could rejoice and encourage others.
- A dictionary definition equates joy with happiness, but in Scripture the two words are quite different. For example, when life is going well, we may feel happy; but when hard times come, we lose that feeling and become unhappy or sad. True joy, however, rises above the rolling waves of circumstance and keeps us on an even keel no matter how happy or sad we might be because of real-life situations. Happiness reflects a horizontal perspective focusing on circumstances or on one’s experience. Joy reflects a vertical perspective centering on God. Therefore, we can be joyful in trials because we know that God is sovereign (**Romans 8:26-28**).
- True joy is found only in relationship with Jesus Christ and is the gladdening of the heart that comes from abiding in Christ. It is the inner peace from Him, having the assurance that God is in us and in every circumstance. In His final words to His disciples, Jesus

promised, “*these things I have spoken to you that My joy may remain in you and that your joy may be full*” (**John 15:11**). Jesus said these words as He faced crucifixion.

- Clearly for Jesus and for Paul, joy was separate from circumstances. One reason for Paul’s joy was the Philippians’ fellowship/partnership in the gospel through their generous and valuable contribution to Paul’s ministry of spreading God’s message. Paul mentioned that their support had been constant from the very first time they heard the gospel right through to the day he was writing this letter—a span of about twelve years. These people did not just sit back and applaud Paul’s efforts; instead, they got actively involved in his ministry through their fellowship with him and their financial support. Not only did the Philippians help Paul but they also got involved in other ministry needs. During his third missionary journey Paul collected money for the impoverished believers in Jerusalem. The churches in Macedonia, including Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea, were not wealthy, yet they gave joyfully and generously (**2 Corinthians 8:1-4**).

Read Philippians 1:6.

- God who started a good work of redemption in us will carry it on through our lifetime to completion when we meet Him face to face. God’s work for us all began when Christ died on the cross in our place. His work in us began when we first believed. Now the Holy Spirit lives in us and is reproducing the life of Christ day by day. God not only initiates our salvation, but He also guarantees its fulfillment (**Ephesians 1:13-14**).
- Here in Philippians, Paul is describing the process of Christian growth and maturity, which begins at

salvation and continues until the day of Christ's return. Nothing in this life or after death can stop God's work in us (**Romans 8:28-39**). When we are discouraged, it's always good to remember that God won't give up on us. He promises to finish the work He has begun. When we feel incomplete, unfinished or distressed by our shortcomings, we must remember and be confident in God's provision. A thought to ponder: *"To be disappointed in ourselves is to have believed in ourselves."*

Read Philippians 1:7.

- Paul knew his thoughts and feelings toward the Philippians were right and appropriate because of his personal relationship with them. The Greek word translated "to think" or "feel" here is used by Paul 23 times in this letter. This word means more than simply an emotional reaction or affection; it goes deeper, showing special concern based on the best interest of others. These Philippian believers had a special place in Paul's heart, and we see that in 1:8 and then again in 4:1. The structure of the sentence makes it possible to translate the last part of this, ***"because you hold me in your heart."*** It is translated that way in the New Revised Standard Version and in the Amplified. In either translation, Paul and the Philippians had mutual affection: Paul in his constant prayer for them and concern for their faith, and the Philippians in their generous support of Paul's ministry.
- Moving on to the last part of the verse, ***"Both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace."*** As Paul sat imprisoned in Rome he knew that the Philippians were suffering as well because of their deep concern and love for him. As he received God's grace in his struggles, so the Philippians would also

share in that grace as they faced persecution for their faith. The words “*defense*” and “*confirmation*” could refer to Paul’s preaching ministry, or the words could be looking forward to Paul’s upcoming trial where he would defend and confirm his faith in the gospel before the Roman court. In either case, the believers in Philippi shared with Paul through their prayers and support.

Read Philippians 1:8.

- Separated by his imprisonment from his friends in Philippi and uncertain of whether he would see them again during his life on earth, Paul experienced intense longing for fellowship with them. He called God as his witness to the truth of his statement: “*for God is my witness; how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.*” Paul’s affection for the Philippians was so strong that it was deeper than human emotion. It was the selfless affection of Jesus Christ Himself. How could Paul say that he loved the Philippians with the affection of Jesus Christ? How could he say that he loved them just as Jesus loved them? Because as Paul lived in the truth that his old man was crucified and his flesh was held in the place of death, the Holy Spirit drew his attention to Jesus Christ and reproduced the life of Christ in Paul (**2 Corinthians 3:18**). Now it was no longer Paul, but Christ (**Galatians 2:20**). The affection that he had for the Philippians did not come from Paul; it was Jesus Christ actually loving the Philippian church through him.

Read Philippians 1:9.

- While Paul’s travels were hindered by his imprisonment, his prayers were not. Paul prayed with

joy for the Philippians (1:4). Here he explained what he prayed for: *that their love may abound still more and more.*” Paul wasn’t talking about some kind of emotional affection; he was praying that their love would overflow through the knowledge of God and in His great love for them (**2 Corinthians 5:14; Ephesians 3:19; 1 John 4:19**).

- From these three verses, we conclude that our love originated with God; *“we love because He first loved us.”* When we begin to comprehend how much God loves us (**Ephesians 3:17-19**), the end result will be that His love will compel and control us and abundantly flow in and through us as Christ is being formed in us. Paul also prayed that the Philippians’ love would overflow in discernment and judgment. In **1 Peter 4:8** Peter tells us that *“love covers a multitude of sins.”* In **2 Corinthians 5:15**, we read *“therefore henceforth, we know no man after the flesh.”* The idea is that of a love so strong we no longer are occupied with another’s flesh; we would not notice or judge another’s flesh, nor would we look at him through our flesh. The church in Philippi was experiencing problems in its fellowship, such as pride and faultfinding (**Philippians 2:1-18; 3:10-4:1**). Before giving any admonition, Paul tactfully revealed he was praying for the believers that their love would be so strong that it would affect their discernment, which would ultimately affect their relationships. Paul’s prayer for the Philippians was that they would be unified in love (**Colossians 3:14**). True biblical love is not a feeling or emotion, but rather the selfless attitudes and actions found in **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**.

Read Philippians 1:10.

- Paul prays that the Philippians would not only have the ability to differentiate between right and wrong, good

and bad, healthy and dangerous but they would also have the discernment to decide between acceptable and right, good and best. As we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and Christ is formed in us, our moral discernment will naturally increase and we will maintain higher Christian morals and values (**Hebrews 5:14**). Many Christians get all caught up in the circumstances of life and neglect the most important priority: to know Christ (**Luke 10:38-42**).

- Paul prayed that the Philippians would be “*pure/sincere*”; the Greek word is used only here and in **2 Peter 3:1**. The Philippians’ transformation should be so thorough that the result would be a “*sincere/pure*” walk of faith.
- Paul also prayed that they would be “*blameless*.” As believers are molded into the image of Christ, the result will be a pure and sincere life lived above reproach. “*The day of Christ*” refers to the time when Christ shall return (**Luke 17:24; 1 Corinthians 1:8**).

Read Philippians 1:11.

- Finally, Paul prayed that the believers would be “*filled with the fruits of righteousness*.” That fruit being all the character traits flowing from Jesus Christ, Who is our righteousness (**1 Corinthians 1:30**). (Those character traits certainly would include the fruits of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22-23**). Christ’s righteousness flows through us as the flesh is held in the place of death through faith in our co-crucifixion with Christ and the Holy Spirit’s work of reproducing the life of Christ in us. Being declared right with God through Christ is a positional truth that enables us to conditionally live right before Him (**Isaiah 32:17; Hebrews 12:11; James 3:18**).

- The phrase “*fruits of righteousness*” refers to the righteousness of God implanted in us through Jesus Christ, causing acts of practical righteousness to flow out of us. Only His life lived out through us can give us this fruit of righteousness/fruit of the Spirit. Such fruit in Christians’ lives is always to the glory and praise of God because it is by His grace alone that sinful human beings may see righteous fruit in their lives.

D. Paul’s Situation Seen Through the Eyes of Faith

Read Philippians 1:12.

- Here we have a great example of the role set forth in the Bible for spiritual leaders: “*be examples to the flock*” (1 Peter 5:3). Paul explained to the Philippians that they should not despair over his imprisonment because what had happened to him was helping to spread the gospel (Romans 8:28). Paul’s example encouraged many believers to take a stand for Christ and preach the good news regardless of the consequences. By the time of this writing, Paul had been in prison for about two years.
- Although one of Christianity’s most tireless missionaries was in prison, God’s work could not be slowed down; in fact, God was using Paul’s imprisonment to actually help spread the gospel. Paul continues to explain in the following verses of how his arrest and subsequent lengthy imprisonment had resulted in the gospel moving in new directions.

Read Philippians 1:13.

- It is interesting to consider the Amplified translation of this verse: “*So much is this a fact that throughout the whole Imperial Guard and to all the rest here, my*

imprisonment has become generally known to be in Christ (that I am a prisoner in His service and for Him)."

- I'm wondering if we shouldn't go a bit deeper and say, "*a prisoner of Christ.*" It was God who orchestrated Paul's arrest; "*A prisoner for Christ.*" Paul was there to serve Christ; "*A prisoner in Christ.*" We could even say that Paul was locked into Christ (**John 10:28-29; Philemon 1**).
- Paul's imprisonment had allowed him to share the gospel with the soldiers who guarded him in the emperor's palace as well as everyone else in the palace. Those who came to visit Paul and those in power and members of the Jewish community knew Paul was in prison only because of Christ, not for being a criminal (**Acts 28:17-23**). Paul's example, fervent love of Christ, and manner of life even in prison had allowed others to see the gospel in a whole new light. The custom of the time was for a prisoner to be guarded by a soldier who would be replaced every four hours. These soldiers certainly heard Paul's words to those who visited, as well as his message spoken to them personally. Paul was confident that the message of the gospel was infiltrating the Roman army and the palace itself.
- It's interesting to consider how Paul ended up in chains in a Roman prison. While he was visiting Jerusalem, some Jews caused a riot and had him arrested. Eventually Paul appealed to Caesar to hear his case (**Acts 21:15-25:12**). Soldiers then escorted Paul to Rome where he was placed under house arrest while awaiting trial. Not a trial for breaking civil law, but for proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul's house arrest allowed him some degree of freedom and permitted him to have visitors, continue to preach, and write letters such as this one to the Philippian church. A brief record of Paul's time in Rome is found in **Acts**

28:11-31. Being imprisoned would cause many people to become bitter or to give up, but Paul saw it as one more opportunity to spread the good news of Christ.

Read Philippians 1:14.

- Not only was Paul spreading the gospel through his contacts in prison but also his life was being multiplied outside the prison. Paul's faith seemed to motivate fellow believers to become more confident in the Lord. Whatever the reason for their lack of confidence before, when they saw Paul's faith it strengthened their own. They began to share the gospel with a greater boldness and without fear. Paul's desire was to pass this good news on to his friends in Philippi so that they might know how God was working through his difficult situation.

Read Philippians 1:15.

- Paul's battle was spiritual, and he carried no rank, except servant of Jesus Christ. He had been made aware that some of the brothers and sisters who had been newly emboldened to speak about Christ were doing so out of envy and strife, but others were preaching Christ with pure motives. It's interesting to give thought to the fact that all of those who preached Christ apparently had the right doctrine. While the end result of people hearing the good news might be the same, some actually had wrong motives in their preaching. Now that the great missionary had been virtually silenced in prison, some of these brothers were hoping to make a name for themselves in the leadership vacuum that Paul left. Perhaps they hoped for great notoriety, trying to turn people's eyes away from Paul and toward themselves. Many Christian

leaders today fall for the same temptation to compete for status or position.

Read Philippians 1:16.

- Those who were preaching Christ out of selfish ambitions were not so much interested in their message as they were in their reputation. As mentioned previously, apparently their doctrine was sound. These were not false teachers. Paul never tolerated any kind of false teaching (**2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 1:6-9**). The error was in motive not in content. These self-seeking opportunists cared nothing for Paul and gave no thought that he might be deeply troubled because of their self-focused ministry that was going on while he was in prison. Little did these men understand Paul's sincere love of God and his single-minded focus on spreading the gospel.

Read Philippians 1:17.

- Those who preached Christ out of good will did so in love, spreading the good news of Christ with pure motives. They knew Paul was in prison, not because of any criminal act but simply for his devotion to Christ and his zeal to spread the gospel. It's interesting to consider that Paul could have become depressed, discouraged, or disillusioned; he could have wallowed in self pity and despair. Instead he regarded his imprisonment as being appointed by God. He considered, I am put here to fulfill God's greater purpose.

Read Philippians 1:18.

- Paul had an amazing selfless attitude. He knew that some were preaching to build their own reputations as we had mentioned before and taking advantage of

Paul's imprisonment to make a name for themselves. Regardless of the motives of these preachers, Paul rejoiced in that Christ is preached. It's a fact that some Christians serve for the wrong reasons. Paul wouldn't condone that, nor does God excuse it; however, we should rejoice with Paul if God uses their message regardless of their motives. Paul had no concern for his own reputation or success; he had dedicated his life to glorifying God. He understood that God was being glorified, even as he sat in chains; thus, Paul could rejoice.

Read Philippians 1:19.

- Paul is a tremendous example of a man who walked by faith. He had total confidence in the Lord during his two years in prison that good results would come from preachers with bad motives. He also knew everything that had happened resulting in his imprisonment would end in his deliverance. What kind of deliverance did Paul envision? Most scholars agree that Paul was quoting from **Job 13:16** which reads, “***Indeed this will turn out for my deliverance.***” They disagree on what Paul meant. Some scholars argue that Paul was referring to his upcoming trial, believing that he would be acquitted and freed, which did happen. However, this is unlikely because of Paul's words in the next verse that reveal his uncertainty about the outcome of his trial. Others believe that like Job, Paul was focusing on his relationship with God, that whether he lived or died his stand for Christ would be vindicated. Still others think Paul was referring to his apostleship in the face of the envious preachers. The thought is that as Job sought to prove his integrity, Paul was seeking to vindicate his standing despite his chains. A final option is that Paul knew the Holy Spirit would sustain him during a difficult trial and in the end, no

matter what the outcome, he would ultimately be delivered (ushered into God's presence). It brings to mind Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the book of Daniel when Nebuchadnezzar said, "either bow or burn" and they said in effect, "King, we don't even have to think about how we're going to answer you because we know that our God is able to deliver us. Whether he physically delivers us out of the fire or he ushers us into His presence, it makes no difference to us. We will not bow to your idol." (See **Daniel 3:16-18.**) Just like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Paul the prisoner expected to be delivered, not by a daring raid, but rather by his God that he knew would never abandon or forsake him. He may never escape detention; his prison shackles may never be loosed, so what? He is delivered.

Read Philippians 1:20.

- Hope and expectation are linked together; in fact, a good definition for "hope" is "confident expectation." Paul was not concerned about the verdict of his trial but for the testimony he would leave. He hoped and expected that his Christian witness would not be put to shame in any way. He was not worried about his own humiliation; "***Whether it be by life or by death,***" his desire was only for Christ to be exalted. Exalt means "to raise in status; to give dignity and honor." Paul did not say, "I will exalt Christ," instead he said, "***Christ will be exalted.***" Paul did not rely on his own boldness but rather on the Holy Spirit to produce that exaltation of Christ through him. Paul knew he could either be released or executed; however, he trusted Christ to work it out for His glory. If the verdict were execution, Christ would be glorified in Paul's martyrdom. If Paul were to be released, he would welcome the opportunity to glorify Him by continuing to exalt and praise Him.

As it turned out, Paul was released from this imprisonment but arrested again two or three years later.

Read Philippians 1:21.

- To those who don't believe in God, life on earth is all there is and so it is natural for them to strive for this world's values such as money, popularity, power, pleasure and prestige. For Paul, however, "*to live*" meant the Holy Spirit producing the life of Christ within. For Paul the essence of life was Christ and everything he desired or attempted was sourced in Christ. The meaning of "*to live is Christ*" is all inclusive in **Colossians 1:27** where we read, "*Christ in you, the hope of glory,*" or **Galatians 2:20**, "*I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*" Paul wrote of the indwelling Christ and of Christ being the motive and goal for living. Paul's whole purpose in life was to boldly share Christ and become more like him; however, to die would be gain as martyrdom would glorify Christ and bring Paul into that perfect state of Christ-likeness as well as face to face with his Savior. Paul's faithful and fearless witness even unto death would enhance the reputation of the gospel and Christ would be magnified as much, if not more, in Paul's death as he had been in Paul's life.
- Some people hold tightly to this life afraid to lose or let go, and in affect become slaves to their mortality (**Hebrews 2:15**). In contrast, those who do not fear death, seeing it as merely the door to eternal life, are free to live with purpose and meaning. Because Paul's life was presented to God as a living sacrifice (**Romans 12:1**), he was ready to die, he could truly live. He belonged to Christ and was confident of his eternal destination so he could donate his life on earth to living in, by, and for Christ. Simply put, "*for me to live is*

Christ” makes reference to a Christ-sourced and Christ-powered life. How much of Paul’s life did he live, and how much did Christ live? Did Paul do his part and then let Christ make up what he couldn’t do? Was Christ Paul’s helper, or was Christ Paul’s life? **“For to me to live is Christ.”** Did he really mean to say, “To me to live is to be helped by Christ?” Some Christians have been heard to say; “I am striving to serve the Lord in my poor, weak way.” But the fact is, the Lord never asked us to serve Him in our poor, weak way, but rather He asked us to present ourselves to Him, that He might serve Himself through us in His strong and mighty way. So long as we are strong enough to be weak, we are too strong for Him. However, to die physically is gain. It’s interesting to give thought to the fact that to die to self is also gain. An interesting quote: *“Fruit springs out of death; self-centeredness is always barren and solitary; the way of victory is the way of the cross. The names of Christians who are honored in history are names that stand over graves where the old man was buried long before the body died.”*

Read Philippians 1:22.

- If the verdict should be for Paul to be released from prison, that would mean more fruitful labor, further missionary travels, more churches planted, more converts, the strengthening of fellow believers, more opportunities to serve Christ. However, the opposite might happen—he would be sentenced to death, which as mentioned before would not be bad, for Christ would be glorified through his death. **“Yet what shall I choose, I do not know”** is Paul’s inner dilemma. In reality, he did not have a choice for the decision was not his, it was God’s. Yet if the decision were up to him, he wouldn’t know what to choose. How many of

us are so taken up with Jesus, so occupied with Him, that if the choice were given, we would choose death?

Read Philippians 1:23.

- The two choices were equally compelling. One, the desire to die and be with Christ forever and two, the desire to stay and continue his fellowship with and ministry to the believers. While Paul lived in intimate communion with Christ during his time on earth, being with Christ in heaven would be even more intimate. These words reveal Paul's understanding of death: believers not waiting in a soul sleep but immediately in the presence of the Lord (**2 Corinthians 5:2-8**). Paul had no question that death would be far better because in death he would reach his ultimate goal: to be with Christ and finally have eternal fellowship in God's presence.

Read Philippians 1:24.

- It is very clear here that Paul placed not only God's will but also his fellow believers' needs above his own desires. He was prepared and ready and actually looking forward to death because of the certainty of heaven. However, he knew his personal desires would be set aside for God's will and the needs of the brethren (**Luke 9:23**).

Read Philippians 1:25.

- At times Paul seemed to sense that death was certain, as in 1:20; 2:17. At other times he was convinced that God still had work for him to do. In this verse Paul expressed confidence that this imprisonment would not end in his death. The progress Paul envisioned

involved a deepening of the Philippians' joy and a strengthening and stretching of their faith. Paul may have been thinking that if he was released, their joy would increase, and their faith would be strengthened.

Read Philippians 1:26.

- This verse could be translated in this way: “***That your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.***” Paul’s return would reassure the Philippians as they saw God’s provision for his dilemma. The joy and rejoicing that Paul speaks of in this verse is different from the many other usages in this letter. It’s even different from the joy that’s used in 1:25. Here it means boasting in Jesus Christ as the grounds or basis for overflowing joy. Paul’s safe return would cause the congregation that loved him so much to boast in Jesus Christ. It would only be because of Christ and Christ alone that Paul could once again be with the Philippian church.

Read Philippians 1:27.

- While Paul was confident God still had work for him on earth, he did not know for sure the outcome of his trial, so he urged the Philippians to live “***worthy of the gospel.***” What does Paul mean by living “***worthy of the gospel***”? He used this phrase in other letters (**Ephesians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:12**); the answer is best revealed in a prayer for the church in **Colossians 1:10-12**. To live worthy of the gospel does not mean that one will live perfectly, for such a life is impossible. However, believers do have the potential to live on a higher spiritual plane because of God’s grace and an indwelling Holy Spirit who is reproducing the life of Christ within. When we believe, we become God’s children, heirs of His promises and members of

Christ's body; now we have the capability to reflect humility, gentleness, patience, understanding, peacefulness, strength, endurance, and gratitude to God in every aspect of our lives.

- Paul kept in touch with the churches. To the church in Rome Paul wrote, ***"I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is being reported all over the world"*** (Romans 1:8). To Corinth he wrote, ***"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you"*** (1 Corinthians 5:1). About Galatia, Paul had heard ***"you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ. Evidently, some people are throwing you into confusion"*** (Galatians 1:6-7). To Thessalonica, Paul reported, ***"Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love"*** (1 Thessalonians 3:6). Whether by letter or personal contact through key people such as Timothy, Silas, Epaphroditus and Luke, Paul knew what was happening in the churches. Paul hoped to return to the Philippian church; however, if he didn't, he would inevitably hear about the believers.
- The indwelling Holy Spirit unifies as Christians stand firm in faith. The flesh is held in the place of death through faith in our co-crucifixion with Christ and therefore the deeds of the flesh (envy, strife, jealousy, anger, divisions) are not present and the petty differences that plague Christians and churches are overcome resulting in spiritual unity. By God's grace, the believers were to ***"strive together for the faith of the gospel."*** Like athletes on a team, they were to be united with one mind, focused on one goal, to advance the faith that comes through the gospel. To face opposition, they needed to be of one mind, unhindered by internal dissension, jealousies and rivalries.

Read Philippians 1:28.

- The believers were in no way to be intimidated by their opponents. Paul had faced severe opposition in many cities including Philippi (**Acts 14:19; 16:22-25; 23:12**). If he was persecuted for his faith, the Christians could expect like treatment. Jesus Himself had told His disciples, ***“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you”*** (**John 15:18**). The church in Philippi needed to be aware of Christianity’s external opponents and false teachers who had infiltrated many Christian circles; their part was to stand strong together in the faith. How sad that unity is lost in many churches by striving against one another instead of uniting against the real opposition.
- The last part of **verse 28**: ***“...which is to them a proof of perdition or destruction but to you of salvation and that from God.”*** The opposition the believers faced at that time and would face in the future gave them proof of two things: the destruction of their opponents and the salvation of the believers (**2 Thessalonians 1:5-10**). Doom is sealed for those who oppose God and His people, and salvation is assured for God’s people.
- Like Paul, whether the believers witnessed through their lives or through their deaths, they would ultimately be saved/delivered because God is sovereign. All that would happen is of God; salvation of believers is God’s doing; destruction of evil doers is God’s doing. But does Paul dare say that persecution itself is also God’s doing? It would be tempting for a church facing severe persecution to begin to doubt God’s goodness, love, and mercy. If the key Christian leader, Paul himself, had landed in prison for two years, did that signify some wrongful teaching from Paul? Had God abandoned Paul? Was persecution a sign of wrongdoing or a revelation that God wasn’t really as powerful as the Roman gods? Paul knew all

these questions might plague the Philippian church, so he argued beforehand that whether they understood God's doings or not, God controlled everything that occurred. Already Paul had explained how his imprisonment had actually helped spread the gospel. Here Paul assured the Philippian believers that persecution also would work for God's glory. They had to trust that whatever happened on this earth, their eternal destiny as well as God's daily deliverance was secure. Indeed, suffering must be seen as a privilege, a good thing. Paul goes on to explain.

Read Philippians 1:29.

- The believers had received a high calling to live a life worthy of, or becoming to the gospel. By God's grace alone, they had been granted the privilege of both believing on Him and suffering for Him (**1 Peter 2:21**). The Greek word translated "granted" is derived from a word meaning "grace" or "favor." Both believing and suffering were to be associated with God's grace toward His people; Paul considered both to be a privilege. He wanted the believers in Philippi to understand that suffering was not punishment for their sins, nor was it accidental—that somehow God had gotten sidetracked and had forgotten to protect them. Instead, suffering for the faith was to be considered a high honor (**Colossians 1:24; 1 Peter 4:12-19**).

Read Philippians 1:30.

- Paul and the Philippians faced the same basic struggle: suffering for the gospel. The Philippian believers had encouraged Paul through his struggle, and now Paul wanted to encourage them in the same manner. Paul had faced that struggle in Philippi on his first visit there (**Acts 16:12, 19; 1 Thessalonians 2:2**). He still faced it in his imprisonment.

PHILIPPIANS

Chapter 2

A. A Call to Unity and Humility

Read Philippians 2:1.

- Verses 1-18 continue the thought from Chapter 1:27-28: “*Whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel and are in no way intimidated by your adversaries.*” Paul desired unity in the Philippian church, but such unity would only be possible by abiding in Christ resulting in harmonious relationships among the believers themselves (1 John 1:3).
- Thus Paul used four “if” clauses here that can actually be rendered “since” or “because.” Paul had no doubt that the Philippian church had some problems, but the church had proven itself to be strong and for the most part unified. Paul gave four results of being unified in Christ:
 - “*If you have encouragement from being united with Christ...*”; Paul knew the believers experienced encouragement from abiding in Christ. Therefore, we could say it this way: “*Since there is encouragement from abiding in Christ.*”
 - “*Since there is comfort from His love...*” Paul also knew the Philippian believers were receiving comfort from Christ’s love.
 - “*Since there is fellowship with the Spirit...*” When a person believes in Jesus Christ as Savior, he or she receives all of the Holy Spirit they will ever get. The issue now becomes how much of us will the Spirit get? As we appropriate the truth of our co-crucifixion with Christ and the flesh is held in the

place of death, the Holy Spirit begins to influence and control our soul (mind, will, emotions). This is true fellowship with the Spirit.

- ***“Since there is tenderness and compassion...”***
Paul combined tenderness and compassion as if he were saying there is “tender compassion” from Christ as we abide in Him.

Read Philippians 2:2.

- The Philippians had given Paul great joy (1:4). Yet Paul was aware of a lack of unity in the Philippian church. For example, believers were demonstrating a false sense of spiritual superiority (2:3). Some were not working harmoniously with others (4:2). Paul knew that even the beginnings of divisiveness could cause major problems unless the divisions were repaired quickly.
- The four results of abiding in Christ listed in verse 1 (encouragement, comfort from His love, fellowship with the Spirit, and tender compassion) are now joined by four more potential and practical unity builders:
 - ***“Being likeminded.”*** Because of our position and union in Christ and our fellowship with the Holy Spirit, all believers can be ***“likeminded.”*** This does not mean all will agree on everything. However, each believer can have the mind or attitude of Christ, which Paul describes at length in 2:5-8. The word translated ***“likeminded”*** in this verse is the same word translated ***“mind”*** or ***“attitude”*** in 2:5.
 - ***“Having the same love.”*** Paul also wanted the church to have the same love for one another as Christ had for them. Christ’s love sent Him out of heaven, as a servant, into humble humanity to death by crucifixion on behalf of undeserving sinners. Because believers have received comfort from Christ’s love (2:1) as we abide in Him, we

now begin to experience the Holy Spirit reproducing that love toward one another.

- Jesus had prayed for future believers, that they may be “**one**” (**John 17:22**). The true church is “**one in spirit**.” At salvation, the human spirit, which is the part of man that communicates with God, is indwelt by the one and only Holy Spirit and is brought to life. From that point on there is a battle within every believer described in **Galatians 5:17**. However, as the flesh is held in the place of death through faith in our co-crucifixion with Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit gains influence and control over the soul (mind, will, emotions) resulting in unity (oneness in Spirit) as the Spirit is influencing and controlling our thoughts, desires, and feelings. Paul made reference to this back in 1:27. The Holy Spirit unites believers into one.
- “**Being one in purpose**.” Continuing our thought from above, as the Holy Spirit gains influence/control over our mind, will and emotions, and draws our attention to Christ, we are molded into the same image and the result is a “**one-mindedness**” or “**one in purpose**.” If these things were in the Philippian believers and were increasing, they would maintain harmony, and Paul’s joy would be complete.

Read Philippians 2:3.

- Paul may be identifying a problem in the Philippian church. It appears that some may have been causing relational problems by their attitudes and actions. They desired recognition and were creating factions based on personal prestige. When people are conceited and selfishly ambitious, they ruin a church’s unity. However, genuine humility builds unity.

- Being humble is not having either high or low thoughts of oneself, but rather not thinking of self at all. ***“Regarding others better than ourselves,”*** Paul wrote to the Romans, ***“do not think of yourselves more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment being devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves”*** (Romans 12:3). Selfish conceit has no place in a believer’s life. Such pride undermines the oneness vital to the church. Like Paul, Peter also spoke of humility. Peter had been greatly humbled in his experience of denying the Lord. He wrote, ***“all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand that He may lift you up in due time”*** (1 Peter 5:5-6; 1 Peter 3:8).

Read Philippians 2:4.

- The opposite of conceit and selfish ambition is appreciative recognition of others. In 2:21, Paul points out that people look to their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. It is easy to get caught up into fleshly, aggressive acquiring and vying for our own rights and needs. But compared to knowing Christ, these interests seem shallow. We need Christ’s selfless attitude of looking beyond ourselves to the needs of others. Paul wrote to the Romans, ***“we who are strong ought to bear with the feelings of the weak and not to please ourselves. For even Christ did not please Himself”*** (Romans 15:1-3).

B. Christ, Our Example of Humility

Read Philippians 2:5.

- If anyone didn't understand what Paul meant by humility and looking first to others' concerns, then Paul made it clear by giving Christ as an example. Believers will adopt the same attitude or mindset that was found in Jesus Christ as they grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and are set free from the flesh's influence on their minds. Many Christians feel that they can't control their moods or attitudes, but Paul doesn't accept the fact that spirit-filled Christians (filled with the life of Christ) are slaves to their attitudes. If Christ had this attitude and if we are living the Christ life, so will we. Those who live according to/influenced by the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires, but those who live in accordance/influenced by the spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires (**Romans 8:5**).

Read Philippians 2:6.

- This verse describes the status of Christ as He existed before the creation of the world in His pre-incarnate state. The words "who being" indicate continuing existence from the beginning (**John 1:1**). Jesus Christ was not merely a human who lived for 33 years on this earth. Instead, He existed with God before time began. In Jesus' prayer before His death, He said, "***And now Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began***" (**John 17:5**).
- "***Having the form of God***" means Christ manifested the very nature and character of God. In Jesus Christ we see God (**John 14:7-9**). God, in Jesus, dwelt among the people. It was this true claim made by Jesus

that infuriated the religious leaders and ultimately caused Jesus to be sentenced to death (**John 5:18; 10:33; Mark 14:63-64**). But Jesus' death was all part of God's plan (**Acts 4:27-28**). Jesus has equality with God. Everything God is, Christ is. But Jesus did not consider this equality something to be grasped. There are two schools of thought regarding these words "*equal with God*":

- Christ did not have to seize or grasp His equality—it was already His.
- Christ did not consider His equality with God as something which He had to hold on to and not let slip from His grasp.
- Actually, both ideas are true.
 - Christ did not have to wrest equality from God. Scholars compare this attitude to Adam and Eve who were tempted by Satan to become like God (**Genesis 3:5**). Using the analogy from **Romans 5**, the first Adam disobeyed God and yielded to a temptation to be like God, something that was not rightfully his. The last Adam, Jesus Christ, gave up the majesty of being God in order to take on the form of fragile humanity.
 - Christ did not cling to His equality but set it aside in order to become human. When Christ was born, God became a man.

Read Philippians 2:7.

- Christ voluntarily made Himself lowly. The incarnation was the act of the pre-existent Son of God voluntarily assuming a human body/human likeness. He may have given up His reputation of being God to become human, but He did not give up His deity. Jesus was in very nature God and upon His birth as a human being He took the form of a slave. What appeared on earth was not a prince in a palace or a royal king or a

wealthy and scholarly teacher. Instead, Jesus' form or nature on this earth was wrapped up in the social position of one whose entire life is devoted to serving others: a slave. ***“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).***

- He was born in human likeness. He didn't look any different from anyone else, certainly not like a god (**Isaiah 53:2**). He was instead a poor carpenter living in a dusty town in the Roman occupied territory of Galilee. He got tired, hungry, and thirsty. Jesus, though fully human, was without sin (**Hebrews 4:15**). His humanity and mortality veiled Jesus' glory and divinity. While He walked as a human on this earth, Jesus Christ never ceased to be God.

Read Philippians 2:8.

- The Greek word for ***“appearance”*** here is the same as in 2:6-7. It means an outer appearance rather than a nature. When Jesus took on a human body and grew to manhood, He humbled Himself to accomplish the task for which He had come: to die for sinful humanity in order that they might have eternal life. Jesus obeyed the will of God to the point of death; He died the worst possible death by crucifixion. Death on a cross was the form of capital punishment that Romans used for notorious criminals. It was excruciatingly painful and humiliating. Prisoners were nailed or tied to a cross and left to die. Death might not come for several days and it usually came by suffocation when the weight of the weakened body made breathing more and more difficult. Jesus died as one who was cursed (**Galatians 3:13**). Jesus' human life was not a script that He passively followed, but rather a life that He chose freely (**John 10:17-18**).

- Why did Jesus have to become human: why did He have to die? A Holy God cannot overlook sin, so the sinfulness of humanity had to be punished. It all started in the Garden of Eden when God laid down the punishment for Adam if he ate from the tree: ***“In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die”*** (Genesis 3:17). Paul also tells us in **Romans 6:23**, ***“the wages of sin are death.”*** All throughout the Old Testament we see a substitute lamb being killed and the blood being poured out on the altar to pay the penalty (death) for man’s sin. However, we read in **Hebrews 10:4** that ***“it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats can take away sin.”***
- So, at the right time God dealt once and for all with sin and its ultimate consequence: death and eternal separation from God (**Hebrews 9:12-14**). Instead of sending all of humanity to eternal punishment, God took the punishment Himself (**Romans 8:3**). How amazing that our God would lay aside His glory and power to face humiliation and torture in order to take the punishment we deserve (**Hebrews 2:14-15**). Jesus Christ truly humbled Himself when He became obedient to the Father all the way to death. He did not have to die as is the common lot of all humanity, but rather He died as an act of obedience to God. ***“Not my will, but yours be done”*** was Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane before His death (**Luke 22:42**). Paul drove this lesson home for the proud Philippians. If the divine Son of God humbled Himself, how could they maintain their arrogance?

C. The Exaltation of Christ

Read Philippians 2:9.

- Christ willingly set aside His glory, and God highly exalted Him. Jesus went from glory, down, down, all the way down to death and the grave and up to greater glory. God did not leave Christ in the grave, but raised Him from the dead, brought Him back to heaven, and glorified Him (**Acts 2:33; Hebrews 1:3**). God gave Jesus all authority in heaven and on earth (**Matthew 28:18**), and *“seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms far above rule and authority, power and dominion and every title that can be given not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the Church (Ephesians 1:20-22).*

Read Philippians 2:10.

- One day every knee will bow before Jesus. Those in heaven refer to the angels; those on earth means all humanity. Those under the earth would possibly refer to unsaved people who have died or to demons. Those who love Jesus will bow in adoration and worship; those who refuse to acknowledge Him will bow in submission and fear (**Ephesians 4:9-10; Revelation 5:13**). Paul quoted **Isaiah 45:23** here and in **Romans 14:11**. In so doing, he applied those powerful words to Jesus Christ. Isaiah proclaiming the unique greatness of God had said that the same God who would not share His glory with another would receive the homage of every living being.

Read Philippians 2:11.

- As every knee will bow, so every tongue will confess the basic truth of Christianity: *“Jesus Christ is Lord.”*

This does not mean that eventually everyone will be saved, but rather that no tongue will be able to be silent; no knee will remain unbowed; all of creation will recognize Jesus Christ as Lord. This will happen to the glory of God the Father. Paul described this to the Corinthians in **1 Corinthians 15:24-28**. The ultimate purpose of God's saving plan and indeed of all creation itself is that everything will glorify God.

D. A Plea to Let Christ Live His Life Through Us

Read Philippians 2:12.

- The word “*therefore*” ties this verse to the previous section. As Jesus obeyed the Father, so shall believers, by grace through faith, obey the Son (**John 17:18; 20:21**). Keep in mind that obedience is always a fruit of faith (**Romans 1:5**).
- Paul loved these believers (1:7-8) and calls them “**my beloved**”—a term of affection not often used by Paul. This church was dear to his heart.
- He requests that they “***work out your own salvation.***” Although believers are saved once for all when they accept Jesus Christ as Savior, it is in the grind of everyday life that our salvation is “***worked out/lived out.***” Paul encouraged the Philippians to put their salvation into practice—not in their own strength, but by God's grace—and that becomes very clear in the next verse. As they worked out their salvation or lived it out in the life of the church, the Philippians were to do so with fear and trembling. Paul used the same words in his advice to servants regarding their attitude in obeying their masters (**Ephesians 6:5**). Fear and trembling refers not to service toward a harsh master; instead, it is proper reverence and awe for a sovereign, loving, gracious, and merciful heavenly Father.

Read Philippians 2:13.

- As the Philippians lived out their salvation in the life of their church, they would not do it on their own. Through the Holy Spirit, God enables His people for the task He wants them to do (**1 Corinthians 12:4-7**). He would give the Philippians both the power and desire to act in accordance with His will in order to bring true unity to the church. This doesn't mean that we are perfect and never have wrong desires (**Romans 7:15-25**). However, it does mean that we can have hope because God is working change in our lives as we, by faith, appropriate our co-crucifixion with Christ and the Holy Spirit does His work of reproducing Christ in us.
- God would work in the Philippians enabling them “*to will*” and then “*to do*” His good pleasure—in this case, unity and restored fellowship among the Philippian believers. God gives the desire and the ability; He has chosen to work through us to accomplish His good pleasure in the world. A quick reading of verses 12 and 13 could lead us to think that salvation is by works and that the Christian life depends on what we do, but a closer look reveals an important phrase: “*God is working in you.*” When we trust Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit takes up residence inside of each believer, and there He works to change us from the inside out making us more like Christ (**Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 5:17**).

Read Philippians 2:14.

- While the Philippians would live out their salvation for the unity of the church, Paul had some practical advice for how they could go about it: stop bickering. Complaining translates from a word that describes a

bad attitude, which expresses itself in constant grumbling. The Israelites constantly grumbled in the wilderness (**1 Corinthians 10:1-5, 10; 1 Peter 4:9**). Murmuring and disputing, complaining and arguing are opposite of Christ's attitude that we saw in 2:5-8 and hurts Christ's cause among unbelievers. If all that unbelievers know about a church is that its members argue, complain, and gossip, it leaves a bad impression of Christianity. Possibly more churches have split from causes related to arguing and complaining than from heresy.

Read Philippians 2:15.

- Paul explained the importance of believer's actions. First, the church must be blameless, meaning beyond reproach, incurring no justifiable criticism. The church was to be beyond the criticism of the unbelieving world.
- Second, the church ought to be pure—also translated, “innocent.” Jesus used the word when he told the disciples to be “*innocent as doves*” (**Matthew 10:16**). Paul employed it when he told the Romans to be “*wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil*” (**Romans 16:19**). If the church is blameless and pure, it will be able to fulfill its mission in the world and conduct itself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, and the church members will be “*children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation.*”
- Paul was quoting from words that Moses used to describe the nation of Israel when it went astray (**Deuteronomy 32:5**). Moses was describing apostate Israel, but Paul applied the words to the culture surrounding the Philippian church. Without a doubt, the Philippian believers lived in a generation filled

with dishonesty and perversion, but there is great significance to the little word “*in*.” While believers are rescued “*out*” of the present evil age (**Galatians 1:4**) and are no longer of the world (**John 17:16**), they are not taken out of the world (**John 17:15**). They are in the world and have been given a mission to go into the world with the good news (**John 17:18**).

- The church of Philippi needed to fulfill its mission in the world and it could best do so by being blameless and pure, children of God, right in the middle of the depraved culture. When a body of believers remains pure and blameless, the contrast with their culture is so stark that it is as if they shine like stars. Jesus told those who believe in Him, “*You are the light of the world; let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven*” (**Matthew 5:14, 16; Daniel 12:3**). Our lives should be characterized by moral purity, patience, and peacefulness so that we will shine like stars in a dark and depraved world.

Read Philippians 2:16.

- The Philippian church was not to sit in their pristine purity merely reflecting the light (life of Christ) in the darkness. They would hold forth the word of life (Jesus Christ **John 1:1-5, 14**) by spreading the truth of the gospel beyond the doors of the church so that the light could illuminate the surrounding darkness. The Greek word translated “*hold forth*” was used in secular culture for offering wine to a guest. The Philippians were to offer Jesus Christ to a dying world, for He alone brings abundant and eternal life. The phrase is also translated, “*holding fast to the word of life*” and could therefore be an encouragement to the Philippians to abide in Christ/look unto Jesus/be occupied with

Him. Both meanings work together—as the believers hold fast to Christ, they can hold Him forth to others.

- Christians can develop a fortress mentality about surviving in a depraved world. Such a mindset prefers to withdraw into church or family away from the evil world, shutting it out. But Paul didn't support a fortress mentality. Instead, he encouraged believers to take Christ out into the culture. Paul had been the first to bring the gospel to Philippi, so he was looking forward to the day when he would see the church pure and blameless and lifting up Jesus Christ. He then would be able to rejoice on their behalf knowing that his work among them had not been in vain.

Read Philippians 2:17.

- Paul's reference to being poured out as a drink offering is an allegory for martyrdom. The libation or drink offering was an important part of the Jewish sacrificial system. It involved wine being poured out on an altar as a sacrifice to God (**Genesis 35:14; Exodus 29:40-41; Numbers 28:24**). Paul regarded his life as a suitable libation to complete the Philippian sacrifice and he willingly offered it for the sake of Christ's gospel and for the many who had believed in Christ because of his preaching. Paul used similar language in **2 Timothy 4:6**. The Philippians' faith had been exhibited to Paul in their sacrifice and their service through their fellowship and financial support.
- In the allegory Paul is presenting in this verse, the Philippians' faith is the real sacrifice and Paul's life is pictured in the accompanying drink offering. Yet even through these somber words, a ray of light would shine. If Paul were indeed to die, he would be glad and rejoice knowing that God had used him in the lives of these

Philippians. When one is abiding in Christ, sacrificing to build the faith of others brings joy.

Read Philippians 2:18.

- Paul considered it a privilege to die for the faith and he wanted the Philippians to have the same attitude if the Lord should happen to take him home. How do we experience gladness when our world seems to fall in, when God seems silent, when our group is withering, when loved ones disappoint us, when nothing seems to be happening in our lives? By occupying ourselves with the only one who can restore gladness.

E. Paul's Plans for the Philippian Church's Future Instruction

Read Philippians 2:19.

- Paul loved the Philippians dearly. Sending Timothy would bring news of Paul to Philippi and would also bring news of the Philippian church back to Paul. Keep in mind that while Paul awaited his trial, Timothy was a great encouragement to him during this difficult time in life; yet Paul was willing to let go of that companionship for the sake of the Philippian church.
- Timothy had traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey when the church in Philippi had begun, so the Philippians knew Timothy well. He had traveled to various churches as Paul's representative at others times also (**1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:2**). Epaphroditus would leave immediately and deliver Paul's letter (2:25-30), then the plan was for Timothy to arrive later after Paul learned the verdict of his trial (2:23). Paul hoped that in the meantime the Philippians would take to heart his call to unity and would live out their faith. Timothy

would be able to see their progress and then could return to Rome with news that would bring Paul good cheer. Paul used the phrase, “*I trust in the Lord Jesus*” with respect to travel plans because he knew who was in control (**1 Corinthians 16:7; Philemon 22; James 4:13-15**).

Read Philippians 2:20.

- Timothy had a genuine interest in the Philippians because he had traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey when the church at Philippi was started (**Acts 16:1-3; 10-12**). The phrase “*no one else like him*” literally means “no one of kindred spirit.” These words of praise for Timothy reveal that Timothy had become a faithful, dependable co-worker and friend. Timothy was as concerned about the welfare and well being of the Philippian church as Paul was.

Read Philippians 2:21.

- This verse could mean that Paul had spoken to others about taking this trip to Philippi on his behalf, but all were more concerned for their own interests and refused. Or Paul may have been reflecting on the state of a selfish world where few truly selfless people can be found. More than likely, Paul was using hyperbole (an overstatement/exaggeration) here. He could not have meant that Luke and Titus and other disciples cared only for themselves, but rather that Timothy cared so deeply for the Philippians that the concern of others paled by comparison. Timothy exemplified what it meant to put others’ interests ahead of his own (**Philippians 2:4**).

Read Philippians 2:22.

- The Philippians knew well Timothy’s value, sound character, and worthiness. The church knew that

Timothy's coming would be equal to that of the arrival of Paul himself, as Timothy had served with Paul like a son with a father. In the first century, the Greeks valued highly the service a son gave to his father, yet Paul realized that both he and Timothy were co-servants of Jesus Christ. Thus, he wrote that Timothy served with him as they shared Christ wherever the Lord led them.

Read Philippians 2:23.

- Paul planned to send Timothy to Philippi (2:19) and hoped to do so when he learned of the court's decision.

Read Philippians 2:24.

- “*Trust in the Lord*” could also be translated “*if the Lord is willing*” (1 Corinthians 4:19). Thus Paul again shows the uncertainty of any plans he himself might make as well as the confident expectation (hope) he had in the Lord's sovereign control over his life.

Read Philippians 2:25.

- Paul thought it was necessary to send Epaphroditus immediately. Epaphroditus had come from Philippi to Rome acting as a messenger to deliver a financial gift from the Philippians to Paul and to care for him (4:18). While in Rome, he had become extremely ill (2:27 and 30). After his recovery, Paul sent him back to Philippi carrying this thank you letter. Epaphroditus came to serve Paul, but Paul felt it necessary to send him back to Philippi with this letter to assure the Philippians of his well being after his severe illness. Paul wanted the Philippians to know how highly he regarded Epaphroditus, so he characterized him with three names: “*my brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier.*”

Read Philippians 2:26.

- How easy it is for us to miss the intensity of Epaphroditus' distress for his friends in Philippi. Communication happens so quickly in our world, but Epaphroditus couldn't just pick up the phone or mail a letter that would arrive in a few days saying all is well. The Philippians had heard that Epaphroditus had fallen ill, and word of their concern had gotten back to Rome. Again, weeks elapsed as the news traveled the 40-day journey between the two cities. When he recovered, Epaphroditus wanted the church to know as quickly as possible, so Paul thought the best way to do that would be to send Epaphroditus himself to Philippi.

Read Philippians 2:27.

- The Philippians' concern about Epaphroditus' illness had been well founded, for he had nearly died. While the apostles at one point had been given the power to heal, it was not a permanent gift and apparently was no longer in effect at this time; otherwise, Paul would surely have healed his friend. Verses to consider: **Acts 19:11-12** where we see that there was much healing taking place and then as we move through the New Testament we come to verses like **2 Corinthians 12:8-9; Galatians 4:12-14; 1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20**. Paul could do nothing but pray and Epaphroditus recovered because of God's mercy. What illness Epaphroditus had is unknown. To Paul, these details were less important than the significance that God had mercy on both him and Epaphroditus.
- God had mercy on Epaphroditus by healing him and returning him to ministry and on Paul by not adding the sorrow of bereaving a friend's death on top of other sorrows rendered by his imprisonment. Does Paul's

concern that he would sorrow over the loss of his friend show a lack of faith? What happened to his proclamation in 1:21 that to die is gain? The tension of these two feelings provides guidance for us. While we can rejoice in the home going of a friend or family member, we also grieve our loss.

Read Philippians 2:28.

- With Epaphroditus' unexpected return, the church might be concerned that he was leaving Paul alone in his most desperate time of need. Instead, Paul took full responsibility for Epaphroditus' return to Philippi and encouraged the believers to rejoice that he had come back to them. As he planned to do with Timothy, Paul willingly sent away those closest to him if their ministry was needed elsewhere. Epaphroditus had certainly been an encouragement to Paul, yet Paul knew that the Philippians now needed encouragement. This would ease Epaphroditus' heaviness and Paul's deep concern.
- Why should someone so strong in faith as Paul feel anxious and why admit to it publicly? Paul's transparency concerning his feelings is a lesson in personal honesty to us who tend to think that sorrow/anxiety is a sign of spiritual weakness. Paul refused to hide behind a spiritual mask.

Read Philippians 2:29-30.

- While Epaphroditus had not been able to remain in Rome to encourage Paul as the Philippian church had hoped, Paul desired the church to welcome him back with great honor for what he had done. ***“Welcome him in the Lord”***—a welcome befitting a brother in Christ. As mentioned before, Epaphroditus had become so ill

that his life had been in danger; he had risked his life for the cause of Christ to help Paul in his time of need. His return to Philippi in no way was an admission of failure. Instead, Epaphroditus had done his work so well that he could report back to Philippi and bring Paul's letter of thanks and encouragement along with him. The world honors those who are intelligent, beautiful, rich, and powerful.

- What kind of people should the church honor? Epaphroditus was called a brother, a fellow worker, fellow soldier, and messenger. These are the true emblems of honor. Paul's point is that Christians should honor those who risk their lives for the sake of Christ and the care of others going where we cannot go ourselves.

PHILIPPIANS

Chapter 3

A. Paul's Reassuring Love and Concern

Read Philippians 3:1.

- With the word, “finally” it would appear that Paul was ending his letter (**Ephesians 6:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:1**). But to a Greek audience, “*finally*” could also mean “furthermore.” “*Rejoice in the Lord.*” In **1 Samuel 30**, David and his men had just returned to their town of Ziklag to find it burned to the ground and their wives and children gone. In verse 4, we read that they “*wept until they had no more power to weep, and David’s men spoke of stoning him.*” Life doesn’t get much worse than this. However, in verse 6 we are told that “*David encouraged himself in the Lord.*” Or as Paul says in **Philippians 3:1**, “*Rejoice in the Lord.*” But how? By remembering as the Holy Spirit brings to mind who God is and all that He has done throughout Scripture, as well as in our own lives (**Psalms 77:10-12**); and then to simply acknowledge and trust the God who we know will never leave us or forsake us or make a mistake on our behalf or do us wrong. Let’s stop a moment and give some thought to true joy. Often happiness is mistaken for joy, but the two are very different. True biblical joy comes from abiding in Christ, knowing and trusting in Him. Happiness comes as a result of pleasant circumstances. Inward joy is lasting; we can feel joy in spite of our deepest troubles. Happiness is temporary. Paul was able to rejoice in spite of his sufferings because he knew and trusted God with the outcome. True joy enables us to transcend the rolling waves of circumstance. When believers’ lives are characterized

by the phrases “in Christ” and “Christ in you,” they can walk through adversity without permanently sinking into debilitating lows and manage prosperity without moving into deceptive highs. The joy of abiding in Christ kept Paul sober-minded no matter how high or low his circumstances (4:12). While Paul was not happy about being in prison, he could rejoice because he knew that he was safe and secure in his position in Christ and that Christ was living His life in and through Paul. ***“To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me and for you it is a safeguard.”*** Most likely Paul was referring to his repeated call to ***“rejoice.”*** Paul may have seen the possibility of the Philippians being depressed over his imprisonment and reminded them to rejoice. Paul did not consider it troublesome to take the time to emphasize again and again this teaching (**2 Peter 1:12-13**).

B. Paul Warns Against False Teachers Who Promote Legalism

Read Philippians 3:2.

- Even if Paul had intended to end his letter at 3:1, he had some further words for the Philippians. ***“Beware”*** is a strong word meaning “look out for or be warned against.” Paul used the word ***“beware”*** three times and then described this hostile group using three different derogatory terms. Jews regarded dogs as despised and unclean creatures. It was common for Jews to refer to Gentiles as dogs. However, here Paul switched the designation to refer not to Gentiles but to an extreme faction in the church.
- Second, he also called them ***“evil workers.”*** The Jews regarded themselves as good workers, not evil workers because they kept the law. Paul labeled them as evil,

not because they were immoral but because reliance on the law lessened their faith and trust in God.

- Thirdly, he called them “*the circumcision*” or those who mutilate the flesh or we could say, beware of the religious ones. Some Jewish Christians wrongly believed that it was essential for Gentiles to follow all the Old Testament Jewish laws, especially submission to the right of circumcision—mutilating the flesh. The Greek word for “circumcision” is “*peritome*,” but Paul did not use it here. Instead, he used another word, “*katatome*,” which refers to pagan mutilation of the flesh. While there was nothing wrong with circumcision itself, Paul maintained that it was wrong to teach circumcision as a requirement for salvation. It had become an empty and meaningless ritual.
- Those who taught this wrong doctrine were called Judaizers. They were a great problem for Paul. The church in Galatia was threatened by this teaching. Paul wrote a strong letter to the Galatians explaining exactly why the Judaizers were wrong. He criticized the Judaizers because they looked at Christianity backwards. What believers do is a result of faith, not a prerequisite to faith. We don’t know why the Judaizers traveled so far to teach their mistaken doctrine to the new Gentile converts; they may have been motivated by a jealous desire to destroy Paul’s authority.
- When Paul called them by such derogatory names, he did so because he was concerned that nothing get in the way of the simple truth of his message that salvation for Jews and Gentiles alike comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone. The early church had already confirmed Paul’s teaching at the Jerusalem Counsel eleven years prior to this in **Acts 15**. However, this didn’t stop many of the Judaizers. Because they had invested so much time and effort in keeping their laws,

they couldn't accept the fact that all their efforts were misplaced and wouldn't bring them a step closer to salvation. Add to this the age-old hatred of Gentile "dogs," which didn't make it any easier for them to accept Gentiles as brothers in the faith. Whether or not they had come to Philippi as yet, Paul knew it was only a matter of time, and he wanted the Philippians to be forewarned.

Read Philippians 3:3.

- Circumcision had been a requirement under the old covenant. It was a physical sign to God's people of their relationship with Him (**Genesis 17:9-14**). Yet it also had spiritual application, for the physical mark was to be a sign of a spiritual relationship with God (**Deuteronomy 30:6**). Paul explained that it is we Christians who are the circumcision. Keep in mind that at one time the physical sign of circumcision had set God's people, the Jews, apart from the Gentiles. However, after Jesus Christ, all people could become a part of God's family by believing in Jesus as Savior. The Christian church made up of physically circumcised Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles is the true spiritual circumcision.
- Circumcision has new spiritual meaning (**Colossians 2:11-12**). True believers, those who are the true circumcision, have three common characteristics that prove their standing before God:
 - ***"They worship God in the Spirit."*** This could also be translated "worship God by the Spirit." Paul spoke many times about the vital role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. We can walk in the Spirit and walk in the flesh (**Galatians 5:16**), pray in the Spirit and pray in the flesh (**Ephesians 6:18**), worship in the Spirit and worship in the flesh (**John 4:24**). True Christian worship is the Holy

Spirit gaining influence and control over our mind, will, and emotions, producing right thoughts about God, as well as godly desires and emotions that are coming from Him. Whatever outward forms may or may not be used, true worship is always in and by the Holy Spirit.

- They “***rejoice/glory/boast in Christ Jesus.***” Paul’s point is that true believers boast not in their own works, as if they somehow saved themselves or can live the Christ-life in their own power but boast in Christ Jesus alone. Any believer who understands the incredible significance of Christ’s finished work cannot help but respond with boasting, or glorying, or rejoicing in Him (**1 Corinthians 11:24-25**–“***Do this in remembrance of me.***”)
- They have “***no confidence in the flesh.***” The Judaizers depended on their obedience to the Jewish law and especially the covenant of circumcision to make them acceptable to God. By contrast, true believers do not place their confidence in anything they do or do not do but in what God through Jesus Christ has done in, through, and for them. Paul used the Greek word, “*sarx*” often translated as “flesh” to refer to the self-centered sin nature, which is totally self-absorbed, self-occupied, self-confident, and self-righteous. It was first seen in Lucifer in **Isaiah 14:14**, when he said, “***I will be like God.***” That self-centered attitude was then used by him to tempt Eve in the Garden: “***In the day that you eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened and you shall be like God***” (**Genesis 3:5**), and now resides in every human being descended from Adam and Eve including you and me. Some interesting Scriptures to consider are **John 3:6; 6:63; Matthew 26:41.**

C. Paul's Impressive Religious Credentials Didn't Find Favor with God

Read Philippians 3:4.

- Paul challenged any false teachers to a credentials show down. Upbringing, nationality, family background, inheritance, religious activity, and morality were brought up. If anyone could have confidence in human advantages and achievements, Paul could. In fact, compared to the Judaizers, who adamantly opposed salvation by faith alone, Paul probably had more reason to boast than they did.
- At first glance, it may look as though Paul was boasting about his achievements in verses 5 and 6. But he actually was doing the opposite: showing that human achievements, no matter how impressive, cannot earn favor with God. Following are seven qualifications that unmistakably belong to a full-blooded Jew—four of these were from heredity or by birth, three were by choice or personal conviction.

Read Philippians 3:5.

- The Judaizers focused on circumcision as the way to be right with God. The first item on Paul's list of credentials, in which he at one time placed confidence, was the fact that he too had been circumcised. That he was "***circumcised on the eighth day***" after birth shows that Paul was born a Jew (**Leviticus 12:3**), not a proselyte or someone who had converted to Judaism and would have been circumcised after conversion.
- Next, "***of the people of Israel.***" Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel. In Paul's list he included his membership among God's elect race, the chosen people. Paul's parents were both true Jews and

Paul could trace his heritage back to Abraham (**Romans 11:1-2; 2 Corinthians 11:22**).

- ***“Of the Tribe of Benjamin.”*** Paul now mentions his membership in one of Israel’s twelve tribes, Benjamin, a heritage greatly esteemed among the Jews. Though the tribe of Benjamin was one of the smallest tribes, it had a special place of honor throughout its history for a number of reasons. Along with the largest tribe Judah, the tribe of Benjamin remained loyal to David’s line when the monarchy split forming northern and southern kingdoms. Israel’s first King Saul after whom Paul was named, was from the tribe of Benjamin (**1 Samuel 10:20-24**). Mordecai, Esther’s uncle and the man who helped save the nation, was of the tribe of Benjamin. In addition, the tribes of Benjamin and Judah were the only two tribes to return to Israel after the exile (**Ezra 4:1**). Paul was pointing out that he was an Israelite by birth, a genuine Jew through and through.
- Next, ***“a Hebrew born of Hebrews.”*** Paul was a Hebrew son born of Hebrew parents. He spoke the old language of his race, Hebrew and Aramaic, in contrast to the Hellenistic Jews who were Greek-speaking Jews. The ability to speak Hebrew and Aramaic was a mark of loyalty to Israel and commanded special attention (**Acts 22:2**). These were Paul’s qualifications by birth and heredity. Now he turns to his qualifications gained by study and zeal for his faith.
- ***“Concerning the law, a Pharisee,”*** the most devout and strict Jewish sect. Pharisees followed the Old Testament law as well as their own rules and traditions thought to be the revealed law of God (**Acts 5:34; 22:3; 23:6; 26:5**). The Pharisees behaved as though their own rules were just as important as God’s laws for living; and as they attempted to keep all the laws, they looked down on others who were less educated and less holy.

Read Philippians 3:6.

- How much more zeal could any Jew have than to outright persecute the church? I would imagine that few, if any, Judaizers could boast of traveling hundreds of miles to find Christians, bring them back in chains to Jerusalem, and cast a vote for their deaths (**Acts 9:1, 2; 22:3-5; 26:9-11**). What drove Paul to persecute the church? He was convinced that Christianity was heretical and blasphemous. Because Jesus did not meet his expectations of what the Messiah would be like, Paul had assumed that Jesus' claims were false (**Acts 26:9**). If salvation could be found in zeal, Paul certainly had it.
- *“As to righteousness under the law, blameless.”* As mentioned before, Paul the Pharisee followed the Old Testament law in addition to hundreds of rules and traditions that the Pharisees placed upon themselves. Regarding ceremonial righteousness and legal standards and the hundreds of laws, Paul was blameless, without fault; he took his position as a Pharisee seriously. Whether it included detailed law keeping or zealous persecution of heretics, Paul led the way. Religious legalism attracts the flesh—trying to look holy without death, our co-crucifixion with Christ (**Romans 6:6**). We may not identify with Paul's list of credentials; who cares that he was a descendant of Jacob's beloved youngest son, Benjamin? But the same spiritual motives contained in Paul's list drives people today. Some people seek spiritual superiority in the right family, the right church, the right doctrine; others seek spiritual security thinking that if they have the right attitudes and behavior, they will escape the suffering that is a part of normal life (**Job. 5:7**). Paul, who seemingly had it all, listed his advantages and then set them aside as disadvantages with the little word *“but”* in the following verse.

D. Knowing and Trusting Christ: The Only Righteousness That God Accepts

Read Philippians 3:7.

- When Paul spoke of his gains, he was referring to his credentials and accomplishments. After showing that he could beat the Judaizers at their own game, being proud of who they were and what they had done, Paul showed that it was the wrong game. Despite his great qualifications and accomplishments, he had come to consider them all loss.
- He used an accounting metaphor with a gain and loss column. The things gained are plural, referring to individual items of importance. Loss is singular, indicating that all the gains are no longer worth being listed separately but come under a single category loss. All the qualifications no longer mattered because of Christ; all his hard work, meticulous law keeping and zeal for the Jewish faith had gained him nothing. What a total change of attitude in this man's life. As Saul, before his conversion, he had much worldly gain. He had gathered many honors for his name. He had made progress in Judaism beyond many of his peers; had achieved a legal righteousness in which no man could find a flaw. His zeal, his knowledge, and his morality were of the highest order.
- But from the moment Christ was revealed to him on the road to Damascus, everything changed (**Acts 9:3-4**). Notice his two remarks in **Acts 9:5-6**: “*Who are you*” and “*What would you have me to do.*” All of a sudden, what had previously been gain, his righteousness, education, and morality, had now turned to rubbish (**Philippians 3:8**). The revelation of the glory of Christ had so completely changed the

entire thought-life, attitude, and being of Paul, that those things which he had once esteemed positive gain were now considered as positive loss. Why? Simply because he had found his all in Christ. Jesus Christ had supplanted everything in Paul's heart. Christ now displaced all that once belonged to Paul.

- As we grow in our understanding of all that the writer to the Hebrews had in mind in Chapter 12, verse 3, when he said, “*looking unto Jesus,*” the more completely we are stripped and emptied of everything in which we could glory or consider gain. Whatever there may be that tends to exalt self, whether it be righteousness, morality, respectability, wealth, glory, or intelligence, it is an absolute hindrance to our enjoyment/occupation with Christ.

Read Philippians 3:8.

- Paul regarded everything as loss compared to knowing Christ (not just a “salvation-knowing” but an “abiding” relationship with Him). When Paul said everything, he was referring to any type of credential or qualification or honor or achievement that someone might use in order to gain favor with God. As Paul wrote this letter, he was in prison for the faith and had suffered hardship and had been near death; yet by grace through faith, he endured for the sake of Jesus Christ his Savior. Paul might have been tempted to rely on these accomplishments in earning favor with God; however, he knew that even great suffering for the sake of Christ was also a loss compared with the surpassing value of truly knowing Christ Jesus.
- The Judaizers might have their rituals and rules, but Paul and all true believers have a wonderful, personal relationship and fellowship with Christ Jesus Himself (Colossians 2:2-3). “*For His sake I have suffered the*

loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.” Not only did Paul consider everything worthless but also he had actually given up or lost all things for the sake of Christ. Considering how much Paul had been taught to value his credentials and how hard he had worked at his accomplishments, casting aside everything would have been a major issue. Yet those accomplishments or credentials were no better than rubbish, refuse, dung or waste to him, for they were human attempts to gain favor with God and thus were worthless. A person cannot depend on personal accomplishment and Christ; it’s Christ plus nothing. Only the one who willingly loses all things can gain Christ (**Luke 9:23-24**).

Read Philippians 3:9.

- Paul wanted to be found living in union with Christ. No amount of law keeping, self-improvement, discipline, or religious effort can make anyone right with God. While those things may give a false sense of righteousness, they would never hold up under God’s scrutiny. The Judaizers had such righteousness, but it was merely their own. They simply were meeting their own standards in keeping the law. But no one can be good enough, not even Paul with all his credentials and accomplishments.
- True righteousness comes only through faith in Christ, thus it is righteousness from God based on faith—God-given righteousness, rather than God-required righteousness. We believers are positionally declared righteous by our faith in Christ’s sacrifice on the cross on our behalf; righteousness is God’s gift to us, it cannot be earned. God can exchange our sin and shortcomings for His complete righteousness in a way

we humans will never fully understand (**2 Corinthians 5:21**).

- Believers are offered a gift, and our part is to accept it by faith. We are declared righteous positionally at the moment we believe, and fruit of a Christ-righteous life is gradually worked out on a day-to-day basis as we by faith appropriate our co-crucifixion with Christ and the Holy Spirit reproduces the life of Christ in us. Being found in Jesus Christ is to be happily abandoned to Christ whose attraction works like a magnet, and our fascination with Him grows stronger; and as we occupy ourselves with Him, we become more like Him (**2 Corinthians 3:18**).

Read Philippians 3:10.

- The word for “*know*” here is referring to personal experiential knowledge. In **Proverbs 24:3-4**, we read, “*By wisdom a house is built, by understanding it is established, and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.*” Notice the progression in these verses; from wisdom (looking at life from God’s point of view), to understanding (through applying it to our lives we understand), to knowledge (familiarity gained through experience); now we truly “*know*.” To know Christ is more than merely to know facts about Him. But rather is the Holy Spirit revealing Christ (**John 15:26; John 16:13-14**) in such a way that we can say with the Apostle John “*we have heard Him, we have seen Him with our eyes, and our hands have handled Him*” (**1 John 1:1-3**).
- Paul truly desired to know Christ, for Christ had changed the very foundation of his life. He also wanted to know “*the power of His resurrection.*” The same resurrection power that brought Jesus back

from the dead is available to all believers (**Ephesians 1:19-20**). Another thought to ponder is that the power of His resurrection assures us of our justification (salvation) (**Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:17; Isaiah 32:17**) and of our sanctification as we identify with Christ in death and resurrection (**Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12; 3:1, 10**).

- Paul also wanted to know the “*fellowship of sharing in His sufferings*”—participating with Christ in suffering (**Philippians 1:29**). In **1 Peter 2:21** we read that we are “*called to suffer, Christ is our example, and we are to follow in His footsteps*.” In **2 Corinthians 1:5**, Paul speaks of the “*sufferings of Christ abound in us*.” In **Hebrews 2:10** and **5:8** we read of “*Christ being perfected through suffering*.” And then in **John 17:18** and **20:20**, we read Christ’s words to His Father: “*as You have sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world*.” As we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and the Holy Spirit is reproducing the life of Christ in us, then it is “*no longer I, but Christ*.” So, when we are suffering and persecuted for the faith, He is right there with us. In fact, the persecution is really directed toward Him (**Romans 15:3**—“*The fellowship of His suffering*”).
- And now let’s consider the phrase “*being made conformable unto His death*.” While believers are growing spiritually, we are being conformed to the likeness of Jesus (**Romans 8:29**), we are “*conformed to His death*” (**Romans 6:11**). When Jesus died on the cross, we died with Him to our former life, and then we were raised along with Christ to newness of life. We believers must first, by faith, die (**Romans 6:6**) before we can truly live for God (**Galatians 2:20**). This crucifixion marks the positional death of our old sin nature and then we begin to experience the power that raised Him from the dead, the same mighty

power gives us morally renewed and regenerated lives. We can't know the victory of the resurrection life without personally applying the crucifixion.

Read Philippians 3:11.

- When Paul wrote, “***And so somehow to attain to the resurrection,***” he was not implying uncertainty or doubt that he would one day live the “resurrected life.” Paul did not doubt the fact that he would “***walk in newness of life***” (Romans 6:4), but how he would attain it was within God's plan and power and not his own. Many Bible scholars teach that Paul was focusing on his soon physical death here and therefore his faith that he would be raised to life again. Their thought is that the “***resurrection from the dead***” probably refers to the resurrection of Christians at the time of Christ's return (1 Corinthians 15:22-24; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15; Revelation 20:5-6). However, there seems to be a deeper meaning here and that is in reference to living the resurrected life. Therefore, the verse could read “***In order that I might live the resurrected life, being dead to sin, and alive unto God.***” And now the rest of the chapter takes on a deeper meaning.

Read Philippians 3:12.

- “Obtain” can mean to take hold of, to receive, to make one's own. So, Paul may have been saying that he had not fully grasped all the meaning of Christ in his life. The grace of God in Paul's life aroused him to want to press on and follow after the resurrected Christ-life. Unlike salvation, which is an event, Paul saw the Christian life as a process. While believers are declared positionally righteous at salvation, our lives are marked by growth toward Christlikeness.

Complete conditional perfection will not be obtained this side of glory.

- While Paul may have seemed like a nearly perfect Christian to his Philippian friends, he emphasized that he had not obtained perfect knowledge of Christ, nor had he obtained a perfect knowledge of the power of His resurrection, nor the fellowship of His suffering, nor conformity to His death. All of these were in process. Pressing on has the idea of chasing or hunting down. Christ Jesus took hold of Paul almost 30 years earlier when Paul was converted on the road to Damascus; Christ laid hold of Paul so that Paul could lay hold of the prize: “The Christ-Life.”

Read Philippians 3:13.

- Unlike the Judaizers, Paul did not consider that he had achieved spiritual maturity. So forgetting his past with all its credentials and accomplishments and like a runner with his whole body reaching for the finish line, by grace through faith he would reach out toward the goal (**Luke 9:62**). We have all done things in our lives that we wish we could forget and for which we are ashamed; however, because our hope is in Christ, we can let go of the past and look forward to sweet fellowship with Him and a life filled with the “fruit of the Spirit.”

Read Philippians 3:14.

- As a runner straining every muscle toward the finish line, Paul by God’s grace pressed on toward the goal. While he didn’t identify the prize, it seems from his writing above that the prize refers to gaining a full knowledge of Jesus Christ and living the dead-to-self

resurrected Christ-life (1 Corinthians 9:24; 2 Timothy 4:7-8).

- Scholars have presented several views for the meaning of “*the high calling/upward call*.” Some scholars regard it as the rapture of the church; others have seen it to mean the call to be saved. Still others connect it to the high purpose or high vocation of Paul as a Hebrew. However, because of Paul’s use of the phrase “*in Christ*,” it seems more natural to understand “*the prize*” as the high calling of believers to a life of abiding in Christ, which in turn will produce the dead-to-self Christ-life under the influence and control of the Holy Spirit.

E. A Plea to Walk in Unity and Truth

Read Philippians 3:15.

- After Paul shared his thoughts regarding the Christian life, he explained to the Philippians that all mature believers should take such a view; they too ought to be pressing on toward maturity. Whatever pride-problem threatened to divide the Philippian church, Paul put a stop to it: “*If on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.*” This was the final word on the matter. Paul looked to God Himself to clarify the truth of his words to those who thought differently. Those who were mature were to heed Paul’s words and to anyone who thought differently, God would lead them to the truth.

Read Philippians 3:16.

- Christian maturity involves appropriating the truth that we have already received. Paul knew the

believers were in different stages, so he encouraged everyone to, by faith, apply what they understood to be true. As they pressed on toward maturity, they could not use their lack of complete knowledge as an excuse for taking lightly what they knew and abuse the grace of God. They would continue to learn and grow while at the same time live their lives by the light they had thus far received (**Proverbs 3:9; 4:18**).

Read Philippians 3:17.

- Paul used these two key phrases for discipleship: “*be followers*” and “*example*.” To be a “*follower*” means “to become like”; “*example*” means “a model or a pattern for one’s life.” Paul encouraged the Philippians to pursue Christ-likeness by becoming like Paul’s own model. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “*Follow me as I follow Christ*” (**1 Corinthians 11:1**). Keep in mind that the gospels may not yet have been in circulation, so Paul could not tell them to read the Bible to see what Christ was like. Therefore, he urged them to follow him as a practical guide for conduct. That Paul could tell people to follow his example is a testimony to Christ in the man. Can we do the same? What kind of follower would a new Christian become if he or she became like you or me? An interesting thought to ponder comes from **1 Timothy 3:16**: “*Great is the mystery of godliness*.” Please keep in mind that godliness/God-likeness is not man imitating God, but rather God reproducing Himself in a man. If godliness was man imitating God, there would be no mystery.

Read Philippians 3:18.

- The reason for Paul’s admonition to follow his example was to turn believers away from following

the bad examples of the false teachers. The false teachers satisfied their own desires; they focused on their own attainment, thus making them enemies of the cross of Christ. The cross ultimately produces dead-to-self but alive-to-God bond-servants of Christ.

- We believers cannot depend on personal achievement and at the same time accept the free gift of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and our co-crucifixion with Him. Either Christ's finished work on the cross was all-sufficient and we can do nothing more, or it wasn't enough, and we have to keep on trying to obey God's laws in order to be made acceptable to Him. Such attempts to nullify the finished work of Christ saddened Paul greatly (**Galatians 4:19**). Paul had warned the Philippians about false teaching and continued to do so with tears.

Read Philippians 3:19.

- Their destiny is destruction. Four characteristics were true of these enemies of the cross:
 - ***"Whose end is destruction"***—because they refused to accept Christ's sacrifice on their behalf, they could not be saved; their only alternative was destruction, eternal separation from God (**Galatians 5:4**).
 - ***"Whose god is their stomach,"*** meaning they worship those temporal elements that satisfy only physical desires. Focusing on the Judaizers, Paul may have been pointing out their absorption with the various food laws; attempting to keep the laws of distinction between clean and unclean food occupied all of their time causing them to focus only on their stomachs. If Paul were attacking another group, he may have been pointing out their gluttony and unrestrained fulfilling of

physical desires (**Romans 16:18; 1 Corinthians 6:13; Jude 11**).

- ***“Whose glory is in their shame.”*** Paul may have meant that these false teachers were heaping praise on themselves instead of on God. They gloried in themselves when they should have been ashamed.
- And finally, ***“Whose mind is on earthly things.”*** Paul was referring to the dependence on credentials, accomplishments, law keeping, etc.

F. Why Should We Walk in Unity and Truth?

Read Philippians 3:20.

- While the false teachers had their minds on earthly matters, believers are to be yearning for their heavenly home. Paul’s speaking of citizenship struck a chord with the Philippians. Philippi was a Roman colony, and those who lived in Philippi had their citizenship in far off Rome. Although most of the Philippians had never been there, Roman citizenship was highly prized during Paul’s time. The Christians in Philippi, as proud as they were of their Roman citizenship (**Acts 16:12-21**), would have done better to value more highly their citizenship in heaven, living on earth as a colony of believing resident aliens temporarily in a foreign country.
- Remembering Jesus’ return to heaven after His resurrection: ***“This same Jesus will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven”*** (**Acts 1:11**). Thus, believers are expecting the Savior’s return to earth. Paul had no doubt about Christ’s return, although neither he nor anyone else knew or knows when that day or time will be.

Read Philippians 3:21.

- When Christ returns to rule and reign, He will bring everything under His control. There will be no more sin, no more evil rulers, no more persecution of believers. Christ will be King of kings and Lord of lords, ruler over all (**Revelation 19:11-16; 21:22-27; Psalm 8:6; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Hebrews 2:8-9**).
- With this same power, He will transform all believers' earthly bodies into new bodies. The phrase "***lowly bodies***" refers not to the human body as being inherently evil; rather Paul was speaking of the present state of humiliation and weakness caused by sin making the body vulnerable and susceptible to sickness, temptation, and death. In contrast, the bodies we will receive when Christ returns will be gloriously immortal like Christ's glorified body. While the transformation of our souls is a long process, the transformation of our bodies will be instantaneous at Christ's return. God will perform this wonderful transformation by the same power that brings everything in creation under Christ's control.

PHILIPPIANS

Chapter 4

A. A Plea to Walk in Unity and Joy

Read Philippians 4:1.

- Paul underscored once again his love for this congregation in calling them “*brothers and sisters, my joy and crown, and my beloved,*” and repeating how he loved and longed for them. That Paul would refer to the Philippians as “his crown” could mean that they would be a wreath of victory and seal of his apostleship (1 Corinthians 9:2), proof that his labor had not been in vain (2:16).
- Because of these amazing and certain promises, the believers in Philippi were encouraged to stand firm in the Lord against false teaching or divisiveness from within and persecution from without. The phrase “*stand fast*” implies that the ground has already been taken, and our part is to, by faith, hold our ground. “*in the Lord*” makes reference to our secure position in Christ.

Read Philippians 4:2.

- Paul not only warned the Philippian church of doctrinal errors, he also addressed some relational problems. Euodia and Syntyche had been workers for Christ in the church, and their broken relationship was no small matter. Their quarrel was causing dissension in the church. Hence, Paul’s plea for unity in 2:1-4. We do not know the reason for the disagreement, but Paul pleaded with them to set aside their differences and come together in the Lord.

- It's interesting that Paul does not address the cause of the quarrel; the issue should never be the petty, fleshly differences Christians have with one another, but rather restored relationship with Christ and unity of the church must be the highest concern. No one in the church should be expected to agree with everyone else or every issue facing the group; however, as each member of the body is focused on the Head (Jesus), the result will be a unity that goes beyond human explanation. This might be a good time to insert and consider the word consensus. Consensus comes about when individuals agree to a certain plan or direction. The plan or direction may not be the first choice of everyone involved, but they agree for the sake of unity.

Read Philippians 4:3.

- The identity of this loyal yokefellow remains a mystery. The reference may have been obvious to the Philippian believers, but it is now hidden from us. Scholars have suggested several possibilities, such as, Epaphroditus, the bearer of this letter, or possibly an elder in the church at Philippi. But whoever this yokefellow was, Paul knew that he could count on him to help these women work out their disagreement. In many of the churches Paul visited, men were the main leaders, but women played a key role in founding the churches of Macedonia (**Acts 16:14, 40; 17:4, 12**).
- “***Contended***” is also translated “labored” and means “to struggle against opposition, to strive, to work earnestly.” These women had gotten involved beyond the comfort level for the sake of the Gospel. Thus, Euodias and Syntyche’s quarrel was highly visible and threatened to disrupt the unity of the church. The

Philippian church leaders were to help reconcile these two women (**Galatians 6:1; Hebrews 3:13**). The mention of the women's help in the cause of the gospel reminded Paul of Clement and other fellow workers who had also labored with Paul. While the names of the rest of the fellow workers are not listed, Paul is certain that their names are in the Book of Life.

B. How to Experience God's Peace

Read Philippians 4:4.

- It seems strange that a man in prison would be telling a church to “*rejoice*.” It would make more sense that the church would initiate an encouraging letter to the prisoner to rejoice. But Paul's exhortation teaches us an important lesson: our inner attitudes do not have to reflect our outward circumstances.
- Paul was full of joy because his occupation was with Christ, not with his circumstances. In **Acts 16:22-25**, Paul and Silas are stripped naked, beaten, thrown in prison, and their feet are placed in stocks; but at midnight they are found singing praises to God. Where did that come from? Certainly not from their great circumstances. It's easy to be overly concerned and thereby discouraged about unpleasant circumstances or to take unimportant events too seriously, but we can always, by grace through faith, rejoice and delight in the Lord. Paul did not call believers to an empty, put-on show of happiness, but rather he called for genuine joy, which is only possible as we rest in our position in Christ. It is only through abiding in Christ that we find joy in pain, suffering, persecution, and sorrow.

Read Philippians 4:5.

- Paul had encouraged the Philippians to be joyful, and now he encouraged them to let everyone see their unselfish consideration toward others, especially those outside the church. The word “**moderation**” is difficult to translate in order to capture the full meaning. Words such as “forbearance,” “gentle spirit,” and “leniency” come close but don’t quite have it. It refers to a spirit that is unselfish, reasonable, fair minded, sensitive, and charitable. It describes someone willing to yield his or her own rights and to show consideration and loving-kindness to others.
- We may find it easy to be gentle with some people, but Paul commanded gentleness toward everyone. He used the same word in **2 Corinthians 10:1** where he spoke of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Jesus never sacrificed truth in order to be gentle, but His gentle spirit often disarmed those set against Him.
- “***The Lord is near.***” This nearness refers not to His presence, but rather to the nearness of relationship as we abide in Christ. (A reciprocal union: in Christ and Christ in you.) It also could have reference to the second coming. The Apostle James wrote, “***You too be patient and stand firm because the Lord’s coming is near. Don’t grumble against each other brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door***” (James 5:8-9). Paul had an eager awareness of, and watchfulness for the second coming of the Lord.

Read Philippians 4:6.

- These were certainly encouraging words as the Philippians faced the problems of life and stood firm in the faith (1:27-28; 3:1; 4:1). Believers are not to

set aside life's responsibilities with a carefree, complacent attitude (**Luke 10:41**), but rather are exhorted to live responsible lives by God's grace providing for their needs and their families and being concerned for others; however, worry, fret, or distress are not part of the true Christ-life.

- In **Matthew 6:25-34** Jesus said not to worry about your life, what you eat or drink, your body, adding time to your life, or what will happen tomorrow. Worrying is a subtle form of distrust in God (**Romans 14:23**). When believers worry, they doubt that God cares or that He is "able" (**Ephesians 3:20; 2 Timothy 1:12; Jude 24**). Paul offered prayer as an alternative to worry. He said, "***But in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God.***" It may seem impossible not to worry, but Paul explained that this is a possibility if God is in focus. Paul's advice is to turn our worries into prayers.
- It might be helpful to stop a moment and define prayer. What is it? We could spend many hours looking up definitions of prayer and to be quite honest, we'll probably find that most are rather shallow. For example, Webster's Dictionary defines it this way: "*To beg or implore; to address God; a form of worship.*" Other definitions are equally confusing and vague. Of all the definitions, John Darby seems to see the true meaning of prayer: "*Prayer is the great means by which we are practically kept in awareness of the Father's presence. It is the proper expression of our weakness to the Father and of our confidence in His love and care day by day and evermore. Prayer is confessing our constant need of dependence upon Him.*"
- I would also like to add this quote from G. Watson: "*It will save years of frustration and effort for one to*

understand that prayer can never be learned or developed. Prayer is the outflow of the new life. As one grows, as the cross frees the new from the old, there is the growth of effective prayer. Without the cross, prayer becomes a mere religious formality. As the cross works in us keeping in the place of death every assertion of the old man and everything in our old nature that is against God, our spirit finds a clear way up to fellowship at the throne. Away from the cross, prayer becomes nothing more than an ecclesiastical ordinance or a religious exercise expressed in devotional phrases. I beg of you: when you read a book on prayer, find out the place in it which the author gives to the cross and you will be able to estimate its value.”

Read Philippians 4:7.

- True peace is not found in positive thinking, in absence of conflict, or in good feelings, but rather is a “fruit of the Spirit” as we walk by faith. Believers are given peace with God when they believe (**Romans 5:1**), and they have the inner quiet of the peace of God as they daily walk with Him (**Colossians 3:15**). God’s peace surpasses all human understanding, and we cannot humanly comprehend such peace. It is not a natural reaction in calamity, sorrow or pain, and such peace cannot be self-generated; it comes from God alone.
- As mentioned before, “*the peace of God*” is a fruit of the Spirit and is His gift to us in a difficult world. As with so much of God’s dealings with man, we cannot fully understand it, but we can accept and experience God’s peace because of His great love for us (**Isaiah 26:3**).

C. How to Enjoy the Sense of God's Presence

Read Philippians 4:8.

- With the word “*finally*,” Paul may have been indicating that he was about to conclude this section of his letter, or he may have been using the word in the sense of it follows then that if one is to have this inner peace from God and maintain a life free of worry, then “*think on these things*.”
- “*Whatsoever things are true...*” Truth is a characteristic of God; in fact, in **John 14:6**, Jesus says “*I Am the truth*.” He doesn’t say I’ll teach you truth or show you truth but says, “*I am the truth*.” So, Paul would say think on Jesus.
- “*Whatever is noble/honest...*”—worthy of reverence. Again, Jesus is noble, the source of all honesty, and worthy of reverence; think on Jesus.
- “*Whatever is right/just...*” Jesus is the just one and the source of our righteousness (**1 Corinthians 1:30**). As we spiritually mature and the Holy Spirit progressively produces the life of Christ in us, we will not only think right thoughts but do right things because it is no more I, but Christ.
- “*Whatever is pure...*” Pure means free from contamination or blemish. Jesus was the Lamb without spot or blemish.
- “*Whatever is lovely...*” The Greek word for lovely is used only here in the New Testament. The New Revised Standard Version translates the word as “pleasing.” Jesus was the only true “lovely One” Who was always pleasing to His Father.
- “*Whatever things are of good report/kind/gracious...*” The Greek word is also translated “admirable.” What a picture of Jesus, the Lamb of God, our all-sufficient Savior.

- ***“If there is any virtue/excellence/purity...”*** Virtue was prominent in Greek rhetoric and Roman philosophy but is found only once in Paul’s letters and three times in Peter’s (**1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 1:3, 5**). This small word incorporates all moral excellence. A wonderful description of Jesus, the excellent One.
- ***“And if there is anything praiseworthy...”*** This phrase may be re-stated as “anything that deserves the thinker’s praise.” Jesus Christ is truly worthy of all our praise; think on, look unto, be occupied with Jesus.

Read Philippians 4:9.

- Paul by God’s grace had lived out and was continuing to live out his faith, so he could urge others to follow his example. If they did not understand how to live their lives as Paul had suggested in Chapter 4:4-8, then they could see it in action. People could follow him as he followed Christ (**1 Corinthians 11:1**).
- ***“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do.”*** What were those things? Some of the many things that Paul shared and lived out before the Philippians and others are right here in Chapter 4:1, 4, and 6–8.
- ***“The God of peace shall be with you.”*** God is the source of peace for all believers. Paul thought so much of this attribute of God that he often used the name “God of peace” as a benediction to his epistles (**Romans 15:33; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11**). To know peace, we must be occupied with Him (**Isaiah 26:3**).

D. Paul's Gratitude for Their Loving, Loyal Support

Read Philippians 4:10.

- Next, Paul turned his attention to one of the main reasons for writing this letter: to thank the Lord and the Philippian church for their gift to him. Paul recognized that every good gift initiated with God (**James 1:17**). Epaphroditus had been sent to Rome from Philippi with a generous financial gift for Paul and it had come during a time of need. Paul's words "*now at the last your care of me has flourished again*" may sound a bit harsh, but that harshness is absent in the Greek. The second phrase explains that the church had always been concerned for Paul, but it had no opportunity to show it. Whatever the reason for that lack of opportunity, Paul rejoiced not only at the gift of God's wonderful provision for his needs but also for the church who cared so much about him, had not forgotten him, and had at last been able to show their concern with the arrival of Epaphroditus.

Read Philippians 4:11.

- At this point, Paul was very careful to be certain that his words were not misunderstood. The fact that the Philippians had not sent help sooner did not mean that Paul had been disappointed in them or that he had been suffering; instead, he had learned an awesome truth regarding the Christian life: he could be content with whatever God provided. Paul had to learn this because contentment is not a natural human response. He was content because he was seeing life from God's point of view, and he was grateful for everything God had provided. By God's grace, Paul could detach himself from the physical non-essentials and concentrate on the eternal.

- It's interesting to go back to the book of Job and give thought to the fact that it was at a moment when Job could little have expected it, that the crash came. No doubt he often had fears, for he said: "***That which I feared greatly has come upon me***" (Job 3:25). And this will always be the case when the soul has no better security for God's love than the receiving of gifts from Him. The gifts then become a snare, and Satan's accusation against Job that the only reason he (Job) loved and respected God was because of God's blessings (Job 1:9-11). Like Job, our grounds for rest and contentment before God then becomes His kindness and mercies to us and not God Himself. This is quite evident from the grief and despair many of His people fall into when they are deprived of any particular physical blessing. When we rest in the gift more than in God, the gift being the evidence of His love; the love itself is not the contentment of the heart. We must fix our eyes not on what is seen but what is unseen (Jesus). What is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Read Philippians 4:12.

- The following verses give a bit of Paul's personal testimony. He knew what it was to have very little, "***to be abased.***" The Greek word is the same root word used to describe Jesus humbling Himself in 2:8. The picture is of Paul willingly accepting a low status, even a life of poverty for his Master's sake (1 Corinthians 4:11-13; 2 Corinthians 6:4-10). Whether Paul had plenty or little, he was content because he did not look to his circumstances to produce contentment; he was content with Christ.

Read Philippians 4:13.

- Paul's contentment was not gained through self-discipline, instead it was through Christ alone, literally, the one empowering me (**1 Timothy 1:12**). In context, the "***all things***" refers to the list in 4:11-12. In every possible circumstance Paul could truly be content because his outward circumstances did not affect his contentedness. Christ was giving him the grace to continue with his ministry and the work of spreading the gospel whether he had plenty or was in need. Paul had complete confidence that no matter what the circumstance, Christ would meet his need. Thanks to his "***enabler***," Paul had a "can do" attitude. This verse can be divided into two halves: the first half is "***I can do all things***." To stop here and pull the words out of context would imply the idea of self-reliance, self-assuredness. The last half reveals the source of our strength: "***Christ***." Faith is dependence upon God, and this God-dependence only begins when self-dependence ends, and self-dependence only comes to its end when sorrow, suffering, affliction, and failed plans brings us to that place of self-helplessness and defeat. And only then do we find that we have learned the lesson of faith—to find our tiny craft of life rushing to a blessed victory of Christ-likeness, power, and service undreamed of in the days of our fleshly strength and self-reliance. For Christians it is not self-esteem, but Christ-esteem—not self-confidence, but Christ-confidence.

Read Philippians 4:14.

- The Philippians shared in Paul's afflictions by sending one of their own, Epaphroditus, to encourage him and through sending a financial gift while he was in prison; thus, communicating their love and concern

for him. The true meaning of this phrase is lost in the English translation, which is a closeness between the Apostle and the Philippian believers.

Read Philippians 4:15.

- ***“In the beginning”*** would probably refer to Paul’s initial visit to Philippi when the Christian church began, as recorded in **Acts 16 and Philippians 1:15**. The communication/sharing the Philippians had done with Paul refers to their financial support. Although Paul ministered in other cities and planted other churches, only the Philippians had shared in giving and receiving with Paul (**2 Corinthians 11:8**). From Paul the church received spiritual blessings and from the church Paul received material blessings (**Galatians 6:6**).

Read Philippians 4:16.

- During his second missionary journey, after Paul left Philippi, his next stop was Thessalonica (**Acts 17:1**). In Thessalonica, the Philippians had sent help for his financial needs.
- The phrase ***“once and again”*** means simply that with no exact number of times. There’s also the possibility this sentence could mean that when Paul was at Thessalonica and more than once while he was in other places such as Corinth, the Philippians had sent help.

Read Philippians 4:17.

- Paul made it clear that his thankfulness for the Philippians’ generosity was not a veiled request for more; in fact, he considered that they had made full

payment as it were and need not send anything else (4:18). The New King James translates this phrase, “*the fruit that abounds to your account*” and the New Revised Standard version says, “*the profit that accumulates to your account.*” The financial language showed the Philippians that their gifts to Paul were investments that paid dividends or accumulated interest that would be credited to their heavenly account.

Read Philippians 4:18.

- Paul thanked the Philippians for their generous gift by describing it as full payment and even more. Their generous gift was more than enough. Surely the Philippian church rejoiced that they had been able to meet Paul’s needs. Paul described the Philippians’ gift as “*a fragrant offering.*” He was referring to the burnt offering, a voluntary offering given for payment of sins and showing a person’s devotion to God (**Genesis 8:20-21; Exodus 29:18; Leviticus 1:9, 13; Ezekiel 20:41**).
- “*Acceptable sacrifice*” meant that their gifts were acts of worship and God was the true recipient. The Philippians’ gift had not only helped Paul and added to their heavenly account, but it was also perhaps most importantly an act of worship and pleasing to God. They had given out of faith, not so much to Paul as to God, the ultimate recipient of every act of love, care, concern, and charity.

Read Philippians 4:19.

- Paul communicates to the Philippian Church his confidence that God would abundantly meet their needs as they had met his. The Philippian church was not wealthy; in fact, when Paul spoke of the

Philippians' generosity, he referred to the impoverished Macedonian Church: ***"We want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches out of the most severe trial their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability, entirely on their own they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints"*** (2 Corinthians 8:1-4).

- Paul was assured by Christ that His grace was sufficient for every need (2 Corinthians 12:9). Just as God had met Paul's need through the generosity of the Philippian church, so Paul states that God would supply the need of the Philippian church through His creative ways. Not only would God supply all their needs, but He would do it ***"according to His riches and glory by Christ Jesus."*** Believers cannot begin to comprehend God's riches in glory. His riches are limitless, infinite. If it is from that storehouse that believer's needs are met, then the Philippian believers could rest assured that God would indeed meet every need no matter how large, desperate, or hopeless it seemed. This happens by Christ Jesus—that is, because of Christ. We have access to God and can ***"boldly come to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"*** (Hebrews 4:16) because of the ***"blood of Christ"*** (Hebrews 10:19).

E. Pauls' Benediction and Closing Statements

Read Philippians 4:20.

- God who supplied Paul's needs and met the Philippians' needs, is the same yesterday, today and forever and promises to meet our needs also. To our

God belongs all glory forever. Paul broke into a doxology of praise as he remembered God's great love and provision.

- *"The big question before the church is always God Himself, and the most awesome fact about any man is not what he may say or do, but what he, in the depths of his heart, understands God to be like. Always the most revealing thing about the church is her idea of God, just as her most significant message is what she says about Him or leaves unsaid, for often her silence is more eloquent than her speech. Possibly every error in doctrine or failure to apply Christian ethics could be finally traced to imperfect thoughts about God...The man who comes to a right belief about God is relieved from thousands and thousands of temporal problems, for he sees that these problems have to do with circumstances which at best cannot concern him for very long."* A.W. Tozer

Read Philippians 4:21.

- Paul closes his letter by sending his personal greetings to every believer in the Philippian church and, in addition, the friends with Paul in Rome also sent their greetings to the Philippians. The gospel had spread to all areas of society, linking people who had no other common bond but Christ. The Roman Christians and Philippian Christians were brothers and sisters because of their unity in Christ.

Read Philippians 4:22.

- Paul expanded his message to include a greeting from all the saints, that is all the believers in the Roman church, some of whom are probably in **Romans 16:1-15**. The mention of those who belong to Caesar's

household offers an interesting sidelight: there were many Christians in Rome and some were even in Caesar's household. Because Philippi was a Roman colony, there may have been a link between some of the imperial staff in Rome and those in Philippi.

Read Philippians 4:23.

- This letter to the Philippians begins and ends with grace (1:2). Paul had experienced God's undeserved favor, and he never tired of praying that others would also experience that grace.
- *"For the Gospel of Grace is the end of religion, the final posting of the CLOSED sign on the sweatshop of the human race's constant struggle to think well of itself; for at best, that is what religion is: Man's well meant, but dim-witted attempt to gain approval for doing odd jobs that he thinks God will thank him for. Religion, therefore, is a loser...It has a failed past and a bankrupt future...There was no religion in Eden, and there will be none in the New Jerusalem; and in the meantime, Jesus has died and risen to persuade us to knock it off right now. He has made it real clear that as far as God is concerned, we're all home free already, and there is not a single religious thing that you or I have to do...We are simply invited to believe it."* Robert Farrar Capon



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