

THE MACEDONIAN CALL
Acts 16:6-40

Intro: Our text tells about the establishing of the church in Philippi.

Lightfoot wrote years ago,

It was in the course of his second missionary journey, about the year 52 (A.D.), that St. Paul first visited Philippi. His associates were Silas who had accompanied him from Jerusalem, Timotheus whom they had taken up at Lystra, and Luke who had recently joined the party at Troas.(p. 49).

We are considering this sixteenth chapter of Acts in preparation for our studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians.

Summary of the chapter:

- 1) Note what Paul tried to do--the closed doors, two of them: in Asia, and in Bithynia (Acts 16:6-8).
- 2) Paul's guidance--the unusual call (Acts 16:9).
- 3) The quick trip to Macedonia (Acts 16:10-12).
- 4) The first-mentioned ministry--by the riverside on the sabbath day. Here we read of Lydia's salvation (Acts 16:13-15).
- 5) The demon-possessed girl, and her deliverance from the demon by the Apostle Paul (Acts 16:16-18).

This led to the first opposition which resulted in . . .

- 6) The beating and imprisonment of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:19-24).
- 7) The salvation of the Philippian jailor, and his entire family (Acts 16:25-34).

Finally, we are told of . . .

- 8) The release of Paul and Silas, and their departure from Philippi, as they made their way south to Thessalonica.

Paul's time in Philippi apparently was very short. "Certain days" are mentioned in Acts 16:12, and "many days" in verse 18. It seems that he and his co-workers were there only a matter of a few weeks at the most (perhaps two or three), and, while spectacular things took place during the visit, we certainly cannot call the results spectacular!

But, by the time that Paul wrote the Philippian epistle to them approximately 10 years later when he was experiencing his first imprisonment in Rome, a thriving church was in existence, with "bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1).

It is important to have this background before we get into the Epistle itself. The whole chapter is very important and instructive in many ways, but I was to focus in upon three points which Luke made in writing up this history of the work of the Lord in Philippi, and how he directed Paul even before he got to this city.

- 1) The first has to do with Paul's call to Macedonia.
- 2) The second has to do with the salvation of Lydia.
- 3) The third has to do with the salvation of the Philippian jailor.

— The first has to do with the importance of the place of Paul's ministry.

The second has to do with the first convert whom Paul was sent to reach. So we will be thinking about this person, Lydia.

The third has to do with the way the Lord used persecution to accomplish His purpose.

All three have to do with Paul's witness. The first, with the place; the second, with a particular person; the third, with the outcome of the persecution.

I. THE PLACE TO WITNESS (Acts 16:6-12).

We are taught in this passage to expect the leading of the Holy Spirit in our witnessing both as to time and to place!

— There is no doubt but that the Church in every generation is called of God to preach the Gospel to every creature. We learned that in Acts 1:8. But we miss real blessings because we do not look to the Holy Spirit to guide us to the right people in the right places at the right time!

The main idea that most Christians have about their witness is that they are to go out and get as many to receive Christ as they possibly can. And so they may ask the Holy Spirit to use them, but they have little or no conception of the distinctive way the Holy Spirit works. It is not the will of God to save everyone. If it were, everyone would be saved because God is sovereign and He can save whomsoever He wants to save. He has a people in every generation whom He has chosen before the foundation of the world, and He knows where they are, and when He intends to save them.

Eventually there was going to be a great work of evangelism done in the Roman province of Asia, but at this time Paul and Silas and Timothy "were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia" (v. 6). Think about that statement! That meant, they tried to go west from where they had been. But the Spirit said, "No!"

— So they tried to go north.

Again, when they tried to enter Bithynia, the Holy Spirit would not let them. (See v. 7.)

Paul must have been somewhat perplexed by this time, wonder-

ing what the Lord was doing with them.

But then he was given a vision. (It would be wonderful if the Lord would always deal with us as clearly as He did with Paul in this instance. But, remember, that He did not always deal with Paul in this way. In fact, this seems to have been the only time that Paul was given such guidance.)

Read verse 9.

The call of the Spirit of God to Paul at this particular time was to carry the Gospel into Europe--and he was to go there immediately! It does not seem that Paul had this in mind at all. There surely were plenty of people to preach the Gospel to where he was, but that was not the plan the Holy Spirit had.

How we need to depend upon the Holy Spirit to guide us in our witnessing, as we need to depend upon Him to guide us in everything else!

So, with apparently no delay, Paul found himself in the chief city of Macedonia, PHILIPPI, which also was a Roman colony. And a work was to be done there which would be recorded in the annals of Scripture for the instruction and blessing of the Church throughout her history!

But notice the call in verse 9.

Let us make sure that we understand it.

In the first place, this call did not mean that everyone in Macedonia was waiting for the Gospel and wanting to be saved! There is no evidence that anybody was looking for him. Unregenerate people do not want the Gospel.

But we can say that there were people in Macedonia who wanted help. There are people all over the world who want help. And they are looking for help. Some think that they have found it. But most people do not know what kind of help they need--like the man in Acts 3 whose friends carried him to the gate of the Temple every day where he could beg from the people as they went into the Temple. He obviously needed money, but that was not his real need.

How could Paul be of the greatest help to the people of Macedonia? He had no question in his mind regarding that. He could give them the greatest help by preaching the Gospel to them. And that is just what he did! The people in Macedonia had their religion, but they did not have Christ! That is why Paul went there.

May our hearts be just as convinced that this is the main way that we are to help people--through telling them of the Lord Jesus Christ!

But let me go on to a second point:

II. ONE PERSON PAUL WAS SENT TO PHILIPPI TO REACH (Acts 16: 13-15).

Here is a most interesting situation.

Do you know where Thyatira was?

It was in the Roman province of Asia where Paul had tried to go.

Let me ask you another question: Did you ever hear about the doctrine of election? (Explain what it is.)

These are the people who are going to be saved: the elect of God! But we do not know who they are. They are not marked in any way. Sometimes they are as hostile toward Christ as the devil himself when we first approach them with the Gospel. But the Lord knows who they are, and where they are, and when He intends to reach them.

Lydia was probably a Jewess. She could have been a Gentile proselyte, but more likely she was a Jewess. She had gone all the way from Thyatira in Asia to Philippi in Macedonia on business, never knowing that the Holy Spirit would bring the Apostle Paul there so that she could hear the Gospel and be saved.

And, as Paul preached, the Lord opened her heart.

This means two things:

1) That before the Lord opened it, her heart was closed to the Gospel. She did not want to be saved. She did not want to hear about Christ.

But it also means

2) That she did not open her own heart. Nobody will do that; nobody can do that. This is a sovereign work of God. And it is absolutely necessary that the Lord do this before anyone will be saved.

And remember one more thing: The Lord could have opened everyone's heart if that had been His will, but He did not do it because it was not His will.

How wonderful it is to see the hand of God in our lives so that we find ourselves in the right place at the right time talking to the right person about the only One who can help them!

Lydia was the first person to be saved in Macedonia, and she was not even a Macedonian!

For this time I am going to omit Paul's dealing with the demon-possessed girl (except to say that the Lord does not need, nor does He even want the devil's help in out witnessing). But let me go on to deal with the circumstances which led to the salvation of the jailor. But note in passing that it is probably true that Paul touched the lives of three people from three different racial backgrounds:

- 1) Lydia, a Jewess.
- 2) The demon-possessed girl, a Macedonian.
- 3) The jailor, a Roman.

III. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WITNESSING AND TRIALS--in Paul's case, PERSECUTION (Acts 16:19-34)

What did Paul think about his call when all of a sudden his clothes were torn off of him and Silas, they were beaten with many stripes, and then cast into prison?

There is no evidence that there was the slightest question in their minds but that they were right where the Lord wanted them to be. Trouble does not necessarily mean we are in the wrong place. In fact, it probably, in most instances, means just the opposite--that we are in the right place!

But you probably have known this story for a long time--how it was through the imprisonment of Paul and Silas that the jailor there in Philippi was saved. Obviously the Lord opened his heart, too, so that he asked how he could be saved.

Often the Lord puts us in hard places because He has people to reach there.

If you have been reading Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, have you noticed what he said in Phil. 4:22?

How amazing, and how wonderful, are the ways of the Lord!

Concl: Paul was there only a short time. The results were very unusual, but numerically it was not phenomenal. However, a church was planted, and the work of the Lord in that place was started.

It was probably ten or eleven years later that Paul wrote to them from Rome. In that letter he made no mention of Lydia, nor of the jailor. Perhaps Lydia had gone back to Thyatira, and the Roman jailor may have been transferred. Or possibly they were both in heaven. But we know that others had been saved, and that there was a church there that brought great joy to the

Apostle Paul.

But what are the important lessons that we need to learn as we turn next week to consider the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians?

Let me mention three things for our encouragement:

- 1) The Holy Spirit is in charge of the work.
- 2) The Lord has an elect people who must be reached--and we will discover that they are the most unlikely people found in some very unusual places.
- 3) The Lord has to open their hearts or they will not be saved.

Please do not say that we are to go only to the elect. We are called to go to all men. We do not know who the elect are, nor where they are. But God knows. And so be ready for the Spirit of God to lead you in His own way to people you have never even thought of, opening their hearts, even causing them to ask you what the Philippian jailor asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Cf. 1 Pet. 3:15.

Closing verses: Phil. 4:20, 23.

OUR TWO GREATEST NEEDS
Philippians 1:1, 2

Intro: I hope you are reading this Epistle every day. It only takes from 20 to 25 minutes. If, on some days, you can read it several times, you will also find that very profitable. Nothing will be more helpful to you in understanding the Word of God than reading it for yourself.

But be sure to pray before you read, and afterwards. In fact, pray your way through this delightful Book. It is in this way that the Holy Spirit teaches us, and makes the Book a real part of our lives.

If you are reading this Epistle daily, I can assure you that our times together in it each Sunday morning will mean far more to you than if you were only reading it and thinking about it when you come to church.

Today we want to begin a verse-by-verse exposition of Philippians. But we are only going to take the first two verses. These will introduce us not only to the Epistle, but also to the writers of the Epistle, and to those who first received it after it was written.

As I mentioned last week when we considered together Acts 16, the church in Philippi was established c. A. D. 52 by Paul after he had received the Macedonian call.

Philippi was in Macedonia (now Greece), and it was a Roman Colony. This brought the Gospel to Europe.

Timothy had joined Paul in Lystra just shortly before he went to Philippi in A. D. 52, and so he was known also to the Philippian believers. When Paul wrote this letter from Rome some 10 or 11 years later, Timothy was still with him, and his name is added to the Epistle as one who concurred with Paul in all that he was writing--but not as the chief writer.

Timothy's father was a Gentile; his mother, a Jewess. Both Timothy's mother and his maternal grandmother were believers, so he was at least a third-generation Christian. Just as Paul had been brought up on the Law, Timothy had been brought up with teaching in the Scriptures. Cf. 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14, 15.

Timothy was an outstanding Christian even before he joined the Apostle Paul. See Acts 16:1-5. And, among Paul's fellowworkers, it is apparent from Phil. 2:19-23 that Timothy was spiritually superior to all of the others.

More about Timothy when we come to chapter 2.

Paul has certainly written 13 of the NT Epistles, and possibly 14 if he wrote Hebrews.

Three of his other Epistles were written along with Philippians during his first Roman imprisonment -- between A.D. 61 and 63.

These were: Ephesians
Colossians
Philemon
Philippians -- in this order.

The dates for Philippians are usually given as 62 or 63.

In Ephesians Paul identified himself as an apostle,
in Colossians also as an apostle, w/Timothy,
in Philemon as a prisoner of Jesus Christ, w/Timothy,
in Philippians w/Timothy as bondservants.

This Epistle to the Philippians is marked w/ joy, peace, contentment, hope, and victory -- more than any other Epistle he wrote. It is a good book for discouraged Christians to read--and even to memorize!

Paul probably began studying the Law as a Jew when he was 5 years old. When he was 13 he became a bar mitzvah, a son of the commandment. Originally he was called Saul, a Jewish name which means "asked for." But soon after he became a Christian he used the Latin (Gentile) name Paul, which means "little." Paul probably was about the same age as the Lord Jesus Christ, although he was saved after the Lord had gone back to heaven.

Notice Paul's recognition of the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus when he identifies himself and Timothy as "the servants of Jesus Christ" (bondservants).

He was not writing to everyone in Philippi, but to the "saints"--those who were set apart, and therefore were holy.

The saints had two locations--one spiritual, the other natural. They were "in Christ Jesus" (with all of the wonderful truth bound up in that expression) "at Philippi."

Notice that "the saints" are mentioned before "the bishops and deacons." This is for two reasons:

- 1) The bishops and deacons are the servants of the people, and so need to be placed lower, even though they are the leaders. Bishops are elders, and notice that they are mentioned in the plural.
- 2) Bishops and deacons are saints before they are bishops and deacons.

Then we come to Paul's first prayer in this Epistle, a prayer with which he actually begins this letter and (in part) ends it. Cf. 1:2 and 4:23.

This is true of all of Paul's Epistles--that they begin and end

with a prayer for grace and peace, and end with a prayer for grace. See the following:

Rom. 1:7b	16:24
1 Cor. 1:3	16:23
2 Cor. 1:2	13:14 (grace, love, communion)
Gal. 1:3	6:18
Eph. 1:2	6:23, 24
Phil. 1:2	4:23
Col. 1:2b	4:18b
1 Thess. 1:1b	5:28
2 Thess. 1:2	3:18
1 Tim. 1:2	6:21b
(grace, mercy, peace)	
2 Tim. 1:2	4:22
(grace, mercy, peace)	
Tit. 1:4	3:15
(grace, mercy, peace)	
Philemon 3	25
----	Heb. 13:25

- Therefore, this is Paul's most-repeated prayer! How important, then, it obviously is.

How wonderful to see that a man who had been raised under the Law as a Pharisee had so much to say about the grace of God.

Thayer, who has written a very excellent Greek-English Lexicon, has this to say about Paul:

And not only by his unwearied labors did he establish a claim to the undying esteem of the friends of Christianity, but also by the fact, which appears from his immortal Epistles, that he caught perfectly the mind of his heavenly Master and taught most unequivocally that salvation was designed by God for all men who repose a living faith in Jesus Christ, and that bondage to the Mosaic law is wholly incompatible with the spiritual liberty of which Christ is the author (p. 496).

Now let us think for the remainder of our time about this grace and peace. I want to ask and answer 5 questions about them:

- 1) What are they?
- 2) Who needs them?
- 3) Where do they come from?
- 4) Why are they needed?
- 5) How are they obtained?

I. WHAT ARE THEY?

A. "Grace."

Whatever it is, it is completely undeserved.

We can also say from what we know about salvation that it is effective, effectual, efficacious. God accomplishes everything that has to do with our salvation by His grace--from start to finish!

The same grace which effectively initiates our salvation also completes it. The same grace by which we are first saved continues to be with us for our perfection.

The best definition is in 2 Cor. 12:9.

Grace is strength, God's strength, which is perfected in our weakness. (Apply this to Paul's circumstances in Rome when he wrote this letter.)

B. "Peace."

Probably the best definition we have in Scripture is right here in Philippians -- 4:6, 7.

It is a lack of anxiety. It is rest, quietness, even in turmoil and trials. It passes our understanding.

J. Oswald Sanders, a Chinese expression, "Let your heart down."

I commend to you the passages in Scripture which speak of "grace" and "peace."

II. WHO NEEDS THEM?

Paul leaves no doubt in the words of our text.

"The saints" need them, and so do "the bishops and deacons." No one is excluded.

Cf. Phil. 2:12, 13.

III. WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?

Again we have the answer in our text: "from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

We do not find these in ourselves. We do not get them from each other. Nor do we get them from the so-called professionals. They come to each of us directly from God and from

This is why they are called "the grace of God," "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," and "the peace of God." God is "the God of peace" in Phil. 4:9.

So this means that the supply is inexhaustible!

Think of it: The Roman Christians needed this. So did the Corinthians, etc., on down the line! And yet there was no concern on the part of the Apostle Paul that God could be drained of all His grace and peace.

Cf. Lam. 3:22, 23,

It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed,
because his compassions fail not. They are new every
morning: great is thy faithfulness.

IV. WHY ARE THEY NEEDED?

- A. Because of our inadequacy.
- B. Because of our trials in this life.
- C. Because of the potential problems we can have with each other in our fellowship.
- D. Because of the difficulties we face in doing the work of the Lord -- our witness to an ungodly world.
- E. Because of our need to persevere on our way to heaven and to glory!

The Philippian Epistle indicates all of these.

V. HOW ARE THEY OBTAINED?

I have already pointed out that they come from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I should also say that they are the grace and peace which belong to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But let me point out two additional things:

- A. Our text indicates (as also the other 26 times Paul refers to them in his Epistles) that they are given in answer to prayer.

Please pray for these for me, will you? And pray for these for your children. And for every Christian you pray for. Cf. also Phil. 4:6, 7.

But there is another very important part of this that we need to realize -- and this also is implied in our text:

B. Grace and peace come to us through the Word of God.

1. Psa. 119:165.

2. Acts 20:32.

Why is the Word so important? Because it is there that we see the Lord. Cf. Isa. 26:3, 4.

Concl: What are you going to do with what we have learned this morning?

I hope you are going to realize more than ever before where your strength and peace come from -- and how you get it.

I hope also that this prayer will become your prayer -- and that you will be able to include it in your letters, as well as in your conversation with those you pray for.

If you are without Christ, I trust that you will realize that there is no real strength nor peace apart from God. You need to have peace with God before you can enjoy the peace of God.

People today, as in every generation, do not need a lot of humanistic psychology; THEY NEED CHRIST. They need to have their sins forgiven, not explained away, not excused. They need to become new creatures, not left to make the best out of what they are in themselves. People need Christ, and they need God. But they cannot have God apart from Christ.

If you do not have peace with God, nor the peace of God, come to Christ today. He is the only Saviour. Through Him you can have forgiveness because He deals with all sinners who come according to His wonderful grace -- divine, unmerited, undeserved, favor of God!

Closing verse: 2 Cor. 9:8.

PAUL'S MINISTRY BY PRAYER
Philippians 1:3-11

Intro: How do you minister spiritually to people when you cannot be with them? (Note that expressed in this question is the importance of being with the people of God to minister to them. This should always be our chief desire. Cf. Paul's statement in Phil. 2:24, and his expression in 1:8 coupled with what he said about Epaphroditus in 2:26.)

There are two answers to my question in the passage before us today:

- 1) You pray for people--whether you can be with them, or not. If we do not pray for people, it is doubtful if we can be of any great help to them.
- 2) You can write to them. What a ministry there is in letter-writing! The NT Epistles teach us their great value--and even more so today when letters can be delivered in such a short time compared with what it was like in Paul's day.

Today we have the added advantage of the telephone.

One other way that Paul used for the purpose of ministry was to send others, as he mentioned to the Philippians in chapter 2 concerning Timothy and Epaphroditus.

In the verses which we will consider this morning Paul was actually combining prayer with letter-writing because he was telling them in his letter how he had been praying for them.

These verses can be divided into two parts:

- 1) Vv. 3-8, in which Paul spoke of his love for them, a love which was expressed in prayer.
- 2) Vv. 9-11, his prayer for them.

I. PAUL'S LOVE FOR THEM (Phil. 1:3-8).

One thing is very obvious from this first part: If we truly love the people of God, we will pray for them. If we do not pray for each other, it is doubtful if we love each other. Love is always expressed by a child of God in prayer.

Note also that Paul's love was to be seen in the fact that he remembered the Philippians. With everything else that was on his mind there in Rome, he could not forget the Philippians--and there was a lot that he had on his mind, we can be sure!

Let us learn from the Apostle Paul some of the rich lessons that are to be found in these verses.

Let us see how his love was expressed.

Let me point out seven things:

A. He remembered them.

We remember them those whom we love.

B. He prayed for them.

We will pray for those whom we love and remember.

C. He thanked the Lord for them.

This is what it means to rejoice in the Lord. We cannot take any credit for what we are as Christians, but the glory belongs to the Lord--and so we thank Him!

D. It was a joy to pray for them.

Prayer is no burden when you are praying for those whom you love.

Illus: The cartoon that was used by some organization years ago in which a boy was carrying his smaller brother. Someone inquired if it were not too heavy a load for the larger boy. But he replied, "He's not heavy; he's my brother!"

E. He was assured concerning the Lord's work in them.

Instead of being an excuse for not praying, this gave Paul one of his greatest incentives to pray. (Note how this affects the life of a Christian as does the doctrine of our security in Christ, and of election in evangelism.) He knew that God had done a work in them.

F. He told them that he loved them. See vv. 7, 8.

We need to express our love for each other in the Lord.
We need to show our love.

Finally,

G. He told them that he wanted to be with them. Cf. v. 8.

This is what it meant to long for them.

These are good indicators for us to check on our love for each other. The two main evidences that we are the people of God are (1) our faith in the Lord Jesus and (2) our love for each other as the Lord's people.

How do we measure up?

Evidently it was their fellowship with Paul in the Gospel (v. 5) which had impressed him so deeply that God had in reality saved many in Philippi. There is a great deal involved in that statement by the Apostle Paul.

— But Paul did not just tell them that he was praying for them; he went on to tell them specifically what he was praying for. We need to do this when we write, too.

And will you notice that, when you compare the prayers of the Apostle in his different Epistles that he did not pray for every church in the same way? This meant that he was acquainted with their specific needs, and prayed for them accordingly!

This, too, is very instructive for us today. Not only should we pray for each other, but we need to know something about where the people are spiritually for whom we pray--and then let our prayers be directed toward their needs.

II. PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THEM (Phil. 1:9-11).

Paul's prayer gives us an indication of what he felt was their greatest need. Can you tell what it was?

There are two things which every Christian needs to be concerned about primarily:

— 1) His knowledge of the truth.

2) His love for God, and for the people of God.

If these two things are as they should be, everything else will fall into place in his life--in your life, and in my life.

The Philippians were strong in their love, but they were lacking in their knowledge.

Contrast this with the Corinthians who were ahead in their knowledge, but they were lacking in their love. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:3-8.

The standard which Paul established for the Lord's servants and which needs to filter down to the Lord's people, is to be seen in his statement to the Ephesian church, ". . . speaking the truth in love . . ." (Eph. 4:15). It is not enough for us to know the truth. Nor is it enough for us to love each other. We must have both--the truth and love.

— So Paul was concerned about their deficient understanding of the truth. You can see this in his prayer.

But now look at his requests.

Actually there are three of them, but they are not three re-

quests which are independent of each other. The first is the main request; the second results from the first, and the third follows from the second.

By this I mean that the third request cannot be realized unless the second request is answered, and the second and third requests will not be answered unless the first is answered. So the first is foundational for the other two.

What is the meaning of the first request?

A. The basic request (v. 9).

Note: Paul does not say that they need to love less. In fact, he prayed that they would love more.

Sometimes we try to correct one deficiency by minimizing another. For example, if Christians lack a practical application of the Word, it may be said that we know too much! But Paul would never say that. Paul would say, "Go on learning more and more, but be sure that the truth is being lived out in your life."

So here he was not praying that they would love less and know more, but that they would love more and know more, too! This is an important principle in teaching and in our lives as Christians.

THIS BASIC REQUEST WAS THAT THEIR LOVE WOULD ABOUND IN KNOWING THE TRUTH AND IN BEING ABLE TO APPLY THE TRUTH TO THEMSELVES, IN THEIR DAILY LIVING.

We have here that familiar distinction here between doctrine and practice, creed and conduct, precept and practice.

And note that knowledge comes first.

We never will know how to live if we do not know the truth of the Word. Never be afraid of doctrine. It is your life-line. This was the great need of the Philipian church. The Apostle John was speaking of the same thing in 2 John: We need to love, but love must be confined within the limits of the truth!

What will follow, and what do we need to be concerned about in prayer, as God answers that basic request?

B. The second request (v. 10).

This is a prayer for correct discernment in the use of the Word--TO BE ABLE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THAT WHICH

TRUE, AND THAT WHICH IS NOT TRUE. IT IS TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRUTH AND ERROR, RIGHT AND WRONG--IN GOD'S SIGHT!

Will you be careful to observe that our personal lives need to be in good order before our discernment can be what it should be?

But look at what follows from this:

C. The third request (vv. 10b, 11).

We can say that in these three requests Paul was concerned

- 1) first, about what we have;
- 2) secondly, about what we can do;
- 3) thirdly, about what we should be!

What does it mean to be "sincere"?

It is that which is real, pure, unmixed, genuine (when examined in the light of the sun, which in this case would be the Word).

What does it mean to be "without offence"?

It means that you and I must live so that we are not the reason for some other brother or sister in Christ to stumble in their walk.

What are "the fruits of righteousness"?

These are those spiritual qualities which are in our lives because we have the righteousness of Christ. These are "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22, 23). These are those Christ-life characteristics of holiness, meekness, humility, love, etc.

"Filled" = having been filled, a perfect passive participle, anticipating the day of Jesus Christ (mentioned for the second time in this passage)--the day when we will finally and perfectly be conformed to Christ.

But since the participle is passive, it means that this is not something that we do for ourselves, but it is done for us by God, through Jesus Christ, unto God's glory!

If we can understand and, by the grace of God, live according to what Paul was praying for here in vv. 9-11, we have the very essence of what it means to live the life of a Christian.

Concl: Let me ask you as I close this morning, "Are you a Corinthian, or are you a Philippian? Are you strong in knowledge and weak in love, or are you strong in love but weak in knowledge? Are you weak in both? Or, can you say to the glory of God, that you are pursuing both knowledge and love?"

I would appreciate your praying this prayer for me. I need a greater manifestation of the truth in my life, greater understanding of the Word, more of it manifested in my life.

But I also need more love. I need to be more like the Lord Jesus.

And I will pray for you in the same way--because you, too, need to know more, and to do more, and to love more.

If anyone is here who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ, I trust that you have seen that this is what it means to be a Christian. But it all must begin with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour. Put your trust in Him for the forgiveness of your sins, and then you will know what it means to love the Lord, to love His Word, to love His people, and to want to live a life that will glorify Him. But you will never have those affections in your heart until Christ is your Saviour. May God enable you to see this, and to trust Christ today.

THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL
Philippians 1:12-18

Intro: We come to a subject today which all of us should be vitally concerned about: "the furtherance of the Gospel." This, in five words, describes Paul's whole purpose in life with regard to the world. This speaks of the advancement of the Gospel, its progress, its forward movement--not according to Paul's plans, but according to the eternal purpose of God!

This mainly has to do with the preaching of the Gospel, not primarily with the results that are obtained. Notice that Paul said nothing in our text about results, about how people were responding to the Gospel, but he was concerned and thankful that the Gospel was being preached! Of course, he wanted to see people saved, but he knew that the results of the preaching of the Gospel are in the hands of the Lord.

It is our responsibility to get the Word out; it is the Lord's work to use the Word when and where He sees fit. You see, our task is not to win as many people as we can. It is to seek the lost sheep, to seek those who have been eternally ordained to salvation. But they are not marked in any way. And so we, according to the command of Scripture, are sent to preach the Gospel to every creature, knowing that anyone who believes will be saved, but understanding also that no one will come to Christ unless He is drawn to Christ by the Father.

I hope you understand this.

If you do, you will become far more concerned about the message that you preach than you are about all of the fancy ideas that some people have as to how we can extract "decisions" from those to whom we bear witness of Christ. We will pay more attention to our message, and be more dependent upon God in prayer.

Let us remember . . .

that Paul was a prisoner in Rome at the time he wrote this Epistle. His enemies had brought about his arrest (and were hoping for his death) in order to put a stop to the advancement of the Gospel. But their plans had backfired on them. Instead of stopping the Gospel, God's plan for the Gospel had been furthered!

The first question, then, is . . .

I. ^{How} ~~Why~~ HAD IT BEEN FURTHERED?

Paul's statement is simply that what had happened to him had "fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel."

His enemies had tried to stop the Gospel; instead, what they

had done had resulted in just the opposite way. And the reason was BECAUSE OF WHAT GOD HAD DONE! GOD had overruled for His own glory. He will never let men stand in His way. Instead, He makes the wrath of men to praise Him.

But let us ask a second question:

II. ^{IN WHAT WAYS} ~~HOW~~ HAD THE GOSPEL BEEN ^{FURTHERED} ~~ADVANCED~~?

A. By Paul's own ministry. See v. 13.

"The palace" not only means among the soldiers, where they stayed, but even to Caesar's court.

Cf. Phil. 4:22. Who would have believed it, but among the members of Caesar's family there were those who were the elect of God! And it was through Paul's bonds, and the explanation for those bonds, that God used Paul's imprisonment to reach those who could not have been reached in any other way.

B. By the preaching of other brethren (vv. 14-17).

But here there were two groups: those who liked Paul, and others who were jealous of him. Notice Paul calls them all, "the brethren in the Lord."

All of them had waxed confident by his bonds, meaning that they had been influenced, persuaded, by Paul's attitude in prison, to be more bold in their own witness--and to do it without fear!

What power there is in a godly example! The whole church can be strengthened by it.

But now look at these two groups:

1. Those who did not like Paul.

Even these were "bold"--meaning that they took heart to do what was most difficult in spite of the possible results.

But they did it out of envy of Paul, to cause strife, and from a contentious spirit--hoping to add trouble to the trouble he was already having.

This means that they were jealous of the Apostle Paul and the blessing he was seeing, and so they were seeking to depreciate him by using the Gospel to get people to follow them instead!

Do not interpret this as meaning that they were

preaching a false Gospel. What they were preaching was the truth, but they were doing it from other than pure intentions, and certainly not for God's glory.

What about the others who were preaching?

2. Those who loved Paul--and who really loved the Lord.

These had done it "of good will"--meaning that they had freely and willingly undertaken the preaching of the Gospel for the purpose of doing good, the good pleasure of the Lord. Their purpose was Paul's purpose.

And they did this because they knew that Paul was "set for the defence of the gospel." This meant that they knew that Paul had taken a stand, that he would not be moved from it, and that he felt called to speak out in favor of the Gospel. A "defence" is a verbal defence!

III. WHAT WAS PAUL'S RESPONSE? See v. 18.

How could he rejoice when there were those who were preaching the Gospel "in pretence," i.e., keeping their real motives concealed? Surely God could not bless such a witness.

But the fact is that He does!

Paul believed that there was power inherent in the Word itself which would and could bring blessing even where the motives of those who preached it were not right.

Cf. Rom. 1:16, 17. THIS ALSO IS A VERY IMPORTANT POINT. We need to understand this also. Paul's burden was that people would hear about Christ, and they were! He was not concerned about his following; he was concerned about the glory of God.

So you can see that there were two ways in which the hand of God was being seen by the Apostle Paul:

- 1) Where his enemies were concerned--that is, those who were enemies of the Gospel.
- 2) Where his brethren were concerned who were anxious to hurt him even more.

So it all caused the Apostle Paul great joy!

IV. THE MAIN LESSONS OF THE TEXT.

A. The importance of preaching the Word.

This was the passion and burden of Paul's heart--that

people everywhere would hear the Gospel, that they would hear of Christ.

This helps us to understand what it means to preach the Gospel. It means to tell people about the Lord Jesus Christ, Who He is, why He came, and what He was accomplishing by His death and resurrection. This is the message which God blesses, and every child of God should be busy telling it! With regard to the world, there is nothing more important that we have to do.

B. The overruling hand of God.

All ministry would be hopeless without this. God uses His Word as it pleases Him, and no one can stand in His way, believer or unbeliever.

Let me remind you again of Isa. 55:10, 11.

Remember also Heb. 4:12. Cf. 1 Pet. 1:23.

Paul could have kept Paul from prison, but He did not do it! And the reason that He did not do it was because He had people to reach through Paul's imprisonment.

Oh, how important it is for us to be submissive to the will of God, and to look for the purposes of God in the things which happen to us!

C. The believers who were stirred up.

SOMETIMES REVIVAL STARTS IN THIS WAY.

In those days, as in our days, there were those who were not bearing witness to the Gospel. And it was through Paul's imprisonment that they were stirred up.

How strange are the ways of God! You would think that what happened to Paul would have made them more fearful of preaching. But it had just exactly the opposite result.

Do you remember what I have been telling you about . . .

1) Our eternal security in Christ?

2) Election?

In the first instance, you would think that this would make the Lord's people indifferent about holiness, even more prone to sin. But it does not work that way! In the second case, you would think that the doctrine of election would make people indifferent to the salvation of the lost. But it does not work that way! Instead, in both instances, it has just exactly the opposite results.

So it is with persecution. It does not put an end to witnessing, but it causes people to bear testimony of Christ who have never witnessed before--or whose witness has been spasmodic and fearful.

God's ways are amazing!

One other thing:

D. The deplorable actions of some believers.

The old party spirit, sectarianism, was present even in Paul's day! Some people are so concerned about their own group, and so jealous of the blessing of God upon others, that they will even use the Gospel message to further their own purposes even when it means that their hearts are not set on the glory of God.

Paul could rejoice in this, but quite obviously God would deal with people who were like this. And there would certainly not be any joy in their hearts over what God was doing even when people were truly saved.

This shows us that even when people do come to Christ under our ministries, that it does not necessarily mean that things are right in our hearts. It does not even mean that the witness is a child of God.

This should be a solemn warning to us--and a lesson: that we need to forget ourselves (as Paul did), and rejoice that the Gospel is being preached even though it might be used against us.

Concl: Are we really burdened to see the Gospel furthered? If so, what are we doing about it?

Are you in some difficult circumstance today, perhaps in your home, or on the job, and maybe with some physical trouble--and you are wondering why you should be there, and why those things are happening to you?

Then consider this: The Lord may have ordered your circumstances as they are because it is His purpose to reach someone with the Gospel who has never yet heard the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ!

And so Paul's own experience was an example of what he was going to write to the Philippians in this Epistle, in chapter 4, verse

4: Rejoice in the Lord always:
and again I say, Rejoice.

"Understand" in v. 12 means to know something so that your life will be influenced by what you have learned. Paul wanted the revival in Rome to spread to Philippi!

THE WORK OF A PASTOR
Philippians 1:19-26

Intro: Many refer to Paul's letter to the church at Phillipi as his spiritual autobiography. We can see in this Epistle how the Lord was working in Paul's heart during this time when he was a prisoner of Rome. It was a time of spiritual growth for him, and a time when the things of the Lord became clearer to him--and more precious. We do not find him feeling sorry for himself. Instead, his determination to live for the Lord had become stronger than ever.

But so also had his desire to minister increased. Far from being discouraged, he looked upon his imprisonment as a unique opportunity for ministry. And he had seen the Lord work in a most unusual way.

But there is a third thing that we must not miss.

He showed that he had the heart of a pastor, earnestly yearning over his brethren in Christ in other places, not wanting them to be discouraged by what had happened to him, but rather seeing the goodness of God, and the sufficiency of the Lord, as well as the purpose of God, in all that had happened to him.

So there is much in this Epistle for pastors, and for all church leaders.

There are three things that are prominent in the words of our text:

- 1) Paul's immediate concern for himself (vv. 19-21).
- 2) Paul's great dilemma (vv. 22-24).
- 3) Paul's purpose in his ministry (vv. 25, 26).

I. PAUL'S IMMEDIATE CONCERN FOR HIMSELF (Phil. 1:19-21).

What do you think would have been your primary concern if you had been where he was?

Paul was concerned about two things: his own salvation (v. 19), and his ministry (vv. 20, 21).

A. His own salvation (v. 19).

Paul used the word "salvation" three times in this Epistle. See 1:28; 2:12. These second two have to do with the work of the Lord in the soul, and it seems that this is the meaning of "salvation" in v. 19--not his deliverance from prison.

Paul longed to see spiritual growth and advancement in his own life as a result of the trials through which he

was going. This must always be in the heart of every true pastor, every servant of the Lord--that we have our trials because God is at work in our own hearts.

And Paul was counting on two things to contribute to his own "salvation" from his circumstances:

- 1) Their prayers.
- 2) The added help provided by the Holy Spirit which had been sent to minister to him on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Eadie, in his commentary, has this to say:

The Spirit represents Christ, for He comes in Christ's name, as another Paraclete, enlightens with Christ's truths, purifies with Christ's blood, comforts with Christ's promises, and seals with Christ's image (p. 45).

How important it is for us to have people who are praying for us! This is what pastors ought to be constantly seeking.

BUT KEEP IN MIND THAT WHAT I AM POINTING OUT ABOUT PAUL AS A PASTOR, IS NOT JUST FOR PASTORS, BUT ALSO FOR ALL OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD BECAUSE THE PASTOR IS TO BE AN EXAMPLE IN HIS LIFE OF THAT WHICH SHOULD CHARACTERIZE THE LIVES OF ALL OF HIS PEOPLE.

Prayer, and the Holy Spirit! How much attention do you give to these? Paul's circumstances in prison would make him realize even more how indispensable they both are!

His second concern for himself had to do with . . .

B. His ministry (vv. 20, 21).

What is the very essence of the pastoral ministry?

It is that Christ might be magnified. And, wherever we are, or whatever our circumstances might be, this never changes!

This was Paul's "earnest expectation" and "hope." This is what he was anticipating every day (not his deliverance from prison). The words which Paul used here expressed certainty that this would take place, but also a stretch-out of his neck as a person would do who is looking for something with great anticipation!

Paul wanted Christ to become more prominent. He wanted his life to reflect and to reveal Christ. He wanted even his enemies to know Christ. He wanted all to see the loveliness of Christ. This was always his ministry!

Christ, Christ, and more of Christ!

How important it is for true pastors to keep this ever in their own hearts, that the same desire might filter down into the lives of their people!

But let us turn now to the second point in our text:

II. PAUL'S DILEMMA (Phil. 1:22-24).

Dying held no fears for the Apostle Paul because it was "far better" to be "with Christ" than to be on earth without Him!

He was, as the NIV says, "torn between the two." The NASB says, "hard-pressed from both directions."

His earnest longing ("desire") was "to depart, and to be with Christ"--like a ship being loosened from the ropes which hold it to the dock. This was "far better," i.e., a far greater advantage!

Paul was headed for heaven and for Christ, and that was where he wanted to be. That was his first choice.

Does this present any dilemma for me, or for you? How do we feel about heaven? Where would we rather be? Do we not all have much to learn at this point?

What is there about heaven that makes it far more to be preferred to continuing here upon this earth? Think about it!

Paul's response was that the Lord's choice was his choice, that he would choose for the present to remain--for one purpose:

III. PAUL'S PURPOSE IN HIS MINISTRY (Phil. 1:25, 26).

He states why he chose to remain in verse 24--the people of God still needed him, and so he must devote to them whatever time he had left.

You see, the people are not to live for the pastor, but the pastor is to live for the people. See how this is implied even in the first verse of this Epistle.

What did he want to do for the Philippians church? Why did he want to remain with them?

It was for:

- 1) Their advancement in, lit., the faith, and for
- 2) Their joy in the faith.

He wanted them to know more of the truth, and he wanted the truth to have a greater impact upon their lives. And, with

all of that growth, he wanted it to be the cause of increased joy in their hearts.

Do you think that people look at us and are impressed with the fact that we enjoy being the Lord's people?

Even when Paul thought of going to Philippi again, it was not that they would be overjoyed just as seeing him again, but that their rejoicing in Christ Jesus might be more abundant (overflowing) because he had been able to come to them again.

This needs to be my purpose in ministering to you, and this ought to be your purpose in the fellowship you have with each other whenever we are together:

- 1) That we would increase in our understanding of the Word,
- 2) That we would be strengthened in our walk with the Lord, and
- 3) That our joy in the Word and in the Lord would become greater than it ever had been before!

Concl: This is the work of a pastor

- 1) He must be concerned about his own "salvation," his own spiritual growth.
- 2) He must look forward to being in heaven with the Lord.
- 3) He must live for the spiritual blessing, for the edification, and for the joy of the people of God.

And he must do all of this because these are the very ingredients that are to become a part of the way all of the people of God are to live.

May the Lord grant that this would be true of all of us, for His glory, and for our great blessing!

STANDING FOR THE GOSPEL
Philippians 1:27-30

Intro: The Epistle to the Philippians is arranged differently from most of Paul's epistles. Usually he began with a section on doctrine, then he would have a section in which he would apply that doctrine with some practical exhortations. But that is not the case here.

In the first place, it does not seem that he had any particular doctrine in mind, or doctrines, which he had written to teach the Philippians church. He does get into doctrine. He does teach. But it is not as though that were the main purpose of his writing.

Instead, we have a strong personal emphasis in this Epistle as Paul wrote to them about what had happened to him in Rome, and then went on to speak of his own devotion to and love for the Lord Jesus Christ which had led him to live as he had lived.

We have these personal references primarily in chapters 1 and 3.

But along with these we have seen in chapter 1 already that Paul's main reason for wanting to stay on earth was in order that he might minister to them. After talking about himself in Phil. 1:12-23, we see his transition to the Philippians which began in verse 24, and continued through verse 26. Then, in verse 27 and continuing down through the 18th verse of chapter 2, we find Paul exhorting the Philippians to be faithful to the Gospel, to be humble, to be concerned about each other, to be holy through their obedience to God, that they might be true and faithful in their witness to the world.

In our text for today we find Paul exhorting them to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27).

The first thing that is evident in our text is . . .

I. THE GOSPEL HAS ENEMIES.

This was evident from Paul's circumstances which he had just related, but you can see this emphasis in every verse from verse 27 to verse 30. (Point them out.)

People do not want to be saved. People are not searching for God. They reject the teachings of the Gospel. They refuse to believe that they are that needy, or that that is indeed their problem. Paul had learned this. The Philippians were learning this. And you and I will learn this IF we are standing fast "in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel."

Notice how Paul spoke of the world in Phil. 2:15. Then notice how he spoke of the enemies of the Gospel in 3:18, 19.

People are not our enemies primarily, but they become our enemies because of the message we bring to them. It is not until and unless God is pleased to work in their hearts that we will see any inclination by any person to receive the Gospel of the grace of God.

Let us be sure that we understand this.

But then we come to the main exhortation of this passage,

II. THE EXHORTATION TO "STAND FAST" (Phil. 1:27).

What does this mean?

See the one other time in this Epistle where Paul made a similar exhortation: Phil. 4:1.

To stand fast means:

- A. To be faithful (uncompromising) to the message of the Gospel.

When we see the attitude of the world, the one thing that we will try to do is to make some changes in our message in order to make the Gospel more acceptable. But this we must not do! We must be loving and gracious in presenting the Gospel, but we must be faithful in declaring the Gospel as it is. We must stand our ground.

Secondly, it means:

- B. To be faithful in delivering that message.

If we cannot change the message, then the tendency for us is to be silent, not to say anything. And we all have followed this course.

But this is wrong!

Paul wanted to stay in this world for the people of God, to edify them. But he also had a purpose for the world itself, for people who were without Christ. It was to make known the Gospel of God's grace. To be silent is a sin when such a charge has been laid upon us by the Lord.

But now we come to a most important point:

III. THE REQUIREMENTS FOR STANDING FAST.

We might speak of these as the prerequisites. Or they could even be called, the provisions which God has made for us to stand fast for the faith of the Gospel.

There are three which Paul mentioned in this chapter.

- A. A life consistent with the Gospel: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ."

Unfortunately the old English word, "converation," does not convey to us what the Apostle Paul was actually saying. "Conversation" to us is talk; Paul was talking about our walk--the way we live!

But this word suggests something else that we need to understand.

It literally means that we are to behave as citizens of the country which we represent. What did he have in mind?

Well, Phil. 3:20, 21 will help us because there the Apostle Paul used the same root as he used in Phil. 1:27. We are citizens of heaven. We became that by the new birth. And we are to live that way. We are to be holy. We are not to be worldly. We are to be different. We are to let it be known that we love God, and that we love His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to let it be known by the way we live as well as by what we say, that we are on our way to heaven, and that we really would rather be there! And we need to make it known that it is because of the grace of God extended to us in the Gospel that we have become the way we are!

In short, every Christian must be a witness before he can effectively give a witness.

Can people tell by the way we live that we are citizens of heaven? This is where we must start.

But, you say, how do you live such a life?

This brings me to my second point:

- B. "With one spirit."

What does this mean?

We have this same expression in at least two other verses in the NT: in 1 Cor. 12:13; in Eph. 2:18. It is lit., in one spirit--but it can be translated with, or even by.

But the point that is most helpful for us in interpreting this phrase in this verse is that the other two verses have reference to the Holy Spirit. And it seems that Paul was referring to the Holy Spirit here. So it should have been printed with a capital "S." By one Spirit!

There can be no standing fast for the Gospel apart from the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Is this not what our Lord meant to indicate by His words in Acts 1:8?

This indicates the reason that we fail so often in our witness: because we are depending upon ourselves instead of depending upon the Holy Spirit.

And note: there is on ONE Holy Spirit! The same One Who empowers me for such a witness is the One Who empowers you. We all have the same inexhaustible source of power. But let us understand what the Apostle Paul was saying: NO ONE WILL STAND FAST FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL WHO IS NOT EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT!

We need to hear more about Him, don't we? We need to know more about Him. We need to depend more upon Him. He is in all who are truly saved, but how often He is ignored.

In ourselves we will only fail, but by the Holy Spirit we can and will stand fast for the faith of the Gospel.

But there is still a third point:

C. "With one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

Our witnessing is not just a personal matter any more than a soldier goes to war by himself. There was to be a united ministry in Philippi by all of the church. If the church were divided, if individuals in the church were only living for themselves, if there were no unity, if they were not "striving together for the faith of the gospel," there would be no real standing fast!

Citizens of the same country may be at war with the whole world, but they need to be at peace among themselves. They must be!

This is why Paul went on to write as he did in Phil. 2. This is why he said what he did about those two women in Phil. 4:2. This is why the Lord Jesus Christ said what He did in John 17:20-23. (Read.)

A lack of unity not only mars our fellowship, but it also nullifies our witness.

But now, what about . . .

IV. THE RESULTS.

If we do things God's way, then we get divine results. What are they? Did Paul guarantee that they would be able to win Philippi to Christ? Or did he even promise that they would be able to win every person they spoke to to faith in Christ? No, to both questions. But he did indicate that there would be several results--both for the believers of Philippi, and for those who were not believers.

- A. Fearlessness, boldness -- "And in nothing terrified by your adversaries."

An adversary is one who is not only against you, but he is seeking your defeat.

To be "terrified" is to be scared. The old fear will go, and it will be replaced by a godly boldness, a fearlessness of people, and a fearlessness of the consequences of witnessing.

Note: We do not generate this; God gives it!

- B. Conviction: "which is to them an evident token of perdition."

"An evident token" is something that is indicated by the pointing of the finger! "Perdition" is the utter and final ruin of those who die without Christ. Our adversaries will be brought to realize that ultimately there is defeat and judgment from God awaiting them.

The Holy Spirit convicts (cf. John 16:7-11), but this is the way He brings it about.

- C. Assurance: "but to you of salvation, and that of God."

When you and I are enabled to behave this way, it not only confirms our salvation, but it will convince us more than ever that our salvation "is of God." And we see that it has to be "of God" in the lives of others as well.

We have a lot of man-centered teaching today because we are not doing God's work in God's way!

- D. Comfort: "Having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me."

"Conflict" is any struggle or trial where the idea of

peril or danger is present.

The Philippian church had been born in "conflict." "Conflict" had taken Paul to Rome as a prisoner. But in it all there had been a "furtherance of of the gospel." And the Philippians could be assured that they would see blessing just as Paul had seen blessing even though there had been a price to pay!

Concl: Are we standing fast "for the faith of the gospel"? The true Gospel of the grace of God, the doctrines of God's sovereign grace, are no more popular today than they were in Paul's day. Men do not like to hear about sin, about depravity, about hell. They do not like to hear about a sovereign God Who has order salvation from the foundation of the world to be as He has ordained that it should be. Men do not like to be told that they can contribute nothing to their salvation. They do not like to be told that even their faith must come from God, that they do not have a free will, but that they are utterly cast upon the mercy of God if they are to be saved. They do not like these things.

But this is what we must proclaim. These are the truths which God blesses. These are the truths which men need to hear. These are the truths which save.

May God Himself enable us to stand fast, and may we see something of the same kind of blessing which Paul saw in Philippi, and then saw again in Rome--all to the glory and praise of God's holy and worthy Name!

FULNESS OF JOY
Philippians 2:1-4

Intro: The main exhortation in the four verses of my text for today are found at the beginning of verse 2 in Phil. 2: "Fulfil ye my joy."

The words mean that, as a prisoner of Rome, Paul was happy. He was content. His life even under those trying circumstances illustrated what he was saying in this Epistle--that they were to "rejoice in the Lord" (Phil. 3:1; 4:4).

When you study the subject of happiness, or joy, in the Scriptures, you realize that joy is to be a distinguishing characteristic of every child of God. Psychologists have put us in different categories, saying some people are characteristically happy, while others are sad most of the time. That may be true on the human level, but when a person comes to Christ, his life is changed. He is to be a happy person from that time on--not in the frivolous sense that we often think of in connection with happiness where everything seems to be a joke, but in that deep, genuine, inner sense, where each Christian learns that he can always be happy in the Lord--and so he lives that way.

As in Paul's case,

- the Lord may not always want us to be free, but He always wants us to be happy.
- He may not always want us to be healthy, but He wants us always to be happy.
- He may not always want us to prosper financially, but He always wants us to be happy.
- He may not always want us to be popular, but He does want us to be happy.

The Lord Jesus said as He was facing that dreadfully trying time on the Cross,

These things have I spoken unto you,
that my joy might remain in you,
and that your joy might be full.

If that were one of the main purposes of the Upper Room Discourse then there should never be a time when the joy of the Lord is not filling our hearts.

However, our problem is that we are looking for happiness in the wrong places. We think that happiness depends upon how much money we have, or how well we feel, or on the number of friends who stand with us, or in the success of the things that we do, or in the amount of time we can spend in recreation.

Now the Lord may make any or all of those things a part of our happiness at one time or another. Paul taught the rich of his day that they were not to "trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17b).

IF OUR JOY RESTS UPON ANYTHING THAT WE CAN LOSE, THEN IT CANNOT BE A PERMANENT JOY. BUT IF IT RESTS UPON THAT WHICH WE CANNOT LOSE, THEN IT CAN BE IN OUR HEARTS REGARDLESS OF WHAT OUR CIRCUMSTANCES MIGHT BE! The only One, and the only things, that we cannot lose are the Lord and all that we have in Him! Therefore, we must learn to "rejoice in the Lord."

What does it take to make you happy, and to keep you happy?

It is interesting to note in Scripture what different people said on this subject:

- 1) David in Psa. 16:11.
- 2) The Apostle John in 3 John 4.
- 3) John the Baptist in John 3:29,
He that hath the bride is the bridegroom:
but the friend of the bridegroom,
which standeth and heareth him,
rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice:
this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

What did it take to make Paul happy? Let me re-read verse 2 to you.

In 1 Thess. 3:8 Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."

The thing which gave Paul the greatest joy in the Lord was to see the people who were under his care living lives that were truly spiritual!

But in our text Paul not only told them what made him the happiest, but how they could become what they needed to be in the eyes of the Lord.

To state it simply, Paul wanted the church at Philippi, the believers at Philippi, to be without divisions, to be likeminded.

Do you remember how grieved Paul was over the divisions that existed in the Corinthian church?

One thing that Solomon taught that the Lord hated was "he that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:19).

The Lord Jesus said on one occasion,
Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to
desolation; and every city or house divided against
itself shall not stand (Matt. 12:25).

The same is true of a church. No church can prosper if it is divided in any way.

Now let us look at our text.

Paul had gotten to this subject in chapter 1, verse 27. (Read.)

He tied that together with what we are to consider today with the word "therefore" in Phil. 2:1. (Notice also the "wherefore" in 2:12.) So we are in one long section now which actually extends to the end of chapter 2.

In exhorting the Philippian believers to be likeminded, Paul pointed out their resources for such a life, how such a life could be possible, in v. 1. Then in verses 2, 3, and 4 Paul pointed out the results which would follow from such resources as are mentioned in verse 1.

So I am going to surprise you today. Instead of having three points, as I usually do, I only have two points. But I do want you to be sure to notice that there are three sub-points to the second part of my message having to do with the results.

I. THE RESOURCES for a life of likemindedness among the people of God (Phil. 2:1).

Note that there are four times in this one verse that Paul used the word "if."

But it suggests two ideas:

- 1) In the Greek they are what is called first class conditions, meaning that they can be translated, since. Paul was not raising questions, but pointing out spiritual realities. There is consolation in Christ, etc.
- 2) The big question was whether or not the Philippian Christians had discovered their resources and were drawing upon them.

I like the suggestion that a number of commentators make who say that there are two main resources here--the first and the third statements. And that the second follows from the first, and the fourth follows from the third. (Explain.)

Paul was stressing the necessity of a Christian's personal involvement with the Lord Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit. There can be no unity among us without Them!

"Consolation in Christ" means, Have we found in our fellowship with Christ that there are inner encouragements, incentives, in our hearts to love the people of God? In the expression, "comfort of love," it seems that he was stressing the fact that true love growing out of our fellowship with Christ will constrain us to be loving in our talk to each other, and about each other.

"Fellowship of the Spirit" points not only to our communion

with the Holy Spirit, but to the benefits which we are receiving because of our relationship with the Holy Spirit, namely, "bowels and mercies"--words which indicate that, if we are really profiting from our fellowship with the Holy Spirit, we are going to be more tenderhearted and loving and compassionate toward each other. The person who is critical and unloving toward others is making a public announcement that there is something really wrong with his fellowship with the Lord and with the Holy Spirit. We simply cannot be walking with the Lord and be divisive in our hearts and attitudes and words.

II. THE RESULTS (Phil. 2:2-4).

There are three--one in each verse.

A. Likemindedness (v. 2).

This means that we will love each other, that we will be in harmony with each other because--not listen to this--BECAUSE WE ALL THINK ALIKE!

Illus: Years ago I used to hear the criticism made of the seminary from which I graduated that those who came out of that school all came out believing the same thing.

Let me ask you: What is wrong with that--if what we believe is the truth of God's Word?

It was also true that my seminary was criticized by those who came to accredit it because all of the teachers were trained right there, and so they all taught alike.

Let me ask you again: What is wrong with that?

Is the Bible not clear on what it teaches about

- God?
- Jesus Christ?
- the Holy Spirit?
- man?
- sin?
- salvation?

Does it contradict itself? Is it healthy for a church to be divided doctrinally?

Let me ask you another question: DO YOU THINK THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR US TO BE LIKEMINDED IN THE WORD AND IN THE LORD? Let me answer. IF IT WERE NOT POSSIBLE, YOU WOULD NEVER FIND THIS EXHORTATION IN THE WORD. How could the Apostle Paul ever expect fulness of joy if he

were expecting something that could never be? OF COURSE IT IS POSSIBLE! And, if we expect the Lord's blessing, we need to be headed in that direction.

B. The second result: Humility (v. 3).

Cf. Phil. 1:15a.

What are your motives in your service of the Lord? What are your ambitions? How do you feel when you see the Lord's blessing upon others more than you see it upon yourself? How do you rate yourself with the rest of the people of our church--higher, or lower? Do you feel that you ought to have the place that they have?

One reason we get rebellious against the Lord, like the Israelites did repeatedly in the wilderness, is because we believe that the Lord ought to be treating us better than He is treating us! This is nothing but pride.

Peter wrote that "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5b)--and he should have known!

C. The third result: Unselfishness (v. 4).

People who are concerned about their self-worth are on the wrong track! And so are those who are looking out for #1!

We all have this tendency, do we not? And we even have it in connection with our lives as Christians. We even read our Bibles and pray thinking especially about how we are going to be benefitted from such things, instead of thinking also about how they might prepare us to be a spiritual help and blessing to others!

Look at Phil. 2:19-21.

Concl: Let me ask you: Do verses 2 and 3 and 4 describe you and me?

If they do not, then there has to be some way or ways in which we are losing out in connection with the truth of verse 1. THERE IS "consolation in Christ." THERE IS "fellowship of the Spirit," or with the Spirit.

The trouble is that you and I are not profiting from our relationship with the Lord and with the Holy Spirit.

Are you reading the Word? Do you suppose it would be shocking to us all to find out how many at Trinity Bible Church do not

read the Word each day?

Or, if you do read the Word daily, has it become more of a routine than a delight? Are you glad when the reading is finished so you can get on to other things that you like better?

What about prayer? Do you pray? Do you pray more now than when you first came to Christ? Do you feel that it is important for you to pray? Do you understand that you are sinning if you do not pray, daily and and fervently and joyfully?

What about sin? Are you tolerating certain sins mainly because nobody knows about them? Has your fellowship with the Lord given you deliverance from your sins? Do you hate sin, knowing that God hates it?

What about your fellowship with the Lord's people? Are there some people in our fellowship that you really do not like, that you try to avoid?

I could go on with lots of other uncomfortable questions. I do not need to answer them because we all know what the right answers are. But the important thing is this: How are we going to be able to give the right answers because we know that things are as they should be in our lives?

IT ALL GOES BACK TO PHIL. 2:1! It goes back to our relationship to the Lord, and to the Holy Spirit. That is where we get the love that we need to show toward each other, and that is where we get the compassion and mercy which will enable us to be likeminded toward each other.

Let me close with these words of the Lord Jesus, and I hope that they will speak to your heart:

Come unto me,
all ye that labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;
for I am meek and lowly in heart:
and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

I heard this week of a Christian who has quit going to church and who is very depressed. He ought to be. I have learned that those who do not meet regularly with the Lord's people in most cases do not pray and have quit reading their Bibles. (I am not talking about people who are sick and cannot come.) But such people who can come and do not, ought to be depressed, and will continue to be depressed until they get back with the Lord and with His people.

THE MIND OF CHRIST
Philippians 2:5-11

Intro: This is one of the most important passages in the Bible having to do with the incarnation and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. From the verb translated, "made himself of no reputation," or emptied Himself, we get the strange word, kenosis, from the Greek verb, kenōō. Probably from the time that these words were written theologians and other students of the Word of God have sought to determine what it meant that our Lord emptied Himself. Some say that our Lord surrendered His Deity when He became man--that He was then not Deity. This, of course, is in direct conflict with the teaching of Scripture which declares that in His flesh He was both God and man. And so others say that it means that His Deity was clothed in humanity, and that for the time of His sojourn here on earth He did not exercise many of His divine attributes. This is the true view. His incarnation had to be a kenosis. But, if our Lord had ceased to be God when He became a man, then His death could not have brought us salvation.

However, let us be sure to notice Paul's purpose in mentioning the incarnation of Christ at this point in this Epistle. He had been talking about likemindedness, about unity. The great obstacle to unity is pride. The solution to pride is humility. And the greatest example of humility of all time is to be seen in the coming of Jesus Christ to the earth. This does not mean that our Lord ever was proud, sinfully proud, as human beings are, but it does mean that we must humble ourselves, following the example of Christ, if we are to have the blessing of God both now and hereafter, and if we are to be likeminded toward each other.

So let me take up first, THE MIND OF CHRIST, of OF CHRIST JESUS. Then let us take up THE REWARD OF CHRIST. And then, finally, THE MEANING FOR BELIEVERS. THE MIND OF CHRIST is seen in verses 6-8. THE REWARD OF CHRIST in verses 9-11. THE MEANING FOR BELIEVERS in verse 5.

I. THE MIND OF CHRIST (Phil. 2:6-8).

A. The definition of "mind."

"Let this mind be" is a verb which means that we need to think and feel about ourselves the way He thought about Himself--and then act accordingly. It means that His will needs to be our will.

We have two good illustrations of the use of the noun that is related to this verb in Romans 8:7 and 27.

I will come back to this at the close of my message.

B. The details of Christ's humiliation.

In this we come to verses 6-8.

We actually see

- 1) The height of our Lord's glory in v. 6,
- 2) The depth of His humiliation in vv. 7, 8.

No one ever moved from greater heights to such depths as our Lord!

But let us consider the statements that are made here.

1. "Who, being in the form of God" -- a clear statement of His Deity.

No one can be "in the form of God" who is not God (so Trenchard says of the word, form). This speaks of what the Lord was inwardly--that He was God by His very nature.

2. "Thought it not robbery to be equal with God."

This means that He did not regard it necessary that He always maintain the outward, conspicuous display of His Deity, showing that He was always "equal with God." He did not consider that holding on to the manifestation of His glory, His Deity, was something which He had to maintain as a prize which should never be even for a time relinquished.

3. "But made himself of no reputation." This is described in the rest of v. 7, and all of v. 8. He did not cease to be God, but He did not appear to be God in His incarnation.

- a. He "took upon him the form of a servant."

This is the same word, "form," that is used in v. 6. He became a real servant--to God, not to man.

- b. "And was made in the likeness of man."

This is a word ("likeness") which describes His appearance. Those who saw Him would be inclined to think that He was just another man.

But notice this next statement:

- c. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself."

This means that He not only humbled Himself in

becoming a man, but that as a man He humbled Himself even more--by becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Here we see the purpose of His humiliation. It was to die on the cross, to provide salvation for helpless, hopeless, guilty sinners. But He did this voluntarily in obedience to the Father's will.

The Scriptures teach us that the humiliation of Christ was actually threefold:

- 1) He made Himself lower than God. In John 14:28 we have His words, "My Father is greater than I." But that was not enough.
- 2) He made Himself lower than angels. Cf. Heb. 2:7. This was for a little time. But this still was not all.
- 3) Among men, none has ever stooped lower in humiliation than He did.

On this last point, cf. Psa. 22:6; Isa. 53:3; Mark 9:12, which reads,

. . . it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at naught. This last expression means that He was going to be treated as though He were nothing! Isaiah's words mean that His sufferings would be so great that He would not even appear to be human.

So, when you consider the height from which He came, and the awful depths to which He went, no person's humbling, or humiliation, can compare with His!

Why did He do it?

- 1) Primarily to be obedient to the will of the Father in providing salvation.
- 2) Secondarily it was to provide salvation for the elect of God. Cf. Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:25; Rev. 1:5, 6; 2 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 4:4, 5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13, 14; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18.

What a passage! Who can ever fully understand what Paul has written?

But let us now look at . . .

— II. THE REWARD OF CHRIST (Phil. 2:9-11).

It is threefold: His exaltation, His special Name, His special honor.

- A. Christ's exaltation: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him."

This was also threefold--as Isaiah said, ". . . exalted, and extolled, and be very high" (Isa. 52:13).

1. His resurrection.
2. His ascension.
3. His seat at the Father's right hand.

No man nor angel has ever, or will ever, be accorded the honor which has already been given to our Lord.

- B. Christ's special name: "and given him a name which is above every name."

Some believe that this is the name, "Jesus." Others feel that He will yet be known by another name. Rev. 19:12 says that, when He comes in glory, He will have "a name written, which no man knew, but he himself."

But whichever it is, no one will ever have a name like the name of the Lord Jesus Christ--a name spotless in its glory!

- C. Christ's special honor:

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

What a day that will be! Creatures of all ranks and from all levels will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. The statement in verse 10 could mean angels, men, and demons ("under the earth"), or it could mean angels in heaven, the saints who do not die with those who have died. Whatever the true meaning, no one will miss giving this special honor to our blessed Lord!

But now we come to the application of this great truth of the humiliation of Christ:

III. THE MEANING FOR BELIEVERS (Phil. 2:5): "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

- A. Christ is our Example.

Peter wrote,
For even hereunto were ye called:

because Christ also suffered for us,
leaving us an example,
that we should follow his steps.

We are not to be greater than our Lord, but to be like Him. If the world hated Him, we cannot expect that it will love us. We need to think about ourselves the way He thought of Himself.

How does it apply to us?

- 1) We are now the sons of God. Cf. 1 John 3:1, 2.
We of the royal family of heaven. But "it doth not yet appear what we shall be."
- 2) We are to give up the rights that we have and prefer rather living as bondservants of God, devoting our lives in being obedient to God and to His will.
- 3) We seek not glory here, but in the life to come.

If we all had the mind of Christ, if we would only think about ourselves the way He thought about Himself, all of the troubles of the church would suddenly come to an end and we would know what the Lord was talking about in Matthew 11:28-30--"ye shall find rest unto your souls."

But there is another point: Christ is not only our Example, but we have . . .

B. Christ, our Life.

Who are we, and where are we? Cf. Phil. 1:1 -- "to all the saints IN Christ Jesus."

Cf. also Paul's prayer in Phil. 1:11,
Being filled with the fruits of righteousness,
which are by Jesus Christ,
unto the glory and praise of God.

Also see Phil. 1:20, 21; 2:1, "consolation in Christ."

The enabling power to live as Christ lived is not to be found in ourselves, but in Christ because of our relationship with Him!

C. The command and the promise of God:

1. Matt. 18:4, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."
2. Matt. 23:12, "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

3. Prov. 18:12, "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility."
4. Jas. 4:10, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."
5. 1 Pet. 5:6, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

The Lord humbled Himself because:

- 1) He was more concerned about the glory of God than He was about His own glory.
- 2) He was more concerned about the salvation of His people than He was for His own comfort.

How amazing that it should be such a rare thing to find a truly humble person among the Lord's people--but it is!

Concl: How can we lose? Through humility God is honored, Christ is manifested, people are blessed, and we are promised blessing--here and hereafter.

May we look to the Lord for the grace and strength to be humble that we may be likeminded with each other, and that the great burden the Lord expressed in prayer for us might be fulfilled, that the world may realize that Jesus Christ really came from God--and why He came! Cf. John 17:21, 23.

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE
Philippians 2:12-18

Intro: As you listen to messages, and read books written by present-day Christian writers, you will be exposed to many different ideas as to what the true Christian life is. I will not try to identify them all because that would be impossible. There are too many of them.

But the dominant idea today seems to be that of compromise. People who claim to be Christians are doing all that they can to popularize the Gospel. They seem to want you to believe that living the Christian life means having all of the things that you have always wanted. Change seems to be ridiculed. According to some teachers you can continue to be just as materialistic, just as pleasure-seeking, just as selfishly ambitious, just as success oriented as you ever were, only on a higher plain. But, of course, they would never admit to these things.

Where do we learn what the true Christian life is?

The answer to that question is: We learn what the true Christian life is from the same source that we learn what it means to be a Christian; we learn it from the Bible!

And what better circumstances could there be from which to learn it than from a Christian who is in the thick of the battle? That is where Paul was when he wrote to the Philippian church--in the battle. Everything that he believed was being tested by his circumstances, and yet we see that he was peaceful, triumphant, filled with joy, and more concerned about the far off Philippians than he was even for himself!

After the first 11 verses of greeting and introduction in chapter 1, Paul gave them his own personal report and testimony concerning his circumstances in Rome (which take us down to 1:27). But even as we read down to that point in the Epistle we can see that behind all that he was saying was a deep concern for them, for the progress that they were making as Christians. And so in 1:27 we see the beginning of the first of his exhortations. This continues down to the end of chapter 2. HE WANTED THEIR LIVES TO BE CONSISTENT WITH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, AND THIS HAD TO DO ESPECIALLY WITH THE UNITY WITH WHICH THEY LIVED TOGETHER AND TOGETHER SERVED THE LORD.

And when Paul got down to what in our Bible is chapter 2, verse 12, he began to give one of the clearest statements we have any place in the NT as to what the true Christian life really is.

Let us seek with the help of the Holy Spirit to understand what he said. And let me point out, first of all, the things which we will be talking about so you can anticipate the many wonderful

things that we have in our text.

There are six things that I want to point out:

- I. THE PLACE OF WORKS IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (v. 12).
- II. THE SECRET OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (v. 13).
- III. THE OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (v. 13b).
- IV. THE SPIRIT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (vv. 12, 14).
- V. THE FRUIT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (vv. 15b, 16).
- VI. THE JOY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (vv. 16b-18).

I. THE PLACE OF WORKS IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (Phil. 2:12).

Dr. B. B. Warfield once said,

Nothing could be more fundamental to Paul's conception of salvation than his teaching as to its relation to "works." He is persistently insistent that this relation is that of cause rather than of effect. The "not out of works, but unto good works," of Ephesians 2:9, 10 sounds the keynote of his whole teaching. In "good works," therefore, according to Paul "salvation" finds its realization: the very essence of salvation is holiness of life, "sanctification of the spirit." And equally in "salvation" "good works" find their only root: and it is only on the ground of the saving work of God that men may be hopefully exhorted to good works (Faith and Life, p. 298).

Salvation is not by good works, but good works also follow salvation.

And the good works which Paul was talking about are those things which a child of God does in obedience to the Word of God.

No person can be saved by good works, but neither will a person be saved who does not then do good works.

Note how the Apostle Paul expressed it here in v. 12. Their obedience was working out what God had worked in them. Salvation is a work of God, not of man. Salvation is of the Lord!

Cf. Eph. 2:8-10.

II. THE SECRET OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (Phil. 2:13).

I could also give this the heading, THE POWER OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

What is involved in living the Christian life? Is it merely taking the NT as a rule book, and trying to follow what it

says for us to do?

One problem with such an idea as this is that there are times when a child of God may not want to do what he is supposed to do, according to the Word of God. Another is that he cannot possibly do what the Word of God says.

So every Christian has to learn that the secret of the life of a Christian is that God is at work in his life. It is God Who gives him the desire to be holy, and it is God Who enables him to be and do that which will result in a holy life. See v. 13. The true Christian life is impossible without this.

How we need to pray that the Lord will make this clear to us! See what the Lord said in John 15:1-5. See also the benediction in Heb. 13:20, 21. No Christian can live as a Christian without the in-working of God and of Christ.

But let us see what else Paul has taught us here.

III. THE OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (Phil. 2:13b).

Is it that we might be able to do what we want to do? No.
Is it that we might always have things going our way? No.
What is it then?

It is that we might do the good pleasure of God, that we might please Him, that we might glorify Him. The true Christian life is not man-centered; it is God-centered.

Our Lord said, "I do always those things that please him" (speaking of the Father) (John 8:29b). He also said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).

How do we know that we are doing what pleases the Father?
It is only when we are living in obedience to His Word.

Cf. Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 5:9.

However, in order that we may see that this is not just an external, outward thing, let us notice what Paul wrote about . . .

IV. THE SPIRIT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (Phil. 2:12b, 14).

Three things are important here:

- 1) In v. 12--"with fear and trembling."
- 2) In v. 14--"without murmurings."
- 3) In v. 14--"without . . . disputings."

A. "With fear and trembling" means that we should have such

an earnest desire to please the Lord always and in everything that we should be afraid that we would do anything else--even to the point of "trembling."

Fear is contrasted with pride, high thinking, in Rom. 11:20b, "Be not highminded, but fear." So a fearful heart is a humble heart.

Eadie said in his commentary on Philippians,
. . . the phrase describes that state of mind which ought ever to characterize believers--distrust of themselves--earnest solicitation (meaning excessive care and/or attention) in every duty--humble reliance on divine aid, with the abiding consciousness that after all they do come far short of meeting obligation (p. 129).

To fear the Lord is to have a humble and sincere desire to please Him, to obey Him, and all for His glory.

B. "Without murmurings." This is the negative side of it.

People murmur when they are dissatisfied. Christians are guilty of murmuring when they are dissatisfied with what God does or with what He says we must do.

The people of Israel murmured all of the way from Egypt to Canaan! Outward obedience means nothing to the Lord if there is inward murmuring.

C. "Without . . . disputings."

This means we delay, we hesitate, we are reluctant to do God's will, we argue with Him because we think our way is better. This cannot be.

If our obedience is to glorify God it must be done cheerfully and promptly. This is the spirit in which we must live. Obedience must come from the heart, not just be in outward acts.

V. THE FRUIT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (Phil. 2:15, 16).

This is twofold:

- 1) Such a life will do something to us.
- 2) Such a life will enable us to be something to the world.

A. The character of a Christian.

Paul used three expressions here and together they add up to holiness--a holy life.

If we are trusting God to enable us to be obedient to His Word from the heart because we want to please him, then we will be . . .

1. "Blameless"--meaning that we will not be hypocritical because we profess to be "the sons of God" but do not live like we are.

Many relate this to the words "without murmurings" in v. 14.

2. "Harmless"--meaning sincere, pure, real, genuine. This is the positive side of which "blameless" is the negative.

Many relate this to the words "without . . . disputings" in v. 14.

3. "Without rebuke"--meaning that our actions cannot be charged morally. We are living as even the world would expect a Christian to live.

And notice the atmosphere in which we are to live like this: "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (not nation).

"Crooked and perverse," according to Eadie, speak of the inner disposition of the world, and then the outward manifestation (respectively) of the world in its willful and habitual turning away from God's way, and from God's glory. Cf. Isa. 53:6.

And this all makes possible . . .

- B. The witness of a Christian: " . . . among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."

"The word of life" is the Gospel. See 1:27.

"Holding forth" is done in two ways:

- 1) By the lives we live.
- 2) By the words we speak--the vocal proclamation of the Gospel.

And often the reason that latter is so ineffective is because the first is in such poor condition. The fruit of true obedience is:

- 1) A holy life.
- 2) A strong witness--a light shining in a dark, dark world. Cf. Stephen in Acts 6:10.

Again, from Eadie (p. 142):

The gospel or word of life was held forth, and its

holders were light-givers in the world. As they made known its doctrines, and impressed men with a sense of its importance, as their actions, in their purity and harmony, exhibited its life and power, did they hold it forth. From them the world learned its true interest and destiny, its connection with God and eternity; they were its only instructors in the highest of the sciences.

Finally,

IV. THE JOY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (Phil. 2:16b-18).

We all should be living for eternity, for "the day of Christ"--the day when He shall come. Cf. 1:6.

Cf. 1 Thess. 2:19, 20. Also 3 John 4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

When we stand in the presence of the Lord, then we shall realize how much of our work here has been lasting and profitable.

What is it that brings you joy? What is your desire for your children, parents--and grandparents? What should be my desire for you? Can we truthfully say to each other, as Paul said to the Thessalonians, "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord"?

Concl: Did you ever see such an abbreviated, yet complete, statement of what the Christian life is? It is all here, isn't it?

If you are not a Christian, do you understand what it means to be a Christian--that it is not by your works, but it is through the grace of God and through Christ?

If you are a Christian, do you see the importance of good works--that they follow and result from saving faith, that they are the good works of obedience to the Word of God? Do you see that, if works did not accompany your faith, your faith is not saving faith?

May the Lord enable each of us to profit from the truth which we have seen this morning according to what we are in His sight.

AN UNUSUAL SERVANT OF GOD
Philippians 2:19-24

Intro: I have mentioned before that Paul ministered to the people of God in more ways than one:

- 1) His greatest desire was to be with them in person where he could minister to them person to person, face to face.
- 2) He always prayed for them. His Epistles give abundant evidence of this.
- 3) He wrote to them, and he often wrote at times when he could have been so occupied with his own troubles that he might have forgotten his people in other places. But he never did forget them.
- 4) Finally, when he could not be with people, he sent some other trusted worker, if such were possible.

This brings us to consider what he had to say about Timothy.

One of the most touching things about Paul's Epistles is to see how he loved his fellowworkers, how he wrote about them, and how grateful he was for their help in the work of the Lord. We see this not only of individuals, but of churches (such as his comments about the Philippian saints in Phil. 1:3-8).

It is very obvious that Timothy had a special place in his heart.

But who was Timothy?

Timothy was half Jewish and half Gentile. His mother was a Jewish Christian, and so was his grandmother. His father was a Gentile, but does not seem to have been a Christian.

Timothy is first mentioned in Acts 16. Paul was on his second missionary journey and came to Derbe and Lystra before going on Philippi. Timothy seems to have been living in Lystra (possibly Derbe), but at this time he joined Paul, being "well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium" (Acts 16:2).

With the exception of two short periods of time when Paul left Timothy and Silas at Berea, but later sent for them when he was in Athens, and they joined him again when he got to Corinth, plus when he was in Asia he sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia (where Philippi was) and Paul waited for a time at Ephesus where they had the big uproar over Diana, the goddess of the Ephesians. When Paul returned from Macedonia to Asia, Timothy and several others went ahead to Troas, but after that Timothy seems to have gone with Paul all of the way to Jerusalem and then to Rome.

So Paul and Timothy were well acquainted with each other, and Paul loved Timothy very much, calling him his own son in the faith.

Timothy does not seem to have been particularly strong physically since Paul spoke to him of his "often infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23). It may have been also that he was not very courageous, but inclined to be timid and fearful (from some of the exhortations that we see in 1 and 2 Timothy).

But he was one thing for sure: FAITHFUL. And Paul commended him to the Philippian church with words which he never used of any of his other fellowservants of God.

Timothy had been a great blessing to Paul in Rome.

Paul knew that he would also be a great blessing to the church at Philippi. And, although he seemed reluctant to let him go, yet he intended to do that for the sake of the Philippian believers, and for his own sake, as he said in this Epistle, "that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state" (Phil. 2:19b).

But what, in the eyes of the Apostle Paul, made Timothy so outstanding, so unusual, as a servant of God and of Christ? This is what I want to consider with you this morning, in the hope that seeing these things, we, too, will be better servants of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul mentioned three things:

- 1) Timothy's relationship with Paul himself.
- 2) Timothy's relationship to the church at Philippi.
- 3) Timothy's relationship to Jesus Christ.

Let me point out what Paul wrote about each of these.

I. TIMOTHY AND PAUL.

Cf. Phil. 2:20a, "I have no man likeminded . . ."

This means that Paul did not have anyone who was more like he was than Timothy.

But why did Paul want believers to be lit. equal in soul to himself? (This is what the word "likeminded" means.)

See 1 Cor. 4:15-17; 11:1; 16:10.

How fortunate is the child of God who has a godly example to follow! We are to be the embodiment of what we teach. Note what Paul wrote in Phil. 4:9. Our teaching would be far more effective if people could see as well as hear what we are trying to teach them.

Paul could be sure that, if Timothy went to Philippi, he would do just what Paul would do if he were to go.

Note what he told Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:2.

But Timothy was not only like Paul in his character and the way that he lived, but also in the way that he worked. See verse 22.

Timothy believed in teaching. Timothy prayed. Timothy did not resort to techniques and methods to accomplish the work of the Lord; he depended upon the Holy Spirit. Paul knew that Timothy would not undo what he had done, but would strengthen it.

How blessed a pastor or missionary is when he has fellow-workers like that!

II. TIMOTHY AND THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI.

See Phil. 2:20b, " . . . who will naturally care for your state."

The "proof" of Timothy, his credentials for service, were the way he had served with Paul. It was not his age, his education and training, his gifts, his experience, but the way he had served.

Now this statement which Paul made about Timothy means that "naturally," lit., from birth, he had shown a great concern for the spiritual welfare of other believers.

"Care" means anxious care. This was not sinful anxiety which is not cast upon the Lord, but genuine, real, true, deep, sincere, faithful, continuing care! Timothy did not do it for what he could get out of it, but he did it because of what God had done in his heart. It was his life, his greatest concern, to know that things were going well with the people of God.

This, too, was like Paul. Cf. 2 Cor. 11:28, " . . . the care of all the churches."

Paul had no other co-workers who had caught the spirit and burden of Paul like Timothy had. He was to Paul like Elisha was to Elijah

He was not looking for great opportunities for himself. He was not out to make a name for himself. He was not running ahead and complicating things for Paul. He was not jealous of those with whom he worked. HIS GREAT BURDEN WAS TO SEE CHRISTIANS BECOMING STRONG IN THE LORD SO THAT CHURCHES COULD BE STRONG AND USEFUL UNDER THE BLESSING OF THE LORD.

Now all of this was attributable to a third thing which Paul said about Timothy. It had to do with . . .

III. TIMOTHY AND JESUS CHRIST.

See Phil. 2:21, 22.

Paul surely did not mean that everybody else was just concerned about himself--such as Silas, Barnabas, Luke, and others we could mention. But he must have meant that no one was as completely devoted to the Lord and to His work as was Timothy!

What does it mean to seek our own things?

It means that we are more concerned about how people are going to praise us and exalt us than we are about how we are going to be a help and a blessing to them.

It means that we are seeking our own objectives rather than being concerned about the purposes of God. It means that we are inclined to look at what we have in ourselves, or what we can do, rather than to have our trust in the Lord and in the Spirit of God.

It means that we are concerned about our reputation, our position, our benefits, etc.

What does it mean to seek the things at are Jesus Christ's?

It means to be concerned about His will, His glory, His purposes, His people.

It means that we will take time to be with Him, to learn of Him, that we might be like Him. It means that we will be concerned about our obedience to the Word of the Lord. It means that we will be more concerned about what we give to the people of God than we are about what they give to us. It means that we will get the greatest pleasure out of seeing the people of God growing in the Lord, in seeing them built up in the faith. At the same time, nothing will cause greater grief and distress of mind than to see the Lord's people stumbling and falling in their walk with the Lord.

Oh, that Jesus Christ might be everything to us! Note how the change came about in Paul's life from what we read in Phil. 3:7-14.

If we want Jesus Christ to mean everything to our people, then He must mean everything to us!

Concl: Timothy should not have been the exception; he should have been the rule. We ought all to be like Timothy.

If we were, we can be sure that Satan's opposition would be intensified, but we could also be sure that the blessing of God would abound in our lives and in the work that the Lord has given us to do.

A MESSENGER AND A MINISTER
Philippians 2:25-30

Intro: Last Sunday we considered Timothy and Paul's comments about him in Phil. 2:18-24. Today I want us to consider Epaphroditus.

I. WHO WAS EPAPHRODITUS? Cf. Phil. 2:25.

A. His name.

We can tell from his name that he was a Gentile. In it you can see the name of the goddess, Aphrodite--the Greek name for the Roman goddess, Venus. This probably means that his parents were followers of heathen gods and goddesses, and that they expected their son to be what they had been. The preposition epi before Aphrodite in his name means upon, and probably suggests that this is where the confidence of his parents was.

But somehow, in some way, Epaphroditus had been drawn to Christ. He had become a Christian. Whether he had been saved when Paul was in Philippi, or not, we do not know, but it is likely that he had been saved afterwards. At any rate, he was no longer a follower of a heathen religion, but he was a devoted follower of Jesus Christ--a new creature in Christ!

B. His home.

He was from Philippi, a Macedonian, therefore, a Gentile, separated from Paul both by language and by culture. Obviously they both spoke Greek, but you have in Paul and Epaphroditus a Jew and a Gentile, one saved out of a corrupted Judaism, the other saved out of a pagan religion, then bound together in the closest fellowship by their mutual relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ!

They were trophies of grace, and their love for each other was a miracle of grace. Here we have a Gentile serving a Jew.

C. His titles.

Paul gave Epaphroditus five titles--two of them being the main ones. He was a messenger and a minister.

1. As a messenger he was lit. an apostle (which is the word that is used here). He had been sent from the Philippian church to Rome to see Paul, and had brought to Paul the gift mentioned in chapter 4.

Paul may never have met him before. We do not know how long he was with Paul. But they were together long enough for them to become very fond of each other. Epaphroditus had been faithful in the task with which he had been entrusted and commissioned by the Philippian church.

2. As a minister he was a servant, a public servant in the sense that he had become a servant of the church in Philippi as well as a servant of the Apostle Paul.

As you read through the second chapter you read of our Lord Who "took upon him the form of a servant," Who "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death." And then you go on to read about this dear Christian from Philippi, and you see that in many respects Epaphroditus was like his Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He had the mind of Christ.

Thus Epaphroditus was a minister, a servant, both to the saints at Philippi and to the Apostle Paul. The word actually means a priestly servant. The term is used of our Lord in Heb. 8:2 where He is called "a minister of the sanctuary." What Epaphroditus did for Paul was considered in the sight of God as the work of a priest. Cf. Phil. 4:18. (By the way, Phil. 2 and Phil. 4 are the only places where Epaphroditus is mentioned in the NT.)

There is nothing to indicate that Epaphroditus was a teacher. He may not have even been an elder in the church at Philippi. He was a servant to the church, and to Paul.

Alexander Maclaren said this about him:

He was . . . the minister to Paul's needs. There would be many ways of serving the captive, looking after his comfort, doing his errands, procuring daily necessities, managing affairs, perhaps writing his letters, easing his chain, chafing his aching wrists, and ministering in a thousand ways which we cannot and need not specify. At all events he gladly undertook even servile work for the love of Paul (Vol. 9, p. 306),

and we might add--also because of his love for the saints in Philippi.

In his work as a minister, Epaphroditus could best be described by three other titles which Paul used of him:

- a. "My brother," or lit., a brother.

This shows:

- 1) They were in the same family, the family of God, with the same origin; lit., from the same womb.
- 2) Equals. Paul may have been an apostle, but he was not more a child of God than was Epaphroditus.
- 3) A term of endearment. This was the first term that Paul heard for himself from Ananias, and he apparently loved it! Cf. Acts 9:17.

- b. "Companion in labour." See the same in 4:3.

Paul was an apostle, a preacher and a teacher. Epaphroditus was none of these, but he was a servant to the Lord's people, doing whatever he could to help them. The word suggests that he was a hard, faithful worker, and that the work of the Lord was his main business.

As such, he was just as much a servant of the Lord as the Apostle Paul was, and they were united together as fellowlabourers. What a precious insight into the Lord's work!

- c. "Fellowsoldier."

There had been danger connected with what Epaphroditus had done for Paul. It was not a perfectly safe thing to be associated with Paul at all. But Epaphroditus had faced the dangers, the hardships, the afflictions, realizing that he had to face these as a good soldier of Jesus Christ in opposition to Satan and all of his evil forces!

Epaphroditus had probably shown this by his personal witness, by his praying, as well as by the hard work with which he had served Paul.

But now let us consider . . .

II. EPAPHRODITUS AT ROME (Phil. 2:26, 27).

I have already mentioned some of the things that he was doing, but let me give you a few other details from these verses, as well as from verse 30.

Epaphroditus gave himself with such tireless zeal that he

got sick, and almost died! He would have died if the Lord had not mercifully intervened. Call this "first century burn-out," if you will. Epaphroditus did what he did because there was not one else to do it. And the work almost killed him!

But one of the amazing things about Epaphroditus' illness was that he was worried about the concern it had caused the Philippian church. They had heard that he had been sick, but they did not know that he had recovered. He wanted them to know that he was "back in service" again. But he served the Lord, "not regarding his life."

Paul said that the Lord was also merciful to him because it would have been another "sorrow" for Paul, added to what he already had, if Epaphroditus had died.

III. EPAPHRODITUS BACK HOME (Phil. 2:28-30).

The servants of the Lord rarely get the honor they deserve in the Lord, but they should be honored by the church. To honor them means to put high value upon them. Cf. 1 Thess. 5:12, 13,

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

Epaphroditus was to be received, to be received "with all gladness," and to be held as a very valuable servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, of His church, and of the Apostle Paul.

Serving the Lord is the greatest work that men can do, and those who do it well are to be honored here as they will be honored in heaven.

Concl: Why is this brief account here? Why is Epaphroditus singled out here for such honor when he is not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture?

Let me state two reasons, and they arise out of 1 Cor. 12:14-31.

- 1) It is because there are those saints in every generation who feel that, because they are not pastors or teachers, etc., that they are not important in the church.

Do you visit the sick? Do you help the needy? Do you give? Do you pray? Do you speak words of encouragement? Do you write letters to missionaries, or to any of the Lord's people, to encourage them in the Lord? Does it bother you that you are not known for what you do? Pay no attention to that. The Lord knows, and even a cup of cold

water given in His Name shall not lose its reward. Cf. Matt. 10:42.

- 2) In 1 Cor. 12:25 we read that it is important for the church to know this "that there should be no schism in the body."

Paul was concerned about one thing in the Philippian church: divisions! He was exhorting them to be likeminded--and therefore the lessons that were to be learned from Epaphroditus' life could be of help to the whole church. Cf. Phil. 2:4.

What a place Epaphroditus holds in the annals of church history! And he will hold a great place in heaven because he did what he could, and he did it well--by the grace of God!

And so just as we read that, just as the Lord has been given a name which is above every name (Phil. 2:9), so Epaphroditus also has a name to be highly revered among the people of God now and for all eternity.

Many people are concerned today about making a name for themselves--athletes, politicians, entertainers. We hear a lot about "name familiarity." Let us be content to be known as servants of Jesus Christ who have been faithful in doing the will of God because we love the Lord and we love all of the people who belong to Him.

To see that we are all needed is one of the greatest factors in preserving the unity of the church.

Unknown Epaphroditus made a trip to Rome for which he will never be forgotten! Common, ordinary work done for another Christian is the work of the Lord, and can be done as priestly service to the Lord.

REJOICING IN THE LORD
Philippians 3:1-11

Intro: Up to this point in this Epistle we have had three things:

- 1) Paul's introduction with his greetings and prayers for the Philippian believers -- 1:1-11.
- 2) His report concerning what had happened to him in Rome -- 1:12-26.
- 3) His exhortation concerning a life that is becoming to the Gospel of Christ -- 1:27-2:29.

The word, "Finally," in 3:1 does not indicate that he is finished, or finishing, but it means that he is moving on to the next and final exhortation that he had in mind as he thought of them and planned to write to them. This includes all from 3:1 to 4:9.

We have the word, "finally," in 4:8 again, but it seems to be a part of the same word in 3:1. It could be translated, "more-over," or, "as for the rest," or, "as for the remaining," i.e., the remaining thing that I wanted to tell you.

So we have the two main things, the two exhortations, that Paul wanted to give them in Phil. 1:27 and Phil. 3:1.

The following is my outline for the first 11 verses of chapter 3:

- I. THE EXHORTATION (Phil. 3:1) -- to rejoice in the Lord.
- II. A WARNING (Phil. 3:2, 3).
- III. PAUL'S TESTIMONY (Phil. 3:4-11). He was doing what he wanted them to do: rejoicing in the Lord! But he shows them that this was not always the case with him.
 - A. His former confidence (vv. 4-6). It was sevenfold.
 - B. His present trust (vv. 7-11). It was singular:
 - "Christ Jesus my Lord."
 - 1. A Person (vv. 7, 8).
 - 2. What he (Paul) had in this Person, the Lord Jesus Christ (vv. 9-11).
 - a. Righteousness (v. 9) -- which is justification.
 - b. Sanctification (progressive) (v. 10).
 - (1) Knowing Him.
 - (2) The power of His resurrection.
 - (3) The fellowship of His sufferings.
 - (4) Conformity to His death.
 - c. Glorification (v. 11).

Please note that in vv. 9-11 we have the three great truths which together make up and explain what salvation is!

- I. THE EXHORTATION (Phil. 3:1).

Paul had evidently spoken to them about this before, but it was no problem to him to say it again. And it was the

greatest of safeguards for them.

How important it is for us to repeat the truth! This is an argument also for reading the Bible over and over. A teacher who does not repeat the truth is not doing a thorough job of teaching.

Two things are important in this exhortation:

- 1) The first is that every child of God should be happy--
all of the time!
- 2) Our joy should be "in the Lord"!

If we here at Trinity Bible Church could only learn the truth of 1:27 and of 3:1, how blessed of God we would be!

We are to "rejoice in the Lord," not in ourselves, not in what we are, not in our achievements, not in any other person, but only "in the Lord." We rejoice in Who He is and in what He has done!

As we go through these verses we will learn more about what this exhortation means.

II. A WARNING (Phil. 3:2, 3).

In verse 2 Paul was referring to false teachers. They are one of the chief enemies to a life of rejoicing in the Lord. They will get your eyes off of the Lord, and try to get you to rejoice in other things.

Paul called them "dogs" because they were evidently Judaizers who loved to use this term against the Gentiles. He turned it back on them because, like "dogs," they were vicious in in the opposition to Christ, unclean, because they were not saved, and outcasts from God and from the truth.

Paul called them "evil workers" because they lacked the truth, and they lacked the proper motives of a true servant of the Lord.

He called them "the concision," a play on words in the Greek as it is even in English, because with their emphasis on circumcision they were mutilators of the flesh, not the true people of God.

In no uncertain terms Paul declared in verse 3 that he and the believers in the Philippian church were "the circumcision," i.e., the true people of God, who are characterized by three things:

- 1) They, lit., worship by the Spirit of God -- render priestly service.
- 2) They "rejoice in Christ Jesus" -- exult, glory in (a

different verb from that in v. 1).

- 3) They had "no confidence in the flesh." "Confidence" means trust. A believer is characterized by the fact that his trust is in the Lord. All false teaching has this one characteristic (whatever other characteristics it might have), that it is man-centered and encourages trust in ourselves or in others.

So the warning is to "beware." "Beware" of anyone who does not teach you about the Christ of the Bible, the Christ of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Next we have . . .

III. PAUL'S TESTIMONY (Phil. 3:4-11).

The reason Paul knew these Judaizers so well was because he formerly had been one of them. And so he mentioned first where his confidence had been, and then where it was as he wrote. And this was actually the reason that he was a prisoner of Rome!

A. His former confidence (vv. 4-6). It was sevenfold:

1. "Circumcised the eighth day." This was according to the Law. Cf. Gen. 17:9-14; 21:4; Lev. 12:3.
2. "Of the stock of Israel." By birth he was a member of the covenant nation.
3. "Of the tribe of Benjamin" -- the beloved son of Israel (Jacob), the tribe that
 - gave Israel her first king,
 - was faithful under Rehoboam, and stood w/ Judah,
 - gave to Israel such men as Ehud, the judge, and Mordecai.
4. "An Hebrew of the Hebrews." Paul had been outstanding in cherishing his national language and culture. He was a Jew who spoke Hebrew, while many were Hellenists, speaking only Greek.
5. "A Pharisee" -- zealous for the Law, scrupulous in obeying it, intensely nationalistic, very devoted to God outwardly, strong in proselytizing.
6. "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church" -- where he felt that he rendered the greatest service to God. Cf. Acts 26:11; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13.
7. "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." "No inquisitor could have found him

defective here" (Moule, p. 61).

- B. His present trust (as he wrote) (3:7-11).
Instead of being sevenfold, it was singular.

1. A Person (vv. 7, 8).

Notice: "Christ Jesus my Lord."

By His Name Paul declared his belief in:

- 1) Our Lord's Messiahship.
- 2) His true and perfect humanity.
- 3) His Deity and sovereignty.

All that he considered "gain" before he now looked upon as a total "loss," meaning that added together they gave him no standing with God, and were a detriment to him because they kept him from seeing what his real need was.

More than that, he called them "dung" -- something worthless, detestable, garbage -- a word that was used for the excrement of animals!

Nothing, nor any combination of the best things, could possibly compare with the priceless privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord!

"Suffered" means that it had been a very painful experience to Paul to learn all of this, but his joy in the Lord had more than compensated for the trauma that had at first been his.

Paul's use of the words "counted" and "count" in vv. 7, 8 means that he had reached his decision after a careful and deliberate judgment. He had carefully weighed the value of his old confidence, comparing those things with Christ, and he found that there was no comparison between the two!

But what was there in Christ that caused Paul such great joy. (Remember that we are talking about rejoicing in the Lord.)

2. What he (Paul) had in this Person, the Lord Jesus Christ (vv. 9-11).

a. Righteousness, or justification (v. 9).

He found perfect acceptance with God, not through his own never-finished work, but through the finished work of Christ.

"Be found" = at any moment of scrutiny, by God or man. "In Christ" -- the believer's position, claiming all of the merit of Christ's work on the Cross, His Messianic work. "The faith of Christ" means faith in Christ. "The righteousness which is of God (its Source and Provider) by faith," not works.

Paul learned that he could never do what he was trying to do, and that it was all unnecessary because God had provided salvation completely through Christ.

Like many other verses in the Bible, Phil. 3:9 gives us the Gospel in a nutshell.

But this is not all that he had in Christ.

b. Sanctification (progressive) (v. 10).

(1) "That I may know him."

This is not just a repetition of vv. 7, 8, but speaks of "a process of growing knowledge" (Moule, p. 65) which always follows a person's initial salvation.

Eadie said that "this knowledge is that of a deep and deepening experience" (p. 186).

There is nothing more important in the life of any Christian. And it never will be completed in this life--knowing Him!

The next three statements really elaborate on how we are to know Him.

(2) "And the power of his resurrection."

With Christ, His sufferings and death preceded His resurrection; with us, the power of our Lord's resurrection life precedes our participation with Him in His sufferings and death.

His life in us enables us to walk, to serve, and to suffer. Cf. Eph. 1:19-23; Col. 2:11, 12. He keeps us from sin. Cf. 1 Jn. 3:9.

(3) "And the fellowship of his sufferings."

Our sufferings are not vicarious, but we will

the opposition of the world and of Satan because of our relationship with Christ and with the Gospel.

Cf. Acts 14:22.

"Christ indeed cannot be known, unless there be this fellowship in His sufferings" (Eadie, p. 189).

"And this will prove a deep secret of fuller spiritual sympathy and fellowship with Him" (Moule, p. 66).

(4) "Being made conformable to his death."

What is the main truth arising out of the death of Christ? It is the Son's complete agreement with the will of the Father-- inwardly as well as outwardly.

This is where the work of sanctification ultimately brings us: to complete harmony in our lives with the will of God for us.

These four statements add up to sanctification.

One thing remains to make the statement regarding salvation complete. We have had justification, and sanctification; now . . .

c. Glorification (v. 11).

"If by any means" actually could be translated, that in this way. Paul was not worried about whether or not he would be raised and glorified. He was saying that justification and sanctification lead ultimately to glorification. Our glorification is assured by that sanctifying work of God which precedes it.

Concl: Two questions:

- 1) Are you rejoicing in the Lord?
- 2) Have you cast aside what Paul cast aside, and do you supremely value what he valued?

May God open our eyes to the wonderful truths found in these verses. There is something for all of us here, saved and unsaved.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIZE
Philippians 3:12-16

Intro: We can see from various passages in Paul's epistles that he was a man who enjoyed sports. It certainly did not consume his time and interest, but he was acquainted with them, liked them, and saw in them some parallels with the Christian life.

He seems to have been especially fond of track--of those who ran in the races. Cf. 1 Cor. 24-27; 2 Tim. 2:5; and here in our text: Phil. 3:14. See also Heb. 12:1, 2.

Even in those days, if you were going to run, you had to qualify. It required a great deal of training. And, once the race started, a runner had to exercise the greatest amount of perseverance in order to win.

Then, as also now, you were not in competition with everyone who was running. There were those who were on your team, and you would be on their team. So you were interested also in their running and in their winning.

Every runner in the games had been chosen. When you would see a runner in the races, you would know that he was there, not just because he wanted to run, but, because of his ability he had been chosen to run.

We know that about sports today, do we not? Those who play for the Blazers, or for the Beavers, or the Ducks, or the Huskies, or even for any of our high school teams, are chosen men or women, depending upon the particular sport. They are chosen for their ability.

Christians are chosen to run, too, but they are not chosen for their ability. They are chosen by the grace of God. Robert Murray M'Cheyne expressed it back in 1837 in these words:

Chosen not for good in me,
Wakened up from wrath to flee,
Hidden in the Saviour's side,
By the Spirit sanctified--
Teach me, Lord, on earth to show,
By my love, how much I owe.

We as Christians are chosen by God, not because of what we are, nor because of what we can do, but we are chosen so that God can demonstrate His power by making us what He wants us to be! Just as you will often hear an athlete express how much he owes to his coach, so we as Christians should never stop praising the Lord for what He has done, is doing, and will yet do, for us. Each one of us is "a first round draft pick"!

Let me discuss this passage today under three headings which

reflect the sports' emphasis in our text. Here they are:

- I. The Runners.
- II. The Goal.
- III. The Race.

I. THE RUNNERS.

Remember that Paul was giving his testimony as a basis for his exhortation in 3:1, repeated in 4:4, to rejoice in the Lord!

Note also in this passage that in vv. 12-14 he was referring what he had to say to himself, but then in verses 15 and 16 he addressed himself to the believers at Philippi-- and to us!

The runners are Christians, and only Christians--those who have been saved, who are born again, forgiven, regenerated, new creatures in Christ, the people of God, the children of God.

I have already said that the runners are a chosen people. They are the elect of God.

The word that Paul used in these verses to tell how we became Christians, and how anyone becomes a Christian, is the word "apprehended" -- "apprehended of Christ Jesus," or, by Christ Jesus.

To apprehend means to lay hold of, to obtain, to make something, or someone, your very own!

We do not initially lay hold of God, but He lays hold of us. We do not chose Him, but He chooses us. And He did not choose us, nor apprehend us, because of any ability He saw in us, but He chose us and apprehended us by His grace to make us what He wanted us to be.

"Apprehended of Christ Jesus" describes how each of us who is a Christian became a Christian!

There is a note of assurance in this expression that we must not miss. See also 3:3.

The Lord has laid His hand upon us and has taken us to be his very own. No one can take us out of His hand. Cf. John 10:27-30. And, being apprehended, we are being molded and strengthened for this race.

Now let us look at . . .

II. THE GOAL.

We might also call this, THE PRIZE.

The GOAL is not heaven. That was guaranteed when when we were chosen, and then apprehended. The GOAL has to do with what we are going to be when we get to heaven.

Paul was talking about the GOAL in Phil. 1:6, and again in Phil. 3:20, 21. The GOAL, that which we are running for, the PRIZE we want, is to be made like Christ. Cf.:

- 1) 1 John 3:2.
- 2) Rom. 8:28-30.
- 3) 1 Cor. 15:49.
- 4) 2 Cor. 3:18.

This ultimately will mean our perfection! Then we will be sinless, no longer capable of sin.

Now notice what Paul said at the beginning of verse 12: "Not as though I had already attained."

Paul did not claim to be sinless, or perfect (in this sense). In fact, he was saying that he was not sinless. You will never meet a sinless Christian in this life. You may meet some who are very holy, but none who are sinless. Let us make sure that we understand this.

But Paul was looking forward to the time when he would be sinless--and you and I should look forward to the same thing for ourselves. This is the goal, the prize, toward which we are running.

The GOAL, or PRIZE, is glorification, and the race speaks of our progressive sanctification.

But let us look at . . .

III. THE RACE.

The first thing to note is, as we have just seen, that . . .

A. It is not finished yet -- for us.

But how can we be not perfect (v. 12), and yet perfect (v. 15)?

Paul was not:

- 1) Contradicting himself, as some would say.
- 2) Being sarcastic.

Instead, we can explain it in two ways:

- 1) He called them "perfect," and himself also, because his perfection, and theirs, was guaranteed. Note

"glorified" in Rom. 8:30.

We can say that we are now sanctified in God's sight because we are in Christ, but practically we are being sanctified. We have a holy standing before God, but we are not yet holy in our state, our present condition.

But there is another idea here:

2) Perfection in Scripture also has the idea of maturity, spiritual maturity.

We have reached different stages of maturity. And so, whatever stage of spiritual maturity we have reached, we are to run the race according to the ground we have gained.

We do not live and walk according to what someone else knows or has accomplished in the Lord, but according to what we know and have accomplished.

If we begin to fail in this, "God shall reveal even this unto you" (v. 15b). How?

- 1) By the way He speaks to us, to our consciences, through His Word.
- 2) By the disciplines which He exercises in our lives.

This is what an athletic coach does. It can often be a difficult experience to go through.

And so he said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect . . ."

But then he spoke of . . .

| ← B. The running.

Note the expressions he used:

- 1) "I follow after."
- 2) "If that I may apprehend."
- 3) "Forgetting those things which are behind."
- 4) "Reaching forth unto those things which are before."
- 5) "I press" (which is the same verb as "follow after" in v. 12).

"This one thing I do." PAUL'S ONE PRIMARY AIM IN LIFE WAS TO BE HOLY, TO BECOME LIKE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST! All of the energy which he possesses was being spent for this purpose. He was running toward heaven with all of his energy that he might be holy.

How did he do this? How are we to do it?

1. By the Word of God -- reading it, hearing it, and seeking to understand it.

When Paul said that he had not attained, he meant, among other things, that he did not know the truth of the Word the way he need to know it.

2. By prayer.

In prayer we draw near to God. In prayer we seek the blessing of God. Paul felt a great need for more prayer in his life.

3. By faith and patience -- the fruits of the Word and prayer. Cf. Heb. 12:2.

He needed to trust the Lord more and more.

4. By obedience to the Word of God.

This must be considered positively and negatively -- things we need to do, and other things which we must not do.

5. By diligent and faithful service.

There are obstacles which Satan places before us, and which our own sinful hearts produce, things that we experience in this evil world, which tend to keep us from such a life of pursuit.

Dr. A. W. Tozer's title, The Pursuit of Holiness, describes exactly what we are to be doing as Christians in the race that is set before us.

Concl: What application do we need to make to ourselves?

- 1) Make sure you have been apprehended by Christ. Are you one of those chosen for the race? That is not your concern. Your concern is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2) Be zealous to reach the goal. Can you say truthfully, "This one thing I do"? If you cannot, then ask the Lord to bring you to that place, and give yourself to the Word, to prayer, to obedience, to cultivate your faith, and to serving the Lord.
- 3) Remember the others who are on the Lord's team, and help them.
- 4) Ask the Lord to use you in apprehending others.

(See the final page of notes -- #6.)

Philip Doddridge, in 1755, expressed the message of our text
in the following words which are found in our Hymnal, #480:

Awake, my soul, stretch ev'ry nerve,
And press with vigour on;
A heav'nly race demands thy zeal,
And an immortal crown.

A cloud of witnesses around
Hold thee in full survey:
Forget the steps already trod,
And onward urge thy way.

'Tis God's all-animating voice
That calls thee from on high;
'Tis his own hand presents the prize
To thine aspiring eye.

That prize with peerless glories bright,
Which shall new lustre boast,
When victors' wreaths and monarchs' gems
Shall blend in common dust.

Blest Saviour, introduced by thee,
Have I my race begun;
And, crown'd with vict'ry, at thy feet
I'll lay my honors down.

A GODLY EXAMPLE
Philippians 3:17-21

Intro: In our text for today we have set before us the need to have some person or persons who are godly examples for us to follow. Sometimes we simply have the Word of God, or the Gospel of God, set before us as an example to follow.

When you stop to think about it, Paul has had a lot to say in this Epistle to the Philippians about examples:

- 1) See Phil. 1:27.
- 2) See Phil. 2:5 ff.
- 3) See Phil. 2:22.
- 4) See Phil. 2:25 ff.

This is a very strong principle in Scripture. It is the will of God that teachers personify the message which they proclaim. Those who hear them should be able to see the effect of the truth in their lives as well as to learn the doctrines of God.

Our Lord's chief objection to the Pharisees was that they were not examples of godliness. Cf. Matt. 23:1-12, esp. vv. 2, 3. They sat "in Moses' seat," exercising Moses' authority, but they did not live like Moses. Moses' life was not to be seen in them!

Elders are to be examples. See 1 Pet. 5:3. Churches are to be examples. See 1 Thess. 2:14. Parents are to be examples to their children. All of us are to become examples for others to follow.

And so we have . . .

I. PAUL'S COMMANDMENT (Phil. 3:17).

Cf. also Phil. 4:9.

The reason that Paul could say this about himself is to be seen in his letter to the Corinthians, the first one. Cf. 1 Cor. 11:1. Christ is the Supreme Example. Paul followed Christ, and the Philippians were to follow Paul. Then they would become examples for others to follow.

In all ages there is to be a distinguishing similarity, certain identifying characteristics, among the people of God.

I want to call your attention in this verse to two words: "followers" and "ensample." Actually "followers together" is the translation of one Greek word.

Paul was telling the Philippians to become, and to keep on becoming (in a more perfect way) fellow-followers of himself.

A. A follower.

This is the word from which we get our word, mimic.

I do not think I have heard this word used since I was a young man. It used to be the word that people would use for an actor, one who impersonated another person. Consequently it took on the meaning of one who was only pretending to be someone else.

To use this word of a pastor, or an elder, or of any other person, would mean that he was only acting a part; he was only pretending to be what he appeared to be.

But that is not the original meaning of the term. Actually a mimic is a person who patterns his life after another person. He wants to be as well as to do what that other person is and does!

Christ is the Supreme Example. Paul followed (mimiced) Christ. The Philippians were to mimic Paul. And others who came into the Philippian church were to mimic the people they found there.

Sometimes a young Christian does not have anyone he can mimic. This is a tragedy. But we all have our Bibles where we can see what the Lord Jesus was, what He did, the things He said, and how he lives. We also have the epistles of Paul where we can learn the same things about him as he sought to follow the Lord.

There is to be a sameness about the lives of the people of God, and we need to be very grateful to the Lord for those people He has brought into our lives who are examples for us to follow, to mimic.

The other word is . . .

B. An example, or ensample.

Cf. 1 Pet. 5:3.

We get our word, type, from the Greek word translated, example.

Another translation could be, pattern.

Illus: Patterns which are made out of wood which are used to make steel castings. The casting looked just like the pattern.

You ladies have the same thing in a dress pattern.
We are all familiar with patterns, or types.

Paul not only said that they were to follow him, but he said in the latter part of verse 17 that they were to "mark," closely observe, those who lived like he did.

This is a term which is sometimes used of the preliminary work that is done when an army is preparing to attack its enemy. We have all heard of air force reconnaissance flights. Every detail needs to be

noticed: How and when they pray;
how and when they read their Bibles;
how they deal with sin;
how they react to trials;
what they read;
where they go;
and on and on!

This is where biographies and reading other good books can be of great help to us as Christians. Preachers need to read about other preachers.

The church of Jesus Christ would be vastly different today if this principle had been followed as it was in the early church.

But now let us go on to verses 18 and 19 and note . . .

II. PAUL'S CONCERN (Phil. 3:18, 19).

One reason we need to follow good examples is because there are so many bad examples around.

And another reason we need to have good examples is because, if those who are living the wrong way are to be changed, it will usually be because they have observed the difference in the life of a Christian.

Note Paul's word, "many." Those who live the other way make up the largest segment of the human family.

Paul was concerned about both the influence and the need of those whom he described with five characteristic phrases:

- 1) "Enemies of the cross of Christ."
- 2) "Whose end is destruction."
- 3) "Whose God is their belly."
- 4) "Whose glory is in their shame."
- 5) "Who mind earthly things."

What does it mean that they are "the enemies of the cross of Christ"?

- 1) It means they have no use for the Gospel.
- 2) It means that they are not interested in a life which is consistent with the Gospel--a life of humility and self-denial.

- 3) They are not interested in eternity, in heaven or hell, because they are all-absorbed with the present life. People by nature are Epicureans.

Paul had spoken to the Philippians about this many times, and even as he wrote he was weeping! Here he was showing how much he was like the Lord.

Paul spoke this way because all men are examples, and we all are followers. The temptation is that we will follow the wrong examples. This is the problem which our young people face every day. And we as adults do, too!

But, finally, let us see why we all need a different kind of an example from that which the world gives to us, such an example as . . .

III. THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL (Phil. 3:20, 21).

To borrow Ezekiel's words which Francis Schaeffer made famous: "How should we then live?" (Ezek. 33:10).

- A. As a citizen of heaven.
- B. In eager expectation of the return of the Saviour.
- C. The change that will then take place for all believers.
- D. The confidence that Paul had in the Lord: "according to the working (the energizing) whereby he is able even to subdue (another military term) all things unto himself."

If we are following Paul's example, this is the way we will be living!

There is no question but that we have responsibilities as citizens of our country, of the states, counties, and cities in which we live, but can other people tell by the way we talk and by the way we live that we are citizens of heaven, looking for the Lord, expecting to be like Him, trusting even now that He is making us like Himself? Are you more interested in the Lord Jesus Christ than you are in any other person? Are you more interested in heaven than you are in the earth? Are you more interested in godliness than you are in earthly gain?

- Concl: What about verses 18 and 19? Are you in that category? If not, do you feel like Paul did about those who are?

THAT CHRIST IS LORD
PROOFS OF THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST
Philippians 4:1-4

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:1-9.

Intro: It is my intention today to deal with only the first 4 verses of chapter 4. However, the first 9 verses do belong together, and conclude the main message of the Epistle. From verse 10 of chapter 4 down through verse 19 Paul thanked the Philippians for the gift that they had sent to him in Rome, and then we have his concluding words in verses 20 through 23.

There is in the first 5 verses of this chapter a special emphasis on the Lordship of Christ. (See it in vv. 1, 2, 4, 5.)

This follows such statements as we have in chapter 3, verses 8 and 20. The punctuation in v. 20 could be, " . . . from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord, Jesus Christ."

In our text (4:1-4) we not only have "the Lord" referred to 3 times, but we have in each of these three instances the expression, "in the Lord."

This describes, according to what Spurgeon used to say, the circle in which every child of God lives: "in the Lord"!

He is our Lord. He is the One from Whom we receive the wisdom and the strength to do what pleases Him. And, it is primarily through our obedience to Him that we demonstrate that He is not only our Lord, but He is the Lord! This is what makes a child of God unique in the world--he knows Jesus Christ not only as his Saviour, but as his Lord.

For Jesus Christ to be Lord means not only that He is Deity, but it means that He is our Sovereign Deity. How could Deity be anything else? And we not only live by Him, but all that we do is to be for Him. If we were more faithful in drawing our strength from Him, and living to please Him, we would not have to talk so much to convince others that He really is the Lord! We cannot separate His place as our Saviour from His place as our Lord. If He is our Saviour, then He is also our Lord--but we do not always live in submission to Him. May God work in our hearts even this morning to bring us to greater yieldedness to Him and to His will.

But there is another thing that I want you to note about these first 4 verses.

We have seen in going through this Epistle that there are two main commandments given by Paul to the Philippians church--and to all of the Body of Christ:

- 1) We are to "stand fast" (Phil. 1:17).
- 2) We are to "rejoice in the Lord" (Phil. 3:1).

Both of these are not only repeated in our text, but they are joined together, related to each other.

So today we want to examine these exhortations again, relating them to each other, and looking at them in the light of the problem which Paul mentioned in verses 2 and 3.

And so let us look, first of all, at . . .

I. "STAND FAST IN THE LORD" (Phil. 4:1).

Read again Phil. 1:27.

This is a command which suggests opposition, conflict. We face enemies. They are:

- 1) The Devil above us--because he is mightier than we are.
- 2) The flesh within us--our old, sinful natures.
- 3) The world around us--our present location.

But--note that chapter 4 begins with the word, "Therefore." This immediately ties chapter 4 in with chapter 3. And, if we only take Paul's last statement in chapter 3 as the main connection, notice how beautifully it fits. We are not always going to be here in this world. The Lord is coming. And when He does, He is going to take us out of this world, forever beyond the reach of Satan, and He is going to change us so that we will no longer have these evil natures which we now have along with the new nature that we have in Christ our Lord.

Until that time we are to "stand fast."

Cf. Eph. 6:10-13 where we have the same exhortation.

What does it mean to stand?

A. The most immediate answer is in Phil. 3:15, 16.

We are to stand fast in holiness. We are not to compromise. We are to persevere in living the way the Lord wants us to live, not in the way the world would have us live. Live according to the light that the Lord has given you, and do not give ground for any reason whatsoever. The compromise road is the road to defeat and disaster.

Daniel and his three friends stood fast!

B. A second answer is found in Phil. 1:27--and here there are really two. (Read also verses 28-30.)

1. We are to stand fast in the ministry of the Gospel.

2. We are to stand fast in the defense of the Gospel.

Cf. 1 Cor. 16:13; 2 Thess. 2:15.

And note how important this was to the Apostle Paul as expressed in his first letter to the Thessalonian church: 1 Thess. 3:8, "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."

We must never give up the truth of the Gospel. We must not give up the ministry of the Gospel.

Relate this to the doctrines of grace and what the Lord is without question doing in our day. We may seem very insignificant to ourselves (and we are), but we must let our voice be heard, and heard, and heard!!!!

We must be faithful. We must persevere. We must plod ahead. We must not be discouraged. We must not give up. Let us daily find our strength in the Lord, and be assured that when we "stand fast" we are doing just what our Lord has commanded us to do.

But now let me say this: It is possible for us to do the first of these commandments without doing the second. And so we need to see that it is the combination of both of these that we must recognize, and obey.

II. "REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS: AND AGAIN I SAY, REJOICE" (Phil. 4:4).

Now it is obvious that in the case of both of these commandments we have repetition.

And not only are they repeated, but this second one is also repeated in this fourth verse: " . . . and again I say, Rejoice."

Why do we have so much repetition in Scripture?

Cf. the refrain in Psa. 107: "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness . . ."

There are at least three reasons that things are repeated in the Word of God:

- 1) They are very, very important to God.
- 2) They are at the moment very needed in the lives of the people of God.
- 3) They are very rare, very difficult to realize in the daily living of the Lord's people.

Do you not find that all of these are applicable today?

It makes no difference how long we have known the Lord, or how recently we have been saved, we are to "rejoice in the Lord." It makes no difference what we may be going through, we are to "rejoice in the Lord." If the Lord says that we are to "rejoice" in Him ALWAYS, then it means that, "in the Lord," we will always be able to, and that this must be our objective every day we live.

- A. To "rejoice in the Lord" means that we are rejoicing in Him as a Person.

We love Him. We love to learn of Him. And we love all that we know about Him. We delight in every one of His attributes--His love, His grace, His wisdom, His power, His faithfulness, His righteousness, His holiness, and on and on!

- B. To "rejoice in the Lord" means that we are rejoicing in the works of the Lord.

1. In His work as Creator.

Have you learned this? Have you seen how much there is of this in the Scriptures.

Illustration: the beauty of a rose, or of an African violet--or of a poinsettia.

2. In His work as our Saviour.

- a. What Christ did for us on the Cross.
- b. What Christ did in us when we were saved, and since we have been saved.
- c. What Christ has been pleased to do through us.

To rejoice in Him means that we praise Him, we glorify Him, we acknowledge that our blessings all come from Him and that we deserve none of them! We rejoice in the Lord when we are trusting Him to enable us to "rejoice." Cf. Heb. 13:15.

The life of a Christian is a life of continual rejoicing in the Lord. We need to stand fast, not feeling sorry for ourselves, not murmuring because we wish things were different, but always rejoicing in the Lord.

How hard it is for us to learn this lesson, and yet how vital and how needful it is! We would see that our problems are not nearly as great as we think they are if we were only learning to rejoice in the Lord. We are

are not to rejoice
-- in ourselves,
-- in our accomplishments,
-- in our possessions,
-- in our circumstances,
-- in other people,
-- or in anything else--
except as we see the Lord in all of these things.

The whole of the Christian life can be summed up in these two commandments. If you and I are obeying these, everything else will fit into place.

Let us be praying that the Lord will help us to "stand fast" and to "rejoice" in Him!

But one thing remains in our consideration of this text.

I have said that standing fast expresses conflict, warfare. I have also said that we have three main enemies--the Devil, the world, and the flesh. Trouble for a church can be outside, or it can be inside. Where was it in Philippi at the time Paul wrote this Epistle?

III. THE CURRENT PROBLEM (Phil. 4:1-3).

It was in the church.

It involved two ladies: Euodias and Syntyche.

They were prominent ladies, and according to verse 3 both of them had worked with Paul "in the gospel."

But now there was trouble!

Some trouble had arisen. Perhaps there was jealousy. They may have become competitors. There obviously was pride because they were no longer of one mind in the Lord. They had gotten their eyes off of the Lord, and on themselves, or on each other. There were definitely two sides to the problem--as there always are!

Paul addressed them by name. And then he called up some man to "help" them. In the KJV the man is called a "true yokefellow," but there are those who feel that "yokefellow" should be translated as a proper name. If so, it would be Syn-zy-gus. He was a "true yokefellow" in fact and in name--faithful, loyal, true, genuine.

How damaging trouble between two saints can be! It can tear a church apart. James was talking about the tongue when he said, "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

(Jas. 3:5b). Paul said, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (1 Cor. 5:6b).

The only way we can really and effectively "stand fast" is when we are also rejoicing the Lord! And when we rejoice in the Lord, how dear the people of God become to us-- especially those in our own fellowship. Note the words that Paul used for the people of God in Philippi:

- 1) "Brethren" -- as in 1:12; 3:1, 13, 17; 4:8. See also 1:14; 4:21.
- 2) "Dearly beloved" -- 2 times in this one verse. It indicates that Paul preferred his brethren in Christ to any and everybody else in the world.
- 3) "Longed for" -- Paul missed them. He wanted to see them and be with them.
- 4) "Joy" -- He delighted in them. They pleased him. Cf. 1 Thess. 2:19, 20.
- 5) "Crown" -- They were an ornament and an honor to him.

So when we really love the Lord and rejoice in Him, it makes us love each other even more.

There is really more of a threat to any church from within than there is from without. Are we aware of this?

To avoid trouble we need to "stand fast in the Lord" and to "rejoice in the Lord."

Concl: Our children have "show and tell" at school.

The Christian, the church, has its own "show and tell." Perhaps it would be better to say, "Go and show and tell."

- 1) We go to the world.
- 2) We show by our lives how much we love the Lord, His Word, and each other.
- 3) Then we tell the message of salvation.

It is only as we show the reality of our relationship to the Lord that there will be the power of God manifested in what we tell.

At this Christmas season when there are so many who do not have the slightest idea of the meaning of the birth of Christ, let us "stand fast" in the Lord for the truth, but let us also do delight ourselves in the Lord, rejoicing in Him, that people may be able to see the effect of what the Lord's work in us is that they may realize that the Lord is their only hope.

PATIENCE, PRAYER, AND PEACE
Philippians 4:5-7

Intro: It would be interesting to know how much accumulated time has been spent in the Word of God during 1984 by those of us who are a part of this ministry at Trinity Bible Church. I would imagine that it would be a considerable amount.

Many of you have been reading your Bible through again this year. I have been asking you to read the books of the Bible that we have been considering together. You have been reading the Scriptures we have studied in SS. It is good that we do not know how much time has been spent in the Word because we might be inclined to boast about it. But I will pose another question that we really ought to be concerned about: HOW MUCH GOOD, SPIRITUAL GOOD, HAS COME TO US BECAUSE OF THE TIME WE HAVE SPENT IN THE WORD?

Arthur Pink has an excellent little book which I read this past year called, Profiting From The Word. He deals rather exhaustively with this subject, and I hope that you will include that book in your reading for 1985. But let me just make a few suggestions as to how we can know that we are really "profiting" from our time in the Word.

Perhaps 2 Tim. 3:16, 17 would be a good place to start. (Quote it.)

Paul made it very clear to Timothy that, if he were profiting from the Word he would be learning the truth of the Word: "doctrine."

He also made it clear that there would be some real changes in his life: "reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness." If our time in the Word is meaning something to us then our lives will begin to look more like the Word of God!

But a third thing that Paul pointed out is that, if we are "profiting from the Word," we will want to be involved in serving the Lord in some way.

Let me ask another question: In addition to these things that I have just mentioned (because they apply to all of the Word of God), WHAT SHOULD WE LOOK FOR AS A RESULT OF THE TIME WE HAVE BEEN GIVING TO THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS?

One very obvious answer is that we ought to love God and love our Lord Jesus Christ more than we ever have before!

Now, let me give you a third question: HAS ALL OF THIS BEEN TAKING PLACE IN YOUR LIFE TO SOME EXTENT? As we come to the end of 1984 can you really say that you know the Lord, and love

the Lord better, that your life is different, that you want to live for Him and serve Him more than ever before?

I hope you can.

— But this all leads me to the message that I want to give to you this morning.

Paul has had two things on his heart as far as the practical effect of the truth is concerned--as it applied to the Philip-
pians:

- 1) That they would "stand fast in the Lord," and
- 2) That they would "rejoice in the Lord."

And he keeps them in that order. (Explain from the Epistle.)

Do you know what it means to do both, and are you doing both?

Well, you may come back at me and say, "Pastor, how can I tell that I am?" All right, let us look at our text.

If we are standing fast in the Lord, and if we are rejoicing in the Lord, then, as far as our text takes us, our lives will be characterized by:

- 1) Patience,
- 2) Prayer,
- 3) Peace.

— We have patience in v. 5, prayer in verse 6, and peace in v. 7.

I. PATIENCE (Phil. 4:5).

This is not the most common word for prayer in the NT, but it rather describes the kind of a person who will be patient.

It speaks of a person who is gentle, mild in disposition, meek, patient.

It is translated "patient" in 1 Tim. 3:3. It is translated "gentle" in Tit. 3:2. "Gentle" in 1 Pet. 2:18. In Jas. 3:17, "gentle," concerning the wisdom that is from above.

There is a sweet reasonableness about this kind of a person.

All of the above are adjectives.

— The noun of this verb is found in Acts 24:4 where it is translated, "clemency" -- which means mercy or forbearance or mild, as in the case of weather.

In 2 Cor. 10:1 Paul used it in speaking of "the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

Obviously we are to seek to be this kind of a person before our fellow-believers, and before all others.

But how?

Note what Paul wrote next: "The Lord is at hand."

This has been interpreted in two different ways, and probably both apply here:

- 1) Of the coming of the Lord.
- 2) Of the omnipresence of the Lord.

And the emphasis is upon the fact that He is "the Lord"!

The emphasis in these verses has to do with troubles, trials, the problems that beset us as Christians. People are watching to see what our reaction will be. Think of Euodias and Syntyche. They were not behaving with moderation, and it seems that they had forgotten that "the Lord is at hand."

Oh, the problems we have when we forget the Lord--His presence, His power, His wisdom, His love, and so on and on!

When you realize that the Lord is sovereign in your circumstances, that He is in control, then it is the part of wisdom to settle down, to be submissive, and to wait to see what He will do.

But there is another way in which we become patient people. It is by . . .

II. PRAYER (Phil. 4:6).

Spurgeon suggested that "careful" ought to be spelled care-full, because the word means, full of care, anxious, worried!

There are many things that we need to be careful about, but there is nothing that we ought to be worried about!

What do we worry about?

We worry about the future. We worry about our health. We sometimes worry about the past. We worry about our children. We worry about war. We worry about money. Sometimes we worry about the Lord's work. In short, we are inclined to worry about practically everything!

Worry is an indication of two things:

- 1) We have forgotten the Lord; we have gotten our eyes off of Him.
- 2) We are not praying as we should--maybe not praying at all!

How are we to pray?

- A. About everything -- the little things as well as the big things. They are all little to God.
- B. By prayer and supplication.

We may not get an answer the first time, but we need to keep praying. The Lord often delays the answer in order to keep us coming to Him.

- C. With thanksgiving.

Before we ask for a burden to be removed, or for a load to be lifted, we need to give thanks for it.

- D. Unto God.

He knows what we are worried about, but He wants to hear it from us. We will not pray unless we recognize that we do have certain, specific needs which we bring before God!

What, then, is the promise?

It concerns . . .

III. PEACE (Phil. 4:7).

This is the peace of God in two senses:

- 1) The peace which God possesses.
- 2) The peace which comes from God to us.

Paul did not say anything here about the trouble being taken away. But it is possible to enjoy His peace while we are still in the midst of whatever situation which has caused us to worry. That is the reason that it "passeth all understanding."

And "the peace of God" which is incomprehensible sets us a military guard (that is the meaning of the word, "keep") so that nothing else can enter in to destroy the peace that we have from God.

In the history of the church there are some remarkable examples of what the peace of God will do in the hearts and minds of the people of God.

Spurgeon told the story of a martyr
who was about to burn for Christ,
and
he said to the judge who was giving orders to fire

the pile, "Will you come and lay your hand on my heart?" The judge did so. "Does it beat fast?" enquired the martyr. "Do I show signs of fear?" "No," said the judge. "Now lay your hand on your own heart, and see whether you are not more excited than I am." (Vol. 40, p. 116.)

Martyrs have been thrown to wild animals, killed by being forced to sit in iron chairs which were red hot, or covered with honey from head to foot until they were stung to death by bees--yet they never flinched so great was the peace of God in their hearts.

There is on record the story of a martyr who was being roasted to death on a gridiron. At one point, as he was dying, he turned to his persecutor and said, "You have cooked me on one side; turn me over now, and do the other side."

"The peace of God which passeth all understanding."

Concl: You see, standing fast in the Lord not only means that we are standing fast for the truth, but it means that we are standing fast in the midst of the trials and testings which we experience every day.

To rejoice in the Lord not only means that we praise Him for saving us, but it means that He is the joy and delight of our hearts while we are in the center of our storms, and not just when the storms are over!

Richard Sibbes, one of the Puritans, once wrote,
. . . the way to be above all things is to submit to
God first (The Bruised Reed in Vol. I, p. 36).

To be patient, to let our moderation be known unto all men, means that we are cultivating that meek and quiet and submissive spirit which in the sight of God is of great price! Then, as we pour out our hearts to God in prayer, we experience that wonderful, amazing peace, which sets up a guard not only to give us peace at a particular time, but to keep us living in peace every day of our lives!

May the Lord enable us to profit from the Word by showing in our lives how sufficient He is for any trial and for all trials through which we may pass.

THINGS TO PONDER AND PRACTISE
Philippians 4:8, 9

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:1-9.

- Intro: We come in our text to Paul's second "finally" in this Epistle. However, remember that this is not a word indicating that he is concluding. We might translate them this way in this Epistle:
- 1) In Phil. 3:1 it is as though Paul were saying, "Now as to the other thing that I want to tell you, . . ." And then he went on to write about the second and only other thing that he wanted them to do: "Rejoice in the Lord."
 - 2) In Phil. 4:8 it is as though he was saying, "Now all that remains for you to do is this: . . ."
It was not as though he was saying all that he could say, but he was saying enough so that their fellowship and their blessing could be preserved, and so their testimony in Philippi would not be tarnished nor hindered in any way.

When we examine these two verses of our text (vv. 8, 9) we can see that:

- 1) There are some things that Paul wanted them to ponder. Note the words at the end of v. 8, "Think on these things."
The word that Paul used here means not only to notice and to think about them, but also to see the value of them and then to desire these things for themselves. I will point out in a minute where they were to see them.
- 2) There were some things that Paul wanted them to practice. This is the meaning of the word "do" toward the close of v. 9.
- 3) Then, v. 9 closes with a promise: "And the God of peace shall be with you."

Let us examine these in the order in which they are found in our text.

I. THINGS TO PONDER (Phil. 4:8).

It is obvious from Phil. 1:27 on that Paul was concerned about disunity in the Philippian church. The problem seems to have centered in the difficulty that Euodias and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2) were having with each other. But, as always, a little problem can soon become a big problem and threaten a whole church. They had gotten their eyes off of the Lord, they were concentrating on each other's weak points, and consequently were failing to look at the good things. This meant that the things that are really important were not as important to the Philippians as they should have been.

And so Paul sought to turn their attention to six characteristics of life which he wanted them to think about, see the

value of, and then desire for themselves. (Read what they are.) These are characteristics which should be outstanding and praiseworthy to the people of God.

The question is: Where are we going to be able to see them?
The answer is threefold:

- 1) We are going to be able to see them in the Lord.
- 2) We are going to be able to see them in Paul. See v. 9.
- 3) We are going to be able to see them in each other!

What is the purpose of our salvation?

Let us remind ourselves of what Paul said in Phil. 1:6.
What is that work? Cf. also Phil. 3:20, 21. It is conformity to Christ, to be made like Christ!

And therefore it must be recognized that in the weakest believer, in the child of God most recently born into the family of God, there are some Christ-like traits. If there are none, then the person is not a Christian. They have to be there.

What are they? (We do not need to think of this as a complete list; the end of the verse indicates that it is not. But it is a characteristic list!)

A. "True."

This speaks of that which is true as opposed to false.
This speaks of that which is genuine as opposed to fake.
This speaks of that which is real as opposed to an imitation.

Where do you find the true pattern for a Christian?
The answer: only in Christ. Listen to 1 John 5:20:
And we know that the Son of God is come,
and hath given us an understanding,
that we may know him that is true,
and we are in him that is true,
even in his Son Jesus Christ.
This is the true God, and eternal life.

You will never find any imperfection in Christ. All is genuine, real. But you will find plenty of imperfection in any child of God. But this is the point: LOOK FOR THE TRUE.

Illus: The words of the native when asked by the big game hunter if he believed the Bible he was reading while sitting beside a big, boiling pot of water.

B. "Honest."

This word is translated "grave" in a number of places in the NT. E.g., 1 Tim. 3:8, 11.

It does mean sober, serious, but not in a repulsive way. It means a person who is controlled by a serious purpose, and who is revered, held in high esteem, for it. The Greeks used this word to describe a person who was in touch with the heavenly world, and in a close relationship with it.

It is opposed to that which is frivolous, low down, indecorous, mean, unworthy. It is awe-inspiring, majestic. It attracts, and it compels others to be like it is.

Again--who is more like this than the Lord Jesus.

But have you not seen some of the Lord's people who were like this?

I thought of Mrs. Willies as I was studying this word.

C. "Just."

This is the word righteous. Basically it means that which conforms to a standard. In the Bible it means measuring up to what God is, and what God wants us to be. In God it means that His acts conform perfectly with His nature. God never does what He would not be expected to do.

Now no Christian is absolutely "just," but think about those qualities which you can see in him which indicate that to some extent he is as God would have him be.

Sometimes a person's doctrine may not be all that it should be, but he may put us to shame in His love for the Lord. Look at that, and learn from that, and desire to be like that.

Church leaders are to have that divine attractiveness about them that will cause the people under their care to want to be like them, as they are like the Lord.

D. "Pure."

This means to be chaste, modest, morally pure. It means that we are not to be contaminated with any evil.

This word is used of God in 1 John 3:2. Think about Him and about Christ in this connection. It is used of a godly wife in 1 Pet. 3:2. In 1 Tim. 5:22 Paul told

Timothy, "Keep thyself pure." In James 3:17 we read that "the wisdom that is from above is first pure . . ."

The world is full of impurity. We see it and hear it all of the time. Is that what you look at? Is that what you think about? Is that the way you speak? Is that what you read?

Evaluate the lives of those who live in impurity as compared with purity. Seek in all things to be like the Lord in this.

E. "Lovely."

This is whatever causes a person to be endeared either by what he says, or what he does, or both.

What is there in the Lord that has caused you to love Him? What is there about other Christians that has caused you to love them? There may be things that have offended you, but look for the "lovely."

Here we are concerned with the answer to the question, "Why do I love the Lord, and His people?" It is because you have found that in them which to you is "lovely."

F. "Of good report."

This has reference to the good things which can be said about a person, especially with reference to the kindly spirit he shows, and the good will which he manifests toward others.

Again in this, as in the preceding words, none can compare with the Lord Jesus.

In addition, whatever else has to do with excelling in moral qualifites, and whatever else is worthy of approval and commendation from God, "THINK ON THESE THINGS." Concentrate on these, and then pray that what you see of them in the lives of your fellow-believers will be true of you as well.

But there is a second concluding word here:

II. THINGS TO PRACTISE (Phil. 4:9a).

Paul here claims that his life is a reflection of that which he taught the Philippians. He had come to teach them the Gospel, but also to show them the effect that the Gospel had had in his own life.

He mentioned four things:

- A. What they had learned as he had taught.
- B. What they had received--their response to his teaching.
- C. What they had heard.
- D. What they had seen. His example in what he had said,
and in the way he was living.

They were to "do," to practise, to live as they had seen him live.

"Those things" mentioned at the beginning of v. 9 must be a reference to "these things" at the end of v. 8--the same things!

III. THE PROMISE: "... and the God of peace shall be with you." Cf. Phil. 4:9b.

There are certain laws of God which produce certain results, and if we violate those laws, we suffer loss. Note what Paul said in Rom. 14:19:

Let us follow after the things which make for peace,
and things wherewith one may edify another.
We all want peace, but we do not always pursue the things
which will result in peace.

Sin never makes for peace. Ignoring God does not make for peace. A self-centered life does not make for peace. To love the Word does make for peace. To love and obey God makes for peace. A holy life makes for peace.

What does it mean to be at peace? Peace is when everything within us is in perfect harmony.

"The God of peace" is certainly related to the expression, "the peace of God," in v. 7.

God is "the God of peace" because He is always at peace, and because He is the source of our peace.

"With us" is an OT expression which means on our side, working in our behalf!

As Thomas Manton once said, ". . . if he (God) smiles, whose frowns need we fear?" (Vol. 19, p. 83). When the Lord gives peace, who then can make war?

Concl: So you can see that our fellowship together, our peace, our joy in the Lord, depends not just on what we know, but upon what we do with what we know! How important it is that we concentrate on the right things, and that we seek to follow the Lord, the Apostle Paul, and each other in the things which make for godliness and lead to peace.

CONTENTMENT
Philippians 4:10-13

Intro: As we get to this point in the Epistle, Paul was bringing his letter to a close.

And yet, this may have been the main thing that caused him to write to the Philippians: to thank them for the gift which they had sent to him through Epaphroditus! See 4:18.

(Review what Paul had written about Epaphroditus back in 2:25-30. This is the only book in the Bible where he is mentioned.)

We do not know what the gift was which Epaphroditus brought from the Philippians, but in 2:25 Paul spoke of him as "he that ministered to my wants," i.e., my needs. Also, in 4:14 he spoke of his "affliction," or distress. In 4:16, of his "necessity." So we can assume that the Philippians sent things which were necessary for Paul's daily needs--things like clothing, food, and perhaps some money.

And the first thing that is apparent as Paul referred to their gift was . . .

I. HIS JOY (Phil. 4:10).

Today I want to consider with you only the first four verses of our Scripture reading. Here we really have Paul's testimony regarding their gift--and it is most unusual in comparing what he said with what is usually said about money in the church and by Christian leaders today.

His joy was great, but it was "in the Lord." What does this mean? Remember that rejoicing in the Lord was one of the main things that Paul had written about in this Epistle.

It means that, while Paul was thankful to them for their gift, he looked upon the gift as from the Lord. It was the Lord Who had

- 1) enabled them to give,
- and who had
- 2) made them desire to give.

And so Paul was rejoicing in what the Lord had done for him through the Philippians!

There is a fine line of distinction here. We need to be grateful to people, but we need to remember that none of us could do anything, none of us could give anything, if the Lord did not first give to us, and then move our hearts to give. So the glory really belongs to the Lord. And yet it is still right for us to thank each other!

But how often we forget the Lord in this.

Think of what an example Joseph in the book of Genesis was along this line:

- 1) When he interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, he gave God the glory.
- 2) When he spoke of the provision that he made for his brothers, again he said it was God!

How we need to look beyond beyond the immediate source to the One Who is the ultimate source of every blessing we have!

Notice: God not only gave to the Philippians so they could give, and then made them willing to give, but he opened the way so that the "opportunity" was there.

But there is a second thing in this passage.

II. HIS SATISFACTION (Phil. 4:11, 12).

Paul expressed it as contentment.

Now here is a most unusual thing: Paul had all kinds of needs, needs involving his daily existence, and yet he was perfectly satisfied BEFORE Epaphroditus got there, and, apparently, even though he did not know that Epaphroditus was coming!

Thayer, in his Greek lexicon (or dictionary), explains this word as indicating "a perfect condition of life" (p. 84).

It actually means that Paul was satisfied, perfectly satisfied, that he had all that he needed when he still had some very real needs. These are not luxuries that we are talking about; these are the necessities of life.

It is obvious that Paul was happy after Epaphroditus came, but be sure to see that he was perfectly contented before Epaphroditus came.

One verse in our Bible where this word contentment is used but where it is translated with another word, is 2 Cor. 9:8. Listen to it:

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.

"Sufficiency" is the word I refer to. The contented person is the person who has enough. The difference with a Christian is that he can know that he has exactly what the Lord wants him to have when, from a human point of view, he has come real needs.

But, you and I should ask, how did Paul find contentment?

The answer: He "learned" it!

By nature we are not contented. We are not satisfied. No, by nature we are murmurers! Very few things really please us. We always are wishing that we had more than we have, and we always want our circumstances to be different from what they are.

Modern advertising capitalizes on our lack of contentment. All day long we are being told that we cannot be happy if we do not have this, or that. And then when we get those things, we are not satisfied because there are other things that we wish we had.

Paul had learned a great lesson which very few of the Lord's people have learned. Think of how rare it is to find even among Christians today a truly contented person. You do not talk to any of us very long before you discover this.

Notice the word "learned" for a moment.

It is a word which indicates a teaching situation--perhaps I could even suggest going to school.

If we are going to learn,

- 1) there must be a teacher,
- 2) there must be a subject which is to be taught,
- 3) there must be a pupil--someone who needs to learn what the teacher is prepared to teach.

Paul was the pupil. No one will learn much until he realizes that he needs to learn.

The Lord is the Teacher--the only Teacher.

The subject is contentment. The textbook is the Bible. The testing takes place every day we live. And how often we fail.

But there is an interesting thing about this word, "learned," which is suggested by A. T. Robertson in his comments on it. He said that Paul expressed this in such a way as to imply that he was looking back over his whole life as a unit to indicate that this was the main thing that the Lord had been teaching him ever since he became a child of God.

And what evidence there is in this Epistle that he had "learned" his lesson well! He had a positive view about his imprisonment. He could speak of death without fear. He showed more concern about the Philippians than he did about himself. He had such an understanding of the sovereignty of God that he knew things were just as the Lord

wanted them to be.

And so Epaphroditus did not find Paul anxious and distraught!
He found him happy, and peaceful, and contented.

How could Paul be like this when humanly speaking his circumstances were so bad?

My last point is:

III. HIS STRENGTH (Phil. 4:13).

Let me make one thing clear: We never graduate from the Lord's school. There are always advanced courses to be taken in the same department. And we never leave our Teacher behind. He is always with us to see how we are doing. In fact, He is always with us to make sure that we do well.

Note what Paul wrote in this 13th verse. (Read it.) What a statement this is!

Some MSS leave out "through Christ" so that we would then translate it,

I have strength for all things through Him Who
pours strength into me.

Now there is no question but that He was speaking of Christ. Cf. Gal. 2:20. But He also could have been speaking of the Father (Col. 1:11), and of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

The contented Christian is not some super giant of a person. No, he is in himself just as weak and helpless and dependent as ever. But he lives his life in dependence upon God, and upon Christ, and upon the Holy Spirit, knowing that in himself he is not ready for anything, but in Them He is ready for anything that comes along, and perfectly satisfied with what God does with Him.

Paul had "learned," he had been "instructed," in the absolute sufficiency of Christ--and so he was always contented.

Concl: Of course the greatest example of a contented persons that we have in the Bible is our Lord Jesus Christ.

And let us remember this when we read or hear Heb. 4:15, For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Let me remind you of what our Lord said on one occasion--a statement full of meaning. It is found in Matt. 11. Read the whole chapter in the light of what is said in verse 25. Note the circumstances regarding John the Baptist's question. See how

opposition was being to arise against the Lord. And then see not only that the Lord prayed, but how He prayed. And then the chapter closes with that gracious call from our Lord which, in itself, means CONTENTMENT!

— Have you realized that this is why you are where you are today? Have you realized that this is why you have experienced the trials that you have had this past week?

The Lord is our Teacher, and He is seeking to show us that we can be absolutely contented, feeling our need of nothing else, as long as we have HIM!

He will never fail us. He is never inadequate. But this is what we must learn. Only a Christian knows that you can at the same time have nothing and yet possess all things. Cf. 2 Cor. 6:10.

A PATHWAY TO BLESSING
Philippians 4:14-23

Intro: There are many things for us to learn when we become Christians:

- 1) The need for Bible reading.
- 2) The need to obey the Word of God.
- 3) The need to pray.
- 4) The need for divine help and blessing, the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- 5) The need for fellowship with other Christians, the importance of the church.
- 6) Witnessing--by life and by word of mouth.

But one thing that is very important, and which we usually learn the wrong way, is what the Bible teaches about giving, and about the use of our money.

The Bible plainly teaches that "the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10), but it is equally true that when we honor the Lord with our money, it can be the means of great blessing!

Remember, though, that when we talk about giving to the Lord, or about giving to the Lord's work, we are talking about that which has to do with the people of God. If you are not a Christian, God does not want your money, and the church should not appeal for your money. God wants your heart. That comes first. What the Bible says about giving to the Lord always has to do with those who are the Lord's people. And the church commits a grievous sin against God when she goes to the world for financial help.

The church also sins when she puts her own people under bondage and under pressure to give. That is one reason we do not pass an offering plate. In fact, we do not even own any. We have an offering box at the back of the auditorium where believers may give is they so desire, but remember that the Word says, speaking to the church,

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart,
so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity:
for God loveth a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7)

So, Christians are to give to the Lord, but they are to give from the heart, and, as our text for today shows us, we are to expect that our giving will bring blessing to us as it, first of all, brings glory to God.

I would be remiss in my responsibilities as your pastor not to teach you what the Word of God has to say about giving, about the way you and I are to honor the Lord with our money. This is one of the pathways to blessing spoken of in the Word.

It is interesting to see how the Apostle Paul spoke about the giving of the Philippians as it related to himself. He needed their gift, and yet he didn't! He was thankful for it, but the Lord had taught him how to go without it, if that were the will of God. How different this is from what we hear today. From what you hear over radio and television, and from much of the mail you receive from Christian workers, you would think that God and His work are facing collapse. We are hounded with appeals for money!

How different are Paul's words.

Listen to what he wrote to the Corinthians in 2 Cor. 12:14,
Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you;
and I will not be burdensome to you:
for I seek not your's, but you:
for the children ought not to lay up for the parents,
but the parents for the children.

(Explain it.)

And then he wrote in the beginning of the following verse:
And I will very gladly spent and be spent
for you . . .

Illus: Charlie Riggs, who would not receive any honorarium when he came to West Memorial, but left \$50 on our dresser for us in those days when \$50 was a week's income for us!

When the Lord was training His disciples he said, "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8). Instead, the church today asks for pledges, and may send you a bill if you get behind in it. And almost every organization claiming to be Christian is conducting seminars these days, but you can only get in on it if you pay a fee--and often it is a large fee. Where do you find a basis for this in the Word of God?

If you know the Lord as your Saviour, you have a great responsibility to honor the Lord with your money, but the tactics of churches and other Christian works to get money have strayed far from the teaching of Scripture. As in so many other things, in what we do and in what we teach about giving, we need to get back to the Bible.

But let me point out something else very wonderful from our text regarding giving. It is found in verse 18. It is this: GIVING IS A PRIESTLY WORK.

One of the many truths that was re-discovered during the time of the Protestant Reformation was the priesthood of believers. This is taught in such verses as 1 Peter 2:5, 9. (Read.)

In our text we have it in the words in verse 18, "an odour

of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God."

When the Lord's people give because they want to please the Lord, because they love the Lord, because they love His servants and His work, it is just as pleasing to God as were the burnt and meal and peace offerings of the OT priesthood!

But if we give because it is tax deductible, or because we feel that we have to, or because we want people to know that we give, there will be no blessing in that! These verses in Philippians 4 give us an excellent picture of the kind of giving which pleases the Lord. And note from the latter part of verse 15 how rare this kind of giving was even in those days!

There is obviously much more in the Bible about giving than we have here in Philippians 4, but we want to concentrate on what we have here. I have said that Paul designates giving as A PATHWAY TO BLESSING. What kind of blessing, or blessings? Let us see.

I. A BLESSING FOR ALL ETERNITY (Phil. 4:17).

Giving is not just something that has to do with this life; the results will be experienced for all eternity.

Do you really believe this?

Listen to these words of our Lord found in Mark 9:41,
For whosoever shall give you a cup of water
in my name, because ye belong to Christ,
verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.
Do you believe that? IT IS TRUE!

Paul said that one reason he delighted in their gift was not because he wanted their money, but because he wanted them to have some rewards when they got to heaven!

Don't be the kind of a Christian who is not interested in rewards!

II. A BLESSING FOR THE PRESENT (Phil. 4:18).

Nothing brings us greater joy, nothing brings us more real joy, than to know that what we are doing is pleasing to the Lord. Giving pleases the Lord when we do it because we love Him and want to glorify Him.

Illus: The lady in Vancouver whose husband would not let her have money for the church, so she gave her bus fare for her trip home, and then walked home.

Remember that it is not the amount we give, but the motive and the spirit in which we give.

But notice a third blessing:

III. A BLESSING FOR ALL PRESENT AND FUTURE TIME (Phil. 4:19).

This verse is often taken out of context. It is a promise to those who give like the Philippians gave to Paul.

The Philippian church was not a wealthy church. In fact, it was just the opposite. They probably were giving what they really needed for themselves. But they gave anyway because they loved the Lord and they loved Paul. So what did Paul tell them, knowing their circumstances? He told them that the Lord would not let them go without their needs being met.

Dwell on those word, "But my God . . ."

Notice the certainty: "Shall supply."

Notice the comprehensiveness of the promise: "All." What needs do we have--materially, physically, spiritually?

Notice the inexhaustible, divine resources: "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Shame on us that we give the impression to each other as well as to the world that our God is a pauper Who is dependent upon His people for the needs of His work, and that He cannot do more until we do more! What dishonor we bring upon His Name by the tactics we use. God is not dependent upon us; we are dependent upon Him! We cannot give to Him unless He gives to us, but when we give to Him, then He will not let us go with unmet needs.

Concl: And so what is the conclusion?

Here it is in verse 20:

Now unto God and our Father
be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

God was to be glorified because of what the Philippians gave to Paul, and He alone was to be glorified because of the blessings they would experience in return.

The last three verses contain greetings, and a prayer. How precious was the fellowship between Paul and the Philippian church!