

Outline of Philippians

- I. Paul's Greeting (Phil. 1:1-2).**
- II. Paul's Delight in the Philippian believers (Phil.1:3-11).**
 - A. His thanksgiving to God for them (1:3-8).**
 - B. His prayer for them (1:9-11).**
- III. Paul's Report to the church about his imprisonment (Phil.1:12-26).**
- IV. Paul's Exhortations to the Church (Phil.1:27-2:18).**
 - A. To be likeminded and humble (1:27-2:4).**
 - B. To have the mind of Christ (2:5-11).**
 - C. To work out their own salvation (2:12-18).**
- V. Paul's Beloved Co-workers (Phil.2:19-30).**
 - A. Timothy (2:19-24).**
 - B. Epaphroditus (2:25-30).**
- VI. THE PRE-EMINENT THEME OF THE EPISTLE (Phil. 3:1-4:9).**
 - A. "Rejoice in the Lord" (3:1-3).**
 - B. Paul's testimony of his joy in the Lord (3:4-14).**
 - C. Paul, the Example to follow (3:15-4:9). Note especially 3:17 and 4:9.**
- VII. Paul's "thank you" for the church's gift (Phil. 4:10-19).**
- VIII. Paul's Conclusion (Phil. 4:20-23).**

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul
Tuesday Bible Class – November 22, 1999
Introduction to Philippians

Intro: The four epistles which Paul wrote during his first imprisonment are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. We do not know the exact order in which they were written, but it seems certain that they were all written from Rome, and early in the A.D. 60's, somewhere between 61 and 63. The last of Paul's epistles, the Pastoral Epistles, were written toward the end of the 60's, between 65 and 68. These are the dates given by A. T. Robertson.

We all know that Ephesians and Colossians are very similar, Ephesians being the longer epistle. Philemon was a man in the Colossian church, and it is very probable that Tychicus delivered the epistle to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, and to Philemon on the same trip. Philippians may have been the earliest of these four epistles, but we cannot say that for sure. *The letter to the church at Philippi was prompted by a gift which the believers at Philippi had sent to Paul, and so we can speak of it as a divinely inspired "thank you note."*

But, as always was the case, Paul looked upon letter-writing as an opportunity for ministry to the people of God, as well as an occasion to encourage the Lord's people. His encouragement usually took the form of telling them how he was praying for them as well as commending them for the way they were walking with the Lord. In the case of his letter to the Philippians, he encouraged them also by telling them how his imprisonment had resulted in special opportunities to spread the message of the Gospel.

Philippians is intensely personal. In fact, one writer called this epistle *Paul's Spiritual Autobiography* – and that is an excellent title for the epistle. The church at Philippi was founded by the Apostle Paul (see Acts 16:12-40), and he felt very close to the believers there. As one writer has said, they "held a special place in his heart" (taken from the article on this epistle in Nelson's Bible Dictionary).

But there are two great truths which are given special emphasis in the epistle to the Philippians: one, on Christ; the second, rejoicing in the Lord. Paul's imprisonment had drawn his heart more than ever to Christ, and this produced in his heart a joy which he probably had never known before. We all would rather avoid trials and testings of any kind, but those which the Lord has designed for us produce spiritual blessings and results in our lives which cannot be attained in any other way. Paul would rather have been free than to be a prisoner of Rome, but he found not only personal enrichment in that Roman prison, but also opportunities to testify to people which he would not have had otherwise. And in that prison he found that the Lord continued to supply his needs, and that the hearts of the Lord's people rallied in his behalf to provide for him in a material way.

In Nelson's Bible Dictionary I ran across what is to me an excellent overview of what the writer called "the theological contribution" which Paul made in writing the epistle to the Philippians. This is what the writer had to say:

PHILIPPIANS, EPISTLE TO THE

Theological Contribution. The focus of Paul's thoughts in this epistle is the Christ-centered life, the hallmark of which is joy. Paul has surrendered everything to Christ and can say, "For to me, to live is Christ" (1:21), "my bonds in Christ" (1:13), "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (1:20), "but what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ," "and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . that I may win Christ (3:7-8). "I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (3:12). Paul's sole passion was to glorify Christ. Paul longed for his experience of Christ to be repeated in the lives of the Philippians. He prayed that

they will abound in the love of Christ (1:9), will lay hold of the mind of Christ (2:5-11), and like himself, will know Christ "and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (3:10-11).

Because Paul's only motive is to "know Him" (3:10), he shares in the power of Christ and "can do all things through Christ," who is his joy and strength (4:13).

Several times in the epistle Paul exhorts the Philippians to translate their relationship with Christ into daily life by being "like-minded" with Christ or "setting their minds on Christ." In the face of opposition, Paul tells them to "stand fast...with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (1:27). Differences between Christians can be overcome when the parties have "the same mind in the Lord" (4:2). Paul exhorts the believers to set their mind on the high calling of God in Jesus Christ (3:14-15) and to meditate on whatever is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (4:8). To have the mind of Christ is to see life from Christ's perspective and to act toward other people with the intentions of Christ.

This is not exactly as it appears in the Nelson's Dictionary because I have enlarged upon several of the quotations from the epistle which the article paraphrased.

The epistle is full of references to Christ, and I want to point them out to you in reading through the epistle. And it is also important to see how joy and rejoicing are likewise a special emphasis in the epistle. These are the results of a life that is as devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ as Paul's was. And may it be our prayer as we go through the epistle verse by verse, that we, too, may become more devoted to our Lord Jesus Christ, and experience the tremendous joy that Paul experienced in his fellowship with the Lord in that Roman prison.

(Go over the outline.)

(Point out the references to Christ – in the pages that follow.)

(Note the references in the epistle to *joy* and *rejoicing* – also in the following pages.)

(See Paul's references to the Gospel – and these, too, will be found after the pages giving the references that Paul made to joy.)

November 29, 1999

Earlier I mentioned that the founding of the church in Philippi is given to us in Acts 16:12 to the end of the chapter. This was probably in the early 50's, 50 or 51, when Paul was on his second missionary journey. Silas was his co-worker at the time. Philippi was named for Philip of Macedon. Augustus Caesar had honored the city by making it not just "the chief city of that part," but *first in the district*, and it was a Roman colony. This made it a kind of miniature of the city of Rome itself. The military presence was very strong in the city, and that may account for the fact that there was no synagogue there. There were not enough Jews to support a synagogue. This is why the Jews who were there met on the Sabbath on the banks of the river. The Jewish women seem to have been more prominent than the men. It was a very important city in the Empire, and that would account for the fact that Lydia, who was from Thyatira across the Aegean Sea in the Roman province of Asia. Philippi was not only a strong military post, but it was one of the great commercial centers of the Roman Empire. Philippi was not located on the coast, but was about eight miles inland, westward, from the city which

is now called Neapolis.

The circumstances recorded in Acts 16 which were significant in the establishing of the church there, were:

- 1) Lydia's salvation.
- 2) The deliverance of the demon-possessed woman who brought her masters a lot of money by her soothsaying.
- 3) This led to Paul and Silas being cast into prison, which in turn led to the salvation of the Philippian jailor.

Twice after this Paul visited the Philippians believers. Both visits are referred to in the first six verses of Acts 20. The second visit was on his way to Greece, and the third was when they came back and passed through Philippi on their way to Troas. These visits were probably around 57 or 58. It is quite unusual that Paul and Silas were in prison when they were in Philippi the first time, and when he wrote to them in the early 60's it was from a Roman prison.

F. B. Meyer had this to say about Paul's letter to the church at Philippi:

This is the tenderest of all the Epistles. There is no chiding or rebuke (except for his words to Euodias and Syntyche in 4:2). It is suffused throughout with words of good cheer, of joy and peace, though it was written in bonds to which the Apostle makes frequent reference (i. 7, 13, 14, 16). There is no trace of despondency or gloom, and though sent to a Church which he had not seen for five or six years, there appeared no necessity for those strictures and reproofs with which [some of] the other Epistles are filled. . . It is the beginning of the precious prison literature of the Church which is amongst our greatest treasures. It was a persecuted Apostle writing to a persecuted Church, but his soul was unfettered and unchoked by prison damp (p. 11).

And F. B. Meyer also made this important comment about the Epistle in the Preface to his commentary (p. 5): The most amazing thing which meets one perpetually in the prolonged and deep study of such a treatise as this, is that those early believers should have been able to appreciate and digest such compressed and profound teaching. When we bear in mind all the explanation, expansion, application, and enforcement which these apostolic paragraphs have received in the course of the centuries, and when, after we have done our best, we are still conscious that we have by no means plumbed the depths, or scaled the heights, or explored all the treasures, we are compelled to feel that the Divine Fire is burning here, and to take off the shoes from our feet in acknowledgment that in a pre-eminent manner, God is here.

There have been many who have paid tribute to the sterling character of this epistle, and I could spend the rest of the hour reading first one and then another of those who have felt the power and blessing that is to be found in reading and meditating on these pages. But I will confine myself to just one more. It comes from one who was both an intellectual giant and a godly minister of the Word, a bishop in the Church of England in the days when there were many who were devoted servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, a professor of Cambridge University in England, J. B. Lightfoot. In his comment, as you will see, he imagines how bewildering it must have been to someone who did not know the Lord, and who would pick up this part of the Word of God, and try to figure out how such a work could be done in human hearts. Listen to what Bishop Lightfoot said:

The Epistle to the Philippians is not only the noblest reflexion of St. Paul's personal character and spiritual illumination, his large sympathies, his womanly tenderness, his delicate courtesy, his frank independence, his entire devotion to the Master's service; but as a monument of the power of the Gospel it yields in importance to none of the apostolic writings. Scarcely thirty years have passed since one Jesus was crucified as a malefactor in a remote province of the empire; scarcely ten since one Paul a Jew of Tarsus first told at Philippi the story of His cruel death; and what is the result? Imagine one, to whom the name of Christ had been hitherto a name only, led by circumstances to study this touching

picture of the relations between St. Paul, his fellow-labourers, his converts; and pausing to ask himself what unseen power had produced these marvellous results. Stronger than any association of time or place, of race or profession, stronger than the instinctive sympathies of common interest or the natural ties of blood-relationship, a mysterious bond unites St. Paul, Epaphroditus, the Philippian converts; them to the Apostle, and him to them, and each to the other. In this threefold cord of love the strands are so intertwined and knotted together, that the writer cannot conceive of them as disentangled. The joy of one must be the joy of all; the sorrow of one must be the sorrow of all.

The Apostle's language furnishes the reply to such a questioner. This unseen power is the 'power of Christ's resurrection' (Phil. 3:10). This mutual love is diffused from 'the heart of Jesus Christ' (Phil. 1:8), beating with His pulses and living by His life. When the contemporary heathen remarked how 'these Christians loved one another,' he felt that he was confronted by an unsolved enigma. The power which wrought the miracle was hidden from him. It was no new commandment indeed, for it appealed to the oldest and truest impulses of the human heart. And yet it was a new commandment; for in Christ's life and death and resurrection it had found not only an example and a sanction, but a power, a vitality, wholly unfelt and unknown before.

To all ages of the Church—to our own especially—this epistle reads a great lesson. While we are expending our strength on theological definitions or ecclesiastical rules, it recalls us from these distractions to the very heart and centre of the Gospel—the life of Christ and the life in Christ. Here is the meeting point of all our differences, the healing of all our feuds, the true life alike of individuals and sects and churches; here doctrine and practice are wedded together; for here is the 'Creed of creeds' involved in and arising out of the Work of works (Lightfoot, J. B., *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, pp.72-73).

It is certainly true, as Dr. Lightfoot has so beautifully pointed out, we often fail to realize what an amazing work God has done in our hearts through Christ and the Gospel, until someone to whom this is all new, is startled by what he sees, and wonders how such a work could be done as is seen in the lives of those who know and love the Savior.

What we see in the epistle Paul wrote to the Philippian believers, is not confined to him or to them. The Lord Who had worked so wonderfully in their hearts, is doing the same in our hearts. And it is a work which only He can do. As Bishop Lightfoot said in the passage I read to you, Philippians tells us about "the life of Christ and the life in Christ." As Paul wrote his "spiritual autobiography," he did it to encourage us that "spiritual autobiography" ours as well.

Let's read this epistle over and over, pray our way through it, and meditate on it, until the message of the epistle gets into our hearts and transforms our lives so that we will be more like our Lord.

But now let us get to the epistle itself.

References to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ in Philippians

PHILIPPIANS 1

1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

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

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

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

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

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

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

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

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

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

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

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

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

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

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

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

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

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

PHILIPPIANS 2

- 1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,
- 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
- 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.
- 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;
- 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
- 16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.
- 19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.
- 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.
- 24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.
- 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:
- 30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

PHILIPPIANS 3

- 1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.
- 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.
- 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.
- 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,
- 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:
- 12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

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

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

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

PHILIPPIANS 4

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

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

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

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

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

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

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

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

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

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

Joy and Rejoicing in Philippians

PHILIPPIANS 1

Philippians 1:4

4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

Philippians 1:18

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

Philippians 1:25

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

Philippians 1:26

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

PHILIPPIANS 2

Philippians 2:2

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Philippians 2:16

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

Philippians 2:17

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

Philippians 2:18

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

Philippians 2:28

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

Philippians 2:29

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

PHILIPPIANS 3

Philippians 3:1

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

Philippians 3:3

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

PHILIPPIANS 4

Philippians 4:1

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

Philippians 4:4

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

Philippians 4:10

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

The “Gospel” in Philippians

Philippians 1:5

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

Philippians 1:7

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

Philippians 1:12

12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

Philippians 1:17

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

Philippians 1:27

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

Philippians 2:22

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

Philippians 4:3

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

Philippians 4:15

15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul
Tuesday Bible Class – November 29, 1999
Philippians 1:1-11

Intro: In the outline which I have given you, the first eleven verses of chapter 1 cover Paul greeting in verses 1 and 2, and then Paul's thanksgiving for the Philippian church and his prayer for them in verses 3-11.

I. Paul's Greeting (Phil. 1:1-2).

Instead of becoming accustomed to words like we find in these two verses, which are characteristic of the way the Apostle Paul began his letters to the churches, we ought to realize that their frequent appearance in Scripture emphasizes their importance. Because we can be sure that if Paul could have started his letters in any better way, he would have done it. Besides, he was writing under the direction of the Spirit of God, and so these familiar words must be taken as being very important to the Holy Spirit.

1:1 "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ" – Of the three persons who are mentioned here, Jesus Christ is evidently the superior One because the other two are His servants, His δοῦλοι, His bondservants. As "servants of Jesus Christ," even though Paul was the older, the more mature, the more experienced, and an apostle, yet as bondservants they stood side by side on the same ground. They both had been bought by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. They belonged to their Lord. And they stood together in their desire to serve their Lord, to do His will. It was their special joy to be able to devote their lives to the service of such a Master. How wonderful it would be if all of us were characterized by what F. B. Meyer called "simplicity," and "humility," and "such abandonment to the will" of the Lord. Neither Timothy nor Paul had been with the disciples when they were talking about which of them was the greatest. But they knew what the Lord had told them on that occasion. This is what He said,

44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:44-45).

Even the Lord did not come to do His own will, but He came to do the Father's will. That was His greatest joy. That determined what the Lord did all of the time that He was here on earth. So in calling themselves "servants of Jesus Christ," Paul and Timothy were expressing their greatest desire to be like their Lord in serving Him as He had served His Father.

You will remember the question that the Pharisees asked John the Baptist when they came to see him. They asked him, "Who art thou? . . . What sayest thou of thyself?" Those are good questions for all of us. John the Baptist said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord'" (John 1:23).

The way Paul and Timothy identified themselves was certainly consistent with what Paul would write later when he said, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." If the Lord Jesus had not been the Servant of the Lord, you and I would not be saved today. We all by nature are very, very proud, and we love the better places in life, but the blessing of the Lord will only be upon us if we humble ourselves before Him and before each other, and if we can be perfectly happy by taking an insignificant place in the eyes of men.

To whom was Paul writing?

November 30, 1999

"To all the saints which are at Philippi" – I read a Psalm each day as I begin my Bible reading, and my Psalm for today was Psalm 16. I am reading through the NKJV this year, and so this is what I read in verse 2:

2 O my soul, you have said to the LORD, "You are my Lord, My goodness is nothing apart from You."

3 And to the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight" (Psa. 16:2-3 – NKJV).

So to the Lord David said, "You are my Lord, my goodness is nothing apart from You." And to the saints he said, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight." This did not mean that he delighted in the people of God more than he did in the Lord, but that among all of the people on the earth, those he delighted in the most were God's saints!

This is the way the Apostle Paul felt about the Lord's people, as we shall see more clearly when we consider verses 3 through 11 in this first chapter of Philippians. Paul loved the Lord's people. He delighted in them. And this is the way godly leaders have always felt about the saints. The saints are never perfect, but they are a people whom the Lord has set apart for Himself, those in whom He delights, and we need to delight in each other also. Even with their imperfections there are no people on earth who can compare with the people of God. And this is not because of what we are in ourselves (we are as worthless in ourselves as anyone else), but it is because of what the Lord has done in us, and for us. We may not be perfect now, but God is still working in us, and as Paul went on to say in verse 6 of this chapter, God has begun the work of perfecting us, and He is not going to stop until His work is finished.

Perhaps one reason that Paul called the believers in Philippi "saints," was to encourage them to make sure that they were living up to the title which they carried. Saints should be saintly, should be pursuing holiness, should be seeking daily to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't become saints until we die; by the grace of God we are saints right now, and because of this we are to love one another.

"In Christ Jesus" – This was their spiritual position. This is why they were saints. They were in the body of Christ Jesus. They had been joined to Him in a living union from which they would never be separated.

"At Philippi" – This was their geographical location. What a testimony to the power of the Gospel, and to the grace of God, that there should be "saints at Philippi"! And yet you find the true people of God everywhere. And wherever we are, we are there to glorify God, to grow in the Lord, and to make our Lord Jesus Christ known to those who do not know Him. How it must have blessed the heart of the Apostle Paul there in Rome, a prisoner of Rome, to remember those days when he and Silas first went to Philippi. His mind must have turned to Lydia who seems to have been the first one to be saved, then the Philippian jailor and his family, and on and on. With such a strong presence of the Roman Empire in Philippi, and such a large contingent of the Roman army, it must have truly seemed to Paul that God had worked one of His greatest miracles in seeing the Gospel prosper in Philippi, and a church established.

But then Paul added, "with the bishops and deacons." Bishops are elders, and elders are bishops.

The Greek word for "bishops" is ἐπίσκοπος. He is *an overseer, a guardian, a watcher*. And they were men appointed by the Holy Spirit. Paul in speaking to the elders (πρεσβύτερος) said that they were to shepherd the flock of God over whom the Holy Spirit had made them *overseers, bishops*. So the office is one; the titles are two. They were the spiritual leaders in the church.

"Deacons" worked with the bishops. The word for deacons in Greek is διάκονος, which means one who renders a service to others. Although this word is not used in Acts 6, yet it is generally agreed that the men appointed by the church to serve the widows, were the first deacons.

“Bishops and deacons” (and very likely *deaconesses*) are the only offices in the church which are mentioned in the NT. “Pastors” were elders, and had the responsibility of being the main teachers in the church.

These were the leaders. They were the servants of the Lord who rendered a spiritual service to the saints, the people of God. In no way was this ever supposed to have become a hierarchy in the church. They were men recognized for their godliness, and for their leadership in their homes, who were appointed by God to serve the people of God in the things of the Lord.

December 6, 1999

1:2 These are among the most familiar words in the NT. It is not only a greeting, but a prayer. In praying for God’s grace on the people of God, Paul had in mind God’s favor “which blesses, cheers, and assists believers” (Eadie, John, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 7). And then Dr. Eadie continued in his commentary on this word by saying that the word “grace” denotes “that many-sided favour [of God] that comes in the form of hope to saints in despondency, of joy to them in sorrow, of patience to them in suffering, of victory to them under assault, and of final triumph to them in the hour of death” (*Ibid.*).

“Grace” is more of a Greek, or Gentile, blessing, whereas “peace” was Hebrew in background. “It includes every blessing—being and wellbeing” (*Ibid.*). But with Paul it was not just a formality as our greetings can often be, especially when we say “good morning,” or “good day,” to strangers. And the Lord Jesus emphasized that “peace” from Himself was different from what people in the world meant when they said “peace,” or *shalom*. This brings special meaning to our Lord’s words in John 14:27:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

To quote John Eadie again, he said this: “The word in this connection denotes that form of spiritual blessing which keeps the heart in a state of happy repose (*Ibid.*).”

All of this comes “from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul did not mean that grace comes from God, and that peace comes from our Lord Jesus Christ, but that both the Father and the Son are involved in ministering grace and peace to us as believers. And since these blessings come from the Father and the Son, we know that they come from an inexhaustible source. God’s people have from the beginning drawn upon the Godhead for grace and peace, and the source is just as plentiful today as ever. And God’s grace and peace are just as sufficient for us today even, as F. B. Meyer said, “amid the altered circumstances of modern life” (Meyer, F. B., *The Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 17). And since “grace” comes from the west, and “peace” from the east, these two words unite believers around the world in every generation. Wherever we live, we all stand in constant need of grace and peace.

It does seem right to say that grace from God and Christ result in giving us peace. So there can be no true and lasting peace apart from the grace of God. These two blessings are constantly needed by those of us who know the Lord.

Now we come to the second point in the outline I have given you.

II. Paul’s Delight in the Philippian believers (Phil. 1:3-11).

1:3 We don’t know anything about Paul’s second and third visits to Philippi, but, whatever have been the circumstances in either or both of them, combined with Paul’s first visit, as he thought of getting to the city, his time down by the river as he met with the people, Lydia’s salvation, and then the salvation of the jailor

and his family following that night in prison, and the earthquake, it always filled Paul with constant thanksgiving. And so our first point in which we see the way Paul delighted in the Philippian believers, is:

A. His thanksgiving to God for them (Phil. 1:3-8).

When you compare Paul's thanksgiving in his other epistles, none of them is equal to what he said here about his joy in the believers at Philippi, unless it would be what he said in his epistles to the church at Thessalonica. Paul's joy in the people of God in Philippi is not just here in the beginning, but it continues to appear throughout this epistle.

In our Bible reading we have just finished 1 John. You will doubtless remember how much the Apostle John had to say about the love that we the people of God should have for one another. It would be hard to find a better example of what the Apostle John was saying than what we have here in Paul's letter to the Philippians. It certainly did not mean that the Philippians were perfect, but it is obvious in Paul's mind, their good points outnumbered those points that were not so good. He truly loved and delighted in them.

But be sure to notice that here Paul was thanking God because it was what God had done in the hearts of those Philippians who had trusted Christ, that made them so delightful to Paul. We are often more concerned about the weaknesses that we see in each other, than we are in the changes that God has made in us. True, none of us is all that we should be, but neither are we what we would have been if the Lord had not drawn us to Himself. This is what we need to be thankful for. And to God belongs all of the glory.

1:4 If we love people, we are going to pray for them. And we are going to pray for them constantly, and it is going to our special joy to do so. This is what we learn from what the Apostle Paul said in this verse.

However, his praying for them was not all thanksgiving, but he brought "requests," *petitions* on their behalf to the Lord. Every believer has needs. Sometimes we know of special needs, but, if we are praying for people who are not with us, but who live in some other place, we never know all of the needs they have. But we know that no one is without needs. Paul would know from the trials and problems which he faced in his own life, something of the problems that other believers have – discouragements, trials of various kinds, busy-ness itself which often robs us of our time in the Word, and our time for prayer. Physical problems present spiritual needs as well. One of the benefits of letter writing is that people will often share their needs and prayer requests with us, and this helps us to pray. Prayer is work. But it can be delightful work, especially when we are able to see or hear how God is answering our prayers.

F. B. Meyer said, "The Epistles of St. Paul are full of allusions to his prayers. We might almost call them his prayer-book" (*Op. Cit.*, p. 18). We must remember, too, that in many instances, Paul was praying for people who had come to Christ under his ministry. However, that was not always the case. For example, we read in his letter to the church at Colosse, a church which he had not visited when he wrote his letter to them. And so we read this in Col. 2:1:

For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.

He must have spent a great deal of time every day in prayer as he prayed not only for the Philippian church, but also for the believers in Rome (where he had never been when he wrote to them), and at Corinth, and at Ephesus and Colosse and Thessalonica, to name a few. Add to that his prayers for Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, as well as for other like Luke, Silas, and Barnabas with whom he ministered the Word, and you can see how much time he must have given to prayer every day. And there can be no doubt but that this explains one of the reasons that he was so greatly used of God.

Now it may not be possible for us to pray as much as Paul did, but when he exhorted believers to follow him as he had followed the Lord, surely one thing he had in mind was prayer because prayer was a major part also in the life of our Lord here on earth. But let us receive Paul's teaching at this point, and look for ways in which we will be able to make prayer more of a part of our lives.

But let us move on.

1:5 Here we come to one of the main reasons for Paul's joy in the believers at Philippi, and for his gratitude to God for them. It was because of their "fellowship" with him "in the Gospel from the first day until" that moment in which he was writing to them.

Those of you who have attended our Sunday night meetings will know that I have spent a considerable amount of time on Acts 2:42 in speaking of the early church. This is what Luke recorded for us about those who had ministered the Gospel and those who had received the Gospel:

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42).

I have spoken about "the apostles' doctrine," that is what they believed, and what they taught. But I haven't yet gotten to that word "fellowship." What did the apostles have in mind when they spoke of fellowship? And what specifically did the Apostle Paul mean when he spoke of "their fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now"?

Fellowship is the translation of the Greek word *κοινωνία*. Paul used it three times in this epistle: here, in 2:1, and in 3:10. Paul used it in 1 Cor. 1:9 where he wrote, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." And you will probably remember the Apostle John's use of it in the first chapter of his first epistle. Let me read that to you. In 1 John 1:3 we read,

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

And then in 1 John 1:6-7 he followed up his first statement with this second one.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Perhaps the best word to use to describe the meaning of fellowship is the word *participation*. To have been called into the fellowship of God's Son, means that we have been called to participate in all that He is. God's Son shares Himself fully with you and with me who are in Christ.

The Apostle John would have us know that there are certain conditions that we must meet in order to be able to participate fully with and in the Father, as well as with and in Christ. Walking in the light is one of those main conditions. If we say that we are sharing in all that Christ is, and walk in darkness, that is, live in the darkness of this world, that is impossible, and so what we are saying is not true.

That is one side, and a most important side, of our fellowship.

But when the Apostle Paul spoke of the fact that the Philippian believers had fellowship with him in the Gospel from the first day on, he meant that they had participated with him in the Gospel. They had given themselves to the Gospel in that they were seeking the full effect of the Gospel in their lives. He mentioned that in verse 6. But he also meant that they had participated with him fully in the spread of the Gospel message to others. And he spoke of that in verse 7.

Now let's talk for a moment about the Gospel.

We all know what the Gospel is, or we should know. It, as Paul said in Romans 1:16, is "the power of God unto salvation." But remember that in speaking of it as "the power of God unto salvation," he did not restrict the Gospel just to that time when you and I were born again, that moment when we passed from death unto life, that time in our lives when we were made new creatures in Christ. It certainly has to do with that. But that was only the beginning. The word "salvation" is what I like to call "the big word" having to do with all that God has done and continues to do in our lives to make us like His Son. It includes our justification, our sanctification, and our ultimate glorification.

So one thing that Paul meant in using this expression was that he could see that there was solid evidence in their lives that they were sharing, participating day by day in the salvation that they had in Christ. They were "going on," as we say, with the Lord. They were growing. Their lives had been changed, and were continuing to change. They were demonstrating in their lives that they had truly been born again. *And this is why Paul was able to say what he did in verse 6.* (Read.) We will get to verse 6 in a moment.

But "fellowship in the Gospel" has another meaning. It means that they were actively participating in the spread of the Gospel. They were doing this by their prayers, and in particular by their prayers for Paul in his ministry. They were also doing this by their gifts which they had so faithfully sent to support the Apostle Paul in the work that he was doing. Remember that one reason Paul wrote this letter, as we see in chapter 4, was to thank them for their offering. But it also meant that they were contributing to the spread of the Gospel by the changed lives they were living, and by the spread of the Gospel by word of mouth.

You see, fellowship is much more than our getting together to talk to each other. That can be fellowship if we are talking about the Lord and His Word, seeking to learn more about living for His glory. Fellowship involves my whole life and your whole life. And with respect to this latter point that I am making, notice verse 7. The church at Philippi was 100% with the Apostle Paul, not only in what he was doing, but in what they were also doing right there in the city of Philippi.

Is it any wonder that Paul delighted so much in them, and thanked God for them, and counted it a great joy to be able to pray for them? The church at Philippi was an amazing church. The people there really loved the Lord, and showed in every way that they belonged to the Lord. And even though Paul was a prisoner in Rome, they wanted him to know that they stood solidly behind him, and were devoted to the same Lord and to the same work of the Lord that had resulted in his imprisonment.

How different this is from what we so often see when people today profess faith in Christ! We say that so and so went forward in a meeting, or professed to believe in Christ when someone talked to him or her about the Savior, or said that they had trusted Christ as a child. But then we ask, "Is there real evidence in that person's life that he is a Christian, or that she is a Christian? And we have to say, "Well, I don't know. He still lives like he used to live. He only comes to church once in a while, or maybe not at all. He doesn't read his Bible, and really isn't interested in learning more about God's Word." That isn't what you would have seen in Philippi! Those people were changed! They loved the Lord, and they wanted to learn more about Him. They were participating in Christ, and in the Gospel in the fullest sense of the Word.

So this is why Paul could say about them what he said in verse 6. Let's move on to that verse now.

1:6 We can't be confident concerning ourselves, nor can we be confident of others who profess to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, *if there is not evidence that the Lord has begun a good work in us, the*

work of salvation! You can't say this about a person who doesn't give evidence in his life that he knows the Lord because you don't really have any evidence that he has been changed by the power of God. It is true that God never quits, He never gives up, on anyone who has truly been saved. He is going to continue that work in their hearts and lives until His work is complete.

I love those words of Paul: "Being confident of this very thing." He no doubt whatsoever but that God had done, and was continuing to do, His work of salvation in many in the city of Philippi, those people who really made up the local church in that city. "Being confident" means that he was absolutely assured, totally convinced, that he was fully persuaded, inwardly convinced, that God had done a mighty work of salvation in many people in Philippi (how many, we do not know), and that what God had started in them (because that is where salvation takes place) He would keep on working at it "until the day of Jesus Christ." But if lives remain unchanged, this verse does not apply. It only applies where people show by the way they live that God has done a work of salvation in their hearts.

But let us go on to verse 7, and so how else they were having fellowship with Paul in the Gospel.

1:7 The word "meet" is the Greek word δίκαιος, which means that he was justified in saying what he said, that it was right for him to say this (and it would have been wrong to think otherwise), not only because of the deep love that he had for them, but because "both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace."

Let me tell you about the word "partakers."

In verse 5 I told you that the word for fellowship was κοινωνία.. This word "partakers" is the adjective from the same root with the preposition σύν attached to the front of it. So the word means *a fellow-partaker*. And so we have the idea of fellowship again. So Paul was saying that they all were fellow-partakers with him of his grace.

What did he mean by this emphasis on grace? If you were ask Paul how he could go ahead with the preaching of the Gospel when he knew that it meant persecution and possible imprisonment, do you know what he would say? He would say that this was his calling, and he wanted to be faithful. But beyond that he would tell us that it is only by God's grace that he could go through with it – the same "grace" that he prayed that the Philippians would have when he wrote verse 2.

But let's ask another question: Why would those Philippian Christians do what Paul was doing when they knew that it meant imprisonment, and could cost him his life? Their answer would be the same. They knew that it was God's will to spread the Gospel, and they had received "grace" from God, the strength to do the will of God even though it might mean the same for them.

Let me illustrate what is involved here by referring you to another friend that the Apostle Paul had.

As far as we know, Paul was released from prison where he wrote this epistle to the Philippians, but he was later imprisoned again, and from this second imprisonment he never was released. The epistle that he wrote shortly before his execution, was 2 Timothy. In this epistle Paul wrote about his friend Onesiphorus. Let me read to you what he wrote. You will find these words in 2 Timothy 1:16-18.

16 The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain:

17 But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.

18 The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

Paul said about Onesiphorus that “he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains.” To befriend the Apostle Paul when he was in prison, would mean that you might get into the same trouble that he was in. But Onesiphorus was not afraid. He, too, was willing to die, if need be, for the sake of the Gospel.

The people in the Philippian church were like that too. All Paul had to promise to do to get out of trouble was to quit preaching the Gospel. But in that city, Philippi, which was like a little Rome, they did not count their lives dear to themselves. They were ready, like Paul was, to lay down their lives for the sake of the Gospel. They knew the desperate plight of people who were without Christ. And they knew how precious the Lord Jesus was to them. So, for the sake of the Gospel and the salvation of sinners, they did not hesitate to take whatever risk was necessary to get the Gospel to people who needed to know the Savior.

But how could they do that? Paul gives us our answer when he said, “Ye all are partakers of my grace.” And that was the grace which God had freely bestowed upon Paul and upon them also.

What did Paul mean by “the defence and confirmation of the gospel”?

In defending the Gospel the Apostle Paul stood his ground against those who, as John Eadie said, on all times and occasions, to answer for the gospel against its adversaries, whether they impugned its doctrines or suspected its tendencies, libeled its preachers, or called in question the facts and evidences on which it rested (*Op. Cit.*, p. 15).

But he did more than that; he *confirmed the Gospel*. He positively declared the Gospel, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus of Nazareth was truly the Son of God, and that salvation from sin and eternal judgment was only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Moreover he declared from the Scriptures that Christ was the only Savior, and that no one could come to God except through Him.

What a lesson this is for us! So far it has cost us very little, if anything at all, to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. But that may be changing even in our own country. If it does, we are under the same orders that the early church was under, and we may face the same dangers. But we know that the same grace that made the Apostle Paul faithful, and made the Philippians church stand behind him, and caused Onesiphorus to risk his own life for the same of the Gospel, is the grace that will prove sufficient for us too.

In the light of these verses, let us make sure of two things:

- 1) That the evidence can be clearly seen in our lives that we truly know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.
- 2) That we are standing with Paul in the fellowship of the Gospel, making Christ known where we are today, by the lives we live, and by the testimony of our lips.

1:8 Before Paul told them how he was praying for them, he had to express again how much he loved them in Christ. That these were not just words, he called upon God as the Witness that what he was saying was really the truth. And when we understand what he was saying, we will understand why he was calling upon God to be his Witness.

Thayer pointed out in his Greek Lexicon that the Hebrews looked upon the inner organs as “the seat of the tenderer affections, esp. kindness, benevolence, compassion.” So the word “bowels,” while it referred to the heart, the lungs, and liver, was the equivalent of what the Lord meant when He spoke of our loving Him with all of our heart and soul and strength and mind. It is equal to when you say that you love someone with all of your heart.

But what Paul was saying was that he loved the believers at Philippi with the love of Jesus Christ. It was not just loving them like Jesus Christ loved them, but loving them with the love of Jesus Christ. Paul knew that Christ was living in him, and that because of this he was enabled by the Lord to love people with the love of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Geoffrey Wilson, in his brief commentary on Philippians had this to say about verse 8:

As no words can adequately express Paul's yearning for his beloved friends at Philippi, he solemnly appeals to the fact that God who reads every heart, knows the depth and intensity of his feeling for them all. This longing is not mere human affection, but is a love which is the fruit of his spiritual union with Christ, so that 'his pulse beats with the pulse of Christ; his heart throbs with the heart of Christ' (Lightfoot). As a man who is 'in Christ,' Paul is gripped by the same love which Christ has for His people, and every true pastor feels something of this affection for the flock committed to his care (p. 20).

If we never got beyond this verse in this marvelous epistle, we would have enough spiritual food to occupy our attention, and to challenge us to greater heights in our walk with the Lord, to occupy our attention in a most profitable way for the rest of our lives. All that we have seen thus far is not just to tell us about Paul and the Philippians and the Gospel, but to show us that there is still much to be done in our own lives before we stand on the high ground upon which Paul and his dear Philippians brothers and sisters stood.

Now we come to:

B. His prayer, i.e., Paul's prayer, for them, the Philippian believers (1:9-11).

December 13, 1999

Paul was concerned about two important things in his first request. One was "love," and the other was in the word "abound." Paul was always grateful when he found believers loving each other in the Lord. This, as the Apostle John taught, is one of the distinguishing marks of a believer. Cf. 1 John 3:14:

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

In his first letter to the church at Thessalonica, Paul said much the same to them that he said to the Philippians here. You will find the words I refer to in 1 Thess. 3:12-13:

12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

And "abound" was a favorite with the Apostle Paul. He did not believe that we should ever be content with the progress we have made at any given time, but that we should be pressing on as he mentioned in chapter 3, and verse 14 in this epistle. Thayer says in his Lexicon that abounding is illustrated by what a flower does when it goes from the bud to the full bloom. That is abounding. God has predestined us to be conformed to the image of Christ. And so we all have much progress to make before we will be like our Lord. And so until we reach that goal (and that will not be until we see the Lord when He comes). So until then we all need to keep abounding.

We learn also from the epistles of Paul that it is good to let those we pray for know what we are praying for. This becomes an added emphasis or exhortation.

Specifically Paul was praying that their love would abound more and more “in knowledge and in all judgment.” What did he mean by these two words – “in knowledge and in all judgment”?

While Paul rejoiced in the fact that love prevailed among the people, yet his request would show that he was concerned about the manifestation of their love. Believers are not to blindly accept and embrace all kinds of people, or all kinds of teaching. It is wrong to love some things. For example, the Apostle John said again in his first epistle,

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

We are not to love sin. We are to love what the Lord loves, and we are to hate what He hates. He loves righteousness and hates iniquity. Love includes acceptance; hate, rejection. So Paul was praying that they would always seek greater knowledge, and the primary emphasis would be upon the knowledge of the truth of the Word, and then “judgment” means *discernment*. Even believers can often be led astray because they do not know what they ought to know.

So basic to this first request was that the love that God had placed in their hearts would be exercised in accordance with the Word of God. There are many things going on in the Name of the Lord today which are in direct conflict with the Word. Radio and television can bring all kinds of teaching right into our homes. We are not just to accept it all blindly, but with “knowledge and in all judgment.” The word Paul used for “knowledge” is ἐπίγνωις, which is a full, mature knowledge. We can never know too much of the truth of God’s Word. And it is the Holy Spirit Who will teach us, and He is the One Who also gives us discernment in the application of the Word.

1:10 “That ye may approve things that are excellent.” This is not just a choice between the good and the bad. Even unbelievers know the difference between right and wrong. But what Paul appeared to be praying about was their God-given ability to choose the best among the good. This is a greater need for the Lord’s people than choosing the good instead of the bad.

There are many things that are good in themselves, but not necessarily the best. For example, it was commendable of Martha to serve the Lord Jesus, but the Lord gently rebuked her when He said to her, “But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42). The Lord was saying to Martha, not that she was doing anything wrong, but that to sit at the Lord’s feet to hear His Word, is the best. If they had both been sitting at the Lord’s feet, and then Martha afterwards had gotten up to fix dinner, while Mary stayed at the Lord’s feet, then the Lord may have rebuked Mary for not helping Martha.

→ ALSO PETER AND THE DISCIPLES FISHING WHEN THE LORD WANTED HIM TO SHEPHERD HIS SHEEP—JOHN 21.

We are confronted all day long with the need to decide about what we are to do. It is commendable when a man works hard to support his family, but if his job occupies so much of his time that he has no time for his family, then doing good is keeping him from doing what is best. Under the guidance of the Lord He gives us the time to do all the necessary things, but we must never allow the good to keep us from the best.

This is what leads to being “sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.” This is the second time that this “day” has been referred to in this chapter. See verse 6. We have it again in 2:16. This is generally taken to mean the day when the Lord returns, and we are caught up to meet him in the air, the day which Paul described

in 1 Thess. 4:13-18. We are to be looking ahead to that day because then we will see things in their true light, and will know then how often we have passed over the best for the good. We often feel resentful when we have planned to do something, and someone comes along who needs our help. In times like that we need to know which is the best, which is the will of God in that particular situation.

The word “sincere” is a word I remember from my Latin classes in high school and college. It is formed from two Latin words which literally mean, *without wax*. It is a word which was attached to furniture because sometimes men who made furniture from poor wood, or who would damage a piece of furniture as they made it, would fill in the defective or damaged place with wax. So when you saw those two words on a piece of furniture, you knew that it was all genuine and not patched up with wax to cover the defects.

It has the same meaning in the Greek, but has the idea of bringing something out into the light, and there to see that it is real; it is genuine. One of the most disappointing and discouraging things that we can discover about people, or they can discover about us, is that we are not real. We are not what we pretend to be. A man can be very pious when he comes to church, but his family may have a lot of trouble getting along with him at home. We all need to be genuine. None of us is perfect, but let's not pretend that we are better than we are. You can see that not to be “sincere” is to be a hypocrite to some degree.

“Without offence” means that we will not be a stumbling block to others, and that is what we will be if they find out that we are not genuine.

1:11 And so all of the requests in Paul's prayer for the Philippian believers leads up to this point. But we still have not reached the height of this request. We come to the **summit** of Paul's prayer in the words, “being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” The word “fruits” is singular in the Greek – *fruit!* TAKEN FROM AMOS 4:12

Bishop Moule pointed out in his commentary that “being filled” is a perfect participle. We can also add the word “passive” to his words, “perfect participle.” So we have *a perfect passive participle*, which speaks of something that has been done for us, and Bishop Moule says that “this seems to anticipate ‘the day’” (p. 17). And he was referring to “the day of Christ” in verse 10, the preceding verse. “The fruit of righteousness” is *the fruit which consists of righteousness*. And Paul must surely be speaking of “the fruit [singular] of the Spirit” which is described in Gal. 5:22, 23:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

So you can see that the Apostle Paul was praying about their growth in grace. He was praying that they would become more spiritually mature, that they would not be satisfied the way they were, but would go on to “abound” in love. And when we get to this point we see that Paul was not just concerned about their love for each other, but also about their love for the Lord, for each Member of the Godhead, loving Him with all of our hearts, all of our souls, all of our strength, and all of our mind. That comes first. And our love for each other grows out of our love for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

But we must also realize that all of this takes place “by Jesus Christ.” And the word “by” in the Greek is the preposition *διὰ*, which means that Jesus Christ is the instrument, the means, the agent through Whom all of this takes place. We have responsibilities in our relationship with the Lord, but He is the One Who has begun a good work in us, and He continues to work in us until His day, the day of Jesus Christ.

And what Paul said here about Jesus Christ, applies equally to God the Father, and to the Holy Spirit. See Phil.

2:12, 13. (Read.) Remember that “love, joy, peace,” etc. are “the fruit of the Spirit.” Such a life as we are to live is a superhuman life, a supernatural life, a divine life. If we were just dependent upon ourselves, we would never make it. The Lord Jesus told His disciples as they made their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, “Without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). Let me read to you all of John 15:4 and 5:

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

It is only through our fellowship with Him, through our obedience to Him and our dependence upon Him, that it is possible for us to be righteous in our character, and righteous in our living.

And so we should not be surprised with Paul’s conclusion to his prayer: “Unto the glory and praise of God.”

How could it be otherwise? We call upon God in prayer for that which we cannot do for ourselves. He is the One Who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. So if our will is for the things that please Him, and the accomplishment of His will is because of His enabling power, then none of the glory belongs to us, but it all belongs to Him! We may not be now all that we should be, and want to be, and will be, but whatever progress we have made in our lives, is to His glory because of His work in us.

We glorify God when there is evidence of His presence and His power in us. He is praised when we give Him the praise for all of the good that anyone might see in us. It is always our place to walk humbly before God, and to walk the same way in our relationship with people, whether they be believers or unbelievers.

Concl: We are all trophies of God’s grace. We are not self-made, but God-made. As Paul said, so can we say,
But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me (1 Cor. 15:10).

Let me mention one more thing about this prayer before we leave it. A prayer like this is certain to be answered because it obviously is the will of God for all of us who belong to Him. And so the prayer is here, not only for us to know how Paul prayed for those people he loved so much, many of whom he had led to Christ, but it is here that we might pray the same prayer for ourselves and for each other. The professing church today is in big trouble because issues like Paul prayed about are seldom heard expressed among the people of God today. By God’s grace may we be different. Others are sure to follow us. And the world will again be confronted with the evidence of what it means to know Jesus Christ, and to live for Him.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul
Tuesday Bible Class – January 3, 2000
Philippians 1:12-26

Intro: In some respects we can consider the first eleven verses of chapter 1 in Philippians as the introduction to the epistle. Paul gave his customary, and yet very important, greeting in verses 1 and 2. Then he showed how he delighted in the Philippian believers by his thanksgiving to God for them, followed by the prayer that he was praying for them. Now as we get to verse 12 he began to tell them about how God had been blessing him even though he was a prisoner of Rome – with a future all unknown! In the outline which I have given to you I called this next point,

III. Paul's Report to the Church about His Imprisonment (Phil. 1:12-26).

And so let us begin with verse 12.

1:12 We must keep in mind that the Apostle Paul was a prisoner of Rome. The tendency on the part of the Philippian believers would not only be concern for the Apostle himself, but for the ministry of the Gospel. So we can see from these words, and from many of the verses that follow, that the Apostle Paul was seeking to encourage them, and to strengthen their faith. He wanted them to know that this was not a setback in his ministry, but that God was working, and working mightily although he was in a difficult position. And far from being discouraged himself, he was greatly encouraged because, as he said, “the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel.” He was having opportunities to preach the Gospel that he could not have had in any other way.

“Fallen out” means *resulted in*, or *turned out*, so that the Gospel had been spread rather than silenced. God has many ways of working, and often what looks like a defeat turns out to be a glorious opportunity which the enemies of the Gospel have unwittingly provide for the spread of that which they were trying to defeat. There was great progress in the expansion of the Gospel, and this was going on in the very heart of the Roman Empire. The Lord turns seeming defeats into great victories.

Look with me at Psalm 76 for an OT illustration of the very thing that Paul was experiencing in Rome

F. B. Meyer had this comment in his commentary on Philippians:

The wicked may plot against God, seeking to injure His servants and obstruct the progress of His truth, and within certain limits they may appear to succeed; but when they expect to reap the harvest of their evil machinations [plots or conspiracies], they suddenly find themselves put to the worse, and God takes all that they had meant for the suppression of the Gospel, to promote its progress and triumph. There are few instances establishing this fact more striking than the story of the Apostle, for the misfortunes which befell his human life, and the difficulties over which he was compelled to make progress, were used by God to promote the highest interests of that very Gospel which was so dear to his heart, and for which he suffered so much (pp. 33, 34).

God's ways and our ways are usually very different, but we see in His ways blessing that goes far beyond anything that we might have thought possible.

But then he went on to explain why he was so thankful for the overruling hand of the Lord.

1:13 Paul's “bonds” were his chains. He was chained to the same soldier, as we understand, for six hours at a time, and for twenty-four hours every day. This in itself could have been a very trying situation for a man who spent much time during every day in prayer, and who loved to be alone not only to pray, but to read

and meditate on the Word. We can imagine that his guards were of many different kinds. Some might have had mercy on him, wanting to help, while others could have been noisy, blasphemous, and intent on making his situation worse.

What actually was Paul's crime? He spoke here of his "bonds in Christ." This meant that it was well known that he was a prisoner because he belonged to Christ, and because he zealously preached Christ. The Jews hated him and pursued him with their charges in their attempt to put an end to the Gospel, but instead all that had happened had soldiers and others speaking about Christ and the Gospel and all that the Apostle Paul had told them. Paul was chained to the soldiers, but the other side of it was that they were chained to him. And he must have told every one of them about how he had felt about Christ in the past, and how his life had been changed when the Lord spoke to him on his way to Damascus. Paul talked to the soldiers, and the soldiers talked to each other as well as to those who had never seen the Apostle Paul. And so the soldiers themselves were spreading the message that they had heard from Paul. They probably had never had a prisoner like Paul, and so both in the palace and in the barracks where the soldiers stayed, the Praetorium, it seemed like everyone was speaking about Paul and his Savior, "Christ."

The word "palace" is a translation of the Greek word for a praetorium. It was the place of the Roman courts where prisoners were tried as well as the place where the soldiers were headquartered. It is translated as "the Palace" because the Caesars were there too. This is what made it such an amazing place for the spread of the Gospel. This is what God had done, and the Philippians believers must have listened to these words in utter amazement, finding it hard to believe that this was actually going on. It was in the Praetorium that this was going on, but many other places as well.

1:14 But in this verse the Apostle Paul spoke of another great blessing. He spoke of "many of the believers" as though this were not just a case of a few, but believers in Rome, encouraged by what God was doing through Paul, had become bold themselves in speaking of Christ and the Gospel. It takes boldness to speak to others of Christ, and so the Lord was stirring up the hearts of the believers. It seems that it was almost the popular thing to speak about Christ.

But where a mighty work of God is going on, the Devil is sure to be at work also, and he often uses believers, or those anyway who profess to believe, to side with the enemy (although they would deny that this is what they were doing).

1:15 While many supported Paul, others were jealous of him, and sought to make things even more difficult for him. At a time when there should have been great unity among those who professed faith in Christ, there was "strife." Paul did not elaborate, but it does not seem that false doctrine was being preached, but that those who were motivated by jealousy were preaching the Gospel in a way to belittle the Apostle Paul, perhaps questioning his motives, or trying to bring his ministry into question in some other ways. They tried to make the Apostle the issue, and not the message which he preached.

When Paul spoke of those who were preaching "of good will," he must have had in mind those to whom he had referred in verse 14, those who were loyal both to the Lord and to the Apostle Paul.

Note: Many claim that verses 16 and 17 have been reverses in the Textus Receptus, the Received Text from which the KJV is a translation. And this is why you find verse 16 in some of the more recent translation is verse 17 in the KJV, and verse 17 in the more recent translation (like the NASB and the NIV) are verse 16 in the KJV. However, both verses are there in all of the translation, and so I am going to deal with them as they appear in the KJV.

1:16 Here Paul spoke of those he had mentioned in the first part of the preceding verse. He said that they preached Christ. So it is hard for me to believe, as some do, that these were Judaizing teachers who were mixing the Law and the Gospel together. Their message seems to have been right, or Paul would not have rejoiced in it, but their hearts were wrong. It is amazing how people will let jealousy and a desire to become more prominent themselves, turn them against a faithful and powerful servant of Christ like the Apostle Paul was. Those who preach the Gospel, and those who bear witness to Christ, must not only make sure that their message is correct, but that their motives are too.

1:17 Those who preached Christ “of good will” (v. 15) loved the Lord, loved the Gospel, and they loved the Apostle Paul and rejoiced in the way that God was using him. And they did it knowing that he was “set for the defence of the Gospel.”

“Set” means *appointed*. Paul believed this was His calling from God – and it most certainly was! He defended the Gospel, not with a lot of arguments outside of Scripture, but from the Scriptures themselves. We have an illustration in Acts 17 of what the Apostle Paul meant here as he wrote to the Philippians. Please turn to Acts 17 with me, and follow me as I read the first three verses:

- 1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:
- 2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,
- 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ (Acts 17:1-3).

The most powerful proofs of the truth of the Gospel are to be found within the Word of God itself. The Bible was written by some 40 writers over a period of 1600 years, and yet there is a unity to the sixty-six books which could only be possible if they were all guided in the same way. And they were – by the Holy Spirit! And so to present the Gospel from the Bible, comparing Scripture with Scripture, seeing prophecies and their fulfillment, is the most powerful and most effective way of preaching the Gospel.

We can see this illustrated in the NT over and over again where the writers cite various OT passages to prove the truthfulness of their writing, and of their preaching. This is expository preaching. Philip began at Isaiah 53 and preached Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch. Peter did this on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. He did the same in Acts 3:22-26. And we see Paul doing this in Acts 13:26-39.

1:18 Here Paul declared his response to all that was going on, that which his friends were doing, and that which his enemies were doing.

Paul could not control what was going on. He did not want to be the issue, but that did not bother him. Bishop Moule’s translation of those word, “What then?”, which we find in the KJV, is “Well, what of that?” Those who were trying to make his situation worse were preaching Christ under the pretense that they were being zealous for the truth, but the real reason was that their hearts were full of prejudice and jealousy toward the Apostle Paul.

The word “pretense” is an interesting word, but it points to a behavior which all of us should seek constantly to avoid. John Eadie describes it this way: It expresses

a prominent element of the old Pharisaical character, its lack of genuineness; or that its professed motive was not its real one, that its exceeding devotion was but a show . . . The word denotes that state of mind in which the avowed is not the true motive; in which there is made to *appear* . . . what does not

exist. . . The contrasted noun, ἀλήθεια, signifies here genuineness or integrity (p. 39).

But Paul was not resentful toward them. Instead, he rejoiced that Christ was being preached, and he fully expected to continue to rejoice.

Bishop Moule made this helpful comment in his commentary on Philippians. He said,

No long comment is needed on the noble spiritual lesson of this passage. His Lord's interests are his own, and in that fact, amidst extremely vexatious circumstances, he finds by grace more than resignation, more than equanimity [calmness and composure]; there is positive and assured happiness. Self has yielded the inner throne to Christ, and the result is a Divine harmony between circumstances and the man, as both are seen equally subject to, and usable by, Him (p. 22).

And John Eadie had this to say about the Apostle Paul's situation here. This is his comment:

The apostle speak of affliction in addition to his bonds—not a closer imprisonment, or a heavier chain, or an attempt to infuriate the emperor and prejudice his appeal, but something over and above his bonds—perhaps chagrin and sorrow at this misrepresentation of his position and character. May we not therefore regard the phrase — “I rejoice, and will rejoice,” as the opposite of those emotions which they strove to produce within him? They laboured to surround him with circumstances which should cause him “affliction,” but they failed. He could not but blame their motives, while he rejoiced in the result. They must have set themselves in rivalry with him, must have hoped to ruin his reputation, and damage his apostolical commission, in the way in which they did his work. By their detraction of his character in and through an imitation of his labours, they trusted to chafe and vex him. But as they deserved, they were egregiously [conspicuously] disappointed. They thought that he would be afflicted, but he was rejoiced (pp. 36,37).

I was glad to see that Eadie agreed with me when he said about Paul's rejoicing,

Surely he [Paul] could never have employed such language, if false views of Christ had been propounded, such views as the Judaizers were in the habit of insisting upon—the necessity of circumcision, and the perpetual obligation of the Mosaic Law. Was it possible for Paul to rejoice in a style of preaching at Rome, which he so strongly denounced in Galatia? (p. 35).

What an important lesson the Apostle Paul teaches us here in putting Christ ahead of himself. If we are truly seeking to glorify the Lord in whatever ministry we have, the Lord will take care of our reputation and continue His blessing upon us. But our objective must be the glory of Christ.

January 4, 2000

1:19 Here the Apostle explained one reason why he could rejoice even when he was faced with the opposition of those who preached “Christ even of envy and strife.” He knew that this was a part of the work that the Lord was doing in his heart toward the ultimate completion of the work of salvation. Paul's word in Phil. 1:6 applied just as much to himself as it did to any other believer. God is the One Who is not only in control of all of the circumstances of our lives, but He works them together for our good, our spiritual good..

When he wrote that “this shall turn to my salvation,” he meant not only how God could use even the opposition for his perfection in grace, but that he could even rejoice in what was going on, knowing that Christ was being preached. He was not indifferent to such hypocrisy as his foes were demonstrating, but he knew that God can bless His Word, and often does, even though those who preach it may be motivated by attitudes which are not pleasing to the Lord. We must remember that the power is in the Word. It, the Gospel, is the power of God

unto salvation. The fact that a man preaches the Gospel, and that people are saved, does not necessarily mean that the preacher is a true believer. It does show the power of the Gospel even though the instrument through whom it comes may be defiled in one way or another.

This is how Eadie expressed the meaning of “this” – “For I know that this . . .”

We therefore understand the touto refers to the state of mind described in the former verse—his joy in the preaching of Christ whatever the motive. For this state of mind indicated his supreme regard for Christ—that he (Paul) preferred Him [Christ] above everything—that he could bear to be an object of malevolence [ill will] and jealousy, if so his Master was exalted—and that, provided Christ was preached, he cared not for tarnished fame or heavier affliction. This mental condition was an index to him of a healthy spiritual state. Salvation must be the issue, when Christ was so magnified in the process (p. 43).

It was Paul’s responsibility to be submissive to the Lord in what was going on. God turns curses continually into blessings. As we read in Psalm 76, He makes the wrath of men to praise Him. So Paul rejoiced in what was going on knowing that it could only promote his own growth in grace if he were truly trusting the Lord and submissive to Him.

But he also believed that there were two other factors that were a part of the blessing that could come to himself throughout the ordeal that he was facing:

- 1) The first was *their prayers* – the prayers of the saints in Philippi.
- 2) And the second was “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”

Verses like Rom. 15:30 show how Paul believed strongly in prayer. This is what he wrote in that verse:

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

Also listen to Col. 4:2-4:

- 2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;
- 3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds;
- 4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

Another such verse is 1 Thess. 5:25, the simple appeal, “Brethren, pray for us.” Paul was a man given to much prayer, but he also sought the faithful support of the people of God in prayer. May we see through all of these verses that it is not only important that we pray, but that we seek the support of others in prayer.

“The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” is obviously a reference to the Holy Spirit. He is “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” because He was sent by our Lord to indwell His people, to teach them, and to empower them, but the thought here is that the Holy Spirit Himself is “the supply.”

:

The greatest example that we have in all of Scripture, or in all of history for that matter, is in what happened to our Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing could have been more despicable than the treatment He received from His enemies—falsely accused, viciously tormented and physically mutilated so that He was almost beyond recognition. And yet in what His enemies did to Him, they were fulfilling the eternal purpose of God for the salvation of sinners. But the Lord prayed that they would be forgiven, and He committed Himself into the Father’s hands. And it was this which led the Apostle Paul to give that great statement on the humiliation of Christ in Philippians 2. Also, Paul had this in mind when he wrote of “the fellowship of His sufferings” in chapter 3, verse 10.

verse 10.

January 10, 2000

1:20 The Apostle Paul had expressed his great joy that Christ was being preached, and his joy was not dampened by the fact that some preached Christ with the purpose of adding affliction to his bonds. How they were doing that, he did not make clear, but it probably amounted to an attack upon his character in some way, or possibly his motives. But he was so devoted to the Lord Jesus that he rejoiced in spite of all that his enemies were doing because Christ was being preached.

Looking back to the final words of verse 19, it seems that it was “the supply of the Spirit” that encouraged him to hope that he would not fail to exalt the Lord through whatever might lie before him. His “earnest expectation” and his “hope” is explained by one writer as “the concentrated intense hope which ignores other interests, and strains forward with an outstretched head (Kennedy, quoted by Geoffrey Wilson, p. 30). Paul was consumed with a desire to magnify the Lord, and no consideration for himself would hold him back from that objective. But he gave the Holy Spirit the credit for the intensity of that desire. He wanted to face the trials that were ahead, whether they led to life or death, with the same boldness that God had given him in preaching the Gospel in the past.

He wanted to *magnify Christ*. He wanted people to see the greatness and glory of the Savior. He wanted them to see that Paul counted his Lord worthy of whatever sufferings he might experience because of Him. Most people think lightly of Christ and just consider Him to be a mere Man. But Paul knew differently. There was no one who could begin to compare with his Lord, and nothing delighted him more than to be telling others about Him. Even death would not deter him.

And verse 21 tells us why he felt the way he did about the Lord.

1:21 To Paul the joy of life was Christ, knowing Him, walking with Him, serving Him. And death was gain because it meant more of Christ.

“To me” is emphatic. Christ was the passion of his life. Eadie expressed it this way. He said, Might not the sentiment be thus expanded? For me to live is Christ—the preaching of Christ the business of my life; the presence of Christ the cheer of my life; the image of Christ the crown of my life; the spirit of Christ the life of my life; the love of Christ the power of my life; the will of Christ the law of my life; and the glory of Christ the end [the goal] of my life. Christ was the absorbing element of his life. If he travelled, it was on Christ’s errand; if he suffered, it was in Christ’s service. When he spoke, his theme was Christ; and when he wrote, Christ filled his letters (Eadie, pp. 50, 51).

And Bishop Moule saw the same meaning of the Apostle in this verse. He said, referring to the Apostle Paul, “Living ... is for him so full of Christ, so occupied with and for Him, that CHRIST sums it up.” And then the Bishop added, “Such is meant to be the experience of every Christian” (p. 24).

Where could we find a better example of one who loved the Lord with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength? This is what the Holy Spirit had done in the Apostle Paul. The Holy Spirit delights in exalting Christ, and He does this for us and in us, and then the glory of such a relationship with the Lord shines out in the way we live. And Paul firmly expected that if his ordeal ended in death, it would only be “gain” for him because in glory he would love the Lord more than ever before.

But while the Lord left him on earth, whether in prison or free, his purpose was to live in such a way that people around him would be forced to consider the greatness and the loveliness of Christ. How different life would be for every one of us if we had the same love for Christ that filled the heart of the Apostle Paul. And his passion for Christ was never more evident than when he was telling someone else about the Savior. He loved to preach the Gospel, and he did it just as faithfully and enthusiastically when he was speaking to one Roman soldier as when he stood before hundreds declaring the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this was never clearer than in the words which the Apostle Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders when he met with them for the last time in Miletus. Although you probably remember his words very well, let me read them to you again because they reflect so well what Paul had written here from Rome to the believers he loved so much in Philippi. Here are Paul's words to the Ephesian elders:

- 18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,
- 19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:
- 20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,
- 21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:
- 23 Save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.
- 24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:18-24).

This, likewise, was the attitude of Peter and John when they were told by the Jewish authorities not to speak any longer "in this name" (Acts 4:17). This is how they expressed their warning to the apostles.

And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18).

Do you remember what they said?

- 19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.
- 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4:19-20).

1:22 Having said this, Paul did not want the Philippian believers to think that he wanted to die. He was not afraid to die, and he knew that to die would be "gain" for him because he would be with the Lord. But he

was blessed with the thought that to continue on in the flesh would enable him to bear more fruit for the Lord. God had richly blessed Paul's ministry, and he was being blessed right there in his confinement. Furthermore, he had no reason to doubt but that if he lived on, his fruitfulness would continue. That is the way it ought to be with all of us. As we walk with the Lord, and grow in the Lord, and continue serving the Lord, we should not only look for fruit, but more fruit. Perhaps Paul was thinking about what the Lord had said to His disciples on that occasion when He was with them for the last time before His death. Paul was there to hear what the Lord said, but he had doubtless heard the disciples speak of the Lord's words to them at that time. I am referring to the words recorded for us in John 15:

- 1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.
- 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing (John 15:1-5).

Notice: “fruit . . . more fruit . . . much fruit.”

Sometimes when the Scriptures speak of fruit, it has to do with godly character. But Dawson Trotman of the Navigators used to say that “the fruit of a Christian is another Christian.” And we have just been over that passage in Matthew where we learned that the Lord’s original call to Peter and Andrew was, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 5:19).

We all need more of the “boldness” that the people in the early church prayed for. It’s amazing, isn’t it, that we can talk about anything else easier than we can speak to others about Christ. This passage would seem to teach us that the problem with us is that we don’t love the Lord Jesus Christ like Paul did, and like many of those early Christians did. It was their greatest joy to talk about Christ, and the Gospel of the grace of God. The JFB commentary tells us that “boldness” is the opposite of “being ashamed.” To be bold is not to be insulting and offensive (although the Gospel does offend), but Thayer defines it as meaning that we have the freedom to speak openly and frankly, not holding back on the truth, speaking with fearless confidence and cheerful courage. We can be bold and compassionate at the same time, but only the Lord can give us the boldness that we need, and so it needs to be a part of our prayers.

But Paul had to admit that if the choice were up to him as to whether he would live on, or die, he didn’t know which he would choose, and he continued speaking of this dilemma in verse 23.

1:23 Bishop Lightfoot said in his commentary that for Paul to be “in a strait betwixt two” meant that he “*was hemmed in on both sides*” (p. 93). “To depart” conveys the picture of what the Israelites did every time the pillar moved, and they had to “break camp.” This was his “desire.” Here Paul used the Greek word which most often has a bad meaning, ἐπιθυμία, and is translated “lust.” But here it is used in a good sense. This is what he longed for. This was his craving. To break camp here on earth so that he could be with his Lord in heaven. That is a wonderful way to think about a Christian’s death, isn’t it? Last Sunday just shortly after noon, my brother Neil “broke camp,” and now he is with the Lord in glory! Bishop Moule said that the same idea is in 2 Cor. 5:1-8 where “the wanderer’s ‘tent is taken down . . . that he may go home to the Lord” (p. 26).

“Far better” is what Bishop Lightfoot called “a triple comparative,” meaning that “far better” is not strong enough. Paul said it was “very far better.” Compare the best that earth offers us, even in our fellowship with the Lord, and the comparison cannot be calculated. Christ in heaven is the Winner. And we will all understand that some day. We need to be thinking about heaven all of the time. That is home. We are strangers and foreigners here on earth, but citizens of heaven (as we are going to learn when we get to the end of chapter 3).

1:24 But then Paul pictured the other side of his dilemma: “Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.” Not just “needful,” but “more needful” – that which the saints can’t do without, something that is indispensable!

In 2 Cor. 11 where Paul was speaking of the afflictions that he had experienced, he brought the list to an end with this statement,

Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches

(2 Cor. 11:28).

So the Apostle Paul was willing for the moment to forego that which was “far better” for that which was “more needful.” And the same is true of the professing church today. It is true of all of us. How “needful” we are, “more needful” than any of us realize. How worldly we can be, how lacking in zeal to serve the Lord, how fickle in our relationship with the Lord! How little we pray, and how lax we are about meditating on the Word. If you want to know why the Apostle Paul prayed so much, one answer is “the care of all the churches.” He was burdened to tell people about Christ who had never heard of the Savior, but then after they were saved he was burdened to help them walk with the Lord. So he would put off his departure for a time so that he could help meet the needs of the people of God. And he seemed to be satisfied that this was the will of God for him.

1:25 “And having this confidence” – Paul was not uttering a prophecy here, but he was expressing his personal conviction that, because he was so aware of how much the Philippians were still in need of his continuing ministry, he felt certain that he would not die. He knew, as far as we can know, that his ministry to the Philippians was not over.

But what would be the purpose of his continuation in this life? It was for their “furtherance and joy of faith.” What would this mean, and how would he do it?

There are two things here, but they are inseparable. It was for *the furtherance of their faith* and for *the joy of their faith*. Spiritual progress in our lives is through a greater understanding of God and His Word, and this is always accompanied by greater joy.

A good illustration of this is to be seen in our Lord’s ministry after His resurrection with the two disciples who were leaving Jerusalem and returning to the home in Emmaus. The account is given to us in the last chapter of Luke’s Gospel, chapter 24. They had been discussing the events of the preceding days having to do with the death of the Lord. And this is what Luke had to say about that event:

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? (Luke 24:15-17).

They told the Lord why they were sad. It was because they had hoped that the Lord Jesus would have redeemed Israel, and they evidently were thinking about deliverance from Rome. Following this the Lord rebuked them, and then He taught them. Listen to the way Luke described what happened.

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:25-27).

Then these men invited the Lord into their home, still not knowing Who He was, and it was while they were eating that “their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight” (Luke 24:31).

But it was their comment which followed which applies to our text here in Philippians. This is what we read in Luke 24:32:

And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

As they came to understand the scriptures better, their hearts burned with great joy within them, and they went right back to the apostles in Jerusalem to tell them that they had seen the Lord.

This is what Paul was talking about. And this was really the purpose behind his writing of this epistle. The believers in Philippi were both confused and saddened by the arrest and imprisonment of the Apostle Paul, and Paul knew that they needed to understand more about God and His ways.

We have the same emphasis in those familiar words of the prophet Jeremiah when he wrote,
Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts (Jer. 15:16).

True growth in grace when our faith is being furthered, always results in an increase of our joy. And Paul always rejoiced to see believers moving ahead in their understanding of the Word, and in the resulting increase in their fellowship with the Lord.

Verse 26 is a continuation of this same thought.

1:26 Here the Apostle Paul touched again upon the purpose of his writing when, speaking of joy, he pointed out that the particular joy he was talking about was *their joy in the Lord*.

I believe that the Apostle Paul here was expressing his primary objective in his ministry of the Word. It was to bring the people of God to a great experience of true joy in the Lord. Geoffrey Wilson says in his commentary on Philippians that “the ultimate aim of all ministry is to give further cause for glorying in Christ Jesus” (p. 33).

The word for “rejoicing” which Paul used here was a favorite of his, the word *καύχημα*. It amounts to boasting (in a good sense), or glorying in the Lord.

Paul used this same word, “rejoice,” in Phil. 2:16. (Read vv. 14-16.)

To rejoice in Christ is to glory in all that He is, in all that He teaches us, in all that He has done for us, and all that He continues to do for us. The words, “more abundant,” should remind us of Paul’s first request in his prayer for the Philippian church which is recorded for us in verses 9-11 of this first chapter. Paul did not believe that we should be content with the progress that we have made so far in our relationship with the Lord, but that we should continue to press on toward the goal of being like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Glorying in Christ is what we will be doing through all eternity, and so it is important that we learn to glory in Him now, and only in Him. Remember what Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia about glorying,

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Gal. 6:14).

Not the cross by which, but the Christ “by whom.”

Adam Clarke said, “The further a man proceeds in the way of truth, the stronger his faith will be; and the stronger his faith the greater his joy or happiness.” But we need to emphasize that this joy will not be in who we are, nor in what we are, nor in what we have, nor in what we can do. But it will be a joy based wholly upon the Lord, Who He is, What He has done, What He can do, and all that has to do with His amazing love for us.

Rejoicing in the Lord is not a theme that is found only in the NT. It is OT truth as well. David said at the end of Psalm 32, one of his Psalms of confession, “Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart” (Psa. 32:11). And Psalm 33 begins with, “Rejoice in the LORD, O ye

righteous: for praise is comely for the upright” (Psa. 33:1). And he strikes the same note in Psa. 35:9, “And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation.” And in one of our memory verses for this year found in Psalm 40 we have these words, also from David:

Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually,
The LORD be magnified (Psa. 40:16).

And we have this verse from Isaiah, the prophet:

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels (Isa. 61:10).

And who could forget those wonderful verses at the end of Habakkuk’s prophecy?

17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation (Hab. 3:17-18).

It is a good measure of our own spiritual lives if we will examine our hearts to determine if we are rejoicing in the Lord, and if so, how much, and with what exuberance.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul
Tuesday Bible Class – January 17, 2000
Philippians 1:27-2:11

Intro: Paul had been telling the Philippian believers about his experiences in Rome, and how the Lord had used his imprisonment for the spread of the Gospel. But he also told them how the Lord had used those trying circumstances for his own edification. If anything, it had sharpened his “earnest expectation and” his “hope” that he would be just as bold in living for Christ and witnessing for Christ as he had been throughout his ministry. And if he were to die, that would be gain for him because it would mean that he would be with the Christ whom he loved with all of his heart.

And yet when he thought of the spiritual needs of the Philippians, he felt convinced in his own heart that the Lord was going to let him continue, as he said. “. . . for your furtherance and joy of faith.” And then he added, That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again (Phil. 1:26).

Then from this point on through the opening verses of chapter 3, the Apostle Paul began to minister to the Philippian believers, and so we have some exhortations starting with verse 27 of chapter 1. And it seems that his main concern was that they would “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.” It is evident that they, too, had their enemies in Philippi who were opposed to the testimony of the Gospel. And at such a time it was absolutely necessary that they stand together and work together in the spread of the Gospel of Christ.

In the outline which I have given you I have called this section,

IV. Paul’s Exhortations to the Church (Phil. 1:27-2:18).

And the first of three points under this heading is:

A. To be likeminded and humble (Phil. 1:27-2:4).

There can really be no real likemindedness among us as the Lord’s people unless we are truly humble. Paul started with the need to be likeminded, and then he went on in chapter 2 to show the need for humility. And in the second part of this section we will see, beginning with verse 5 of chapter 2, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the great Example of humility Whom we are to follow.

So now let us turn to Phil. 1:27.

1:27 Just as our text begins with the word “only,” so does the Greek text. This makes it emphatic. Geoffrey Wilson, in his commentary, said that this “points to the one essential thing which demands the Philippians’ attention, no matter what happens to Paul” (p. 34).

The words “let your conversation be” are a translation of a single Greek word, a verb, which means *to behave as citizens*. On this point let me ask you to turn to Phil. 3:20. The literal translation of the first words of that verse is, “For our citizenship is in heaven.” And he used the noun which is formed from the verb that we have in Phil. 1:27. You can say that we have *dual citizenship*. We are citizens of the United States of America, but by the new birth we are also citizens of heaven. Some day we are going to leave this earthly citizenship behind, and we will go to our *home country*! And what a blessing that will be for all of us. No taxes. No crime. No sickness and no death. No politicians. Everything will be perfect then. But even though we are citizens of the United States, yet we are to live as citizens of heaven. And citizens of heaven should make the best kind of citizens in the United States because the standards for us as citizens of heaven are far greater, far higher, than what our country here on earth expects of us.

So, going back to 1:27 we are to behave right now here on earth as citizens of heaven in a manner that is worthy

of the Gospel of Christ. You see, as I mentioned before, it is by the Gospel of Christ that we have become citizens of heaven. We were born citizens of this country, or we have become naturalized citizens. But we were not born saved. We were born in sin, and we needed a second birth to qualify as citizens of heaven.

Now you and I have papers to show that we were born in this country, and that we are citizens of the USA. But we don't have papers to show when and where we were born again. So how do we show that we are citizens of heaven? ***We show it by the way we live.*** "Becometh" means *worthy*. If we claim to be the people of God, then we need to live like the people of God. And how is that? Well, there are many things that could be said in answer to that question, but the all-inclusive answer is that we act as citizens of heaven in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel when we see to live by the Word of God. A Christian surely should live according to the laws of the country of which he is a citizen, but our country condones a lot of things that the Bible condemns. And the Bible tells us to do a lot of things that our country is not even concerned about. Our country talks about right and wrong, but it does not call what is wrong *sin*. So the standards for those of us who claim to be citizens of heaven are high, so high, in fact, that without the blessing and strength of the Holy Spirit, we are unable to do what the Bible tells us to do. Or to state it another way, we are not able to keep from doing what the Bible forbids without the help and blessing of the Holy Spirit.

As far as our text is concerned, to live as citizens of heaven, Paul was saying meant *standing fast in one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel*.

Let us start with these words by determining what Paul meant by "the faith of the Gospel." Perhaps you will remember that when you have the definite article "the" with "faith," that it usually means *doctrine, teaching*. The Gospel is usually under attack by those who still in their sins. The Gospel is often under attack from many of the pulpits of our country. A lot of people don't like the Gospel because they feel that they are OK just like they are. A lot of people hate the Gospel because it insists that it is the only way that people can get right with God. In these days when "anything goes," You are a bigot in these days if you believe that there is only one way that people can be saved, only one Savior. People like to think that any religion is all right, or no religion is all right. Everything is relative.

So Paul was saying that we need to stand our ground, we need to persevere, striving together, united in our stand for the Gospel of Christ.

Therefore, Paul pointed first of all to the lives we are to live as the people of God, and then he called upon the believers in Philippi to stand together for the truth of the Gospel. This did not mean that they should engage in some kind of a conflict with the people of the world, but the best way to stand for the Gospel is to be faithful in proclaiming it. We are not out to win arguments, but we are out, as Solomon said long ago, *to win souls*. See Prov. 11:30, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." The Lord Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19).

Those who proclaim the Gospel of Christ have always been like soldiers in warfare. And it is important that there be no conflict within the ranks. We have a common Enemy, and many are on his side. But the Lord is on our side, and often the greatest of enemies, like Saul of Tarsus, are subdued by the Captain of our salvation, and then become enlisted in the work of the Gospel. The ministry of Paul surely must have been an encouragement to believers in that day to know that there is nothing impossible with God.

But we need to remember what Paul wrote about our warfare in Ephesians 6, and also his words in 2 Cor. 10:3-6:

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

- 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)
- 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;
- 6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

But let us go on now to verse 28.

1:28 “In nothing terrified” – Eadie mentions that this verb in the Greek was applied to sacred horses. So the picture is of horses bolting when they are suddenly terrified by something. Lucille and I along with Gary and Martha had an experience with bolting horses a few years ago up in Victoria, B. C. We got into a wagon drawn by two horses to ride through the city and to see one of the parks in Victoria. The girl who was driving us allowed the wheels on one side of the wagon to run up on the curb, and when she reined the horses away from the curb, the sudden jolt of the wagon, terrified the horses, and they bolted. They ran as fast as they could go until they ran up on another curb, and one of the horses went down. That stopped us from what could have been a very serious accident. The Lord protected us, and we were all aware of that. But this is the picture here. We are not to panic, and run off when opposed because of the Gospel. Nobody likes that kind of a situation, but sometimes we can face strong opposition.

But when we stay calm, the reaction on our enemies will be what Paul called, “an evident token of perdition.” Again our Lord is our supreme Example of One Who remained calm when faced by His enemies in the Garden of Gethsemane, and afterwards at His trials, and even through His death. This was perhaps what God used to bring one of the thieves who was crucified with the Lord Jesus to faith. And the Apostles Peter and John showed real God-given courage when they were told not to speak or teach any more in the Name of Jesus. Do you remember that incident. It is recorded for us in Acts 4:18-20:

18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

So while God uses the strength of His people under opposition to witness to the unsaved of their own perdition, it also testifies of the salvation of the Lord's people.

Those of us who were in church here at Trinity on Sunday night saw from Ephesians 5 how it is the uniqueness of our services, and especially with regard to music, that we bear the greatest testimony to unsaved people who may attend our services. And this is not just true of us, but of any church. The emphasis today in many churches is to make our services as much like the world is used to as possible. But the Word tells us that our most powerful testimony is when people see how different our meetings are when we sing “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” rather than music which reflects the kind of music that is going on in the world. Many people think that we are most persuasive when we do what the world does, but the Word of God teaches us just the opposite.

1:29 Paul ended verse 28 by saying how God often uses the courage which we display when under fire for the sake of the Gospel. And he went from that to say that the same gracious action on behalf of Christ that brought us to faith in Christ, has by grace given us those times when we suffer for His sake. Paul had learned a lesson which we all need to learn, and that is to see God in all of the circumstances of our lives. Things often get beyond what we can control, but they never get beyond God's control in our lives. God brought us to faith in Christ. Our faith is a gift from God. In the same way the sufferings that we may experience, and will exper-

ience if we are living like citizens of heaven, are given to us by God for the glory of Christ. Many, many times people have been brought to the Savior through watching the people of God under trials, or by seeing their peace when under fire.

1:30 We don't all suffer to the same extent, but suffering is always the lot of believers. We may lose friends because of our faith in Christ. Often families are divided because some are Christians, and others are not. With many in the past suffering has meant death, martyrdom. The Philippians had seen how Paul and Silas suffered in Philippi. Now they were hearing that he was going through more suffering. But Paul looked upon the same grace that led to his salvation, as the grace that enabled him to suffer for the sake of Christ.

The word "therefore" in 2:1 indicates that the them in the latter part of chapter 1 carries over into chapter 2. It is always good to look for connecting words like "therefore," especially when we come to a chapter division.

2:1 "If" suggests to us *doubt*, amounting to maybe there is, and maybe there isn't. But that is not the idea in this verse. In fact, Paul was expressing positive truths. And in place of the "if" we can read since – ***Since there is consolation in Christ, since there is comfort in love, since there is fellowship in the Spirit, and since there are tender compassions and mercies . . .*** These are called in Greek, first class conditions which are assumed to be true. But we know that they are true.

"Consolation in Christ" – The word that Paul used for "consolation" is capable of a double meaning. One is that of comfort or encouragement, suggested by the word "consolation." And the other is exhortation. Paul meant that what he had been saying was a reflection of what the Lord had said, but that the Lord does not leave us alone either to suffer or to live for God. His teaching while He was here on earth was exactly like what Paul had been teaching in the preceding verses. We have examples of our Lord's teaching about suffering in what we call the Upper Room Discourse (although not all of it was given in the Upper Room). Listen to these words found in John 15:18-21:

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

But then in John 16:33 the Lord said this:

These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

There is both exhortation and comfort in the words of the Lord Jesus. He has sent us into a hostile world to bear witness of Him. But He has always promised us that He would be with us, and that He would never fail us nor forsake us. Yes, there is consolation in Christ. Read His words in the Gospels, and you will find them over and over again.

"Comfort of love" – That is, can we find any comfort in love? Now this can only mean God's love for us, or Christ's love for us. There is no difference between the two – God's love and Christ's love are the same. Again remember that Paul was not expressing doubt that there is love in the love of God for us, but he was saying that *since there is*, therefore we should not doubt His love for us because of the troubles that come our way in the ministry of the Word, but we should know that the Lord's love for us is always the same. It never fluctuates, is never hot and then cold, never up and then down. So we know that His love will support us and cause Him to

minister to us when we face either the problems which seem to stand in the way of our oneness with each other, or facing the problems of suffering for the sake of Christ and the Gospel. There is no more encouraging truth than the truth that God loves us, loves all of His people, and loves each one in the same way.

The third expression that Paul used was “fellowship in the Spirit – *since there is fellowship in the Spirit*. Here Paul was thinking about the resources that we have in the Holy Spirit. Likemindedness among believers would be utterly impossible without Him. When the early Christians prayed for boldness to continue to speak the Word of God, they were filled with the Spirit, and spoke the Word of God with boldness. It is the fruit of the Spirit which makes us like Christ. The Holy Spirit is our Teacher, and He empowers us with all of the grace we need to be faithful in suffering and faithful in our fellowship with each other.

The fourth expression, “bowels and mercies.” Lightfoot called these *affectionate yearnings of heart and tender feelings of compassion*. Not only do we have the love of God for us, but we have the love of God in us. “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). And Christ lives in us (see Gal. 2:20).

So let us understand that both the ability to honor the Lord in suffering and the possibility for believers to be united in true oneness, are only possible because of the resources that we have in the Members of the Godhead — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The things that Paul has been discussing in this epistle, godly living, faithfulness in suffering, and now as he gets back to the subject of their oneness with other — all of these were tests of their salvation, and also of the genuineness of their fellowship with the Lord. We can all make great claims for ourselves, but words alone will not meet our needs. We need to be walking in real fellowship with the Lord.

All of this was so important to the Apostle Paul that here in chapter 2, verse 2, he said,

2:2 “Fulfil ye my joy.” As great as Paul’s joy was in the believers in the Philippian church, his joy was not yet complete. What an example Paul is in his love for the people of God, and his desire to see them experience true fellowship, and growing fellowship in the Lord. In 1 Thessalonians 3:8 we read that he said to the believers in this church, “For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.” This is a real test of the nature of our fellowship with the Lord when our joy is tied in with the spiritual condition of other believers.

John Eadie had this to say about Paul’s word here in verse 2:

His theme is unity, the cultivation of the feelings which maintain it, and the repression of that selfishness and pride which always retard and so often destroy it. He had joy in their spiritual welfare, but he would have fulness of joy in the harmony and love. Therefore he solemnly calls upon them by four distinct appeals, to fill up the measure of his gladness. His earnestness makes it evident that he apprehended the existence among them of a spirit of jealousy, selfishness, and faction. This suspicion haunted him and grieve him, or at least it moderated that delight which he would otherwise have felt in them, and which he so ardently longed to possess. His happiness would be at its height, provided that the one soul and the one mind reigned in the church. What a motive to conciliation and peace lay in the thought that his joy was so far dependent on the absence of feuds and schisms among them! Could they be so unthinking as to grieve their apostle by any report of their differences? And they were to beware of strife and vainglory as elements of disunion, and to cherish a spirit of humility and kind regard for one another’s welfare (p. 81).

F. B. Meyer, in his commentary on Philippians, likened what Paul appealed for in this verse to what happened in Israel when the people came to make him king over Israel as he had already been appoint king over Judah. It is expressed in 1 Chronicles 12:38:

All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king.

F. B. Meyer applied that verse in this way:

So the deepest thought in Christian fellowship, and that which makes us truly one, is the desire to make Jesus King, that He may be loved and honored, that thousands of souls may bow the knee and confess that He is Lord. Oh! that this were ever the prominent thought among us (p. 79).

It is a high time in the life of any church when the people are united in their desire to glorify the Lord in every phase of the ministry, and in each person's life. Paul must have been thinking of his own expressed desire which is found in Phil. 1:20 – the magnifying of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the passion of Paul's heart. When believers are united in this purpose, this is true unity.

Verse 2 deals with the positive side of this questions of unity; verses 3 and 4, with the two negatives, and how we can be protected from them.

2:3 Never is anything to be done “through strife or vainglory.” Paul had used this word “strife” in 1:15.

This means, in the NT, to promote yourself, to put yourself forward, and to be willing to use even the lowest means to accomplish what you want to do. In Aristotle it is a word that describes what politicians do. It promotes division, and is motivated by selfishness. It is illustrated by what Paul told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:30: “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” To work by “strife” is to built up your following, and to diminish the number of those who are following someone else. Paul said that this is never to be done.

“Vainglory” is empty glory, glory which is not glory at all. This is illustrated by Phil. 3:18 and 19. There it is spoken of unbelievers, but believers can be guilty of the same sin. This is another word for pride as the rest of the verse shows.

To safeguard ourselves from “strife and vainglory,” we are to cultivate “lowliness of mind” and to esteem others “better than ourselves.” This is only possible in a real sense by the grace of God because we are inclined by nature to think to think that we are the best. This is humility. It is to have a deep realization of our own littleness. Paul and Barnabas showed that they were not bothered with “vainglory” when in Lystra the people were ready to worship them when they healed a man who had never walked. This is what Luke had to say about that situation in Acts 14:12-15:

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

This is “lowliness of mind.” Actually it means to habitually consider others as our superiors.

Paul continued along the same line in verse 4.

2:4 Again, by nature we are always inclined to look out for our own interests first. Paul said that we are to be concerned first about that which will benefit others. Selfishness and pride stand in the way of true oneness in the body of Christ. As citizens of heaven, our lifestyle is to be completely different from the way

people live in this world. The world says that if we don't look out for ourselves, and seek our own interests, we can be sure that no one else will be concerned about us. So athletes brag about what they can do, and are constantly pointing out how they are better than others. Politicians do the same. And often such feelings are in our hearts even though we don't express it in words.

How important it is for us to remember the words of Solomon which are found in Prov. 4:23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." And the reason we must set a guard around our hearts is because of the condition of our hearts. Jeremiah said that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). Charles Bridges said in his commentary on the Proverbs, that if we are to keep our hearts, we must know what they are. And he said, "If we know not our hearts, we know nothing to any purpose. Whatever else we know, to neglect this knowledge is to be a fool at the best" (p. 53).

Where are we going to find the perfect example of what Paul was speaking about? Is there such a one? And the answer is, "Yes." It is to be found in perfection in our Lord Jesus Christ. But, by the grace of God, it is found in a less perfect way in those whose goal in life is to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. And so this is where the Apostle Paul takes us now from verses 5 through 11 in our text.

Let me remind you of its place in our outline:

IV. Paul's Exhortations to the Church (Phil. 1:27-2:18).

And now we are ready for the second point under this heading.

B. To have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5-11).

January 24, 2000

2:5 "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Paul had touched much on the subject of being likeminded, in this epistle. Even here in chapter 2, verse 2, Paul spoke of it twice. He told them to "be likeminded, . . . being . . . of one mind." In both of those instances Paul used the same verb that he did here in 2:5. But when we come to verse 5 we see that by likemindedness, the Apostle Paul meant *likemindedness with Christ*. Paul was not saying that they just needed to be likeminded with each other. Often that is the wrong kind of likemindedness. Criminals can be likeminded in the desire to commit a crime. Soldiers need to be likeminded with each other when they go into war. Athletes have to be likeminded if they hope to win any games. Parents need to be likeminded in the way they raise their children. People in a church need to be likeminded about what they think a church should be doing. In fact, we have all kinds of likemindedness around us. Likemindedness does not even require that people be Christians. Likemindedness can be right, or it can be wrong. So if Paul were just saying that the believers in Rome needed to be likeminded, but did not specify the one with whom they were to be likeminded, the strongest character in the church could easily decide what the people in the church were to do, and have everyone fall behind him, but he might be totally wrong in the way he was leading the church. Often people who are not spiritually minded, get into places of influence in a church, and lead the church in a way that is contrary to the way a church should go according to Scripture.

The Apostle John mentioned a man in his third epistle who was like what I have just described. His name was Diotrephes. The Apostle John said that he "loveth to have the pre-eminence. He wanted everyone to agree with him, and if they didn't agree, he would put them out of the church. He wanted a likeminded church, but to him it meant being likeminded with him, with Diotrephes!

What was it that Paul had in mind?

Whenever Paul spoke of likemindedness, or unity, oneness among the people of God, *it was always likeminded-*

ness with CHRIST! And that becomes very clear here in verse 5 of chapter 2. The Word of God teaches us that we have been saved to become like Christ. To attain that goal, we need to believe what He believed. We need to think like He thought. We need to live like He lived. Becoming like Christ touches every detail our lives. We must have the objective, or objectives, in life that the Lord Jesus Christ had. So that Paul was not just saying that we need to be likeminded with each other, but we need to be likeminded with Christ – all of us! If we are to be examples to each other, it must be like Paul was an example. He told the believers at Corinth who were in all kinds of trouble, **“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”** (1 Cor. 11:1).

All of this requires that we have the mind of Christ, and in a very practical way this means that *we are to think about ourselves in the same way that Christ thought about Himself*. And there is one word which describes how the Lord thought about Himself, and that is the word *humility*! *This is one of the most amazing of the attributes of our Lord, and at the same time the most glorious*. Yes, humility is one of the divine attributes. And we should be thankful that it is because if it were not one of His attributes, we would be doomed to hell without any hope whatever of salvation. We read in Psalm 113:5-6,

5 Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high,

6 Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!

Think also of those wonderful words of our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 11:29 where it is recorded that He said,

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.

In verses 6 through 8 of this chapter the Apostle Paul rehearses for us, step by step, the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ. We need to understand what the Apostle said here because as humility was a distinguishing characteristic of Christ, pride is the distinguishing characteristic of the human heart. Pride is the root sin, the sin that is responsible for all other sins. When you and I look at the sins which we have committed, pride has had a hand in them all. Satan's basic sin was pride, and all that he has done from the day of his fall to the present, is the result of his pride. Notice the I will's of Satan in Isa. 14:12-14:

12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

And you will remember that when Paul gave Timothy the spiritual qualifications of a deacon, he said this: “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:6).

Paul, in ministering to the believers in the church at Corinth, reminded them that “we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). So we are not just following an example, but by the new birth “we have the mind of Christ.” That is why Paul said, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Christ, in saving us, gives Himself to us. He is our Life. He lives in us. And so to have his mind, means that we need to look to Him to give us the same objective in life that He had. It is like Paul said later on in this same chapter, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). He works the mind of Christ in us.

In a practical sense, we study Christ, and seek by God's grace to be like Him, to do as He did, to speak as He spoke, to think as He thought, yet all of the time we realize that what we do to please the Lord is always the result of His thinking in us, and His working through us, making us willing to do God's will, and then enabling us to do it.

Now as we come to verse 6, notice that everything that is mentioned in verses 6, 7, and 8 has to do with what Christ did. And then in verses 9, 10, and 11 tell us what God did in response to what Christ did.

2:6 We have in these verses one of the grandest statements in all of Scripture of the Deity and the Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. And Paul began with His Deity. This is where we also must begin. “Who, being in the form of God.” This is how the Apostle Paul presented the Deity of our Lord.

“Being” – meaning *being as He always had been*. There was no beginning to the Son of God, and so there was no time when He became Deity. This was His essential nature – “in the form of God,” that is, possessing all of the divine attributes of God, meaning of God the Father. And so the Deity of the Son was identical with the Deity of the Father.

This is the truth that the Apostle John has given us in John 1:1 and 14. (Quote.) John would have us know that all that Jesus Christ was when He was with the Father in eternity past, He continued to be when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary, and then also when He was born and throughout His life on earth.

The writer of the book of Hebrews also started this way:

- 1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,
- 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;
- 3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:1-3).

“Thought it not robbery to be equal with God” is a strange translation. It means that He did not consider that His obvious equality with God was something that He had to keep regardless of whatever needs there might be that He could meet. And notice the word “obvious” in the way I have explained the meaning here. In heaven His Deity was never questioned. His glory was “obvious,” and all who were there could see it. No angel ever questioned the Deity of the Lord. But when His glory was veiled in human flesh, most people saw Him as being no more than a mere man. This was a part of His humiliation. This did not mean that He gave up His glory to become a Man, but it does mean that He gave up the display of His glory, the manifestation of His glory to most human beings, because of the work that He came to do.

2:7 “But made himself of no reputation.” Lit., *He emptied Himself*. This does not mean, let me say again, that He gave up His Deity. But His glory was concealed in His humanity He voluntarily gave up the exercise of His Deity except for rare occasions.

“And took upon him the form of a servant” – The word “form” here is the same word that we had in verse 6. It is the Greek word *μορφή*. And it emphasizes the outward appearance which the Lord took by His conception and birth. He did not come as a King, but as a servant. He did not come to be served, but to serve. He was serving the Father, the Servant of Jehovah, but He also served people, teaching them, healing them, feeding them when they were hunger, meeting their needs. This is how He appeared before men, not as the Mighty God.

“And was made in the likeness of men” – This means that His appearance was as a real human being, but the word is probably used to indicate that, while He was a true human being, He was more than a man: He was also the Son of God. Thus we have the Son of God Who became a Man, and appeared on earth as a Man, yet was more than a Man because He continued to be the Son of God. “Likeness” is the Greek word *ὁμοίωμα*.

2:8 “And being found in fashion as a man” – The word “fashion” is the Greek word *σχήμα*, and it means that our Lord gave every indication by His appearance that He was a true human being. No one doubted His humanity. It was only after His ascension that questions began to arise as to whether or not His humanity was real. From what people saw, and heard, and could touch, He was a Man.

“He humbled Himself” – This is what characterized the life of our Lord upon the earth. He came to do the Father’s will, and not His own will. This led to our Lord’s final death, but in His whole life on earth we can see the marks of His humility.

“And became obedient” – This was what followed His humility. Again, His whole life was marked by obedience to the Father, but act of obedience which crowned all of the others was when He willingly submitted to His enemies, and the depth of His humiliation was seen in the nature of His death – by crucifixion! As Paul expressed it, “even the death of the Cross.

John Eadie described the course of our Lord’s humiliation “from the one depth to the yet lower depth” in this way:

From heaven to earth He descended by emptying Himself; but after being on earth, he humbled Himself by His obedience to the death. Or He laid aside the form of God, and took that of a servant; but in that servant’s form He still abased Himself even to the Cross (p. 113).

Bishop Lightfoot stated it this way:

Nor was this his lowest degradation [*i.e.*, that He became a Man]. He not only became a Man, but He was treated as the meanest [lowest] of men. He died the death of a criminal slave (p.112).

No one has ever, in all of human history, ever expressed the depth of humility and humiliation that our Lord experienced because no one could have been as high as He was, the eternal Son of the living God, to die as One made sin for us, taking upon Himself that which should have fallen upon us.

Now the point that Paul was making in verses 5 through 8, was not just that we should understand the humility of Christ, but that each of us is to have the mind of Christ. That which was true of Him, is to be true of us. In no one else who ever lived, is humility to be seen more clearly than in the Person of Christ, in the way in which He lived, and the way in which He died. His humility is seen in His love for the Father by His willingness to become a Man, and to live as a Man upon the earth, and finally to carry out His obedience to the Father to the full when He died upon the Cross for sins which were not His own.

January 25, 2000

2:9 Now we come to *the exaltation of Christ*. He humbled Himself; God exalted Him, “highly exalted Him.” This means that He was raised above all others, that He was raised to the highest possible position. And it is fitting that this is the only time this word is used in the NT, and that it should be reserved for our Lord Jesus Christ, and for Him alone. The Greek verb is *ὑπερυψώω*. The basic verb, *ὑψόω*, is used a number of times. In fact, it is used twice in John 3:14 to describe what Moses did to the serpent in the wilderness, and then to the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up” (John 3:14).

The exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ was predicted by Isaiah the prophet in that great Messianic passage which begins in Isaiah 52:13 and goes through all of Isaiah 53. The verse I am referring to is Isaiah 52:13, “Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, **he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.**” Many expositors

tors believe that these three words, “exalted and extolled, and be very high,” are a prediction of the resurrection of our Lord, followed by His ascension, and then His being seated at the right hand of the Father. Others were raised from the dead before the Lord Jesus was raised, but He was the first to be raised Who would never die again. “Death hath no more dominion over Him” (Rom. 6:9).

Amazingly we have these same three phases of our Lord’s glorification referred to us in Eph. 2:5, 6. Let me read verse 4 along with verses 5 and 6:

- 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
- 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)
- 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Now let us examine what the Apostle Paul wrote in Phil. 2:9-11 about the exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Note that our Lord did the humbling of Himself; God is the One Who “highly exalted Him.”

It all has to do with “a name.”

We all know that names usually were very important in the Bible. Names were conferred on people to indicate some special honor or dignity which was being conferred upon them. The same is infinitely true of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some expositors take this as meaning that the Jesus Christ is yet to receive another Name which He has not yet been given. Others say that this means the honor which the Father will bestow upon Him as the crucified, resurrected, and glorified Savior. One thing is certain: No one has ever occupied the place that the Lord now has, and will have forever!

But the text here indicates that the Father has already given the Son the Name that Paul was talking about. The Greek word translated “given,” or “hath . . . given,” is ἐχαρίσατο, an aorist indicative, which would indicate that the Name which the Apostle Paul was talking about, had already been given to Him. If we were to link together all of the names in the Bible alone which have been given to men, and combine their honor into one great name, the name to which Paul was referring here would be far above the combined glory of them all.

2:10 This verse seems to indicate that the name is “Jesus.” Mary only gave the Lord this Name because she had been told by the angel Gabriel who had been sent to her by God, that this was to be His Name. And the same was true of Joseph. Listen to Matthew 1:20, 21. Joseph had discovered that Mary was with child, and he could only come to one conclusion, as hard as it was for him to believe it, but the evidence was there that she had been unfaithful to him. But this is what we read in Matthew 1:20, 21:

- 20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.
- 21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

After the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the meaning of that Name had its fulfillment, and our Lord’s glorification was God’s way of declaring that the Name which had been given to our Lord now had its full meaning as it applied to our Lord. So doesn’t the text here indicate that it was the Name that was given to our Lord before His birth that He can now lay full claim to? I believe it does.

Many parents have named their sons “Jesus,” but I don’t see how anybody could do that if they really understood this section of the book of Philippians. That Name has never been revered like it will be some day when “every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.” But this is only a

part of it. We need to go on to verse 11 for the rest.

2:11 “And that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Now let's make sure that we understand what Paul was saying here. We not only have the Name “Jesus,” but we have the confession of “every tongue” that which was denied our Lord by most people when He came the first time, and that is that “Jesus Christ is Lord.”

So, in thinking about the Name of Jesus, we learn here in verse 10 that “Jesus” and “Lord” are upon the tongues of men to be brought together, and so “Lord” will then be joined to the Name “Jesus,” and we will have that Name which the Apostle Paul loved to say, and loved to write out in his epistles, **the Lord Jesus Christ!** People don't call Him that now when they speak of Him, but that day will come! And it will come when He returns to reign upon the earth.

I have been speaking about God as “the Father” of our Lord in explaining these verses, but you will notice that Paul did not call God “the Father” until the very end of verse 11. While the Lord was here on earth, men wanted to kill Him because He called God His Father. For example, we read this in John 5:17 and 18,

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

But there is a day coming when all men will know that God is the Father of Jesus of Nazareth, and they will acknowledge that “to the glory of God the Father.”

So that which men have refused to acknowledge, that Jesus was the God-Man Who came to be the Savior, and that He is equal in Deity with the Father, they will express it with their tongues in that day.

But who is included in this acknowledgment of “Jesus” as “Lord,” and as the Son of the Father? Those in heaven would include both angels and the people of God who are there. Those on earth would include all living. And those “under the earth” would include not only those human beings who have died, and will be raised again, but demons and even Satan Himself. Isaiah predicted that day. Listen to what he wrote in Isa. 45:22-25:

22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

24 Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.

25 In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory (Isa. 45:22-25).

Many of the Psalms speak of that glorious day. For example, Psa. 67:

1 God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah.

2 That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.

3 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.

4 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah.

5 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.

6 Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.

7 God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

Today our Lord is hardly honored anywhere, but the day is coming when all of the nations of the earth will honor Him everywhere! What a day that will be! This does not mean that all will be saved, but it does mean

that people will acknowledge that He is the Person He claimed to be, and that the message of the prophets of the OT and of the apostles and prophets of the NT, is absolutely true. Jesus Christ is Lord, and He alone is the Savior of the world, meaning the only Savior.

After going through a passage like this, we can see what great issues, divine issues, were resting upon that lowly Person, Jesus of Nazareth, Who was despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Then their knees were unbent, and their tongues blasphemed Him. But the day is coming when all of that will be changed, and every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess what He declared, and others declared of Him, when He was here on earth.

But we must not forget the Apostle Paul's purpose in mentioning the humiliation and the glorification of our Lord Jesus Christ. *It was that we, too, might have the mind of Christ.* But how often, even today, have the people of God been mixed up on this point. How many there are who follow the world in exalting themselves, while they give only lip service to humility. When any man exalts himself, he is intruding into that work which belongs to God alone. Thus it is one of man's greatest sins to exalt himself. All of us in ourselves are nothing but corrupt human flesh. We are deserving of only the judgment of God. And yet we exalt ourselves, and make gods of one another. Where do you find the politician who is truly humble? They all try to convince us that they are the best for the job they are seeking. We see this in all areas of life. A common question that employers will ask prospective employees, is, "Why should we consider you for this position for which you are applying?" In other words, "Tell me not only how good you are, but how much better you are than anyone else we might consider for this position." The man who used to be the heavyweight boxing champion of the world used to tell us that he was "the greatest." But look at him today. Do any of our reporters warn us that this is what can happen to anyone who claims the place which only God has?

Let us all beware. We are all proud in heart, not humble. But those of us who know the Lord should be especially aware of our need of true, God-given, Christ-like, humility. On at least two occasions, and probably on many more, the Lord said this: "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11). Once was when he had been invited with others to eat bread in the house of a Pharisee and he saw how the guests were seeking to get the best seats. The other is when He told the parable about how the Pharisee and the publican prayed as they went to the temple.

Humility is what the Lord was speaking about in Matt. 5:8, "the poor in spirit." Solomon said in Prov. 16:18 and 19,

18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

19 Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

One example of humility which our Lord gave us was when He was with His disciples and He took a towel and water, and began to wash His disciples' feet. Micah has given us those very, very valuable words found in Micah 6:8,

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

The Apostle Peter said in his first epistle,

5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you (1 Peter 5:5-7).

Let us all remember that the humbling is our responsibility, the exalting is God's. And so when we seek to exalt ourselves, we are seeking to take over that work which belongs only to God.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul
Tuesday Bible Class – January 31, 2000
Philippians 2:12-18

Intro: From the twenty-seventh verse of chapter 1 down through the fourth verse of chapter two, the Apostle Paul had been appealing to the Philippians that their lives should be in total harmony with the Gospel of Christ. This called for the greatest humility on the part of each believer in the church, that they might be of the same mind in the Lord. Their relationship with each other would not only determine the blessing of their fellowship, but it would affect their attempts to spread the Gospel. And these two things are what every church needs to be concerned about – the blessing of the Lord in the church, and the witness of the church to people in the world who are without Christ. Their greatest Example of humility and likemindedness with God was to be seen in the humiliation and subsequent glorification of our Lord. And Paul, before he spoke of Christ, had told them, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

Now, as we come to verse 12, he was preparing to make his appeal that the believers in Philippi concentrate on being obedient to what he had been telling them to do.

Let me call your attention to our outline for just a moment, so we can see how all of this fits together. This all comes under “IV” in the outline I have given you:

IV. Paul’s Exhortations to the Church (Phil. 1:27-2:18).

And under this I have given you three points:

A. To be likeminded and humble (Phil. 1:27-2:4).

B. To have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5-11).

And now we are ready for the third point:

C. To work out their own salvation (Phil. 2:12-18).

2:12 The word “wherefore” shows that there is a clear connection between what he had just written, and what he was about to say. It takes us back to 1:27. And notice the tenderness, the graciousness, of what he was about to say: “Beloved.” But he commended them for their past obedience. Apparently they had always been very responsive to the teaching of the Apostle Paul. After all, he was their father in the faith. The genuineness of their obedience was to be seen in the fact that they did what the Apostle Paul told them to do even when he was not with them, watching them. This is true obedience. A child who only obeys his or her parents when they are watching him, but who does something else when he is not being watched, is actually a disobedient child. The same can be said of an employee. Unfortunately the idea that the Apostle brought up here is often true of church members. When they come to church they can act very devout, like they love the Lord, and want to please Him, but when they are not at church they are entirely different. I once heard of a man who told his pastor that the men he worked with would be surprised to know that he went to church. That was because of the way he was with them, the way he talked, the stories he told, and so on. But with the Philippian believers it had been very different. What they were when the Apostle Paul was with them, was just like they were when he was not with them. And if anything, they were even more careful about their lives when he was not there. Hypocrites would not have been comfortable in attending the meetings of the Philippian church.

But, regardless of how obedient we have been, we can always be more obedient. And so Paul here exhorted them with this words which we find at the end of verse 12: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” This is what he had been speaking about.

Obviously Paul was not teaching that we are saved by works. In the words, “your salvation,” he implied that they were already saved, they already had salvation. Eadie translated the words, “work out,” as meaning that they were *to carry out their salvation, or to perfect what God had done in their hearts*. The verb is *κατεργάζομαι*. While Thayer in his lexicon did not understand Paul’s message here, he said that this verb means “*to do*

that from which something results” (p. 339). As others have explained it, we are to work *out* what God has worked *in*. He has changed us inwardly. Now we are to aim at making sure that the results of God’s work are seen outwardly! In Romans 7:18 this verb is translated *perform*. When Paul’s apostleship was being questioned in Corinth, he wrote this:

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds (2 Cor. 12:12).

He used the same verb that he used here in Phil. 2:12, and it is translated “were wrought.” The point is that Paul claimed to be an apostle, and the miracles he performed proved it.

So we can say that “work out your own salvation” actually means two things. It means to work toward the completion of our salvation, and in doing so we show outwardly what we are inwardly. Our lives will give evidence that we really know the Lord.

The point is that we all have a responsibility in our growth as Christians. We need to read the Word, and pray that the Holy Spirit will help us to understand it, and then show us how the Word is to be applied to our lives. We need to be careful that we are doing what the Lord wants us to do, living obediently to His Word. And it also means that we must refrain from anything that would hinder our growth in the Lord. So in some ways it means *do*; in other ways it means *don’t do*.

And all of this is to be done “with fear and trembling.”

This is “godly fear,” which we read about in Hebrews 12:28:

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

This is not the fear that people experienced when they are terrorized for some reason, but the fear that God’s people have lest they displease the Lord in any way. “The fear of God,” while it may include, and does include, a fear of the consequences of disobedience, yet its main emphasis is that we do not want to overlook anything that might keep us from pleasing God.

These two words are used in Eph 6:5 where Paul was addressing servants. Notice how he used it:

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

We fear lest we miss anything that pleases the Lord; we tremble at the awesomeness of His Person and His presence. And verse 13 goes on to tell us why we are to fear and tremble.

2:13 “For it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

We are to work out, to aim at the completion of our salvation, but we are to do it knowing that all of this continues to depend upon God’s work in us. As Bishop Lightfoot has said,

It is God working us you from first to last: God that inspires the earliest impulse, and God that directs the final achievement: for such is His good pleasure (p. 115).

Geoffrey Wilson pointed out from a man by the name of Collange that the Philippians did not need “to wait for Paul’s arrival to reform the flaws in their fellowship, because God Himself is effectively at work in their midst” (p. 54).

And then he quoted a man named Daille who wrote:

This shows how empty is the presumption of those who divide the glory of our course in the faith between God and ourselves; freely granting that God works in them the beginnings of salvation, but pretending that, after having received the first tokens of His grace, they are afterwards the authors of the rest, which they express by a word full of vanity, saying that they co-operate with God, making themselves, by these means, companions of the Godhead in this work. The Apostle here throws down all this project of their pride, pronouncing, gloriously, that *it is God which works in them to will and to do*, the progress and the end, as well as the beginning (pp. 54, 55).

Our object is to do God's pleasure. It is God Who turns our wills to do His will, and then He enables us to do what is pleasing in His sight. So all of the progress that any of us has made in this Christian life, is because of God's work in us, making us willing, and then empowering us to do His will. So God gets all of the glory; none of it belongs to us.

Bishop Moule has this very enlightening comment in his commentary on this verse:

In the light of a passage like this we read the deep truth that the "grace" which is in the Christian is not merely an emitted influence from above; it is the living Lord Himself, present and operative at the "first springs of thought and will.

And then he added:

Here, though in passing, we touch one of the deepest mysteries of grace. On the one hand is the Christian's will, real, personal, and powerfully appealed to as such. On the other hand, beneath it, as cause is beneath result, is the will and work of God; God Himself the hidden secret of the right action of the true human will. Let us recognize with equal reverence and simplicity both these great parallels of truth. "With fear and trembling" let us remember human responsibility; with deep submission let us adore the ways of grace, attributing ultimately to God alone every link in the chain of actual salvation (pp. 45, 46).

2:14 Paul immediately followed the truth expressed with words which show the need to be trusting God for the realization of God's will. We are all by nature inclined toward "murmurings and disputings." The children of Israel had hardly started on their way out of Egypt before they were murmuring, and it continued throughout their journey. They murmured against Moses and Aaron, but their murmurings were really against the Lord. Often we murmur directly against the Lord because we don't like the way He is dealing with us, or leading us. It is called a murmuring because it often is not expressed audibly. But whether outward or inward, both are equally displeasing to the Lord. Eadie said that murmuring "denotes the expression of dissatisfaction with what is said, done, or ordered" (p. 136). The Greek word for "disputings" is the word from which we get our English word dialogue. This is the word that is used in Luke 9:46: "Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest." The disciples got into a big argument about this. It is translated "doubtings" in 1 Tim. 2:8: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." Both anger and disputings are hindrances to prayer.

ROM. 9:19-24

Being able to obey such commands as the Apostle Paul has given here, is evidence of the working of the Lord in our hearts. Arguments rarely lead to an agreement. When two people dispute, each is out to convince the other that he is wrong. These are enemies of likemindedness. And they are usually expressions of pride. And to do all things "without murmurings and disputings," means to do nothing where these are involved. God's will is not to be resisted, nor are we to argue about it. That is the reason we need to be asking the Lord to make us willing to do His will. He can change our stubborn, self-willed hearts, to the place where we really take delight in doing the will of God.

Verse 15 continues the exhortation.

2:15 The Greek word which Paul used here and translated “be” is better translated *become*. It means, as Bishop Moule said that Paul “gently suggests their need of *becoming* more fully what Christians should be” (p. 46).

It is a sad state of affairs when people do not appear to be what they claim to be. There are always many who claim to be the people of God, who are not really saved. God knows our hearts, and He knows those who are His. But what is perhaps even a sadder state of affairs is when those who are generally saved cannot be identified by the life that they live. This is what Paul was appealing to the Philippians for. It was not that we become the children of God by what we do, but that we show that we are the people of God by the way we live, and by the kind of people we are.

“Blameless” means to live in such a way that no charge can be laid against us. “Harmless” means to be so that there is not a confusing mixture of good and evil in us. Failure to measure up to this brings quick reproach upon the church, as well as the individuals who claim to be the children of God, and yet are not living even like people in the world expect a Christian to live.

“The sons of God” is better translated, *the children of God*, or *those who have been born of God*. If we have been born of God, this means that God is our heavenly Father, and we should bear, and will bear, much of the likeness of our Father. If our lives do not back up our words, our words mean nothing. But it is only as God is pleased to work in us, that we can do and be what should be expected from a child of God. There were days in the history of the church when the church exercised great influence and authority before the world. And it was because the people of God were living holy lives. But as the church has become more worldly and less godly, so her influence in the world has suffered a great deal. The light that should be shining brightly, has a weak glow about it, and in some cases is not shining at all.

And then Paul added another “without” – “without rebuke.” Thayer says that this means what was required of any animal that was to be sacrificed to the Lord. It was to be “without blemish and without spot.” All three of the words here in this verse which Paul used have an alpha privative attached at the beginning of the to make it a negative. So there is much to be avoided if we are to live lives pleasing to God.

Where do we live? “In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.” “Crooked” is *warped*. “Perverse” is *to be opposed*. So the world is distorted by its sin, and yet refuses help from the very source that help should come. “Nation” would be better translated as *generation*. Paul was speaking, not of any particular nation, but he was speaking of what the whole world is like. They are in darkness, and what they need is the light, the light of God’s Word, the Light which is Christ. We who know the Lord are to be shining, but the only way that we can be shining is by the lives we live. We are in the world, but we are not of the world. We are not to be like the world, but if we are to shine as lights we are to be like Him Who is the Light of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ. How could Paul have possibly described what true evangelism is in any clearer terms?

February 1, 2000

“Shine” means to shine as the lights in the heavens shed their light upon the earth at night. Eadie said this:

The figure is simply that the sons (better, children) of God are in the world what the heavenly luminaries are to it. The world is the sphere in which they revolve and shine. The point of comparison is obvious. It is not first nor simply eminence in virtue, nor conspicuous position, nor elevation above worldly pursuits and likings, *but the diffusion of light* (italics mine). Matt. v. 14, 15, 16. They did not only enjoy the light, but they reflected it. They appeared as luminaries in the world, and its only spiritual light came from them. There was deep gloom around them, but they tended to disperse it. What in fact has

not the world learned from the church? (pp. 140, 141).

Paul has already shown how the light is shed in the world; in verse 16 he went on to complete what he was saying about the way in which darkness in the hearts of men is dispelled.

2:16 “Holding forth the word of life” is how we shine. We have the Word which is a living Word, but also a life-giving Word. Those of us who know the Lord have been enlightened by the message, and as we hold it forth to a world in sin, the Gospel sheds its light upon others. God is the One Who determines its effectiveness.

Quoting Eadie again,

The Gospel or Word of life was held forth, and the 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 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 (*Op. cit.*, p. 142).

Thayer says that *to hold forth* means *to present the Word of life, to call attention to it, to present it and to apply it*. The godliness of a believer’s life is meant to awaken interest in the hearts and minds of people in the world as to why we are the way we are, but from that foundation there is a spoken message that needs to be given as we tell people about “the Word of life,” the Word that itself is living, and which gives life. But as God is the One Who has worked in our hearts, we need to remember that the Word is only effective in bringing life to others as God works in them “to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

This is why we are called “the light of the world.” And why churches in Revelation 1 are represented as lights on a lampstand. But while we carry the light to others by what we are and by what we say, let us remember that the light of the Word continues to shine upon us that our lives may be pure and holy before God and before men.

Notice that this is how Paul evaluated his own ministry among the believers in Philippi. He would rejoice “in the day of Christ” if he saw all of this ~~true~~ of the believers in the church at Philippi. To see people make professions of faith, is a blessing, but only if we also see in them a love for the Word, a desire for holiness, and a burden to carry the message of salvation to the lost world around them. Otherwise Paul would consider that he had “run in vain” and “labored in vain.” Cf. 1:6, 10. This is the day when the Lord will come, and the rewards of faith are given by Him to believers. Calvin wrote,

The expression . . . is intended to stimulate the Philippians to perseverance, while the tribunal of Christ is set before their view, from which the reward of faith is to be expected (XXI, 73).

In running we have one of Paul’s favorite figures of the Christian life. It is a race to be run. But it is also a work to be done. And the thought here is not only that he has *run* and he has *worked*, but that he has trained and taught the believers in Philippi, as elsewhere, to do the same – that is, to run with him, and to work with him.

2:17 If what God was doing in the lives of the Philippian believers should ultimately cost him his life, he could only “joy and rejoice” with them. Here he speaks of himself as the sacrifice. It emphasizes what he had said in 1:21 and 22.

Let us be sure to notice in Paul’s writings that which made him happy, that which caused him to rejoice. It is in sharp contrast with that which many of us who claim to know the Lord, have as that which brings joy to us.

And for Paul to speak of joy and rejoicing, means an overflowing joy, a joy which is complete in itself and which needs nothing else to make it complete.

He had reminded them in the last two verses of chapter 1 (vv. 29 and 30), that they were in the same battle with him. And so notice his words in verse 18 of this chapter.

2:18 He wanted the Philippians to meet their trials in the same spirit that he was meeting his trials (so, Geoffrey Wilson, p. 58).

Calvin said about this verse that Paul's readiness to suffer even to death, was meant to encourage the Philippian believers to do the same because they would only gain by death. And then he added:

For he [Paul] formerly taught them that death would be *gain* for himself . . . here, on the other hand, he is chiefly concerned that his death may not disconcert the Philippians. He, accordingly, declares that it is no ground of sorrow; nay, that they have occasion of joy, inasmuch as they will find it to be productive of advantage. For, although it was in itself a serious loss to be deprived of such a teacher, it was no slight compensation that the Gospel was confirmed by his blood. In the meantime, he lets them know that to himself personally death would be a matter of joy (*Op. cit.*, p. 75).

And so he called upon them to joy and rejoice with him. It is not that he sought death, but that the spread of the Gospel was so important to him that if it meant death, he would welcome it for the sake of the Savior whom he loved so dearly, and had served so faithfully. Bishop Moule said, "He bids them share his martyr-joy, as partners of the martyr-spirit" (p. 49). Lightfoot pointed out that Paul's words in verses 17 and 18 express the idea of a congratulation, and he wanted them to share the same attitude whatever might be the outcome of the situation that he faced at that time in Rome.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul
Tuesday Bible Class – February 7, 2000
Philippians 2:19-30

Intro: The Apostle Paul was blessed with faithful co-workers. They also were a joy to him. In the remainder of chapter 2 Paul mentioned two of them: Timothy, in verses 19-24, and Epaphroditus, in verses 25-29. Both of these men were a great blessing to Paul, and each had rendered faithful support to him in his ministry. They did not have an agenda of their own, but rejoiced in the privilege of serving the Lord under the leadership of the Apostle Paul.

This section is the next major division in this epistle. I have listed it in the outline as:

V. Paul's Beloved Co-Workers (Phil. 2:19-30).

A. Timothy (2:19-24).

B. Epaphroditus (2:25-30).

Most pastors know that such men are rare indeed. Paul indicated that there was no one with him who could excel Timothy. Others sought their own things; Timothy was a man completely devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ, and His service. And his devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ was manifested in a sincere concern for the spiritual welfare of the Lord's people.

A little background on Timothy might be helpful before we start on these verses.

Timothy, sometimes translated Timotheus, is first mentioned in Acts 16. He had a Jewish mother, but his father was a Gentile. His mother was a believer, but evidently his father was not a believer. In Paul's last epistle, 2 Timothy, in verses 3-5 of chapter 1, Paul had this to say to Timothy:

- 3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;
- 4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;
- 5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also (2 Tim. 1:3-5).

So Paul's mother was named Eunice, and his grandmother's name was Lois, and both were believers. And Paul said that all of them had "unfeigned faith." That means that he considered all three of them as genuine believers. The Greek word that Paul used actually meant *unhypocritical*. So Timothy was a third generation Christian. Paul's background was completely different from Timothy. Paul had been raised as a Jew, and had become a Pharisee who was devoted to stamping out the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Timothy, we can say, had heard the Gospel from the time that he was a child. Some feel that the Apostle Paul actually led Timothy to Christ because he called him, "my own son in the faith." And that may have been the case. But it might have been that Paul spoke of him in that way because he had nurtured him in the faith. Whatever may have been the actual case, there was definitely a father-son relationship between Paul and Timothy. See Phil.2:22.

Although Timothy's mother was a Jewess, as Unger's Bible Dictionary points out, Timothy was not raised as a Jew because at the time Paul met him he had not been circumcised. And so Paul circumcised him because the Jews knew that his father was a Greek, and Paul did not want the lack of circumcision to be a problem in his ministry to the Jews.

Looking back to Phil. 1:1 you can see that Paul included Timothy in his letter to the Philippian church. It is very likely that Timothy was with Paul, Luke, and Silas when they went to Philippi for the first time, saw people saved, and so the church at Philippi had its beginning. So it seems that he was known, and probably well known by the believers in Philippi. Notice in Phil. 2:22 that Paul said, "But ye know the proof of him,"

and so on. This may even mean that Timothy stayed behind in Philippi to help in the establishing of the church there. It is very interesting to try to put all of the pieces of his life together.

We won't take the time to trace his ministry with the Apostle Paul. There are several fine Bible dictionaries that will help you do this. But it seems that none of Paul's co-workers was any closer to Paul than Timothy was. And if Paul had a successor, it seems from epistles like 1 and 2 Timothy that Timothy was that man, followed closely behind by Titus.

But now let us turn to our text in the Philippian epistle. In verses 19 through 24 we have the verses in which Paul spoke of Timothy.

A. Timothy (Phil. 2:19-24).

2:19 The Philippian believers were concerned about Paul, but Paul was just as concerned about them. They were concerned about his physical well being and safety, as well as how he was doing spiritually, and he was concerned about how they were doing in their walk with the Lord, and their fellowship together. So he was hoping that it would be the will of the Lord Jesus that "shortly" he would be able to send Timothy to them. I think we see in Paul's words in this verse the fact that Timothy was a very important part of Paul's life at this point in his imprisonment. We often think of how Paul ministered to others, but we also need to realize that others, like Timothy, had an important ministry to Paul himself.

Eadie remarked concerning the possibility of Timothy's trip to Philippi that "only if Christ so willed it could it happen." (p. 147). Paul had learned to trust the Lord before this with every detail of his life, but here he seemed especially aware of his total dependence upon the Lord.

How important it is that we keep in touch with each other, and Paul did it in two ways: by his letters, and by his own personal visits. And when he was not able to go personally, he sent one of his fellow servants. "Out of sight," for those of us who know the Lord, must not be "out of mind." Even in prison a major part of Paul's joy had to do with the spiritual "state" of those believers he had known and loved, and many of whom he had brought to Christ. Since he could not go, the Philippians would have been the happiest to see Timothy. Timothy was an ambassador for Christ, but here we see that he was also to be an ambassador for Paul.

2:20 Timothy had worked with the Apostle Paul long enough that he had become like Paul. It was not that he was just imitating him, but that the hearts of these two men, Paul the older and Timothy the younger, had been bound together. Timothy had learned from Paul that the ministry was not a profession, but it was "the outflow of his life" (Bounds, E. M., *Preacher and Prayer*, p. 7). Timothy followed Paul as Paul was following the Lord. Their hearts were one in the ministry of the Word. As I have said, Timothy did not have an agenda of his own, but he was one in heart and mind with the Apostle Paul. For Timothy to go to Philippi would have been to the Philippians almost like having Paul come – not quite like it, but almost! He would "naturally" care for their state, that is, be genuinely concerned about them individually as well as the condition of the church.

Think of the times that Paul and Timothy had talked together about the believers in Philippi. And they probably never did that without praying together for them. And remember that a Roman guard would have been listening to them, and watching what they did. Here was a man who could have been facing death, and that Roman saw that Paul was not concerned about himself, but about others in far off Philippi. Is it any wonder that those soldiers went back to their quarters to discuss those circumstances the like of which they had never seen before.

The word “care” is the word that the Lord used in his Sermon on the Mount when he said repeatedly, “Take no thought for your life.” He meant that they were not to be anxious and worried about their lives, what they would eat, or drink, or wear. But Paul’s use of it here in the Philippian epistle shows when we compare the two passages that there are times when it is bad to be concerned, but there are other times when it is wrong not to be concerned. So when we might say, “I am worried about so and so; I’m afraid that they may not be doing very well in their relationship with the Lord,” this is a proper and good use of the word. But even then we must not take the burden as though the result is in our hands. Such convictions should drive us to our knees, and perhaps to our desks to write a letter, or to our computers to send an e-mail, to let that person know of our concern for them.

In saying these words Paul was conferring upon Timothy the greatest of honors. Others may work hard and long to obtain a corruptible crown, but Timothy was laboring to obtain an incorruptible crown. And in this he was like the Apostle Paul. Cf. Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 9:24, 25.

But why was Timothy so unique? Paul tells us in verse 21.

2:21 (Read.)

One reason the church does not have many Timothys is because by comparison it seems that “all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” Paul probably did not mean that Timothy was the only man in his acquaintance who was genuinely serving the Lord, but that Timothy’s kind were an exception.

“The things which are Jesus Christ’s” would mean several things. In the first place it meant that Timothy was a man who had a deep and growing love for the Lord Jesus Himself. It meant that Timothy had a great hunger for the Lord, that he delighted in his fellowship with the Lord. Timothy treasured those times when Paul would teach him more about the Lord. Timothy was probably one of those believers you couldn’t talk to for a very long before the conversation would turn to the Lord. This is what Timothy was seeking. **Timothy was a man who could have written David’s Sixty-third Psalm. (Turn to it, and read it.)**

But seeking “the things that are Jesus Christ’s” also meant that Timothy’s great concern, like the Lord, and like the Apostle Paul, was in knowing and doing the will of God. It meant that he carried in his heart a deep and loving concern for the people of God. He did not preach to have the commendation of men, nor was he concerned about displaying whatever gifts the Lord had given to him. He was not ambitious to take over the Apostle Paul’s position. In his ministry he was concerned first of all that Jesus Christ would be glorified. And after that he was concerned that those to whom he went, if they were the Lord’s people, would know Him better, love Him more, and trust Him more completely. If they did not know the Lord, then it was His desire to see them come to Christ. He knew that he did not minister on his own, but that the same Christ Whom he preached, was with him, blessing the Word which Timothy preached, and drawing His own to Himself. And as Timothy preached, he was deeply conscious that he still had a long way to go before God’s work in his heart and life would be completed. But Timothy’s passion in life was to know Christ, more and more and more.

May the Lord keep us from seeking our own advancement, our own praise, from seeking our own name recognition, our own goals in life unless those goals have been fashioned by the Word of God, and by the Spirit of God.

But that is not all that Paul could say about Timothy. Look at his words in verse 22.

2:22 All that Paul could say, and imply, about Timothy’s relationship with the Lord, was *demonstrated by*

the way he served the Lord with Paul.

Notice the words, “the proof of him.” What did Paul mean by these words?

The word translated “proof” is the Greek word, δοκιμή. It means to be tried and approved. We all have to go through this. And it is not something that is done once for all, and then we don’t have to be concerned about it any longer, but it goes on throughout life. This is the kind of testing that the Lord puts us through to bring out those qualities in us which qualify us as servants of the Lord. We ought all to remember that even with our blessed Lord, He “learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:8).

It is good to get as much training as we can, but it is not our training alone that qualifies us. It is good to have a lot of experience in the work of the Lord, but neither does this alone qualify us. Listen to what Paul said. It is right here in verse 22. (Read it.)

“As a son with the father, he hath served with me in the Gospel.” Do you know whom this reminds me of? This is exactly what our heavenly Father could have said about our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord said as much about Himself because He said, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). And we can add to these words those that we find that our Lord said, recorded for us in Mark 10:45: “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

May I say it reverently and with the deepest devotion to the Lord, *this was his proving ground. And this is ours as well.* One of the greatest ways we show our love for the Lord, is by our love for His people, and our joy in serving them.

There are three verses in 1 Cor. 4 which fit right in here. They are verses 15 through 17:

15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church (1 Cor. 4:15-17).

The church will never have another Apostle Paul, but there will always be the need for men who will adorn the name of Timothy.

2:23 Timothy by his passion for Christ, and by his proven ministry with Paul, had become a tremendous blessing and encouragement to Paul, and the believers in Philippi could look forward to his coming with great joy knowing that when Timothy came to them, blessing was in store for them.

And then Paul concluded his words about Timothy with a final word about himself.

2:24 Just as he was trusting that the Lord would be able to go to Philippi “shortly,” so here he expressed the same trust in the Lord that he himself would be there “shortly.” This the second time in these verses that he used the word “shortly.” Cf. v. 19. It means *soon, as soon as possible*. But it was clear in the Apostle’s mind that it all depended upon the Lord and what His will was.

There are many lessons for us to learn from the work that the Lord had done in the heart of Timothy, as well as in the heart of the Apostle Paul. With the relationship that these two men had with each other, we not only

have a great example of like-mindedness, but we can see why the blessing of the Lord was so evident in their relationship, but why the blessing of God in their ministry was so apparent.

Now we move on to what the Apostle Paul had to say about Epaphroditus.

February 14, 2000

In our outline this is the second point under Roman numeral “V.”

V. Paul’s Beloved Co-Workers (Phil. 2:19-30).

A. Timothy (vv. 19-24).

B. Epaphroditus (vv. 25-30).

2:25 Who was Epaphroditus? Surprisingly this is the only book of the NT in which he is mentioned. He is mentioned twice, here in verse 25, and in 4:18.

It seems that he must have been a Philippian, and a member of the church in Philippi. Whether or not he was an elder in the church, we cannot say for certain. Calvin called him the pastor. But it is clear that the believers in Philippi trusted him because he was the one who brought their offering to the Apostle Paul (mentioned in chapter 4).

After delivering his gift to Paul, he stayed with Paul to minister to him on behalf of the Philippian church.

Paul called him “my brother, and companion in labor, and fellowsoldier” as well as their “messenger, and he that ministered to my wants,” *i.e.*, Paul’s needs. Several commentators have noticed an ascendancy in the words which Paul used here. Eadie said this:

The epithets rise in intensity, –first a Christian brother–then a colleague in toil–and then a companion in scenes of danger and conflict . . . Not simply a brother, but an industrious one–not industrious only in times of peace, but one who had met the adversary in defence of the Gospel. And this was not all, he sustained at the same time a peculiar relation to the Philippians church . . . “your deputy and minister to my need.” (p. 152).

Paul and Epaphroditus were member of the same family, “my brother” in the family of God, involved in the same work, the work of the Lord, and they had faced the same Enemy, the Devil. So Epaphroditus was a brother, a worker, and a soldier.

To the Philippians he was their “messenger.” Here Paul used the Greek word for *an apostle*, not that he was an apostle like Paul, but because he had been commissioned by the Philippian church to represent them in all that he could do for Paul. So all that he did was as though the Philippian believers were there helping Paul.

The verb “ministered” is the word used of a priest as he ministered to the spiritual needs of the people. So again we see that Epaphroditus was there to help with all of his needs, the spiritual as well as the physical and the material needs.

The words translated “your” are emphatic.

So we must come to the conclusion, as little as we know about Epaphroditus, that he was outstanding as a Christian and also as a servant of the Lord. In the following verse we see why Paul felt that it was necessary to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi as soon as he could go.

2:26 Evidently Epaphroditus had served Paul long and hard until he came down with an illness that almost took his life, and the news of his physical problem had gotten back to his fellow-believers in the church at Philippi. At the time Paul was writing Epaphroditus had recovered fully, but then he was deeply concerned for the Philippian believers because, apparently, the news of his recovery had not gotten to them. And so he “longed” for them, that is, because of his love for them he did not want them to have an unnecessary concern for him. And the whole thing made him “full of heaviness.” Thayer says in his lexicon that this is the strongest of three words in the NT that are used for depression. And this depression was caused by the conflict he felt in his heart – the need to be with Paul as compared with the need to let his fellow-believers in Philippi know that he had recovered.

This might seem like a minor thing to us, but it helps us to see how greatly concerned the believers in those early days could be for each other. It would be good if we were more inclined to follow their example in this.

2:27 Paul confirmed to the Philippians that he had been very sick, and that he had almost died. We know that Paul before this had exercised the gift of healing, but evidently he no longer had that power. He attributed Epaphroditus’ recovery to the mercy of God. And Paul looked upon God’s goodness to Epaphroditus as an act of mercy toward himself. Otherwise Paul would have had “sorrow upon sorrow.” What did he mean by this, “sorrow upon sorrow”?

He probably had several things in mind. He probably had sorrow over his own situation. It would have been very strange if he hadn’t felt that very keenly. But he would have had deep sorrow in losing such a friend and brother. In the third place he must have been thinking of the great loss which the church in Philippi would have experienced in losing such a faithful and devoted servant of the Lord. There never have been, and there never will be an abundance of men like Epaphroditus, and to lose any like Epaphroditus would have been the cause of great grief for those who truly understand the work of the Lord.

But you will remember that before this Paul had written to the church at Thessalonica about the sorrow we experience when believers depart from this life. It may even be true that our sorrow is deeper than people in the world experience, but it is a different kind of sorrow. We sorrow because we will miss them, and miss the fellowship that we have had with them. That is the kind of sorrow that we never get over. My mother has been in heaven since 1953, and my Dad died eleven years later in 1964. And I still miss them, and often wish that I could talk certain things over with them. I am sure that most of you have loved ones in glory, and that you feel that same way about them. But, at the same time we would not bring them back to this wicked world. The world was bad enough when they left us, but it has gotten even worse, and there is no indication that the downward trend is going to be reversed. We sorrow because we loved them, but we rejoice because we know that where they are is “far better” than what we have here. That is what Paul said in chapter 1, verse 23. Coming into this world our Lord became “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). We should never be ashamed of our sorrows or of our tears. But, like Paul, how thankful we can be when the Lord has mercy upon us, and spares our loved ones. And that was the joy that filled Paul’s heart as he wrote. He still had his share of sorrows, but that was one that he did not have.

2:28 Here we see why Epaphroditus was going back to Philippi. It was because Paul was sending him. And he said that he sent him “the more carefully,” meaning *sooner than he had originally intended to send him back*. Paul would forego the pleasure he had when Epaphroditus was with him, in order that the Philippians might rejoice again. And to know the joy that this would bring to them, would mean less sorrow for the Apostle Paul. Eadie said, “In proportion as they rejoiced would his grief be lessened through his oneness of heart with them” (p. 155). Again, we need to learn that one of the means of increasing our own joy is that we are able to see to it that we have done something to add to the joy of other believers.

2:29 Paul could visualize what would happen in Philippi when the believers there once again saw their beloved Epaphroditus restored to health, and he did not want them to restrain their rejoicing because they felt that their joy had brought added pain to Paul in his circumstances.

More than that, Paul wanted them to bestow upon Epaphroditus by their welcome, the greatest honor. "The class of men . . . of whom Epaphroditus is a noted example, deserve the esteem and gratitude of the church for their self-denying and disinterested labors" (Eadie, p. 155). The world has no honors to bestow upon men like Epaphroditus, but the church should and must. Men and women who love the Lord, and who serve Him faithfully and unselfishly, seeking the best for their fellow-believers, are the elite of the earth.

Paul in writing in his first epistle to the church at Corinth, had this to say about three men who had come to him from Corinth:

17 I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.

18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such (1 Cor. 16:17-18).

And in writing his first letter to Timothy, Paul told him,

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17).

The world honors men who seek their own glory; the Church, on the other hand, is to honor those who live for the glory of Christ and for the blessing of the people of God.

2:30 And to cite one particular reason why Epaphroditus should be honored, we have Paul's statement here at the end of chapter 2. (Read v. 30.)

Lightfoot says that this verse plainly shows that Epaphroditus' illness was not the result of persecution, but of over exertion. He did not consider his own life in order that he might be able to do what the Philippians could not do because of the distance which separated them from the Apostle Paul. Note that helping Paul was what Epaphroditus considered to be for him "the work of the Lord."

The work of the Lord is far more extensive than most of us realize. It is interesting to contemplate what our Lord said on one occasion about giving a cup of cold water to a little child. The verse is found in Matt 10:42. This is what the Lord said:

And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

If a little child were to have visited the Apostle Paul, and Paul had asked Epaphroditus to give that child a cup of water, that would have been given in the name of the Apostle, but the Lord would have considered what Epaphroditus did as service to Himself.

Concl: In what better way could we conclude this chapter than by remembering what Paul wrote to the Corinthian church about the work of the Lord. I am speaking of 1 Cor. 15:58:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

How blessed Paul was in the men whom the Lord gave to him to be his fellow-workers in the work that the Lord had given him to do! And even in his confinement in Rome the work of the Lord continued.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul
Tuesday Bible Class – February 15, 2000
Philippians 3:1-14

Intro: To have the books of the Bible divided into chapters and verses, is a great convenience. If we didn't have them, we would all have to have the same edition of the Bible so we could all find the same place by page number. But as convenient as chapters and verses are, they have one major drawback. They often keep us from seeing the continuity of the book or the epistle which we are studying.

I think that is true again as we come to chapter 3. We come here to what I have called THE PRE-EMINENT THEME OF THE EPISTLE, which is, not only rejoicing, but rejoicing in the Lord! You will notice this emphasis in every chapter. Often when the words joy and rejoicing are not actually mentioned, you will see that Paul was nevertheless rejoicing. An example of this is the way in which he was thankful for so many things. Thanksgiving is an expression of our joy. And there is no doubt but that the Lord intends that while we may not always be comfortable, we should always be joyful.

But when we think about this as we see it in this epistle to the Philippians, we need to be careful that our joy is always "in the Lord."

As we come to chapter 3, Paul had just concluded what he had been writing about Timothy and Epaphroditus. It is clear that both of these men had been a great comfort and a great source of joy to the Apostle in his confinement. Look, for example, at 2:28 and 29. (Read.) But, as he moved on into what for us is chapter 3, he emphasized that their joy should not be in Epaphroditus as much as they loved him, nor even in himself nor in Timothy, *but their joy should always be in the Lord*. Paul gloried in Christ, and we will see more of that here in chapter 3. He looked upon every person and every church as to what they were in Christ, and how the Lord had blessed them and was using them in his life to keep him rejoicing even in his then difficult circumstances. And so he comes out with that emphasis "loud and clear" as we come to this third chapter. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord."

Now let me call attention to where we are in the outline which I have given to you. We are down to Roman numeral "VI." And I have given it to you this way:

VI. THE PRE-EMINENT THEME OF THE EPISTLE (Phil. 3:1-4:9).

And I have said this not only because of the way joy and rejoicing is referred to throughout the four chapters, but because of Paul's use of the word "Finally" here at the beginning of chapter 3.

To us that word means that he is concluding the epistle. But you can see that he is almost at the mid-point in writing to them. So he must have said it thinking that he was about finished when in reality he went on and on writing more than he expected to write, or that word "finally" meant something different to him from what it means to us. What did he mean by saying "finally"?

In the Greek it is actually two words, *Tò λοιπόν*. You will find that Paul used these words in much the same way that he did here in 1 Thess. 4:1, 2 and 2 Thess. 3:1. Bishop Lightfoot actually attaches his exposition of this first verse of chapter 3 to his last comments on chapter 2. But John Eadie said,

Suffice it now to say, that the use of the phrase implies that the primary object of the writer has been gained; that what especially prompted him to compose the epistle has already found a place in it, and that what follows is more or less supplementary" (p. 159).

Bishop Moule would translate these words as, "For the rest," or "For what remains." And then he added: On the whole it seems not so much to introduce an immediate conclusion . . . as to mark a transition on

the way to it (p. 56).

Notice that Paul used “finally” again in Phil. 4:8.

So we can take this as a landmark along the way telling us that this is the main point of his epistle. The Philippian believers were concerned about Paul, and they were concerned about Epaphroditus, but Paul would have us know that regardless of the troubles that we are going through, we are always to rejoice in the Lord, and that we always have many reasons for rejoicing in the Lord.

We come now to the first point in our outline under VI.

A. “Rejoice in the Lord” (Phil. 3:1-3).

3:1 “My brethren” shows that he was not writing in a critical way, but lovingly exhorting them to do what he himself had had to learn to do. Our emotions are usually so controlled by our circumstances, that it takes discipline and training to learn to look beyond our circumstances to see our Lord Who is in our circumstances and greater than our circumstances, so that we can *rejoice in Him!*

What, specifically, does it mean to “rejoice in the Lord”?

It means for sure that the Lord is to be the source of our joy as well as the object of our joy. We rejoice in Who and What He is! We rejoice in what He has done for us. We rejoice in His presence with us. We rejoice in His sovereignty over us. We rejoice in His love for us. We rejoice in His mercies and grace which are daily upon us. And, as it was with Paul, we are rejoicing in the Lord when “Christ is preached.” But it also means that we look to Him to enable us to rejoice in our circumstances whatever they may be. If you could see little Nathan Wilks brighten up when he sees his grandfather, Dr. John Custis, you would see a good example of what it means to rejoice in a person.

I have told some of you, possibly most of you, about an incident in the life of a Bible teacher I had in Baylor University. His name was Dr. J. B. Tidwell, a godly man and a great teacher. He was the head of the Bible Department, but often spoke in various churches on the Lord’s Day. One Saturday morning he was preparing a message for the following day. His study door was closed, but suddenly there was a knock at the door. He knew by the knock that it was his young son who was only two or three at the time. Dr. Tidwell tried to ignore it, but the knocking persisted. He knew that he was not going to get any peace until he responded to the knock. So finally he said, “Well, what do you want?” He watched at the door knob turned and a little boy about the height of the door knob walked into the room. Dr. Tidwell repeated his question, “What do you want?” Instead of answering right away, the little boy walked over to his Daddy, climbed up on his lap, put his arms around his Daddy’s neck, and said, “I don’t want anything, Daddy; I just want you!” That is one example of what it means to *rejoice* in a person.

When Paul said, “To write the same things to you,” he was indicating that he had spoken to them about this previously, but it was not a trial to him, it was not “irksome,” nor *tedious*, to him to have to say it all again.

One thing we notice about the writers of Scripture is that they did not hesitate to repeat themselves. In fact, they often did it intentionally. The best example I know of in Scripture, is what Peter said in his second and last epistle. His words to which I am referring are found in 2 Peter 1:12-16. Most of you know this passage, but listen again to what he said:

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;

14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty (2 Peter 1:12-16).

And Peter did the same in 2 Peter 3:1. This is even the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Cf. John 14:26:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Here in Phil. 3:1 Paul added, "But for you it is safe." Safe, because it gives you added confirmation in the truth. And "safe" because it is the truth of the Word that protects us from the inroads of the Enemy, a fact that Paul was preparing to make. There are many, many advantages to us spiritually if we will but learn to "rejoice in the Lord." "Rejoice" is a present imperative meaning that they were always, and under all circumstances, to rejoice in the Lord. If we forget the Lord and all for which we need to be thankful, then we become an easy prey for the Enemy.

And so he followed this exhortation with solemn, threefold warning.

February 21, 2000

3:2 "Beware of dogs." The Greek actually says "beware of the dogs." Eadie said that this means that Paul was speaking of a well known group. "Dogs" was a term that the Jews used of the Gentiles. But Paul here turned to back on those Jewish teachers of the Law who had invaded and were troubling the church. Dogs in those middle eastern countries were known for their filth, for their viciousness. They had no owners, had no homes, but roamed wherever they wanted to go, ate whatever they could find to eat, and were a danger to the population. Often they would attack people in their hunger. So to call anyone a dog was about the worst kind of reproach.

Paul used the term to warn the believers of the danger which these false teachers presented by their corruption of the truth of the Gospel, and their distorted view of the Christian life. The people of God in every generation need to be constantly on guard against anyone who distorts the truth. In these days when anything goes, the Christian will often be the object of hostile attitudes because he stands by the truth. Many times throughout the history of the church believers have died because they stood by the truth and refused to change. But the warning still stands in the Word: "Beware!" We are to be on our guard. We are to expect that there will be those who seek to change the church. Unfortunately many times their efforts have been successful. This behooves all of us to know the truth so that we will be able to detect error when it comes our way.

The second warning: "Beware of evil workers." The repetition of βλέπετε in each of these warnings emphasizes the danger which each posed. This is another way of describing the "dogs." Bishop Moule thought that this term might be an allusion to the doctrine of salvation by works. They claim to have a clearer understanding of the truth, but actually they pervert the truth and would draw the people away from the truth, away from the Gospel, and away from Christ. And so they were not good, but evil. Trench cites examples in secular literature where this word for evil, κακός, was used of a garment that was supposed to be new, but it was tattered and damaged, or of a doctor who was lacking in the skill which he professed to have. So these "evil workers" were not what they claimed to be. They claimed to serve God, but instead they were the servants of the Devil.

The third warning: "Beware of the concision." In English the translation bears some similarity to the word *circumcision*. But it actually speaks of *a mutilation of the flesh*, and goes along with the idea of an attack by "dogs." Moule said in his commentary that "to demand circumcision as a saving ordinance was to demand a mere maltreatment of the body" (p. 58). Lightfoot said, "This circumcision, which they vaunt [boast about], is in Christ only as the gashings and mutilations of the idolatrous heathen" (p. 144). Remember what the prophets of Baal did when their god did not answer them in their contest with Elijah. Cf. 1 Kings 18:28. And yet these "dogs," these "evil workers," continued their false teaching which is described for us, as one illustration, in Acts 15:1:

And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

In Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia, he said, "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing" (Gal. 5:2). He was speaking of being circumcised in order to be saved. The same is true if baptism is used as a condition of salvation, or if church membership is so used, or if people think that by giving their money to the church they can be saved, or by any other so called "good work." There can be no leeway, "no margin or room for action, or the like," in our teaching of salvation. Christ alone is the Savior, and any addition, whatever it might be, to faith in Christ, is a perversion of the Gospel of the grace of God, and the church must never tolerate any deviation whatever.

So what Paul said to the church at Philippi, is his message to Trinity Bible Church, and to every other church where people claim to stand for the true Gospel of Christ. *No compromises can ever be allowed!*

3:3 This might sound like the height of pride, but actually it is a grand statement of the truth. Paul did not say this on his own, but here he was stating the true doctrine of salvation. He was actually picking up on the teaching of the "evil workers" by using "circumcision" as a synonym for salvation. So he said very boldly and certainly, "We are those who are truly saved, who worship God in the Spirit (it needs to be capitalized), and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Notice here that Paul mentioned all Three Persons of the Godhead in this one verse.

For Paul's statement here that "we are the circumcision," we need to remember his words in Romans 2:28-29:

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Our worship is *by the Spirit of God*, the translation which is more in accord with the Greek text. Even our worship is not done in the flesh, but by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

"And rejoice in Christ Jesus." Here is a statement that helps us with the meaning of Paul's words in verse 1 of this chapter. We rejoice that "Christ," the Messiah, the Son of God, Who became "Jesus," the Man, has done all that God required for the salvation of any sinner who believes. We give Christ the glory, and take none of it for ourselves. Our works have no part in obtaining salvation, nor do we work to keep our salvation. We work because we are saved. God does the saving through Christ, and Christ saves us and keeps us from ever losing our salvation. So we "rejoice in Christ Jesus"! We glorify Him as the Savior, and we glorify Him alone!

"And have no confidence in the flesh." Paul was speaking here of "confidence" in obtaining salvation. We all as Christian probably manifest that we have too much confidence in ourselves, but God continues to work in us to teach us that "the flesh profits nothing." This is what the Lord said in John 6:63:

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are

spirit, and they are life.

The teaching of Scripture on this point is so clear that it is a testimony to the hardness and blindness of man's heart that he persists in thinking that he contribute to his own salvation. Before I leave this subject, let me give you two more verses from Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia. The first is in Galatians 5:6:

For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

The second is in Galatians 6:15:

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

William G. Pettingill, one of the editors of the original Scofield Bible, wrote a commentary on Galatians which he entitled, *By Grace Through Faith Plus Nothing*. That is exactly what the teaching of Scripture is, and any deviation from that is the work of "dogs" who are "evil workers" and mutilators of the flesh is circumcision is what they want to bring in.

Now let us go on to the next point in our outline.

Here in the first fourteen verses of Philippians 3 we have:

VI. THE PRE-EMINENT THEME OF THE EPISTLE (Phil. 3:1-4:9).

In the first three verses of this chapter we have:

A. "Rejoice in the Lord" (Phil. 3:1-3).

And now we come to the second point under VI:

B. Paul's testimony of his joy in the Lord (Phil. 3:4-14).

Just by looking down from verse 4 to verse 14 you can easily see that there is a change in verse 7, introduced by the word, "But . . ." So this tells us that in verses 4, 5, and 6 Paul said what he rejoiced in before the Lord saved him. And then beginning with verse 7 he went on to say how, after he was saved, he learned to "rejoice in the Lord."

3:4 Here Paul said in so many words, "If anybody wants to express his confidence in his flesh, I have more to boast about than he does." He had more to boast about than any Gentile because he was a Jew, a member of God's chosen nation, but he also had more to boast about than most Jews because of the progress he had made in their "religion." So if anyone could have been saved "by works," Paul would have been at the head of the class.

He did this to place his position in Christ in the greatest possible contrast. He was seeking to show that if anyone who was what he had been, and who had done what he had done, could not be saved, then there was no hope for anyone else who was seeking salvation by their own credentials. Paul must have had all of this in mind when he wrote Ephesians 2:8 and 9, especially thinking about those phrases "not of yourselves" and "not of works." (Quote these two verses.)

Let's examine what Paul said about what he could boast about. He made seven points.

1) "Circumcised the eighth day." This is exactly as it was ordered by the Law of Moses. This was when John the Baptist was circumcised. See Luke 1:59. This was when our Lord was circumcised. See Luke 2:21. This is when Abraham circumcised Isaac. See Genesis 21:4. In Leviticus 12:3 it was prescribed by Law that every male child in Israel be circumcised on the eighth day. Since this was so important in the arguments of the Jews, Paul mentioned this even before his nationality.

But if you stop to think about this, this should have been credited to Paul's father because he was the one who had Paul circumcised. But the Jews would have looked upon this as benefitting their child. So it was a legitimate argument for Paul to make.

2) "Of the stock of Israel." He was an Israelite by birth. He was a descendant of Abraham through Jacob and Israel. He was not a proselyte. He was an Israelite by blood.. Eadie said that Israel expresses a higher nobility than either Hebrew or Jew. See p. 172.

3) "Of the tribe of Benjamin." Benjamin was Jacob's favorite son. Jacob in blessing his sons called Benjamin and his tribe, "the beloved of the Lord" (Deut. 33:12). When the ten tribes defected from the Davidic kingdom, Benjamin remained faithful, and joined with Judah. King Saul, Israel's first king, had been chosen by God from the tribe of Benjamin. And Paul had been named Saul at his birth. So this was no insignificant claim that Paul could make.

4) "An Hebrew of the Hebrews." Paul was not aware that any in his family line had ever mixed with the Gentiles. It also probably means that he spoke his native language, while many Jews were content to speak only Greek. They were called Hellenists. It also indicated that he had stayed by the customs of the people of Israel while others had abandoned them, or had been careless at times in observing them.

5) "As touching the law, a Pharisee." There were only about 6,000 Pharisees in Paul's day, according to Josephus. Moule in quoting others said, "The Pharisees were the enthusiasts of the later Judaism . . . the votaries of religious precision, elaborate devotion, vigorous proselytism, and exclusive privilege, and the most intense nationalism. They were held in high esteem among the common people" (p. 60). And Paul had the distinction of having been brought up under the instruction of Gamaliel. He mentioned this in defending himself before a crowd in Jerusalem, speaking in Hebrew:

I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day (Acts 22:3).

Gamaliel is described in Acts 5:34 as "one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people." Not only was Paul a Pharisee, but he was the son of a Pharisee according to Acts 23:6. Many who are knowledgeable about Israel in those days believe that if the Apostle Paul had not been saved, he would have become the outstanding rabbi of his day. All of this would have given Paul the highest rating among the Jews.

6) "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church."

John Eadie made an excellent statement of what Paul had in mind when he wrote, "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church. This is what he had to say:

The Apostle had been no passive supporter of the Law. While he upheld it, he upheld it with his might. And when the supremacy of the Law seemed to be endangered by the growth of Christianity, with characteristic ardor and impetuosity [rushing for force and violence] he flung himself into the contest. He could not be a supine [lying on his back, or as we would say, "taking it lying down"] and listless spectator. The question was to him one of conscience and submission to divine authority, and therefore he deemed it his duty to imprison, torture, and kill the abettors [supporters] of the infant faith, whose most malignant feature, he thought, was antagonism to Moses. Others might stand aloof, fold their hands in indifference, and yield a facile [agreeable] acquiescence in events as they occurred. But the disciple of Gamaliel was in terrible earnest. Believing that speaking "words against Moses" there was open blasphemy, and that the glory of God and the spiritual interests of his country were in imminent

hazard, he felt himself doing God service when he resolved to hunt down and extirpate [to pluck up by the root, to eradicate] the rising heresy, and “breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” [a quotation from Acts 9:1]. Foremost among the zealots stood Saul of Tarsus. Had his adversaries ever shown a similar fervor—had they so openly committed themselves? His zeal for the Law outstripped theirs—ἐγὼ μᾶλλον [from Phil. 3:4]. If he did not now enforce the Mosaic ceremonial, it was not because he had never loved it, or had been quite careless when it was assaulted. Not one had labored more prodigiously [beyond what would normally have been expected], or fought for it so ferociously—“the witnesses laid their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul” [quoted from Acts 7:58] (p. 175).

Geoffrey Wilson pointed out that the Pharisees, a name which means *a separatist*, or *the separated ones*, were continually engaged in a warfare on two fronts, on the one hand against the theological liberalism of the Sadducees, and, on the other hand, against the religious laxity and indifference of the common people, they were not hesitant to take on another opponent, and yet they continued to have the respect and support of the people as the most influential party in Judaism (see p. 72). They were the ardent defenders of what might be called, “the Jewish faith.” He did what he did in total sincerity that he was doing the will of God, or as he expressed it later to Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:13, “ignorantly in unbelief.” And that, he said, was the reason God graciously extended mercy to him. And as soon as Paul had turned in faith to Christ, the Jews sought to kill the one who formerly had been their champion.

There is no question but that Paul thought that he was doing the will of God by persecuting and killing those who believed in Christ as the Messiah and Savior. The words of the Lord Jesus in John 16:2 were absolutely true in the case of Saul of Tarsus. Do you remember what our Lord said?

They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service (John 16:2).

Finally, we come to the last point of those things which Paul gloried in before he was saved.

7) “Touching the righteousness which is in the Law, blameless.” Paul was like the rich young man who came to the Lord Jesus wanting to know how he could inherit eternal life. He claimed that he had kept the Law perfectly from his youth—*i.e., all his life*. Paul claimed that he was free from censure from any man. No charge could be laid against him as one who had violated the Law in any way.

But Paul would learn later that his evaluation of himself was completely what was on the outside, not what was in his heart. He would learn later the meaning of Solomon’s words in Ecclesiastes 7:20, which he should already have known, “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” And he would learn the truth also of what the Lord told Samuel when Samuel was inclined to think that Eliab, Jesse’s son, had to be the Lord’s choice to succeed Saul as the King of Israel. This is what the Lord said:

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7).

And so we learn that even the most moral among men can be totally blind as to the true condition of their hearts. Only the Lord Himself can dispel that blindness. In Paul’s case, all of the light that he needed was in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, but he was so deeply taught in a salvation by works, that all of those Scriptures, many of which he quoted when he wrote Romans 3, he had completely overlooked in seeking to justify himself. No man has ever been justified before God by keeping the Law because no one has ever kept the Law with the one exception of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Law shows us that we are sinners, but it does not

save us. At this point in Paul's testimony he was ready to speak of the true righteousness, the righteousness which makes us acceptable to the all-seeing eye of God, the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ. And so verse 7 of Philippians 3 brings us to the great change that took place in the heart and life of Saul of Tarsus who was, in the providence and grace of God, to become one of the greatest champions of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that the church has ever had..

But as far as Paul's life in Judaism, he had not been guilty of omitting anything that he should have done. And yet all of that fell far short and below what he needed, and what he was to find in Christ.

February 28, 2000

3:7 When Paul the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, suddenly he realized that all of those thing which he had depended upon to give him acceptance with God, were sheer "loss." Instead of having merit with God, it was all demerit. He knew that his birth as a Jew, his achievements as a young Pharisee, and his strict obedience to the Law, has not been an asset, but were definite liabilities because they had kept him from seeing his real need, and how impossible it was for him to meet that need for himself.

The word "gain" in Greek is in the plural speaking of "the quantity and variety" (Eadie, p. 176). Added altogether they did not spell acceptance with God, but they amounted to a total "loss." All of them were good in themselves, but did not add up to salvation. They were a "loss." They damaged the possibility that he could be saved. They were all a detriment to him. These are the ideas in the word "loss." The truth that Isaiah had expressed, and which Paul as Saul may have known, had never gotten into his heart:

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away (Isa. 64:6).

Paul's situation before he met Christ explains why it is often so difficult for "good" people to be saved. They have never realized that their sins have nullified any benefit that they were trying to gain by their good works. But when he met Christ, all of his previous ideas about salvation were suddenly changed. Paul used the word "counted" twice again in the next verse. Thayer says that it means "a belief resting not on one's inner feeling or sentiment, but on the due consideration of external ground, the weighing and comparing of facts" (p. 276). When he understood Christ, when the light suddenly dawned upon his soul, he had no inclination at all to display his own supposed merits, but promptly declared that they were all a total "loss." He saw that with Christ he not only did not need what before had been so important to him, but neither did he need anything else or anyone else when he had Christ! And that is what he went on to say in verse 8.

"For Christ" is lit. *on account of Christ*.

What was once gain was now reckoned loss, either because it did not commend him to Christ, or what was held as something won was regarded now as loss, for it not enable it win Christ, nay, kept him from winning Christ. When he won, he was losing; nay, the more he won, the more he must lose. All his advantages in birth, privilege, sect, earnestness, and obedience, were not only profitless, but productive of positive loss, as they prevented the gaining of Christ, and of justification through the faith of Christ (Eadie, p. 177).

Διὰ can also be translated, *because of*, or *for the sake of*, "Christ." When he understood Christ, he knew that he did not need any of those other things.

But then he went on to show that his loss was even greater than he had just expressed. It was to include "all things."

3:8 “Yea doubtless” “corrects by emphasis” (Moule, p. 61), and Moule said that it can be translated, “Nay rather,” or, “But indeed” (Eadie, p. 177), or “Nay moreover” (Lightfoot, p. 148). Lightfoot made this further comment:

This combination of particles introduces the present statement as an amendment and extension of the former. The advance consists in two points; (1) The substitution of the present for the perfect [in the verbs] . . . ; (2) The expansion of ταῦτα into πάντα (p. 148).

The present is “I count”: the perfect is “I have suffered.” The present indicated that as Paul was writing this epistle years after he had come to Christ, he still felt the same was about any merits he had sought to achieve before God in connection with his salvation. He included everything that he had not mentioned in verses 5 and 6, and gave them the same negative value.

The word “excellency” shows that Paul knew that “the surpassing worth of this knowledge [of Christ] eclipsed and annihilated all other gains in comparison” (Lightfoot, p. 148).

One of the first men to translate the New Testament into modern English was a man by the name of Richard Frances Weymouth, who was British. I have always appreciated his translation of this passage of Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi. And I want to read it to you. This is Weymouth’s translation:

Yet all that was gain to me, for Christ’s sake I have reckoned as loss. Nay I even reckon all things as pure loss *because of the priceless privilege of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord*. (The italics is mine.) For His sake I have suffered the loss of everything, and reckon it all as mere refuse, in order that I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own, derived from the Law, but which arises from faith in Christ—the righteousness which comes from God through faith. I long to know Christ and the power which is in His resurrection, and to share in His sufferings and die even as He died; in the hope that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

With what tenderness the Apostle Paul must have written those word, “Christ Jesus my Lord”! Before it had been a religion in which Paul was seeking to make as much of himself as he could. Now it was Christ, a glorious Person, Who had forever won His heart.

Notice the word “suffered” here in verse 8. Actually “suffered the loss” is one word in the Greek. It seems that he was referring to how all that he boasted in before he was saved was torn away from him by the Jews because, as Bishop Moule said, “he deserted the Sanhedrin for Jesus Christ” (p. 62). But instead of mourning his loss, He “counted them but dung,” that he might win Christ. The word σκύβαλα which Paul used here, and which is translated “dung,” was sometimes used to describe the scraps of food that fell from the table which either the dogs ate, or it was thrown out as garbage. Sometimes it was used about the chaff of the wheat, which is described in Psalm 1 as that “which the wind driveth away.” At other times this same word was used of manure. And so Eadie said,

It expresses not only the utter insignificance which the apostle now attached to the grounds of his former trust, but the aversion with which he regarded them, especially when placed in comparison with Christ (p. 180).

William Ramsay, who has written several books dealing with the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul, said of Paul’s words, “for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things,”

These emphatic words suit the mouth of one who had been disowned by his family, and reduced from a position of wealth and influence in his nation to poverty and contempt (p. 36 in *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, but quoted by Geoffrey Wilson, p. 74).

It is interesting, isn’t it, that Paul spoke of his salvation as *winning Christ*? The verb that he used here has the

same root as the word “gain” in verse 7. He turned his back upon all that he had trusted in before in order that *Christ might be his gain*. I mentioned before that many expositors and students of the life of Saul of Tarsus believe that had he remained a Pharisee, he would have become the outstanding rabbi of his day, perhaps one of the greatest that Israel has ever produced. And there would have been many who branded Paul as a fool for giving up such a promising career and future. But when the eyes of his heart were opened to see Christ, he knew that his greatest gain was to have Christ.

Our Lord said on one occasion, and perhaps He said it many times during His ministry here on earth,

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:35-37).

Cf. the account of the man who came to Jesus wanting to know what he had to do to inherit eternal life. The account is given in **Mark 10:17-23. (Read.)**

People are not saved by what they give up, but what they refuse to give up is often that which stands in the way of their salvation.

3:9 “And be found in Him,” that is, in “Christ Jesus my Lord” (v. 8). Here Paul touched upon a theme for which he would be remembered in a special way in the epistles of the NT which he wrote, the truth of our union with Christ. Paul told the Corinthian church that to be a Christian is to be “in Christ,” and that to be in Christ is to be “a creature.” We were in Christ when He died. We were in Christ when He was raised from the dead. And we even ascended with Him and are now seated with Him in heavenly places. This is truth far beyond what we can comprehend, but we can believe it, and enjoy it. One aspect of what it means to “be found in Him,” is stated by Paul in this ninth verse of chapter three. It is stated both negatively and positively:

Negatively it means, “Not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law. Positively it means having “that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

To “be found in Him,” in Christ, is to be covered by the righteousness which God imputes to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. To “be found in Him” is to be brought into a living fellowship with Christ, a union which can never be broken. It is a relationship as close as our heads have to the other members of our physical bodies. And it is a relationship which is not earned by the works of the law, but by God’s gift of faith to all of us who believe. This means that our acceptance with God is because we are in Christ. Christ took our place on the Cross that we might forever share the place that He has before God. It is all of grace. There is not even a small part of our salvation that we are worthy to have. “The righteousness which is of God by faith” is a righteousness which gives us perfect and eternal acceptance before God. We don’t have it because of our works, but because of His work on the Cross for us.

However, as wonderful and miraculous as all of that is, *it is only the beginning!* In verse 10 Paul tells us what became the passion of his life having been placed by God into Christ. And be sure to note that this is not only a passion with the Apostle Paul, *but a prayer* – the prayer of his life. It is very important for us to learn to make this our prayer as well. And in this connection it is good to remember the teaching of David in Psalm 37:4: “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

3:10 We need to keep in mind what the Apostle said counting all things but loss . . . “for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” In our Lord’s prayer which is recorded for us in John 17, He

said this at the beginning of His prayer:

2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:2-3).

Paul first knew the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. But having met the Lord, he desired to know Him in what Eadie called, “a deep and deepening experience.”

The Greek phrase could very accurately be translated, “In order that I may know Him.” In salvation we are brought to know the Lord – in order that we might know Him better and better, and enjoy a life of daily fellowship with our precious Savior. This is why we have been saved, *that we may know Him*. This knowledge is a personal and practical knowledge. And this is a knowledge that is to grow and grow as long as we live. He is to be first in our affections. And we love those dear saints of God who speak to us of Christ, and tell us what they know of Him so that we can know Him better. In our reading of the Word, we are always looking for Him, and wanting to learn more of Him. We love to commune with Him in prayer, and then to have Him speak to us through the Word.

This is what is unique about the Christian faith. We are called “unto the fellowship of His Son,” God’s Son, “Jesus Christ our Lord.” Others may be satisfied with images and ceremonies and all that usually goes with them, but our need is to know the Lord as our Savior, and then to continue to know Him more and more as our Lord and as our Savior. The Apostle Peter’s partings word in his second and last epistle were these.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen (2 Peter 3:18).

February 29, 2000

Every religion in the world is a system of works; the Christian faith is a relationship with a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who has saved us, not by our works, but by His work. What a difference it was for the Apostle Paul to write:

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:8-10).

But the second part of this verse is, “That I may know . . . the power of His resurrection.” We know the power of Christ’s resurrection only to the degree that we “know Him”! But what did Paul have in mind?

Lightfoot said that he had in mind “the quickening and stimulating of the whole moral and spiritual being” (p. 150). He wrote to the Galatians,

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing (Gal. 5:2).

Here in Philippians he was praying that he would see *the profit* in his life of having been joined to the risen and living Christ – deliverance from sin, a holy life, a desire to please God, a special joy in prayer, and a burden for the Lord’s people that they, too, would long to know their Savior, as well as a burden for those who did not know that they might know the Him. And the fact that God graciously answered that prayer is apparent from such verses as Gal. 2:20 (quote), and Rom. 6:3-6:

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin (Rom. 6:3-6).

And what about Rom. 8:3-4?

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

And we need to add to this list what the Apostle Paul said in Phil. 4, verses 10-13. (Read.)

The power of Christ's resurrection was to be seen in every aspect of Paul's life. Christ had made him a new creation; old things had passed away, and all things had become new to him. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17. Christ was living *in* Paul, and the evidence could be seen in the changes that were evident in what he was, and the way he lived. The Lord Jesus had said, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). Even in the way in which Paul had been united with other believers in the body of Christ, the resurrection of Christ was evident. He was an answer to our Lord's prayer in John 17:20 and 21:

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:20-21).

Before he was saved, Paul had hated Christ, and he had hated everyone who had trusted Christ. But the evidence of Christ living in his heart was seen in that all of that was changed. Now he loved Christ, and even in Damascus sought the fellowship of those who shared his new-found faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The evidence of the indwelling presence of Christ in his life was to be seen in every aspect of his life.

But Paul was praying that the power of Christ's resurrection would be known more and more in himself. We see here that Paul understood God's ultimate purpose in saving us. *It was, and continues to be, to make us like the Lord Jesus Christ.* And we are all being conformed more and more into the likeness of Christ, not by rules and regulations that we impose upon ourselves outwardly, but by the power of the resurrected Christ Who is living in all of us!

Cf. Eph. 3:13-21.

But let us move on to the next statement that Paul made here in verse 10: "And the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."

With Christ His sufferings preceded His death and resurrection; with us resurrection comes first, but the sufferings follow.

Paul soon found that the world's treatment of the Lord was turned upon himself. The hatred of Christ that he had experienced before he was saved, was directed toward himself by the world of unbelievers, And this included unbelieving Jews (even the chief priests and scribes and Pharisees) as well as the pagans in the Gentile world. A part of the fellowship of the saints is "the fellowship of His sufferings." The Lord had told His disciples before He went to the Cross that this would be the case. Cf. John 15:18-21

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have perse-

cuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

I agree with what Eadie said on this point, but I also disagree with him in part. He said that this is not “a spiritual participation,” but I believe that it is. We do not suffer vicariously as He did, suffering for the salvation of others, but we suffer nevertheless. It is our portion in life because we have been joined to Christ. But Eadie went on to make give this wonderful explanation of what Paul said:

A share in Christ's actual sufferings was impossible to him. But the sufferings of Christ were not ended—they are prolonged in His body, and of those the apostle desired to know the fellowship. He longed so to suffer, for such fellowship gave him assimilation to his Lord, as he drank of His cup, and was baptized with His baptism. It brought him into communion with Christ, purer, closer, tenderer than simple service could have achieved. It gave him such solace as Christ Himself enjoyed. To suffer together creates a dearer fellow-feeling than to labor together. Companionship in sorrow forms the most enduring of ties,—afflicted hearts cling to each other, grow into each other. The apostle yearned for this likeness to his Lord, assured that to suffer with Him was to be glorified with Him, and that the depth of His sympathies could be fully known only to such as “through much tribulation” must enter the kingdom.

And then Eadie concluded his remarks on “the fellowship of His sufferings” with this remarkable statement: “Christ indeed cannot be known, unless there be this fellowship in His sufferings.” (This entire statement is found in Eadie's commentary on page 189.)

Lightfoot made this statement:

The participation in Christ's sufferings partly follows upon and partly precedes “the power of His resurrection.” It follows, as the practical result on our life; it precedes, as leading up to the full and final appreciation of this power (p. 150).

He meant that we suffer with Christ because His power is displayed in the way we live. But when we suffer, we are cast back upon the Lord, and so we learn more deeply what “the power of His resurrection” enables us to suffer for His sake.

And this leads to “being made conformable unto His death.”

The word which Paul used here appears only two times in the entire NT, *and both of them are here in this epistle to the Philippians, and both are in this chapter*. The other occurrence of it is in 3:17 where it is translated “followers together.” It means *to share the same likeness* of something, or *to take on the same form* of whatever was being discussed. Paul wanted to be like his Lord even in death. Living for Christ and serving Christ in those days meant the strong possibility that death would be the final result. But Paul, by the power of Christ's resurrection, was ready even for that. He told the Corinthians when he wrote to them, “I die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31).

When Paul was with the Ephesian elders for the last time, he told them that the Holy Spirit had made known to him every place that he had been that “bonds and afflictions” were waiting for him in Jerusalem. But this was his response:

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall

see my face no more (Acts 20:24-25).

And this explains why the elders “wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him” as he left them. It was not that he was just leaving them, but they felt certain that the outcome of Paul’s trip to Jerusalem ultimately would mean death for him.

And when Paul went on to Caesarea and met with the believers in the home of Philip, Agabus, a prophet, took Paul’s girdle and bound his own hands and feet, and then he said,

So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles (Acts 21:11).

And then we read what Paul’s response was:

Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 21:13).

And the people there could not get Paul to reconsider and to change his plans about going to Jerusalem. And so finally they said, “The will of the Lord be done” (Acts 21:14).

I used to feel that Paul was just bullheaded and determined to have his own way. But I don’t feel that way anymore. Paul was a man with a great passion for Christ, and a great burden to bring people to Christ. He knew the risks involved. He had been there when Stephen was stoned. He knew how the Jews had treated his Lord, and had not been satisfied until He was on the Cross. And he did not expect the ministry to be any easier for himself. He wanted to be like his Lord was. He wanted to live like his Lord lived. And he also wanted to die like his Lord died.

Listen again to Eadie’s words:

The process of conformity was advancing;—like Him in suffering, like Him in death—a violent and bloody death as the servant of the Lord. It mattered not what the form was—whether by the sword or the cross, at the stake or in the arena; whether it was the fate of Stephen or the end of James, the similarity desired was one of spirit and state. In all things Paul coveted conformity to his Lord—even in suffering and death. Assured that Christ’s career was the noblest which humanity had ever witnessed, or had ever passed through, he felt a strong desire to resemble Him—as well when He suffered as when He labored—as well in His death as in His life. Christ’s death was a sacrifice, and his own was contemplated in the same light—“I am now ready to be offered.” Christ’s decease at Jerusalem was characterized by unfaltering submission to the will of God, complete devotion to the welfare of humanity, and generous forgiveness of His murderers; so, no doubt, the apostle gained his wish, and the martyrdom at Rome was signalized by a similar calmness and faith—met with a serenity which the apparatus of death could not disturb, and accompanied with such intercession for his executors as Jesus had offered, and the first martyr had imitated (p. 190).

When Paul wrote to the church at Rome, he had said to them,

14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom 1:14-16).

When he faced death in Rome, he said, “I am now ready to be offered” (2 Tim. 4:6). And what added meaning is given to those words now that we have seen Paul’s words in Phil. 3.

But death was not the end, and Paul has yet to experience the full extent of “the power of His resurrection,” that is, the resurrection of Christ. So let us go on to verse 11.

March 6, 2000

3:11 The word for “resurrection” in the preceding verse is ἀνάστασις. It is the regular word for a resurrection in the New Testament. In this verse Paul used the same word, but put the preposition ἐκ, meaning *out of*, on the front of it. The ἐκ is turned to an ἐξ before the “α” on ἀνάστασις, and so we have the word ἐξανάστασις. This means lit. *an out-of resurrection*. But that is usually shortened by expositors to “the out-resurrection of the dead.” This is not an expression of doubt as to whether or not he would be resurrected, but shows Paul’s humility (Vincent), a modest hope (Lightfoot), but also as Calvin said, not the uncertainty of it, but the difficulty. Paul was really looking forward to his complete transformation into the likeness of Christ but he was thinking of all that had to be done in his own heart before that could be realized. Our transformation into the likeness of Christ began the moment we were saved. But we would all admit that there is much yet that needs to be done to make us like Christ. We have a responsibility in this. Of course, all we do is dependent upon the enabling grace of God. But we need to read and to obey the Word. We need to pray. We need to keep ourselves from sinning against the Lord. And we need to seek to please the Lord in what we do, where we go, what we say, how we act, and even in what we think. None of this is easy, but God is our sufficiency, and we need to trust the Lord to make us what we need to be.

The difficulty involved, which we all face, led Paul to say, “If by any means,” or as the Greek text is sometimes translated, “Somehow I might attain unto the out-resurrection of the dead.” Paul looked at the impossibility of it all from a human standpoint, but he believed that “somehow” the Lord was going to accomplish His purpose in every believer.

Now this will be accomplished when the Lord returns for us. And Paul evidently referred to it as an “out-resurrection” because believers are to be raised separately from unbelievers – although all will be raised. And when we see the Lord, as the Apostle John has taught us, “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). This is our certain hope. There may be differences in our likeness to Christ, but we shall all be like Him nevertheless.

Verses 20 and 21 of this chapter show that Paul had no doubt about his final resurrection into the likeness of the Savior Whom he loved and served. However it might be realized, he was eagerly looking forward to it. Even “to depart and to be with Christ” was “far better,” but to be finally transformed into Christ’s likeness, would be *the best!*

Although the outcome was absolutely certain, yet Paul expressed it modestly and humbly as his “hope.” What a fresh and clear insight this whole passage gives us into the heart of the Apostle Paul and his utter devotion to his Savior. May it be the prayer of our hearts to know the Lord as Paul desired to know Him, and to serve the Lord with an utter disregard for ourselves in order that Christ may always be glorified, and that people might be blessed.

Verse 12 continues what Paul had been saying in verse 11.

3:12 Here we see where Paul stood at that particular moment, and he would be in this place, although gradually improving as long as he lived. He said that he had not already “attained.” What did he mean by this?

Perhaps it will help us to know that Paul used this verb, λαμβάνω, in Phil. 2:7 in the statement that our Lord “took upon Him(self) the form of a servant.” Paul was saying here in 3:12 that he had not yet taken upon himself the likeness of Christ. He had not yet laid hold of it even though it was the primary objective in his

life. He was not yet “perfect.” He used the perfect form of the verb, so that we can translate it, “I have not yet been perfected.” He meant that God’s work was not yet finished in him. He still has a ways to go before he would be perfected into the likeness of Christ. But he was not just sitting back and waiting for something unusual to happen to him. He said, “I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” By *following after* he meant that *he was in pursuit of the fulfillment of the purpose God had in laying hold of him*. To use the figure of speech that he used in writing to the Corinthians, he was like a runner in a race running to win. Cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27.

We have the same idea present to us in Heb. 12:1-3:

- 1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
- 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Paul used this same word in Phil. 3:14 where he said, “I press . . .” Before Paul was saved, he said in verse 6 of this chapter, “Concerning zeal, persecuting (the same word, pursuing) the church.”

He used it again when writing the following words to Timothy:

- 11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after [pursue] righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.
- 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses (1 Tim. 6:11-12).

The Apostle Peter used this same word, διώκω, when he quoted Psalm 34 in 1 Peter 3:10-12:

- 10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:
- 11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue [pursue] it.
- 12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

But it does not just mean to pursue godly characteristics, but to pursue them in God, to pursue them in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. This is what we have had in one of our memory passages. It is found in Psalm 63:

- 1 O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;
- 2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.
- 3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.
- 4 Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.
- 5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:
- 6 When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.
- 7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.
- 8 My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me (Psa. 63:1-8).

David sought the Lord the first thing every morning, and he remembered the Lord at night when he was in bed, and if he was awakened during the night, his thoughts turned toward the Lord.

Jeremiah had the joy of giving the people of Judah in their captivity the following message: Jer 29:11-14

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

14 And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

How it pleases the Lord when we pursue Him, not just to get more blessings from Him, but because we want Him and want to be like Him! This was behind the Apostle Paul's words which we considered in Phil. 3:10, "That I may know Him." Paul wanted to lay hold of that purpose for which the Lord had saved him, and that was to be like the Lord.

But he continued on with this same tremendously important truth in verse 13.

3:13 Here Paul repeated what he had said in verse 12, but in a slightly different way: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended." It may have been that many of the Philippian believers, because of their love for Paul and because of the way he had been so mightily used of God in their lives, that they were thinking that he had arrived at the goal! Not having seen the Lord, it would have been easy for them to think that he was already perfect. There is always the danger that we will hold some people in higher esteem than we should. It always makes me made when I hear people criticizing Dr. Chafer. Most people who criticize him today didn't know him. But those of us who sat under his ministry were often led into what seemed to us to be the glory of heaven itself as he opened the Word to us. But those of us whom he called "his boys" need to be careful not to put him too high on a pedestal, because as godly as he was, he still had not attained, and he was the first one to tell you that he hadn't. But he pursued the Lord., and he encouraged us to follow him in that pursuit.

So this is what Paul said about himself: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended." How important it is for all of us to realize this! We still have a ways to go, a long way. And let each of us remember this about ourselves. But I hope we can also say what Paul said immediately afterwards:

13b But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14 I press toward the mark for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13b-14).

March 7, 2000

"But this one thing I do." Does this remind you of David's words in Psalm 27:4? He said that there was "one thing" that he desired of the Lord. Let me read that verse for you.

One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple (Psa. 27:4).

Both David and Paul had very full lives, and so they did not mean that they only had one thing that they did, or only one thing that they desired. But they meant that all that they did and all that they desired had just one thing as the great objective of their lives.

The Lord Jesus said a similar thing about Mary of Bethany. I think most of you will remember the occasion on which the Lord was at their home. Martha was busy preparing a meal for the Lord, but Mary at the same time was sitting at the Lord's feet to hear His Word. This angered Martha because she evidently was under a lot of pressure to get the food ready for the Lord. And so this is what she said to the Lord. The account is found in

the tenth chapter of Luke, verses 40 through 42, but I will begin reading with verse 38:

38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her (Luke 10:38-42).

It is always helpful for us to see that people like Paul, and like David, and like Mary of Bethany had one consuming purpose in their lives which affected everything else that they did or said, and that such purposes are commended by the Lord.

But there is another side to this “one thing” that is so important. It is when the “one thing” is not the right thing. And again I turn to Scripture and an experience in the life of our Lord while He was here on earth. It has to do with the rich man who came to Him and wanted to know what He should do to inherit eternal life. Let me read the story to you. It is found in Mark 10:17-22:

17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.

19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions

I hope that Dr. Johnson was right when he said that the fact that John Mark told us that the Lord loved him, meant that he was one of the elect, and that sometime in the future this man became a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to believe that is true. But what a tragic thing it would be for that rich man to spent all eternity in hell remembering that he had considered his money more valuable than the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is probably true that we all have “one thing” that is pre-eminent in our lives. With some it is making money, and then keeping it, and making more money!. With others it is having a good time, one kind of pleasure or another. Some delight in certain kinds of sin, and this is the “one thing” that they live for. Those of us who know the Lord may have some good things which are that “one thing” for us, like church work, but it is so easy for us to be occupied doing things for the Lord, but it may be that we have not focused upon the Lord Himself as we should have. Paul said that there was “one thing” he was focused upon. What was it?

Let me point out to you that he said that there was “one thing” that he did, but then he went on to mention two things. That is no problem because it is always true that when we focus on one good thing, like Paul did, there are other things that he had to do in order to accomplish the “one thing.” And so he said, “Forgetting those things which are behind.”

Now it seems to be customary with many in interpreting this verse to say that Paul was talking about those things which he had mentioned in verses 5 and 6. But that could hardly be true because he had counted all of

them, not only as “loss,” but as “dung.” So he had left those things behind long before this. No, it seems here since he had been writing about apprehending that for which Christ Jesus had apprehended, or laid hold of, him, that he had in mind being satisfied with the ground that he had already gained as a child of God – the knowledge that he had, the people who had been saved, the churches that had been established, and so on and on. There are some people who are always talking about what they have done as though they had nothing more to learn, no greater love for the Lord to seek, no greater likeness to Christ to achieve, no greater faithfulness in serving the Lord to experience. And so they give the impression that they have arrived at their goal, and that they are not still pressing on as they did earlier in their lives. Paul might easily have felt that way, being a prisoner of Rome and confined as he was. But that was not the case with him.

Years ago I heard of a very prominent pastor who, after he had studied and preached for twenty years, said that he had done his best work during that time, and that he was just going to spend the rest of his life repeating what he had already learned. And that is exactly what he did. He was a very excellent speaker, and people would flock to hear him, but it has always seemed to me that it was tragic that he did not keep pressing on. He accomplished a lot in his lifetime, but he could have accomplished so much more if he had only kept pressing on.

Paul was never satisfied with what he had done. He was grateful for the Lord’s blessing in the past, but that only challenged him to seek even greater blessing in the days to come, greater knowledge of the truth, greater fellowship with the Lord, and seeking other places and other people who had not heard the Gospel so that he could go to them to tell them about the Savior. “Forgetting those things which are behind.”

But that is only half of it. He followed by saying, “and reaching forth unto those things which are before.” And the main point that Paul was making was what the Lord still had to do in his own heart. Paul was not so busy with other people that he forgot his own spiritual needs, and that the Lord had saved him, not just to make an apostle out of him, not just to give us many of the books of the NT, not to use him to reach people with the Gospel and to see them established in churches. All of that had been a great blessing to him. But he remembered that the Lord had saved him to make him like the Lord Jesus, which is God’s purpose in saving every single one of us. And Paul, realizing that the Lord’s work in himself was not yet finished, kept on reaching forth and pressing on “toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

“Reaching forth” would be illustrated by a runner putting all of his strength into the race to the very last that he might win the prize. Perhaps you remember how Paul spoke of this very thing in his first epistle to the church at Corinth. I am referring to what you will find in 1 Cor. 9:24-27. Listen to what Paul had to say:

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

What is “the prize”?

Geoffrey Wilson answers that question for us in his commentary on Philippians when he reminds us of John S. B. Monsell’s wonderful hymn, “Fight the good fight.” It is #484 in our hymnal. The second verse goes like this:

Run the straight race through God’s good grace,

Lift up thine eyes, and seek His face;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

I love the thought in that last line. Christ is not only the prize, but He is the path that leads to the prize. All along the way we need to be occupied with Christ. Day by day the Lord is with us, working in us, moving us on toward the goal when we will be “like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Notice the expression, “the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” The word “high” can be translated, and is translated by many, as *the upward call*. And we can take it even a step farther and say that it is *the heavenly call* because the word translated “high” can mean *heavenly*. The idea is that it comes to us from heaven, and it is a call that leads us to heaven. This is the call that we received that brought us to Christ. This is God’s efficacious grace, or His irresistible grace. It is not only a call to come to Christ, but a call to come to heaven. But it is not only a call to come to heaven, but a call to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the upward, heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke of us as the Lord’s people as “partakers of the heavenly calling.” Cf. Heb. 3:1:

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

To “consider” our Lord Jesus Christ means *to perceive Him, to discover Him, to behold Him, to fix our eyes and minds upon Him*. We are always to be focused upon our Savior.

Paul spoke of our calling in Rom. 8:28-30 in those words we all love. I want to read them to you again.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:28-30).

We are not only called to salvation, but we are called to be “conformed to the image of His Son,” our Lord Jesus Christ. That is why Paul wanted to “know” the Lord more and more, and better and better. It was because this “one thing” he did, was to pursue Christ, and to seek to be like Him in every way.

Now when Paul spoke of pressing on for the prize, the goal, of the heavenly calling he had received (just as you and I have received that same heavenly calling), he was indicating that we have responsibilities in the fulfillment of this calling. We must take time for personal fellowship with the Lord *in the reading of the Word*. We need to be seeking the Lord in prayer. We need to ask God daily for the grace we need to be obedient to the Word. One way the Lord works to make us like His Son is when we do His will. We become by doing what God has instructed us in the Word to do.

I read to you a little while ago those wonderful words which David penned at the beginning of Psalm 63. Let me read give you two other verses, possibly written by David, but words which show what it means to have a passion to know Christ. They are found in Ps. 42:1-2:

1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

When Paul said, “I press toward the mark . . .,” he meant what David meant when David said, “My soul followeth hard after Thee.”

Concl: Now it is a blessing to read about Paul, and about David, and about Mary, and there are many others who had the same passion in their lives to know the Lord – both in and out of Scripture. But the big

question just now is, "What about us?" Do we have that same passion to know Christ, to be with Christ in fellowship today, and to be like Christ? You know, we are not "perfect" yet. Nor has any of us "apprehended," laid hold of, come into the possession of that for which Christ apprehended us. Our race is not run. We haven't reached the goal yet. Are we pressing on toward the goal of being like Christ. Did we continue our pursuit of Christ this morning in the reading of His Word, and in prayer? Have we been careful even this morning about what we have been thinking, and about what we have been saying, and about where we intend to go today, and what we intend to do? It is good that we all are here today where we can talk about the Lord Jesus, and read about Him in the Word. It is good to sing praises to Him. It is very good to be together with others who know and love the Lord. But is this really the "one thing" in our lives, or is there anything or anyone in our lives who is more important to us than He is?

It seems that the older Paul got, and the closer he got to the goal, the harder he ran! He was headed for that which is "far better" than anything we have here, and he longed to be with the One Whom he loved more than anyone else. Let us thank God for the past blessings He has so graciously and abundantly given to us. But let us pray that they will not cause us to be so satisfied that we will stop running. I recognize that as we get older we can't do everything that we used to do, and what we do takes longer than it used to. I know all about that. I am sure that Paul realized that too. But we as Christians have the unique privilege of getting stronger in another way even as our bodies get weaker. Paul spoke about this also. Listen to his words which we find in 2 Cor. 4:14-18. I am breaking into the thought of the chapter, but you will see what I have in mind as I read to the end of the chapter:

14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:14-18).

Physically we may not be able to run races anymore, but spiritually we ought to be running better and faster and stronger than ever before. For some of us the goal may not be far off. But for all of us it may be closer than we think because surely the coming of the Lord draweth near. James said it far better than I can:

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh (James 5:7-8).

Let me conclude with those wonderful words of instruction found in Hebrews 12:1-3:

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds (Heb. 12:1-3).

Run toward the Lord and with the Lord as fast as you can, keeping your eyes on Him. When the way gets hard, He will strengthen our faith so that we can continue to keep running until He comes, or until He calls us home.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul
Tuesday Bible Class – March 13, 2000
Philippians 3:15-4:9

Intro: The testimony of the Apostle Paul came to an end with the fourteenth verse of this chapter. He had been talking about himself up to that point and his past life as a Jew. But then he went on to tell how what he found in Christ so far exceeded what he had in Judaism, that there was no basis for comparison at all. But as we come to verse fifteen in chapter 3, the Apostle returned to his exhortations which were directed at the church in Philippi. And at the basis of this next section to which we are coming, was his appeal, given twice, for them to follow the example of his life. See 3:17 and 4:9. This was not with any sense of pride, but because he longed to see them in pursuit of the goal which he sought, which was conformity to Christ.

Let me point out to you where we are in the outline which I have given to you.

VI. THE PRE-EMINENT THEME OF THE EPISTLE (3:1-4:9).

We have considered the first two points under this heading:

A. “Rejoice in the Lord” (3:1-3).

B. Paul’s testimony of his joy in the Lord (3:4-14).

And now we come to the third point:

C. Paul, the Example to follow (3:15-4:9).

3:15 The word “therefore” suggests a change. And here, as I have indicated, he began to apply what he had been saying to the believers in Philippi.

Some have wondered how Paul could say that he was not yet “perfect” in verse 12, but then addressed the Lord’s people in Philippi as “perfect” in this verse, and included himself.

The answer to this seeming contradiction is that the word “perfect” is used speaking often of different degrees of perfection. He admitted in verse 12 that he was not completely perfect. The work of the Lord in him was not yet complete. He still had a ways to go. So there he was using it in the absolute sense. But here the word is used more to indicate that who were progressing in spiritual maturity. And all of us differ from each other when we think of where we are today in our growth in the Lord. In fact, using the word as Paul used it here in verse 15 was very similar to what he would have meant if he simply addressed them as being saved. Paul used the word “perfect” in the same way in his letter to the church at Corinth, in chapter 2, verse 6 (and reading verse 7 with it):

6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory (1 Cor. 2:6-7).

“Be thus minded” – This means that he wanted them to think the way he thought. This meant renouncing all confidence in the flesh, and pursuing Christ, seeking to know Him better, walking in fellowship with Him, and seeking to be like Him. He wanted them to be pressing “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” He wanted them to be disposed in their thinking to move in the same direction that he was moving. And he promised them that if they got interested primarily in other things. “God shall reveal even this unto you.”

God is infinitely concerned about our growth in grace. And so when for any reason we might grow cold, or be occupied with lesser things, He has ways of showing us His displeasure. The primary way that He does this is through the Word. But if a believer gets neglectful of the Word, the Lord can deal directly with his heart, or in

his circumstances, or in his relationships. God has many ways of dealing with us. What Paul wanted was what God wanted for all of His people – following on, reaching forth, pressing toward the mark.

In a way Paul was saying that if his own teaching failed to inspire those to whom he was writing, and if it was not sufficient to keep the Philippian believers headed in the right way, the Lord will step in and supply what was needed. We are all in the Lord's hands. There is no question about that. Remember what the Apostle Paul wrote in Phil. 2:12-13.

3:16 Each one of us is responsible before God to live according to the truth that we know, and we must not neglect that. It is in using the truth that we have that we go on to learn more and more. Paul uses an expression here which speaks of soldiers in an army walking in line. We want to obey the truth that we know, but at the same time we are to walk in fellowship with each other.

There is real safety for all of us as believers when we seek to walk together in accordance with the Word of God. There are those who go off on their own instead of steering a straight course. We need to help each other in our walk with the Lord, and in our seeking to understand more and more of the Word of God.

3:17 Then we come to Paul's first exhortation for the believers to follow him. "Be ye followers" is the translation of the Greek verb from which we get our English word *mimic*. Unfortunately our English word is often used of a comedian who is trying to entertain people, and to make them laugh. But Paul was using the word in a very serious way. *And this is a very important truth which is found throughout the Word of God.* I am speaking of the idea that we all need to seek to be examples which other people can follow. Peter said that elders are to be examples to their people. Parents are to be examples to their children. Teachers are to be examples to those they teach. We fail so often in our instruction of others because, while they hear words, they do not see living illustrations of what we teach. In 1 Cor. 11:1 Paul told the Corinthian believers to mimic him just as he sought to mimic Christ. This does not just mean in our outward behavior, but it means to be mimics in our hearts.

We as parents need to ask ourselves if we would be happy with our children if spiritually they were just like we are. I think it was Alan Redpath who used to be a pastor in London, England during World War II. One Saturday night as he was preparing for his services of the Lord's Day, the Germans bombs began to fall again in the city. His little girl was upstairs in bed, and she began to cry. So he hurried up to be with her, and to comfort her until the bombing stopped. Before he left her, they had prayer together. He prayed, asking the Lord for His protection, and thanking Him that their home had been spared during that attack. And then his little girl prayed, and I think I remember almost the very words which she prayed. Her prayer was short and to the point. This is what she said, "Lord, when I grow up, make me big and strong like my Daddy." Mr. Redpath went back to his study with those words indelibly fixed in his own mind and heart, reminded how the Lord had made his little girl want to be his follower. How important it is for all of us to be examples which others can mimic.

But notice that Paul did not just say that the Philippians should follow him. He went on to say that they ought to be on the lookout for others who would be examples to them by their faith, and by their lives. The word "mark" means *to take aim at them, or to consider them, show regard for them*. And notice that the emphasis was to be on *how they walk*. This would include how they *talk* because how we *talk* is a vital part of *our walk*.

You know, you can often dip into the past through the biography of some godly man or woman who is now in glory, and find some great examples. I have found many through books, people like Charles Spurgeon, George Mueller, Hudson Taylor, Andrew Bonar, Amy Carmichael, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, and many others. It is often good just to think of the people that the Lord has used in your life, possibly people you won't know

personally until you get to heaven, but it will fill your heart with thanksgiving to God just to think of them. And there are many people we have known, and still know, who have been a help to us. And let us remember that others are watching us, looking for an example to follow. How greatly godly types are needed in these evil days in which we live, because, as Paul went on to say, there are a lot of examples that walk in the opposite direction.

3:18 I believe the translators of the KJV were right when they put the next two verses as a parenthesis. They stand in contrast with what Paul had just written, and what he would continue to write from verse 20. But he wanted us to think about this too.

“Many walk” – As our Lord said,

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matt. 7:13-14).

Many go in the broad way that leadeth to destruction. I don't think there is any question but that at any period in human history many more are on the broad way to destruction than are on the narrow way that leads to life, life eternal. But I hope that we are following the example of the Apostle Paul in what he said here. He said that he had often talked to them about these “many” people. It is so easy to get disgusted with them, isn't it? We wonder how they can be so foolish, but we forget that we would be out there with them, doing what they are doing, talking like they talk, and seeking what they are seeking, if it were not for the fact, the blessed fact, that the Lord took hold of us, brought us to His Son, and set us walking in a different way and in a totally different direction.

How did they affect Paul? Evidently he couldn't think about them, or talk about them, or write about them, without tears running down his cheeks. Even as the manuscript of this epistle got to Philippi, the people who looked at it saw where the writing had been blurred a little bit by the tears of the Apostle Paul. Perhaps it was quite a bit, because he said that he was weeping. Here is a part of the example that we need to follow.

Why was Paul weeping? Because “they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.” Paul was speaking about people who were like he had been. These enemies were not the kind of people who say, “You can have the Gospel, but it is not for me.” No, they were the kind who said, “I don't want Christ, and I don't want to have Him either!” I am sure that a part of Paul's tears were tears of joy as he thought of the grace of God in seeking him and saving him when he was plunging headlong into eternal damnation.

These people, like people today, and some of them are in churches, who despise the very work which Christ did for the salvation of sinners.

Paul was following from his heart the example of his Lord. Listen to Luke 19:41-42. The Lord was looking at the city of Jerusalem when He wept and spoke these words:

41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

How did Paul describe these enemies of Christ's cross, the message of the Gospel. He tells us in verse 19, and describes them in four ways.

3:19 First, “Whose end is destruction.” Their goal, the result of their hatred, their destiny, “is destruction.”

It is total ruin, total loss, the judgment of God. People think that they are getting away with what they are doing, and how they are living, but the end is dreadful beyond what anyone of us can possibly realize.

Second, “whose god is their belly.” Eadie said,

The expression is a strong one, and the general meaning is, that they found their divinest happiness in the gratification of animal appetite. This god they loved and served. No idolatry is so unworthy of a rational being; no worship so brutal in form, and brutifying in result. Intemperance, for example, ruins fortune and forfeits character, crazes the body and damns the immortal spirit. And if, as in the figure of the apostle, a man’s belly be his god, then his hearth is his altar, and his liturgy turns on the questions, “What shall we eat, or what shall we drink?” or repeat the chant—“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (pp. 216, 217).

Matthew Henry said, “Gluttons and drunkards make a god of their belly, and all their care is to please it and make provision for it” (Vol. VI, p. 741).

Notice the steps downward that the Apostle Paul traced. They reject Christ and God. So their god becomes their belly, satisfying it with food and drink. And this in turn often leads to a promiscuous life. And so we come to Paul’s third point:

“Whose glory is in their shame.” Again quoting Matthew Henry: “They not only sinned, but they boasted of it, and gloried in that of which they ought to have been ashamed” (*Op. cit.*, pp. 741, 742). Men glory in their freedom to do what they want to do, not realizing they are piling up judgment to their eternal shame. It is bad enough to sin, but to glory in it is to flaunt it before God.

And lastly, “who mind earthly things.” See how Paul exhorted the Colossian believers not to set their affections on things on the earth, but “on things above” “where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” Cf. Col. 3:1-17.

Although the Apostle Paul here in Philippians 3 was thinking of those who are the enemies of God and of Christ, yet that which he said about them also poses real dangers to believers. Too often we get occupied with things earthly and temporal, and this causes us to neglect what is heavenly and eternal.

Since verses 18 and 19 are a parenthesis, verse 20 is a continuation from verse 17. (Make the connection.)

3:20 The reason we are to be followers of our Lord, and of Paul, and of all who live godly lives, is because we are citizens of heaven. Paul had referred to this back in chapter 1, and verse 27. In 1 Peter 2:11 we see that the Apostle Peter spoke of us as aliens in this world. He said, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”

This subject came up in our Lord’s trial when he stood before Pilate, and it is recorded for us in John 18:33-37:

33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king.

To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

In our Lord's prayer recorded for us in John 17, He said to the Father concerning His people, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16). And then two verses later we read, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:18-19).

I think that Christians who form political parties and who get involved in the politics of our day, are misguided Christians. If a Christian wants to run for some political office, that is between him and the Lord, but a Christian Coalition has no right to exist. We have a higher calling. We are here in this world to live for the Lord, and to bear witness to the Gospel of Christ by word and life. The Lord never tried to organize people to get them involved with Rome. Nor did the Apostle Paul. We all have to live under the laws of our country, but it is a shame when we try to make our government fit our convictions as Christians. It never has worked, and it never will work. Righteousness will never prevail until our Lord is here reigning on the earth with a rod of iron. We are not looking for some political party to turn things around. Things have gone too far in the wrong direction. And when that has happened in the past, as with the Canaanites, God wiped out whole nations. We don't think it can happen again, but it can! We are looking to see the purposes of God fulfilled. And here in Phil. 3:20 we are told that as citizens of heaven, we are looking "for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

What was Paul saying when he used the verb "look"? He meant that we are eagerly awaiting His return. We believe that He is coming, and we are expecting Him at any time. And when the Lord's people are truly looking for the Lord's return, it is going to have a tremendous impact upon our lives. The Apostle John said, "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

A. T. Robertson said in his comments on the Greek Text that the verb, "look for," "vividly pictures Paul's eagerness for the . . . coming of Christ as the normal attitude of the Christian colonist whose home is heaven" (Vol. IV, p. 457).

What is the Lord going to do when He returns?

3:21 The Lord is going to change, to transform, or fashion anew these bodies of our humiliation. And He is going to make them like His glorious body – a body that will no longer be subject to pain and sickness, or death, or sin. Our KJV says "fashioned like. This is the same word that is translated conformed in Rom. 8:29, and these are the only two times that the word is used in the NT. Let me remind you of what we have in Rom 8:28-30, noting especially verse 29:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Even outwardly we are going to have a body like that of our Lord. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-58:

51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortal-

ity, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

But how will He be able to do such an impossible, yet glorious, work.?

Here Paul gives us one of the greatest statements in all of Scripture concerning the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, the sovereign power, the divine power. Not only is He able to transform every believer, body, soul, and spirit, into the very likeness of Christ, but by His almighty power “he is able to subdue all things to Himself.”

We all need to take this thought with us over to chapter 4, verse 13.

Peter, James, and John saw our Lord’s glorified body on the Mount of Transfiguration. Cf. Matt. 17:2.

When Paul recorded his prayer for the Ephesians in Eph. 1, this is what he prayed:

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:19-23).

See also Col. 1:11 and 29.

See also that great passage in Isaiah 40, actually the whole chapter, but especially verses 25-31:

25 To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isa. 40:25-31).

In these days when everything is so wrong, and people are content to forget God and to do all kinds of things that are abominable in His sight, it is good for all of us to think much about God, His power, His righteousness, and His purposes. No man, no nation, no group of nations, has ever been able to stand against God. And neither will ours! Let us worship our Lord for His sovereign power.

March 20, 2000

4:1 The “therefore” at the beginning of this chapter, ties it especially with the closing verses of chapter 3.

This great joy which he manifested here is in contrast with the sorrow he felt in his heart, and the tears he had been shedding, over those who were “the enemies of the cross of Christ.” He was not thinking of how they had made life difficult for him, but he was deeply concerned for what lay ahead of them: “Whose end is destruction” (3:19). However, in speaking of the changes that would take place for believers when the Lord returns, his heart was overwhelmed with joy. And the words of this first verse show how close Paul felt to the believers in Philippi, and who dear they were to him. And he urged them in this verse to “stand fast in the Lord.”

Twice in this verse, at the beginning, and then at the end, Paul called them his “dearly beloved.” These, plus the ways in which he expressed his love for them in between the twice-repeated, “dearly beloved,” shows that he was having difficulty getting across to the Philippian believers how much he loved them. “Dearly beloved” is the translation of one Greek word, ἀγαπητός, and you can tell by the sound of it that it is related to ἀγάπη. And the unique characteristic of this kind of love is that it is a love of choice, seeing in a person that which attracts your love. It shows the tremendous change that God had made in the heart of the Apostle because there had been a time in his life when he chose to hate Christians, to do away with them and their Christ if he possibly could. But now, they were his choice. He loved them. He longed to be with them. He prayed for them, and rejoiced to hear of the progress they were making spiritually in their relationship with the Lord. And for Paul to say “dearly beloved” twice, is evidence that *he really meant what he was saying to them.*

The word translated “longed for,” is used only here in all of the NT. It means that of all that Paul longed for there in Rome, nothing on earth mattered so much as the hope that the Lord would bring them together again. It shows how unselfish Paul was. Normally you would think that he “longed for” whatever help they might be able to give him, but it was not their help that he wanted; he wanted *them!*

“My joy” meant that they at that very moment were the cause of the great joy that he had in his heart just thinking of them. Although they were separated from each other by many miles, just thinking of them brought overflowing joy to Paul’s heart.

The “crown” which Paul speaks of here is not the crown which a king wears, but the crown given to a victor in athletic competition, or the crown given to a military hero, or the crowns given to a couple on the occasion of their wedding. Paul felt that the way the Lord had blessed him in Philippi was marked by a victor’s crown. It was evidence of God’s blessing that so many were turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God! So Paul was triumphing in the victory which God had given in Philippi.

It is difficult to imagine how Paul could have expressed greater love, or greater joy, or greater thanksgiving to God, than he did in the words that he multiplied here in verse 1.

But in spite of all of the joy and blessing he felt in his heart, he gave them a loving exhortation. And it has been thought that his delight in the Philippian believers was inclined to touch their hearts in such a way that they would be moved to respond positively to what he wanted them to do.

What was it that he wanted them to do? “So stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.”

Cf. this same exhortation in Phil. 1:27. In our text “stand fast” is a present active imperative meaning that they were *to stand and to keep on standing.* They were not to waver in their fellowship with the Lord, not to falter

in their faith. But they were, as the verb could be translated, *to persevere!* They were *to stand firm!* I like what Eadie said about this verb:

To stand, or stand fast, in the Lord, is neither to wander out of Him, nor even to waver in connection with Him, but to remain immovable in fellowship with Him,—to live in Him without pause—to walk in Him without digression—to love Him without rival—and serve Him without compromise (p.235). Such living is only possible through the Lord. And this probably ties in with what Paul had said in 3:21 about what God is able to do. There is much in us that needs to be subdued, and much which we lack which needs to be added to us. And Christ is the One Who is sufficient to subdue our waywardness, and to provide us with the strength that we need every day to be faithful to the Lord.

This is a very needed word for all of us. We can so easily be turned aside from walking with the Lord by such things as unanswered prayer, or by trials that we do not understand, or by a lack of fruit in our ministry, or by the way that people treat us. But since we are easily brought to an end of our own resources, we need to trust the Lord to subdue our unbelief, and to strength our trust in Him – even when we do not understand His ways with us. And let us remember that the Lord loves us even more than the Apostle loved the Philippian Christians. So may His love for us persuade us to keep standing regardless of what our circumstances might be.

4:2 What we read in this verse may have prompted Paul's exhortation to stand fast in the Lord. There were two ladies in the church at Philippi who were having some kind of trouble with each other. Whatever the trouble might have been, the fact that he repeated the verb, "I beseech," for each of them, seems to indicate that they were equally to blame (Fausset, VI, 436) for whatever trouble they were having. Fausset thought that they were prominent in the church, and that their influence could have spread quickly through the church. It is always true that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," as Paul told the Corinthian church in 1 Cor. 5:6). A little trouble quickly multiplies, a little sin produces multiple sins.

From their names, we can be fairly sure that they were Gentiles. From Paul's exhortation, and his emphasis on this theme of likemindedness in the epistle, he was not telling them just to resolve their differences, to settle which one was right, but he was telling them to seek the mind of the Lord, and to come to an agreement as to what was the will of God in that which was causing the trouble between them. It does not seem that it was a doctrinal problem, because Paul usually would deal with such a problem when it became a threat to the fellowship of the people in the church. But Paul was exhorting them to settle their differences immediately, and to get back into fellowship with each other – and with the Lord!

4:3 It is easy to overlook the ministry of women in the early church. There are many questions that can be raised about this verse. Paul did not mention who the women were, nor did he say who his "true yokefellow" was. It seems to me that it could have been Epaphroditus, but we can't say for sure. The names of the women are not given either, but it is evident that they had been a great help to the Apostle Paul in his ministry at Philippi. Possibly Lydia was one of them, but we can only speculate. Eadie and Lightfoot thought that Paul was still talking about Euodias and Syntyche. And they may have been right. Whoever these women were, they had been a great asset to Paul in his preaching of the Gospel. The verb, "which labored with me," is the same verb that Paul used, referring again to Phil. 1:27, which is translated in that earlier verse, "striving together." It means that they vigorously cooperated with Paul, giving him their full support, in the work that he had done in Philippi. And so now Paul wanted his "true yokefellow" to "help" them. The verb "help" is sometimes rendered, *to seize*. Paul was not telling his yokefellow to lay hands on them, but the idea is that he was not to delay in getting to them to give them the help that they needed.

If the reference here in verse 3 was still to Euodias and Syntyche, it surely is sad to think that two ladies who had been greatly used by the Lord in the past, were involved in trouble with each other as Paul wrote. The

Devil is continually working within the ranks of believers to hinder the work of the Lord. They had also helped a man by the name of Clement (whom we cannot positively identify), as well as with others. Paul had no doubt about their salvation because he added at the end of the verse, "whose names are in the book of life." That means that they were believers, and that Paul was assured of it.

4:4 This verse may give us a hint of the trouble to which the Apostle Paul had been referring. These women may have been rejoicing in what they had done, each of them comparing herself in a favorable light with the other. Pride often becomes a major hindrance, standing in the way of the blessing of the Lord, or, at least, of the full blessing of the Lord.

Paul was speaking about the way some Corinthians were comparing themselves with each other, and, of course, when we compare ourselves with others we always pick someone whom we think will put us in the best light.

Read 2 Cor. 10:12:

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

We are not to rejoice in ourselves. Whatever we have done in serving the Lord, it could have been done better. And if there has been blessing, the glory does not come to us, but it belongs to the Lord because He is the One Who always gives the blessing. If He doesn't give blessing, there will be none. So it is ridiculous for us to boast about what we have done. What we need to do, and to do it always, as Paul has said, and repeated it so that we will not miss it, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."

Before in our studies I have quoted John Eadie because of the great insight the Lord has given him into the truth of this epistle, and I do so again on this verse. His words are very important for all of us to pay particular attention to them. This is what he wrote on Phil. 4:4:

The apostle wished them to come to a full appreciation of their position and their connection with Christ. Could they but judge truly their condition and prospects, and contrast them with their past state of gloom and unhappiness—could they but realize the nobleness and power of the truth they had embraced, and the riches and certainty of the hopes they were cherishing—could they estimate the saving change effected in their souls, and picture too that glorification which was to pass over their bodies—then, as they traced all blessing to Christ and to union with Him, they would rejoice in the Lord, not in themselves as recipients, but in Him as Source, not only in the gifts conferred, but in Him especially as the gracious benefactor. To rejoice in Him is to exult in Him, not as a dim abstraction, but as a living Person—so near and so loving, so generous and so powerful, that the spirit ever turns to him in admiring grateful homage, covets His presence as the sunshine, and revels in fellowship with Him. Despondency is weakness, but joy is strength. Is it rash to say, in fine, that the churches of Christ are strangers by far too much to this repeated charge of the apostle—that He is thought of more as a Being in remoteness and glory, far above and beyond the stars, than as a personal and sympathizing Savior—that salvation is regarded more as a process that a man thankfully submits to, than a continuous and happy union with Jesus—and that therefore, though Christians may run and are not weary, and may walk and are not faint, they seldom mount up with wings as eagles, and then, if they do, is not their flight brief and exhaustive? (Eadie on Philippians, pp 241, 242).

On the repetition of this exhortation, "Rejoice in the Lord," first in 3:1, and then twice in 4:4, Eadie quoted the man he called, "the earnest English expositor of this epistle" (p.242), and then tells us in a footnote on p. 244 that his name is Henry Airay, "the Reverend and Faithful Servant of Christ," "Doctor of Divinity," and unfortunately the last line about him was not printed on the page. But I would like to read a couple of pages from

Eadie's commentary where he quoted at length what Dr. Airay wrote about this statement in Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord, alway: and again I say, Rejoice."

(Read pp. 242-244a in Eadie's commentary on Philippians.)

4:5 It is important to link the following verses with the foundation that the Apostle Paul has laid in chapter 3 and the first four verses of chapter 4.

If it were the case that these two ladies were at odds with each other, each one glorying in the fact that they had worked with the Apostle Paul, but in contention about who had done the most work and the best work, and that they were inclined to rejoice in themselves instead of rejoicing in the Lord, and giving the glory to Him, then how appropriate are Paul's words here in verse 5. (Read the verse.)

What is it about you that you would like for people to recognize? And I ask myself the same question. Paul tells us here what it is that we should want people to see in us. It is "moderation." What did Paul mean?

Our Greek lexicons give as another possible translation, *gentleness*. The NKJV gives it this meaning, with *graciousness* or *forbearance* as other alternatives. The NASB translated it "your forbearing spirit." The NIV has, "Let your gentleness be evident to all."

Now when you put this with "rejoice in the Lord," we see what our attitude toward the Lord is to be, and that being the case, it must follow that we must always manifest a spirit of gentleness. The two go hand in hand. You and I can't be considered gentle unless it is our habit to rejoice in the Lord.

But let us take this word a little farther. Archbishop Trench, in his book, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, has quite a section on this word, ἐπιεικής. A gentle person in the Biblical meaning of the word is a person who backs down and away from the full exercise of his rights for the purpose of preserving the spirit of a relationship. Sometimes we can push our rights to the point that we are guilty of sin.

For example, you remember the story that the Lord told of the king who had a servant who owed him ten thousand talents. And so the king ordered the servant to be sold along with his wife and his children. The servant came to the king, fell down before him, and pled for time, saying that if the king would only be patient with him, he would repay the full amount he owed the king. The king was so moved with compassion that he forgave his servant the whole amount. That is moderation; that is gentleness. The king had the right to make his servant pay, but he chose not to press his legal rights because of his compassion. But that same servant turned around and acted in the opposite way toward his fellow servant who owed him only a hundred pence.

This is how Paul expressed it in Eph 4:32:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

This is moderation; this is gentleness.

And so God Himself is the Supreme Example of moderation, of gentleness. Cf. Ps 103:10-14:

10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

Then Archbishop Trench said this:

The ar-che-type [the original model from which all copies are but representations] and pattern of this grace is found in God. All His goings back from the strictness of His rights as against men; all His allowance of their imperfect righteousness, and giving of a value to that which, rigorously estimated, would have none; all His refusals to exact extreme penalties . . . all His keeping in mind whereof we are made, and measuring His dealings with us thereby; all of these we may contemplate as ἐπιείκεια upon His part; even as they demand in return the same, one toward another, upon ours (p. 155).

And then Trench added this: "Peter, when himself restored, must strengthen his brethren (Luke xxii. 32)" (*Ibid.*)

If Euodias and Syntyche had behaved like this toward themselves, there would have been no problem. And often that is the case with us, too.

But then Paul immediately added, "The Lord is at hand." There is a passage in the epistle of James which seems to throw light on this statement in Phil. 4:5. It is James 5:7-11:

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Many Greek scholars take our word "moderation" as also meaning patience.

One of the greatest incentives for keeping our lives in order, and for staying in fellowship with each other is the fact that the Lord may come at any moment. And the point is that we must not allow anything in our lives that we would not want to be there when the Lord comes for us.

The same is true of death. I have quoted Jim Elliot before who said, "Be sure that when the time comes for you to die, that is all that you have to do." It may be too late then to restore relationships that have been broken, or to seek the forgiveness of our own sins.

All of this gives new meaning to verses 6 and 7, doesn't it?

4:6 How different our lives would be, as well as our relationships with each other, if we were more prayerful. We can be sure that there were difficulties in the lives of Euodias and Syntyche where prayer was concerned. Either they were not praying at all, or they were not praying for the right things. They may have been asking "amiss," as James warns us in James 4:1-3:

1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

"Be careful for nothing." The Greek has this emphatic order, "For nothing be careful." Lightfoot calls this "anxious harassing care" (p. 160). These are cares, burdens, troubles, which we cannot get out of our minds. It

is not that we are to be indifferent to the problems we face in our lives, but we are not to let them get the best of us. We are not to be full of care about anything. We are not to worry, but we are to pray. But if we don't pray, then it is inevitable that we will worry and carry all of our burdens instead of giving them to the Lord.

In Peter's first epistle we have a verse which is very similar to Phil. 4:6. Most of you could quote 1 Peter 5:7 which tells us, "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." The word "careth" is the translation of the Greek verb, μέλει. And it has been translated, "It matters to Him about you." This is a truth that we need to grasp by faith because it is true.

We also have that wonderful verse in Psalm 55:22 which encourages us to do what these two verses teach us which I have just mentioned. The verse in Psalms say,

Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved (Psa. 55:22).

Many years ago I learned a short verse which speaks of an imaginary conversation between a Robin and a Sparrow concerning these truths which we are considering. The verse goes like this; perhaps some of you know it:

Said the Robin to the Sparrow, "I should really like to know
Why these anxious human beings rush about and worry so."
Said the Sparrow to the Robin, "I think that it must be
That they have no heavenly Father such as cares for you and me."

Again quoting Eadie:

The solicitude guarded against is that state of mind in which one frets himself to know more than he is able, or reach something too far beyond him, or is anxious to make provision for contingencies, to guard against suspected evils, and nerve himself against apprehended failures and disasters. The spirit is thrown into a fever by such troubles, so that joy in the Lord is abridged, and this forbearance [gentleness] would be seriously endangered. Not that the apostle counsels utter indifferences, but indifference would preclude prayer; but his meaning is, that no one of them should tease and torment himself about anything, when he may get what he wants by prayer. There is nothing any one would be the better of having, which he may not hopefully ask from God. Why then should he be anxious? (p. 247).

We are not to worry about anything, but we are to be prayerful about everything. "By prayer" speaks of the fact that we bring our requests to God. We don't keep them to ourselves, nor just repeat them to others. But we come with our burdens to God. "Supplication" describes how we come to God, not in a careless or casual way, but fervently and earnestly, entreating God for particular needs as we seek special blessings. Both of these words are used together in Eph. 6:18; 1 Tim. 2:1; 5:5.

When Paul said that we are to "let our requests be made known unto God," he did not mean that we would be telling God things that He did not know beforehand. Our Lord said that "your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him" (Matt. 6:8). But we come to Him with our requests just like we would if He did not know. We want Him to hear us because we know that if He hears us, we have the petitions that we have desired from Him. Cf. 1 John 5:14-15.

And we pray "with thanksgiving." We give thanks to God that we can bring each request to Him. It is a God-given privilege that we can come to Him in prayer. We can thank Him for the promises He has given that our prayers will not be in vain, but that we can expect to receive answers from God. We can thank Him that He has the power to give us whatever we ask, if it is His will. And we can be thankful whenever He withholds the

blessing we seek, either just for a time, or permanently, because He knows if He should answer, how He should answer, and when He should answer – all are subjects for thanksgiving.

4:7 And now we come to the promise.

“And the peace of God.” In verse 9 we have “the God of peace.” Eadie says that peace here amounts to happiness, and he surely is right! Paul was speaking of those things which would normally disturb us, and leave us without any peace. But when we have God’s peace, Eadie said about those disturbances,

Come what will, it cannot injure—come when it likes, it is welcome—and come as it may, it is a blessing in disguise (p. 249).

God never gives us His peace without giving us Himself.

Be sure to notice that this verse says nothing about the removal of that which was inclined to make us worry and be anxious. The things that make us worry can still be there, but they don’t worry us because we have God and His peace keeping, guarding, our hearts and minds against those fears and thoughts that so often disturb us. And yet, as always, God’s blessings come to us “through Christ Jesus.” It is always the plan and purpose of God that we should always be looking to Christ, and expecting that the blessings we seek will come to us from Him, and for His glory.

Lightfoot says that the verb, “shall keep,” “is a warrior’s duty; ‘God’s peace shall stand sentry, shall keep guard over your hearts” (p. 161).

Calvin gives us a good statement to consider before we leave this verse. Here is what he said:

It is on good ground that he [Paul] calls it the *peace of God*, inasmuch as it does not depend on the present aspect of things, and does not bend itself to the various shiftings of the world, but is founded on the firm and immutable Word of God. It is on good grounds, also that he speaks of it as surpassing all understanding or perception, for nothing is more foreign to the human mind, than in the depth of despair to exercise, nevertheless, a feeling of hope, in the depth of poverty to see opulence, and in the depth of weakness to keep from giving way, and in fine, to promise ourselves that nothing will be wanting [lacking] to us when we are left destitute of all things; and all this in the grace of God alone, which is not itself known otherwise than through the Word, and the inward earnest of the Spirit (XXI, 120).

March 27, 2000

We need to relate all of the above to the situation regarding Euodias and Syntyche. The issue that divided them probably was of great importance, but not so great that God was not sufficient for it. And so instead of being filled with the anxiety which interrupted their fellowship with each other, they should have “let their requests be made known unto God,” then peace between them could have been restored as they waited upon the Lord to see how He would meet their needs.

4:8 Notice that the last statement of this verse is, “think on these things.” And then verse 9, the last of this section begins, “Those things which ye have both learned, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”

Paul evidently was using the difficulty between Euodias and Syntyche to teach the whole congregation. The way Paul has referred to it, and sought to resolve it, shows that it must have been well known among the believers in the church at Philippi. And so Paul was calling upon all of the believers to consider carefully these ideals of Christian character and behavior, to think much about them, and to see to it, by God’s grace, that as

Paul sought to manifest them in his life, so they should do the same. Various attempts have been made to categorize these words, but Paul probably was not so much concerned about various categories as he was to single out each of these moral qualities for their consideration and application.

Paul evidently felt that pointing out these words for their consideration, he had come to the end of what he had wanted to say to them, and so he said, "Finally, my brethren," a term which he used to include all of the believers regardless of their sex or age. Young people, and even children, cannot begin to soon to focus upon these characteristics which will produce true spiritual maturity in their lives.

We live in a day where people, even the Lord's people, take little or no time to think, to meditate on those higher qualities of character and life which are so rare today. We are living in an increasingly God-less society. Profanity is everywhere, and so much conversation is on the lowest level of character and behavior. So we need to guard ourselves against these wicked influences. We need times when we can think about God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. We need to meditate on the Word of God. We need to think about ourselves and how we can grow in the Lord. And we must have time to be quiet before the Lord in prayer.

There are several passages which speak of meditation. In Psalm 1 we are told where true happiness is to be found. Let me take the time to read that Psalm for you, and although you could quote it right along as I read it, think carefully about what it says:

- 1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
- 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.
- 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.
- 4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.
- 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
- 6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

When Joshua became the leader of the people of Israel following the death of Moses, the Lord gave him some wonderful counsel which every Christian leader, every Christian parent, and every Christian, young and old should take to heart. The words are found in Joshua 1:8:

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

And when Paul was writing to his younger son in the faith, he wrote about the importance of meditation:

- 12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.
- 13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.
- 14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.
- 15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.
- 16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee (1 Tim. 4:12-16).

This is what Paul was exhorting the believers in Philippi to do when he said, "Think on these things." It is very true that we don't make much progress in the spiritual life until we learn to think, and then continue to do it.

Now let us look at what Paul said here in Phil. 4:8.

“Whatsoever things are true” – The world like to make everything relative. Vice President Gore says that our Constitution is a “living” document, and he means by that, that it changes with the times. Even many Christians have bought into this idea. The announcers on KPDQ are always describing their station as “today’s Christian radio,” and that is why you hear so many non-Christian and weird things on that station. They are following the trends of the day. Churches are doing this too. What Paul was speaking about here is *absolute truth*. The truth, real truth, never changes. The moral standards established by God’s Word do not change. They do not change from one generation to another, nor do they change from one nation to another. They are the same for children, young people, and adults. And you and I need to get these truths firmly established in our minds, and then never depart from them. Fill your mind and your heart with the truth. And remember that Jesus Christ is the truth. Follow Him and seek by the power of the Holy Spirit to pattern your life by His, and by His Word.

“Whatsoever things are honest” – The word can be translated *honorable*. The three other times that this word is used in the NT, it is translated “grave.” But we probably understand *honorable* better. In 1 Tim. 3:8 deacons are to be honorable. In 1 Tim. 3:11 their wives are to be honorable. And in Titus 2:2 older men are to be honorable. That is, they are to be worthy of respect. We should be able to look up to them as patterns of what Christians should be. The Word gives us all of the details of what a godly person should be, and we should not only look for the people we can gladly follow, but we should seek by God’s grace to be honorable ourselves.

“Whatsoever things are just” – This means *righteous*. To be righteous is to measure up to the standard. The standard for us as Christians is the Word of God. No one measures up to that standard perfectly, but is how we are to be measured. This emphasizes again that for us right is right, and wrong is wrong, and a just person does not compromise with that. Things are legal today in our country which are abominable before God. So what is legal may or may not be right for us as Christians. We have no greater authority than the Bible, and where social standards and Scripture are in conflict, for us the Scriptures always win out with us.

“Whatsoever things are pure” – This applies to what we do, what we say, what we think, where we go, and so it applies to all that we are. We need to be morally and spiritually clean. The Apostle John used this word when, in connection with the coming of the Lord, he said, “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). This eliminates and condemns all hypocrisy. It means that we must be chaste, free from immorality in any of its many forms. We need to be careful about what we look at, about the books that we read, and we need to be extremely careful about what comes out of Hollywood and through television in these days. It is like looking for something good to eat in a garbage can. Read books that will help you to keep your thoughts clean, and the one book that surpasses all others in this is the Bible.

“Whatsoever things are lovely” – This is the only time this word is used in the NT. It means *acceptable*, not what is acceptable to the world, but what is acceptable to God. And it is that which has the approval of godly men and women. Paul evidently was thinking here about that which would commend the Christian life to others. In Romans 14:18 Paul used another word for acceptable, but it has the same idea, when we seek not to be a stumblingblock to others, but when we seek to live peaceably with others and seek by our lives to build others up in their faith.

“Whatsoever things are of good report” – That is, *well spoken of*. It is that which is praised or esteemed among men. It can mean *winsome*. We as Christians are to live in such a way that the Holy Spirit can use us to draw others to Christ, or, with believers, to make the Christian life a life that they want to live.

In Lange's commentary on Philippians, we read of those two words, "whatsoever are," that:

The $\delta\sigma\alpha$ indicates that all things, without exception, which the category embraces, are meant; while $\varepsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\nu$ implies their actual existence in contrast with the arbitrary supposition of men (Vol. 11, p. 70).

Then Paul concluded this list by saying, "If there be any virtue," $\acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\tau\eta$, the common word among the heathen for moral excellence, which only appears four times in the NT, and which the apostles tried to avoid using, was put here to indicate that wherever these words might be found, or evidence of their influence even in heathen cultures, they were to become subjects for the careful meditation of believers.

Even though all people have been depraved and degraded by sin, yet even among those who do not know the Lord, there are still traces present even in the unregenerate, that man was created in the image and likeness of God. So that when we see evidences of these, they are to become a reminder to believers to "think on these things."

Eadie expressed the idea in his commentary that these six ideal traits were mentioned because there was a special need for them in Philippi among the believers, and still thinking of Euodias and Syntyche.

The fact that Paul did not mean for this to be an exhaustive list, but only typical of other virtues that he could have mentioned, he would include them all, and say, "Think on these things."

Robert Hall, quoted by Lange, said,

If we would be complete in our Christian profession, we must attend to *all* the virtues of it . . . The beauty of the Christian character is not formed so much by the gigantic size of one virtue, as from the harmony and consistency of all. Never, then, let it appear which virtue has been most approved by you, but cultivate *every* virtue (Vol. 11, p. 71).

And then we come to verse 9.

4:9 As I have studied all of these terms that Paul has mentioned in verse 8, I have found that there is some difficulty in adequately expressing what each one is. That is one big reason why living examples of these characteristics are so important. There is no better definition of these moral standards than a life in which they can be seen. Paul did not make the statement that we have in this verse with pride, but with a humble desire that he might be a help to any and all of the kind of people we ought to be, and the nature of the life that we need to live.

His statement means that verse 8 is by way of a reminder of what he had spent much more time previously seeking to get them to understand and obey. "Learned" means that he had taught them. "Received" means that they had agreed with him, and were seeking to become what Paul taught them they should be. "Heard" means that they had heard these things from his own lips as they came from his heart. And "seen" means that he had been a living example of the truth that he taught. "In me" means that they knew that the life he lived was genuine, and that it was more than just an outward show, but it was the performance of his life.

Eadie does his usual good job of summarizing what the Apostle Paul had done:

The apostle first enumerates the things possessed of certain specified qualities, and bids his readers think on them . . . But then he connects the previous general statement with his personal instructions . . . nay, embodies it in his own character, and therefore he boldly bids them reproduce his lessons and example in their own experience and life (p. 259).

Another writer has said,

He who rightfully claims salvation in word, has resting upon him still more the duty of bearing witness to it in his life (quoted in Lange, Vol. 11, p. 70).

And what is the Apostle Paul's promise, which in this instance is the promise of God: "And the God of peace shall be with you."

In 4:7 Paul spoke about "the peace of God, which passeth understanding." Here he was speaking of "the God of peace." He shall be "with you." This means not only the promise of His presence, and the certainty of His favor, but the guarantee of His blessing. What a testimony from this man of God who, as he wrote, was a prisoner of Rome. Paul was a living illustration of the truth of Phil. 4:6 and 7.

Concl: Let go back over these last verses of this epistle and make sure that we understand them, and then that we obey them. It ought to be encouraging and strengthening to us to know that these words came not from a man who was living in the best of circumstances, but from a man who was trusting God in very difficult circumstances who did not know from one day until the next what the outcome would be. It could have been freedom, or it could have been death. Whatever it might be, here was a man with the peace of God in his soul and the grace of God in his heart.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul
Tuesday Bible Class – April 3, 2000
Philippians 4:10-20

Intro: The message of the epistle has been concluded at this point, but the Apostle still had a matter that he needed to take care of, a matter which was one main reason that he was prompted to write to the church at Philippi at that time. He wanted to thank them for the gift which they had sent to him.

The Apostle Paul was an example to all of the people of God everywhere, and included in this example was his attitude toward money. How sad it is when the church gives the impression that one of the main things that the church is interested in, is money! On the other hand, how refreshing it is to read what the Apostle Paul said to the church at Corinth. I am thinking of his words found 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 yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

There are many passages in the Bible, OT and NT, which speak of money. In the OT under the Law, the people of God were required to give a tithe. With the birth of the church, and the establishment of the church, no such requirements were given by the apostles. The main teaching on giving in the NT is given in 2 Cor. 8 and 9, and it would seem that the main point that the Apostle Paul gave in those chapters is stated in 2 Cor. 9:7. And this is what Paul said:

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).

There is nothing in the NT to indicate that people were required to give. It was certainly expected that they would give, not because they had to, but because they wanted to give. And they gave because they loved the Lord, and were grateful to the Lord for His blessings upon them, especially the gift of salvation.

Paul was very, very careful in his ministry to serve the Lord in such a way that people could not say that he was in it for the money. He was also very careful to keep everything open and above board where money was concerned. For example, when a gift was sent by any church to the people of God in any other place, Paul was careful to see that the gift was sent by men who were to be trusted. And when he was given a gift for some church, he always wanted another reliable brother to go with him so that no one would be able to say that he had used the money, any part of it for his own advantage. We see this in a passage in 2 Corinthians 8. Listen to what Paul wrote:

16 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.

18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;

19 And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:

20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men (2 Cor. 8:16-21).

It is not exaggeration to say that Paul was scrupulously careful to make sure that his life was above reproach where money is concerned. And this passage that we are now considering is a good example of how Paul felt about money. Many a ministry has been ruined because men have failed the Lord on this very point.

Now let us turn to the text of this message of gratitude that Paul wrote to the Philippian church for the gift that they had sent to him.

4:10 Notice that Paul's great joy was not in the gift itself that he had received, but "in the Lord" Who had prompted the Philippians to give. And his joy was exuberant, ecstatic! It was a joy which lessened the concern that he had about his imprisonment, whatever the outcome might be. But we need to go down to verse 17 to see why he was so joyful. It was not that his needs were being met through the gift that he received, although that just have gladdened his heart, but what gave him the greatest joy in receiving the gift was the thought of the blessing from God that it was going to bring to the Philippian church because they had given. He knew that although they had sent their gift to him, yet in sending it they were actually giving to the Lord. Paul knew what delight it brought to the heart of the Lord for His people to giving that the needs of His servants might be met. Paul spoke of their giving like the blossoming and fruit-bearing of a tree. It was like a tree that had been dormant for a time, but suddenly it showed real signs of life.

But Paul was quick to say that He knew that it was not that their care of him had been lacking, but that they had simply not had the opportunity to send a gift to him. It may have been the distance between them, and the fact that until Epaphroditus came, they had no way of sending the gift to him. They must have had some means of communicating with each other, like the mail, but with all of the corruption in the Empire, money sent to Paul in that way would never have received him.

Such a problem obviously meant hardship for those who were serving the Lord, but the Apostle Paul, instead of grieving about it, had realized in that very problem an opportunity to learn from the Lord how to deal with it, as he went on to say in verse 11.

4:11 Paul wanted them to know that he was not complaining. "Not that I speak in respect of want." "Want" in the KJV means *what he lacked*. Here it actually meant *poverty*. Paul had probably never experienced poverty until after he was saved. And so he had to learn how to handle it. Fausset pointed out that the "I" is emphatic. Here he was an apostle, devoting his life to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet there were times when he simply did not have enough to live on. He was not like a lot of people today who don't have enough because they have run into debt. It was just that he had those special times of need during which the Lord was teaching him – teaching him CONTENTMENT!

Lightfoot says that *contentment* is "independence of external circumstances." Times of need are to teach us to turn to the Lord, to trust Him, and to learn that He really does take care of us. See Heb.13:5-6:

5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. So it is not that the Lord leaves us to starve to death, but it puts us in a new place of dependence upon Him. And we are to look to Him to see how he will meet the need we are facing. Sometimes Paul worked as a tent maker, and his needs were met in that way. At other times his needs were met like they were met in this instance.

Let me encourage you to read the stories of two men in the past, both Englishmen who learned to trust the Lord in a special way both for themselves, for their co-workers, and the needs of the work they were involved in. These men knew each other, and they both contributed from time to time to each other's work. One of these men was J. Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission. The other was George Mueller, the man who established an orphanage where he took care of hundreds of needy children. There is another lady who did the same. Her name was Amy Carmichael, a Scotch lady, who went to India as a missionary. Her work was delivering little girls in India from temple prostitution. She never went back to Scotland, but lived and died in India, and saw hundreds of Indian girls rescued from a life of sin. I am sure that there have been many others who trusted the Lord like these people did, never appealing to people for funds, but who really trusted

the Lord to meet their needs. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer founded Dallas Seminary on the same basis. Today churches and Christian organizations do many things to get people to give, but I wonder if we are not missing blessings that people have seen in the past who really looked to the Lord for the supply of their needs. Paul told Timothy that “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6) after referring to some who believed that “gain was godliness.” And it is in that same passage that Paul wrote to Timothy,

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:10).

In the next verse Paul went on to explain what he meant when he said, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

4:12 He knew how to be “abased.” That was one state. It means *to be brought low, to be humbled*.

Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 4:7-11 about some of the humbling experiences he had had, and why. Listen to what he wrote:

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

11 For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

He had more to say in chapter 6 of 2 Corinthians, verses 1 through 10:

1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

10 As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things

And so it would seem that what Paul was writing about did not have to do just with a lack of money, but that was usually involved in some way.

Let me quote again from our dear friend John Eadie whom the Lord gifted to express the meaning of Paul's words in a most significant way. Here is what he said about Paul's abasement:

The contentment which the apostle universally and uniformly possessed, sprang not from indifference, apathy, or desperation. It was sullen submission to his fate, not the death of hope within him. He felt what want was, and keenly felt it, and therefore he gladly accepted relief, and rejoiced in all such manifestations of Christian sympathy. Nor was he self-sufficient in the ordinary or the common sense

of the term. It was no egotistic delusion that upheld him, nor did he ever invoke the storm to show that he could brave it. But his mind calmly bowed to the will of God in every condition in which he was placed. For that wondrous equanimity [evenness of mind, calm temper] and cheerfulness far excelled the stolid and stubborn endurance ascribed to heathen stoicism, gave him mastery over circumstances. He felt the evil, but surmounted it—a purer triumph than with a petrified heart to be unconscious of it (p. 266).

And so he also knew “how to abound.” He knew what it meant to have more than enough, to have enough and some to spare.

Solomon realized that there were dangers facing the child of God in both circumstances, and that is why he wrote the following words:

- 7 Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die:
- 8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:
- 9 Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain (Prov. 30:7-9).

And so it is just as necessary to learn to abound, as it is to suffer need. When we are abounding it is so easy for us to forget that our blessings come from the Lord. Again referring to Solomon, listen to what he wrote about riches:

- 4 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.
- 5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven (Prov. 23:4-5).

Paul also had a good word for Timothy, which Timothy was to pass on to those who were rich, about the dangers that are to be avoided when we “abound.” Here is what Paul told Timothy:

- 17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;
- 18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;
- 19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

When David became the King of Israel, he became a very wealthy man. But his wise counsel in Psa. 62:10 was, “If riches increase, set not your heart on them.”

There are many preachers today who are proclaiming a prosperity theology, which is a false theology of deception. And millions of Americans have no time for God, and no place for God in their hearts or in their lives, because they are satisfied because they are experiencing prosperity. A man can only say that he knows how to abound, if he, like Paul, does not let money come between him and the Lord, but who takes his prosperity as a gift from God with the responsibility to honor the Lord with every penny that he has.

In the latter part of verse 12 Paul indicated that at all times and in all of the circumstances of his life, he had been faced with these two alternatives, and the need to learn each in a more meaningful way each time he faced either the one or the other. “I am instructed” means that he was always conscious that God was teaching him some needed lessons regardless of what his circumstances might be. And so Paul was a man like David, who continually set the Lord before him.

And now we come to that wonderful thirteenth verse of Phil. 4. And, as is always the case, it means more to see it in its context.

4:13 The Name “Christ” does not appear in the better MSS, although it does appear in others. But there is little doubt but that Paul was referring to our Lord Jesus Christ. “The Lord” is mentioned in verse 10. And then Paul spoke of learning in verse 11 and of being instructed in verse 12. And who is it who teaches us if it not the Lord Jesus? He lives in us. He is our life. And it is He Who, as Lightfoot said, Who *infuses us with power!* He enables us to face whatever we need to face. In the context of this verse we must say that it is Christ Who is with us when we are abased, and it is Christ Who enables us to handle the abounding when it comes.

This verb, “strengtheneth,” meaning *enables, increases our strength, endues with strength, makes us strong*, is used in the following verses:

1) Acts 9:22:

But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

2) Rom. 4:20-21, speaking of Abraham:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

3) Eph. 6:10:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

4) 1 Tim. 1:12-13:

12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

5) 2 Tim. 2:1:

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

6) 2 Tim. 4:14-18:

14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:

15 Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

17 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

And so as Paul reviewed for the Philippians his times of abasement, and his times of abounding, he gave the Lord all of the credit and glory that throughout his life, and even in his present circumstances, he was strong and peaceful, not in his own strength, but by the enabling power of the Lord Who was proving again that He was sufficient for Paul in his present need.

Again I will quote John Eadie who said,

The apostle boasts not only of a high courage in reference to such triumphs as he had achieved, and others of a similar class or nature, but he claims a moral omnipotence, and allows no limit to its sweep and energy.

Eadie was referring here to Paul’s words, “I can do all things through Him Who strengthens me.” Then he continued:

His allusion is probably, however, to a certain sphere of operation, such as that present in outline in the

previous verses. Where unassisted humanity should sink and be vanquished, he should prove his wondrous superiority. Privation, suffering, and martyrdom could not subdue him, and what might seem impracticable should be surmounted by him in *his borrowed might* (italics mine). He could attempt all which duty required, and he could succeed in all; for to him the epithet [as an appropriate description] *impossible* (italics mine) had no existence. The verse is virtually climactic. After saying that he had learned contentment under every condition, and telling that he had known so many varieties and extremes of condition—it being implied that he was uninfluenced by any of them—he adds, in earnest and final summation—Not these alone, but all things I can do in Him strengthening me. It is also to be borne in mind that this ability came not from his commission as an apostle, but from his faith as a saint. The endowment was not of miracle, but of grace (p. 271).

Even concerning Paul's thorn in the flesh, we see a wonderful illustration his declaration in Phil. 4:13. Think of his words in 2 Corinthians in connection with the verse we are considering now.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.
8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.
9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

This ought to be an encouragement to all of us. Paul had no corner on the grace of God, no exclusive right to the power of God. He had been a learner. He had paid special attention to what the Lord was teaching him. And it was not that Paul was endued with special power in himself so that he could endure where others would have suffered total defeat. But what Paul was telling us here was that he had found through his troubles, and even in times of prosperity, that the Lord had enabled him to rise above the obstacles and through them to demonstrate the sufficiency of an all-powerful Lord.

Let me repeat again at this point what Paul had said in verse 9 before he started this tremendously important "thank you note." He said,

Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you (Phil. 4:9).

Paul, by the grace of God, had been enabled to turn what appeared to be a humiliating defeat into another glorious triumph to the glory of God. And this is why His epistle to the Philippians is such a joyful treatise. Paul was trusting the Lord, and the Lord was enabling him to be peaceful, and joyful, and victorious.

Adam Clarke wrote on this verse:

It was not a habit which [Paul] had acquired by frequent exercise, it was a disposition which he had by grace; and he was enabled to do all by the power of an indwelling Christ (Vol. VI, p. 507).

April 10, 2000

In verses 11 through 13 Paul has touched upon some of the most profound truths of the Christian life. He was not glorying in himself as though he were of a different nature, and considerably above his fellow believers. But what he was saying, he had learned. He had been instructed by none other than the Lord Himself the contentment with which he had been so blessed. There was a great deal of learning, many trials, and occasional disappointments, which the Lord had used in his life to bring him to that level of spiritual living. And even with all that the Lord had taught him, you will remember that he said in chapter 3 that he still did not believe

that he had arrived at the place of perfection for which the Lord had saved him. Even in his confinement in Rome, he was still learning. Every new trial brought him again into the Lord's classroom for advanced studies in the life of faith.

There is an excellent little book published by the Banner of Truth called "*Rejoice . . . Always!*" It was written by a British pastor by the name of John Gwyn-Thomas. And the whole paper back of one hundred and fifty-nine pages, is an exposition of Philippians 4. It was through the work of his wife, Nancy, that these messages were made available from the notes her husband had used in preaching. I wish that she would do the same for the first three chapters of Philippians because what he gave on the fourth chapter, is really wonderful! But I doubt if the work on the other three will be done. I would encourage you to get the book, and read it – "*Rejoice . . . Always!*" by John Gwyn-Thomas.

Mr. Gwyn-Thomas raised the question in his comments on this verse, Phil. 4:13, "Why do we fail?" That is, what is it that keeps us from being able to say what the Apostle Paul said. "I can do all things through Christ which," or Who, "strengtheneth me"? In answering that question he made four suggestions.

His first suggestion was that today there is a lot of misunderstanding about the Christian life. Often preachers are guilty of producing this misunderstanding. They picture the Christian life as an almost perfect existence. Young Christians are led to believe that things will be a lot easier for them since they have come to the knowledge of Christ, that now everything will be wonderful! Growth will almost be automatic. They have stepped into a new world. But then Mr. Gwyn-Thomas said this:

But there is nothing automatic in spiritual things; God never sees us as a computer or a machine in which, the moment you press a button, certain processes must follow (p. 110).

It is the idea that all you have to do is to pray, and immediately problems will vanish, and the world will become quiet and orderly again. When Christians wake up to the realization that this is not the way God works, it is often very, very discouraging to them. It is wonderful to know the Lord, and we have blessings as Christians that people do not have who are without Christ. But the Christian life is not easy. I remember a student at Multnomah who told me that she never really had any troubles *until she became a Christian*.

A second suggestion that Mr. Gwyn-Thomas made was that we can get along with a little prayer, a little Bible reading, and a little Bible study, occasional church-going, maybe attend prayer meetings if nothing else which they want to do conflicts with it. We see this everywhere today. It is a solemn fact that most people who go to church only go once in the week. And so thousands of churches have discontinued their Sunday evening services, and Wednesday night Bible studies and prayer meetings, just because people aren't interested enough to attend. Or they feel that they have met their responsibility to the Lord by going to church on Sunday morning.

Another thing that has happened in many churches is the practice of having church on Friday night, or some time on Saturday, so that people can have more of the weekend to do what they want to do. Why was it that the early Christians met especially on the Lord's Day. It was to commemorate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ! I can't help but think that the people who can go to church on Friday or Saturday so they can go skiing on Sunday, are somehow declaring that they don't put a lot of emphasis on the resurrection of Christ. What would some of our forefathers think who often stood outside for hours in bitterly cold weather, after walking miles to get there, just because they wanted to be with the people of God, and to hear the Word of God taught? Gwyn-Smith quoted Bonhoeffer who called such a lifestyle, "cheap grace." And by any stretch of the imagination could we call present-day church life and the lives of professing Christians, loving the Lord with *all* of our hearts, and *all* of our souls, and *all* of our strength, and *all* of our minds? It probably would be an exaggeration to call most present-day Christians even half-hearted about their relationship with the Lord.

One time when Lucille and I were in southern California we decided to attend church on a Sunday night where several thousand attended on Sunday morning. When I called to find out the time of the Sunday evening service, and I asked who was speaking, I was told that no one was speaking, that they were fortunate if only three hundred came at night, so what they did was show a movie instead of having a preaching service.

But let me go on to Mr. Gwyn-Thomas' third suggestion.

For this he said that there is a tendency for Christians today to put up a front to try to indicate that everything is OK in our lives, when it isn't. We are inclined to feel that the Christian life is one long vacation where we are enjoying every day as it comes. And the reason people do this is because they think that any other impression is dishonoring to the Lord. But the point is that we don't face our problems, and deal with them. This does not mean that we tell everybody every burden, or every difficulty that we face, or confess every failure. But it does mean that in the midst of our trials and troubles we are learning from the Lord how to find joy and peace and contentment even though things are not going the way we would like for them to go in our lives.

I think that the Apostle Paul could have said that he didn't really have any troubles until he became a Christian. He was in big trouble as he wrote this epistle to the Philippians. But you wouldn't realize it if it were not for his occasional references to his "bonds," meaning, *his chains!* The Lord never promised us that we would have an easy time if we became His people, but He did promise that He would never leave us nor forsake us, and that He would work all things together for good to those Who love Him, to those who were called according to His purpose.

The last suggestion that Mr. Gwyn-Thomas made was concerning the conflict that we often experience because of the difference, sometimes the conflict, between our wills and His will. If we were all perfectly honest, we would have to confess that this has been a major problem with us. Let me remind you that this was a problem with our Lord Jesus Christ – a problem that caused Him to sweat drops of blood through the pores of His skin. Do you remember what He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane? And He took three of His apostles with Him because He felt the need to have them pray with Him and for Him. But they didn't realize the terrible struggle that He was going through.

I was often reminded of the Lord by what Dr. Mitchell did with me when we were working together at Central Bible Church. His study and mine adjoined each other, separated by a very short hallway, and a wash room that was between our studies. And more than once he would come into my room, or he was say to me when I was in his room, "Dwight, I need your prayers. Come, and let us pray together." Most people knew nothing of the struggles that he was going through. Probably a lot of people thought that life was a bowl of cherries to him, but I can tell you that he had his struggles of soul, just like you and I do.

There is a wonderful hymn that is not in our Hymnal, and I wish it were. It deals with this very truth that we are faced with here at the end of this wonderful epistle. One of the tragedies of the Lord's work today is that we are letting entertainment crazy people draw us away from the great hymns of the Church. And it does not bode well for the coming generation. So many times in my own trials a verse from a hymn has been the next best thing to a verse of Scripture, never quite as good, but a close second. List to the words of this hymn which was written by a man, George Croly, who was born in 1780, and died in 1860. This is what he wrote:

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart; Wean it from earth, through all its pulses move,
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art, And make me love Thee as I ought to love.

I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies, No sudden rending of the veil of clay,

No angel visitant, no opening skies; But take the dimness of my soul away.

Hast Thou not bid us love Thee, God and King? All, all Thine own,
soul, heart and strength and mind.

I see Thy cross – there teach my heart to cling; O let me seek Thee, and O let me find.

Teach me to know that Thou art always nigh; Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh; Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.

Teach me to love Thee as Thine angels love, One holy passion filling all my frame;
The filling of the heaven-descended Dove, My heart the altar, and Thy love the flame.

We can't afford to allow conflicts to remain between our wills and the will of God. Often there is no difference between us, but the Lord withholds His blessing until we are prepared to say from our hearts, not just with our lips, "Lord, Thy will be done." I am sure that Paul would never have chosen to spend those days under arrest by the Roman government, but how happy he was in his soul, and how peaceful in his heart, because he had accepted his then-present circumstances as the will of God for him for those days. And it had brought him to the place in his own life, as we learned in chapter 3, where the greatest longing in his heart, was to know the Lord in a closer fellowship than he had ever known Him before.

I wish I could tell you more about what Paul had in his heart, the result of countless times of suffering and changes, but only the Lord and Paul knew what was behind those words, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." And then to be able to follow those gracious words with the word of verse 13: "I can do all things through Christ, [Who] strengtheneth me." Such a life, such peace, such victory, is still possible even with conditions the way they are today. Only the Lord can give us the strength to live peaceably when it seems that so many things are going wrong today, not only in the world, but also in the Church. The Lord knows what He is doing with our country. And He knows what He is doing with each one of us. So let us get in step with Him, and enjoy His peace in these troubled times.

But we need to go on to verse 14.

4:14 Paul had digressed in verses 11, 12, and 13, after rejoicing in the gift they had sent in verse 10. But now he comes back to that gift. He did not want them to think that he did not appreciate what they had done, nor did he want them to think that their gift was not needed – because it was! And so he said that what they had done, was "well done." It had moved him once again from being abased, to abounding.

The word "communicate" has reference to their giving, but lit. it means, *to have fellowship with him in his ministry*. It meant *to participate with him in what he was doing*. By their giving, as well as by their prayers, they had become partners with him in the ministry the Lord was giving him in Rome. It was a most gracious, a most godly way, to speak of their giving to him. But instead of using the word "ministry," he spoke of his "affliction." It was his trouble, his tribulation, the pressure he was under. And their gift had been such an encouragement to him that it had lightened his load, eased his burden.

So you have Paul showing that he was experiencing a wide range of emotions there in Rome. On the one hand he was peaceful and joyful, but on the other hand he was under pressure, under a great burden, in personal need himself, and probably because of all of the spiritual needs he was discovering in his own heart, as well as in the lives of those who were around him. Paul took their gift as an evidence of the blessing of God upon him in the circumstances he faced at that particular time. And he was very, very grateful

4:15 But as he went on to say in the following verse, such giving had been characteristic of the Philippian church since the Gospel first came to them – and they had been unique in their support of the Apostle Paul. “No church” had done what they had done, “concerning giving and receiving.” They gave, and he had received. Philippi, of course, was in Macedonia.

April 11, 2000

This was probably a reference in 2 Cor. 11:7-9 to the gift of money he had received from Macedonia while he had been ministering in Corinth.

7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.

9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself (2 Cor. 11:7-9).

4:16 The same thing had been true when he had been in Thessalonica, establishing the work there. It was the Philippian church which had supported him, not just once, but “once and again,” *i.e.*, many times.

However, even what the Philippian believers had sent, was not enough because we read in 1 Thess. 2: 9 that he had spent time working for his own support. This is what he said:

8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe (1 Thess. 2:8-10).

And there is a similar passage in 2 Thessalonians:

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat (2 Thess. 3:7-10).

And so he had refused to accept support from the Thessalonians while he was there, but he had received support from the church at Philippi. However, their support had not been solicited. They had been moved by the Lord to voluntarily give to the Apostle Paul so that he would be free to give his time to the preaching of the Gospel.

In Paul's letter to the church at Corinth we have his teaching regarding how the churches were to support the ministry of the Word. A part of this is in 1 Cor. 9:1-19. (Read.)

In 2 Cor. 8 and 9 we have most of his teaching regarding *giving in the church*. But, as we can see in these references that I have given you, Paul was very, very careful not to exercise this plan of God because he did not want to bring reproach on the preaching of the Gospel. He did not want people to be able to say that he was in the ministry for financial gain.

One very sad thing that is going on in many Bible schools and seminaries today, is that young preachers are

being taught to tell churches what they require financially before they will come to them as pastor. This often includes not only the salary that they expect, but medical and dental insurance, and even retirement. Churches need to be taught about giving, but I am sure that those of us who are in the ministry can and are grieving the Lord because we don't trust Him to lead His people to give as He leads them to give. Pastors and churches today are doing many things that are contrary to Scripture, and one of the main sins has to do with money. You all have surely heard about *prosperity theology*. Paul did everything that he could to keep from bringing reproach upon the Gospel, *and we know from what our Lord said about the Pharisees and money, that this was a real departure for Paul from what he very likely had done as a Pharisee. As a Christian, he not only preached a Gospel of grace, but he lived by the grace of God.*

On the practice of the Pharisees, cf. Matt. 23:14:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Verse 17 is one of the most amazing verses that Paul ever wrote, and it shows what great changes had taken place in his heart as a Christian.

4:17 (Read.) Notice: "Not because I desire a gift." It often helps us to understand the meaning of a word if we can see how it is used elsewhere in Scripture. The verb "desire" is a very strong word in Greek. It can mean *to search for*, *to crave*, or even *to demand*. It is the word which our Lord used in the Sermon on the Mount when He was instructing His disciples not to worry anxiously about what they were going to eat, what they were going to drink, or what they were going to wear. And He gave as His illustration, the Gentiles. And this is how the Lord used this verb "desire" – "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek (Matt. 6:32a).

Just think how true this is of people even today. It was apparent that what we eat and what we drink and what we wear was more important to many of the people in our Senate than to deal honestly with the wrongdoing of our President. They didn't want to do anything that would disturb the prosperity that we have been enjoying as a nation. But the Lord showed us last Friday that He has His own ways of dealing with the economy. But isn't it true that we as Americans love to eat, and many love to drink, and our fashion "experts" keep changing the styles of clothes we wear because they know that Americans will buy, and buy, and buy! And so two thousand years after our Lord spoke those words, it is still true that "after all these things do the Gentiles seek." Some people will borrow up to the limit on 2, or 3, or 4, or 5 credit cards because of the things that they crave!

Paul said, "I don't crave your money." He made it clear that he would never demand that they support him. But he went on to tell them what he did *crave* because he used this same verb, "desire," two times in this one verse. What did he long for? He said, "But I desire fruit that may abound to your account." Paul firmly believed that when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, we are going to be rewarded for our giving, IF we have given *voluntarily* because we love the Lord, and because we love His Word, and because we love His people, and because we love His work. And so Paul was expressing His delight that their gift to him was going to bear fruit to their account in heaven. And many times the blessings of giving come to us in this life. We are not to give like we are making an investment in some kind of stock, but we are to give even though in this life we never experience any blessings in return. That is not very likely, but our motive in giving should never be what we are going to receive now, even praise from others.

Eadie brought out another thought arising from this verse. He expressed it in the words that follow:

The apostle wished them to reap the growing spiritual interest of their generous expenditure. Not for his own sake but theirs, does he desire the gift.

And then this was his point:

He [the Apostle Paul] knew that the state of mind which devised and contributed such a gift, was blessed in itself; that it must attract divine blessing, for it indicated the depth and amount of spiritual good which the Apostle had done to them, and for which they thus expressed their gratitude; and it showed their sympathy with the cause of Christ, when they had sought to enable their spiritual Founder [Paul] in former days to give his whole time, without distraction or physical exhaustion, to the work of his apostleship. This was a spiritual condition which could not but meet with the divine approbation, and secure the divine reward (p. 278).

Paul must have been thinking of what he had written to the church at Corinth, the words we find in 2 Cor. 5:9-10:

9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

And so even as Paul was thanking the Philippian church for the gift which Epaphroditus had brought to him from them, he wanted them to know that the greatest joy that he had in receiving it was in thinking of the blessing that the Philippians would receive from the Lord because they had given. And the reverse is also true: when we fail to give (cheerfully, voluntarily, and faithfully as the Word teaches us to give), we miss special blessings which we would otherwise receive. God intended that His work be supported by Himself in answer to prayer, but instead of praying, and depending upon God alone, the church today has adopted Madison Avenue tactics. Consequently we lose that way that the Lord has of confirming His will to us. Men like Hudson Taylor and George Mueller, and women like Amy Carmichael, accepted what the Lord provided as the limitation that He was placing on His work. On the other hand, when the Lord provided in special ways, they accepted that as confirmation that they should move ahead to do what they had been praying about.

Paul did not require people to make pledges as to how much they would give. He taught them how to give, just as he taught them everything else that had to do with their relationship to the Lord, and then prayed that they would be obedient to the Lord so that the Lord would be glorified and they would be blessed.

Cf. Paul's words in 2 Cor. 9:6-8:

6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

8 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:

And let me remind you that the Lord has made it very clear that His work is to be supported by His people, *and not by the unregenerated people of the world*. How sad it is that we go to the world for money instead of bringing our needs to the Lord, and seeking our blessings from Him. Here again we are missing many blessings that we would receive otherwise.

Hudson Taylor of the old China Inland Mission, used to say, "God's work, done in God's way, will never lack God's supply." What we are ignoring today is that God's work must be done in God's way. When we do His work, or try to do it, in man's way, the blessing will not be there.

4:18 Here is another very wonderful verse. What a marvelous way to speak of an offering given to the Lord! Paul called their gift, "an odor of a sweet smell." Bishop Moule translated these words as an "odor of

fragrancy.” It was like the sweet incense which was offered on the altar of incense in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple. This is what it was to God. The fragrance of the Philippian offering ascended all the way to heaven. And the next expressions tell us *why*.

And so you can see that while the Philippians had sent their gift to Paul, it was in reality a gift that they were making to the Lord.

It was “a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.” Sacrifices were offered to God. They had to measure up to the standards which the Lord had set for His people. And so the primary objective in every sacrifice that was offered under the first covenant, was that it be acceptable to God, that is, that it be just what He wanted. Even though the Philippian church had sent their offering to the Apostle Paul, he accepted it as that which had been offered “to God.” Paul’s words mean that he accepted their gift primarily as a gift to the Lord. Their offering was in full agreement with what the Lord wanted them to do.

This word, εὐάρεστος, is used in the following verses: Rom. 12:1, 2; Rom. 14:18; 2 Cor. 5:9; Col. 3:20; Titus 2:9; Heb. 13:21. The verb, εὐαρεστέω, occurs in Heb. 11:5, 6; 13:16. The adverb, εὐαρέστως, is in Heb. 12:28. In each case the words mean *not only pleasing*, but *well pleasing*! It is a blessing when we do something that pleases people, like the Philippians’ gift to Paul. But our joy is even greater when we know that what we have done is also *well pleasing to the Lord*, or even well pleasing to people. As I have already said, pleasing the Lord, well pleasing Him, should always be our main objective in whatever we do.

April 17, 2000

4:19 There are many wonderful verses in Philippians, and the Apostle Paul saved one of the best to the last. (Read.).

Paul was speaking on behalf of God. It is true that the Holy Spirit was directing Paul in what he had to say, but we also see here the strong confidence that Paul had in his God. Note the words, “my God,” “all your need,” “His riches,” “by Christ Jesus.”

Fausset suggested that what Paul was saying was, “My Master will fully repay you; I cannot” (VI, 438). It was probably very humbling to the Apostle Paul to have been in a position where the gift of the Philippians was so needed, and so welcome. He had gone to Philippi to tell them about the One he called, “My God.” And his God was now their God. And they had been joined together in a bond that was closer than any other. I am reminded of statements that we hear from time to time, such as, “God will be no man’s debtor,” and that “we cannot out-give God.” Paul in his days as Saul of Tarsus had thought that he knew God, and that he was serving God, but it was not until the Lord saved him on the road to Damascus that he could truly say of God that He is “my God.” And it was only then, and afterwards, that he learned that the true God was the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at Phil. 1:3 and you will see that there also Paul spoke of “my God.” Read down through verse 6 and there he mentioned what he was sure that his God, and their God, would do for them.

Going back to Phil. 4:19 the next words are, “shall supply all your need.” They had been used by the Lord to meet Paul’s need at that time; Paul projected his statement into the future and said that his God, and their God, would “supply all” their “need.” This doesn’t mean that the Lord’s blessing would leave them without any needs, but that whatever needs they might have then, or whatever needs would arise in the future, God would meet them. And He would always use those needs to minister to them spiritually. “All needs” must mean here

as the word “all” often does, *all kinds of needs*. We as believers have physical needs, and material needs, and spiritual needs. Sometimes He provides through what we receive from the work we do. Sometimes He provides graciously through others. But always He is the source of the blessings that we need, and that we receive.

And all of this is “according to His riches in glory.” The best explanation of the words “in glory” seem to be *in a glorious way*. Eadie said, “He will supply every want [need] in glory—like Himself—not grudgingly, or with a pittance, but with divine generosity” (p. 284). There is no need that we have, but what our God is sufficient for it. Paul brought this truth out beautifully in Romans 8, verses 31 through 37:

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us (Rom 8:31-37).

Always in the early church the threat of persecution was something that weighed heavily upon the minds of the people of God. The same was true in OT times. It is one of the most dominant themes in the Psalms of David. But God is not only able to deliver His people, but He is able to turn the curse into a blessing. He not only gives victory, but makes us “more than conquerors” because He makes our trials to fit right into His glorious purposes for our lives.

And His blessings are continuously given to us “by Christ Jesus.”

This was a marvelous promise. When first reading it, it seems almost too good to be true. And yet the people of God in every generation since these words were first penned, have relied heavily on the trustworthiness of what the Apostle Paul said here, and have found it to be true. Again, quoting Eadie:

Nor was it rash of Paul to make such a promise, nor did he exceed his commission. He did not speak without a warrant. He knew the character of his God, and did not take His Name in vain, for his varied and prolonged experience had fully informed him, and he was assured that the state of heart in the Philippian church must attract toward such a blessing. Would God resile [re-zil, meaning *draw back*] from His servant's pledge, or act as if in thus vouching for Him he had taken too much upon him? The idea of his close and tender relationship to God as his God, and his assurance that the promise made in His Name would be realized; the thought of such a promise, so ample in its sweep, and so glorious in its fulfillment, with the idea that all whether pledged or enjoyed is of God the Giver, suggest the brief doxology of the following verse (p. 285).

4:20 For any child of God who understands the truth of verse 19, the response that we find here will be spontaneous, and joyful. The praise here is brief, but deep, and it had a permanent place in the heart of the Apostle Paul. On this Eadie comments again:

Let the child [of God] realize its relation to the Father who feeds it, clothes it, and keeps it in life, who enlightens and guides it, pardons and purifies it, strengthens and upholds it, and all this in Christ Jesus, and it cannot but in it glowing consciousness cry out—“Now to our God and Father be glory for ever and ever.” The Amen is a fitting conclusion. As the lips shut themselves, the heart surveys again the facts and the grounds of

praise, and adds—So be it.

— Lightfoot pointed out that here Paul did not say, “Now unto God and *my* Father,” but “now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” What he had said that the Lord would do for the Philippians, he knew that the Lord had done the same, and would continue to do it, and so he joined himself with them in giving praise to God.

In the Greek text the word “glory” is preceded by the article, *the*, which Fausset says, suggests God’s exclusive right to the glory.

Concl: This marks the end of the epistle. The rest gives his farewell and prayer. But let us not forget what we have found in this precious treasure of God’s Word. Let us remember this prisoner of Jesus Christ, who, al-though faced with many problems of his own, nevertheless had found peace and joy in those dreadful circum-stances, and who was so concerned that the believers in Philippi stand fast in one spirit, “striving together for the for the faith of the Gospel,” all the while *rejoicing in the Lord*, that his readers would know that he was the personification of what he was praying that they would be. And yet we come to verse 20 knowing that “the glory” was not his, but the Lord’s.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul
Tuesday Bible Class – April 17, 2000
Philippians 4:21-23

Intro: These last three verses of the epistle give us, **VIII. Paul's Conclusion (Phil. 4:21-23).**

4:21 The word “salute” was a term of affection which literally meant that he was enfolding all of them in his arms. And he wanted them to know that he was including every one of them, whom he called “saints.” They were the people in Philippi who had been set apart from all of the others in the city as *the holy ones*. This is what they were in name, and what they were to be in their daily lives, a people separated unto the Lord, in the world, but now of the world.

Sending greetings from “the brethren which were with him, meant that they knew that Paul was writing to the Philippian believers, that they had talked with each other about the work of the Lord in Philippi, and most likely that they had prayed together for the Philippian believers. And so this, too, would have been a great encouragement to those who received this letter.

4:22 In this verse, going from “the brethren” in verse 21 to “all the saints” here, would speak of the church in Rome who were also in contact with the Apostle Paul. That is apparent from the reference to those who “are of Caesar’s household.” Calvin mentioned that this meant, those of the household of Nero—a thing well deserving to be noticed; for it is no common evidence of divine mercy, that the Gospel had made its way into that sink of all crimes and iniquities. It is also the more to be admired, in proportion as it is a rare thing for holiness to reign in the courts of sovereigns (XXI, 129).

Paul had told the Corinthians that “not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Cor. 126), *but some are!* Their salvation was just as amazing as the salvation of Saul of Tarsus had been. Let us never be guilty of limiting the power of God or the power of His Word. He sends forth His Word to accomplish His purposes, and it is to the glory of God that those whom He has chosen, and those whom He calls, come! We can wonder if any in the church anywhere had the faith to pray that some in Caesar’s household would be saved. It would be very interesting to know how God worked in that royal family to bring some to Himself. “Chiefly” means *especially*, or *most of all*. Think of it, members of Caesar’s household had let Paul know that when he wrote to the church at Philippi, they wanted to send greetings to them. This also probably means that prayer was being offered in the royal palace for the work of the Lord in Philippi. What a testimony to the grace of God! Nero had some relatives who were saints! I doubt very much if you will learn that from secular historians. But here it is in the Word of God.

4:23 Paul began this epistle with a prayer for grace and peace, and he ended it with a prayer – a prayer for “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” to be upon all of them.

No prayer is repeated in the epistles more often than the prayer for grace. It was by grace that the believers were saved; it is by the grace of God that they are kept. It is by the grace of God that they grew and became strong; it was by the grace of God that they were strengthened in their trials and temptations. And like all of the attributes of God, grace is inexhaustible! It is always sufficient and more than sufficient, and yet every believer stands in constant need of God’s grace.

Let us remember that believers today are faced with the same need, and so let it be in our prayers continuously as we pray for one another. God’s people are always a needy people, but their needs are never beyond the marvelous grace of God. And again we have an “Amen.” And so may it be for all of us.