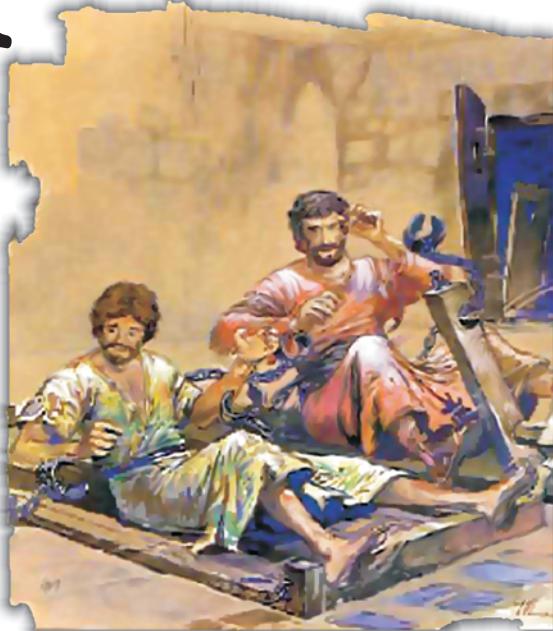


The Epistle to the
Philippians



“Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously...”

Doyle Gilliam

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The Letter
to the
Philippians

Doyle Gilliam
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The Letters to the Philippians

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This Book is Dedicated to

Louise Gilliam

my faithful companion in my ministry
and mission work, both state-side and on foreign fields.



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and
The W.R. Collier family

for making the printing of this book possible.

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A companion workbook on the study of the Philippian Letter by Doyle Gilliam (an excellent **Bible Class Workbook**) is available for purchase through the Sunset International Bible Institute External Studies: 1 (800) 687-2121

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Introduction to Philippians

Introduction

The beginning place of study in any New Testament book is to present background material that will help a person to understand the message of the book. So it is with the epistle to the Philippians. The city of Philippi, its history, and the establishment of the church, as recorded in the book of Acts 16, will be studied. An overview of the epistle of Paul to the Philippians is appropriate. The following points will be noted in the beginning of the study: the occasion of the writing of the letter, Paul's purpose in writing, and some of the characteristics of the church in Philippi as revealed in the letter and in other scriptures in the New Testament.

The City of Philippi

First Called Krenides

Philippi was originally called Krenides which means “little fountains.” It was renamed Philippi after Philip the king of Macedonia. in the year 356 B.C. Philip was the father of Alexander the Great. He came and mined the gold that was in the Philippian area and used it to partially finance his military expansion. It was also the scene of the historic battle between Brutus and Cassias, the assassins of Julius Caesar, and Antony and Octavian in the year 42 B.C. Because of the victory won there, Philippi was made a Roman colony, a miniature Rome. Its citizens enjoyed all the rights of Roman citizens. Many of them were former Roman soldiers. When Octavian later defeated Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium in the year 31 B.C., many of the soldiers of Antony were dispossessed

of their lands in Italy and moved to Philippi.

Philippians were very proud of their Roman colony status as seen in both the book of Acts and in the book of Philippians. For example, in Acts 16:20–21 Paul wrote: “*They brought them before the magistrates and said, ‘These men are Jews and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.’*” Paul referred to this citizenship in Philippians 1:27: “*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves* (which literally means “to behave as citizens”) *in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.*” In Philippians 3:20 he referred to this citizenship concept again: “*But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.*” However, the reason that Philippi is known in the modern world is not because of its connection with the Roman empire. The reason Philippi is known in the modern world is because a short letter was written to the Lord’s church there by the apostle Paul about a century after the events that were previously noted.

The Church Established in Philippi

The church was established in Philippi during Paul’s second missionary journey. There was a new team that had formed to go and preach the gospel to the different nations. It was made up of Paul and Silas, and later Luke and Timothy joined them. Paul suggested to Barnabas that they go back to see how all the brothers were doing in the churches where they had preached. Barnabas agreed to go, but he wanted to take Mark with him. Paul disagreed, and there was a sharp contention between them over the matter of whether Mark should accompany them. Finally, Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus. Paul chose Silas and went overland to the area where he and Barnabas had preached during their first missionary journey (cf. Acts 15:36–40). When they got to the city of Lystra, Paul met another young man whose name was Timothy. He was highly recommended by all the brethren there. Paul had him circumcised because his father was a Greek. His

mother was a Jewess and a believer. In order not to be a stumbling block to the Jews in the area, Paul had Timothy circumcised and took him along as an apprentice missionary (cf. Acts 16:1–3).

When they came to the town of Troas, Paul saw a vision during the night in which a man of Macedonia begged him to come over to Macedonia and help them. After Paul had seen the vision, they got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called them to preach the gospel there (cf. Acts 16:9–10). Luke the physician, the writer of the book of Acts, joined the team,. He was with them as they preached the Word of God in the city of Philippi. The conversion of Lydia and her household happened in Philippi. Philippi was a leading city of the district of Macedonia. There were no Jewish synagogues there so apparently there were not many Jews living there. There must be at least ten Jewish men in order to have a synagogue in a city. Since there was no synagogue, a number of women prayed and studied the Word of God together by the river. Paul found them there and taught them the Word of God. Lydia and her household received the Word of God and were baptized. She persuaded Paul and his companions to stay in her home while they were preaching the Gospel in the city of Philippi (cf. Acts 16:12–15).

There was a fortune-telling slave girl who was delivered from the spirit of divination. She had been following Paul and Silas throughout the city of Philippi day by day shouting, “*These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.*” Paul was finally provoked because he did not want this accurate information conveyed from such a source. Paul commanded the spirit to come out of her. When the masters of this slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they had Paul and Silas beaten, flogged, and thrown into the inner prison (cf. Acts 16:16–24).

That lead to the conversion of the jailor and his family. About midnight there was an earthquake, and the jailor thought all the prisoners had escaped. He was about to kill himself

when Paul told him not to harm himself because none of the prisoners had escaped. He fell trembling before Paul, brought them out, and said, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” Paul said, “*Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved — you and your household.*” He preached the Word of God to him and his household. During the same hour of the night, about midnight, the jailer took them out and washed their stripes. The jailer and all his family were baptized (cf. Acts 16:25–34). The church began at Philippi with the conversion of Lydia and her household and the conversion of the jailor and his family.

It is interesting to note in the very last verse of Acts 16 that Luke wrote, “*Then they left,*” which indicates that Luke, the writer of Acts, stayed there. About six years later, when Paul was on his third journey, he came back to the town of Philippi.

Luke began to write in the first person again in Acts 20:1–6. At certain times in Paul’s missionary preaching career, Luke would join the team, and he would write in the first person. He would write about what “we” did or what they did to “us.”

Paul’s Letter To the Church

The Occasion of the Letter

Paul had a great desire to express his appreciation for the financial gift he had received from the Philippian church. In chapter four there is a detailed discussion of the thanksgiving that Paul offered to the church because of their financial aid. They had sent this aid by the hands of a man named Epaphroditus. Paul had received the gift, and He wanted them to know that he was deeply grateful that they had remembered him again. They had always remembered him, but they did not always have the opportunity to show the feelings they had for Paul. When they had another opportunity, they expressed their love, and Paul sent a thank you letter to the Philippian church. He sent it by the hands of Epaphroditus, who had brought the help to him the first time: “*But I think it is necessary to send*

back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs” (Philippians 2:25). In the context Paul explains that Epaphroditus had become very ill and had almost died. But God had mercy on him and on Paul as well: “*Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow*” (Philippians 2:27). The Philippians had heard that Epaphroditus was ill, and Paul wanted them to be assured that he was well. So he took the opportunity to send Epaphroditus back with the letter. Paul encouraged them: “*Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him*” (Philippians 2:29).

Paul’s Purpose In Writing

Paul’s first purpose in writing the letter to the Philippian church was to give a written expression of gratitude. He not only thanked God for their gift, but he also thanked God for the Philippians themselves. He wrote, for example: “*I thank my God every time I remember you*” (Philippians 1:3).

The second purpose in writing the book of Philippians was to provide spiritual guidance and instruction which the congregation needed. Notice some of the things Paul wrote to the Philippians as he gave them various exhortations about the Christian life and the way they should please God. In one exhortation Paul wrote that whether he came to them or was absent, he wanted them to live a life that was worthy of the Gospel of Christ and strive together with one spirit and one mind to be united together in one purpose for the Gospel (cf. Philippians 1:27).

Paul wanted the brothers to be like-minded, not looking to their own interests but to the interests of others. The church at Philippi had some internal problems, and the best way to solve them was not to look to one’s own interests, but to the interests of others. In connection with that point, he told them to have the attitude of Christ: “*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 2:5). Paul explained that Christ

had been at the right hand of God eternally, but emptied Himself, became a man, and had been obedient unto death, even death on the cross (cf. Philippians 2:6–8).

In another exhortation to the Philippians Paul told them to do all things without grumbling and disputing or arguing, but to hold forth the word of life. They were living in a pagan world, and they were to be like light shining in the darkness. In the darkness they were to bring light to the pagans who were living in darkness (cf. Philippians 2:14–16).

Also, Paul wanted them to rejoice in the Lord. In fact, this is one of the keynote statements that is made often in Philippians. In Philippians 3:1 Paul wrote: “*Finally, brothers, rejoice in the Lord . . .*” And in chapter four verse four Paul wrote: “*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again. Rejoice.*” Paul wanted them to be a people that were rejoicing in the Lord because of the blessings they had in Him.

Another purpose of the letter was to fill their hearts and minds with gladness. The word “joy” is found many times in the book of Philippians. In its verb and noun form, the word “joy” or “rejoice” is found 16 times: “*In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy*” (Philippians 1:4). “. . . Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice” (Philippians 1:18). “. . . I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith” (Philippians 1:25). “. . . your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me” (Philippians 1:26). In Philippians 2:2 Paul gave an exhortation for them to be like-minded: “*Then make my joy complete by being like-minded . . .*” Again the word is found: “. . . I am glad and rejoice with all of you” (Philippians 2:17) “So you too should be glad and rejoice with me”(Philippians 2:18). “*Welcome him in the Lord with great joy . . .*” (Philippians 2:29). “*Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord . . .*” (Philippians 3:1). Paul wrote the church about his love and joy: “. . . You whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown . . .” (Philippians 4:1). So the key word found often in the book of Philippians is “rejoice.” Paul said because he rejoiced, he wanted them to rejoice as well: “*Rejoice in the*

Lord always. I will say it again. Rejoice” (Philippians 4:4). “I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me” (Philippians 4:10).

Paul asked the Philippians to give Epaphroditus a warm welcome back home. Epaphroditus had been sent to take care of Paul’s needs. He had been very ill and was returning so Paul wrote: “*Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him*” (Philippians 2:29). Paul wrote that Epaphroditus almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give (cf. Philippians 2:27–30).

There are two main warnings in the book of Philippians. This church was not bothered by a lot of heresy or by a number of false teachings. It does not have really serious flaws, but there are a couple of dangers that Paul wanted to warn them about.

First, is a warning against **legalism**. There were some people who trusted in the flesh, in their outward advantages, and in their attainments. Paul warned the brothers not to behave that way: “. . . If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more” (Philippians 3:4). Paul rejected all of those attainments and accomplishments. He considered them as rubbish that he might gain Christ. Philippians 3:8:

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

He illustrated from his own life that men should not trust in their fleshly or physical advantages, but trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the righteousness that is found by faith in Him.

Second, is a warning against **lawlessness** (cf. Philippians 3:17–21). Paul wrote this section of the letter with tears as he warned them of the enemies of Christ: “*Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in*

their shame. Their mind is on earthly things” (Philippians 3:19).

So there were two extremes in the church in Philippi. There was legalism on the one hand where men tried to bind laws from the law of Moses or other human regulations. And there were others who wanted no regulations of any kind so everybody could do his own thing. Paul opposed both the legalism and the libertines that he found potentially developing in the church in Philippi.

Paul also wanted to report on his own circumstances (cf. Philippians 1:12–26). Some of the people may have thought that Paul was discouraged because he had been in prison two years in Caesarea and perhaps two more years in Rome, but Paul wrote that the things that had happened to him had caused the Gospel to progress: “*Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel*” (Philippians 1:12). Even while Paul was in prison people learned that he was in chains because of his relationship with Jesus. Philippians 1:13–14:

As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

Many of the Christians in Rome boldly spoke the Word of God because of Paul’s imprisonment. Paul encouraged the Philippian Christians not to worry about him. Things were going well, and God was being glorified.

The Character of the Church

What was the Philippian church like? Information about the church can be obtained from the book of Philippians as well as from other scriptures in the New Testament. The Philippian church was perhaps closer to Paul than any other

church. He called the brothers, “*... my joy and my crown ...*” (Philippians 4:1). Another example of Paul’s love for this church is found in Philippians 1:7–8:

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Paul loved the Philippian church with the very heart of Christ, a sacrificial love.

There were two blemishes, though, in the church in Philippi. The first blemish was the disunity. The fact that Paul exhorts them a number of times to unity or toward like-mindedness shows that they did not have the unity that they needed to have. This disunity is shown, for example, in Philippians 1:27:

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel

Paul wrote to encourage the church to be one in spirit: “*Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose*” (Philippians 2:2). The problem of disunity in the church was perhaps centered with two of the sisters: “*I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord*” (Philippians 4:2). These were two Christian ladies who served with Paul in the Gospel but who were having conflicts with one another. Paul exhorts them to be one in the Lord and to agree with each other.

The second weakness of the church in Philippi was, perhaps, despondency. The very fact that Paul emphasized joy, rejoicing, and exhorting indicates they did not have the joy that they should have had. A life of trust and contentment apart from anxiety was the kind of life that Paul told the Philippians they needed to have.

This was the least Jewish of all the churches that was begun by Paul. Philippi was not a mercantile city. It was a military city, and there was no synagogue there. There are no quotations from the Old Testament in the book of Philippians. There were some Jewish elements there, apparently, because Paul warned about them in Philippians 3:2–3:

Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.

Paul warned about the Judaizers, men who followed him from place to place and tried to bind upon the Gentile Christians the law of Moses in order to be saved. Luke presented an example of men who were Judaizers in Acts 15:1:

Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved”

And Paul had to warn the church in Philippi about the same danger.

Another characteristic of the church in Philippi was that women were very important. In fact, this was generally true in Macedonia. A number of scholars have stated that women held high positions of honor and esteem, more so than in any other part of the Roman empire. When the church was established in

the city of Philippi, the first converts were women, Lydia, with her household. Apparently, she had a large house because the church met in her home (cf. Acts 16:13–15, 40). Also, Euodia and Syntyche are mentioned in the book of Philippians. They were women who Paul labored with, *and they contended at his side in the cause of the gospel* (cf. Philippians 4:2–3). So women were very significant in the church at Philippi and in the Philippian community.

Another characteristic of the Philippian church was its organization. According to Philippians 1:1 they had overseers and deacons. This letter was written “*. . . to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.*” There were elders or overseers in the early church from the very earliest days. The disciples in Antioch provided help for the brothers living in Judea by sending gifts to the elders: “*This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul*” (Acts 11:30). Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for the congregations that they established on their first missionary journey: “*Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord in whom they had put their trust*” (Acts 14:23). The qualifications for the elders and deacons are found in Paul’s writings (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1–15; Titus 1:6–9).

Another characteristic of the Philippian church was that it was an obedient church. There are no flagrant violations of God’s will, nor any spirit of rebellion to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Philippians 2:12:

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

The Christians in Philippi had been obedient when Paul was there, and they had continued their obedience after he had left them.

The Philippian church was also a generous church despite their extreme poverty. Paul wrote the church in Corinth about the Macedonian churches, including Philippi. 2 Corinthians 8:2–4:

Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

The Macedonian churches were noted for their generosity, benevolence and their willingness to help other churches that were in need, especially the churches in Judea.

The church in Philippi was also an evangelistic church: “*In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now...”* (Philippians 1:4–5). Their evangelistic spirit was also shown when they sent Paul support so he could continue teaching the Gospel. Philippians 4:15–16:

Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.

The church at Philippi was also a persecuted church. Paul encouraged them to stand firm in one spirit when they were persecuted. Philippians 1:28–30:

...without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by

God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

The brethren had seen Paul being persecuted and shamefully treated, and now they were also enduring some of the same opposition. Paul reminds them they are suffering for Christ.

Conclusion

In the next chapter some of the characteristics of the letter to the Philippians and the salutation found at the beginning of the letter will be examined. I believe that modern man is seeking desperately for the secret of true happiness and contentment. This is a good reason for studying the great letter of Paul to the Philippians. First, the letter reveals the secret of true happiness found in Christ through a right relationship with him. Second, it reveals the apostle Paul who learned the secret of true happiness and contentment. Third, the letter reveals the Christ who taught Paul the secret.

Introduction and Salutation

Philippians 1:1–2

Introduction

In the first chapter the city of Philippi, its history, and the establishment of the Lord's church in that city was briefly studied. Three background points were noted. The occasion of the writing of the letter to the Philippian church, Paul's purposes in writing, and some of the characteristics of the church in Philippi were mentioned. In this second chapter some of the characteristics of the epistle and the salutation will be studied. Notice first some of the characteristics of the epistle of Paul to the Philippians.

Characteristics of the Epistle

First characteristic: the letter to the Philippians is more **peaceful** than the Galatian letter and more personal than the Ephesian letter. In the book of Galatians Paul has a fiery style of writing about the Judaizers who were trying to undermine his work. The Philippian letter is more personal than the Ephesian letter; in the Philippian letter the words "I," "me," and "my" are found about 120 times.

Second characteristic: Philippians contains much **personal** information like 2 Corinthians, but for different reasons. In 2 Corinthians, Paul wrote many things about himself because he had been attacked by enemies that wanted to undermine his apostleship. Paul wrote to the Philippian brethren wrote himself because he had a very personal and warm relationship with the church, and he wanted them to know how he was doing.

Third characteristic: the letter emphasizes the **preeminence of Christ** throughout. He is mentioned nearly 50 times in 104 verses. Chapter one could be summarized "Christ our Life." Chapter two could be summarized "Christ our Example." Chapter three could be "Christ our Object." And chapter four could be "Christ our Strength." The book of Philippians has a beautiful verse that could be the key to the whole letter: "*Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you*" (Philippians 3:17). What is so desperately needed today is Christianity as Paul understood it, taught it, and lived it. Christians need to follow his example and the example of others who followed that same pattern.

Fourth characteristic: Philippians is a letter of **love**. Paul wrote often about his feelings for the church in Philippi: "*I thank my God every time I remember you*" (Philippians 1:3). Paul had them in his heart and longed to be with them. Philippians 1:7–8:

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

The letter reveals Paul's great love for the Philippian church: "*Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown . . .*" (Philippians 4:1).

Fifth characteristic: Philippians is a letter of **joy**, as previously mentioned. The very theme of the letter is, "I rejoice. Do you rejoice? I rejoice. I want you to rejoice as well." Paul rejoiced no matter his circumstances: "*Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel*" (Philippians 1:12). Paul could have joy in every kind of circumstance. His joy was not based on

circumstances. His joy was based on his living and loving relationship with the Lord! Because Paul had joy, he exhorted the Philippians to have joy in every situation. Paul wrote again about the contentment that he had. After letting them know that he appreciated their gift, Paul wrote about his contentment. Philippians 4:11–12:

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Then he added that beautiful statement: “*I can do everything through him who gives me strength*” (Philippians 4:13). If Paul looked out his prison cell and saw a Roman sentry guarding him, or if a guard was chained to him, it would remind him that the peace of God that passes all understanding was guarding his heart and mind in Christ Jesus (cf. Philippians 4:7).

The theme of Philippians is rejoice in the Lord always. Paul wrote: “*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*” (Philippians 4:4). Paul wrote that God will meet all the needs of Christians: “*And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:19). The Philippian brethren had met Paul’s needs, and Paul wrote that God would meet all their needs. This joy is also expressed in the heavenly citizenship that Paul and the Christians in Philippi enjoyed. Philippians 3:20–21:

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

The church in Philippi rejoiced in being evangelistic and in facing death in chapter one. They rejoiced in lowly service and in brotherhood in chapter two. They were able to rejoice even in imperfections and in heavenly citizenship according to chapter three. And in chapter four the church was able to rejoice even in anxiety and privations. Paul demonstrated joy in all of his life and taught the Philippian church that they could also have joy and a sense of contentment in every circumstance and in every relationship.

The Salutation

Styles Of Letter Writing

The style of writing in Bible days was different from the modern day style. When a person receives a letter today, he looks at the end of the letter to see who wrote it. But in Bible days, the author identified himself first, and then established the identity of the recipients of the letter. Examples of this are given in both the Old and New Testaments. A copy of a letter from King Artaxerxes to Ezra follows the earlier form: “*Artaxerxes, king of kings, To Ezra the priest, a teacher of the Law of the God of heaven: Greetings*” (Ezra 7:12). The writer of the letter first identified himself. He then mentioned the person to whom he was writing. Next the king sent his greetings. Another example of Bible times letter writing is given in Acts 23:26: “*Claudius Lysias, to His Excellency, Governor Felix: Greetings*.” The Roman commander gave his name at the beginning of the letter and then addressed the letter to the governor and gave greetings. This is standard form for New Testament letter writing.

The Writers By Name

The two people who wrote the letter to the Philippian church are identified at the beginning of the letter: “*Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons*”

(Philippians 1:1). Timothy was associated with Paul because of his special connection with the Philippians. He had been a member of the missionary team that taught the Gospel in Philippi (cf. Acts 16:1ff). Apparently Timothy had been converted on the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas (cf. Acts 13–14). When Paul wrote to Timothy later he called him: “ . . . my true son in the faith . . . ” (1 Timothy 1:2). On Paul’s second journey Timothy joined the team of Paul and Silas (cf. Acts 16:1–3). Timothy was a faithful co-worker with Paul all of his life, and was often sent by Paul to teach and encourage churches. Since Paul knew that Timothy was a man who would faithfully convey The Message, Timothy was often chosen by Paul to be his messenger. Timothy was such a faithful co-worker that he was sent to Corinth to mature and encourage the Christians. 1 Corinthians 4:17 says:

For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

Paul was concerned about the Christians in Thessalonica so he sent Timothy to strengthen and encourage them: “*We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God’s fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith*” (1 Thessalonians 3:2). Timothy was devoted to the Philippians according to Philippians 2:20–22:

I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.

It was to Timothy that Paul wrote his last letter: “*Do your best to come quickly*” (2 Timothy 4:9). Timothy was Paul’s fellow worker in a way that perhaps no one else was. Paul described him this way: “*Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you*” (Romans 16:21). Timothy was honored to be associated with Paul in the writing of the New Testament epistles, but Paul is the real author of the book of Philippians, not Timothy.

After mentioning Timothy in the opening remarks of the letter Paul wrote in the first person. Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, wrote this personal letter to the church at Philippi. When Paul mentions Timothy in later passages, he will mention him in the third person: “*I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon . . .*” (Philippians 2:19). Paul did send Timothy. In fact, he was often the messenger Paul used to communicate with the various churches.

A great deal is known about Paul from the book of Acts and from the letters that he wrote. He had been a persecuting Pharisee who was consumed with passion to destroy the church. If there was anyone who came near to destroying the work, the eternal purpose of God, it was Saul of Tarsus as he persecuted the church from place to place. He was converted to Christ in Damascus after meeting the Lord on the way. He was told to go into Damascus where he was told what he must do to be saved. After being taught by Ananias, he arose and was baptized to wash away his sins. He began to follow Jesus Christ with all of his heart, and he preached “The Faith” he had at one time tried to destroy. After his conversion he became known as the Apostle Paul. He went on mission journeys, evangelistic tours, throughout the Roman world. Paul wanted to bring every man and woman into contact with the message of salvation that had been revealed to him. On the second journey he, Timothy, and Silas, along with Luke, established the congregation at Philippi. After ten years of friendship and fellowship in the Lord Paul wrote this letter, a letter that was written over 1900 years ago.

The Writers By Profession

Paul described himself and Timothy as servants of Christ Jesus. He did not call himself an apostle in this letter because he did not need to do so. Often he would stress his apostleship when churches or individuals questioned it. In Philippi there was no question about the relationship that Paul had with the Lord, nor was there any question about his authority. So he did not need to assert that he was an apostle. His authority was not questioned; the relationship between Paul and the Philippian Christians was tender and trusting.

The word that Paul used for “servants” is translated from the Greek word *douloi* which means “bond-servants” or “slaves.” This word emphasized that they were not their own, but they were at the complete disposal of their Master. Paul wrote a similar statement in 1 Corinthians 6:19: “. . . You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” Paul reminded the Christians in Rome that they had once been slaves to sin. Romans 6:17–18

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Paul wrote that he and Timothy were servants of Christ Jesus, meaning that they belonged to Him and were to do His will.

“Bond-servants” and “slaves” is not the only term “servants” implies. It is also a term of dignity. When God chose certain people in the Old Testament to do outstanding things for him, they were called “servants of the Lord.” For example in Joshua 1:1 Moses is described as: “. . . the servant of the Lord . . .” In Judges 2:8 Joshua is called: “. . . the servant of the Lord . . .” In Psalm 78:70 and in Psalm 89:3 David is referred to as: “his servant.” In Jeremiah 7:25 God spoke of: “. . . my servants the prophets.” This expression is

also found in Daniel 9:6: “*... your servants the prophets ...*” and in Amos 3:7: “*... his servants the prophets.*” This was a familiar expression often used in the Old Testament. It was a great honor to be a servant of God, and Paul would gladly speak of Timothy and himself as “*servants of Christ Jesus.*”

The attitude of servant-hood was demonstrated and taught by Jesus. Matthew 20:25–28:

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Paul, undoubtedly, was delighted to be a servant of men, just as Jesus Christ was while on earth.

The Recipients of the Letter — Saints

Paul addressed the letter, “*... To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi ...*” (Philippians 1:1). The word “*saints*” does not refer to sinless, perfect people, nor to special people who have been elevated to sainthood after they died. Most of the New Testament epistles are addressed to the saints: “*To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints ...*” (Romans 1:7). “*To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy ...*” (1 Corinthians 1:2). “*... To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus*” (Ephesians 1:1). “*To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse*” (Colossians 1:2). The recipients of these letters were saints, individual Christians who lived in these places. People who read these letters know that the saints were far from sinless or perfect. But the Word does refer to the

fact that the saints have been “set apart” for God and for His holy use.

In the Old Testament certain items were holy or sanctified. They were set apart. The altar, the ark of the covenant, the lampstand, and the tabernacle were all sanctified. They were set apart for special use. They were consecrated and set apart for God’s holy purposes. The nation of Israel in the Old Testament was also sanctified. God chose Israel out of all the nations on earth and set its citizens apart as His holy people. As the people gathered around Mount Sinai. God told Moses to give instructions to the house of Jacob. Exodus 19:5–6:

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation . . .

The Israelites were a holy people, God’s treasured possession. Deuteronomy 7:6:

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

There are also scriptures about sanctification in the New Testament. Jesus sanctified Himself, that His disciples might be truly sanctified. (cf. John 17:19). He consecrated Himself to God and to the purpose of going to the cross to die for the sins of the world. Jesus set Himself apart to fulfill God’s purpose. Christians are also sanctified or set apart to be used for God in a very special way. Peter wrote that they have obligations as God’s chosen people. 1 Peter 2:9:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may

declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Peter wrote a statement about being holy: “*But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy’*” (1 Peter 1:15–16). Saints are to be holy.

Christians have been baptized into Christ: “*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*” (Galatians 3:26–27). And they are to continue to live in Him. They are rooted and built up in Him (cf. Colossians 2:6–7). Christians are to rejoice in the Lord (cf. Philippians 3:1, 4:4). They are to stand firm in Him and do everything through Him (cf. Philippians 4:1, 13). In the book of Philippians, as well as other letters from Paul, Christian are encouraged to always live in Christ, rejoice in the Lord, and do everything because of their union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Co-Recipients of the Letter

The letter was also written to the overseers and the deacons. In the New Testament overseers and elders refer to the same people. For example, Paul sent for the “elders” of the church in Ephesus to meet him at Miletus (cf. Acts 20:17). When Paul met them, he called them “overseers” which means “bishops,” and he told them to be “shepherds” also translated “pastors,” of the church of God (cf. Acts 20:28). In 1 Peter 5:1–4 Peter wrote to the “elders” and appealed to them as “a fellow elder” to “be shepherds of God’s flock . . . serving as overseers” or “bishops.” So in the New Testament, the elders are also called overseers, pastors and shepherds. There was a plurality of elders in each congregation. There is not a reference in the New Testament to “the” elder of the church or “the” overseer of a church; it is always the elders or the overseers (plural). This is a consistent teaching in the New Testament. The pattern, then, is for bishops to oversee one congregation.

There were also deacons in the church at Philippi. Deacons are special servants in the church. An example of their work occurs in Jerusalem when the Grecian widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. The apostles wanted to devote their attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word so seven men filled with the Spirit and wisdom were selected to be responsible for the ministry (cf. Acts 6:1–6). Paul gave the qualifications for deacons and their wives in 1 Timothy 3:8–13.

Paul concluded the salutation with: “*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 1:2). In the Bible grace from God and Jesus Christ is always listed first and then peace. Grace is free, spontaneous, unmerited love from God through the redemption that came from Christ to lost people: “[all] are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). Peace is the fruit of such activity in forgiven sinners: “*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Romans 5:1). Peace with God can never come before grace. Grace must always come before peace which comes as a result of the grace which brings the sinner into a right relationship with God. So Paul blessed the saints in Philippi with the grace and the peace of God. Christians can give no better blessing to another Christian than grace and peace from God, a blessing often found in the New Testament epistles.

Thanksgiving and Prayer

Philippians 1:3–11

Paul’s Thanksgiving For the Philippians

Introduction

Paul was constantly in prayer and thanksgiving for the Philippian Christians. He had a great deal of confidence about God’s work in their lives. Paul wrote about love, knowledge, depth of insight, discernment, and the fruit of righteousness in his prayers for them (cf. Philippians 1:9–11).

The Testimony of Paul’s Memory

Paul often thanked God for the Philippian church: “*I thank my God every time I remember you*” (Philippians 1:3). Paul often thanked God for the faith, love, and endurance of Christians to whom he wrote. Paul thanked God for the Thessalonian Christians, another great church in 1 Thessalonians 1:2–3:

We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was grateful for the joy the Thessalonian church had given him: “*How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?*” (1 Thessalonians 3:9). Paul was deeply grateful for the faith of the

Christians in Rome: “*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world*” (Romans 1:8).

Paul and Silas had been mistreated previously when they were in Philippi, but they had pleasant memories because the Philippian Christians had been very receptive to the Gospel, and they had a continued fellowship with Paul in the spreading of the Gospel from the very first day. This gave Paul unceasing joy.

The Testimony of Paul’s Action

Paul’s prayers for the Philippian church were filled with joy: “*In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy*” (Philippians 1:4). Paul’s prayers for other churches were also filled with thanksgiving. Ephesians 1:15–16:

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

He wrote two letters to Timothy, and in the second letter he stated: “*I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers*” (2 Timothy 1:3). In the little book of Philemon verse four he wrote: “*I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers.*” Paul often expressed the deep gratitude he felt for individual Christians and for churches to whom he wrote letters.

Paul needed to pray for the Philippians because there were imperfections in the church. They were a good church for he called them “*my joy and crown*” (Philippians 4:1). But they needed to be more like-minded, have the same spirit, and be one in love and purpose (cf. Philippians 2:2). The church needed to avoid complaining and arguing (cf. Philippians 2:14).

And there were two Christian ladies who needed to agree with each other in the Lord (cf. Philippians 4:2).

There were dangers in the church, as well, and Paul needed to warn them about those dangers: “*Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh*” (Philippians 3:2). Later in the same chapter he wrote about enemies of the cross of Christ. Philippians 3:18–19:

For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.

No wonder he felt the need to pray for the Philippians when they had such dangers facing them.

Paul’s constant prayer for the saints in Philippi was always in the spirit of joy. The world could not give joy, and the world could not take it away. Jesus promised that the joy that he gave, the world could not take away (cf. John 16:22). That is why Paul and Silas could be beaten, flogged, thrown into prison in Philippi, and could sing and pray to God at midnight. No wonder the prisoners were listening to them. The joy Paul possessed was irrepressible. His joy was not based on outward circumstances; it was something he always had in every circumstance of life. Paul’s joy was based on his relationship to the Lord. Since Paul was in Him, he always found contentment and joy.

The Testimony of the Philippians’ Fellowship

Paul prayed with joy: “*because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now*” (Philippians 1:5). There had been support given to Paul from the beginning of the church. After Lydia and her household were baptized, she offered her home as a place for Paul and his companions to stay. When Paul and Silas got out of prison, they visited the

brothers at her house (cf. Acts 16:15, 40). Apparently her house was used as a meeting place for the church. The Philippian church also provided for his needs when he was in Thessalonica. Philippians 4:15–16:

Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.

They sent aid to him again by Epaphroditus (cf. Philippians 4:18). Paul sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi after Epaphroditus had taken care of Paul's needs because the church had heard that Epaphroditus was ill (cf. Philippians 2:25–27). Paul was deeply grateful for the long partnership the Philippian church had with him because there was no other church that had the same kind of partnership with Paul.

When Paul wrote to other churches, he told them he was praying for them, and he requested that they pray for him. Ephesians 6:19– 20:

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

When Paul wrote the church in Colossi, he asked them for a similar kind of prayer. Colossians 4:3–4:

And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

Christians are sometimes amazed that Paul, as bold as he was, asked churches to pray that he might have boldness to preach the Word without fear and doubt.

The third way the church in Philippi may have had fellowship with Paul was through being involved in sharing the Gospel themselves. For example, Philippians 1:27:

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.

Children of God need to be blameless and pure when they teach the Word of Life. Philippians 2:14–16:

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life . . .

So not only did the church in Philippi meet Paul's needs, but they were involved in holding forth the Word of Light to people who were in darkness.

The Testimony of Paul's Confidence

God completes the work that he begins in His people: “*Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 1:6). This verse does not teach that God will complete the work that he begins in His people without their cooperation and response of faith. God began the good work in the Philippian Christians with their acceptance of the Gospel in a response of faith, and He completed it with their cooperation and response of faith. The commands in the Bible about

faithfulness are addressed to Christians, not to God. Even though God worked in the lives of the Christians and brought to completion what He had started, He did so with their cooperation and with their faithful response to His message.

Philippians 1:6, also, does not teach the impossibility of apostasy, nor does any other verse in the New Testament. Note the following admonition given to saved people, especially the last two verses. 2 Timothy 2:11–13:

Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself. [Boldness added for emphasis.]

God's faithfulness, though, does not guarantee a Christian's faithfulness! Paul boldly wrote that if a Christian disowns Jesus, He will disown that Christian. Paul told the church in Colossi they would be reconciled to God and presented holy in His sight if they continued in their faith. Colossians 1:22–23:

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation. If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel . . .

A person is guarded or kept through faith. Peter wrote that Christians are guarded by faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last day (cf. 1 Peter 1:5). But the point is that one can stop believing. He can stop trusting. He can stop following Jesus. The Bible shows that it is possible to stop believing and turn away from God: “*See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God*” (Hebrews 3:12).

Paul had a great deal of confidence in the Christians in Philippi. He did not have the same confidence in the Galatian Christians. Paul was astonished that they were deserting Jesus: “*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel*” (Galatians 1:6). Paul had deep concern for the Galatians who were children of God and had been set free: “*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*” (Galatians 3:26–27). Paul encouraged the Galatian Christians to stand firm and not stop following Jesus: “*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery*” (Galatians 5:1). Someone may say, “It does not say they were saved.” But what it does say can only be said about saved people. The Galatians were people who had been set free, and their obligation was to stand firm and not let themselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Paul wrote that the Christians had fallen from grace: “*You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace*” (Galatians 5:4). After Paul wrote about the works of the flesh, he warned the Galatian Christians, not the pagans: “. . . *I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God*” (Galatians 5:21). All Scripture demonstrates that God initiates and completes the action in a Christian’s life, but He does so through the response of faith of the Christian. All these verses teach the same truth. The ultimate good work, of course, which God has in mind for the life of any Christian is that he be conformed to the likeness of His son (cf. Romans 8:29). The eternal purpose of God is that men and women be born again and then be transformed into the image of God’s Son.

Paul wrote about the transformation process in 2 Corinthians 3:18:

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

The transformation is not something that happens overnight. It is an ongoing process. As Christians behold the Lord, they are transformed into His image.

The Testimony of Their Relationship

Paul had a close relationship to the Philippians: "*It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart . . .*" (Philippians 1:7). Even though Paul was separated from them physically, he held them in his heart and in his thoughts. In loving remembrance, they were never out of his heart.

There are similar concepts found in other passages that Paul wrote to other Christians. For example, Paul wrote the church in Corinth: ". . . *I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you*" (2 Corinthians 7:3). Paul had the same love and concern for the Christians in Thessalonica: "*But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you*" (1 Thessalonians 2:17). Even when Paul was separated from these churches, he was always with them in his heart. His firm desire was that he be with them again to continue to stir them up and help them in their faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul was a prisoner at the time he wrote the letter to the Philippians, but they shared in God's grace with him: ". . . *for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me*" (Philippians 1:7). Paul was a prisoner for the Lord (cf. Ephesians 4:1), and his sufferings were for the church (cf. Ephesians 3:13). His chains were the means of encouraging his brothers to preach the Word of God more courageously and fearlessly (cf. Philippians

1:13–14). He also mentioned that he was defending and confirming the Gospel: “*. . . I am put here for the defense of the gospel*” (Philippians 1:16). The Gospel needs to be defended against those who would attack or deny its message. Peter told Christians to be prepared to give the reason for their hope: “*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have . . .*” (1 Peter 3:15).

Paul and the Philippians shared not only in the suffering for the furtherance of the Gospel, but they also shared in the grace of God. This would include, of course, Paul’s commission to preach the grace of God to others and their sharing with him in this work from the very beginning. Because of their close relationship, Paul longed to see them: “*God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 1:8). Paul loved them with the very heart of Jesus. God could be called to witness that the testimony Paul had given was true.

Paul’s Prayer For the Philippians

The Request For An Ever Increasing Love

Paul prayed for their ever increasing love: “*And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight*” (Philippians 1:9). They already had love, as did most of the Macedonian Christians. They had demonstrated that love in a sacrificial way by giving to the needy (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:1–5). They had love for God and for each other, but Paul prayed that their love would abound more and more. Paul wrote a similar statement to the church in Thessalonica: “*May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you*” (1 Thessalonians 3:12). In the same letter Paul urged them to show love even more: “*And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more*” (1 Thessalonians 4:10).

Christians are never to be content with their love for others or their expressions of devotion to God; they are to continually do so more and more.

Paul wrote that this love must be guided by knowledge. It must be regulated by truth. In the Old Testament God spoke through the prophet Hosea: “*My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge*” (Hosea 4:6). Paul prayed that God would fill the Colossian church with knowledge of His will. Colossians 1:9:

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding

The Word must be studied in order to know God’s will, but prayer is important, as well. Both study of the word and prayer are necessary in order to have the knowledge and depth of insight that Paul wants the Philippians to have. James wrote about the way to obtain wisdom: “*If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him*” (James 1:5). It is a study of the Word of the Lord and a dependence upon God in prayer that helps Christians to have the depth of insight they need so they can make the right decisions.

The Fruit Of An Ever Increasing Love

The fruit of ever increasing love is that Christians can discern what is best: “*so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ*” (Philippians 1:10). “*Pure and blameless*” means sincerity, without hypocrisy, shame, or pretense. This purity should be seen by people who observe a Christian’s life. For example, God’s Children should not cause others to stumble: “*Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God*” (1 Corinthians 10:32).

It is a mark of maturity when Christians are able to make right decisions about what is best for their spiritual growth. Paul wrote about approving the things that are good: “*Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil*” (1 Thessalonians 5:21–22). The writer of the book of Hebrews wrote about mature Christians who can partake of solid food, not merely milk: “*But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil*” (Hebrews 5:14).

Paul wanted the Philippians to be filled with righteousness: “*filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God*” (Philippians 1:11). This fruit of righteousness transforms lives made progressively holy by the Lord through His Spirit: “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control . . .*” (Galatians 5:22).

Paul wrote about the fruit that God produces in the lives of Christians when they obey Him: “*For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth*” (Ephesians 5:9). Jesus talked about the fruit that men can bear: “*Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me*” (John 15:4). Paul wanted the Christians in Philippi to be faithful and fruitful by abiding in Jesus.

The objective of bearing fruit is to the glory and praise of God. This should be the purpose of every Christian. After all is said and done, his ultimate purpose is that God be glorified. Jesus said that Christians should be the light of the world: “*In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven*” (Matthew 5:16). Peter wrote a similar statement in 1 Peter 4:11:

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things

God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul's thankfulness for the church in Philippi has been presented in this third chapter. The reader has learned that Paul often prayed for the brethren. There are some lessons that Christians today can learn from Paul's letter. First, Paul often let his brothers and sisters know what he prayed for so they would know how to pray. In other words, Christians can learn how to pray by observing the prayer life of Paul. After reading Paul's prayers, Christians can imitate his prayer life.

Second, Christians can learn that their prayers should be filled with thanksgiving. Paul presented many of his prayers and petitions to God with thanksgiving. A mark of maturity is found in a Christian when his prayers are permeated with thanksgiving.

Third, prayers of a child of God should be filled with thanksgiving for spiritual things, not merely temporal things. In his prayers he should give thanks for God, for Christ, for the Holy Spirit, for salvation, for the cleansing from sin, for divine guidance, for the assurance that all things work together for good to those who love God, and for the strength that is received from other Christians. All of these spiritual blessings should frequently be mentioned in a Christian's prayers as he thanks God for what He has done for him physically, as well as what He has done and is doing through Christ in a spiritual way. One measure of maturity is a comparison of time spent praying to God for material blessings compared to the amount of time spent rejoicing and giving thanks for the spiritual blessings in Christ. Many good ideas can be gained from studying the prayers of Paul in the New Testament.

Paul ‘s Chains Advance The Gospel

Philippians 1:12–30

Introduction

The church was planted in Philippi in the midst of opposition. When Paul wrote this letter he was a prisoner of Christ Jesus, that is, on Christ’s behalf. The Philippian Christians, knowing of his confinement, may have thought Paul was discouraged. They may have felt his work was stifled, and he was accomplishing little in view of his circumstance. But Paul wrote about his imprisonment and affirmed that his chains had actually advanced the gospel, no matter the outcome of his life. In the meantime, he urged the Christians to live a life of steadfastness amidst suffering.

Imprisonment Advances Preaching

Paul believed that the events in his life had advanced the kingdom: “*Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel*” (Philippians 1:12). The expression: “*what has happened to me*” refers to his arrest in Jerusalem, the trials, and the imprisonments in Caesarea and in Rome. Paul was beaten in the city of Jerusalem and was rescued by the Roman soldiers. He spent time in prison there, was later taken to Caesarea where he spent two more years incarcerated, and was taken to Rome (cf. Acts 21:27–28:16). God’s providence was at work. God worked to bring good out of evil and advance His cause even through persecution and opposition. This is one of the

great Bible truths: God works in the lives of His people in a providential way to bring good out of evil.

The story of Joseph in the Old Testament is a great example of God's providence. In Acts 7:9–10 Stephen told the Sanhedrin about the way God worked good in the life of Joseph:

Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the good will of Pharaoh king of Egypt; so he made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace.

There is another statement in the Old Testament about the providence of God in the life of Joseph. His brothers were concerned about how Joseph would treat them since their father, Jacob, had died. He said to them: “*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives*” (Genesis 50:20). The brothers meant evil, but God overruled their evil deeds for a good purpose which Joseph recognized, and he praised God.

Jesus affirmed the same principle of God's providence when he spoke to the apostles about the persecution they would receive during the siege to Jerusalem. Luke 21:12–13:

But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. This will result in your being witnesses to them.

Their arrests, imprisonments, and all the opposition only gave the apostles more opportunities to preach the Word of God. Paul believed implicitly in the providential working of God in his life and in the lives of His people: “. . . *This is my gospel,*

for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained" (2 Timothy 2:8–9). Paul wrote perhaps the greatest statement that has ever been made about the providential working of God: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). This scripture has encouraged many people through the years to believe that God's divine intervention is at work in the lives of His children. Paul knew that the things that had happened to him had caused the Gospel to be advanced.

There are two things that had resulted from his imprisonment. First, it was clear to everyone that Paul was in chains for Christ: "*As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ*" (Philippians 1:13). The people who saw Paul on a daily basis realized he was not a common prisoner, a dangerous revolutionary.

The Praetorian guards were very elite soldiers. They were specially chosen, and they had great influence and power. Many of them probably learned the Gospel when they were chained to Paul, as they heard him teach others and heard him dictate letters to churches and individuals. They saw him demonstrate a joy and contentment in every circumstance. This must have deeply impressed the soldiers, and many of them were led to the Lord because of it. They knew that he was in prison because of his loyalty to Christ not because he was a dangerous revolutionary or some kind of common criminal. Later Paul wrote about the saints who belonged to Caesar's household (cf. Philippians 4:22). People in Caesar's household were converted to the Lord because Paul was in prison in Rome. Much good was accomplished because of God's providence. The news about Paul being in chains spread to the people throughout the city of Rome. Everybody knew he was in prison because of his relationship with Jesus.

A second advantage of Paul's imprisonment was the boldness shown by fellow Christians: "*Because of my chains,*

most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly” (Philippians 1:14). Seeing Paul’s steadfastness and contentment while in prison emboldened most of the brother to speak the Word of God more courageously and fearlessly. Boldness and fervency are contagious, and Paul’s example encouraged the brothers. As a result, the Gospel was advanced, and many people learned the way of salvation because of Paul’s chains.

Preaching Christ with Different Motives

Paul wrote about the motives that preachers have; sometimes the motives are high and noble, and sometimes the motives are not pure or holy. Notice some of the reasons men did not preach with the right motive: “*It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry . . .*” (Philippians 1:15). Paul also mentioned: “*The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains*” (Philippians 1:17). However, they did preach Christ, not a perverted Gospel which could not save men. Paul warned about the danger of men preaching another gospel in Galatians 1:8–9:

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

The men in Rome were not teaching another Jesus or another Gospel. Their message was accurate. They were not leading men astray, but their motivation was not good. The fact that they were teaching the right message caused Paul to rejoice. Hence, Paul could rejoice because the right message was preached, even though the motives of the preachers were false.

Paul wrote about men who preached Christ for the right reason: “*The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel*” (Philippians 1:16). Some preach Christ “*in love.*” Every preacher and teacher of the Word of God should examine his motives for preaching Christ: “*The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains*” (Philippians 1:17). Is the motive for preaching, financial gain, popularity, or praise of men? Is the motive for preaching because it is an easy job? Or is the motive a sincere love for God and others and a deep conviction that the message of Christ must be preached for the glory of God and the salvation of the lost? Every preacher and teacher needs to examine his motivation, but the important thing is that Christ is preached: “*But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice . . .*” (Philippians 1:18).

Torn Between Two Desires

Confidence in God’s Overruling Providence

Paul said he was torn between two great choices, beginning with the last part of verse 18 through verse 26. Paul had confidence in God’s overruling providence in his life. Paul continued to rejoice because he knew that through the prayers and the help of the Spirit what had happened to him would lead to his deliverance. Philippians 1:18–19:

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.

Paul had confidence that God would bring his vindication because God had furthered the Gospel through his chains. Regardless of the outcome of the trial before Caesar, Paul

believed God would vindicate Him. The word “*deliverance*” is sometimes translated “salvation.” In this context it does not refer to his certain deliverance from prison because the possibility of both death or life is mentioned in Philippians 1:20:

I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Paul was not sure whether he would die or live, whether he would be released from prison or whether he would be executed. Paul referred to his eternal or final salvation in 2 Timothy 4:18: “*The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom . . .*” Paul also wrote about his salvation in Romans 13:11: “. . . *The hour has come for you to wake from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.*” I think it is likely that Paul was referring to his deliverance or final vindication before the judgment seat of Christ, in Philippians 1:20. Even if he were to receive the wrong judgment from Caesar, he was convinced that he would ultimately be vindicated by God.

There are two factors involved in Paul’s deliverance. In verse 19 he wrote about his expected deliverance because of their prayers. Paul often assured converts to Christ that he was always praying for them. Colossians 1:9–10:

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.

Paul not only prayed for his brothers, but he would often ask them to pray for him. For example, he asked the Colossians to pray that God would open a door so he could proclaim the mystery of Christ: “*And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains*” (Colossians 4:3). A similar passage is found in 2 Corinthians 1:10–11:

He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

The Apostle Paul did not believe he could do everything alone. He believed that other people, by praying, could bring about spiritual results. He believed that Christians who were praying for him were able to strengthen him and cause God’s gracious providential grace to work more effectively in his life. A man who often prayed for others felt the need for others to pray for him.

The second aspect of the deliverance was that he would receive help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ (cf. Philippians 1:19). Paul wrote that the Spirit helps Christians in their weaknesses. Romans 8:26–27:

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.

In another beautiful passage Paul wrote about the strengthening influence of the Spirit in the life of a Christian: "*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being*" (Ephesians 3:16). It is on the basis of the prayers of the Philippian Christians and the intercessory work of the Spirit of Jesus Christ that Paul believed he would receive deliverance.

Confronted by Two Possibilities — Life or Death

Paul wrote about Christ being exalted, whether by his life or by his death, beginning in Philippians 1:20:

I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Paul was not concerned about personal shame and humiliation because he had suffered those feelings for years as a follower of Christ. But, in his defense, if he had sufficient courage and was not ashamed of his testimony, honor would be brought to Christ through him. That was his only concern. Paul wanted Jesus glorified, either in his life or in his death. That was his concern in every aspect of his life. Paul realized there were two alternatives: either he would be released or he would die. In either case, Christ would be exalted and glorified. Paul felt that death would be a victory: "*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain*" (Philippians 1:21). Paul had been crucified with Christ according to Galatians 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Since Christ was living in Paul, he felt he was no longer living, but Christ was living in him. Thus, Paul could write, “*For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain*” (Philippians 1:21). Christ was the aim, the purpose, the goal, and the sum of his entire life and death. Death could only mean gaining more of Christ if Paul had to leave this life through execution. Death cannot be gain, however, if a person has not made Christ his life. If one is living for wealth or fame or prestige, then death is loss.

Torn Between Two Desires

Paul is torn between his two desires. Philippians 1:22–24:

If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

Paul realized if he lived, he could continue to be fruitful in the kingdom. So he wrote that it was more necessary for him to remain alive. Paul was convinced that he would live for the spiritual benefit of the Philippians and others. The result would be that their joy in Christ Jesus would overflow. The option of remaining alive was in harmony with Paul’s great concern for the spiritual progress of all the churches. One of the most beautiful passages in the New Testament is 2 Corinthians 11:28–29:

Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

Paul’s concern for the churches is also mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:15: “*So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well . . .*” This verse is

translated: “*And I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. . .*” in the New American Standard Bible. To depart and be with Christ is what Paul desired because it is the better alternative..

Departing is in contrast with living in the body. Departing from the body means being with Christ. Faithful Christians, like Paul, would prefer to be with God: “*We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord*” (2 Corinthians 5:8). The Greek phrase “*it is much rather better*” is translated “*which is better by far*” and means “by far the best.” Paul’s statement about death greatly contrasts Socrates’ statement made before he was given hemlock, a deadly poison. Socrates spoke these words as he was about to drink the hemlock: “The time has come for us to part—for me to die and for you to live—but which of us is going to a better thing is uncertain.” Paul had absolute certainty about his life and about his death; he knew he would go to be with the Lord when he died.

Paul knew it was necessary for him to live for the progress and joy of the faithful. Philippians 1:25–26:

Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

The joy in Christ would overflow to the church if Paul lived. So he considered their needs more than he considered his personal desire.

Living in a Manner Worthy of the Gospel

Responsibility Toward the Gospel

Paul gave the church in Philippi a solemn exhortation in Philippians 1:27:

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel

Paul exhorted the Philippian Christians to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. “*Whatever happens*” referred to the uncertainty in Paul’s life of whether he would ever return to Philippi or only hear about them. Their responsibility was precisely the same whether Paul was with the church or absent. The phrase “*conduct yourselves*” is from an expression in the Greek language which means to “live as citizens.” The people in Philippi prided themselves on their Roman citizenship. When the owners of the slave girl opposed Paul and Silas, they brought them before the magistrates and said: “. . . *These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice*” (Acts 16:20–21). But Paul was referring to a higher citizenship, the one he also wrote about in Philippians 3:20: “*But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.*” He told them to live worthy of the gospel not because they were Roman citizens, but because they were citizens of Heaven. In other New Testament scriptures Paul used similar expressions about Christians conducting themselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Paul wrote the church in Rome to receive Phoebe in a way “worthy of the saints” (cf. Romans 16:2). Paul urged the church in Ephesus to live a life “worthy of the calling” they have received (cf. Ephesians 4:1). Paul prayed that the Colossian Christians might “live a life worthy of the Lord” and please Him in every way (cf. Colossians 1:10). Christians are partakers of a high calling and their response should not be one of listlessness and indifference. Their response should be whole-hearted dedication and service to the Lord without any compromise.

Standing and Contending for the Faith of the Gospel

If the Christians conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, Paul will know that they: “*stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel*” (Philippians 1:27). Steadfastness and unity are required for God’s people and are emphasized in this letter and throughout the New Testament: “. . . you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends” (Philippians 4:1). Paul wrote a similar scripture about standing firm in 1 Corinthians 15:58:

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Another exhortation about unity is found in Ephesians 4:3: “*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*”

“*The faith of the gospel*” mentioned at the end of Philippians 1:27 means “the body of revealed truth that was given to the church.” The churches in Judea heard the report about Paul: “. . . that the man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy” (Galatians 1:23). Jude also wrote about the faith: “. . . contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3).

Paul taught that Christians should expect opposition from an unbelieving world in Philippians 1:28:

. . . without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved--and that by God.

Paul told the church in Thessalonica there would be trials and persecution. 1 Thessalonians 3:3–4:

. . . so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.

Paul told them not to be frightened or intimidated by such opposition. Their faithful endurance under persecution would be a sign that those who opposed the church would be destroyed and the faithful would be saved. Philippians 1:28:

. . . without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.

There are two gifts from Christ found in Philippians 1:29–30:

For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Paul and Barnabas returned to some cities to encourage the disciples to remain faithful even during hardships: “strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true in the faith. ‘We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God’ . . .” (Acts 14:22). Paul wrote Timothy that all believers would be persecuted: “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).

The Christians were encouraged to persevere knowing that they would suffer as Paul had in Philippi. Paul still had struggles as he wrote this letter from prison about receiving

opposition. He encouraged the Christians to be steadfast and to maintain their faith in spite of all opposition.

Imitating Christ's Humility

Introduction

In chapter five the focus of our attention will be on the first eleven verses of Philippians chapter two. “Imitating Christ’s humility is the emphases of this section of Scripture.

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death of a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory to God the Father.

The church at Philippi was a great New Testament church, and Paul thanked God every time he remembered them. They had fellowship with him in the gospel, and they were generous and loving and sacrificial. They were his “joy and crown.” There is no serious false teaching which they had tolerated nor is there any gross immoral conduct among them. However, no church is free from the danger of discord, rivalry and strife. This is especially true in a growing church that is militant and evangelistic. There can be personality clashes among active Christians who have deep convictions and zeal for God. There is not found in the Philippian church the same serious division which Paul had to rebuke at Corinth, but whatever friction and discord existed merited an exhortation to unity and humility.

Exhortation to Humility and Unity

Four Spiritual Realities That Produce and Maintain Unity

Paul gives an exhortation to unity and to humility in the first four verses of chapter two. There are four spiritual realities, according to this passage, that produce and maintain unity. First, he says, *“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ.”* Jesus, of course, had brought man into a fellowship with him in His body. And those in fellowship with him should be united with each other. In John 10:16 Jesus anticipated the call of the Gentiles into the body of Christ. He said, *“I have other sheep which are not of this flock. I must bring them also, and they, too, will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”* Jesus had also prayed that His followers would be united. In John 17:20–21 he said, *“I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.”* The encouragement that we get from being united to Christ should be an incentive to maintain unity and harmony.

The second incentive or reality is, “*... if any comfort from his love. . .*” The New International text which we have used here indicates that the comfort comes from His love. It is His love for us that should be an encouragement to unity and to humility. Christ’s love for us is a strong incentive for pleasing Him and for doing His will in all matters, including this one of unity. In 2 Corinthians 5:14 Paul said, “*For Christ’s love compels us.*” One translation there says, “*The love of Christ leaves us no choice.*” In 1 John 4:10–11 John wrote, “*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*” A little later he writes, “*We love because he first loved us.*” The love that Christians have for God and the love that Christians have for each other come from the fact that they have learned love from Him who first loved us.

The third incentive Paul mentions is, “*... if any fellowship with the Spirit . . .*” It is through the Spirit that men have been brought into this one body. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 Paul says, “*For we were all baptized into the one body through the Spirit—whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*” In Ephesians 2:18 he says, “*For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*” The church is God’s temple. It is indwelt by the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 Paul says to the Corinthian Christians, “*Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?*” In Ephesians 2:22 he wrote about the church being the temple of God. He says, “*In him you, too, are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.*” In that very beautiful benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14 Paul wrote about the Spirit, “*May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*” The joint participation in the Spirit is again a strong incentive to harmony and unity. In Ephesians 4:3 Paul said, “*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*”

Now, the fourth incentive: “. . . if any tenderness and compassion . . .” When Jesus was on earth, he was motivated by tenderness and compassion in His dealing with people that were lost and wayward. One time he looked over a scene and saw people there that were scattered about. Matthew says in Matthew 9:36, “*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*” Christians are to clothe themselves with compassion, according to Colossians 3:12–13 where Paul said,

Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

An attitude of tenderness and compassion would help to solve many of the problems of friction and disharmony among God’s people. Instead of some superficial advice like, “Sink your differences and live in peace,” Paul would appeal to these lofty motives. In view of the fact that you have: (1) “Any encouragement from being united with Christ;” (2) “Any comfort from his love;” (3) “Any fellowship with the Spirit;” and (4) “Any tenderness and compassion.”

Three Qualities to Make Paul’s Joy Complete

He says, “. . . then make my joy complete . . .” Paul always prayed with joy when he thought about the Philippian saints and their participation with him in the gospel (cf. 1:4). Remember that he called them, “*my joy and my crown.*” And yet that joy was not complete because of the disunity that existed among them. He said, “You need to be like-minded.”

They needed this like-mindedness in view, first of all, of the pressures from without. There was opposition. In chapter 1:27 he had just written,

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence I will know that you stand firm in one spirit contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.

So because of the pressures from without, they needed to have a spirit of being like-minded, that they might present a united front as they faced the opposition of an unbelieving world.

In the second place, they needed to be like-minded for the internal harmony of the body. Peter wrote about this kind of thing in 1 Peter 3:8 when he said, “*Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.*” In this context Paul says, “*...having the same love.*” This involves a cherishing of mutual affections. A beautiful passage in 1 Peter 1:22 says, “*Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.*” In this context Paul says, “*Be one in spirit and purpose.*” This involves a harmony of the minds as well as thinking with one purpose. Paul had this in mind when he wrote the Romans. After writing about the strong and the weak and the problems they sometimes had with each other, he said in Romans 15:5–6, “*May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Three Characteristics of Humility

In verses 3 and 4 Paul exhorts these Philippians to humility. He said in verse 3, “*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. . .*” This spirit of selfish ambition Jesus encountered even when he was here among His followers. In Mark chapter 10 James and John wanted to sit at His right hand and His left hand in glory. The other apostles were indignant, probably because they wanted that same

position for themselves! And even on the night of His betrayal we find that Jesus encountered this attitude in the upper room. Which of them was going to be greatest was the dispute they were having. Jesus told them that the one who is greatest among you must be the servant of all. Jesus taught a different spirit from the selfish ambition. He said this kind of spirit must not be in His followers. He said in Luke 22:25–26,

The kings of the earth lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them are given the title Benefactor. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.

The early church also had problems from this attitude of selfish ambition and vain deceit. There was this Diotrephes, “*who loved to be first*,” according to 3 John verse 9. Some of the teachers who stirred up trouble for Paul were actually doing so out of motivations of selfish ambition (cf. Philippians 1:17). Surely one of the most destructive attitudes in the church today throughout the world is that of striving for power and position. The determination to be number one, regardless. But Paul said, “*In humility consider others better than yourselves.*” What a difficult thing to do! To have this inner unity or harmony, selfish ambition and vain conceit had to be replaced by humility and by consideration of other people. In 1 Peter chapter 5 Peter wrote, “*Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God that he may lift you up in due time.*” In Ephesians 4:2 Paul wrote, “*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*” Many exhortations are given to God’s people toward humility and toward a spirit of thinking of others rather than themselves. This is what Paul says here. He says, “*Consider others better than yourselves.*” This is not easy to do, but we must remember two or three basic facts.

First, when we think of others as better than ourselves, one is not necessarily considered better in every aspect or in every respect. And second, we know our own inner weaknesses and failures. We cannot know the hearts of others. In Romans 12:10 Paul says, “*Honor one another above yourselves.*” There would be little discord and disunity today among God’s people if these verses were obeyed. He said, “*Each of you should look out not only for your own interests, but the interests of others*” (v.4). Paul had this attitude regarding lost people who needed the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 9:19 he said, “*Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.*” A little later in the same discussion he said, “*To the weak I become weak to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some*” (v. 22). This was also Paul’s attitude toward his fellow Christians. In 1 Corinthians 10:24 he said, “*Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.*” He demonstrates that this was his attitude in his own life. In 1 Corinthians 10:33 he said, “*Even as I try to please everybody in every way, for I am not seeking my own good, but the good of many so that they may be saved.*” Then he very significantly adds this statement: “*Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 11:1). And this is what Paul does here in the Philippians letter, chapter 2.

The Supreme Example of Christ

Jesus’ Example in Attitude

He turns to the example of Christ as the greatest possible incentive to unity and humility: the supreme example of Christ. In verse 5 Paul said, “*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.*” In any kind of disposition or practice, the greatest example is always that of Christ. In a discussion of the strong and the weak in Romans chapter 15, Paul said, “*Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself.*” When he wants to

teach pleasing others, he uses the example of Jesus. In a context of suffering, Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:21, “*To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow, in his steps.*” After demonstrating humility and service to others, Jesus said in John 13:15, “*And I have set you an example that you should do even as I have done for you.*” In this context of humility and looking to the interests of others, no better example could be found than the example of Jesus Christ. This is always true in any aspect of the Christian life. We may note the great heroes of faith in both the Old and New Testaments. But the greatest example is always the example of Christ.

Jesus' Example in Humility and Service

Notice now what Paul says about what Christ did in demonstrating humility and obedience. Paul said that Christ, in His very nature was God. The words “very nature” are from a Greek word, “**morphe**.” The word **morphe** does not refer to outward shape or form. It refers to the inner, abiding essence of our being. Jesus in his eternal abiding nature is God. John 1:1, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” In John 8:58 Jesus said, “*Before Abraham was born, I am,*” identifying himself with the eternal “I AM” of the Old Testament. In John 20:28 when Thomas saw the prints in Jesus’ hands and the wounds in His side, he said, “*My Lord and my God.*” Jesus accepted that confession that He was both Lord and God. The Hebrew letter also speaks about the deity of Christ. In Hebrews 1:3 the writer says, “*The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.*” Jesus is not a created being. He is God, in His eternal nature, and has never been less than God. This is the consistent teaching of the word of God throughout the Bible.

Paul says He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped or something to be held onto. Rather than hold on to His equality with God which He had by nature, He did not

refuse to leave that glory and honor and the worship of angels. Paul refers to this kind of attitude in 2 Corinthians 8:9 when he says, “*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor so that you, through his poverty, might become rich.*” In the prayer of Jesus in John 17:4–5 He refers to this previous glory that He had with the Father. He said, “*I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now,*” He says, “*Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world began.*” Paul says that Jesus became the very nature of the servant. In other words, He was not just outwardly a servant, but in His inner abiding essence, He was a servant. This context says, “*He made himself nothing,*” or he emptied himself. And this was the leaving of His glory and the outward manifestations of deity when He was on earth. He was not seen in his essential glory as God, but was seen as a Galilean peasant. But He never stopped being God, and even in the days of His flesh, He was still God. He accepted worship and praise as God, even when He was here on earth (John 9:38 and John 20:28). Paul says in His very nature He was a servant; in His inner, essential nature of serving rather than being served. This is what Jesus taught in His own lifetime. In Matthew 20:28 He said, “*Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.*” In Luke 22:27 when He was with the disciples in the upper room He said, “*But I am among you as one who serves.*” Paul also said that Jesus was “*made in human likeness.*” His humanity was real. It was so real that He could be tired and thirsty. He could be tempted. He could shed blood and He could die on a cross. John talks about that incarnation of Jesus in John 1:14 after saying, “*The Word was God,*” he said, “*The Word became flesh, and lived for a while among us.*” Hebrews 2:14 talks about the real humanity of Jesus. “*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil.*” Paul wrote in Galatians 4:4, “*But*

when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, and born under the law. . ." The New Testament teaches the full essential deity of Christ.

It also teaches His real humanity. Paul said in this context, "*He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.*" This decision was made in eternity, that Jesus would be obedient to the Father, and was followed faithfully by Jesus from his childhood throughout His entire personal ministry, even to the point of a shameful death on the cross. Earlier in Jesus' life He had said in John 6:38, "*I have come down from heaven, not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.*" In Hebrews 10:7 the Old Testament is quoted and Jesus is the one referred to here when He said, "*Then I said, 'Here I am. It is written about me in this scroll. I have come to do your will, O God.'*" And He never forgot that will and He never failed to do it.

Paul said that He was obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Death on the cross was the most shameful ignoble death that man could endure. In Galatians 3:13 Paul refers to that curse that a person was under when he was crucified. He said, "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for as it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.'*" He quotes from the book of Deuteronomy, and this is fulfilled in the death of Jesus on the cross. Such a death was offensive to both Jews and Gentiles, but it was God's one way of saving man. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:23–24, "*But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*"

The Exaltation of Christ

Then Paul turns to the exaltation of Christ in 2:9–11. He said, "*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place.*" This, of course, was the principle that Jesus had taught. "*For whoever*," he said, "*exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted*" (Matthew 23:12; Luke 14:11,

19:14). Many passages emphasize this principle. He was exalted after His death and resurrection to the right hand of God “*far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given.*” Paul said, “*Not only in the present age but also in the age to come*” (Ephesians 1:20–21). In 1 Peter 3:20 Peter says that He has gone to the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him. Jesus said in Matthew’s account that, “*All authority*” had been given unto Him in heaven and on earth.

Notice Paul said that when God raised Him from the dead and exalted Him, He gave Him a name that is above every name. Some believe that the name here that Paul is talking about is the name “Jesus.” Others believe that the name is the name “Lord.” Or others even believe that it is “Jesus Christ is Lord,” which is the confession that everybody will finally make. But we should remember also that the term, “the name” in the Bible stands for one’s character, position, place and nature. For example, in Hebrews 1:4, “*So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.*” So it is not so much the mention of the name “Jesus” or the name “Lord” that will cause every tongue to confess and every knee to bow, but it is the recognition of his character, His position, His place, His nature, and when men recognize that, they will confess Him. Everyone will finally confess Him as Lord and every knee will ultimately bow before Him.

Paul said here, that all creation will recognize that Jesus Christ is Lord. This is in harmony with other statements in the New Testament. In Revelation 5:13–14 John wrote, “*Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing; ‘To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!’*” All of this will be to the glory of God. Man’s salvation and Christ’s exaltation are always to the glory and the praise of God. In conclusion, having the same attitude that was in Christ is the key to unity, harmony, and peace among the people of God. Therefore, let us

fix our eyes on Jesus. We can think about different people who have set great examples before us. But as the writer of Hebrews says in 12:1 even though we can see all of those great witnesses who are like a cloud encompassing us about, let us fix our minds on Jesus, and that will solve most of the problems that the church has had through the years.

Shining as Stars

Philippians 2:12–18

Introduction

This section of the letter from Paul to the Philippian church begins with the expression “*Therefore*” or “*So then.*” It points back to the humility and obedience of Christ that was presented in the preceding chapter. It would also include a reference to His exaltation after His submission to the will of God. Paul then gave further exhortations to the Philippian Christians which involved their relationships with God, with each other, and with the pagan world among whom they shine like stars in the universe.

Salvation to Be Worked Out

Their Past Obedience

Paul wrote that the church in Philippi had obeyed while Paul was among them and in his absence. Philippians 2:12:

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

They had obeyed Christ by becoming Christians. They had imitated the obedience of Jesus, who was obedient unto death on a cross (cf. Philippians 2:8). The author of the book of Hebrews wrote about His obedience as well: “*Although he was*

a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). Jesus said his purpose was to do the will of His Father who sent Him: “*‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work’*” (John 4:34). Jesus said He did not come to do His own will: “*For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me*” (John 6:38).

Obedience is not optional for a believer. There is the initial obedience to the Gospel that brings a person into Christ and forgiveness of sins is obtained. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He commissioned His apostles to preach the Gospel of salvation to every person: “*Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned*” (Mark 16:15–16). The Apostle Peter stood on the Day of Pentecost and addressed the Jewish crowd. Acts 2:37–38:

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Saul of Tarsus, whose name was changed to Paul, obeyed the same Gospel. He was given instructions to go into Damascus where he would be told what he must do (cf. Acts 9:6). There Ananias commanded him: “*. . . Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name*” (Acts 22:16). Paul reminded the Roman Christians of their previous obedience in Romans 6:17–18:

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been

set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

If judgment begins with Christians, Peter asked about the end of those who do not obey God: “*... what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*” (1 Peter 4:17). Paul wrote that Christ will be revealed in blazing fire, and He will take vengeance upon those people who know not God and obey not the Gospel. 2 Thessalonians 1:8–9:

He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power

So obedience to the gospel is not an optional. People who do not obey the Gospel will be punished and shut out from the presence of the Lord.

Even children of God are called to a life of obedience. Obedience does not stop once a person becomes a Christian. It is really only beginning. Paul wrote about the reputation of the Roman Christians: “*Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you . . .*” (Romans 16:19). Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica commanding them for their obedience: “*We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things that we command*” (2 Thessalonians 3:4). Jesus said that people who love Him, will obey Him: “*If you love me, you will obey what I command*” (John 14:15). John later wrote that God’s commands are not burdensome: “*This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome*” (1 John 5:3).

There is really no conflict between faith and obedience because faith is an expression of obedience, and obedience is a demonstration of faith. Obedience is not contrary to faith. Paul wrote that he received grace and apostleship to call people

to obedience: “*Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith*” (Romans 1:5). When Paul closed the letter to the Roman church, he wrote about the ministry he was given to preach to the Gentiles so that all nations might believe and obey God (cf. Romans 16:26). The Galatian church also obeyed God: “*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*” (Galatians 3:26–27). Notice that faith led them to be baptized. Faith leads a person to obedience. The book of Hebrews shows that “*by faith*” men and women of God obeyed His will (cf. Hebrews 11). Faith and obedience are closely related.

Their Present Obedience

Paul encouraged the Philippian church to bring their salvation to completion: “*. . . continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling*” (Philippians 2:12). Some people believe this exhortation applies to the church’s responsibility to work out its problems of inner disunity. Even if this is involved, it is not all that is involved. Paul could as easily have written: “*work out your problems.*” Instead, he wrote: “*work out your salvation.*” The problems would only be solved as each individual worked out or brought to completion his salvation through Christ. Salvation, of course, is something that a person cannot earn or merit: “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast*” (Ephesians 2:8–9). Paul wrote Titus, a preacher of the Gospel, about salvation. Titus 3:5:

He saved us, not because of righteous things we have done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

There are obligations involved in the salvation one receives by the grace of God. The tragedy is that many Christians are not growing in their faith. They continue to have the same faults and weaknesses and are slaves of the same temptations. The emphasis of the Bible is: you are in order that you may be. Peter wrote that Christians have responsibilities. 1 Peter 2:9:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light

Since Christians are “called out” people of God, they have a responsibility to shine in the darkness to those about them. Paul taught the same principle to the church in Colosse. Colossians 3:1–2:

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things.

This is the working out of what God has worked in. It is to bring to completion—to carry out the goal of the salvation. Peter wrote newborn Christians to encourage them to grow in their salvation: “*Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation*” (1 Peter 2:2). In his second letter Peter wrote again about the growth that is necessary in a Christian’s life: “*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ . . .*” (2 Peter 3:18). In the same letter Peter wrote in more detail about the Christian graces that are to be added to a Christian’s life. 2 Peter 1:5–8:

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to

knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice, Christians are to continue to grow. They are to have these qualities in increasing measure.

Christians are to work out their salvation with fear and trembling (cf. Philippians 2:12). Some people have an unwholesome, morbid, and slavish fear or dread of God. That is not the fear or spirit that God wants His people to have: “*For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear*” (Romans 8:15). John wrote that there is no fear in love: “*There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love*” (1 John 4:18). Paul wrote Timothy that Christians are to be bold and full of love: “*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline*” (2 Timothy 1:7).

Christians are not to be a people motivated by fear. They should have wholesome fear, deep respect, and awe in the presence of the eternal God. It is self-distrust, a tenderness of conscience, and a vigilance against temptation. It is an attitude that shrinks from what would hurt or offend the Savior. This kind of reverence or wholesome fear was exhibited by Isaiah when he saw a vision of the Lord Almighty. His holiness and majesty caused Isaiah to cry out in Isaiah 6:5:

“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

God said through the prophet Isaiah: “*This is the one that I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word*” (Isaiah 66:2). The writer of Hebrews wrote that Christians should be thankful and worship God acceptably: “*Therefore, since we are all receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire*” (Hebrews 12:28–29). Children of God must always remember the tax collector who looked up to heaven, beat his breast, and said: “*God, have mercy on me, a sinner*” (Luke 18:13). This is the kind of reverence and awe that should be in the life of the Christian. Paul’s statement: “*. . . continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling*” (Philippians 2:12) shows the seriousness of the exhortation. It is not to be taken lightly.

God’s Work in Their Obedience

Paul did not write that a Christian is to work out his salvation by himself. Instead, Paul wrote: “*For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose*” (Philippians 2:13). God does not say: “work out your salvation all by yourselves.” Paul wrote “*work out your salvation*,” but he also wrote: “*For it is God who works in you . . .*” It is important to understand, in this scripture as well as in all of Holy Scripture, that God does take the initiative and God does provide the necessary power. It is also important to realize that man is given responsibility. He must work out the salvation that he receives from the Lord. God is working in Christians to give them the power, assurance, and confidence to work out their salvation. There are so many beautiful passages that tell a Christian that God is at work in his life. Paul wrote that God is able to do more than a person can ask or imagine because of His power: “*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us*” (Ephesians 3:20). Paul wrote that God began a good work, and He will carry it through to completion: “*Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you*

will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6). Paul believed he could do anything with the Lord’s strength: “*I can do everything through him who gives me strength*” (Philippians 4:13). Jesus reminded His disciples to remain in Him because they could do nothing apart from Him: “*. . . apart from me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5).

Paul wrote it is God who works in His child: “*to will and to act according to his good purpose*” (Philippians 2:13). Both the motivation and the ability to act come from God, but He is pleased when His rebellious children repent and turn from their wicked ways. Ezekiel wrote that God is pleased when wicked people turn to Him. Ezekiel 18:23:

“Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?” declares the Sovereign Lord. “Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their wicked ways and live? But if a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked man does, will he live?”

Ezekiel recorded a similar statement from God in Ezekiel 33:11:

“. . . I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?

Paul gave a two-fold application. He gave both the motivation and the power, but the responsibility is upon the Christian to work out his salvation. God’s elect have the instruction and motivation for pleasing Him. Paul instructed the church in Thessalonica to live a life that pleased God, and they were living such a life (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:1). When His people walk in the light, confess their sins, and grow in grace and knowledge, God is pleased.

The Christian's Influence and Effectiveness

The Action of Christian Living

Christians shine like stars in the universe when they: “*Do everything without complaining or arguing*” (Philippians 2:14). When complaining or grumbling is mentioned, Christians remember the Israelites in the wilderness because they were often guilty of complaining or murmuring. They murmured about food in Exodus 16:3:

. . . “*If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around the pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but, you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death*”

The Israelites grumbled again: “*Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the Lord . . .*” (Numbers 11:1). God heard the complaints of the grumbling Israelites, and He was displeased: “*How long will this wicked community grumble against me? . . .*” (Numbers 14:27).

Paul warned about the same kind of grumbling spirit: “*And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel*” (1 Corinthians 10:10). Peter wrote about the proper way to offer hospitality: “*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling*” (1 Peter 4:9). It is easy to show hospitality to someone and yet grumble about it after the people are gone. Christians should never do this. Paul is a great example of a person who did not grumble or complain. He learned and practiced contentment in every situation. Philippians 4:11–12:

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content

in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Paul taught the Philippians to be content, and he teaches Christians the same thing today so they can live a life of trust, free from anxiety and complaining. Philippians 4:6–7:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Paul wrote the churches in Galatia to encourage them to do things without arguing: “*If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other*” (Galatians 5:15) This refers to the disputing, debating, doubting, and wavering among the brethren. This kind of behavior was to be avoided.

The Character of Christian Living

The reason Christians are to do everything without complaining or arguing is so they can shine like stars. Philippians 2:15:

. . . so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe.

The word “*blameless*” means “moral integrity manifesting itself in the sight of others.” Paul’s conduct before the Thessalonian church was blameless: “*You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed*” (1 Thessalonians 2:10). Paul prayed they would also be blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus

Christ (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23). The word “*pure*” is from a Greek word that means “unmixed or unadulterated, sincere, and without guile.” The word “*pure*” also means “moral integrity in respect to the heart.” Paul wrote the church in Rome to encourage them to be pure: “. . . but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil” (Romans 16:19). Jesus sent out His twelve apostles with the instruction to be innocent: “*I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes as innocent as doves*” (Matthew 10:16). “*Innocent*” means “pure or harmless.”

The Consequence of Christian Living

Paul wrote that Christians who become blameless and pure will become “*children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation.*” The expression “*a crooked and depraved generation*” is an Old Testament expression about Israel. The Israelites are characterized by God as a warped and crooked generation (cf. Deuteronomy 32:5). Not only had they departed from God’s way, but they had caused God’s name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles due to their disobedience. Paul wrote about their behavior in Romans 2:24. The Jews bragged about their relationship to God, but they broke His law. They should have brought the light to the Gentiles, to those who were in darkness, but they were the cause of God’s name being blasphemed.

The Expanse of Christian Living

During Paul’s life, the pagan world was a dominion of darkness and depravity. No wonder he wrote Christians to shine as lights in the darkness. In Romans 1:18–32 there is an extended discussion of the Gentile world in Paul’s day. Paul wrote that even though wicked men knew God, they refused to acknowledge him as God. They became vain in their reasoning and their senseless hearts were darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. The godless people exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served created

things rather than the Creator. God gave them up because they had given God up.

Paul wrote the Christians to insist they no longer live as the Gentiles were living. Ephesians 4:18–19:

They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

Peter also wrote a dark picture of the depravity in the Gentile world. 1 Peter 4:3–4:

For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.

Christians had done those evil things in the past, but they had changed. People thought it strange they no longer participated in those activities. Christians have been called out of darkness to shine in that darkness.

Paul wrote about the responsibility of those people who have been called out of darkness. Philippians 2:15:

. . . so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe

“*To become blameless*” means they are blameless in the sight of men, but “*without fault*” means they should be without fault

in the sight of Almighty God. Paul wrote the Ephesian Christians to live as children of light: “*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light*” (Ephesians 5:8). Peter wrote God’s elect to be holy: “*But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all that you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy’*” (1 Peter 1:15–16).

Paul wrote the church in Philippi to shine like stars in the universe (cf. Philippians 2:15). Possibly the background for this phrase is found in the first book of the Bible where the word used for sun, moon, and stars that were created by God on the fourth day is the same word that is used by Paul (cf. Genesis 1:14–19). It is the same word used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Christians are not to shine for themselves. They are to shine for the world; Christians are to shine for others. They are not to live for themselves, but for others.

Jesus claimed to be the light of the world, and he came into a world of darkness to bring light: “*. . . I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*” (John 8:12). Jesus’ disciples were also called to be the light of the world: “*You are the light of the world . . . let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven*” (Matthew 5:14–16).

When Christians shine, they hold out the word of life: “*as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing*” (Philippians 2:16). The blameless life of a believer, makes the Christian life very attractive to others, but the spoken word is also necessary. It is easy to say, “all we need to do is to live the right kind of life.” But Paul wrote not only about living a righteous life, he also wrote about teaching Christ to bring men to salvation: “*For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God*” (1 Peter 1:23). When Paul wrote about the Jews

rejecting Christ and the Gospel, he also wrote about their efforts to keep Christians from speaking to the Gentiles so they could be saved (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:14–15). The Gospel is the Word of life because it brings life in Christ to those who respond to it. It is also called “*this message of salvation*” in Acts 13:26. Paul wrote the brethren in Philippi that they should hold out the Word of life in order that on the day of Christ he might boast that he did not run or labor for nothing. Paul anticipated boasting or glorying in the day of judgment because of the transformed people who would be saved through the Gospel he had preached. 1 Thessalonians 2:19:

For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

Paul’s Confident Boasting

The Character of Paul’s Labor in Philippi

The quality of service, of course, would be the thing that would determine the kind of work that Paul had done. He wrote: “. . . that I did not run or labor for nothing” (Philippians 2:16). This would be the case if his converts returned to the world and did not remain faithful to the Lord Jesus. They could return to the Law. They could return to the world and apostatize from God. Then Paul’s works would not be fruitful. It would have been in vain. This is an important truth for Christians today. The person who is teaching the Word can help people to obey Jesus and become His children. If the converts are faithful to Him, the teacher who has brought them to the Lord will receive a reward. If the converts are unfaithful, then he has run or labored in vain.

Paul wrote the Corinthian Christians in some detail that he laid a foundation by preaching the Lord Jesus Christ. Then someone else built on it. Paul warns that each builder should be

careful how he builds. No one should lay any foundation other than Jesus Christ. If any man builds on the foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is. On the judgment day fire will test the quality of each man's work. If the converts are still faithful to God, the builder will receive his reward (1 Corinthians 3:10–15). Paul did not mean that people who live ungodly lives — adulterers, fornicators and rebellious people — will still be saved. Paul meant that faithful converts will demonstrate the effectiveness of the work of the Gospel teacher. His work has not been in vain.

Paul wrote about the cost of his labor in Philippi: “*But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you*” (Philippians 2:17). Some people think this verse is based on a first century practice where libations or drink offerings were poured on the sacrifices offered to a god. It may rather be related to the drink offerings of oil or wine which were offered in the Old Testament sacrificial system (cf. Exodus 29:40-41; Numbers 15:1–10; Numbers 28). The Philippians' lives were a sacrifice to God. The Roman Christians were to offer themselves as living sacrifices: “*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship*” (Romans 12:1). The writer of Hebrew encouraged Christians to offer pleasing sacrifices to God: “*And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased*” (Hebrews 13:16). Toward the end of Paul's life, he wrote that his life was like a drink offering: “*For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure*” (2 Timothy 4:6).

Even if Paul were poured out like a drink offering, he was glad and rejoiced with them: “*... I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me*” (Philippians 2:17–18). Paul encouraged them, in turn, to rejoice

with him. In this section of the book Paul exhorted the Christians to continued faithfulness and to be a reflector which radiates the greatness of God to the whole world.

Timothy and Epaphroditus

Philippians 2:19 –30

Introduction

Paul mentioned earlier the possibility of his martyrdom, being poured out like a drink offering. He believed he might have to die because of his allegiance to Jesus. Paul wrote more about his future plans, including the possibility of his release and return to Philippi. He anticipated sending Timothy to them even before his release. Timothy is one of the preachers who helped him evangelize Philippi previously. Timothy would in turn bring back news to Paul about the Philippians.

Paul wrote of the more immediate coming of one of their own, Epaphroditus, who was the bearer of the letter. This chapter concerns these two fellow-workers of Paul. Both of these men had the mind of Christ and looked to the interests of others, as their Master had done.

Timothy, The Like-Minded Brother

Timothy — Paul’s Son in the Faith

Timothy joined Paul and Barnabas after their stay in Lystra, during their first missionary journey (cf. Acts 16:1–3). When Paul wrote the Christians in Corinth telling them he was sending Timothy: “*For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord . . .*” (1 Cor 4:17). When Paul wrote Timothy, he called him: “*my true son in the faith*” (1 Timothy 1:2). Obviously, Paul and Timothy grew close on the first journey.

Timothy's mother was a Jewish Christian, and his father was a Greek. His sincere faith first lived in his grandmother Lois and in his mother Eunice (cf. 2 Timothy 1:5). They were the ones who apparently taught him the holy scriptures from his infancy: "*And how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 3:15).

Timothy was with Paul and Silas when they preached and established the church in Philippi (cf. Acts 16:12-40). He was also with Paul in Thessalonica and Berea (cf. Acts 17:1-15), he joined Paul in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:5), and Timothy was with him in Ephesus during Paul's third journey (cf. Acts 19:21-22).

Timothy was also with Paul when he wrote a number of his epistles. When Paul wrote Colossians, the name Timothy was with his name in the salutation as it is in the Philippian letter. His name is also connected with Paul's in the greeting of five other New Testament letters: 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, and Colossians. Timothy sent greetings to the saints in Rome (cf. Romans 16:21). He received at least two letters from Paul, including the last letter that Paul wrote — the book of 2 Timothy. Timothy is mentioned 24 times in Paul's writings. Timothy was a man in whom Paul had a great deal of confidence and trust. They worked closely over a period of many years. Thus, Paul wrote: "*I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you*" (Philippians 2:19).

Timothy — Paul's Ambassador To The Churches

When Paul was unable to visit churches that needed instruction or encouragement, he often sent Timothy as his special messenger. Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica to strengthen and encourage the brethren. 1 Thessalonians 3:1-3:

So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent

Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials . . .

Notice that Timothy was sent to strengthen and encourage them during their trials. Paul wrote the Corinthians to tell them he was sending Timothy. 1 Corinthians 4:17:

For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

Paul encouraged the brethren to accept Timothy. 1 Corinthians 16:10–11:

If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. No one, then, should refuse to accept him. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers.

Paul sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia while he stayed in the province of Asia. (cf. Acts 19:22). And Paul wrote the church in Philippi that he hoped to send Timothy to them: “*I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you*” (Philippians 2:19).

Much can be learned about Timothy because Paul sent him several places. Timothy was apparently willing to go anywhere. A message was absolutely safe with Timothy, and he always represented Paul accurately. Timothy served the genuine interest of others, even as Paul did. Paul wrote he would be cheered when he received news from Timothy about the

Philippian Christians. He must have anticipated good news about their progress from disunity and despondency to like-mindedness and unity. This message would make his joy complete. Paul showed a similar concern for the church in Thessalonica when he received the good news from Timothy that they were standing firm despite severe opposition: “*For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord*” (1 Thessalonians 3:8). Paul was deeply concerned about the church in Corinth. He failed to enter a door opened by the Lord to preach the gospel because he had not found Titus at Troas (cf. 2 Corinthians 2:12–13). Paul revealed when he would send Timothy to Philippi: “*I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me*” (Philippians 2:23). Whenever Paul knew the results of his trial, whether he would be executed or released, he planned to send Timothy with that news.

Unique in His Concern and Service

Notice how Paul described Timothy: “*I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare*” (Philippians 2:20). Timothy obviously shared with Paul a genuine interest in others and demonstrated it often. Paul expressed his love and concern for others in 1 Corinthians 9:19, 22:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might gain some.

Paul encouraged Christians to not be a stumbling block to anyone. His attitude was to seek the good of others so they might be saved. 1 Corinthians 10:32–33:

Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God — even as I try to please

everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of the many, so that they may be saved.

Paul was deeply concerned about all the churches. 2 Corinthians 11:28–29:

Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

Paul was concerned about all members of the body of Christ, and he taught that other Christians should have the same concern for one another so there would be no division. 1 Corinthians 12:25–26:

So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

So the concern that Paul had and the concern that Timothy had is the concern that God's people should have for each other today. Christians should not merely seek their own interests, they should seek the interests of others.

Paul must have been disappointed to have to write about their selfish attitude: “*For everyone looks out for his own interests and not those of Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 2:21). This is a rather surprising statement in view of what Paul wrote in Philippians 1:14: “*Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.*” But a number of points need to be remembered. First, remember that some preached Christ out of envy and rivalry, and some out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing they could stir up trouble for

Paul while he was in chains (cf. Philippians 1:15–17). Second, remember that Paul wrote that no one came to his support: “*At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me*” (2 Timothy 4:16). Where were Luke, Titus, Aristarchus, Tychicus, Epaphras, Mark, and others? Perhaps they were away at the time on a mission for Paul, or they may have been involved in evangelistic work someplace else. It is possible, of course, that other people were spiritually qualified to come, but they were unable because of other factors such as their business or work. There was only one man who was available and shared Paul’s deep love and concern for others. That man was Timothy. Paul had no man who was like Timothy. It may be asked today: “Where are those people whom God can send to mission fields and other needy areas where hardships and dangers prevail? How many people are willing to seek not their own good, but the good of others so others may know Jesus Christ? “*For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 2:21).

A Tried and Proven Servant

Paul wrote that Timothy had proven himself: “*But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel*” (Philippians 2:22). Paul’s attitude toward Timothy is shown. The Christians in Philippi knew that Timothy was like a son to Paul, and Timothy served with Paul in the work of the Gospel. Timothy served as a slave, like Jesus. Jesus was a slave or servant and was obedient even unto death, death on a cross (cf. Philippians 2:7–8). Jesus told His apostles that He had come to serve: “*Just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many*” (Matthew 20:28). Timothy was not a slave of Paul, he was a slave of Jesus Christ. Paul did not say, “He served me,” instead, he said: “. . . *He has served with me in the work of the gospel*” (Philippians 2:22).

Paul's Future Plans To Visit The Philippians

Paul planned to return to Philippi after his release from the Roman prison: “*And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon*” (Philippians 2:24). “*Confident in the Lord*” means “everything that Paul did was in accordance with God’s will.” As Paul was able to see the will of God, then he would do what God wanted him to do. Paul hoped in the Lord (cf. Philippians 2:19). Paul’s actions were always “in the Lord” or “according to the Lord’s will.”

When Paul was in the city of Ephesus, they wanted him to stay longer, but he declined to do so. He promised to return if it was God’s will: “*But as he left, he promised, ‘I will come back if it is God’s will’ . . .*” (Acts 18:21). James wrote that Christians ought to make plans according to God’s will: “*Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that’*” (James 4:15). Christians should not live apart from the will of God.

Epaphroditus — The Gift and The Gift-bringer

The Return of a Special Gift, Epaphroditus

Paul felt it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi. Philippians 2:25:

But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.

The name “*Epaphroditus*” means “lovely” or “charming.” The name came from the goddess Aphrodite. Strangely, many Christians in the first century were named after Greek gods. This did not mean that they were followers of those gods; it only meant that the men and women got their names from the Greek gods. The days of the week on a modern-day calendar are also named after pagan gods. A shortened form of

Epaphroditus is the name Epaphras who was described as “one of you” and a servant of Jesus Christ to the Colossians (cf. Colossians 4:12). Paul wrote that Epaphras was a “fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus” (cf. Philemon 23). But there is no reason to identify the two men as the same person. Obviously, Epaphroditus was a Philippian and Epaphras was a Colossian.

Paul called Epaphroditus his brother (cf. Philippians 2:25). I have been amazed at how many times Paul used the term brother when he wrote to Christians. In 1 and 2 Thessalonians alone he wrote of Christians as his brothers 22 times. Paul was in Christ, and they were in Christ so they were brothers to one another.

Epaphroditus is also described as a fellow worker. Paul, rather than exalting himself above others, recognized them as rendering to God the same type of service that he rendered. He wrote about his fellow workers in this way. Paul described Priscilla and Aquila as his fellow workers: “*Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 16:3). Paul also described Timothy as: “*my fellow worker who sends his greetings to you*” (Roman 16:21). Paul called Timothy God’s fellow worker in spreading the Gospel of Christ (cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:2). Paul also described Philemon as a fellow worker: “. . . *To Philemon our dear brother and fellow worker*” (Philemon 1). Paul also called Titus his fellow worker: “*As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you*” (2 Corinthians 8:23).

Not only was Epaphroditus a brother and fellow worker, he was also a fellow soldier. Epaphroditus was a comrade in arms in the struggle against the forces of evil. By using such a term, Paul reinforced the idea of a spiritual warfare and that Epaphroditus had a role in it. He was Paul’s fellow soldier. Paul wrote to Archippus and called him “*our fellow soldier*” (cf. Philemon 2). Military terms were often used by Paul when he described Christian responsibilities. 2 Timothy 2:3–4:

Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer.

When Paul was about to lay down his own life, he wrote: “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*” (2 Timothy 4:7).

Paul also described Epaphroditus as “*your messenger whom you sent to take care of my needs.*” The word “messenger” is translated from the Greek word **apostolon**. The word “apostle” also comes from the same Greek word. Jesus selected twelve apostles, and then Paul was also chosen by Him and had a unique relationship and function. All of the apostles were specially chosen and commissioned by Christ, and they, along with prophets, made known the New Testament revelation. Ephesians 2:19–20:

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Paul wrote about the mystery of the Gospel which had been hidden, but was revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets. Ephesians 3:4–5:

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

These men had special responsibilities, but there were other men who were also called apostles. They were men who were

sent. “*Apostles*” comes from the Greek word **apostoloi** which means “sent out.”

There were men who were selected by churches and sent by the churches with certain responsibilities and functions, and, hence, could be called apostles. Luke wrote about “*the apostles Barnabas and Saul,*” men who were selected and sent out by the church in Antioch (cf. Acts 13:2–3; 14:14). The Holy Spirit asked the church in Antioch to set apart and send out Saul and Barnabas for the work. Paul wrote that the brothers in Corinth were representatives of the churches: “... as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches . . .” (2 Corinthians 8:23). The word “representatives” is also translated from the Greek word **apostoloi** which means “apostles.” The representatives were sent out by the churches to perform a certain function. They were apostles of the church, who were selected and sent by the church to bear the contributions to the poor among the saints in Judea. Hence, they were rightly called apostles.

Paul wrote that Epaphroditus was their messenger since he had been selected by the Philippian church. He had been commissioned by the church to take the contribution to Paul and to care for his needs. But Epaphroditus not only brought Paul gifts from the Philippian brothers, he was a gift as well since he stayed and took care of Paul’s needs while Paul remained a prisoner in Rome.

The Illness Of Epaphroditus

Paul wrote about the illness of Epaphroditus: “*For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died . . .*” (Philippians 2:26–27). Apparently Epaphroditus became ill either on the way to Rome or after he arrived there. When the Philippian church learned about his illness, they were grieved. Epaphroditus, in turn, learned that they knew of his illness, and this caused him to be distressed. The word “*distressed*” is a strong word that was also used when Jesus became sorrowful and troubled in

Gethsemane (cf. Matthew 26:37). But Paul wrote that God had mercy on Epaphroditus: “*Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow*” (Philippians 2:27). Even though Paul had the gift of healing, he realized that Epaphroditus might die.

This verse proves that healing was not a part of atonement. This is confirmed by other New Testament passages. Paul wrote Timothy about his stomach problems: “*Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses*” (1 Timothy 5:23). Timothy was not healed by Paul, he was told to take certain medicines. Paul did not heal Trophimus: “*...and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus*” (2 Timothy 4:20). Paul had a thorn in the flesh, some kind of painful malady, that he asked the Lord to remove, but it was not removed. 2 Corinthians 12:7–9:

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassing great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’ ...

Paul’s illness was not healed; yet he still was a man of God. He trusted in God. He was saved by the blood of Jesus, but he did not have perfect physical health that is often promised by some teachers today.

Paul did not write whether the recovery of Epaphroditus was instant or gradual. But Paul recognized that God was the one who caused Epaphroditus to recover.

The Charge To The Philippians

Paul was eager to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi: “*Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when*

you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety" (Philippians 2:28). Paul knew the Philippians would be glad to see Epaphroditus, and Paul would have less anxiety.

Paul wrote the Philippians to welcome Epaphroditus: Philippians 2:29–30:

Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

Some of the Philippian Christians may have had some reservation about Epaphroditus returning to Philippi. The church had sent him to Rome to take care of Paul's needs. Paul assured them that he agreed with Epaphroditus' decision to return and urged them to welcome him with honor. Paul urged the church in Rome to receive Phoebe. Romans 16:1–2:

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.

Paul encouraged the Christians to welcome Epaphroditus in the Lord with great joy. Their grief of knowing of his illness would turn to joy when they saw that he was, indeed, in good health.

Paul encouraged the brethren to honor men like him. It is an interesting biblical point that men are to be honored who have the characteristics that Epaphroditus had. In 1 Corinthians 16:17–18 Paul wrote about some other workers who needed honor:

I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking

*from you. For they refreshed my spirit and yours also.
Such men deserve recognition.*

This honor is in harmony with the principle that Jesus taught in Mark 10:42–44:

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”

Notice, Paul wrote that Epaphroditus risked his life and almost died for the work of Christ. Paul faced the same kind of risk constantly as he traveled about preaching the Gospel of Jesus. In Paul’s farewell talk he told the Ephesian elders of the warning that the Holy Spirit had given him. Acts 20:22–24:

And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.

Paul wrote that Epaphroditus came “*to make up for the help that you could not give me.*” The Philippian church had been concerned about Paul and desired to help him, but they had lacked opportunity: “*. . .Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it*” (Philippians 4:10).

Summary Of Epaphroditus

Epaphroditus' return from Rome to Philippi is mentioned in Philippians 2:25. The reasons for his return and his ardent desires are given in verses 26–28. The expected gladness of his return is mentioned in verse 28 as is Paul's statement that he would have less anxiety. Paul wrote the church about the manner they should receive Epaphroditus in verses 29–30.

Conclusion

Besides the example of Jesus in Philippians 2, there are three other great examples of self-renouncing attitudes. First, Paul had the same attitude that Jesus had; he was willing to be poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and the service coming from their faith (cf. Philippians 2:17). Second, Timothy took a genuine interest in the welfare of the Philippian Christians, not seeking his own interests, but those of Jesus Christ (cf. Philippians 2:20–21). Third, Epaphroditus risked his life in order to serve others who were in need (cf. Philippians 2:30). Philippians 3:17 sums up the purpose of this chapter and perhaps the story of the whole book: "*Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.*"

No Confidence in the Flesh

Philippians 3:1–11

Introduction

Life is like a mail-box; it receives things that are valuable, even priceless, but other things that are only fit for the waste basket. Every life should have its waste basket where useless things can be thrown away.

Paul, in this section of Philippians, looked upon his life as one with great privileges and attainments. But after coming in contact with Christ, he made another assessment of his life and found that the things he had trusted were more than useless; he called them “*rubbish*.” Paul felt that they served as a barrier to his being what God wanted him to be. The same can be true today, so Christians need to pay close attention to the Apostle Paul’s message.

Admonition To Rejoice In The Lord

Keynote Of The Epistle

Notice his admonition: “*Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you*” (Philippians 3:1). Paul encouraged the church to “*rejoice in the Lord!*” This statement is the keynote of the epistle. Paul prayed for the church with joy: “*In all of my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy*” (Philippians 1:4). Paul encouraged the church to rejoice: “*So you too should be glad and rejoice with me*” (Philippians 2:18). In Philippians 2:29 he wrote them to welcome

Epaphroditus with great joy and honor men like him. In the last chapter he wrote again to remind them to rejoice: "*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*" (Philippians 4:4).

A Prized Possession Of Paul

Paul possessed this joy and demonstrated it in many different circumstances. About midnight after Paul and Silas had been beaten and put into stocks in the inner cell of the Philippian prison, they were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them (cf. Acts 16:25). Paul rejoiced even when he was sorrowful: "*sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing and yet possessing everything*" (2 Corinthians 6:10).

Joy Not Based On Outward Circumstances

The joy, which Paul taught and practiced, was not based upon his outward circumstances. Instead, his joy was a result of his relationship with the Lord. Therefore, he always possessed the joy.

The Necessity Of Repetition

Paul was not troubled to write the church the same thing again: "*It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you*" (Philippians 3:1). This verse may refer to his exhortation to rejoice. The Philippian Christians may have been despondent and discouraged. So Paul urged them toward a joyful trust in God. There is another possibility as well. The repetition could refer to the warning about adversaries who opposed the Gospel, whether they be pagans or Judaizers. In the immediate context he warned them about Judaizers and the influence they would have upon a Christian's faithfulness to God. Regardless, the repetition of vital truths and warnings about those who would lead Christians astray are always a "*safeguard*." Peter also realized the importance of reminders: "*So I will always remind you of*

these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have” (2 Peter 1:12). Jude also wrote reminders: “*Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe*” (Jude 5). So, it is necessary for Christians to have repetitious teaching. Even though they know certain things, they still need to be taught again and warned again and again.

Beware of the Judaizers

The Danger of Contamination

Paul warned about Judaizers: “*Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh*” (Philippians 3:2). In the Bible the term “dog” is used consistently as a term of reproach and shame. A dog was considered an unclean animal. From the book of Deuteronomy through the book of Revelation the term “dog” is used in a derogatory manner. In Deuteronomy 23:17 it is used of a male prostitute. When David was pursued by Saul, he referred to himself as a dog: “*Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea?*” (1 Samuel 24:14). A dog was a despised animal of little significance. David asked why the king of Israel pursued such an insignificant being? While teaching about hypocrites, Jesus said: “*Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs*” (Matthew 7:6). Jesus responded to the request of a Canaanite woman, a non-Jew: “*It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs*” (Matthew 15:26). In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus said: “*Even the dogs came and licked his sores*” (Luke 16:21).

These passages should not be read with the background of a person from the western world. They should be read with the background of a person from the eastern world where dogs were despised. John referred to evil people outside the holy city as dogs: “*Outside are the dogs, those who practice magical*

arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood” (Revelation 22:15).

The dogs of Paul’s day would roam the streets, sometimes in packs, hunting in garbage heaps, snarling, and growling at people who came near. And in Paul’s day the Gentiles were looked upon as unclean and called “dogs” by the Jews. Paul took this term and used it for the Judaizers, men who followed him wherever he went, snapping at his heels. They caused trouble by undermining his authority. They tried to force the Gentile converts to be circumcised and to keep the Law of Moses. Every time Paul established a church, the Judaizers were behind him, like snarling, growling dogs. Thus, Paul warned the Philippian brethren to “*watch out for those dogs.*” Paul forcefully wrote against the Judaizers in 2 Corinthians and Galatians.

The dogs are called “*. . . those men who do evil . . .*” (Philippians 3:2). By rejecting the authority of Paul and denying the Gospel of the grace of God for salvation apart from the Law of Moses, they were “*deceitful workmen*” as Paul called them in 2 Corinthians 11:13. Jesus told the teachers of the law and the Pharisees that they kept men from God. Matthew 23:13–15:

. . . You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he has becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

The third thing that Paul called these men was “*mutilators of the flesh.*” The word is “*concision*” in some translations rather than circumcision. Circumcision was first commanded by God to Abraham (cf. Genesis 17). It was a sign of the

covenant between God and Abraham and his descendants. It was to be more than a sign in the flesh. Even in the Old Testament there was to accompany the fleshly circumcision, a circumcision of the heart, an attitude of submission and dedication to God. God commanded the Israelites: "*Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer*" (Deuteronomy 10:16). Christians should realize that God has always considered circumcision more than merely of the flesh; it was to be something of the heart. The Prophet Jeremiah encouraged the men of Judah and Jerusalem to return to God: "*Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your hearts, you men of Judah and people of Jerusalem . . .*" (Jeremiah 4:4).

In the New Testament physical circumcision was considered an optional matter, a matter of indifference. Whether a person is circumcised or not, does not effect one's salvation, nor is it evil within itself. Three different times Paul wrote that circumcision was nothing and uncircumcision was nothing: "*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love*" (Galatians 5:6). Paul wrote later in the same letter: "*Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation*" (Galatians 6:15). Paul wrote the church in Corinth the same message: "*Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts*" (1 Corinthians 7:19). These three passages show that keeping the commandments of God, being a new creature, and serving God from the heart are what matter, not the fact that a man was circumcised physically. But the Judaizers, "*those dogs,*" wanted to bind circumcision, the Law of Moses, upon the Gentile converts.

Some men from Judea were teaching the brothers in Antioch that unless they were circumcised, they could not be saved. Acts 15:5:

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses.”

Paul argued that to receive circumcision for salvation was actually a rejection of Jesus and his atoning sacrifice; it was a rejection of the Gospel of grace. Paul sternly warned the Galatian Christians about circumcision in Galatians 5:2–4:

Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all . . . You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Circumcision in the flesh, divorced from faith in God and the Messiah, Jesus Christ, was nothing more than mutilation, according to Paul. It was similar to the practice of pagans who slashed and cut themselves in order to please their gods. So Paul wrote Christians to beware, not of the circumcision, but of the concision, “*those mutilators of the flesh.*”

In the Old Testament mutilation was condemned by God. God told Moses to tell the entire assembly: “*Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord*” (Leviticus 19:28). When Elijah and the prophets of the pagan god Baal met on Mount Carmel, Baal did not respond to their cries: “*So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed*” (1 Kings 18:28).

Stephen scolded the Jews who were not circumcised in heart: “*You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!*” (Acts 7:51).

The People and Nature of True Circumcision

According to Paul, what really matters is circumcision of the heart. True circumcision is not circumcision of the flesh. True circumcision is circumcision of the heart. Romans 2:28–29:

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

Paul also referred to the true circumcision in Colossians 2:11–12:

In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Paul warned about Judaizers who wanted to bind the Law of Moses on men because their circumcision was not based on faith in God and the Messiah. Paul said this circumcision is only a mutilation of the flesh.

According to Paul, true circumcision is Christians who worship by the Spirit of God. Philippians 3:3–4:

For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more.

Worship is not merely an outward formality, a ritualism; it is from the heart. It springs from a deep gratitude and appreciation for what believers are and for what they have in Christ. Jesus talked about true worship in John 4:24: "*God is Spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.*" True worship is motivated, inspired, and controlled by the Spirit of God. Paul wrote that the true circumcision are those "*who worship by the Spirit of God.*"

Second, the true circumcision are those "*who glory in Christ Jesus.*" There is no effort to glory or boast in one's own righteousness or attainments. The glory is not in one's self; it is in Christ and His atoning sacrifice, His death on the cross. 1 Corinthians 1:28–31:

He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

Paul described his viewpoint of boasting in the Lord in Galatians 6:14: "*May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*"

The third characteristic of true circumcision is people who put no confidence in the flesh. "In the flesh" would refer to any achievement, attainment, privilege, or accomplishment that one might trust in to have a right relationship with God. This attainment might come from ancestry, race, religious background, or any achievements of the past. Paul demonstrated that if anyone has reasons for such confidence in the flesh, he had even more.

Fleshly Attainments That Give No Confidence

Credentials of Paul According to His Flesh

Paul's reasons for confidence in the flesh are discussed in Philippians 3:4–6. This section is closely related to Paul's boasting in 2 Corinthians 11:16: "*I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then receive me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting.*" Circumstances forced Paul to affirm the grounds that he had for boasting. He had far more grounds for boasting than his opponents who sought to undermine his authority.

Notice the privileges of Paul and his ability to boast in the flesh. Philippians 3:4–5:

... though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee

Paul was circumcised on the eighth day. This was in accordance to God's plan for circumcision given to Abraham. Genesis 17:12:

... every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring.

Paul was not an Ishmaelite circumcised at the age of thirteen as was Ishmael (Cf. Genesis 17:25). Paul was not a proselyte, a convert to Judaism, receiving circumcision in adulthood. Paul was circumcised on the eighth day according to God's original plan for His people .

Second, Paul wrote he was “*of the people of Israel.*” Israel was the name given to Jacob after he wrestled with God (cf. Genesis 32:28). It signified dignity, having power with God. Some of the privileges of the people of Israel are listed in Romans 9:4–5:

. . . *Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.*

Third, Paul wrote he was “*of the tribe of Benjamin.*” Benjamin was the son of Rachel, Jacob’s favorite wife. He was the only patriarch who was born in the Promised Land (cf. Genesis 18). The first king of Israel, Saul, son of Kish, was a Benjamite (cf. 1 Samuel 9:1–2). When the kingdom divided after Solomon’s death, only Benjamin remained loyal to Judah and to the house of David (cf. 1 Kings 12:21). A great man named Mordecai brought about deliverance for the Jews. He was from the tribe of Benjamin (cf. Esther 2:5). To be of the tribe of Benjamin meant he was one of the very elite.

Paul wrote he was “*a Hebrew of Hebrews.*” This expression has special reference to the fact he spoke the Hebrew language or the closely related Aramaic, which was spoken by many Jews in his day. Many of the Jews had forgotten their language when they were scattered throughout the Roman empire, and they had adopted the Greek language. Many of them had adopted Greek customs, as well. Paul meant he had remained a real Hebrew because he spoke the language of his forefathers. He addressed a mob in the Hebrew language (cf. Acts 21:40). Paul gave his defense in Aramaic: “*When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet*” (Acts 22:2). Paul’s language skills had been handed down to him by his parents and his Jewish teachers.

The Attainments Of Paul In The Flesh

The attainments of Paul are continued: “*. . . in regard to the law, a Pharisee*” (Philippians 3:5). The Pharisees were a strict sect of the Jews who developed between the Testaments, late in the second century B.C. They were the separated ones; that is what the term “Pharisee” actually meant, those who are separated. They opposed the pressure of the pagan culture on the Jewish people. They had good motivation, at least originally. But they developed into a super-critical sect, enforcing their own traditions upon men their fellow Jews. They were often rebuked by Jesus because of their self-righteous attitudes, their outward only observance of the Law, and their neglect of God’s Word. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees numerous times because of their hypocrisy (cf. Matthew 23). But they were considered orthodox in belief, and they were recognized as the leaders of the common people among the Jews. To be a Pharisee in Paul’s day meant to be of the strictest sect, and it implied zeal, perseverance, and fervency for God. Paul often spoke of his background as a Pharisee and affirmed that the Jews knew the way he had lived since childhood: “*They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee*” (Acts 26:5).

Paul wrote about his background in Judaism and the zeal with which he persecuted the church: “*as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless*” (Philippians 3:6). Jews who were zealous for God were expected to oppose the enemies of God, and Christians were considered enemies of God. Paul, then known as Saul of Tarsus, violently persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it (cf. Galatians 1:13). He not only consented to the death of Stephen (cf. Acts 8:1), but he also gave his vote that many others should be killed. Acts 26:9–11:

I, too, was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And

that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecuted them.

He described himself very well, I think, when he wrote that there were some Jews who were zealous for God, but their zeal was not based on knowledge (cf. Romans 10:2). He could not have described himself more perfectly.

Paul wrote that he was faultless in his legalistic righteousness (cf. Philippians 3:6). He was a man who had kept the law outwardly as well as any man had. No man, of course, could keep the law perfectly, but he was a man who in his zeal for God and the Law performed everything that was commanded of him as well as any man had. Luke wrote a similar statement about the parents of John the Baptizer: “*Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly*” (Luke 1:6). When the rich young ruler asked Jesus about eternal life, Jesus pointed him to the commandments: “*Teacher,*” he declared, “*all these I have kept since I was a boy*” (Mark 10:20). Paul insisted to the Jewish Sanhedrin that he had fulfilled his duty to God: “*. . . My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day*” (Acts 23:1). That statement does not mean he never sinned; it means Paul was a man who was blameless in the sight of others concerning the Law. No one did a better job of conforming to Jewish law than did Paul. But Paul knew his legalistic righteousness was not the same as righteousness by faith so he turned away from legalistic righteousness.

Paul's Assessment of His Fleshly Status

True Estimate of Fleshly Attainments

In Philippians 3:7–11 Paul wrote about his profits that he now considered as loss. All of his privileges and attainments were real, but they did not bring divine approval: “*But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ*” (Philippians 3:7). Jesus talked to His disciples about gain and loss: “*What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?*” (Matthew 16:26). All the advantages and privileges were counted as loss in the mind of Paul. There was a storm during Paul’s trip to Rome. After fourteen days of not eating, the men on board finally ate and then lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea. The gain for the people was considered a loss, but there would have been a greater loss of human lives if they had retained the grain (cf. Acts 27:27–44).

Paul considered everything a loss compared to knowing Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:8:

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ

The word translated “*rubbish*” could also be translated “garbage,” “dung,” “muck,” or the “filth fit for the garbage heap.” Paul did not see his past privileges and attainments merely as neutral and useless. He viewed them as repulsive garbage, muck, or rubbish if they caused him to trust in things rather than to depend upon justification before God by Jesus Christ. Paul had once asked Christ the question: “*What shall I do? . . .*” (Acts 22:10). The rest of his life Paul trusted the Lord and obeyed everything the Lord assigned him to do.

True Attainment Is Knowing Christ

Gaining Christ and the righteousness that comes from God was what Paul wanted. Philippians 3:9:

...and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

The surpassing greatness of knowing Christ was not simply knowing some facts about Him. Many people know facts about Him. It was knowing Him better and better as Lord, Savior, Friend, and Guide that Paul desired. Jesus prayed to His Father about eternal life: “*Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent*” (John 17:3). Knowing God and Jesus Christ in a very personal way was what Paul wanted more and more.

Paul desired “*the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*” It is not a righteousness that comes from the Law. Paul knew that observance of the Law could not bring a person into the presence of the Holy God. Galatians 2:16:

...know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we might be justified by faith and not by observing the law, because, by observing the law no one will be justified.

The blood of Jesus opened a new and living way into the Most Holy Place. Hebrews 10:19–20:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body.

Paul wanted to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. Philippians 3:10–11:

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

The power of the resurrection was demonstrated by raising Christ from the dead, and it was the same power that was exerted on Paul and all believers.

On Toward the Goal

Philippians 3:12–21

Introduction

Paul wrote about the danger from the Judaizers and their desire to bind the Law of Moses, including circumcision, upon others. He wrote that the true circumcision are those who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.

Paul had more reasons than anyone to have confidence in the flesh, to trust in his privileges and attainments to gain a relationship with God. But Paul considered them a loss for the sake of Christ, even rubbish to gain salvation through Him.

In his surrender to Christ and his determination to know Him, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, Paul confessed that he had not yet attained this goal.

The need to press on toward the goal, the obligation to live up to what had been attained, the requirement to live the pattern, and the need to heed the tearful warning about the enemies of the cross of Christ will be studied in this chapter. Paul had an intense desire to obtain heavenly citizenship and to help other Christians do the same.

Pressing Onward Toward the Goal

The Encouraging Confession

Paul had not obtained his goal to know Christ better, to become like Him in His death, and to be made perfect: “*Not*

that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (Philippians 3:12). Paul was indeed growing in these areas, but he was not content with his progress. He desired more growth in Christ Jesus. Paul would not claim to be perfect, to be absolutely sinless. Though men have often claimed to have reached such a state, it is impossible. 1 John 1:8–10 verifies this:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

Paul was not sinless, but he pressed on to his goal to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

The Ever-Pressing Goal

Christ had taken hold of Paul from the time he was converted in Damascus, and Paul declared that he wanted to take hold of these things for which Jesus Christ had taken hold of him. Why did Jesus take hold of Paul? There are at least two answers to this question. First, he was an instrument chosen by God to bring salvation to the lost. When the Lord appeared to Ananias in Damascus, He encouraged Ananias to go to Saul, whose name was later changed to Paul: “. . . ‘Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel’” (Acts 9:15). God told Saul he would preach to the Gentiles: “*The Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles’*” (Acts 22:21). When Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus, He appointed Saul as a servant and witness. In Acts 26:16–18 Paul reveals the words of Jesus to king Agrippa:

“Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

Second, Jesus took hold of Paul in order to bring about his salvation and to transform Paul’s life into His image. The ultimate purpose of God’s calling of Paul and of others was so they could be conformed to the likeness of his Son (cf. Romans 8:29). Paul wrote about that transformation in 2 Corinthians 3:18:

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Paul pressed on to fulfill Christ’s purpose. He lovingly surrendered to Jesus and allowed Him to transform his life. He also brought others to the same relationship with Jesus. In Colossians 1:28–29 Paul says:

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

The Exclusive Involvement

Paul did not feel that he had taken hold of it: “*Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward*

what is ahead” (Philippians 3:13). What is the thing that Paul had not taken hold of? Men cannot live a dual life, serve two masters. Jesus stated in Matthew 6:24:

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Lot’s wife had divided affections. When Lot and his family left the city of Sodom, his wife turned back, and she became a pillar of salt because she had a divided heart (cf. Genesis 19:21–26). Jesus warned of this divided allegiance when He compared the destruction of Sodom to His return: “*Remember Lot’s wife*” (Luke 17:32). Jesus told a man who wanted to follow him that looking back would not qualify a person for the kingdom: “*Jesus replied, ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God’*” (Luke 9:62). When Martha was distracted by all the preparation to serve Jesus, she complained to Him because her sister Mary was not helping. Jesus responded in Luke 10:41–42:

“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Paul summarized the one thing in Philippians 1:21: “*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*” Christ was glorified in his body whether by life or by death (cf. Philippians 1:23–24).

The one thing Paul did involved “*forgetting what is behind.*” Paul, in his pre-Christian life, had special privileges and attainments that were a stumbling block in his Christian life, in the race. He forgot his past sins that the Lord Jesus had forgiven. He would always remember with deep gratitude and thanksgiving that he had been marvelously saved and cleansed

by Jesus. He writes about his thankfulness in 1 Timothy 1:12–13:

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man . . .

Paul knew his forgiveness was real and complete, and he would not let his present joy and peace be destroyed by memories of the past.

Paul also wrote about “straining toward what is ahead.” The athlete in a race does not look behind or to the side, but his entire focus is toward what is ahead. In many passages Paul and other New Testament writers compared living the Christian life to running a race. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:24–25 :

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

The Hebrew writer also wrote about the Christian race in Hebrews 12:1–2:

. . . let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus . . .

The Everlasting Prize

Paul stated the reason he pressed on toward the goal: “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). He pressed on toward the goal like a runner does. Heaven is the

goal toward which he strived. It is the prize to be rewarded. The final gaining of Christ and all that was involved caused Paul to press on. God has called Christians to press on toward the goal of heaven. It is a call from heaven and a call to heaven: “*Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus . . .*” (Hebrews 3:1). Peter also stated that God called Christians to His eternal glory: “*And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ*” (1 Peter 5:10). The prize is often called a crown to be presented by the president of the games, who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote there was a crown of righteousness in store for him and for all who longed for the Lord’s appearing. 2 Timothy 4:7–8:

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the
crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous
Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to
me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

Peter wrote about the crown of glory: “*And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away*” (1 Peter 5:4).

Living up to What We Have Attained

the Understanding of the Mature

Paul wrote that Christians need to live up to what they have already attained. Philippians 3:15–16:

All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

The word “*mature*” comes from the same Greek word as the word “*perfect*” used in Philippians 3:12. Both words mean to be full-grown, mature, and having grown out of the state of infancy or childhood. The word “*mature*” used in Hebrews 5:13–14 means perfect:

Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Paul wrote that Epaphras wanted maturity for his brethren. He wrote concerning Epaphras’ prayer for them in Colossians 4:12:

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

The Understanding of the Others

Paul wrote “*And if on some other point you think differently, that, too, God will make clear to you.*” This verse shows the need for basic integrity in understanding God’s will. If a person is wanting to know God’s will, he will be helped by God. Jesus said to the Jews in John 7:17: “*If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.*” God will providentially work to help people with honest, searching hearts who are choosing to do His will. They need to live up to what Paul attained. The Jews in Jesus’ day refused to accept the truth they heard from Jesus. Therefore, it was not likely they would learn truth from Him. Though Christians do not know all that is to be known about the future, they do know God and have a responsibility to live up to the truth they have attained.

Living According to the Pattern of Paul

Paul wrote that Christians should live according to the pattern he gave: *“Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you”* (Philippians 3:17). Despite his imperfections, Paul was still an example of right attitude and conduct, and he frequently urged Christians to follow him: *“Whatever you have learned and received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you”* (Philippians 4:9). Paul also encouraged the church in Thessalonica to follow his example: *“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example . . .”* (2 Thessalonians 3:7). Whether he expressed it or not, readers should always understand the previous passages in light of 1 Corinthians 11:1: *“Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.”* Christians should take note of those who live according to the pattern that Paul gave.

The Enemies of the Cross of Christ

Their Condition — Apostate Christians

Paul declared that many people live as enemies of the cross: *“For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ”* (Philippians 3:18). Who are the enemies of the cross of Christ? Many people say they were “professed Christians.” The word professed or pretended must be used by some religious teachers about passages that warn Christians about falling away from God because they believe that man is once saved, always saved. They believe that apostasy is an impossibility. Therefore, any Bible warnings to people about falling away from God must be explained on the basis that they are only “professed Christians.” But what is written in these scriptures can only apply to people who have already become Christians. Paul wrote that people who tried to be justified by the law would be alienated from Christ and fall away from grace. Galatians 5:1–4:

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all . . . You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

These people had been set free by Christ so Paul encouraged them to stand firm.

Peter warned believers that it is worse to have known the truth and left it, than to have never known the way of righteousness. 2 Peter 2:20–21:

If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.

Similar warning passages are given to God's people several times in the New Testament.

The enemies of the cross of Christ are men who are not Judaizers. The enemies are apostates, people who have renounced a belief. They are people who were once Christians, but have fallen away and have become enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their Character — Sensual And Shameful

The enemies of the cross of Christ are sensual and shameful: "*Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on*

earthly things" (Philippians 3:19). Their god is their stomach and their mind is on earthly things. In 1 Corinthians 6:13 Paul wrote: "*Food for the stomach and the stomach for food.*" He was discussing the problem of sexual immorality among the Corinthian Christians. When men worship their sensual appetites, they make those appetites their god. So Paul wrote that their god is their stomach.

Some people abused the doctrine of the grace of God so Paul wrote: "*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?*" (Romans 6:1–2). If Christians sin more, grace will increase. But Christians can no longer live in sin because they have died to sin.

Some godless men changed the grace of God into a license for immorality and denied Jesus Christ as Sovereign and Lord (cf. Jude 4). The New Testament is full of warnings concerning the lust of the flesh, making one's stomach his god. These verses need to be seriously considered by everyone who would walk in the steps of the Savior today. Their glory is in their shame, and their destiny is destruction.

The enemies of the cross were like some of the apostate Israelites in the days of Jeremiah. Jeremiah 6:15:

"Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them," says the Lord.

Some of the Corinthian believers appeared to glory and be proud even when they were tolerating a flagrant case of sexual immorality: "*And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?*" (1 Corinthians 5:2). The church had allowed a man to take his father's wife, and they had done nothing about it. The church should have been filled with grief and have put the man out of their fellowship.

Paul wrote the Philippian church that their mind was on earthly things. John warned Christians not to love the world: 1 John 2:15–16:

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.

Paul encouraged the church in Colosse to set their minds on things above, not on earthly things. Colossians 3:1–2:

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

The best way for Christians to set their hearts on things above is to set their minds on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and good. Philippians 4:8:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things

Their Destiny — Destruction

The destiny of the enemies of the cross of Christ is destruction. Paul warned the Galatian Christians to reap eternal life not destruction. Galatians 6:7–8:

Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction,

and the one who sows to please the Spirit from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Christ will return in blazing fire taking vengeance upon those who know not God and obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus: “*They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power*” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Paul was deeply concerned and disturbed about the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Paul’s Concern: To Warn Them Again

Paul had often warned the Christians, and again, with tears, he warned them of many who live as enemies of the cross of Christ (cf. Philippians 3:18). This verse shows the necessity of repeated warnings about men and women who live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their lifestyles were undermining the very purpose of the cross. The people who did not follow Paul’s example became enemies of the cross of Christ. He even warned them with tears.

The modern view of God is some kind of heavenly Santa Claus with very little moral authority. The weakened view today that most people have about the consequences of sin does not cause anyone to weep! But Paul knew better. He knew that men could be lost eternally, and such apostasy from God caused him to weep.

In his farewell Paul told the Ephesian elders of his concern for them: “*I served the Lord with great humility and with tears . . .*” (Acts 20:19). When Paul again wrote the Corinthians, he stated that he had written the first letter out of great distress and anguish: “*For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you, but to let you know the depth of my love for you*” (2 Corinthians 2:4). Paul’s weeping was just as glorious as his joy. He was a man of great joy, but he was also a man of many tears. There are enemies of the cross of Christ today. By looking at the characteristics of the New Testament enemies of the cross of Christ, Christians

today can recognize people who have the same characteristics and know they too are enemies of the cross of Christ.

Heavenly Citizenship

Citizens of a Heavenly Kingdom

In contrast to the men who were enemies of the cross of Christ, Paul wrote about heavenly citizenship: “*But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 3:20). Paul reminded God’s people of their heavenly citizenship and of the obligations and responsibilities growing out of that citizenship. The Philippians were very proud of being Roman citizens and were always aware of the implications of such a position. Christians are to always remember their heavenly citizenship and the implications of such a blessed position: “*To the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven*” (Hebrews 12:23). Christians are citizens of heaven: “*... and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life*” (Philippians 4:3). Jesus’ disciples returned with joy from preaching the Word, and Jesus said: “*... rejoice that your names are written in heaven*” (Luke 10:20).

Waiting For The King

Paul wrote the Philippians that Christians await a Savior from heaven: “*... And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 3:20). Paul also wrote the Thessalonians that Christians eagerly await the return of His Son: “*and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath*” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Paul wrote Titus about the blessed hope: “*while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:13).

Paul wrote that in heaven a Christian’s body will be like Jesus’ body: “*who, by the power that enables him to bring*

everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). “Our lowly bodies” means they are subject to sickness, pain, aging, and death. It does not mean they are sinful or evil. The bodies must be changed before entering heaven. 1 Corinthians 15:50–52:

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

John also wrote that when Jesus returns, He will transform believers’ bodies to be like His body: “. . . But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). The assurance is that it will be done by His power: “who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). The One who created the universe and has it under His control will not fail to fulfill a person’s hope to be like Jesus Christ.

Character of Heavenly Citizenship

Philippians 4:1–7

Introduction

To the residents of Philippi, Roman citizenship was extremely important and something of which they were very proud. When the Philippians converted to Christianity that pride of citizenship shifted to a pride in their heavenly citizenship. Paul reminded them of this citizenship and imparted to them the characteristics of the citizenship.

The church in Philippi had many favorable traits and was reckoned, by any standards, as one of the great New Testament churches. The saints at Philippi had a special relationship with Paul; every time he remembered them, he thanked God for them. These Christians were not without weaknesses and dangers. In the previous chapter Paul warned about two of these dangers. One danger was from the Judaizers with their legalism and confidence in their religious privileges and attainments. The other danger was from the Gentile libertines, men whose god was their stomach, whose glory was in their shame, whose mind was on earthly things, and whose destiny was destruction.

In contrast to the “enemies of the cross of Christ,” these saints at Philippi were citizens of heaven, waiting for the “blessed hope” of Christ’s second coming (cf. Philippians 3:17–21).

The two main weaknesses of the Philippian church were disunity and despondency. Hence, Paul gave frequent admonitions for unity and rejoicing in the Lord in his letter.

Citizenship in heaven demanded certain characteristics and obligations. Such characteristics of heavenly citizenship would enable the church in Philippi to overcome dangers and weaknesses.

Heavenly Citizenship Calls for Steadfastness

Steadfastness Endangered by Circumstances

Paul taught that heavenly citizenship calls for steadfastness: “*Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!*” (Philippians 4:1). Paul began with the word “*therefore*” which connects the warnings and admonitions given in the last chapter with the instructions given in this chapter. These exhortations grew from the example of Paul and the others who lived according to the pattern that they gave. The “*therefore*” relates to their citizenship in heaven in contrast to the people who live as enemies to the cross of Christ.

Steadfastness Encouraged By Love And Concern

“*My brothers, you whom I love and long for*” shows Paul’s deep love for his brothers in Philippi. Paul’s affection for them was noted many times: “*God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 1:8). Paul also wrote: “*But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you*” (Philippians 2:17). Paul experienced this deep affection and concern for the people he converted to Jesus in many different places. And it should be a great example for preachers and teachers of the Word of God today. Paul wrote a beautiful passage about his love for the church in Thessalonica: “*We loved you so much that we were*

delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us” (1 Thessalonians 2:8). Paul wrote about the pressure he faced for all the churches in 2 Corinthians 11:28–29:

Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

If more preachers and teachers of the Word of God had the heart of Paul, perhaps, more Christians would have the awareness of their heavenly citizenship. Certainly Paul was a great example because of his attitude, not only toward lost people, but especially his attitude of love for people who had obeyed the Gospel.

Steadfastness Encouraged By Relationships

Paul considered his brethren at Philippi his “*joy and crown.*” The word “*crown*” is from the Greek word *stephanos* which means the victor’s crown or the wreath that was worn by a person who won a race or some other kinds of competition. It was not the kingly crown. The crown could be worn by Paul and others because of their faithfulness and life transformation. It would be worn like an ornament, an honor to the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul encouraged Christians to become blameless and pure: “*. . . in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing*” (Philippians 2:16). Paul called Christians “*our glory and joy*” in 1 Thessalonians 2:19–20:

For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

There is no greater joy than to bring lost people to Christ and to know of their continued growth in the Lord after many years. John wrote the church about this joy: "*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are living according to the truth*" (3 John 4).

Steadfastness Encouraged by Paul's Exhortation

Paul wrote the church to "... stand firm in the Lord, dear friends." This had been Paul's previous admonition to them, to stand firm regardless of what happened. Philippians 1:27:

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.

Standing firm is an urgent message because of the tendency to drift away from the Lord, which is a real danger. The writer of Hebrews warned the Christians: "*We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away*" (Hebrews 2:1). Paul urged Christians in many scriptures to stand firm in the faith (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:13). Paul encouraged Christians to stand firm in the freedom they had received from Christ (cf. Galatians 5:1). Christians are urged to stand firm in one spirit (cf. Philippians 1:27) and to stand firm in the Lord (cf. Philippians 4:1). Paul summarized this message in 1 Corinthians 15:58:

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

So steadfastness is urged by Paul. The church in Philippi had no serious errors or problems, but they were urged to stand firm in the faith.

Heavenly Citizenship Calls for Unity And Cooperation

Personal Relationships and Cooperation

Heavenly citizenship calls for unity and cooperation. Philippians 4:2–3:

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Paul exhorted the two Christian ladies to agree with each other in the Lord. These Christian women had contended at Paul's side in the cause of the Gospel. They were obviously very diligent, fervent women who were well known in the Philippian church. The reason for their differences is not stated, but it was serious enough for Paul to write about the problem. He wanted the whole church to be involved in bringing them to a spirit of like-mindedness. One of the problems, in any kind of situation, is showing partiality, but Paul did not show partiality. Notice how he exhorted them: "*I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.*" Without any partiality at all he exhorted them both to be one and to agree with each other in the Lord in the matters about which they had differed.

He also summoned help for solving the situation. He wrote about a man who is called a "*loyal yoke fellow.*" This phrase can be translated as the proper name Syzygus. He must have

been a person of great patience and understanding, a person of respect who could handle such a delicate task. He is exhorted to help these women because they had labored with Paul in the Gospel. Obviously, this is not a doctrinal matter; it is a personal matter between two dedicated servants of Christ. Such friction and disunity between members of the Lord's body needs to be dealt with and removed for the effectiveness of any local church.

Body Relationships and Cooperation

Paul wrote about "*Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*" He mentioned Clement, but others are unnamed by Paul, but they are known by the Lord who keeps a register of His people. Paul wrote "*whose names are in the book of life.*" This phrase is similar to Jesus' statement: "*... rejoice that your names are written in heaven*" (Luke 10:20). John wrote about people who would enter the Holy City of God because their names are in the Lamb's book of life: '*Nothing impure will enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life*' (Revelation 21:27).

Heavenly Citizenship Calls for Rejoicing and Peace

A Constant Joy in the Land

Heavenly citizenship calls for rejoicing and peace. Paul wrote: "*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*" (Philippians 4:4). The rejoicing was to be done "always," under all conditions, and in every circumstance of life. Paul consistently taught and practiced being joyful: "*Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus*" (1

Thessalonians 5:16–18). He wrote about rejoicing even when sorrowful: “*sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything*” (2 Corinthians 6:10). So Paul stated, taught, and practiced rejoicing always, not merely when circumstances were good.

Joy is not based on outward circumstances as happiness is. After Paul and Silas had been beaten and thrown into prison, they prayed and sang hymns to God: “*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them*” (Acts 16:25). Paul wrote with tears, that many live as enemies of the cross of Christ (cf. Philippians 3:18). So it is possible to have a deep concern for lost people and for worldly apostate Christians, as Paul did, and still rejoice in the Lord always. Paul, who commanded Christians to rejoice in the Lord always, also wrote in Romans 9:1–4:

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel . . .

Paul reprimanded the church in Corinth because he loved them deeply: “*For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you*” (2 Corinthians 2:4). Paul was a person who was deeply involved emotionally in the lives of his converts. He wept with them, and he wept for them. He also rejoiced with them and rejoiced because of them. So he encouraged his converts to rejoice in the Lord always.

A Manifest and Gentle Joy in Christ

Then Paul adds the little statement: “*Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near*” (Philippians 4:5). The word

“gentleness” emphasizes consideration for others, courtesy, and graciousness. It is the opposite of stubbornness and thoughtlessness. Gentleness is especially important when dealing with situations among brothers and sisters in the Lord where enmity and hard feelings may develop. A spirit of gentleness was necessary to help Euodia and Syntyche to settle their differences. “Gentleness” or “forbearance” is an expression of love for others. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:4–5: “*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking . . .*”

The motive for their adherence to Paul’s exhortation is “*The Lord is near.*” This sentence can refer to a place or to time. God is always near to His children. He never leaves them or forsakes them. They can always be assured of His presence. Paul wrote about God’s presence when others deserted him: “*But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength . . .*” (2 Timothy 4:17). Jesus promised to always be with His disciples: “. . . *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age*” (Matthew 28:20). The Lord being near could refer to His second coming. The coming of the Lord is always near for all Christians. Even if He chooses to delay His coming, His nearness is a reality for all Christians at death.

A Peaceful Joy in Christ

The thing that really causes an absence of joy in people is not so much sorrow and trouble, but it is doubt and worry: “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God*” (Philippians 4:6). Anxiety, doubt, and worry stifle joy and peace in the life of a Christian. Jesus desires that His people be free of worry and anxiety. Jesus said in Matthew 6:25–34:

“*Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at*

the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life ? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.’”

Paul believed what Jesus said was true, and he was at peace, anxious about nothing. He had learned to be content whatever the circumstances (cf. Philippians 4:11). Worry is the killer of joy and stifles the spiritual growth of a Christian. It is a form of unbelief and distrust in the Lord and His promises. God gives a beautiful promise in Hebrews 13:5–6:

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do unto me?”

Paul reminds us of this promise: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). And

Peter also wrote about God's care: "*Cast all your anxiety upon him because he cares for you*" (1 Peter 5:7).

A Trusting and Asking Joy in Christ

The answer to anxiety and worry is a trustful prayer life: ". . . but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6). Paul often emphasized prayer: "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful" (Colossians 4:2). He wrote that prayer should be continual: "Pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Paul encouraged Christians to pray for one another: "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for the saints" (Ephesians 6:18). Paul demonstrated this dependence upon God by praying continually in every conceivable situation in his life and in the lives of others. His prayer life can be observed by studying several of his letters (cf. 1 and 2 Thessalonians; Ephesians; Colossians).

Petitions and requests should be accompanied by thanksgiving. Being thankful for past blessings helps one to avoid anxiety and complaining: "Give thanks in all circumstances . . ." (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Paul wrote Christians to urge them to pray for everyone: "I urge, then, that first of all, that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for everyone . . ." (1 Timothy 2:1). Christians were called to peace: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful" (Colossians 3:15). R.C. Bell wrote this beautiful statement, "A beautiful and fruitful union is formed when prayer and praise wed." Petitions and thankfulness go a long way toward avoiding anxiety.

A Protective Joy in Christ

The peace of God is the result of a life of prayerful trust: "*And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*"

(Philippians 4:7). Man has peace with God when he responds with obedience to the Gospel by faith, and by his faith is justified: “*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Romans 5:1). The war is over. Christians have reconciliation with God and are in fellowship with Him.

The peace of God is not something that happens immediately at conversion. It is the result of Christian growth, trusting God, and depending upon His promises. Peter wrote that Christians can cast their anxiety on God: “*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you*” (1 Peter 5:7). The result of casting anxiety on God will be “*the peace of God, which transcends all understanding*” because God can do more than one can ask or imagine: “*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us*” (Ephesians 3:20). Paul was guarded by Roman soldiers when he wrote that the peace of God will guard hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Heavenly Citizenship Calls for Proper Thinking and Doing

the Heart of the Heavenly Citizen

Heavenly citizenship calls for proper thinking. Philippians 4:8:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

The importance of wholesome thinking cannot be overemphasize. Jesus taught that every sin a person commits is caused by unwholesome thinking. He talked about anger and indicated that anger is the incentive, but murder is the result (cf.

Matthew 5:21–22). John wrote that hatred causes murder: “*Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer . . .*” (1 John 3:15). Jesus said lusting causes adultery: “*But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Matthew 5:28). Covetousness is the desire and theft is the overt act: “*People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction*” (1 Timothy 6:9). Righteous acts result from wholesome thinking, but improper acts result from improper thinking.

Hence, Paul gave the admonition “*to think about such things*” because wholesome thinking causes righteous acts. “*Whatever is true*” refers to moral qualities of uprightness and dependability. Paul urged Christians to put off falsehood and speak truthfully to their neighbors (cf. Ephesians 4:25). “*Whatever is noble*” denotes that which has dignity and majesty, the opposite of vulgarity. “*Whatever is right*” describes that which is righteous, thinking righteous thoughts, and meditating on God’s righteous acts. “*Whatever is pure*” indicates purity of thought and purpose, a precondition to purity of word and action. Paul encouraged Timothy to remain pure: “*. . . Keep yourself pure*” (1 Timothy 5:22). In Ephesians 5:3 Paul declared that God’s holy people should be sexually pure and free of greed:

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God ‘s holy people.

“*Whatever is lovely*” indicates that which is attractive, agreeable, and winsome, the kind of things one should think about. “*Whatever is admirable*” deservedly enjoys a good reputation. “*If anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*” The urgent need to have wholesome thoughts is so difficult to practice, but it will make a difference in the lives of God’s people. Solomon wrote a pungent

statement: “*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life*” (Proverbs 4:23). Jesus taught that all the sins that men commit come from the heart. Mark 7:21–23:

For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man “unclean.”

Someone said, “The mind is dyed with the color of its waking thoughts.” Hence, the importance of right thinking needs to be emphasized continually. A person’s thinking will determine his character and actions.

The Practice of the Heavenly Citizen

Paul wrote that the church in Philippi should practice what he had taught them: “*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you*” (Philippians 4:9). Whether Paul stated it each time or not, such imitation is qualified by this verse: “*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Paul was not the kind of preacher who said, “Do as I say, not as I do.” Paul believed he had received a message from God, and he had a keen responsibility to pass the message on faithfully. Paul had a responsibility not only to preach the Word, but to put the Word into practice in his life. He felt confident to plead with others to follow his example, as he followed the example of Christ.

Paul wrote a similar verse to encourage Timothy to persevere: “*Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers*” (1 Timothy 4:16). Paul urged Timothy to watch both his life and his doctrine, not merely one or the other. Paul also exhorted the church in Philippi to follow his example: “*Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of*

those who live according to the pattern we gave you”
(Philippians 3:17).

Conclusion

The result of wholesome thinking will be the peace of God. Paul not only wrote that the peace of God would be with them, the God of peace would also be with them. God is often called the God of peace (cf. Romans 15:33, 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). In this chapter some of the characteristics of heavenly citizenship have been given. Heavenly citizenship calls for steadfastness, unity, and cooperation. Rejoicing, peace, proper thinking, and acting are also needed for heavenly citizenship.

Thanks for the Gifts

Philippians 4:10–23

Introduction

The church in Philippi was established by Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke (cf. Acts 16). Paul was proud of the disciples and thanked God for them: “*. . . my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown . . .*” (Philippians 4:1).

This church was known for its liberality and generosity in meeting the needs of others. Paul wrote about the churches in Macedonia, which would include the church in Philippi. 2 Corinthians 8:1–3:

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty, welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability . . .

Paul also wrote that the Macedonian churches brought him support: “*And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed*” (2 Corinthians 11:9). The church in Philli had assisted Paul “*. . . from the first day until now*” (Philippians 1:5). Their recent gifts sent by Epaphroditus

brought forth this letter. Paul wrote these beloved, thoughtful, generous saints to thank them for the gifts.

Paul's Sufficiency Is in Christ

Sufficiency Through Caring Brethren

Paul wrote the believers to let them know that his sufficiency was not in them, anyone else, nor himself. His sufficiency was in Christ: "*I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it*" (Philippians 4:10). The word "renewed" is from a Greek word which means to "blossom again." It was sometimes used of a tree that appeared to be dead in the winter, but in the spring it would put forth fresh green sprouts indicating that it was alive.

The church in Philippi had been concerned about Paul. There had been no change in their attitude toward him, but previously they had no opportunity to show their concern. Paul does not specify why they had no opportunity to express this concern, but observation of other verses in the Bible reveals some conclusion.

First, when Paul accepted material aid from those whom he converted, this was misrepresented by his detractors as proof that he wanted to live at the expense of others. Sometimes he determined he would receive no support from others. An example is found in 2 Thessalonians 3:7–8:

... We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you.

Paul kept himself from being a burden to the church in Corinth. 2 Corinthians 11:8-9:

I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so.

Second, it is possible that Paul even requested that no more financial aid be sent to him during certain periods of time because of the problem. Paul was involved for a long time in the collection of a relief fund for the churches in Judea, especially Jerusalem. The Macedonian churches had given beyond their ability (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:1–5), but the situation changed. The relief fund had been delivered to the church in Jerusalem. Paul had been imprisoned in Caesarea for about two years, and then he was sent to Rome. The changed situation meant the Philippian church found another opportunity to minister to Paul’s needs, sending gifts by the hands of Epaphroditus. So Paul expressed his deep gratitude to the church in Philippi.

Sufficiency Through Contentment

Paul was content regardless of his outward circumstances: “*I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances*” (Philippians 4:11). Biblical writers urged contentment and freedom from the love of money and worldly cares in many passages. Jesus taught that worldly cares can prevent a person from growing spiritually. Luke 8:14):

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.

Jesus warned the crowd against greed: “ . . . Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist of the abundance of his possessions ” (Luke 12:15). The writer of Hebrews encouraged Christians to be content: “ Keep yourselves free from the love of money and be content with what you have . . . ” (Hebrews 13:5). Paul wrote that greed is idolatry and will prevent a person from inheriting the eternal kingdom : “ For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure, or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God ” (Ephesians 5:5). Paul wrote that no one will take anything with them when they depart this earth. 1 Timothy 6:6–8:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

Contentment permeated Paul’s thinking and his life. He urged others to have a life free from anxiety and worry, a life of trust in a faithful God who meets every need. Paul learned the secret of contentment in every situation. Philippians 4:12:

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

When Paul became a Christian, he suffered the loss of everything. Some of Paul’s other writings show how serious his suffering really was. 1 Corinthians 4:11–13:

To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty; we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless . . . Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.

Paul often suffered extreme hardships. 2 Cor 6:4–5:

Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger.

But there were also times when Paul had plenty. He must have considered the warm hospitality in the homes of Christians, times of plenty. And there were times when the Philippian church and other churches sent him gifts. As Paul accepted the gifts, he probably considered it a time of plenty. Paul learned the secret of being content in every situation “*whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*” Even when Paul had nothing, he felt he possessed everything: “*Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything*” (2 Corinthians 6:10). This was a very delicate matter. Paul had to express his gratitude for their gifts as he taught them about his dependence upon God and the contentment he had in every circumstance of life.

Sufficiency Through Christ’s Empowering

So Paul wrote the key thought: “*I can do everything through him who gives me strength*” (Philippians 4:13). The Greek word that was translated “*contentment*” was used by the pagan stoics to mean they were self sufficient. They could boast about doing everything for themselves because they felt they did not need anyone else or any power outside of themselves. Paul’s sufficiency was not in himself, though. Paul’s sufficiency was in Christ. He knew that apart from Christ he could do nothing. Jesus said man can do nothing without Him: “*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5). Paul stated that his strength came from Jesus: “*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has given me*

strength . . .” (1 Timothy 1:12). Paul wrote another passage about other blessings from God: “*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline*” (2 Timothy 1:7). He always attributed his abilities to the Lord and His power: “*Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God*” (2 Corinthians 3:5). Christians are not competent by themselves. Their competence always comes from God.

Paul learned that his weakness would become his strength in Christ. He pleaded with the Lord to remove the thorn in the flesh that he had been given. 2 Corinthians 12:9–10:

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul’s Appreciation of Their Gifts

Paul’s Gratitude for Earlier Gifts

Paul had a great appreciation for the gifts from the Philippian church: “*Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles*” (Philippians 4:14). Paul received their gifts with a great deal of gratitude even though his contentment was not based on outward circumstances. Yet, he would have them know of his gratitude for their gifts and fellowship with him in the Gospel throughout the years.

Paul wrote that in the early days of their acquaintance they had helped him. Philippians 4:15:

Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out

from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only

He wrote of their partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now (cf. Philippians 1:4). Their partnership was a matter of giving and receiving. The expression “giving and receiving” was an expression used by accountants in Paul’s day. The accountant’s ledger would show what was received and what departed. Paul considered the Philippians to be the givers, and he was the receiver. *“When I set out from Macedonia”* would be the time he went to Achaia, especially to Corinth (cf. Acts 18:1). Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians indicates he received no support from them and would not accept any support from them. 2 Corinthians 11:8–9:

I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so.

The church in Philippi also sent Paul aid when he was in Thessalonica: *“For even when I was in Thessalonica you sent me aid again and again when I was in need”* (Philippians 4:16). Paul was in Thessalonica after he had left Philippi. So in the very infancy of the church, she was already sending financial help to Paul. Philippi was a mission minded church that helped Paul again and again as he shared the Gospel. Paul was persecuted in Philippi, and he was persecuted in Thessalonica, as well. The brethren in Philippi were so grateful that Paul had taught them the Gospel that they shared with him.

Paul had a godly attitude about their gifts: *“Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account”* (Philippians 4:17). Paul, of course, was blessed by the gifts that were sent by Epaphroditus, but this blessing

was not the main benefit from the transaction. The greatest benefit was, as Paul wrote, “*what may be credited to your account.*” The enriched fellowship and the joy of serving others would be like interest added to their account.

Jesus taught the same truth: “*But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal*” (Matthew 6:20). Note other passages that deal with the same principle: “*God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them*” (Hebrews 6:10). Paul encouraged Timothy to teach wealthy Christians not to put their hope in wealth. 1 Timothy 6:17-19:

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

The previous verses do not teach that such deeds of service to others earn one’s salvation. They simply show that both faith and love are demonstrated by action. Apart from a life of service, there is no real faith or love. Paul urged the Ephesian elders to remember the words of Jesus: “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35). The Philippian believers had long experienced the joy of giving. It was not a painful duty for them; it was a precious privilege. In 2 Corinthians 8:3–4 Paul wrote about the attitude of the Macedonian churches, including Philippi:

For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

On a spiritual level, the greatest gain came not to Paul, but to the Christians because of the blessings they received.

Paul's Acknowledgment of the Gift

Paul acknowledged the gift from God's people in Philippians 4:18:

I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

Paul continued to use accounting language when he wrote “*I have received full payment and even more.*” A debt was fully paid. Notice that he wrote that he had not only received enough, but “*even more.*” Their generosity had more than covered his needs. This is an example of Paul being well fed and living in plenty (cf. Philippians 4:12).

Notice how Paul described the gifts in verse 18: “*They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.*” In the Old Testament a sacrifice was often described as a pleasing aroma to the Lord. When Noah offered a sacrifice to the Lord after the flood, the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma (cf. Genesis 8:21). The burnt offering was a pleasing aroma to the Lord (cf. Exodus 29:18). Jesus’ death was a fragrant offering to God: “*and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*” (Ephesians 5:2). God considers the life of a faithful Christian to be a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice. Romans 12:1:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Peter wrote about offering acceptable spiritual sacrifices to God in 1 Peter 2:5:

You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ Jesus.

In Hebrews 13:15–16 the writer urged Christians to continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God:

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

God considers doing good and sharing with others as sacrifices to Him.

It is also interesting to note that the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles was viewed as a priestly service by the apostle Paul. Romans 15:15–16:

I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

When the Gentiles were converted, they were presented to God as an acceptable offering. The Gentiles were pleasing to God because of the concern and care Paul manifested toward others which reflected his attitude toward God. John declared that Christians who love God must also love their brothers. 1 John 4:20-21:

. . . For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those on his right hand who were allowed to enter the kingdom: “*The king will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me’*” (Matthew 25:40). Men cannot serve God or Jesus directly with sacrificial offerings today, but they can serve God by serving His people and those who are in need.

Paul’s Confidence in the Supply of God

Paul adds this very beautiful comment. “*And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:19). The saints in Philippi sent gifts to meet Paul’s needs, and he assured them that his God would meet all their needs. Notice, Paul wrote “*needs*” not “*desires*,” whether health, prosperity, or any other category. Paul, for example, wanted his painful thorn in the flesh to be removed, but the Lord did not consider it a need, and gave him instead sufficient grace to sustain him. 2 Corinthians 12:8–10:

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my

weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me . . . For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul did not write the Philippian church that God would meet their needs out of his glorious riches. Notice, he wrote “*according to his glorious riches.*” It will not be from His wealth, but in a manner that benefits His wealth or glorious riches. A Christian’s needs will be met on a scale worthy of His unlimited resources.

Paul’s Aim — The Glory of God and Final Greetings to the Church

In the concluding verses Paul wrote: “*To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen*” (Philippians 4:20). The outburst of doxology or praise to God is the joyful response to this section of Paul’s letter. It is also the response of Paul to everything that God has revealed to be and to do in this entire epistle. Paul concludes the epistle with the final greeting and benediction. Philippians 4:20-22:

To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings. All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

Paul addressed this letter to the saints in Christ Jesus (cf. Philippians 1:1), and he closed it with a greeting to each one of the saints in Philippi.

The brothers who were with Paul sent greetings, including Timothy. Perhaps it also included those brothers who were emboldened by Paul’s chains to preach the Word of God courageously and fearlessly (cf. Philippians 1:14).

The saints in Caesar’s household wanted their greetings sent to the members of the body in Philippi: “*All the saints send you their greetings, especially those who belong to*

Caesar's household." Members of the Lord's church strongly felt the tie of brotherhood throughout the Roman empire. In 2 Corinthians 13:13 Paul wrote: "*All of the saints send their greetings.*" Those who belonged to Caesar's household were not likely members of his own family, but they were probably domestic and civil servants who were in his service. The very fact that saints could be found in such a place is a great incentive for sacrificial missionary effort to every place throughout the world today.

Paul desired that the One who was the theme of his life and was the main subject of this letter, be with their spirit: "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen*" (Philippians 4:23). Paul held the Philippian loved ones in high esteem.

Review and Summary

Introduction

There are two goals for the final lesson of Paul's letter to the Philippian church. First, there will be a review and summary of the letter, noting the major points in each chapter. Second, a special review of joy, the keynote theme of the letter, will be noted.

Review and Summary of Philippians

Establishment of the Ministering Church

Paul and Barnabas went together on the first mission trip, but they were unable to agree about whether or not John Mark should accompany them on the second journey. So Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus, and Paul chose Silas and went overland throughout the region preaching and teaching the Word of God. Timothy joined them in Lystra, and later Luke joined them. The churches were strengthened in the faith by these four men (cf. Acts 13–16).

Paul had a vision one night and concluded that God had called them to preach the Gospel in Macedonia. So they went there at once. On the Sabbath when they went to the river to pray, they spoke to some women gathered there, including Lydia, a worshiper of God. Lydia and members of her household were baptized, and she invited the men to stay at her home (cf. Acts 16:9–15).

Later Paul and Silas were cast into prison because they had cast a spirit of divination out of a slave girl, and her owners

were so incensed by the loss of money that they had Paul and Silas brought before the magistrate, beaten, and put into prison. During the night the prison doors were shaken by a violent earthquake. The jailor was about to kill himself when Paul told him the prisoners were all there. The jailer learned the Gospel, and he and all his family were baptized the same hour of the night. Hence, the church in Philippi was begun with Lydia, the members of her household, the jailor, and his family (cf. Acts 16:13-34).

Some ten years later Paul was in prison in Rome, and he received a gift from the Philippian church sent by Epaphroditus. After a serious illness, Epaphroditus returned with this letter from Paul which expressed his thanks for the gift. Paul wrote about some other necessary matters concerning his life and the church at Philippi.

Chapter One — Review and Summary

Philippians 1:1–2 is the salutation from Paul and Timothy, servants of God. The letter was written to the saints in Philippi, along with the overseers and deacons. Then Paul thanked them and gave a prayer for their fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until the time he wrote the letter. He also mentioned his deep affection and love for them, with the very heart of Christ. He prayed for their spiritual growth and fruitfulness (cf. Philippians 1:3–11).

Paul wrote that his chains of imprisonment had actually caused the Gospel to be advanced. As a result, it had become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that Paul was in chains for Christ. All the people in Rome knew why Paul had been imprisoned. Most of the brothers had been emboldened to preach the Word of God more courageously and fearlessly because of his chains (Philippians 1:12–14).

Paul wrote about wrong and right motives of preachers. Paul rejoiced that some preachers preached the right message though their motivations were not correct. As long as Christ was preached, good would be done, though the preacher's

motivations was condemned by the Lord (cf. Philippians 1:15–18).

Paul wanted Christ exalted, whether by his life or by his death. And he exhorted the believers to live a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Paul urged them to suffer for Christ as they went through the same struggles that he had.

Chapter Two — Review And Summary

Paul encouraged the church to be united and humble (Philippians 2:1–4). Paul gave an example of Christ's humility and obedience. Christ, who was in His very nature God, emptied Himself and became a man, taking the very nature of a servant. His obedience was complete, even to the point of death on a cross. Therefore God exalted Him to His right hand and gave Him the name that is above every name. At the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (cf. Philippians 2:5–11). Based on the previous statement, Paul exhorted them to work out their salvation: “*. . . continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling*” (Philippians 2:12). God’s enabling power was mentioned: “*For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose*” (Philippians 2:13).

Paul wanted Christians to shine like stars in the universe. They were to live lives that were free from grumbling, arguing, or complaining so they could become blameless and pure. Their lives should show the Word of life to others (Philippians 2:14–18).

Paul then wrote about two men who were great examples to the church. They had a strong relationship with the church. Timothy was a young man who had been Paul’s faithful co-worker. Paul wrote about the genuine concern that Timothy had for the church in Philippi and the beautiful relationship that Paul and Timothy had together. Timothy was a useful messenger of Paul’s, and he always represented Paul accurately

when he was sent to the churches throughout the Roman empire.

The other man mentioned was Epaphroditus. Paul described him as his brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier in the Lord, who was their messenger sent to meet Paul's needs. Epaphroditus had become ill, and almost died. When he recovered, he was sent back with this letter. Paul wrote that he should be welcomed warmly as one who had gained honor and respect and almost died for the work of Christ (cf. Philippians 2:19–24).

Chapter Three — Review And Summary

In the third chapter Paul admonished the Christians to rejoice in the Lord. Then he warned them about the dangerous Judaizers. He called them dogs, evil workers, and the concision or men who are mutilators of the flesh. If anyone wanted to glory in the physical advantages and opportunities they had, Paul had more reasons. After he presented his privileges and attainments, he wrote that he considered all of them as loss. Philippians 3:8-9:

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him . . .

Paul realized that he had not gained the perfection that he desired, nor had he reached the goal, but he was pressing on toward it (Philippians 3:10–12). Pressing toward the goal involved two specific things in this context. It involved forgetting what was behind, whether privileges, attainments, or failures. And it also involved straining toward what is ahead for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul and others set a godly example for other saints, and he gave a tearful warning about the character of the enemies of the cross of Christ: “*Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things*” (Philippians 3:19). Paul contrasted them to those who have heavenly citizenship, those enrolled in the Lamb’s book of life.

Chapter Four — Review And Summary

The fourth chapter begins with a call for steadfastness. Then Paul appealed for unity and cooperation between two Christian women who needed to be reconciled (cf. Philippians 4:2–3).

Rejoicing, gentleness, and a prayerful trust are commanded by Paul, rather than a life of anxiety. The result would be the peace of God which transcends all understanding (Philippians 4:3–7).

Paul also wrote about proper thinking and action. He wanted the church to have noble and pure thoughts. He urged them to do what they had learned, heard, and seen him do (cf. Philippians 4:8–9).

Paul thanked them for their concern for him and for the gifts even though he was content in all circumstances. He had learned to be content whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in need. But, Paul was deeply grateful for their gift, and he expressed his gratitude to them. (cf. Philippians 4:10–16). He was not looking for a gift; he was interested in the blessing they would receive. Philippians 4:17–19:

Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account . . . And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Paul closed the letter with greetings to the saints in Philippi and greetings from the brothers in Rome (cf. Philippians 4:21–23).

Special Note of Joy

Preliminary Background on Joy

Joy is taught several places in the New Testament. First, Jesus promised joy to His followers who obeyed His commands: “*I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete*” (John 15:11). Jesus promised that the disciple’s grief would turn to joy after His death and resurrection: “. . . Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy” (John 16:22).

Second, people who obey the Gospel experience joy. (Acts 8:38–39) When an Ethiopian eunuch was on his way home after worshiping God in Jerusalem, Philip preached the Gospel to him. Philip told him the story of Jesus, the lamb led to the slaughter, and the eunuch stopped the chariot. Acts 8:38-39:

And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

No wonder the eunuch went away rejoicing. He had come in contact with Christ and His shed blood. The Philippian jailer was also filled with joy after he came to believe in God. Acts 16:33–34:

At that hour of the night the jailor took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailor brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with

joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.

Third, joy in the New Testament is often associated with the Holy Spirit. In Iconium this significant event occurred: “*And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 13:52). Paul wrote the church in Corinth about joy in the Holy Spirit: “*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*” (Romans 14:17). In fact, Paul included joy when he wrote the attitudes that are produced in the life of a Christian by the work of the Holy Spirit: “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*” (Galatians 5:22).

Fourth, notice also that the joy is in the Lord: “*Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord . . .*” (Philippians 3:1). Paul encouraged the Christians to always rejoice: “*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*” (Philippians 4:4). They were not to rejoice because of their worldly accomplishments or fame. They were to rejoice in the Lord!

Christians Do Not Automatically Have Joy

The fact that there are frequent exhortations in the Bible to rejoice shows that Christians do not automatically have joy. If Christians had joy merely because they were Christians, there would be no exhortations to rejoice.

Second, Christians do not automatically have other aspects of the fruit of the Spirit. For example, Paul wrote that the fruit of the Spirit is love (cf. Galatians 5:22). Love is commanded in many biblical passages. It is not assumed that Christians necessarily have love. Peter wrote this beautiful thought about love: “*Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart*” (1 Peter 1:22). Christians have the responsibility to love each other deeply. The purpose of being saved, born again, was so they might love, and Peter

encouraged them to love deeply from the heart. John wrote that obeying God is a way to show love for Him. “*This is love for God: to obey his commands . . .*” (1 John 5:3).

Third, Christians do not automatically have peace, also a fruit of the Spirit. Peace is the result of a prayerful life of trust. Philippians 4:6–7:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Christians do not automatically have the characteristics of joy, love, and peace. They come from a life of trust and commitment to God, regardless of a person’s circumstances.

Things That Rob Us of Joy

There are things that steal joy from a Christian’s heart. Notice some of the possible thieves of joy today. One is circumstances. If a person’s joy is based on outward circumstances, their joy is on a very shaky foundation. In fact, if one is basing his joy on outward circumstances, he will often be joyless and miserable. Paul would not have been a joyful person if his joy had been based on outward circumstances: “*I am not saying this because I am need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances*” (Philippians 4:11). So a person’s circumstance can take away joy, but it should not.

Second, some people believe that other people can take away their joy. People are often difficult to deal with. Some people have bad attitudes such as malice, deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, slander, and other sinful attitudes. People in need do not always appreciate the things that Christians do for them. These negative attitudes can even be found among God’s people. But Christians should put these attitudes away: “*Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit,*

hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind" (1 Peter 2:1). Paul had plenty of reasons for disappointment and discouragement because of people. In fact, Paul wrote that some men preached Christ out of envy and rivalry (cf. Philippians 1:15).

Paul wanted to send Timothy to them because he had a genuine interest in the Philippian church while others looked out for their own interests: "*For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ*" (Philippians 2:21). In his last letter Paul wrote about Demas deserting him: "*For Demas, because he has loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica . . .*" (2 Timothy 4:10). Paul was again disappointed by men: "*At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them*" (2 Timothy 4:16). This is an incredible statement! Paul did not lose his joy when the brothers deserted him. In fact, he did not want their behavior held against them. Christians today should not let any relationship take away their joy.

Third, material belongings can possess a Christian and take away his joy. Perhaps that was why Jesus warned about greed: "*Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions*" (Luke 12:15). Paul's joy was not taken away by the absence of material possessions. Paul beautifully wrote about rejoicing under difficult circumstances: "*sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything*" (Corinthians 6:10).

Fourth, perhaps the main thing that steals joy away from Christians is worry and anxiety. If they do not properly deal with circumstances, people, and things which lead to worry and anxiety, they can be robbed of joy. Worry, not suffering, is the real killer of joy. Paul had many reasons to have anxiety and worry: his imprisonment, brothers who had false motives when they preached the Word, internal friction in the church, danger from false teachers, and corrupt lifestyles. And even though Paul had anxiety for all the churches and deep concern for the people who were being led astray, he still maintained inner joy

and peace. He was free from debilitating worry that takes joy away.

The Secret of Maintaining Joy

What is the secret of maintaining joy? How can Christians have the joy that is mentioned in the Bible? The secret lies in the attitude of one's mind. Solomon wrote a wise passage about the heart: "*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life*" (Proverbs 4:23). All that a person does comes from his heart, where the joy should be. Joy will be manifested if it is indeed in one's heart. Remember how Paul exhorted the saints in Philippians 4:8:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

The attitude of the mind will involve trust in God. Philippians 4:6–7 is a verse which has been mentioned often, but it cannot be mentioned too often:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Peter urged Christians to trust in God: "*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you*" (1 Peter 5:7).

Second, to have joy in their hearts, Christians must rely upon God's providential working in their lives. Paul believed in God's providence: "*Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel*" (Philippians 1:12). Paul wrote another verse that is a favorite of many people: "*And we know that in all things God*

works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Third, Christians must accept God’s promises if they are going to have joy. Paul knew that his strength came from the Lord: “*I can do everything through him who gives me strength*” (Philippians 4:13). Paul warned the Corinthian Christians about falling away and sinning like the Israelites had done. But he encouraged them by showing a way out from temptation. 1 Corinthians 10:13:

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will always provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

A favorite passage of mine of this book, is about God’s power at work in His body: “*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us*” (Ephesians 3:20).

Fourth, a single-minded dedication and submission to Jesus Christ is needed to have joy in one’s heart. Paul was completely dedicated: “*For to me, to live is Christ*” (Philippians 1:21). Paul put his past life behind him and pressed on toward heaven. Philippians 3:13–14

But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Paul exhorted Christians to have Jesus’ attitude: “*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 2:5).

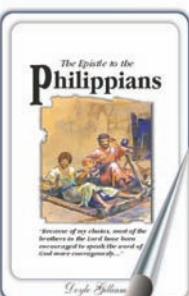
In conclusion, in view of these principles believers can indeed obey Paul’s injunction: “*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*” (Philippians 4:4).

Doyle Gilliam



Doyle Gilliam was born in Fallcreek, Texas. He attended public schools in Fort Worth, Texas, graduating from Polytechnic High School. After attending Texas Wesleyan College and Abilene Christian University, Doyle received his B.A. degree from Florida Christian College. His M.A. degree was earned from Abilene Christian University. Doyle has been preaching over 50 years, having spent much of this time in mission work in Africa beginning in 1957. He is the author of a *Topical Index To The Bible* in the Chichewa language of Malawi which has been translated into English, Spanish, French, Swahili, Chishona, Russian, Bulgarian and "Pidgin English." He has written a Commentary on John's Gospel in a *Commentary on the New Testament In Simple English* published in 1988.

The Gilliam family served nearly 20 years in Malawi, Kenya, and Zimbabwe, returning to the United States in 1977. Since then Doyle has taught in Sunset International Bible Institute as well as Sunset School of Missions. He and Louise, parents of five children, make frequent teaching trips back to the African mission field.



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