

A
Doctrinal and Devotional
Commentary
Of the book of
Philippians

By
Rénald Leroux Jr.

A doctrinal and Devotional Commentary of the book of Philippians
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Introduction

1. Author

The author is the apostle Paul (Phil. 1:1).

2. The recipients of this letter

The believers in the Roman colony of Philippi which was built by Phillip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, in 358-357 BC. This city was predominately inhabited by Roman citizens, some Greeks and Jews. It was Paul who founded this church (Acts 16:1-40).

3. Place and date of writing

It is suggested that Paul wrote this letter in a Roman prison around 61 AD.

4. Purpose of this letter

To bring up to date information in regards to his personal state and also to speak about internal fighting in the church and the threat of false teachers. Finally to encourage the church to rejoice in the Lord.

Philippians 1:1,2
01 - 'To all the Saints in Christ Jesus'

- (1) Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus,
to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers
and deacons:**
- (2) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
(NASB)**

This letter to the believers in the city of Philippi, which was a Roman colony, begins with a warm greeting. As you can see it opens with the names of the people that it was written by - Paul and Timothy. This is not the only letter from the apostle Paul that also has in its heading the name of Timothy his fellow worker in Christ. Actually Timothy's name is also beside Paul's in 2nd Corinthians, Colossians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians and also Philemon. Here we can see the humble character of Paul for even if the letter is from his own heart and mind he includes Timothy and places him at his right hand. Should this not encourage all believers to look unto others with the same attitude as Paul did?

In the first verse we see the official title Paul refers to himself with. Many believe that Paul was the "greatest of all apostles" in writing and in deeds and they may be right. For no other apostle has worked so hard as a missionary as Paul did and no other apostle wrote as many of the New Testament epistles as Paul (twelve were written by Paul, four by John, two by Peter, one by James, one by Jude and an unknown writer for Hebrews). Paul was the most prolific writer in the entire New Testament! His great knowledge and insight was well-known by all, including the apostle Peter who wrote that some of his writings were difficult to understand (2nd Peter 3:15, 16).

In verse one, Paul introduces himself and Timothy as:

(1) ...Bond-servants of Christ Jesus

He was not the great theologian, apostle, missionary, miracle worker, teacher and model for all the Disciples of Christ to follow – NO! He simply saw himself as a **bondservant**. He was a slave of Jesus. You see Paul understood very well what had happened at the cross and what Christ had done for him. He wrote the following to the believers in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 6:19,20

**(19) Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own;
(20) you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.
(RSV)**

Paul had been bought at the cross and he no longer belonged to himself. Slavery was very common in Paul's day. In fact there were more slaves in the Roman Empire than freemen! Even in the old Greek Empire slaves were more numerous than citizens were. It is very difficult for us to understand what it meant to be a slave – you did not belong to yourself. It meant that someone had total authority over you and your very life belonged to your owner. He told you where to go, when to work, what to do. All that you possessed was actually his – even your wife and children. The owner would determine EVERYTHING that concerned your life – because you were his. This is what Paul saw himself as, a simple bondservant. He was telling the Christians at Philippi that Christ was the absolute owner and ruler of his life; that Jesus was the only commander and the only one who had authority over him. Please notice that he included Timothy as also being a bondservant. What Paul saw himself as he passed on to his fellow worker Timothy. He taught Timothy what he knew to be true for himself. We are but servants unto the Lord Jesus for he has bought us by a great price – his blood at Mount Calvary.

I wonder if we have the same vision of ourselves as Paul did. Do we actually see ourselves as not being the authority in our life? Who tells us what we should be doing, where we should be living, or how we should be spending the monies we have? Who has the final say in our everyday life? Who sets the rules for our conduct wherever we may be? For Paul it was Jesus and for you and I it should also be Jesus.

Verse one also states who the letter was written for:

(1) ...To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.

I would like you to notice that the letter was written to three types of people found in the local church: all the saints, the bishops and the deacons. Now all of these people could have been summed up as: "To all the saints in Philippi," but there are a few things I would like you to notice:

First of all the believers in Christ at Philippi are called *saints*. This word in Greek (HAGIOS) basically means to be holy, pure, sacred or morally blameless. This was the description of the believers of Christ that lived in Philippi.

We all know that we are sinners and that we fail constantly before the Lord. We also know that in ourselves we do not have any holiness, purity, sacredness and that certainly we are not morally blameless. So why does Paul consider and call the Philippians *saints*? Simply because that is what they had become because of their faith in Christ as we see in Eph. 1:3,4:

Ephesians 1:3,4

**(3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,
(4) even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.
(RSV)**

Holy and without blame are all those who have been born-again. Saints are not people of old that have lived wonderful Christian lives that stand out far above the others. Saints are not the superheroes of the faith and they are certainly not to be venerated or prayed to. Saints are every single man, woman and child that has received salvation through and only through the person of Jesus Christ the beloved Son of God. Should we not rejoice that because of our calling we have become saints in the household of the Lord God!

The second and third group of people are the *bishops* and *deacons*. Now a *bishop* (EPISKOPOS) means an overseer. It typically is the same person as an *elder* (PRESBUTEROS). This would be men who have the spiritual qualities and spiritual gifts to lead and be accountable for a local group of believers that gathered together. These men were the authority in the church, the spiritual leaders and teachers (Christ always being the absolute Head of the churches Col. 1:15-18). The other group of people is called the *deacons*. These men and women were the servants within the church. The word *deacon* (DIAKONOS) simply means – a servant. Probably people who had different ministries and helped out in various forms and fashion. Still today we have these two groups of people in our churches.

In other words this letter written to the Philippians was for EVERYBODY in the church. Its content is for everybody, its warnings are for everybody, and its admonitions are for everybody. So when you read this epistle take at face value that it is written for you as a believer in Christ. The worth and authority of this letter has not expired. All that is written in it is for YOUR benefit, encouragement and discipline. May our good Lord bless you by the reading and studying of the Letter of Paul to the Philippians!

In verse two we see the heart of Paul for his brothers and sisters:

(2) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace is the unmerited favor that God bestows upon people. Jesus said the following:

Matthew 5:45

so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

(RSV)

Grace is never merited, for it is no longer grace if it is something that is due to us because we have laboured for it (Rom. 4:4). What Paul desires for the Philippians is that the unmerited favour of God be showered upon them, freely given by God and freely received by the believers. Too many believers are under so many burdens because they do not understand or accept that God freely bestows upon them his blessings. Instead of rejoicing and living a life of thankfulness they crumble under having to “buy” or be “good enough” to receive from the Lord. Friend, we will never be “good enough”. In fact realizing we’ll never be “good enough” is essential in receiving from God! Listen to what Jesus said:

Luke 5:32

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

(RSV)

It is also written:

Romans 3:10-12

(10) as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one;

(11) no one understands, no one seeks for God.

(12) All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one."

(RSV)

Grace is what we desperately need because NO ONE is righteous, NO ONE understands, NO ONE seeks God, ALL have turned aside, ALL have become unprofitable and NO ONE does good. So believe God, you will never be good enough – never! That’s why Christ came and took away our shame and sins at the cross because we could not and never will be able to! Accepting God’s grace is so marvellous so don’t let his grace pass by – receive it.

The second desire from Paul is for all to have the peace that can only come from the Lord himself. Once you have tasted it – there is nothing in the world that can even scratch its surface. God’s peace is so different from the peace that the world offers.

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

(RSV)

“My peace” that’s what every Christian needs, the peace of Christ well established in his heart. A peace that will face every valley and mountain we are called to face. A peace that says “It’s all right – just carry on”.

We see that grace and peace are given by the Father and the Son in verse two. Paul wants the believers to understand that both Father and Son are presently working in them to bring about this grace and peace. What we are to do is not to block the coming of grace and peace because of OUR turning away. We are to maintain a pure heart that will be able to receive and enjoy the grace and peace that the Lord has in store for his children. We should search our hearts to be certain that all the doors of our hearts are open and that sin does not shut them. This is how David said it:

Psalms 139:23,24

(23) Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

(24) And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

(RSV)

Yes may the grace and peace of the Father and the Son truly be upon you. May you open pure hearts unto the Lord to receive all the blessings he has stored up for you. But suppose you have not kept your heart open and suppose your life could have reflected Jesus in a much better way and your thoughts have not been set on the Kingdom of God. Is it too late for you to come back? Will the Lord forgive you and receive you with arms wide open? You may have been secretly living in the flesh and no one has a clue to what you look like on the inside. You know that God has been knocking at the door of your heart for quite a while but you haven’t opened it yet. Your heart is troubled and a new desire has been growing in you – and you want to come back.

If this is the case I am happy to tell you that if you repent with a sincere heart. If you openly confess the way you have lived because of abandoning the “narrow road”. Then the Father will gladly open his door so you can come back home. I’m basing myself on what is written in the Scriptures:

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

(RSV)

God is faithful and just and he will forgive our sins. That's his promise and God does not lie. So just come to him with a childlike heart and ask forgiveness and tell him that you now want to glorify his name in your life. If you need help to walk in the light (and we all do) the Holy Spirit will guide you and also strengthen you to be able to live a life that is worthy of your calling.

So don't hesitate, today can be the beginning of your closer walk with the Lord.

**Philippians 1:3-7
02 - 'Being thankful'**

**(3)I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
(4) always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,
(5) for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,
(6) being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you
will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;
(7)just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart,
inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel,
you all are partakers with me of grace.
(NASB)**

Once the introduction of Paul's letter is done he now turns to what I call "being thankful". In other words Paul is very happy and deeply grateful that there is a very close relationship between the brothers and sisters at Philippi and himself. I believe that this heartfelt connection that was in Paul should be alive in every child of God in relationship with every other Christians that they know. This is a very important lesson that we all need to learn – to care for each other. So let's look at what this thankfulness encompasses.

(3)I thank my God upon every remembrance of you

The first thing that I see that thankfulness does to a regenerated heart is that it turns it towards the one who has made this all possible – God. Paul first of all turns to God with thankfulness. I am certain that Paul could have thanked many that were in the church at Philippi since he himself had established that church (Acts 16:11-40). But instead of doing that he knows that none of this would have been possible if the hand of God would not have been upon him – so he first of all thanks God. This very basic and simple thing can be often forgotten. We can easily forget the true source of our blessed relationships and give credit to a person or even ourselves! Far be it from our thoughts to forget that – God should be honoured and thanked first and always and in all things. That is why Paul could write.

Ephesians 1:15,16

**(15)For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your
love toward all the saints,
(16)I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,
(RSV)**

Paul also basically gave thanks to God for the brothers and sisters in Col. 1:3, 1 Thess. 1:2 and 2 Thess. 2:13. As we can see to be thankful was well ingrained in Paul's heart towards the Father for all the other true believers that he knew. Have we been thankful for the Christians that we know or have we rather been irritated towards them? Which do you think ought to be done before the Lord? Which of the two pleases our heavenly Father? Now Paul states "*upon every memory of you*". It gives me the idea that he didn't miss a single opportunity to be thankful unto God. It also means that Paul didn't remember these Philippians once in a while. I believe that they were on his heart and in his prayers (as we will see). So keep your Christian brothers and sisters close to your mind and soul. Be thankful that you have them. Do they sometimes irritate you – be thankful. Are they asking for help repeatedly – be thankful. Yes thank the Lord for your best friends in the church and also for those who never seem to grow up!

A second thing that thankfulness does is the following:

(4) always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,

Thankfulness will cause you to pray for your fellow Christians. Remembering the Philippians does not only touch the mind (he remembers them) but it also touches the heart (he prays for them). I like the word *always*. His prayers are not sporadic, irregular or infrequent, Paul *always* prays for them. As if this is not enough it is also written "*in every prayer*"! It's as though Paul doesn't miss an opportunity to pray for the beloved Philippians. How often we can even forget to pray and be thankful unto God for the people we know! Now his prayers were not only prayers of thankfulness they were also prayers of requests for them. To be able to request things for people you really need to know their needs. This manifests that Paul not only knew the Philippians but also was able to "keep in touch" with what was happening with them. Let's not forget that Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter. I know that if I were in prison I would have had so many other things on my mind that I probably would have forgotten the problem the other Christians were having. My eyes would have been fixed on myself and my distress. But not so with Paul! He made requests in his prayers for the Philippians every time he prayed. Are we able to bring specific requests before the Lord for everyone in our church? Do we know them well enough? Do they trust us and open up in conversations we have with them? How can we minister unto them if we don't really know them? It seems that Paul knew them very well.

A third aspect of thankfulness is found in the word *all*. Paul prayed for ALL that were at Philippi! Our human nature often prefers to gather together in little circles of friends. In these circles of friends we manifest care, understanding, benevolence, love and so forth.

For those that are outside of these circles of friends there is little that is manifested unto them. We don't actually despise them, we don't wish them any harm but we keep them at a certain distance. And when we pray they naturally don't "pop up" in our minds. Often we don't make a big thing out of it and we just say that: "that's the way it is." Maybe in the world but not in God's house. As a Christian I should (as Paul did) be able, to not only offer general prayers, but very specific prayers concerning my brothers and sisters in the church.

A fourth aspect of a thankful heart is shown at the very end of this verse by the words "*all with joy*". These few words manifest the attitude of Paul's heart in his thankfulness unto God. Paul prays and asks requests for all types of things needed in the lives of the Christians in Philippi. Now does this seem to be a burden or a heavy load for him? Can you imagine Paul saying: "Oh no! I've got to pray for those Philippians again. I'm so tired of thinking about them. I wish I could forget them!" Of course not – it was a joy for him to pray for them! I must say that Paul is quite an extraordinary man. Most of the Christians I know even have a difficult time to open up at prayer meetings! Prayer seems to be a lost "art" and I would say a lost "joy". If praying for my Christian friends would really be a joyful thing to do wouldn't I be praying much more often for them?

(5) for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

Paul remembers in his prayers for the Philippians the "*fellowship*" that they had. As we grow older the fonder we become of past memories. What remained in Paul's heart was the time that he passed with the Philippians. Being in prison he had very little time for anything else than to meditate on his past. We could say that Paul was pleased with what he remembered of the people he once knew. Notice that the memories of fellowship were anchored on the "*gospel*" – the Good News. True spiritual fellowship has nothing to do with our trips to the bowling alley, coffee shops, restaurants after Sunday services and other outings. True spiritual fellowship, as I said, is anchored on the gospel. True fellowship is centered on the person of Jesus Christ. How sweet were those memories of the gatherings for singing praises, listening to testimonies of salvation, the breaking of the bread, praying for each other and being mutually edified by exhortations. I fear that the modern church knows less and less what true fellowship is all about and because of this our soul dries up and we become spiritually weak.

When Paul writes "*from the first day until now*" this teaches me that it didn't take months and months before Paul was at ease and was actively part of the church in Philippi. I know that he is the founder and it could not be any other way because of this but the principle remains the same. "*From the first day*", Paul was active, lively and vigorous in the church right from the beginning.

What a beautiful state of mind. He met people and right away he was in their lives. It's not always easy to mix in with a group. But it can be done, as Paul did in Philippi. How much time is simply lost because we stand on the fringe of church gatherings? We don't participate, partake or contribute. We walk in very softly and leave quietly. I've known people who have been going to their church for years and don't even know the name of it! Don't wait any longer, don't be a marginal Christian. We can all have an impact if only we get involved.

(6) being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

This brings us to a very well-known verse. A verse that we hear on and off and in all kinds of situations. This section speaks about Paul being thankful for the brothers and sisters he has in Philippi but it also speaks of another subject – confidence. I'm certain that Paul had confidence in praying. I know this simply because Paul prayed quite often and also for a very large number of people. In verse six we see that Paul's confidence extended all the way to the "*day of Jesus Christ*".

Paul speaks of the unlimited confidence that he has in God. His faith is unshakable for what the Lord has promised he will bring forth.

Numbers 23:19

God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should repent. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it?

(RSV)

Yes God will make it good even unto the Philippians. It is the same God that has also given you salvation and all the promises that this includes. There is no reason for God's children not to stand on the promises of God. We can have confidence in God for every aspect of our lives. He is not only our Master (we have been bought at a great price) but he is also our Father (we have been adopted – Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5).

Paul was confident that God would not abandon the Philippians!

(6) that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

It is God that has begun a good work in us! What sweet words to the soul! Like morning dew this phrase nourishes and fortifies. Many believe that THEY have begun a good work in themselves by "accepting" Christ as their Saviour.

This is far from the truth. It is the Lord God that actually does everything concerning our salvation. The following is a list of what he has begun to do in the believer and it all originated even before time existed!

- God chooses the ones who will be holy and blameless (Eph. 1:4).
- God chooses people unto salvation (2 Thess. 2:13-14).
- His calling is according to His purpose (2 Tim. 1:9).
- He predestines His chosen unto salvation (Rom. 8:29-30).
- He also predestines us to adoption (Eph. 1:5).
- He appoints some people to believe (Acts 13:48).
- He draws people to Himself (John 6:44,65).
- He works faith in sinners to be able to believe (John 6:28-29).
- He grants repentance (2 Tim. 2:24-26).
- He makes us to be born again not by our will but by His will (John 1:12-13).

Having done all of that and so much more, Paul is absolutely certain that what God has begun he will also bring to completion. We may sometime have projects that we abandon after a short while but the Lord God ALWAYS does what he says he will do. We know that believers have been sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). We also know the following:

2 Corinthians 1:20-22

(20)For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God.

(21)But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us;

(22) he has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

(RSV)

God has given the believer the Holy Spirit as a seal that guarantees all of his promises. So Paul was right to believe that God will bring the believer safe and sound unto the day of Jesus Christ. So have no worries, God has not finished with you yet and he will not leave you or abandon you until you are transformed into the image of his beloved Son (1 Cor. 13:11,12; 2 Cor. 3:18). Now if God won't let go or abandon the Christians around me it surely must imply that I also love them and keep myself attached to them.

(7)just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

Paul says that it is a right (just) (DIKAIOS) thing for him to think this way (that God will bring them to completion). But the word I want to stress is *all* (of you *all*). Sometimes we wonder what in the world will God do with such or such a person. They fail all the time, they sin over and over, and they can't seem to walk straight or in the light. They are an awful reflection of Jesus Christ. You try to help and it just doesn't work – it seems to be wasted time! Here Paul says – of you *all*. Every single child of God will be kept and made into the image of the Son. That is the plan of the Father for all of his adopted children no matter who they are.

Romans 8:29,30

(29) For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren.

(30) And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

(RSV)

Paul brings this section to an end by speaking of both love and grace. It almost sounds like a love letter (*because I have you in my heart*) and it actually is. I wonder if I have this deep love for the brethren like Paul did. I wonder if I have patience with them like he did. I wonder if I see them as the good Lord does. He held the Philippians close to his heart and told them of his love for them. Maybe I ought to do the same with the people of my church – tell them that they are dear and precious and that they hold a special place in my heart. Imagine if everyone did what Paul just wrote! Wouldn't it be the greatest church to be involved in? – Absolutely!

Paul expresses his love for the Philippians in the worst possible of life's conditions:

(7) Inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

For most of us loving, cherishing, caring and treasuring others is easy when things go well in life, but not so with Paul. He loves the Philippians even when he is chained up in prison waiting for his trial and having to defend himself for his dear life! Now that takes a spiritual person to do that wouldn't you say! Instead of complaining about his terrible life – Paul writes love letters to his beloved spiritual children. When are Christians going to stop complaining and start loving as we should?

(7) you all are partakers with me of grace.

Grace is a very mysterious thing and needs to be well understood. Paul writes that both the Philippians and he are under the same grace. But how could this be? They are free and he is imprisoned. They have a life ahead, he has death in sight. He is shackled they go about as they please. It seems that they are at the opposites of the life spectrum – and they are. But in both cases they are covered by the grace of God! We often forget (as Paul will remind the Philippians later on) that suffering is also a grace!

Philippians 1:29

For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

James wrote it this way:

James 1:2-4

(2)Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials,

(3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

(4)And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

(RSV)

And Peter added to this thought about receiving the grace to suffer:

1 Peter 1:6,7

(6) In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials,

(7) so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

(RSV)

So the grace of God is the very life of the believer in ALL circumstances. And the grace of the Lord is not lacking simply because of different trials that believers are called to participate in or live out. So one should be satisfied with what life presents him knowing that it is God's grace that suffices (2 Cor. 12:9).

I really like the attitude that the three friends of Daniel had when they faced death by being burned alive in the furnace. Do you remember what they said?

Daniel 3:16-18

(16) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

(17) If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

(18) But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

(RSV)

As with Paul, the circumstances of their lives were very dim. If they did not bow to the gods of Nebuchadnezzar they would be killed right there and then. They knew that God was able to deliver them – if he wanted to. But they were readily accepting the fact that either of the two might happen. They understood that the hand of God was upon them one way or the other. In their hearts the grace of God was not only there if they were delivered from the furnace. It was there because he was the true God – the God of Israel.

So don't believe the lie that says "If you're not blessed by health, wealth and a great life – the grace of God is not upon you". Tell that to all the martyrs found in Hebrews chapter 11!

Philippians 1:8-11
03 - 'God is my witness'

- (8) For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.**
- (9) And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,**
- (10) that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,**
- (11) being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.**
- (NASB)**

Have you ever been a witness in a court case? If you have then you know the feeling that you have when you stand in the witness box. There's a lot of pressure because you are under oath and you never know what questions are going to be asked. You know that you can't lie and if you do and get caught then you're in real big trouble because you can end up behind bars.

- (8) For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.**

When I was a young man I had the opportunity to work in a courthouse for several years and I have seen countless people being called as a witness either for the prosecutor or the defense. Often court cases are determined by the quality of the witnesses. You have a strong case if you have strong witnesses. Here we see the apostle Paul calling "to the stand" his witness – God himself! His witness is the ultimate source of authority. Why would Paul call upon God? Simply to prove to the Philippians the truth of what he is about to write.

It's as though Paul wants the Philippians to know this one thing about him. This one thing that's above everything else and that's the love that he has for them. He "*longs*" (EPIPOTHEO) after them, this means that he has a great desire for them. He is jailed and in chains because of the gospel. And like anyone else in his situation he only has his memories to linger on and to support him. Whether they are of his relation with the Lord or of the brothers or sisters. So he remembers the good times he had when he was at Philippi and the wonderful people he met there. How he wishes he could go back to those delightful days.

To help the Philippians understand how strong his desire is for them he brings a comparison. We sometimes read of a man who deeply loves a woman and to prove his love for her he says: “Ask of me anything – even the moon – and I will give it to you!” Here Paul compares his love for them to the love of Jesus Christ for his beloved church!

(8) ...with the affection of Jesus Christ.

What Paul is saying is that his affection and his desire for them is of the highest degree. I personally know that I could never say such a thing unto anyone – I love you just as much as Christ loves you. Remember he has called upon God as his witness – a witness that is true. He’s saying the following “God knows my heart and he can tell that this is true, I am not lying.” But what did Paul mean when he said that he longs after them with the affection of Jesus Christ? To answer this question we simply need to look at how Christ loved his disciples. What Christ divinely did for his followers – Paul humanly did for his beloved Philippians. Again I must say that this is far above how I have ever been able to love another person. Have you truly loved this way? Is your love for others like Christ’s is for you? Are you able to call God as your witness to attest to the love you have for others!

(9) And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment.

What I would like for us to notice is the affection that Paul has manifested in real life. It’s one thing to say “I really hold you dear” or “I long for you every day”. But it’s quite another to make it apparent in our daily life. So how did Paul show that he deeply cared for his friends? One of the ways was through prayers. This is the second time that Paul speaks about his praying for them (v.4 & v.9). In verse four he doesn’t say what he prayed for but he does in verse nine. As Paul speaks of his longing and love for the Philippians he now prays that they in turn will love each other. This is what Paul had to say about what their love should be like.

First their love should ABOUND. This word (PERISSEUO) means to super abound or be in excess. Paul doesn’t want their love to be a small love, a shy love or a once in a while love! He prays that their love will be excessive or overflowing if you wish. Not a stream of love but an ocean full of love. He desires that a massive amount of love be in the hearts of the Philippian believers. But his prayers for them continue. He doesn’t want the Philippians to believe that their love has reached a certain level of comfort. As if they could say: “Well my love for others has gotten pretty good I can now rest and be happy with the way I love”.

This brings us to the *second* aspect of their love – it should **ABOUND MORE AND MORE!** No one should be at ease with the way he loves others. Let's not forget what the two great commandments are:

Matthew 22:36-40

(36)"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

(37)And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

(38)This is the great and first commandment.

(39)And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

(40)On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."

(RSV)

Loving God first and loving others second wraps up the Law and the Prophets. So is my measure of love for God sufficient? What about those around me? Is my love for them adequate? Is it possible for me to express my love for God in a better or more tangible way? Are there things that I do that I know hinders me from loving as I should? Am I in the way of loving others? Does my love for myself precede the love I should have for God and others? What Paul is saying is: "Philippians, your love should be continuously growing; it should not be stagnant".

The last aspect of love opens up to five imperative points concerning the fabric of our love. We have so far seen that our love should:

1. Abound
2. Increase

In verses ten and eleven Paul introduces five other points, let's look at them:

(10) that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.

Third, our love should approve the things that are excellent. The word "*approve*" (DOKIMAZO) means to test or examine, therefore to discern. Our love is called to test what should be the object or person of our affection. We are so easily fooled into automatically loving a person or a ministry or a group of people simply because of a little information given to us about them. Paul says that we are to put to test even the things that are or seem to be excellent.

Testing is something that we ought and are taught to do. It is vital for our spiritual health. In 2 Cor. 2:9 Paul tests the Corinthians. In 2 Cor. 13:5 we are told to test ourselves. In 1 Thess. 5:21 we are told to test all things. So again we see that Paul stresses the fact that it is important even in loving people or things to really examine what we are doing. Remember what the apostle John commanded in 1 John 4:1, we are told to even test the spirits. In other words please don't take for granted that everyone who says he is a Christian is either a true Christian or a well-meaning person – test before you love!

Fourth, the fourth aspect of our love should be that:

(10) ...you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.

Our love absolutely needs to be “*sincere*” (HEILIKRINES). This word means to be tested as genuine or pure if you prefer. Often the love manifested is not profound. It's more of a: I love you because you love me or I love you until it bothers me. God's love for the redeemed has been tested as genuine, Romans 5:8,9 reminds us of this:

Romans 5:8,9

(8)But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

(9)Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

(RSV)

Sometimes love is not pure in the sense that there are other motives, hidden motives that are concealed behind why we love. One can love to get something out of a certain relationship. One can also love to exploit one's greed or to be flattered by others who see our “love”. This love does not pass the test as being genuine.

The *fifth* aspect is that real love is without “*offense*”. This Greek word (APROSKOPOS) means to be inoffensive, not to lead to sin. Loving is difficult, it leads to self-abasement or denial of oneself. Love needs to be selfless if it is not, it is then narcissism (the love of self). Here we are told that even when we love we can be an offense to some and lead them to sin. So we need to be very careful. Do you remember what is written?

Romans 14:14-16

(14)I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

(15)If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died.

(16)So do not let your good be spoken of as evil. (RSV)

Romans 14:21

**It is right not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother stumble.
(RSV)**

Real love is not an offending love (unless it deals with a biblical truth issue). So let's not offend someone even if it's under the cover of love.

(11) being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

The *sixth* facet of Christian love is that it is filled with the fruits of righteousness. Paul exhorts the Philippians to have fruitful love not a destructive, negative or damaging type of love (which is no love at all). This talks about the way that disciples ought to walk in general. As children of God we are told to walk in a certain way - a way that is different than those who do not know the Lord.

We should not:

- Walk in darkness (John 8:12)
- Walk according to the flesh (Rom. 8:1)
- Walk as gentiles (Eph. 4:17)
- Walk as fools (Eph. 5:15)

We should:

- Walk in the steps of the faith (Rom. 4:12)
- Walk properly (Rom. 13:13)
- Walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7)
- Walk in the same spirit (2 Cor. 12:18)
- Walk worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1)
- Walk in love (Eph. 5:2)
- Walk worthy of the Lord (Col. 1:10)
- Walk in Christ (Col. 2:6)
- Walk to please God (1 Thess. 4:1)
- Walk in the light (1 John 1:7)
- Walk in truth (3 John 1:4)

If I understand that loving in righteousness is having a life that exemplifies all that is written above, I should take time to examine myself to see if these are the fruits that I bear in life. Now please notice that Paul writes:

(11) ...which are by Jesus Christ

This type of love, this desire to love, this capacity of loving God and others is totally impossible for those who are not regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Man may try but will only be able to mimic the perfect love that is found only in Jesus Christ. In other words when you try to love by your own flesh you are condemned to fail because the flesh will not accept to be pushed away for too long.

Remember what Paul says about the type of fruit that the flesh produces:

Romans 7:5

While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

(RSV)

The fruits of the flesh (even in a loving human context) bear the fruit of death. But for the child of God the fruit that his love bears is the fruit of righteousness (v.11).

For our *seventh* and last facet of Christian love we find the following:

(11) ...to the glory and praise of God.

The fruit of true Christian love are found in the fact that it is aimed at the glory and praise of God. In other words it is the Lord God who will receive all glory and praise. He and only he is up front as John the Baptist describes so well:

John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease.

(RSV)

Is that how you feel about yourself? That you must decrease to allow people to see Jesus living in you? Does your heart give glory to God when His love in you does good around? Do you feel frustrated when you are forgotten and only God is spoken of?

May we, like Paul, be able to call God to witness that we truly love and care for all our brothers and sisters!

Philippians 1:12-18
04 - 'I want you to know'

- (12)But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,**
- (13)so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;**
- (14)and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.**
- (15)Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will:**
- (16)The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;**
- (17)but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.**
- (18)What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.**
- (NASB)**

It seems that one of the most important words in the modern Christian vocabulary is the word “why”. How many times have we heard people ask this question over and over again – why? We wonder why God would ever allow this to happen to us or a loved one. It gives the idea that God has some “explaining to do”, that in some way he was not allowed or should have asked at least our advice or permission before acting! This reminds me of what the Lord said to Israel:

Jeremiah 18:6

O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? Says the LORD. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

(RSV)

And also what Paul wrote in Romans:

Romans 9:20,21

- (20)But who are you, a man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me thus?"**
- (21)Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use?**
- (RSV)**

But not so with Paul. He was living difficult times but never had he ever thought to blame God or to question him. He was imprisoned, his freedom had been taken away. He was chained and life was limited to a few square meters. He was at the “mercy” of the Roman guards and their every whim. He could have thought – why Lord – why? He had served the Lord for so many years and honoured him everywhere he had been. He had suffered so much physical pain, his body had become a tapestry of his Christian life and one could see how he had agonized because of his faith. Rather than asking “why”, this is what Paul wrote:

(12) But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,

He wanted the Philippians to know, to understand, to comprehend that what he was now living was not a wretched thing. It may also be the case that different things were being said about the state of Paul. We all know how news can turn out to become gossip and the truth is twisted. So what did Paul want the brethren to be certain of – let’s take a look.

(12) ...that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.

The things which happened to Paul were his imprisonment and everything that led up to it. Would you say that something like this would be a pleasant experience? Something that all would enjoy and even welcome? Of course not! What about his future, was it bright and encouraging? Was Paul certain that “it was just a mistake” and that he would be set free with a pat on the back and a “sorry about that”? Again, of course not! But in all this turbulent deadly whirlwind of events Paul has a different view of things.

He writes that these things have actually turned out “*for the furtherance of the gospel*”. I might be blind but I don’t see any “why me” or “poor me” in this phrase. What I see that Paul has totally set himself aside, not that he doesn’t know that he exists but he knows that something greater is blossoming because of his imprisonment. Paul is seeing his present situation with spiritual insight. He might have remembered what Christ had said:

Matthew 22:37

And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."

(RSV)

Loving the Lord with all of our being means that we place him above all else, which would include imprisonment for Paul. If the Lord wanted Paul to be in prison – so be it! He knew that he could trust the Lord in all things – even the possibility of martyrdom! It can happen that what seems to be dreadful is actually a blessing in disguise. Think of Joseph who was sold into slavery, then landed up in prison. He became Pharaoh’s right hand and was able to save his entire family from starvation. Think of Hannah who was unable to have children and was mercilessly nagged by her husband’s other wife. She finally had a son – Samuel who became a great man of God at a time when Israel needed spiritual leadership. Think of Sarah and Elizabeth who both were barren and felt the shame of not being able to give children to their husbands. Were not Isaac and John the Baptist to come forth from their wombs! Pages could be written concerning undesired and painful events that led up to something that people never thought would happen.

Rare were those who, like Paul, were able to comprehend that the hand of God was behind all that was happening to them. Blessed are you if you are one of them! If you can say as Paul that what is happening to you is furthering the gospel.

(13)so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;

A *second* thing that Paul wants the Philippians to know is that the reason for his imprisonment is known. There was no gossiping or lying concerning his chains. No false accusations being spread around. Everybody knew the real reason why Paul was suffering in jail. And because of this the gospel was spreading! The palace guards had heard the story behind his incarceration. Paul was there because of Christ. He wasn’t a scoundrel, a crook or a thief. It is one thing to be jailed for crimes that you have committed but another for being a disciple of Christ. Remember what Peter had to say on this subject:

1 Peter 2:19-21

(19)For one is approved if, mindful of God, he endures pain while suffering unjustly.

(20)For what credit is it, if when you do wrong and are beaten for it you take it patiently? But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval.

(21)For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

(RSV)

As I read these lines I cannot but wonder what am I known for? What do people recognise in me? Do they know me as a “good person” or as a Christian? If it’s as a “good person” then I have failed because there are “good people” (using human standards) in all walks of faith and even in those who deny the existence of God altogether. As Paul was known so should I be known to belong to Christ. Paul writes that it is *evident*. It’s not as though people had to guess, deduct or suppose that he was Christian – it was *evident*. People could see it right away. And again I must ask myself if people around me find it *evident* that I follow Jesus Christ. If not, then I’ve got some “walking in the light” to do!

(14)and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

A *third* thing that Paul wanted the Philippians to be certain of is the following. His chains did not discourage the other Christians. This is a spiritual truth that we see all over history and in our present world. The more there is opposition towards the faith the stronger it gets. If you read the book of Acts you will see the massive opposition and yet the spreading of the faith as though it was a bushfire! Churches blossomed everywhere in the known Roman Empire. History tells us that the heavier the hand of Caesar the greater was the harvest of souls.

Today it is believed that we need to be at peace with everybody and in harmony with all others. Not that we should be picking fights with other religions or philosophies but we should understand that Disciples of Christ will be hated. We have been warned by Jesus himself:

Matthew 10:25

it is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they malign those of his household.

(RSV)

Matthew 10:18

and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles.

(RSV)

Mark 13:9

But take heed to yourselves; for they will deliver you up to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them. (RSV)

But why should people reject those who truly believe in Christ. Why should kind, caring and loving people be looked upon as being so dangerous to society? John tells us in his gospel:

John 1:10,11

(10)He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not.

**(11)He came to his own home, and his own people received him not.
(RSV)**

If people do not receive Jesus they certainly will not receive his disciples.

But the chains of Paul strengthened the brethren and this showed up in two ways. First of all most of them became *confident*. They may have been shy and reluctant to manifest their faith. This is not new! Paul even tells Timothy not to be ashamed of the gospel!

2 Timothy 1:8

**Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel in the power of God.
(RSV)**

Because of Paul, people began to be bolder in their testimony. The enemy might have been glad to see Paul being shut in prison but the Lord changed it for good – others were now taking his place! Now people:

(14) ...are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

I can almost imagine the sparkle in the eyes of Paul as he was writing these lines. How excited he must have been to know that Christians were opening up and spreading the gospel. That his chains had a positive impact on the brethren. I can see that Paul was ready to pay the price so that the glorious gospel would spread its wings in Rome. Paying the price for Paul was: being jailed, chained and humiliated by society. Have you ever thought that you are also called to pay the price so that others may be encouraged or may come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ? Are you paying the price? Do you even want to pay the price? Most were ready in Rome and I pray that you also are.

(15)Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will:

(16)The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

(17)but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

(18)What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

The last thing that Paul wanted the Philippians to know dealt with the hearts of the Roman Christians. The Christian community in Rome was pretty much like everywhere else in the world, even in our world of today and it seems that we have not learned our lesson after all those centuries! Paul is so happy that the word of Christ is getting out there. That Disciples of Christ are spreading the Good News. But in doing this he can see that the hearts of some Christians are not pure in doing this. In verse fifteen to eighteen Paul speaks of two groups of people – two that are very different.

The first group that is spoken of are Christians whose hearts are not right with the Lord. This is Paul's description:

- **Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife (15)**
- **The former preach Christ from selfish ambition (16)**
- **not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains (16)**

What was wrong with them? If we could take a spiritual x-ray of their hearts this is what we would find: envy, strife, selfish ambition, lack of sincerity and a desire to add affliction to the already difficult situation Paul was living.

Could it be possible that in Rome (as it happened in other churches) that for some reason there were those who stood against Paul? It may be out of envy or jealousy, for others they may have had a difficulty with authority? We don't really know but what we do know is that sin can be alive and well in the hearts of regenerated people! Out of the five sins that Paul mentions in verses fifteen and sixteen the one I see the most frequently in our Christian circles today is the preaching of Christ for selfish ambition (v.16). This is especially true in churches where money, luxury and materialism is actually called a blessing from God. I fear that many preach Christ out of selfish ambition – to become wealthy! May we never become like the Christians that Paul describes! This teaches me that I always need to be ever watchful of my heart, knowing that:

Jeremiah 17:9

**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?
(RSV)**

If not attended to, my heart can slip away into sin's mud so easily. I believe that this is what happened to some of the Christians at Rome. They did not guard their hearts and they became corrupt. But I say "some" because our text in verse fifteen says: "Some indeed preach". Not all were like these sinful brethren, on the contrary some had pure hearts. This is Paul's description:

- **some also from good will (15)**
- **but the latter out of love (17)**
- **knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel (17)**

As I said some (most of them I hope) had their hearts in the "right place". They did not see Paul as an enemy but rather as sent by God, a true apostle, who needed to be respected and honoured as such. These brethren had a spiritual vision that ought to be recommended. Notice that they did not follow what the other Christians were saying or doing in relationship with Paul. They stood firm in their beliefs and were not swayed away. We also see that their motives were completely different. They preached Christ out of love (v.17) while the first group did out of envy, strife and selfish ambition (v.15, 16). And finally they preached to defend the gospel (v.17) while the others preached to add affliction to Paul (v.16). Now it is always sad to see that some Christians act in a sinful way. But amen that there are those who do things with godly motives.

(18)What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

This is Paul's conclusion to what I would call a spiritual disorder. What would have been our thoughts concerning evangelism in Rome and how it was done? What are our thoughts concerning how evangelism is done today? I can see that Paul handled things with a lot of spiritual maturity. Instead of being irritated, or claiming that people abused him or wanting to disassociate himself from this fringe group, he was actually rejoicing that the Good News was being preached. He knows that some are doing it for an evil gain but he still rejoices because the gospel is being heard.

I believe that Paul understands that for whatever reason or way that some preach Christ – God is in control. He knows that souls can be saved in whatever context or platform the salvation message is presented. He has total confidence in God. He understands that people can be saved by the thousands as with Peter on Pentecost (Acts 2:41) or one at a time as with Philip and the Ethiopian on a lonely road (Acts 8:34-40). And that's what Paul, so far, wanted the Philippians to know.

We are all called to share the gospel message with those around us. One of the main reasons why there are less and less people that come to the Lord in North America and Europe is simply because God's people have become silent. For some unknown reason the drive that pushed Christians to evangelize has gone away. I sometimes wonder and ask myself if all of this wealth and materialism that we so abundantly have is not a hidden curse upon God's children. So comfortable feeling no real need for the Lord, we simply have become silent. This reminds me what the Lord Jesus said to the church at Laodicea:

Revelation 3:15-19

- (15)I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot!**
- (16)So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.**
- (17)For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.**
- (18)Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.**
- (19)Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent.**
- (RSV)**

May we open our hearts, be ready to pay the price and share the Good News with those whom we come in contact with.

**Philippians 1:19-26
05 - 'Living for Christ'**

- (19) For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,**
(20) according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.
(21) For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
(22) But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.
(23) For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.
(24) Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.
(25) And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith,
(26) that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.
(NASB)

Have you ever been in a situation where you did not know what to do? Should I go or should I stay? Should I buy or should I wait a little longer? Being ambivalent is not easy for the emotions especially when the stakes are high! Imagine a matter of life or death! If I lie I will live but if I tell the truth I will surely die. How difficult that situation must be. Well in this section Paul will mainly speak about his spiritual tug of war.

- (19) For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,**

Paul speaks about the present events of his life. The imprisonment, the spread of the gospel the brothers that have a pure heart and the others that don't and still others that are acting this way just to do him harm. I must say that Paul's circumstances are quite challenging. I can imagine the average person saying: "How can I get out of this situation?" But Paul wasn't the average person and he doesn't see things the way others do. It seems that Paul understands that all the circumstances he presently is living is for his own good – because he writes:

- (19) For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance**

How, when, where – he doesn't know but what he is certain of is that the outcome of his present trials will be his deliverance. Whether it is his physical or spiritual deliverance he does not know but it doesn't seem to matter much to Paul. In his letter to the Romans Paul had written the following:

Romans 8:28

**We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.
(RSV)**

Many believe that Paul's letter to the Romans was written around 57 AD and the Philippian letter around 60 AD. If this is true then Paul is applying what he wrote to the Romans (about all things working together for the good) to his own life! It's an easy thing to say to a grieving family that "God will take care of everything and that they just need to rest in Him" - we all do it. But when it happens to us are we that confident in God?

Paul explains the spiritual support that will help him pass through this difficult situation.

(19) ...through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ

There are two things that he mentions: the prayers of the brethren and the support of the Holy Spirit. As for the prayers of the saints, do I need to explain the importance of praying for each other? Our prayers (in a way that is not quite understood) has a determining effect on the future events of things, that's why we are told to pray for:

- The harvest of souls (Mat. 9:38)
- God to choose another season or day to act (Mat. 24:20)
- Victory over the flesh (Mat. 26:53)
- Strength (Luke 18:1)
- Christians not to do evil (2 Cor. 13:7)
- To be made complete (2 Cor. 13:9)

Paul knows that praying to God, in the name of Jesus and by the Holy Spirit is what the Lord God has prescribed his children to do in all circumstances. So he asks the Philippians to pray for him, actually it would be more accurate to write that he knows that the Philippians are already praying for him. So there is power in the prayers of the saints. James wrote about this:

James 5:17,18

**(17)Elijah was a man of like nature with ourselves and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.
(18)Then he prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit.
(RSV)**

The second spiritual support is the person of the Holy Spirit. He will assist Paul in his afflictions.

(19) ...the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ

What does the Holy Spirit supply to the believer? I believe a quick look at the different names given to the Holy Spirit will bring us an answer.

The Spirit supplies lordship and also liberty.

2 Corinthians 3:17

**Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.
(RSV)**

The Spirit supplies all that concerns life.

Romans 8:10

**But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness.
(RSV)**

The Spirit supplies leadership.

Romans 8:14

**For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
(RSV)**

The Spirit supplies the love needed.

Romans 15:30

**I appeal to you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, (RSV)
The Spirit will supply all the help needed.**

John 14:16

And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor, to be with you for ever.

(RSV)

The Spirit will supply the power needed in your life.

Luke 1:35

And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

(RSV)

There are literally dozens of different names attributed to the Holy Spirit in the Bible and all of them manifest his power and personality. Since the Holy Spirit lives in the true believer and he is called to help, imagine what the Holy Spirit can supply to the child of God! No wonder Paul had confidence concerning his future.

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

Here Paul begins to talk about what I call the tug of war that exists in his heart. But before he explains his dilemma he makes a bold statement. He says that "*in nothing I shall be ashamed.*" Paul is opening his heart once more and refers to his deepest desires that reside in him. It's his expectation and hope that he will never be put to shame. I can only imagine he is speaking concerning his conduct. Even in prison he wants to be a true reflection of his Saviour. Unlike many Christians today who make excuses Paul maintains the same high standard for himself (despite his circumstances) that of Glorifying God and striving to never bring shame to the Lord.

So when you are in prison what can you do to glorify the Lord God? It's a good question because many of us often wonder how we can glorify the Lord. I'm a stay-at-home-mom, or I'm retired, or I don't have all my physical capacities – what can I do? It seems that it all begins with our attitude. "*With boldness*" was his outlook on life. Boldness (PARRHESIA) which gives the idea of being out-spoken referring to one's assurance. Whatever Paul does he does with assurance. He is driven and he is not ashamed of this:

**(20) ...so now also Christ will be magnified in my body,
whether by life or by death.**

What Paul is determined to do unashamedly even in prison – is to magnify the Lord in his body. You see the body of Paul is his instrument of life and it also is yours and mine. That is why we need to remember the following:

1 Corinthians 6:20
you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.
(RSV)

Paul wants to *magnify* (MEGALUNO) to make great or to extol the Lord Jesus. Every person coming to see Paul is to see Jesus lifted up high and glorified. So whether in speech or in deed this was Paul's mission in prison – to let everyone know about Jesus. And it seems that it was working well for him (1:13). This also should be our mission – to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ where we are and at all times.

(20) ...whether by life or by death

May I ask you a question? Is it easier to glorify the Lord in our life or in our death? Think about it before you answer. As for me I believe that it is easier to glorify the Lord in death – why, simple! Usually death does not take that long to happen but life can take decades of Christian living and striving to honour God. But for Paul it didn't really seem to matter in life or in death his goal was the same and his objective did not change.

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

There are few statements that “tell it all” like this phrase. He is saying that “My life is Jesus and in death I gain even more than I have in life”. It is a win-win situation, Paul could not lose on either side of eternity!

Galatians 2:20

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

(RSV)

This well-known verse (which was made into a song) says exactly the same thing. What Paul tells the Galatians (in or around 50 AD) is the same as he tells them years later. So this is not something new that Paul thought up because he might die and has nothing else

better to do than to glorify God. No, this is a pattern of life. It is the bedrock of Paul's principle in life – I will magnify the Lord in all I do. That's my life because the Lord died for me so I will live for him!

2 Corinthians 5:15

And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

(RSV)

The following verses bring us to the heart of the tug of war.

(22)But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labour; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.

(23)For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

(24)Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

Do I want to live with you or die and be with Christ? If I live then:

(22) ...this will mean fruit from my labor

If I live that means that I will have more opportunities to bear fruit for the glory of God here on earth. But Paul then says:

(22) ...Yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.

(23)For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

Can you feel the hesitation grinding on Paul's heart? If I stay, I'll be with the brethren and continue to teach, encourage and discipline. If I go, then all the troubles that the churches and life give me will have vanished - no more headaches and heartaches. Paul knows that being with Christ is "*far better*". This should encourage all Christians, death is the opening of the door to God's mansions that he has prepared for us (John 14:2). Death, as we see explained here, is a good thing to look forward to! So what is Paul going to decide to do – stay or go?

(24)Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

Once more we see that Paul thinks of others before he thinks of himself! The tug of war is finished, one side has won over the other. Paul decided that for the good of the brethren he would stay by their side. I have seen many people slowly dying and most of them can't wait to be with the Lord. I have rarely seen someone say: "I need to stay because people need me to help them"!

**(25) And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith,
(26) that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.**

So far this is the third time that Paul uses the word *confident*. In verse six he is confident in the Lord God. In verse fourteen the brethren in the Lord are confident. And now in verse twenty-five he is confident. Now what is Paul confident of? Well he is confident in God. He is confident that God is sovereign in all things including the time he will remain on earth and the time he will leave this world. Please notice that Paul not only wants to remain here on earth but he has a goal for being here instead of being with Christ.

(25) ...I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith

He wants to stay because he wants to be part of the progress and joy of the brothers and sisters in the faith. Should this not also be our "vision of life"? What is our reason for living? Certainly, as Paul said earlier, to magnify the Lord. But also to assist those of the faith to grow and be joyful. He wants to give unto others what he had received from the Lord. We certainly desire this for our children or grandchildren but what about for everybody in the church?

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

Paul is thinking of the joy of the Philippians before his own joy! As though he is saying: "I know that if I go to be with Christ this will bring you sadness – so I'm staying!" This makes me think of what Jesus said:

Matthew 7:12

**So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.
(RSV)**

And that is what Paul was doing even when confronted by death in jail. What a wonderful model Paul is. He is quite content to remain in the state he is in knowing that this will bring encouragement to his brothers and sisters in the Lord. When life brings situations that are uncomfortable, what is normally our first reaction? What can I do to change it? How often do I stop to think of the impact on others if I change my personal situation? For example, I don't really enjoy my work (but my co-workers count on me) so I'll look for another one. Or I don't feel at ease with doing Sunday school (although all the kids seem to enjoy themselves) so I'll tell the superintendent to try to find someone else. I know I'm the only piano player in the church but I sure wish I didn't have to play every Sunday – I'm changing church! We often act in direct opposition to what the Scriptures say we ought to do – here it's called selfishness! Think of others before thinking about yourself. Be ready to suffer for the sake of others. When we learn to joyfully do this – we truly are children that the Father can be proud of!

Philippians 1:27-30
06 - 'Your daily walk'

- (27) Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,**
(28) and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.
(29) For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,
(30) having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.
(NASB)

These four verses bring to an end the first chapter of the book of Philippians. Paul now turns his focus from his Christian conduct to their Christian conduct. Normally a person is much more interested in how others behave than with their own behaviour. Just think of the Pharisees and how they watched Jesus to be able to find some accusation against him.

Luke 11:53,54

- (53) As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard, and to provoke him to speak of many things,**
(54) lying in wait for him, to catch at something he might say.
(RSV)

People are so swift at detecting the smallest mistake one can make. This certainly was a problem in the times of Christ just as it is today.

Matthew 7:3-5

- (3) Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?**
(4) Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when there is the log in your own eye?
(5) You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.
(RSV)

Have you noticed that Paul first begins with his own conduct and then speaks about the conduct of others? Paul doesn't point the finger at others before pointing it at himself. He searches his own heart before asking others to search theirs. This is the way all Christians ought to handle themselves.

Don't judge others before you judge yourself. This is another life lesson that we absolutely need to learn and practice. Between you and me, no one likes a person that goes around judging others all the time. If you are one of them, please realize that it is a sin and you need to repent of it.

(27)Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

The *conduct* that is mentioned here (PILITEUOMAI) speaks of our behaviour as a citizen. Now what citizenship is Paul referring to? If he speaks of an earthly citizenship then it has nothing to do with "*the gospel of Christ*" that is mentioned a few words later. So we can automatically discard this thought. This leaves us with just one other possibility – the heavenly citizenship that all true believers have. Paul will later speak of this:

Philippians 3:20

**For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
(RSV)**

So our conduct (or heavenly citizenship) must reflect our true homeland. Since we are no longer of the earth, the standards of our lives have changed. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul refers to this conduct of life and what it actually means.

Ephesians 4:1-3

**(1)I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called,
(2)with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love,
(3)eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
(RSV)**

Ephesians 4:17

**Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds;
(RSV)**

Ephesians 5:1,2

**(1)Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.
(2)And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (RSV)**

Ephesians 5:8

for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light. (RSV)

In other words when people look at you do they see you as a living *gospel of Jesus Christ*? Paul expects a few things concerning the holy conduct of the Philippians. The first deals with the absence of hypocrisy:

(27) ...so that whether I come and see you or am absent

It can often happen at home, work or church that we can act in a way that is different than when we are observed. Have you noticed that our real nature is made manifest when there is no one there to see us? Paul, being the authority figure (as an apostle), tells the Philippians that whether he is there or not their conduct is not to vary. This capricious conduct is devastating for your testimony, because people easily see when someone is a fraud. And the only thing that you will bring is shame on the gospel of Christ. Christ lived a life void of hypocrisy and so should we. Remember what Jesus once said:

John 8:46

Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? (RSV)

Therefore do not be a spiritual hypocrite, rather be honest and true to what you do.

The second point speaks about being open and transparent:

(27) ...I may hear of your affairs

Christian living is something that is done in the open. As a lamp lights the room, so should the lives of believers of Christ shine wherever they are. Jesus told us that we are the light of the world and that this light should not be hidden (Mat. 5:14). I see in these words that what is done is done not in secret but in the open view. Open enough that one can hear about it even if they are far away. So let this be a warning to all of us in relationship with our daily walk. We should be aware that our life is to be seen by all and make certain that someone, even far away, won't hear a negative comment about us.

(27) ...that you stand fast in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel

Paul continues to describe what a conduct, worthy of the gospel, looks like. Here we see that it deals with unity. All together with a common goal. It gives me the idea of an army of soldiers walking all at the same pace, keeping in step and in line and naturally all heading in the same direction. These soldiers are steadfast and are of one spirit, having one goal in mind. Unity is so important in our Christian life that Paul also deals with this subject in his letter to the Ephesians. In his letter he speaks of the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3) and also the unity of the faith (Eph. 4:13). Let's not forget that unity is the desire and the prayer of Christ for all of his disciples.

John 17:11

And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

(RSV)

As Christians we have a heavenly citizenship but we have not entered our homeland yet. So while we are here we are to walk in one spirit with one another in harmony and unity. We are also to walk in one direction, persevering and being very determined to live the gospel, as it is taught by our Saviour through the Holy Spirit, by the ink of the New Testament writers.

What will happen when believers in Christ are determined to walk in a way that glorifies the gospel and reflects the holiness of God? Trouble is what will happen! And we know this is true because Jesus told us that it would definitively happen (Mat. 26:31; John 15:18). We know it is also true because persecution of the Disciples of Christ is everywhere to be seen in the New Testament. So Paul writes about this.

(28)and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.

The natural reaction when serious trouble lies ahead is to become afraid. We call it "natural instincts". When adversaries are marching against us we tend to worry. Remember King Saul when the Philistines were waging war against him (1 Sam. 13). He got so terrified that he didn't wait for Samuel to come and offer a sacrifice to the Lord he did it himself! You see because he was terrified he acted foolishly, offered a sacrifice, offended God and he lost his kingdom. Paul tells the Philippians not to be in any way terrified. Now this steadfastness is for them a sign of perdition. Their own perdition of course! They are blinded by the fact that they see no fear in believers and they think that they will be able to overcome them.

They are few, unarmed, simple people – we will destroy them in a snap of a finger! History has proven the opposite, the children of God are not only still here but have grown in numbers. If the absence of being afraid is actually a “trap” for unbelievers it is the opposite for the child of God. Paul says that to the Philippians it is their salvation. In other words it is one of the different ways that the Lord comes to the aid of his children. He helps them to be calm.

Psalms 46:10

"Be still, and know that I am God. I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth!"

(RSV)

Paul had told the Philippians that he would magnify the Lord whether in life or in death (1:20). To be able to do that, one needs to be unafraid. And one can be unafraid when one is assured, deep down inside, that God is in charge of everything that is happening.

**(29) For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,
(30) having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.**

As I think of the state of the Church today I hear very little concerning what is written in verses twenty-nine and thirty. In some circles the only thing that is presented to the Christians as being granted unto them is power, health, money and victory in all things. It is said, God wants you to be rich, wants you to be healthy, and wants you to have power and victory in your life. As I read the Holy Scriptures I do not see this at all. We are misled to satisfy our flesh (power, health, money & victory) instead of satisfying the Lord (walking in meekness and so forth). I fear that it is the blind that are leading the blind!

Paul is telling the Philippians that God has granted (CHARIZOMAI) to them which means “to grant as a favour” the following. But first I would like to stress the fact that what is granted is part of the grace of God unto us. It is God’s grace, not his punishment, or severity, or lack of compassion but his grace that places believers in “suffering” situations. We have a tendency to believe that all that is good (to our standards) is from God and all that is bad (to our standards) is from the devil. The problem with this is that OUR thoughts determine what is good or bad. Or what situation is from God and which one is from our spiritual enemy.

Paul writes that the grace of God does two things. First of all it brings salvation (*not only to believe in him*). Isn’t redemption wonderful to hear and sing about! Tell me about my redemption and the benefits I will receive. Remind me of the mansions that God has

prepared for his children. Speak of heaven and how God will wipe away all my tears. To Paul this is an unbalanced view of God's grace. And in most churches today this is the only view that is taught. There is another side of the grace of God and that is:

(29) ...but also to suffer for His sake

When was the last time you heard a sermon speaking about suffering as part of God's grace and plan for your life? Well it is, but we would rather close our eyes than to accept this truth. As we have seen earlier Paul accepted his imprisonment with joy and contentment. I wonder if we are ready to suffer unjustly for the sake of Christ. Are we ready to lose friends, job opportunities, be laughed at and gossiped about? Would we accept when our family members shun and despise us for the sake of Christ? Remember what Christ said:

Luke 9:57-62

(57)As they were going along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

(58)And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head."

(59)To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."

(60)But he said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

(61)Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home."

(62)Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

(RSV)

As believers, we have received the grace of salvation but also to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ. We are openly willing to receive the first. What are we doing with the second grace? I have noticed that most people love to read Hebrews 11:1-35 (which speaks of the first grace) but I rarely hear someone speak about Hebrews 11:35b-40 (which speaks of the second).

Heb. 11:35b-40

(35b)Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life.

(36)Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment.

(37)They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated --

**(38)of whom the world was not worthy-- wandering over deserts and mountains,
and in dens and caves of the earth.**

**(39)And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was
promised,**

**(40)since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should
not be made perfect.**

(RSV)

Why do we shy away from identifying ourselves with Jesus Christ when there is a price to pay? Why do we praise God for the grace of salvation and not for the grace of suffering with his Son?

(30) having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

Paul ends by saying that things haven't changed that much. What they saw is still happening as he wrote the letter. This still rings true for today and even more. It is said that in the 20th century more Christians have died for their faith than all the other centuries combined! The beginning of the 21st century has intensified its hatred for believers and has opened the door to even more massacres of helpless Christians. Let us not forget that both have been granted to us: salvation and persecution.

**Philippians 2:1-4
07 - 'Be like-minded'**

(1)Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, (2)make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

(3)Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

(4)do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

(NASB)

The end of chapter one finishes with the conduct of the Philippians and how this conduct will have an effect; a negative effect on the adversaries and a positive effect on themselves being a proof that they belong to God. Now in the first four verses of chapter two Paul continues to speak concerning the conduct of the believers and the effect of this godly living on their everyday life. When I study the Holy Scriptures there is a striking aspect that is spoken of over and over again and that is the conduct that the child of God should manifest.

This was first taught in the Garden of Eden:

Genesis 2:15-17

(15)The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

(16)And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;

(17)but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

(RSV)

Don't eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – that was what God asked of Adam. A simple command was placed in front of our first parents. And they failed in their walk and became sinners. As you read the pages of the Bible you will see that the demand concerning conduct of man grew and grew until it was fully manifested by what is referred as "the Law" which includes the Ten Commandments and all the other laws given by the Lord to Moses for his people – 613 in all! This "list of conduct" was impossible to carry out – for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom.3:23). Amen that Christ has fulfilled the Law in my place (Mat. 5:17)!

Still today God wants his children to have a different conduct than those who do not know him. But it seems that when one speaks of honouring God by following the Law he is automatically called a legalist. Unfortunately many do not understand that the grace of God is given to the believer so he can “walk in the light” and not in darkness any longer. So this section concerning our conduct is very important.

(1)Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion.

Let’s not forget that Paul is imprisoned and I believe that Paul might be asking himself “Is it worth it all?” “I’ve worked so hard, it’s been so difficult, has my ministry had any effect?” I also believe that Paul is searching for comfort and some type of tangible human support (he is human after all)!

There are two types of consolations that Paul would like to receive while he is in prison. The first deals with spiritual consolations which he receives from God. These consolations are perfect in every way. They reach down to the very essence of our needs as a person. Our God is the God of consolation!

2 Thessalonians 2:16

**Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace,
(RSV)**

What is the consolation that is showered upon Paul?

The *first* is the “*encouragement found in Christ.*” When we turn our eyes to Christ, when we sit at his feet, when we listen to his words - we receive his support. Not only does he know what we are going through but he actually has tasted the very hardship that is laid upon us. In his majestic rendering of our eternal High Priest the author of the Book of Hebrews wrote the following:

Hebrews 4:15

**For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.
(RSV)**

And because Christ has suffered like we have suffered he can fully sympathise, empathise and understand us. It is the same Jesus that cared for the sick, blind and bedridden, the same that fed thousands, forgave sin and raised the dead – the same Jesus that cares for all his disciples. What unique consolation we find in Christ Jesus!

The *second* is the “*consolation that love brings.*” In Deut. 4:37 the love of God for his chosen nation brought deliverance from Egypt and opened a land of milk and honey for them. We see that love brings deliverance. Paul may have reminded himself of God’s love for him having given him deliverance over the condemnation of the Law. In Isaiah 43:4 the love of God brought honour to his people and they became very precious in his eyes. What honour shall be given to all of God’s children when they shall be received in the New Jerusalem as heirs of the Almighty! In Jeremiah 31:3 it is written that the love of God is an everlasting love. It shall never diminish nor pass away. It will always cover God’s adopted child day in and day out. In John 15:9 Jesus says that his love for his disciples can be compared to the Father’s love that he has received. As Paul lies in his prison he reflects on the love that God has for him. A love that brought: deliverance, honour and worth, eternal assurance, and is equal to the love of the Father for the Son. No wonder Paul felt God’s love.

The *third* is the “*fellowship of the Spirit.*” Isolated, chained and imprisoned I can imagine that human fellowship was scarce. But there was a deeper and more profound fellowship that Paul experienced in that jailhouse – the fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Certain names given to the Holy Spirit will help us understand what role the Holy Spirit would have in fellowshipping with Paul.

- “The Spirit of Life” (Rom. 8:2). The Spirit has life in himself and could share life when Paul needed it most.
- “The Eternal Spirit” (Heb. 9:14). The Spirit would always be capable to come to the aid of Paul anywhere and anytime.
- “The Spirit of grace” (Zech. 12:10). Paul would never find himself outside of God’s grace.
- “The Spirit of truth” (John 14:17). Paul could always find truth in God and come back to rest upon it.

As I said before the Bible is filled with different titles, names and types given to describe the Holy Spirit. Paul could find daily fellowship with the Spirit for he is filled with truth, grace and life and He also is eternal and could always be called upon.

The *fourth* consolation is affection. This word (SPLAGCHNON) means sympathy or pity in Greek. It's wonderful to understand that the Lord can (and does) look upon our life and circumstances and feel sympathy and pity towards us. Disciples of Christ are not mere insects that can be walked upon and never thought of or cared for! Paul could find sympathy and pity from the Lord like the Lord had given in the past to Israel.

Judges 2:18

Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them.

(RSV)

Finally the *fifth* is compassion. Paul could find mercies in all he was living. The caring, tender hand of God was always there to lift him when he needed consolation. Our God is the God of mercy.

Deuteronomy 7:9

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.

(RSV)

These five things saturated Paul: encouragement, love, fellowship, affection and compassion. All these things came from God. But what about the Philippians – what could they do to encourage Paul? In verse two to four Paul will tell what these beloved brothers and sisters could do to hearten him. As we will see, each verse speaks of a different aspect of their life or being.

(2)make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

I find it marvellous that Christians who are so far away from Paul, can have a positive effect on his everyday life! I believe that it is the same thing for all the children of God! We can, by our walk in Christ, actually have an effect on someone half way across the world. But how was this done in Paul's day? Well, the same way that it is done today – we encourage others when they hear about our steadfastness in Christ. The apostle John said it this way:

3 John 1:3

For I greatly rejoiced when some of the brethren arrived and testified to the truth of your life, as indeed you do follow the truth.

(RSV)

The word *complete* (PLEROO) means to make complete. It literally means “to cram”. Paul wanted to be in complete joy learning that the Philippians were all like-minded. Now does this imply that some were not like-minded? Unfortunately it probably does. I have yet to see a church where everybody thinks alike on every subject. Whether it is finance, missions, evangelism, church structure, Sunday school, and so forth. Like-minded (PHRONEO) means to be mentally disposed. Paul is telling the Philippians that they should be thinking alike, like Christ would think naturally!

1 Corinthians 2:16

"For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

(RSV)

Thinking alike and having the mind of Christ, truly brought joy to the heart of Paul. Just as a father enjoys seeing all of his children being in harmony I can only imagine Paul rejoicing when he heard that his spiritual children were all thinking alike. Isn't it the same thing today? Do we not rejoice when we hear about a church that is moving in the same direction for the glory of God? And doesn't it break your heart when you hear of church “splits” or church members accusing others of ungodly things?

Being like-minded means that they had the same love. As an example I could say that when a couple have the same love it means that they pour their attention and care on the same object – their children for example. They have goals for their children and they work towards those goals. A wonderful family atmosphere, being balanced in their expenses towards them, desiring for them a higher education. These parents both have the same love for their children and show it by both working together in the same direction. As for the Philippians Paul encouraged them that they should have the same love. First of all love for God and secondly love for their fellowmen – whether inside or outside of the church. There is something unique when people of a congregation truly love each other – they become Disciples of Christ!

John 13:35

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

(RSV)

Filling Paul with joy also meant that they were to be “*united in spirit*”. We have stated that probably in some cases the Philippians were not like-minded. Here we see that Paul stresses this point by saying “*Be of one accord*”. One accord (SUMPSUCHOS) gives the idea of having the same spirit or having similar sentiments. This involves the emotions of the Philippians. I know for a fact that sometimes we can agree and work with others to reach a goal without having our heart totally in it. But we do it anyways “for the greater good”. What I see in this new aspect of giving joy to Paul is that the *hearts* of the people (not only the minds) are to work or walk in the same direction. What a difference it makes when it is your heart that drives you forward. Every time the Bible speaks of loving your God it always begins with “*all of your heart*”. Why is it always before your, soul, mind and strength? Simply because if God has your heart he truly has all “of you”.

Paul ends this section of what it means to be like-minded by adding being “*intent in one purpose.*” So far we have seen that being like-minded means to be of the same love, same accord (sentiment) and naturally the same mind. It is the same Greek word at the beginning of this verse when Paul writes “*fulfill my joy by being like-minded*”. As I said earlier this means to be mentally well disposed.

My question would be the following “How can I do this?” How can I have the same love, be of one accord and have the same mind as my brothers and sisters in Christ? It is one thing to say what I must do but it’s another to show me how I can reach that goal! Well that is exactly what Paul is going to do. This is one of the things that I love about the Holy Scriptures. They show me the path to walk on. Since I’m a very practical person I really need this aspect in my life. So in verses three and four Paul will explain to the Philippians just how to do it.

- (3)Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;**
- (4)do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.**

Paul makes two bold statements. Now for the natural man this is definitively something to AVOID at all costs. But to the spiritual man this is something that is absolutely necessary to do. When you think of it this is the very basis of our religion. We cannot be Disciples of Christ if we do not live these two verses. Let’s look at verse three.

- (3)Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;**

When Paul says; “*do nothing*” it is very clear that everything is important in what he is about to write. We cannot be a “*part time*” Christian or an “*it depends*” follower of Christ. So what is the attitude that I should not have when I do things – Paul points out two traits of character.

The *first* is – “*selfish ambition or empty conceit*”. This speaks of the “me, myself and I” syndrome that all humans have. Let’s face it – we are all basically selfish in nature. We all want to take care of ourselves first and if there is an overflow then we can share with others. Please take time to read Romans chapter eight which speaks about not walking according to the flesh. Have you noticed that no one has to teach you how to love and take care of yourself! We do it naturally. But we do have to be told how to share, love, be patient, kind and so forth with others. So naturally nothing ought to be done from selfish ambition.

I need to ask myself “What is the reasoning behind my actions” or “Am I doing this to get something out of it?” “Do I give to get a bigger tax receipt?” “Do I clean the church building to be thanked?” “Do I teach Sunday school to be recognized?” “Am I on the church board to have power over what goes on?” “Am I caring towards my spouse in order to look good?” All these things that I have mentioned are inhabited by self-ambition. Beware of self-ambition it always destroys the one doing it. Self-ambition devastated King Nimrod and the tower of Babel was not finished. Self-ambition filled King Saul and he lost his kingdom. Self-ambition brought death to Judas when he sold Christ for 30 pieces of silver. There is no place for self-ambition in the Christian life.

Usually where there is self-ambition there is conceit (KENODOXIA) which means: empty or vain glory. Paul teaches that self-ambition and conceit go hand in hand. All that self-ambition is able to give to us is nothing more than empty or vain glory. It is a glory that is temporary and has no worth in itself. It lasts but a fraction of a second compared to the glory that the Lord will give to his Disciples. Do you remember these teachings from our Lord?

Matthew 6:2

"Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

(RSV)

Matthew 6:5

"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

(RSV)

Matthew 6:16

"And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

(RSV)

Charitable deeds, prayers and fasting can be done with self-ambition and when it is, you harvest conceit (empty or vain glory). Paul now tells the Philippians how to avoid or get rid of self-ambition.

(3) ...but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.

Self-ambition makes you want to be number one and have all the glory possible. The spiritual solution is quite simple my friend – it's all in the mind! Paul says that the battle is in your mind because he speaks of "*humility of the mind.*" How you see yourself will make all the difference. By the way how did the writers of the epistles see themselves?

Romans 1:1 - Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ

James 1:1 - James, a bondservant of God

2 Peter 1:1 - Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ

Rev. 1:1 - And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John

Jude 1:1 - Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ

Having lowliness of mind is exactly what John the Baptist was all about:

Matthew 3:11

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

(RSV)

John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease."

(RSV)

Humility of mind is the first ingredient for battling self-ambition and conceit. The second part of verse three teaches us what to do instead:

(3) ...but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.

If the first part deals with how we look at ourselves the second part deals with how we look at others. Here Paul tells the Philippians to esteem others better than themselves. The word esteem (HEGOMAI) means to deem, consider or count. Christians need to have the right vision concerning their brothers and sisters. They are to see others as superior to themselves. This does not demean ourselves but it places us in our rightful position – as servants of each other. In Rom. 1:9 and 2 Tim. 1:3 Paul speaks of himself as a servant of God. In Gal. 5:13 we are to serve one another. 1 Tim. 6:2 speaks of serving our masters. So instead of serving ourselves we are called to first serve the Lord and then those around us.

The second part to the question: “How can I have the same love, be of one accord and have the same mind as my brothers and sisters in Christ?” is found in verse four:

(4) do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Paul desires the entire church community in Philippi to be doing this. Too often we see only a handful of people really wanting to live as Christ teaches. Many are not ready to pay the price or they are still filled with selfish ambition or conceit. Not everyone really wants to be a Disciples of Christ in its true sense.

John 6:66-68

(66)After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him.

(67)Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?"

(68)Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life;

(RSV)

What is it that Paul wants each and every believer in Philippi to do to fight self-ambition? It's simple, stop looking out for you only. Notice what Paul writes:

(4) do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Look out NOT ONLY “*for your own interest*”. The Scriptures do not tell us to stop looking out for ourselves to abandon the care of ourselves or to totally deny that we do need care. It says NOT ONLY which leaves place to actually care for us.

Taking care of ourselves and our needs is normal but this desire has been twisted by sin to make this our top priority. Paul teaches the believers that it's all right to take care of yourselves but don't forget that you're not number one! First of all God is number one and then the others take second place, then you come after, in terms of God's priorities.

Think of Abram and his nephew Lot. At one point they separate because their flocks are too numerous and their servants fight over pastures and water. Abram offers Lot to take the first choice concerning what land he wants. Lot, being carnal, takes the best for himself (Gen. 13:10,11) leaving Abram with the less desirable land. Not a lot of consideration for his uncle who took care of him since his parents died. Then in chapter fourteen Lot gets to be a captive because of a local war. When Abram gets to hear about this he rushes to Lot's rescue and delivers him (Gen. 14:13-16). Abram could have held a grudge against his inconsiderate nephew but being a spiritual person he looks for Lot's personal interest even though he might suffer loss or die in doing so. Abram is a great example for us to follow. To fight self-ambition I must be considerate of others! I should want the best for my church family.

Philippians 2:5-8
08 - 'The mind of Christ'

(5)Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
(6)who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a
thing to be grasped,
(7)but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the
likeness of men.
(8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient
to the point of death, even death on a cross.
(NASB)

What made Paul joyful? Was it not that the Philippians would be like-minded, one heart and one soul? To be able to do this Paul reminds his readers that this can only be done through lowliness of mind and esteeming others better than ourselves. As we read verses five through eight we can see that Paul gives the believers the ultimate example of whom they should follow and why this should be. Jesus is the perfect example of a person with lowliness of mind and placing others before himself. Now as I said before it all has to do with our attitude.

(5)Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

What is attitude? As in verse two it also means (PHRONEO) to be mentally disposed. Have you noticed that sometimes we are not well disposed towards something or someone? Because of this we do not want to go “along” and we stubbornly refuse to do what we should. A child doesn’t want to eat his food. A teenager doesn’t want to go on a “stupid” vacation with his family. An adult resists being shown how to properly fix a situation at work. Why do people sometimes act like this? Simply because they are not well disposed.

In the Christian life we can also have this attitude of not being well disposed. My wife would love for us to go on a “couples weekend” but we’re not going (I’m not well disposed to her needs). My son really wants me to go to his high school recital but I’m not going (I’m not well disposed to his needs). At church they need a few Sunday school teachers and asked me if I would consider it but I turned down the offer (I’m not well disposed towards my church.) Finally the Holy Spirit has been nudging me to witness to my co-worker but I’ve kept silent (I’m not well disposed towards God).

What Paul is teaching his friends in Philippi is that we need to be like Jesus. To think and act like Jesus. We need to see things as the Lord would see them. Our heart should be as our Saviour’s. Remember what Christ said:

John 6:38

**For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.
(RSV)**

If I am to have the attitude of Christ I need to know what it was – and this is it. Having the same thought pattern of my Saviour is desiring not to do MY will but the Father's. And I simply cannot do this unless I allow Christ to live freely in my heart.

Gal. 2:20

**I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
(RSV)**

So before continuing with your reading you absolutely must ask yourself some very important questions and be ready to be honest. I have seen too many Christians wear masks and “make pretend” or “play church” as I call it. Very few have the courage to face themselves in the mirror and see how they really are. Is it Christ that lives in me? Do I live a life of faith or of the flesh? Have I really been crucified with Christ? Have I given myself to Christ and does each new day bring a renewal of my desire to honour him in all things? If I'm not ready to answer these questions – I'm certainly not ready to be called a disciple of Christ.

What Paul will explain is the attitude of Christ as God in verses six and seven. And then speak of his attitude as a man. You will see that in both cases it is the same. This proves that the attitude that I have has nothing to do with my status as a person. I can be just as generous as a poor person as I can be as a rich person. I can be a patient intelligent person as well as a patient simple-minded person.

**(6)who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
(7)but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.**

Historically these two verses have caused a lot of questioning and theological disputes. I am not going to write about them, there are other books that address this doctrinal debate. We take for granted that Jesus is the LOGOS and the LOGOS was made flesh (John 1:1-14). The LOGOS was “with God” and was also God. The Trinity is a fact but also a mystery and I will leave it at that.

What I would like to point out is that in verse six Jesus “existed in the form of God” and in verse seven Jesus “took the form of a bond-servant”. Paul does not make an argument concerning the deity of Christ he also does not make an argument concerning the incarnation. Although these are cardinal doctrines they are not the point he is trying to get across to the Philippians.

Paul writes that Jesus *existed in the form of God*. This is what William Hendriksen wrote in his “New Testament Commentary on Philippians” (Baker Book House, p. 105): *What Paul is saying then, here in Phil. 2:6, is that Christ Jesus had always been (and always continues to be) God by nature, the express image of the Deity. The specific character of the Godhead as this is expressed in all the divine attributes was and is his eternally.* (Cf. Col. 1:15,17 also John 1:1; 8:58; 17:24). So Christ who has been eternally God manifests his attitude by doing the following:

(6) ...did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped

Equality (ISOS) means to be similar in amount and kind. What did Christ do with his equality with God? He did not see it as a thing to be grasped (HARPAGMOS) which means a plunder or robbery. So how did he prove that he was ready to set it aside?

(7)but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Jesus emptied himself and this brings problems to many. How can God empty himself of who he is? How can God not be God any longer? If God is no longer God how then can the universe keep on functioning? If God is not God who then is God? What we need to notice is that the word “emptied” (KENOO) also means “to make of none effect”. This gives the idea that Christ, as God, willingly set aside his being God for the time that he took on the flesh of man. The Father and the Holy Spirit continued to “sustain the universe” but God – the Son, for a measure of time and a specific reason, set aside his being God and became a man. Paul summarises it this way:

Romans 1:1-4

- (1)Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God**
(2)which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures,
(3)the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh
(4)and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, (RSV)

Having set aside who he was, Jesus took the form of a bondservant and became a man. This manifests exactly the “attitude of Christ” that we are talking about. This is the attitude that Paul is telling the Philippians to have in their minds. It’s as though Paul is saying the following: “Look at what Christ did! He was God and set aside all of his glory and took the form of a man and not only a man but the least of them – a bondservant!” There can be no greater example of humility than what Christ has done.

Now the attitude of Christ as God was not to regard his equality with the godhead. He proved this by taking on the flesh of a man and setting aside his deity. This is what we call the mystery of the incarnation. Once Christ took on flesh he also manifested his attitude as a man:

(8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Christ obtained the body of man through the incarnation. He was truly a person as you and I are. In all things he was a real person with all the difficulties that this implies. What was his attitude as a person? What is Paul trying to tell the Philippians? Christ humbled (TAPEINOO) himself, which means that he willingly abased himself. He was heavenly and became earthly. He was a spirit and took on flesh. He was God and became a man. So Christ humbled himself and so must the Philippians have this attitude deeply rooted in their hearts. This should not only be for the disciples at Philippi but also for all Disciples of Christ, wherever they are – even today!

What does it mean to have a humble attitude? Paul does not leave us in the dark about that – it means to “*become obedient*”. This word (HUPEKOOS) simply means to be attentively listening, which infers to obey what has been said. This is the key thought that should remain in our minds. “I listen attentively and I obey”. God – the Son obeyed God – the Father and humbled himself and became a man. We, in turn, listen and obey Christ.

What was the extent of the obedience of Christ and should this level of obedience become our standard as Disciples of Christ? Obeying is not difficult as long as it appeals to our desires or reasoning. But when it steps out of our frame of thought it becomes another matter doesn’t it! So up to what point did Jesus become an obedient bondservant?

(8)... He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

One may be obedient to the point of death or think they can. It is one thing to think you can do something and another to be willing to do it when time comes. Remember what Peter and the disciples said:

Matthew 26:35

**Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you." And so said all the disciples.
(RSV)**

We often think of what Peter said but notice that all the disciples agreed with him. Peter failed at the cross, he denied even knowing Christ. In fact only John stayed with Christ until the very end. We can also remember the zeal of Thomas called “the Twin”, whose brave words also fell through when time came to stand up and be counted.

John 11:16

**Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."
(RSV)**

Paul says that there might be some brave hero that would be willing to lay his life down and die for a just cause.

Romans 5:7

**Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man--though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die.
(RSV)**

If a man can humble himself and die for a good cause what’s the “big deal” then with Christ being obedient and also dying? The difference (which is not comparable) between the death of a man for a just cause and the death of Christ lays in these few words:

(8) ...even death on a cross.

The death of men for a good cause has absolutely no measure in comparison to the death of Christ “*on the cross*”. No man has ever or will ever suffer what the cross brought to Christ. The judgment of the Father of our sins that fell on the shoulders of Christ is simply incomprehensible for our human minds. Christ at the cross became sin and tasted the just judgment in our stead!

Romans 8:3,4

**(3)For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,
(4)in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

(RSV)

And also:

2 Cor. 5:21

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

(RSV)

Christ became sin in his flesh and sin was judged in him. Christ tasted our eternal punishment by being abandoned by the Father and dying at the cross. This is the measure of the obedience of Jesus unto his Father. This is the measure of obedience that Disciples of Christ should be willing to offer to God. In other words it should be limitless and freely offered out of love for our Lord and Savior.

Philippians 2:9-11
09 - 'The name of Jesus'

- (9) Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,**
(10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,
(11) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
(NASB)

When we read the word “therefore” it brings the subject to either an end or a conclusion. What we see here with verse nine is that Paul brings his readers to a conclusion to what has been written. The subject was “having the mind of Christ” and the submission that he had towards the Father. We have seen that his obedience was manifested to the fullest at the cross where he suffered death and became a substitution for the repentant sinner. We will see in this section what this voluntary submission of the Son towards the Father brought him.

(9)Therefore God also has highly exalted Him

There are four things written here that the Father gave the Son because of his obedience. The first is that the Father “*highly exalted Him*”. The idea behind the word *exalted* (HUPERUSOO) is to raise to the highest position. Remember that Jesus had set aside his glory to become a man. Once he had finished his redemptive work the Father gave back to the Son his rightful place and honour.

John 17:4,5

- (4) I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do;**
(5) and now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made.
(RSV)

We also have Stephen’s testimony that the Father had given back the Son his rightful place.

Acts 7:55,56

(55) But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;

(56) and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God."

(RSV)

If there is one book that manifests the glory of the Son it is certainly Revelation. In the final chapter it is written of Christ: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (22:13). Jesus truly has been given the highest position, the one he had before the foundation of the world.

It is wonderful to see that what the Father has done to the Son now the Son wants to do to his disciples. Have you noticed how the teachings of Christ walk hand in hand with what the Father has done for him! Take the parable of the guest at the wedding for instance. The guest who sits in the back is asked to come to the front where he will receive glory.

Luke 14:10

But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, "Friend, go up higher"; then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at table with you.

(RSV)

When Jesus speaks to the crowd he tells them the following:

Matthew 19:30

But many that are first will be last, and the last first.

(RSV)

As the Father did with the Son so will the Son do unto his disciples. Jesus will give them the greatest glory of all – the right to become a child of God!

John 1:12,13

(12) But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God;

(13) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

(RSV)

This honour is not even given to the angels that have kept their hearts pure by not rebelling against the Most High God. No angel, archangel, Seraphim or Cherub are ever redeemed to become a “child of God”. You will never find any spirit of any sort that has had been graced with such a title. There are no spirits that were adopted and became part of the family of God. This is only given to the children of Adam who have repented of their sins and have cried out to Christ to save them.

Dear friend if you are one of the blessed ones, may you daily rejoice and ever be thankful unto the Lord. May you desire to honour God in all you do.

(9) ...and given Him the name which is above every name.

This is the second gift of the Father to the Son because of his perfect obedience – a name that is above every name. It is said that in Cruden’s Concordance (1737) there are 198 different names and titles given to our Lord and Saviour! We know him simply as Jesus of Nazareth. It is this name that is above all others and no wonder because the name Jesus means – *SAVIOUR!* Now what does it mean that his name is above all other names? It means that is name is supreme!

- Angels will sing his praises
- Demons tremble at the hearing of his name

By the name of Jesus:

- The blind see
- The lame walk
- The deaf hear
- The dead are raised from the grave
- The tempest calms down
- The fig tree withers
- The demons are cast out
- The hungry are fed

His is the name of:

- The King of kings
- The Lord of lords
- The Ruler of heaven and earth
- The Creator and Sustainer of life
- The Alpha and Omega

- The Lion of Judah
- The bright morning star

There is truly no other name that is above the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! How is it possible that so many Christians forget or set aside this wonderful name? How is it possible that our hearts do not palpitate when we hear it pronounced or sung at our meetings? Dear friend, may this name always be on your lips and on your mind.

Paul continues to tell the Philippians what these gifts are by unveiling the third one.

(10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

The bowing of the knee has always manifested submission towards the one we bow to. It says "You are greater than me" or "You have authority over me". It is a sign of respect and honour. Still today where a monarchy exists, as in the United Kingdom, people bow down when they meet royalty. The Father gives all the honour due to the Son by giving him a name that every knee (including yours and mine) will bow to. Have you noticed that there are three groups of "places" where creatures will have to recognize the full authority of Christ?

The first being: "*of those in heaven*". In other words the heavenly hosts! We can get a glimpse of this from the book of Revelations.

Rev. 5:14

And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

(RSV)

Rev. 7:11

And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God.

(RSV)

I don't know how many angels God has created but one thing that I do know is that ALL OF THEM without any exception will bow down before the Lord. This will be the ultimate defeat of the fallen angels, they will be forced to proclaim that there is no other final authority than God himself. What a wonderful day this will be. There will be no more war in heaven for the fallen angels will have surrendered once and for all.

The second is: “*and of those on earth*”. This speaks about all humanity living on earth. Every single man, woman and child will one day confess the name of Jesus as being above all names. Today our world is filled with idols as much as it ever was: the world of music, sports, politics and religion is bursting with them. One day will come when the great King will rise and reign and all on earth will bend the knee before him. I hope that your heart has already made Christ your Lord and your lips have already confessed his name!

The third is: “*and of those under the earth*”. This last place where the name of Christ will be above all others speaks of the underworld. This is the kingdom of those who have deceased. This domain was talked about by Jesus in Luke 16:19-31. Poor Lazarus was taken to “Abraham’s bosom” while the rich man woke up in “Hades”. Each were waiting for the resurrection of the dead that Jesus spoke of:

John 5:28

(28) Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice

(29) and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.

(RSV)

In heaven, on earth and even under the earth ALL who belong to their respective kingdom will bow the knee. Declaring that Jesus is the great I AM. My hope is that all who read this book will openly confess Christ as King before they pass away. Because there is no redemption after death (Heb. 9:27).

The fourth and last gift of the Father to the Son is the following:

(11) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

What divine gifts has the Son received for his obedience – even unto the cross! He is highly exalted, he has a name above all others, all knees will bow before him and finally every tongue shall confess his name! The name of Jesus had already been confessed and praised by so many in the Bible.

Think of the Father who said this of his Son - the blessed Messiah:

Isaiah 9:6,7

(6) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

(7) Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (RSV)

Remember what the angel said to Joseph:

Matthew 1:20,21

(20) But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit;

**(21) she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."
(RSV)**

John the Baptist proclaimed the following:

John 1:29

**The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!
(RSV)**

Peter also made a well-known confession concerning Jesus:

Mat. 16:16

**Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
(RSV)**

Even the demons confess and recognize Christ for who he truly is:

Luke 4:34

**"Ah! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God."
(RSV)**

It's not that no one has ever confessed the name of Jesus – far from it! But the promise of the Father is that one day his name will be confessed by ALL! Can you imagine the day when all in heaven and on earth who have disdained his name, all that have worked against the name of Christ, and all that have mocked his name will have to bow the knee, manifest respect and confess that Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords! What a day that will be, what rejoicing and exultation for all the ones that have been washed by the blood of Christ!

It is written that all of this is “*to the glory of God the Father*”. Christ has never done anything to glorify himself. He came to do the will of the Father, to honour and glorify him. Dear friend, should this not also be the aim of every child of God? Should this not be our desire also – to honour and glorify God! May each of you take a stand before all and manifest your attachment to your Saviour. May your hearts be filled with the precepts given by Christ to his disciples and as Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 10:31

**So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
(RSV)**

Philippians 2:12-18
10 - 'My beloved'

- (12)So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;**
- (13)for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.**
- (14)Do all things without grumbling or disputing;**
- (15)so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,**
- (16)holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.**
- (17)But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.**
- (18)You too, *I urge you*, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.**
(NASB)

In this section the focus of Paul is no longer on the Son of God but rather on the believers in Philippi. In a way Christian living is exactly what is presented before us. Often people wonder what a life of a disciple of Christ looks like. In reality it is very simple: you set your eyes on Jesus (as in 2:9-11) and you respond to it (as in 2:12-18). Do you remember in 2:1-4 Paul called the Philippians to also respond in a way that is manifest in their life? Have you ever met a person who was apathetic? Whatever good was done in their favour they seemed to be so distant and so detached as though nothing had actually happened. Isn't it irritating and frustrating, to a point that sometimes you say: "That's it, no more help for this guy!" Sometimes Christians can be just like that person – ice cold to what God has done for them. Verse twelve begins with Paul setting the foundation of what a good response rests upon.

- (12)So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.**

He begins by calling the Philippians "*my beloved*". Did you know that in all the epistles that he wrote to the churches there is only one where he does not call the Christians "*beloved*" and that is the churches of Galatia! The word beloved (AGAPETOS) gives the idea of being dear or well loved. These believers were well loved by God and in turn well loved by Paul. Read what Paul wrote to the Romans.

Rom. 1:7

**To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace
from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
(RSV)**

Just think about it, the redeemed are God's beloved. Those who have received salvation are dearly loved by the Father. Doesn't that make you feel so blessed and does it not encourage you in life? God loves me – not because of who I am but because of what I have become through Christ! On the other hand it also teaches me that if God loves his spiritual children – I should also!

Paul speaks of obedience "*just as you have always obeyed*" and this is the foundation I was speaking about. That is the natural response of knowing that we are dearly loved by God – we obey him. Paul speaks of an obedience that is always present. It seems that the saints at Philippi were more honourable and grateful towards God than the ones in other churches such as Corinth. Paul is proud to write that they always obey. They chose to obey, they delighted in obeying it was perfectly normal to do this – after all they were deeply loved by the Lord himself! Have you noticed (and this can be true in your personal life) that some people obey differently depending on the circumstances? When I was a teenager I obeyed the family rules much better when mom and dad were present. When they both left the house – the house rules went with them! I acted differently because they were not there and they could not see me. I know that it is the same thing with many Christians, they often obey God depending on who is around to know or to see them.

(12) ... not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence

Children are children whether we are children of God or not! The Philippians were "good children" because they obeyed whether Paul was present or absent. It's even written "*much more in my absence*". They took special care to do what was right when Paul was not around. What about you, my friend, are you a different Christian on a Sunday morning than a Friday night?

(12) ... work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

I've heard people use this verse to show that salvation is not by faith only but also by works. They say: "You see you have to work out your salvation..." This of course is not what the text is saying. One of the better explanations I have read is from "The Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the whole Bible" which writes the following:

“Salvation” is “worked in” (Philemon 2:13; Ephesians 1:11) believers by the Spirit, who enables them through faith to be justified once for all; but it needs, as a progressive work, to be “worked out” by obedience, through the help of the same Spirit, unto perfection (2 Peter 1:5-8).

In other words we need to “*work out*” our salvation or if you prefer “be active in our faith”. It is given to us by grace and God has not given it to us for us to bury it in the ground like the foolish servant (Mat. 25:14-30). We need to bear the fruits of repentance (Mat. 3:7-9). James wrote about bearing “good works” in relation with just saying “I’m saved”.

James 2:18

But some one will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.

(RSV)

Working out your salvation is simply manifesting the truth concerning your salvation by acting in a spiritual manner. The term *work out* (KATERGAZOMIA) means to accomplish, perform or to work out. Paul is saying to the Philippians “accomplish what God has given you to do.” Further proof that we do not work to get our salvation is what Paul writes in verse thirteen:

(13)for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

When Paul says to “*work out our salvation*” he then writes that it is God who works in us so we can manifest our works! So Paul is simply saying: “let God work in you and don’t put any stumbling blocks in his way,” Here we see how gracious the Lord is. He supplies the energy and capacity to his children so that they will be able to obey him. God gives the determination and the ability to his children in relationship with good works. This fits perfectly with what Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

(RSV)

So how are the Philippians supposed to go about “*working out their salvation*” and how are we also to do the same?

(14)Do all things without grumbling or disputing.

Paul begins by saying “*Do all things*” That’s right – all things! Not just the easy things, good things, happy things, simple things or the things that you like – but all things. When you read the whole sentence Paul refers to the opposite things that I just wrote about. “*Do all things*” – the difficult things, unhappy things, the things others look down upon. Remember in the Upper Room when no one wanted to wash the others feet, what did Jesus do? He set aside his garment and girded himself with a towel (John 13:4) and he did what the others disdained to do – he washed his disciples’ feet. That, my friend, is “*do ALL things*”. The rest of the verse speaks of our attitude as we do all things. We are to be “*without grumbling or disputing.*” No grumbling in our hearts, no grudging or murmuring and also no disputing, no verbal fighting. We are to do what is asked by the Lord because we are his servants and servants DO NOT tell their master how to do things! Jesus certainly did not have a grudge against his disciples the night he washed their feet. He could have given them quite a sermon on the subject but he did something else, something that had a greater impact – he acted in their place as a silent slave would.

(15)so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.

This is why Paul tells the Philippians to do all things without grumbling or disputing. There is a reason for our conduct, the way we walk in life. In verse fifteen Paul gives a few of them. It’s our human nature to wonder about why we should do thing this way instead of another way. We often ask the question “Why?” When the Holy Spirit gave Paul this letter to write down he actually inspired Paul to give the answer to our “Why?” The first thing that I see is that we are to *prove yourselves* (GINOMAI) which means to cause to be. In a very real way our conduct is proof of who we have become. It manifests to everyone that we have passed from death unto life. That we have become new creatures in Jesus Christ. This new person acts differently, thinks differently and lives differently. This is the way that Jesus explained it:

John 15:5

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

(RSV)

Bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) has an impact on the people around us. The way that they will see us is as though we are blameless and innocent. This reminds me of the church in Jerusalem and how in the beginning people saw them in a favourable way (Acts 2:46,47).

Why we should walk as children of light has another aspect: it is also a testimony of the transformation that the Holy Spirit brings into the life of the new believer.

(15)...children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.

The world we live in is very dark and sin has infected every aspect of life. It is expected that the children of the world will act as their father and that the children of light will imitate their heavenly Father. Listen to what Jesus said:

John 8:44a

**You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.
(RSV)**

The testimony Paul is looking for in the Philippians is that they will not live as a *crooked and perverse generation*. Christians are not to walk as those who are not born of the Spirit. There is actually a war going on and the flesh is battling the Spirit inside us (Gal. 5:16,17). Paul tells the Philippians (as he would tell us today) *to appear as lights in the world*. Our conduct should shine brightly in a world that so desperately needs to see. Jesus told his disciples to be the lights of the world and not to hide their lights under a table but to let them shine brightly so all can see (Mat. 5:14-16). I wonder how brightly I shine. I wonder if people can see in my actions something that is out of the ordinary – something spiritual!

There is the same old question that comes to mind every time I am encouraged by the Word of God to live a life worthy of my calling: “How can I do this?” That’s what Paul explains in the following verse.

(16)holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

I have to *hold fast* to the word of life (the Holy Scriptures). The idea of holding fast (EPECHO) means to pay attention and also to retain. Seems quite easy to understand doesn’t it! Paul tells the Philippians to listen attentively to the Word of God and then to retain what is said. Parents often tell their kids “just do what I say” and Paul, as their spiritual father, tells them the same. Please notice that the Holy Scriptures are called the “*word of life*”. My point lies in the word “life”. It can happen that some Christians actually believe that the Word of God is boring, dull and dreary and that it has very little significance in their life.

I don't think they are reading the same way or with the same state of heart as millions of others do. The Word of God is filled with life – not death! Jesus even gave this special blessing concerning the Word of God:

Luke 11:28

**But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"
(RSV)**

The blessing of the Lord is upon you if you hear and keep his word – how great is that! So how do you walk as the light in a crooked and perverse generation? By holding on to God's word and simply applying it in your life.

(16)...so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

Have you noticed that Paul turns his vision from the present to the end-times? Paul's mind is fixed on the finish line. He's telling the Philippians that their life of light has an effect right now because the generation that lives in the dark will see their light. But he also is telling them that their present life also has an eternal effect. One of the sad things in life is that death interferes with the work that we have done here on earth. Death brings a stop to our efforts. Someone else might continue our work but rarely does it flourish under different hands. On the other hand all of our work for the Lord DOES NOT END with our life. The reward of our work for his glory will fully be given only when physical death has come.

Col. 3:24

**Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ.
(RSV)**

Paul is saying: "be steadfast and when the time comes I will have no regret of having worked with you." This can be applied to all true believers. We also need to fix our sight on the end of our race and remember that all we do will be remembered by the Lord and he will reward us.

In the last two verses Paul speaks of rejoicing.

(17)But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.

(18)You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

Remember that Paul is writing this letter while he was imprisoned in Rome. His future looks bleak (from a human standpoint) and what he is filled with? – JOY! Paul is comparing himself as a “*drink offering*”. A drink offering was the offering of wine that went along with another offering. The drink offering accompanied the main offering whether meat or grain. Paul compares himself not as a main offering but as a lesser offering that compliments a main offering. Once more we see the humility of Paul. You see the main sacrifice is “*the sacrifice and service of your faith*”. He rejoices because his life of sacrifice has assisted their life of service, faith and sacrifice. I wonder how many Christians are actually happy that they suffer ALONG with other Christians as they walk with the Lord. I would guess to say that most of us are more than happy NOT TO suffer at all.

(18) You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

Paul urges the Philippians to be ready, willing and able to rejoice with others as they share in the sacrifices being done for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is such a wonderful human model to follow. He is in prison and even then he is able to both rejoice and share in sacrifice. He is even willing to be as a drink offering just to come along side with the Philippians as they live painful situations. Is this how we see our Christian life? Are we ready and prepared to lay our life down as a sacrifice even if it's only to encourage others? May God change our hearts if this is not the case.

**Philippians 2:19-24
11 - 'Trust and hope'**

(19) But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.

(20) For I have no one *else* of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.

(21) For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.

(22) But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child *serv*ing his father.

(23) Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things *go* with me;

(24) and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.

(NASB)

The section we are looking at is all about hope and trust. Isn't this at the very heart of our faith? Our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ and our trust is placed on what he has done in our behalf. Before we continue I would like to say that both words hope and trust that we find here are very much alike in their meaning. They go together like a hand in a glove. The word hope (ELPIZO) means to expect, confide and trust. While the word trust (PEITHO) means to rely because of an inward certainty. One could say that their meaning is related in thought. So let's look at what Paul is getting at with these two words.

(19) But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.

The first thing that I notice that is so important is that the hope of Paul is in the person of his Saviour. A normal person in his situation could place his hope in the judicial system, in his legal representative, the people he knows, the wealth that he has, or the "strings" he can pull. But our friend Paul places his hope not in the things of this world (although he could have) but in the person of Christ. This reminds me of the words he wrote to the Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 1:9,10

(9) Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead;

(10) he delivered us from so deadly a peril, and he will deliver us; on him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

(RSV)

Here we have the true definition of what a Christian's hope is: "to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead". By the way the word *rely* in 2 Cor. 1:9 is the same Greek work *trust* in Phil. 2:24!

So Paul is really placing his trust in Jesus Christ and this time it deals with Timothy. Paul hopes to do something with his missionary companion and that is to send him to the Philippians. It seems that even if Paul is in prison and has many things to worry about he chooses to set them aside and to think upon others instead of himself! He sets his mind on the Philippians and how they are. Paul is anything but egocentric. He could be crying and complaining saying: "poor little me" or "it always happens to me" or "what have I done to deserve prison" and so forth. His eyes were fixed on others and their welfare. Paul truly is a man after Jesus' heart because he also did not look at his own needs but was ready to give all for the sake of the others.

Now why would Paul want to send Timothy to see the Philippians? He wants to hear the latest news concerning them so that he can be encouraged by what he hears from Timothy. When I read this phrase it reminds me of the impact we can have on our brethren. What could make a man like Paul be encouraged while he is in prison? Better food, or prison conditions, more liberty or money to buy what is needed – no, not for Paul. What really has a positive impact in his life (besides the Lord obviously) is to receive good news about the spiritual health of his brothers and sisters in Christ. The apostle John wrote the same thing.

3 John 1:3

For I greatly rejoiced when some of the brethren arrived and testified to the truth of your life, as indeed you do follow the truth.

(RSV)

Have you ever thought that you personally have an impact in the lives of others? As a Christian what you do will have a ripple effect on others whether in your church or your community. I have been a pastor now for 35 years and I can testify along with Paul and John that there is great joy in hearing about people that you know that are walking hand in hand with the Lord. So think about what is being said and live a life intent on encouraging others – it will make a difference.

20) For I have no one *else* of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.

One of the things that I really enjoy when I read the Scriptures is that it is very straightforward. It says the truth even though what is written goes against the grain! One would think that the Christians that surrounded Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome would be touched by his plight and concern for other Christians. But this does not seem to be the case. On the contrary it seems that Paul has no one to rely spiritually on to “fight the good fight” along with him. When I was a young believer I sometimes wished that I lived in the time of the book of Acts. I thought every Christian was living to the utmost of his capacities. As I grew older and became a pastor I began to see another picture, a more actual picture, of what in general Christians are like. Unfortunately things haven’t changed. Most of the people who say they are Disciples of Christ have very little interest in spiritual matters.

Paul says that NO ONE else (that’s very strong wouldn’t you say) has a “*kindred spirit*” (SOPSUCHOS) which means a similar spirit, other than Timothy. On one side this fills me with sadness. Have the Christians forgotten what the Lord God has done for them? Have they set their eyes on earthly treasures instead of heavenly ones? Have they forgotten their calling and who they have become? It is sad to see that those who were set free by Jesus once again allow themselves to be captured by the things of this world. On the other hand I am glad to see that Timothy is still marching forward for the Lord. This reminds me of what Jesus said:

Luke 9:62

Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

(RSV)

It seems that Timothy has both of his hands firmly on the plow and is looking forward. I must ask you these two questions: Are your hands on the plow and if so are you looking backwards or frontwards? In other words are you walking on the wide road or the narrow road?

Here we see that Timothy was “*genuinely concerned*”. His concern for the things of the Lord was sincere, honest and honourable. Timothy did not “play church” as I call it. He actually walked the walk and talked the talk! He knew the price and he was ready to pay it. I see a reflection of Paul in the life of Timothy. Paul cared deeply for the believers and we see that this is also rooted in Timothy’s life. No one else in Rome seemed to have this deep concern for the brethren at Philippi as Timothy did. I guess I don’t have to remind you of the importance that genuine love has in the life of a believer – Jesus said:

John 15:13

**Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.
(RSV)**

I need to confess that I have not reached this level of “*genuine concern*”. A concern that places all others before myself. A concern that allows me to say NO to myself and YES to those around me. A concern that pushes me to lay down my life for my friends. May we all grow with a sense of deeper concern for others.

What was wrong with the Roman Christians? Where did they fail? Why were they so negligent concerning the welfare of others? Once again you will see that things haven’t changed that much.

(21)For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.

They were seeking (or running after) the wrong things in life. Let’s not forget that at that time Rome was the very center of the world. It was the biggest metropolis of its day. There, you could find anything you ever desired. Rome was THE place to be in the first century. Power, influence and money were in Rome. All types of merchandise coming from the four corners of the world were sold in Rome. The architecture feasted your eyes: the colossus of Nero (a statue slightly over 30 meters high), the Aqua Claudia, the Diribitorium and so many other sights! In the first century Rome was a thrilling city. But it was also filled with debauchery, lust, sin and idolatry. It was easy for anyone to sink deeper and deeper into sin’s filth! Rome must have been a very difficult place to live in if you were a devout Christian. Wickedness, depravity and immorality were waiting for you at every street corner.

This seemed to have infected the Roman Christians for Paul says that they all sought “*after their own interest*”! They had taken their hands off the plow and no longer looked ahead where they should have. It seems that they had lost their first love for Christ. They were plague-ridden with the ME-MYSELF & I syndrome! How easily we can also lose our first love for Christ and set our eyes upon other goals than the ones set by our Lord.

Revelation 2:3,4

(3)I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.

**(4)But I have this against you that you have abandoned the love you had at first.
(RSV)**

As you can see it is possible to endure patiently, bearing up for Jesus' sake and not grow weary, as possibly the Roman Christians were, but at the same time lose their first love for their Saviour. Deep in their hearts they sought their own interest first – how sad.

(22) But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father.

Here we see a contrast between Timothy and those that sought after their own interest first. The first thing that I see is that Timothy had been *proven*. Which means that the life of Timothy manifested beyond any doubt that he was truly a disciple of Christ. He had been dedicated to God since Paul took him under his wing – and even before that (Acts 16:1,2). Timothy had followed Paul and suffered alongside him in his missionary trips. He stood with Paul and never abandoned him contrary to John-Mark (Acts 15:38) and also Demas (2 Tim. 4:10). Have we proven our worth? Has time manifested our true attachment? Have the violent waves of the world beating upon us broken down the walls of our faith? This is how Peter describes it:

1 Peter 1:6,7

**(6) In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials,
(7) so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
(RSV)**

The second thing I see is the Character of Timothy that is brought forward: “*he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father*”. It seems that the Roman Christians had been lacking in “*furthering the gospel*”. It does follow the fact that they had lost their first love and were looking out first of all for themselves. Since they were number one – God had to be further down the line. But not so with Timothy he did what he could to help in the spreading of the gospel. We know that it was difficult for Timothy because of his frequent illnesses (1 Tim. 5:23), his spiritual gifts that needed to be re-kindled (2 Tim. 1:6) and his shy character (2 Tim. 1:8) but he persevered. Contrary to what is so often seen today, Timothy never gave an excuse for not showing up! That’s also how he proved his worth – you could always count on Timothy.

(23) Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me; (24) and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.

In the beginning of this section I told you that it was all about hope and trust and the final lines of Paul manifest this. His hope was to be able *“to send him immediately”*. That was his expectation - what he trusted the Lord for. Have you noticed that Paul still could make plans and think about the future? He’s in prison but his heart is free. He may be shackled but his mind is not chained! What a wonderful encouragement for all of us for we all are at times bound by life’s situations. We should never allow this to tear us down and defeat us in our walk for the Lord.

He also trusts in the Lord for one last thing: *“that I myself also will be coming shortly”*. Paul knew that his life rested in the hands of God. He knew that the walls that concealed him would simply break down by one word if God wanted them to. He hoped and trusted in the Lord for this to happen. It is believed that Paul was imprisoned around 60-62 A.D., and died around 67 A.D., what we do not know is if Paul ever succeeded in seeing his beloved Philippians again. What we see here is that sometimes we can make plans, hope and trust in the Lord for them but the result lies in the hands of the Lord and no one else. God is sovereign he does as he wills.

Psalms 115:3

Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases.

(RSV)

Making plans for the Lord and thinking ahead is a sign of being spiritually healthy. What we must never forget is that God may just say “NO”. As good servants we should simply accept that our plans and his plans may be very different.

Isaiah 55:8,9

(8) For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

(9) For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

(RSV)

So tell me, have you any plans concerning the Lord? Suppose Jesus would appear in front of you as he did with the two disciples on the road of Emmaus. Imagine if he asked you – “What are you doing in my name?” or “How are you working in my Father’s vineyard?”. What would we say? Would your mouth be shut tight because of the shame you felt? Remember the parable concerning the workers in Matthew 25 and how Jesus dealt with the third servant who did nothing while he was away.

Matthew 25:24-27

(24) He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, “Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow;

(25) so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.”

(26) But his master answered him, “You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed?

(27) Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.”

(RSV)

You see this last servant did not have any real desire to be active for his Master. The only thing that he did was to bury, to hide what he had received. For me this represents the multitude who just hide or bury their faith. They refuse to use what the Lord has given them for the advancement of the kingdom. The other two servants did what they could and the Master welcomed them into his joy. But he was not satisfied with the excuse that the third one gave. I also believe that whatever excuse one can have for not working for the Lord is not going to be accepted by Christ.

Why not think about what you are doing for the Lord. Begin by praying that the Lord will show you what he wants of you and just say: “Yes Lord”. You never know where your service will lead you.

Philippians 2:25-30
12 - 'God have mercy'

- (25) But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need;**
(26) because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.
(27) For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.
(28) Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned *about you*.
(29) Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard;
(30) because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.
(NASB)

In our section entitled “trust and hope” we saw that Paul’s intention is to send Timothy as soon as he knew what the future had in store for him: “(2:23)*Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me.*” But he had other plans for another of his co-workers, a man called Epaphroditus. Very little is known about this Christian brother except for what is written in Philippians. Believe it or not in one way this is very encouraging. Let me explain. There are people in the Bible who appear just once but were very important in what they did. Think of Simeon (Luke 2:25) when baby Jesus was placed in his arms he prophesied. The same thing happened with Anna (Luke 2:36) after she saw the child she witnessed to all those who were waiting for redemption in Jerusalem. Think about the woman at the well (John 4) she spoke to Christ and went to tell all the people in her village. The story of these people (and many more) are mentioned once but at the same time the impact of what they did is still referred to today. It is the same thing with Epaphroditus, who was mentioned once but we still speak of him today.

What encourages me about the story of Epaphroditus is that it can be my story or your story. We often wonder if the things that we do have any bearing at all for the Kingdom of God. I would like to encourage you and say “YES” they do. The apostle Paul was certain of this and he reminded the Corinthians to:

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

(RSV)

Your labour in the Lord is not vain! Whatever it is or however unimportant it may seem God promises you that it will not be unproductive or futile. From simply bringing your children to Sunday school or being a greeter. It maybe that you leave tracts when you eat out or bring food to someone in need. Everything that we do in the name of Christ will never be forgotten. Jesus says that we will be rewarded for all we do even if it is as simple as giving a cup of water to someone in need!

Mark 9:41

For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward.

(RSV)

So let's take a look at Epaphroditus.

(25) But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need.

Here we see three things concerning him in relation to Paul and two things in relation to the Philippians. First Paul calls him "*my brother*" which means that Epaphroditus had surrendered his life to Jesus Christ. He had understood that he was a sinner before God, repented of his sins and received salvation given only by Christ, he was born-again (John 3:7). Without this new birth we can never be called "brother". So knowing Paul I am convinced that he was certain that Epaphroditus was a child of God. As you know it all begins with this spiritual birth. The second relationship is "*my fellow worker*". While most believers unfortunately are content just with becoming a child of God some have a greater desire and that is to work for the Lord. In other words some are so grateful that they desire to place themselves at the service of the Saviour. A perfect example of thankfulness is found in Luke 17:11-19, where only one out of the ten lepers glorified God and came back to Christ to thank him.

Luke 17:15,16

(15) Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice;

(16) and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. (RSV)

What we see concerning Epaphroditus is that he had a deep sense of gratefulness unto God. May I ask at what level is your sense of gratefulness? Are you just a “*brother*” or are you also a “*fellow worker*” alongside others of the faith? The third is “*fellow soldier*”. As I write these lines I can clearly see these three descriptions as a series of steps in Christian life. One begins with the new birth (a brother) as you grow in love for your Lord you desire to devote yourself to him (fellow worker) and finally you fully enter the battle for the faith (fellow soldier). There are two other verses where Paul speaks about being a soldier for Christ and each one speaks of a different aspect.

2 Tim. 2:3

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

(RSV)

Paul tells Timothy to be ready to share in the suffering of being a good soldier. Epaphroditus was willing (as we will see) to suffer for Christ. That is something that is not well received amongst many of us. We want to receive the good of being a child of God. The promises, the favours, the benefits and the blessings. We want all the good things and are taught that this is what we should have and live for. My friend, this was not the case for the Christians of the New Testament. The promises of God concerned mostly the spiritual aspect of their lives with the final promise of eternal life in the presence of the Lord God. Most of us shy away from suffering or having to suffer because of the name that we bear – Christian.

2Tim. 2:4

No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him.

(RSV)

This is the second aspect of being a good soldier for Christ – we don’t get entangled with the things of this world. Again there are many who have objectives that they place higher or more important than the person of God in their life. They desire a career, or a family, or influence, or material possessions, or reputation. Some are so busy with social works that they forget ministries. Others work so hard that they have no energy left for the Lord. We often forget what Jesus said:

Matthew 6:33

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.

(RSV)

I would suggest that if you are entangled with the things of this world – deliver yourself from them for they are slowly choking your spiritual life!

Now as for the two aspects of Epaphroditus' life concerning the Philippians the first is that he is "*your messenger*". That means that Epaphroditus was a member of the church of Philippi. He had been sent by the church to Rome with things for Paul. As we will see they supported Paul in his ministry. I believe that this shows that Epaphroditus was a man who could be trusted. How important it is to have a good reputation in the church for without it nothing will be given unto us to do for the Lord. Remember what Christ said about being trustworthy:

Luke 16:10

"He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.

(RSV)

The second aspect is "*minister to my need*". The aim of sending of Epaphroditus was to serve to the needs of Paul while he was in prison. Try to imagine what this would look like. How difficult, unpleasant, tedious or demeaning this could be – but not for Epaphroditus! What a wonderful Christian and what a model for all of us. It may be that some are willing to have certain ministries but how many gladly take the ones that no one desires to have? In verse twenty-six we see another aspect of his character.

(26) because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

What I see in this verse is the very heart of Epaphroditus. What Paul tells us is that he was very sick. Normally when one is sick one's attention is fixed upon oneself but not with our friend! What we see is that he *longed* (EPIPOTHEO) for his friends in Philippi. This word means an intense craving or desire. While he was sick and as we will see even close to death Epaphroditus had his mind on his brothers and sisters. His world was not centered upon himself – a true disciple of Christ. The other thing that I see is that he was *distressed* (ADEMONEO) which means to be full of heaviness. In other words he felt bad that his health issues had a negative impact on the lives of the Philippians. He felt bad because they felt bad. I wonder if I am like that feeling bad because others are feeling bad whatever the circumstances might be.

(27) For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

For some unknown reason Epaphroditus became very sick and Paul thought that he was going to die. Which makes me think of life and the traumatic situations that it plunges us into. Here we have a man who is healthy and is given a mission. I am certain that the Philippians would not have sent Epaphroditus on this mission if he already had been a sick person. If he was sent to take care of the needs of Paul he must himself have been healthy. For whatever reason he is struck by illness and great illness at that. One could wonder why God would allow this man, who was on a godly mission, to become sick. The point I want to express is that it is not because I have a ministry or am a “soldier in the faith” that I am exempt from sickness. If Job, who was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil (Job 1:1) could be struck by illness, then anyone can!

What we are told is that the mercy of God was present in all of this. We can often forget that whatever situation we find ourselves in God is there and God can intervene if he desires to do so. Let’s not forget that God is everywhere (Omnipresent), he knows all things (Omniscient) and that he is all-powerful (Omnipotent). This should encourage all his children to cry out to him for comfort and assistance. I have no doubt that both Paul and Epaphroditus prayed to the Lord for his intervention.

(27)...but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

God did intervene and the health of Epaphroditus came back. God was not obliged to give his health back and Paul knew it that is why Paul says that God manifested his mercy. Mercy is not something that is earned or due, it is something that is given by grace. It seems that God acted for a double reason. The first being that Epaphroditus would benefit from it and continue his work for the Lord. But there is a second and that is for Paul so that he would not “*have sorrow upon sorrow*”. Due to the circumstances for we know the load Paul was presently carrying was a heavy one. God in his grace did not allow Paul to bear more than he could carry. This is also a promise that he gives to all of his children.

Matthew 11:28

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

(RSV)

If today you are heavily burdened and your shoulders are bending because of the weight you are carrying, the same God who helped Paul is ready to listen to your plea.

(28) Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned *about you*.

(29) Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard;

(30) because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

Have you noticed what Paul does once Epaphroditus came back to health? What would you have done? I would have been glad to see that he can once more take care of my needs and do the things that I am not able to because I am imprisoned. Imagine you have your own personal valet! Instead of thinking like this Paul does something quite out of the ordinary.

(28) Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned *about you*.

Paul sends him away, he tells Epaphroditus that it's time to go back home! See once more how Paul is selfless, how he thinks of the betterment of others before himself! He may have been thinking that Epaphroditus should be with his own that he shouldn't have to pay such a price just to be with him. Notice how Paul is also concerned with the Philippians "*I may be less concerned about you*". He's thinking that the brothers and sisters at Philippi might be distressed concerning Epaphroditus' ministry in Rome. What a spiritual lesson we have here. Whatever the situation (even in prison) think of others before thinking of yourself. This particularly hits hard on our society which teaches us that WE are number one. May we grow and realize that others are more important than ourselves!

(29) Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard;

(30) because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

Have you noticed that we can often "*hold men in high regard*" when actually they haven't done much? How quick we are to place someone on a pedestal without any valid reason. A person who went on a mission's trip for two weeks is not to be praised as if he was there for twenty years. A person who replaced his pastor on the pulpit for his three weeks' vacation is not a preacher. My son-in-law told me that while he was in seminary some of the students asked people to call them "pastor" and they had not even finished seminary yet! Too much credit is often given without any proof of its validity – let us not be like that. Paul says that Epaphroditus should be held in "*high regard*" because he earned his stripes! We learn *that he came close to death for the work of Christ*. Paul even says that Epaphroditus "*risked his own life*" to help him.

So before we praise someone in the Lord let's make sure that he or she deserves the praise. Actually we should never be looking for praise even if we have done all that was required of ourselves, remember what Christ said:

Luke 17:10

So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty."

(RSV)

The last thing I would like you to grasp is that Epaphroditus who came close to death and even risked his life for Paul did not abandon his ministry. Over and over again I have seen people simply stop their ministry because of a little "bump" in the road of life. The church counts on them, the church needs them but they just drop their responsibilities on somebody else's lap! The way that Epaphroditus dealt with life and ministry tells a lot about his character. The way that others just drop everything without caring about the consequences also tells a lot about their character.

May we reflect on the depth of our personal commitment towards the Lord. May we seek to be like our friend Epaphroditus who even faced with sickness and death "carried on"!

Philippians 3:1-6
13 - 'Beware'

- (1) Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.**
- (2) Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision;**
(3) for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,
(4) although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:
(5) circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;
(6) as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.
(NASB)

For many commentators rejoicing is the main theme of the Epistle to the Philippians. In a way we can understand for in your Bible you will probably find this word in eight different places (1:16; 2:16,17,18,28; 3:1; 4:4,10) in others it is in only seven places as in the NASB. Actually the word for rejoicing (CHAIRO) is found seven times. In verse 2:16, where we find the word "joy", it is actually the word (KAUCHEMA) which means to boast either in a good or bad way. So in the book of Philippians we have seven appearances of the word "joy"!

Here Paul sums up the fundamental place where Christian joy is to be found – it is in Christ Jesus.

- (1) Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.**

What is fascinating to see is the difference between what the Greek word for rejoice means and what the word rejoice automatically means today in many parts of the world. When you think of rejoicing what do you imagine in your mind? After giving a few phone calls (my own little survey) this was the general response to the question: "what does the word rejoice bring to mind". The words celebration, happy and having no worries were evoked. For many "to rejoice" may give the idea of having a party with music, dancing and being exuberant. You would be surprised to know that rejoice (CHAIRO) means to be cheerful, calmly happy. To be cheerful in a calm way now that's different than what we would have thought!

To me it gives the idea that we ought to rejoice not in the flesh but rather in a holy manner and spiritual way. Some regrettably forget that God is a God of order.

1 Corinthians 14:33

**For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints.
(RSV)**

1 Corinthians 14:40

**but all things should be done decently and in order.
(RSV)**

So we are to rejoice in the Lord because of who he is and what he has done for us. Rejoice because if you are a true disciple of Christ your Lord is the:

- Advocate (1 John 2:1)
- Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8)
- Author and finisher of your faith (Heb. 12:2)
- Bread of life (John 6:32,35)
- Cornerstone (Ps. 118:22)
- Creator (John 1:3)
- Deliverer (Rom. 11:26)
- Good Shepherd (John 10:11)
- Great High priest (Heb. 4:14)
- Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14)

We need to search our hearts and be honest enough to see who or what makes us rejoice in life. If there is something or someone who brings greater joy in your life than the Lord Jesus or even comes close, then you are committing idolatry! If this is the case than you must repent and give Christ his rightful place as the source of your greatest joy.

(2) Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision.

It's as though Paul lifts the Philippians up to the heavens by speaking about rejoicing in the Lord and suddenly he drops the believers with this bomb – beware! That's quite the spiritual roller coaster ride. In Greek the word beware (BLEPO) means to behold, look onto, beware. It gives the idea that one must take a close look and think concerning what he is looking at. In other words Paul is saying: look around, investigate, think and act wisely. There are three things that Paul tells the Philippians to watch out for, let's look at them.

The first is to “*beware of the dogs*”. The American Tract Society Dictionary has this to say about the word “dog” in the Bible: *Among the Jews, to compare a person to a dog was the most degrading expression possible, 1Sam. 17:43; 24:14; 2Sam. 9:8. And you can also find: In various places in Scripture the epithet "dogs" is given to certain classes of men, as expressing their insolent rapacity, Mat. 7:6; Ps 22:16; Phil. 3:2, and their beastly vices, Deut. 23:18; 2Pet. 2:22; Rev. 22:15.* This helps us to get a better picture of what Paul meant when he said to beware of dogs. These were people who thought nothing of true religion, mockers, blasphemers, and lovers of the flesh, fools who ridiculed what is pure and true. Imagine the mockers who stood at the cross and taunted Jesus – these are dogs. We also need to beware of men and women who manifest greed and vice. We need to keep away and separate ourselves from them remembering that a little leaven leaves the whole lump (Gal 5:9).

The second is to “*beware of the evil workers*”. These were worthless, depraved and wicked people. These were the ones that worked iniquity. Remember the “great woes” that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 23 – they all concerned workers of evil. Here is an example:

Matthew 23:27,28

(27)Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

(28)So you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

(RSV)

Jesus describes them as people who looked so good on the outside and yet were only pretending to be spiritual. The world is filled with these men and women. They infest our churches, are on television, radio and on the web. They prey on those who are spiritually weak or blind. Beware, open your eyes and do as the apostle John teaches us:

1John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

(RSV)

The third is, “*beware of the false circumcision*”. These were the Jews who thought themselves superior because they were descendants of Abraham (being circumcised). Paul is referring to those who disdained the Lord’s Messiah and glorified themselves in the flesh. Paul mentions them in his letter to the Romans:

Rom. 2:29

**He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal. His praise is not from men but from God.
(RSV)**

Before his conversion Paul describes himself as being a person of false circumcision, denying the truth and wanting to do away with those who believed in Christ. Listen to what he says about himself!

Acts 22:4

**I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women.
(RSV)**

Acts 26:11

**And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme; and in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.
(RSV)**

Gal. 1:13

**For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.
(RSV)**

This was Saul before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus and became the Paul that gave his life for his Lord and Saviour. He was circumcised in the flesh but not in his heart! He now warns the Philippians to beware of religious people that are like he was before. Again this is a fair warning for us today. These false men and women of God manifest themselves by criticizing others that don't believe exactly as they do. They do not tolerate others that are not reflections of themselves. Please beware of people that are always putting other believers down. Don't fall in their trap and get boxed in. Remember the apostles who shunned a man who was casting out devils but was not part "of their group" and what did Jesus say to them?

Mark 9:38-40

(38)John said to him, "Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he was not following us."

(39)But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me.

(40)For he that is not against us is for us.

(RSV)

There are many today who need to hear and act upon these words. So beware of those who are of the false circumcision (or false confession of faith). Once Paul tells the Philippians to beware of those of false circumcision he tells them what to look for instead.

(3) for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

There are different ways that people divide the world's population. Rich or poor, healthy or sick, intelligent or ungifted, beautiful or ugly and so on. Here we see the only way to divide Adam's children: false or true circumcision and that's what Paul will be speaking about in verse three.

He has warned the Philippians concerning those who bear false circumcision and now he describes what true circumcision is all about. This was important for those who received this letter and it is just as important for true believers today! Do you remember there were three descriptions of unspiritual people (dogs, evil workers and false circumcision)? Paul will also give a three-fold description of what spiritual people really are. He wants the Philippians to be able to easily identify the false from the true.

The first affirmation of those of the true circumcision is: "*who worship in the Spirit of God*". Since to become a child of God one must go through a second birth – being born of the Spirit - it is natural that Paul places this as number one on his list. In his momentous talk with Nicodemus Jesus made it very clear that a man must be born again.

John 3:3

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

(RSV)

John 3:5

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

(RSV)

Because of this second birth, the child of God now worships the Lord God in a different way – he now does it the right way. His approach to God is now through the Holy Spirit and not through the flesh.

John 4:23

**But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him.
(RSV)**

So those who bear true circumcision (that of the heart) are first of all those who do not approach God on the basis of their own merit but solely on the merit of what Christ has done for them.

The second sign of a true believer is: *“and glory in Christ Jesus”*. Before being saved men would glory in many things such as: who they are, what they can do, who their ancestors were, their social rank, their possessions or professions and so forth. Do you remember King Saul who offered the sacrifice in the place of Samuel in 1 Sam. 13:9,10? He thought that since he was king he could take into his own hands the offering of a sacrifice. Because of this he lost his kingdom. He gloried in who he was and this failed. Do you remember the rich man who came to Jesus wanting to know how to have eternal life (Mat. 19:16)? Once Jesus told him, he sadly went away for he thought he could approach God and love his riches also. Both of these men are examples of people who glorified themselves outside of what God wanted. Being rich or even being a king does not mean a thing before God. What you need is to glory only in Jesus Christ.

The third sign is: *“put no confidence in the flesh”*. This is a sign of humility. Remember the apostle James and what he wrote about people making all sorts of plans (James 4:13-16)? They believed that they could do this and that and not have a thought about God. They had confidence in their flesh. You see they thought they had no need to ask God. They thought they could do things by themselves. Why ask God they knew best! But James reprimands them.

James 4:15,16

(15) Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that."

**(16) As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.
(RSV)**

In everything our confidence should rest **ONLY** on the Lord God. We should always place our desires before him even the small things. For you see everything in life is important so everything must be placed before the Lord. Trusting in ourselves only brings failure in the long run.

Proverbs 3:5-7

(5)Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.

(6)In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

(7)Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.

(RSV)

Now that you know what a spiritual person really looks like (he worships in the Spirit, glories in Jesus Christ and has no confidence in the flesh) become one and also establish relationships with other true believers.

In the rest of our section the apostle Paul continues to speak about people who rely on the flesh before God. He even gives himself as an example of this or, as we will see, the failure of believing in this.

(4)although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:

(5)circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;

(6)as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

He is saying that he was the perfect candidate for representing someone who (or so he thought) “had it all” before God. He writes seven things to which he gloried in the flesh before becoming a true worshipper of the God of Israel.

- Circumcised the eight day
- Of the nation of Israel
- Of the tribe of Benjamin
- A Hebrew of Hebrews
- A Pharisee
- A persecutor of the church
- Before the Law blameless

He thought he stood blameless before God. But what a surprise Paul got when he met Jesus face to face on the road to Damascus. Everything that he hoped in, the religious foundation that he stood upon crumbled in a split second! What a fool he had been and what fools are all of us who believe that there is something in ourselves that is pleasing to God and that we can approach God because of our own merits.

Beware, beware, beware of the flesh for it is at war against God (Gal. 5:17). Jesus also gives us a list of things that we have to be very careful about.

- Mat. 6:1 Beware of practicing your piety before men
- Mat. 7:15 Beware of false prophets
- Mat. 10:17 Beware of men
- Mat. 16:6 Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees
- Mark 12:38 Beware of the scribes
- Luke 12:15 Beware of all covetousness

As Christians we need to be aware of the tricks and snares of life. We desperately need to search the Scriptures, study and reflect upon them. It will keep us from the follies of this world. I enjoy the Book of Proverbs, they are a safeguard for my mind and soul. Take time to read them over and over again and with time they will become part of your thought process and protect you from the different facets of sin.

Philippians 3:7-12
14 - 'I gained by losing'

(7)But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

(8)More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

(9)and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,

(10)that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

(11)in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

(12)Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

(NASB)

Verse seven opens to what I believe is the biggest struggle that confronts every disciple of Christ – to not satisfy his flesh! In our last chapter Paul explains that if there was someone who could boast in the flesh he was the one. In verses seven to eleven Paul describes why he was terribly wrong.

(7)But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Do you remember the seven things that Paul boasted about in Phil. 3:4-7? In his spiritual journey as a Pharisee he had been taught that who he was and what he did greatly mattered before God. That these things would even secure his eternal destiny. Paul thought that what he did brought him merits before the Lord; that the more he did the more the balance would weigh in his favour. At this point Paul presents to the Philippians a portrait of his spiritual cornerstone and it was seven-fold:

- Circumcised the eighth day
- Of the nation of Israel
- Of the tribe of Benjamin
- A Hebrew of Hebrews
- A Pharisee
- A persecutor of the church
- Before the Law blameless

May I ask what your spiritual foundations are? On what grounds do you believe that God will agree to allow you to spend eternity in his kingdom? In other words how can you be declared just? For Paul he was counting on those seven things but what about you? Have you ever thought it through? Your answer will determine where you will be after you die! The Bible tells us that redemption is only found in Jesus and that we can never add to what he has done. His sacrifice, that gives salvation to those who repent, is perfect and eternal.

Hebrews 10:14

**For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.
(RSV)**

When Paul wrote to his co-worker Titus he wrote a majestic section concerning salvation given by God. He reminded Titus of the absolute mercy and compassion of the Lord in reference with redemption. Let's read these four verses and may our hearts feast upon them.

Titus 3:3-6

(3)For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another;

(4)but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,

(5)he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit,

(6)which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

(RSV)

If your foundation for salvation does not rest only on the person of Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross I encourage you to abandon it as Paul did. His eyes were opened and he saw that all his works were useless. Seeing this, Paul knew that there was only one thing he could and needed to do – get rid of them and repent.

(7) ...those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Has it ever happened to you that you really liked something and were proud to own it but then one day you saw another one and you just fell in love with it? Because you saw the beauty and splendour of the new one you were no longer satisfied with what you had, it now looked so bland. We have all experienced this temptation haven't we! Paul also went through the same thing, the only difference was that it had to do with his salvation! His foundation suddenly became worthless when he understood the value of Christ.

So he counted all those things as a loss and set his feet on a new and perfect foundation – Christ himself! He now continues to explain his spiritual journey of loss to gain.

(8) More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

What strikes me is when Paul writes that: “*I counted ALL things as a loss*”. Can you imagine EVERY thing he counted as a loss! Everything that he possessed, everything that he learned, everything that he taught, everything that he did, every single thing that made the person of Paul he set aside and saw them as a loss. Do you remember the story of the man who found a treasure and what he did?

Matthew 13:44

**The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.
(RSV)**

He sold everything he had to acquire the field. Like Paul he counted as loss all he had for the sake of what he had just discovered. And what about the story of the merchant, do you remember that one?

Matthew 13:45,46

**(45) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,
(46) who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.
(RSV)**

This man sold all he had to acquire the pearl of a lifetime. Have you also counted all you possess as a loss compared to Jesus or are you still holding on to other things? The secret that made Paul abandon his all for Christ is “*in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord,*” It all has to do with the VALUE we place on what our eyes are set upon. Do you remember King Hezekiah and his foolishness (2 Kings 20)? He had fallen ill and was at death’s doorstep. He cried out to the Lord and God gave him fifteen more years to live. Ambassadors from Babylon came to see him saying that they had heard that he had been ill and brought their best wishes with them. Without them even asking, Hezekiah showed them all his treasures (2 Kings 20:13). He delighted in these treasures and was so proud to manifest his riches. God had just given him a new “lease” on life but not a single word concerning Yahweh. Hezekiah did not count God to be worthy to be mentioned.

The king's gain was his gold and his possessions and he was reprimanded by the prophet Isaiah. Has Christ become your surpassing value? Have you forgotten his worth or what he has done in your stead?

You cannot gain Christ if you don't consider all other things as rubbish compared to Christ. One of the meanings of the word rubbish (SKUBALON) in Greek is "fecal matter of animals". I believe that this is what Paul is referring to. All things (not people but things) except Christ are like fecal matter of animals in his eyes. If we could only cherish the Lord like Paul did!

Paul now tells the Philippians two things in relationship with the treasure of his life -Jesus! He first of all wants to be found in him.

(9)and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,

This is in continuous relation with what he has set aside to gain Christ. He wants to know, taste and be in Christ more and more. In other words he wants Christ to be as alive in him as he can ever be. By setting aside other things Paul is making room for Jesus. This is how he explained it to the Galatians:

Galatians 2:20

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

(RSV)

How can Paul be found in Christ, how can you and I be found in Christ? It hasn't changed it is still by "*not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law*". What he clung to so tightly he has now let go. The Law is no longer the means of his salvation – it is Christ. This is the fundamental difference between a religion and true Christianity. If I have any sort of righteousness OUTSIDE of Christ then it is a religion because it includes something that I do or that I add to what Christ has done. If my only source of righteousness is Jesus Christ and NOTHING else – then it is true Christianity.

The righteousness that Paul found rested on "*that which is through faith in Christ*". Not faith and works, not faith and religion, not faith and whatever else. But solely "faith in Christ".

As it is written three times in the Bible (Rom. 4:3, Gal. 3:6 and James 2:23) “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness”. It is God that gives righteousness to the repentant soul, we can never earn it.

After writing that “*being found*” in Christ was his first spiritual desire Paul gives us his second – to know Christ.

(10)that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; (11)in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Today many people say that they know Jesus. But what they really mean is that they have heard of Jesus. They intellectually agree that he is a person of important historical value. They may admire him, speak of his teachings and sometimes may even follow some of them because of their moral value. But that’s not the “*I may know him*” that Paul is speaking about in verse ten. To know (GINOSKO) gives the idea to know absolutely. We would say that Paul wants to know everything about Jesus. But not a head knowledge but rather a true heart knowledge. You might not know this but there was quite a difference between Greek thought of knowing and Jewish thought of knowing. To make it simple for the Greek “to know” meant: to intellectually understand something. But for the Jew “to know” meant: to understand AND live what was understood. In North America as in Europe we have the Greek philosophical view of knowing – to mentally receive information. A bit like storing up information in our computer.

In the Ancient Greek way of thinking I could say that being faithful to my spouse is a good thing and at the same time have concubines! I would agree that faithfulness is a virtue but live another way and truthfully say that I believe it to be true. If I were in Israel, I could only say “Yes I know that being faithful to my spouse is a good thing and that it is virtuous” ONLY if I lived it. If you did not live it then you were a liar. Now when Paul wrote that he wanted to know Christ – he meant that he honestly wanted to live Christ. Do we have the same desire that is - to live Christ to the fullest? Paul is going to tell the Philippians what exactly he means by “knowing Christ”. He is going to give them three examples.

First of all, to know Jesus is to know “*the power of His resurrection*”. There is no power in death for believers have been freed from the fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14,15

(14)Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

(15)and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.

(RSV)

The real power that exists today is the power found in the resurrected Christ. As Jesus was brought back to his earthly life by his resurrection so are believers empowered by their own spiritual resurrection from the dead through him.

Romans 6:3,4

(3)Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

(4)We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

(RSV)

“Walking in the newness of life” is the equivalent of “knowing the power of his resurrection”. All that Paul did was through the power given unto him because he was “in Christ”. This is what he testified to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain.

On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me.

(RSV)

Second of all to know Jesus meant to have “*fellowship with his sufferings*”. I have rarely listened to a sermon on how wonderful it is to suffer with Christ or for his glory! It is probably the last thing that passes through our minds. No one says: “I wonder what I can do to fellowship with his sufferings today?” Many simply will do anything NOT to identify with Christ so that they will not be persecuted one way or another. Some will openly deny that they even know Christ – just like Peter did!

Mat. 26:72

But again he denied with an oath, "I do not know the Man!"

(RSV)

If you desire to know the depth of Christ then you must pass through suffering for he is called “the man of sorrows” (Isaiah 53:3). Suffering because of Christ is part of the very life of a true disciple. No one that has ever seriously read the New Testament can ever deny that! Listen to what Peter says about suffering.

1 Peter 1:6,7

(6) In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials,

(7) so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

(RSV)

If you are serious concerning your walk with Christ you must be ready to identify with him in his sufferings. He identified fully with you on the cross, should you not identify yourself with him even though there is a great cost?

The third and final “how to know Christ” is to “*be conformed to his death*”. I believe that Paul is speaking about putting to death the flesh. By the flesh is meant whatever in this world is enmity against the Spirit (Gal. 5:17). We all know that there is a spiritual war that is presently ravaging against the souls of every human being. The flesh and its desires are at war with the Holy Spirit and his desires for your life. Have you noticed how sensitive this war felt when you were first born-again? How suddenly you realized certain sins, habits or ways of life that were not at all in conformity with holiness? You never felt bad about them before, simply because you were still dead in your trespasses and blind to spiritual truth. But now that you have passed from death unto life (John 5:24) you have become sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and have begun saying “NO” to the flesh. We all know how it can sometimes be so difficult! This is what Paul meant by “*being conformed to his death*”. Are you still sensitive to the sins that the Spirit of God is pointing out in your life? Have you built up a resistance, an inoculation against his leading? By doing this you will not know what it means to be conformed to his death and will be losing out on God’s blessings.

(11) in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

The literal meaning of “*the resurrection from the dead*” is “out-resurrection out of the dead”. Paul knows fully that as a man he will never fully attain the “knowledge of Christ”. What he is expressing is that the complete knowledge of Christ will only be experienced once we have passed from this world unto eternity (1 Cor. 15:50-58; 1 Thes. 3:11-13; 2

Tim. 1:12; 4:7,8 and Titus 2:13,14). Some believe that one can live a life here on earth without ever sinning. Even Paul did not believe this!

(12) Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

Once more Paul is manifesting great humility, he truly is a servant of the Lord. He openly confesses that the battle between the flesh and the Spirit is still raging within himself. Remember these words that were written in Romans:

Romans 7:14,15

(14) We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin.

(15) I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

(RSV)

I fear that too many Christians still are afraid of revealing the intense battles that they are living. Hiding behind a mask or making believe that one is spiritual simply deepens the bondage of sin. Living a lie is not living in the light. Never forget these words from our Lord: “The truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

Paul expresses that he has not yet obtained the “*resurrection from the dead*”. He has not tasted fully the power of living totally in the Lord Jesus. Nor has he “*already become perfect*”. Before this personal defeat what does Paul do? He openly confesses that he is unable to reach the goal of his life. The goal set before all Disciples of Christ. What does he do? Does he abandon his calling? Forsake his mission? Renounce the truth because it is the truth? NO!

(12)...but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

There is a driving force that literally thrusts Paul into marching forward – the Holy Spirit! Paul “presses on” (DIOKO) which means to pursue or to press forward. He is not defeated by his defeats! He may fail but Paul rises again and marches forward. When he wrote to the Corinthians he also shared that he “*pressed on*” no matter what.

1 Corinthians 4:11-13

(11) To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are ill-clad and buffeted and homeless,

(12)and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure;

(13)when slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the off scouring of all things.

(RSV)

Do you remember when many of Jesus' disciples abandoned him because of what he said? They had followed him for some time now and after Jesus gave a short teaching concerning eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood (John 6:53-69) it was just too much for them.

John 6:53

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you..."

(RSV)

John 6:66-68

(66) After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him..

(67)Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?"

(68)Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life;

(RSV)

What Christ had said was just too much for some of the disciples to handle. This was "over the top". No way were they going to "eat his flesh and drink his blood" they just didn't understand what Jesus was speaking about. Unlike Paul they did not "press on" and continue no matter what. It seems that for most Christians there is a line drawn in the sand. As long as our walk with Christ remains on this side then it is O.K. But if ever Christ leads us to the other side of the line then I put a stop to my affection towards him. This is exactly what we see with the disciples that abandoned him in John 6.

The Philippians needed to hear the spiritual truth that concerned each and every one of them. Jesus has laid his hands upon me and I will march forward until I reach the goal that he has set before me. Yes, Paul had experienced setbacks but never defeat! May this lesson forever be engraved in our minds. We march forward no matter what!

Philippians 3:13-16
15 - 'Reaching forward'

(13) Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,

(14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

(15) Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; (16) however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.

(NASB)

In our present text the apostle Paul continues to speak about the goal that was set before him when he became a follower of Christ. In his writings to the Philippians we have noticed how transparent he was about himself and his failures. As you may know it is foolish to play “games” with the Lord. To make-believe that we are something we are not. Being a spiritual hypocrite is not something you want to be.

The word hypocrite in Greek (HUPOKRITES) means: an assumed character hence a stage player, actor. Have you noticed how Jesus confronted those who manifested phoney spirituality? Jesus was kind to the woman who was caught in adultery (John 8). He revealed himself to the Samaritan woman who lived in sin (John 4). He comforted the woman who had been impure for twelve years (Mat. 9). He also came to the rescue of the man who lacked faith (Mark 9). But on the other hand he could not tolerate people who were spiritual hypocrites, who made-believe they lived a righteous life. In his speech against the religious leaders of his day this is how he described them in Matthew 23.

- Hypocrites
- Blind guides and fools
- Whitewashed tombs
- Full of iniquity
- Sons of murderers
- Serpents & brood of vipers

Having been a Pharisee before his conversion Paul knew too well the hypocrisy one can easily slip into. But that was a thing of the past, he was now walking in truth. May I encourage you to reflect upon your own spiritual walk and how you manifest it before others? Do you crave to be seen as someone you are not? Are you a different person when you are not in a religious setting? Are you able to say as David did?

Psalms 139:23, 24

(23) Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

(24) And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

(RSV)

Let's come back to our text and see what there is to learn from it.

(13) Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.

Paul continues to be very open about his walk with the Lord and he tells the Philippians that he does not see himself as *"having laid hold of it yet"*. In other words he hasn't reached his goal of letting Christ fully live in him. He writes the word *"yet"* and it's a very encouraging word. Paul knows that one day he will live this "total oneness" with the Lord. The apostle John wrote it this way:

1John 3:2

Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

(RSV)

We also are like Paul, we have not *"laid hold of it yet"*. We desire to walk in the truth and sometimes we fall short. We sometimes feel that we are coming back to "block number one" again. For some it brings discouragement and frustration. I've seen far too many Christians simply give up! They only look at their failures and not at what God has already done for them by declaring them righteous before him (Rom. 3:21,22)! But what does Paul do as he faces the reality of his sinful nature that sometimes is victor in his life?

(13) ...but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.

How I wish every Christian I knew would have this simple capacity – to forget the past and to reach forward. How many ruminate on their past sins and failures. How many have stopped moving forward because of this and even have regressed in their spiritual walk! I have not yet found ONE SINGLE TIME where Jesus brings back to mind past sins or failures once they have been forgiven. Why do Christians have such a hard time to forgive themselves? Why are we so hard on ourselves? Why can't we just accept what God says he does?

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

(RSV)

Heb. 8:12

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

(RSV)

Ephesians 1:3,4

**(3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,
(4) even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.**

(RSV)

I believe that it is an insult to our Father when do we not to believe what he tells us is the truth concerning him. When God forgives – he forgives! He is able to do this because of the holy and perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. If you are that person the one that just can't stop looking back at your past sins, I encourage you to ponder upon the depth of the forgiveness that is freely given at the cross.

Please notice that before Paul can “*reach forward*” he has to do one thing “*forgetting what lies behind*”. I would like to stress the word “*forgetting*” (EPILANTHANOMAI) which means: to lose out of mind, neglect, forget. Do you remember what Paul had to stop thinking about so that he could move forward? He persecuted Christians, had them thrown in prison and even had them killed. He was zealous to do all these evil things. He KILLED PEOPLE – think about it! Innocent men and women were murdered with his approval, destroying families causing children to become orphans and having their lives all “messed up”. He has blood on his hands. He has realized that he has blasphemed the name of God for years and years as a Pharisee. He had taught a false religion based upon the works of the flesh – he was a false prophet!

Paul was able to set all that aside, all of it. And how could he do this? How could his conscience deal with all the atrocities he had committed? He believed in the total forgiveness that the cross offers. So Paul does not ponder upon his past sins any longer and he does what we should all do: “*reaching forward to what lies ahead*”. It seems that Paul has a one-track mind! Sometimes Christians can be just like cars they have three positions: reverse, neutral and forward! Reverse is when you always think about your past sins.

Neutral is when you have stopped your walk with Christ because you are “frozen”. Forward is when you march onward because your Lord is calling your name. Reverse is when you look at the past. Neutral is when you can’t forgive yourself. Forward is when you look towards the Lord! So what position are you in?

(14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Without looking back Paul presses forward. There is no way Paul will remain stagnant or motionless. As I said he only has one position in the transmission of his life and that is – forward! He perseveres, he follows after something that is very precise. This reminds me of what Jesus said over and over again – follow me! By saying this, he is asking people to move forward and to set their eyes on Jesus. In the book of Matthew we see Jesus saying six times – follow me!

- Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men (4:19)
- Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own (8:22)
- Follow me, and Matthew rose and followed him (9:9)
- Follow me, and take up your cross (10:38)
- Follow me, and deny yourself (16:24)
- Follow me, and you will have a treasure in heaven (19:21)

The goal is to follow Jesus. This was his heavenly calling. If you are a true believer, what do you think your heavenly calling is? Is it any different than Paul’s? Are only some called to follow Jesus and not others? Are there two different kinds of disciples? You know, the ones that LOOK at the parade and the ones that ARE IN the parade. In his teachings Paul makes it very clear that ALL believers have received the same heavenly call – to follow Jesus. Actually none of the New Testament writers make any sort of distinction between disciples. We all have one Saviour, one calling and we are all going to live in one place – heaven.

Paul “*presses on forward*”. Don’t think that it was easier for Paul to walk with Christ than it is for us today – far from it. Every single day Paul had to get up and place his life before the Lord. He had to make the decision to continue on the narrow road. He had to fight against the desires of his flesh. He had to tell his eyes to turn away from what was sometimes in front of him. He had to be patient, caring and forgiving. Pressing forward is not an easy thing to do. You know that and so do I so that’s not the question. The core of the matter is – do I desire to press forward today? Am I ready to fight? Do I want to hold the banner? Paul was ready – what about me?

(15) Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you;(16) however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.

This is Paul's conclusion concerning reaching for the heavenly goal – let's have this attitude. Now attitude (PHRONEO) means to exercise the mind. In other words let's keep this in mind or let's set our minds upon this. Even still let's really think about this. Because this is the goal set before us by the Father. Now some people might think that: "Hey, some can become perfect after all!" (*as many as are perfect*). The idea behind the word perfect in Greek is: to be complete in character. As I said before, no one on earth is perfect, for we have all sinned (Rom. 3:23). Paul is speaking about having a spiritual attitude that is mature concerning our divine calling. We sometimes even say the same thing when we deal with a difficult situation, we say: "let's be mature about this and not make a rash decision".

Now in all churches there are people and the probability that there will be differences of opinions. I have never seen a church where all the people are always in perfect harmony with all that is going on. It was the same thing in Philippi, so Paul writes about this.

(15) ...and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you.

Notice that Paul is using the same word again – attitude. He is asking people to exercise their minds and he knows perfectly well that by doing this it just may be that not all will come to the same conclusion. So what are they to do? By the way what are we to do when in church we don't all come to the same conclusion? The answer for the Philippians is the same for all of God's children: "*God will reveal that also to you*". When we have a difference of opinion we need to take it to the Lord. We need to search his Word. We need to pray for guidance. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to teach us. And also be willing to be taught. When our pride gets in the way, churches fall apart! This reminds me of what Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia:

Galatians 5:15

But if you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another.

(RSV)

Paul ends this section with a word of advice to follow. As you walk towards the goal set before you by God this is what the Philippians are to do.

(16) however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.

They are to live in a certain way. To “*keep living*” (STOICHEO) means: to march in or to conform. It gives the idea of a pattern of life that we conform to because of our calling. Now their daily life was to have the “*same standard*” that they had already attained. It’s not that they had not yet been able to conform to God’s way of living – they had! What Paul is saying is that now that you have reached a mature spiritual standard of walking with God – continue in it! Just keep on following Christ. If we consider ourselves mature in Christ what we need to do is simple – keep on reaching forward and being the light of the world.

Philippians 3:17-21
16 - 'Follow me'

- (17)Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.**
- (18)For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,**
- (19) whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.**
- (20)For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;**
- (21)who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.**
- (NASB)**

Have you ever thought of what example of himself Paul is speaking about? It deals with what he has just written. Follow my example and count everything as a loss to gain Christ (3:7...). Follow my example and press forward and don't let yourself be discouraged by your failures (3:12...). Paul was a living example of what a disciple of Jesus looked like. As I write these lines I have to wonder if I could say the same thing – follow my example! For my spouse, children and grandchildren. For the people in the church, my neighbours and friends. Could I tell them – this is what a Christian should look like. This is the change that the fruit of the Spirit brings into the life of the believer. Paul knew that he was a model and without a doubt he was. Doesn't the Lord call all of us to be examples for others to see – of course he does. He even has made us his ambassadors!

2 Cor. 5:20

So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.
(RSV)

Surely ambassadors are examples of what citizens of their country are like. If we are not able to say “follow my example” then there is only one thing to do and that is to ask forgiveness and have a change of heart concerning our way of living. This is what the Bible calls repentance. What is wonderful with the Lord is that we can come to his throne of grace, repent and forgiveness is given. It may just be that this simple decision will change your entire future!

- (17)Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.**

Again we see in verse seventeen the humility of Paul. He tells the Philippians to follow his example but also the example of others. You see, Paul doesn't think that he's the only Christian that is worthy to be looked upon. He may have thought of that as a Pharisee but not as a Christian. He knows that there are other good Disciples of Christ such as Timothy and Epaphroditus that the Philippians can use as examples. They are to observe them. Now to observe (SKOPEO) means to take aim at, therefore to observe. It gives me the idea that you are aiming at something and your sight is fixed on it. Imagine yourself as a bird-watcher. You are in a forest and have your binoculars with you. Then you see a stunning Northern Cardinal! You slowly take your binoculars, place them before your eyes and fix your sight on it enjoying every minute of it. You are observing this gorgeous creature of God. And you keep on observing it until you can no longer for the bird has flown away. Paul is telling the Philippians to observe mature Christians.

What should they look for in these mature Christians? It is the *"pattern of their walk"*. Reflecting on the pattern (the walk) of godly men and women is one of the best school of life that you can attend! The book of Psalms tells us some of the many spiritual walks we should be following.

- Walk in truth (26:3)
- Walk in integrity (26:11)
- Walk before God in the light of life (56:13)
- Walk in God's ways (81:13)
- Walk uprightly (84:11)
- Walk in His truth (86:11)
- Walk blamelessly (119:1)

Do you have these mature Christians in your church or personal life? If you do, get to know them better and follow their example. This is also what Paul instructed Timothy to do.

2 Timothy 2:2

**and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men
who will be able to teach others also.**

(RSV)

Here we have four generations of Christians that benefit from "looking and living" what they see. The first generation is "me" and which is Paul. Then the second generation is "you" which is Timothy. Then a third generation is the "faithful men". Which brings us to the fourth generation which is the "others".

**(18) For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,
 (19) whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.**

If there is a good way of walking there is also a bad way of doing it and this is what Paul will speak about in the two verses above. What I unfortunately read is that “*many walk*” there were many, far too many who did not walk as an example to be followed. But who are these “*many*”? Paul does not say but we can imagine that they were people from the inside and also people from the outside of the church at Philippi! These were probably people who professed to be Christians with their lips but did not manifest the reality with their lives. We have all seen them, they are still in our churches or in our surroundings. People who come Sunday after Sunday but live a life that only brings shame unto the name of Christ. They are the ones who live according to the flesh, whose desire is to do their will and not the Lord’s. Paul tells the Philippians a few traits of character concerning them.

The first is that “*they are enemies of the cross of Christ*”. Some are ashamed of the cross of Christ. Like Peter once did, they turn their backs on the Lord. They deny even knowing him. They would rather warm themselves by the fire with fools and blasphemers than to stand by the Saviour. Some are ashamed of the gospel never speaking of it to others and by doing so closing the door to heaven to them. This was not a difficulty that occurred in Paul’s life (Rom. 1:16). Others were enemies because of what they taught - like the Jews who preached against Christ and the grace offered unto them. They were false prophets who may have told the Philippians to return to the Law or to be circumcised to obtain salvation. To all of you today that are ashamed of the cross please remember these words of Christ:

Mark 8:38

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

(RSV)

The second trait of these people is: “*whose end is destruction*”. These false Christians or openly anti-Christians all have the same fate. There is a day of judgment that is coming and no one will be able to save them from the wrath of God. These people who mock Christ will all find themselves in hell (Rev. 20:15)! Many have not listened and feared the warning of Christ.

Matthew 7:20-23

(20) Thus you will know them by their fruits.

(21) Not every one who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

(22) On that day many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?”

(23) And then will I declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.”

(RSV)

“Depart from me – I never knew you” is what these evil men and women will hear. I must ask you the following: Is your faith true, will it save you? Are you certain that you have received salvation? Have you deeply repented of your sins? Is your life honest and true or are you one of the many who do not bear the fruits of salvation (Mat. 7:20)!

The third is “*whose god is their appetite*”. Their appetite is for earthly things, the things of the flesh. They cherish the present more than the heritage promised to those who walk in the light. Remember Esau, his god was certainly his appetite. He exchanged his birthright for a bowl of soup! His eyes were fixed on the present and he resented what was to come. Paul spoke about these people and they will be among us until the very end.

2 Timothy 3:2-5

(2) For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,

(3) inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good,

(4) treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

(5) holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people.

(RSV)

The fourth is “*whose glory is their shame*”. These are the people who do things that bring shame. But not only that, it seems that they actually enjoy doing shameful things! They openly do things that sinners normally do in the dark. These men are openly defiant towards the Lord. They revolt against his will. They establish themselves as their own masters. Paul spoke to Titus warning him of such men:

Titus 1:10-13

- (10)For there are many insubordinate men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially the circumcision party;**
(11)they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for base gain what they have no right to teach.
(12)One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."
(13)This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.
(RSV)

You may know some of them. You hear them speak, they glory in vain things. Some are in your church, some just profess to be Christians. But there is something wrong, deadly wrong! They glory in all but in the Lord. Or even worse, they glory in both things of the world and the things of God.

The fifth is like a wrap-up phrase: "*who set their minds on earthly things.*" All they seem to care about are the earthly things. What a difference from what the Lord teaches his disciples to do!

Mat. 6:33

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.
(RSV)

These men are conforming themselves to the values of this world. To prevent this from happening to us we must heed to the words of Paul in his letter to the Romans.

Rom. 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
(RSV)

After speaking concerning those who the Philippians should not follow he brings back to memory what should be the delight of every believer.

(20)For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

(21) who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

What should the Philippians eagerly wait for? Not earthly things, for Paul just mentioned that these only bring condemnation. We eagerly wait to be in heaven for this is where our citizenship is. Our old man is of the earth but our new man is celestial. Our eyes no longer look downward but rather upward. We are eager for heaven because this is where our Lord and Saviour lives. The Jews were eager to enter the land of milk and honey for it was the Promised Land. We, on the other hand, are eager to enter heaven, which is our Promised Land! There is another reason why we eagerly wait for heaven.

(21) who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory...

Our bodies will be transformed from their primal state and desires to bodies that conform to God's glory. We will have a celestial body a body like the angels have. The apostle Paul speaks of this in his letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 15:47-49

(47) The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.

(48) As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven.

(49) Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

(RSV)

The bodies of the believers are going to be transformed for we will now have become "as the angels are" (Mat. 22:30). We will have a body that will be conformed to its new environment. A body that will be able to travel across the universe – like the angels do! A body that no longer is susceptible to sickness, and feebleness, and aging or corruption. I believe that our new celestial bodies will resemble that of the resurrected Christ. Read the gospels and you will find so many different facts concerning this new body. In one way it bears a resemblance to our earthly body. Jesus walked and talked, he ate and people were able to touch him. He even looked like himself because everybody recognized him. On the other hand it is quite different it passed through solid matter, it "popped up" in the Upper Room. It bears deep scars yet there was no pain. It was able to rise into the sky and so forth. We will be given an incredible body suited for its new life environment. Can you imagine having a renewed mind in a renewed body! So how will this be done?

(21) ...by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

It will be done by the power of God. It is the One who said: “let there be light” who will give us a new body. He that told Lazarus to rise from the dead, he that walked on the waters and told the tempest to be still – he will give us a new frame of life. He who created millions of different living creatures with millions of different bodies – he will create something totally new for his children. Is that your hope? Are your eyes ever searching for the coming King? Does each new dawn bring a new hope of being taken into the presence of God? Are you hoping to soon see your heavenly brother? Do you remember what the angels said to the disciples just after his ascension?

Acts 1:10,11

(10)And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,

(11)and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

We also need to stop gazing into heaven and start moving on with the mission Christ has given us, while never forgetting the promise of his return.

Philippians 4:1-3
17 - 'Need help?'

(1)Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.
(2)I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. (3)Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the case of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.
(NASB)

I just love the way that the apostle Paul opens this section. The way that he declares his love for the Philippians. Some say that Paul was a “macho man” with a stiff upper lip. I’m sorry but I just don’t see it that way. Paul unashamedly declares his affection for the Philippians. Not only once but twice in verse one, right in the beginning and right at the end. Have you ever seen in the gospels any Pharisee who had this type of affection towards the people they taught? Asking the question is answering it! For the most part they disdained the “little people”. Do you remember the story in John 9 about the man who was born blind and was cured by Christ on a Sabbath day? Do you recall how the Pharisees treated the cured man after he witnessed the miracle he had received?

John 9:34

They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.
(RSV)

That’s how they treated people who did not conform to their exact beliefs! In the same story we see the parents of that man and they also testified and this is what is written about them.

John 9:22

His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.
(RSV)

This time we see that the Pharisees simply put out of the synagogue everyone who would challenge their authority and theology. All of this simply to say that Paul had been a Pharisee and persecuted Christians to death like he did with Stephen in Acts 7:58 – 8:1. What happened in the life of Paul?

How could he go from killing Christians to openly loving them? By the grace of God, his eyes were opened and he came to the truth concerning who Jesus was and that revelation changed him profoundly! May I ask if your encounter with Jesus has changed your love for the brethren and those around you who have not yet become a child of God? If so, have you been able to express it OPENLY like Paul does?

(1)Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

What does loving someone push them to do? One thing is “*to see*” them. It is written that Paul “longed” (EPIPOTHEOS) to see them this means: to greatly yearn upon. There was an honest to goodness deep desire in Paul to see his beloved friends in Philippi. It is interesting to note that the Greek word that Paul uses for our English word “long” is actually what is called a “hapaxlegomenon” (commonly known as an APAX) which is a word or a phrase that appears only once in a text. This is the only place in the entire New Testament where “epipothetos” is used. This group of Christian believers just might have been the ones that he missed the most in his entire life! The point that I am bringing is that true love makes our object of love to be missed greatly. Are we at the point in our life where we actually miss being close to God? Do we miss reading his word or miss talking with him? How about missing being amazed or astounded by God? Do we miss singing his praises or miss speaking about him? If so, we truly love him. On the other hand if I can go on for days not giving a thought about the Lord I would question my relationship with him.

Another thing that loving someone does is that it makes that person become the treasure of our life. The person becomes the “apple of my eye” as we used to say. Paul says that they are his *joy* and his *crown*. Joy is something that fills our hearts. Joy always has to do with something good happening to you. Joy never brings anger or frustrations neither does it bring irritation on the part of the person who is joyful. In other words joy is a wonderful, delightful, superb emotion. I can only guess from what I read that the Philippians brought only good to the mind of Paul. This reminds me of what Jesus said:

Mt 6:21

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

(RSV)

They were the love, joy and treasure of his life and his heart was with them. He also saw them as his *crown*. Kings adorn their heads with their crown. It symbolizes who they are. In a way the Philippians represented who Paul was and what Paul was all about. They were God-fearing believers, mature men and women who trusted Christ as their Lord and Saviour. I am certain that Paul was proud of them like a father can be of his children.

Notice that Paul once more slips in the idea of being strong in the Lord when he says “*stand firm in the Lord*”. He is pounding into the hearts of the Philippians, this goal of life time after time. It was so vital for him to repeat it over and over again – stand firm.

(2) I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.

But as in all families, even the most beloved, there are times when dissention and discord creeps in. If not taken care of, this can destroy the best of families. It has always saddened me to see individuals inside the Body of Christ care so little about the damage that they do. Churches torn down or splitting because of a “feud” or lack of humility. Churches that take decades to grow can be wiped off the map in only a few weeks! I can only imagine how our heavenly Father weeps over his stubborn and heartless children.

Here in the midst of this lovely church we find two sisters that are at odds with each other. It is not mentioned why this tension existed. What we do know is that the bad news was brought to the attention of Paul. Isn’t it astonishing that “bad news” travel so far and wide even in Paul’s days! The city of Philippi lay in eastern Macedonia. To travel from this city to Rome took weeks. With our modern highways and ferry systems the distance between Rome and Philippi is 1305 km (about 810 miles). Imagine how difficult it must have been for Epaphroditus to do that in his day! He came to see Paul with excellent news except for this one. Euodia and Syntyche were having quite an argument. I can only guess that it was one of importance because it had not already been settled. Hearing of this Paul gives his recommendation “*I urge*” (PARAKALEO) means: to call near, to invite. I like his attitude, instead of using his authority as an apostle or founder of the church he calls out to them. He actually invites them to reconciliation. We can see his kindness – he calls them by name Euodia and Syntyche which gives a very personal touch. This is the only time their names are mentioned in the Bible. Isn’t it dreadful to be remembered down through history because of your dissention with someone else? What a tragedy! Paul invites them to “*live in harmony*”. To change their ways, to both repent. You see, I can only imagine that one somehow hurt the other. The one that did the hurting should ask forgiveness but the one who got hurt should give forgiveness. It’s either one or the other or maybe both that did not do what was asked of all who are beloved of God.

Paul also gives the reason why they should live in harmony “*in the Lord*”. He brings them back to the foundation of why Christians should act in a certain way – because of Jesus. Think of what Jesus has said and what he has done in your favour. As for what he has said, this phrase in what we call the “Our Father” tells it all.

Matthew 6:12

And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors;

(RSV)

Remembering what he has done, should encourage each of us to do what we ought to do.

Ephesians 4:31,32

(31) Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice,

(32) and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

(RSV)

Euodia and Syntyche are called to forgive each other since the Father has forgiven them because of Christ. It just might be that you have not completely forgiven someone. May these lines encourage you to remember the vital necessity of doing so.

(3)Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the case of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

We just don't know who this "*true companion*" is but we do know what he is asked to do. Before we get to that I would like to bring the following thought: Sometimes we are called to do important things without it being known. Not everyone is called to be "known" because of what they do. I would say that more Christian work is being done today by "unknowns" than anybody else. How many honest and persevering saints are in some type of ministry devoting themselves, giving of themselves for the cause of Christ on a daily basis? You may even know some of these selfless Christians. They may not be known to the general public but the Lord knows everything that they do and they will not be forgotten.

Mat. 10:42

And whoever gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

(RSV)

What is asked of this unknown Christian is that he give a hand in helping out Euodia and Syntyche. Paul gives in verse three a hint concerning them: "*who have shared my struggle in the case of the gospel*". It seems that Paul knows them, that they were part of the advancement of the kingdom of God. They may have helped out in the establishing or growth of the church in Philippi. They were both women that loved the Lord and had served him amidst all the opposition the city of Philippi could bring.

Something somewhere went wrong. The flesh took over and there was a rift between them and they were “stuck”. So Paul calls his true companion to come beside them.

Please notice that Euodia and Syntyche, even though they worked for the Lord, had their own personal struggles. It is always a mistake to believe that the leaders of the church are so spiritual that they don't have any personal issues to deal with. Or that they do not have any battles with sin. This is not true – we are all sinners and we all fail as Disciples of Christ. Paul said the following concerning himself:

Romans 7:18-24

- (18) For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it.**
- (19) For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.**
- (20) Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me.**
- (21) So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.**
- (22) For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self,**
- (23) but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members.**
- (24) Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?**

(RSV)

Have you ever thought of being the one to help out when Christians are passing through difficult times? It may not be the same conflict as with Euodia and Syntyche, but there are so many people in our churches that desperately need outside help to get their lives back on track. We are all called to encourage and care for one another. Please place this before the Lord and let him guide you.

Paul ends with “*whose names are in the book of life*”. Did you know that the book of life is mentioned seven times in the Bible! Once in Philippians and the rest in the book of Revelation. It would make a very interesting study to do on your own. Here are the verses: Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 20:15; 21:27. The one that I would like to end this section with is the last one on this list.

Rev. 21:27

But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

(RSV)

Heaven is a unique place and here are some facts concerning heaven from the book of Revelation:

- The New Jerusalem comes down from heaven (3:12)
- The throne of God is in heaven (4:2)
- All praise God in heaven (5:13)
- The Lamb of God is in heaven (8:1)
- Angels are in heaven (10:1)
- God's temple is in heaven (11:19)
- Angels and demons battle in heaven (12:7)
- There is no more place for the fallen angels in heaven (12:8)
- There is rejoicing in heaven (12:12)

There are so many things concerning heaven and it would be another good book for you to read about. No one can enter heaven if his or her name is not written in the book of life – no one! My friend, be certain that your name is in the book of life. Your eternal destiny depends on it!

Philippians 4:4-9
18 - 'The peace of God'

- (4) Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice
 (5) Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near
 (6) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God
 (7) and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
 (8) Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things
 (9) The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.
 (NASB)

I have counted nine times where our English word rejoice or rejoiced is translated from the Greek (1:18; 2:16,17,18; 2:28; 3:1,3; 4:4 and 4:10). What we often do not know is that (as in our case with the word “rejoice”) it is translated from four different Greek words! In a real sense we lose the different subtleties that is found in the original. Just for you to get a picture of what I mean look at the following list of Greek words translated into our English “rejoice”:

Verses	Greek word	General meaning
1:18; 2:28; 3:1; 4:4,10	CHAIRO	Calmly happy
2:16	KAUCHEMA	To boast in a good or bad sense
2:17,18	SUGCHAIRO	To sympathise in gladness
3:3	KAUCHEMAI	To boast, glory, joy, rejoice

(4) Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice

Paul is reminding the Philippians that they are called to be happy in the Lord. Note again that Paul is not thinking of a “crazy happy” but a calm happiness. I have always thought that there is one perfect model of what I should look like as a Christian and that is Jesus Christ.

No matter what my pastor or denomination says the perfect way of living is reflecting Christ. This is so true that the goal of God the Father is to make us become Christ-like!

2 Corinthians 3:18

**And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.
(RSV)**

So the next time you gather in church, look around and think, “have I ever seen Jesus act like this?” or “has the Holy Spirit ever driven Jesus to act like this?”. I don’t want to start a debate but if there was one person who was perfectly controlled by the Holy Spirit it is Jesus of Nazareth so learn from him and imitate how he rejoiced! Paul says we should “*always*” rejoice. Does this mean that I should always be happy and negate what is going on in life? Some people actually do this. They say that what we see is not reality so they refuse to accept it. They live in a “make-believe” altered world of their own. This is not what is taught in the Bible. The word “*always*” refers to the different situations that are presented to you. Paul is saying that in your present situation you should have this calm happiness.

- Calm happiness from knowing that God is in control.
- Calm happiness from knowing that God desires the best for you.
- Calm happiness from knowing that you are resting in his hand.

(5) Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near.

We have seen Paul speak about the character that Disciples of Christ should have and he once more brings this to their attention. Do you think that Paul is trying to get something across here? I hope you’re answering “YES” he is! When Paul speaks of a “*gentle spirit*” (EPIEIKES) he means a spirit that is appropriate. An inner attitude that reflects the Spirit you have received from the Father. I would say that an appropriate spirit is certainly one that bears the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22,23

**(22)But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness,
(23)gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law.
(RSV)**

This is what you ought to be known for – all these fruits. This truly manifests that your spirit is under the control of the Holy Spirit. I must ask myself if this is what my family, neighbours, co-workers, friends, church family and even my enemies see in me? Paul is not saying that I should boast about my good character “*be known to all men*” – that would be a sin. What he is referring to is that my gentle spirit should be so constant that all who know me will automatically see it in me. He continues with “*the Lord is near*”. I think it’s a reminder for the Philippians and for all of us. Jesus is just around the corner, he can arrive at any moment. Don’t fret, just continue to have an appropriate spirit. He has promised to return and he will do so. It may also mean that being near he can be there to help you persevere in having an appropriate spirit. In either case it’s always encouraging to remember that Christ is coming back.

**(6) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God
(7) and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

These two verses are some of the best-known verses in the New Testament. I have heard them so many times and they have been an encouragement for so many people throughout the past centuries. This is what Albert Barnes wrote about “Be anxious for nothing”:

That is, be not anxious or solicitous about the things of the present life. The word used here - merimnate- does not mean that we are to exercise no care about worldly matters - no care to preserve our property, or to provide for our families (compare [1 Timothy 5:8](#)); but that there is to be such confidence in God as to free the mind from anxiety, and such a sense of dependence on him as to keep it calm.

I love the way that he writes “there is to be such confidence in God as to free the mind from anxiety”. Having confidence in God, isn’t that what faith is? As a child believes his father so should we believe what our heavenly Father says to us. Our lack of confidence is often what brings us down and brings so many worries. Have you noticed that in the Sermon on the Mount in chapter six Jesus speaks four times (6:25,28,31,34) about not worrying? Listen to what our Saviour has to say about trusting the Father in his first and last statement.

Matthew 6:25

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

(RSV)

Matthew 6:34

Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day.

(RSV)

So what are we to do if we are not supposed to be anxious?

(6) ...but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Paul is telling us not to keep the things you worry about all cramped up inside. He doesn't want us to keep it a secret and to feel as though we are all alone with our problems. He tells the Philippians to speak about it to the Lord. Simply because he is the one that can remedy the situation. He speaks of four different aspects of your conversation with God. The first is *prayer* (PROSEUCHE) this is the most common word for a regular prayer to God. Paul is simply saying – speak to God about it. Open your heart and let him know how you feel about the circumstances that are bothering you. Don't be afraid – he's your Father and he cares so much about you. The second is *supplication* (DEESIS) this speaks about a real need that you have. Not just a desire that you place before the Lord but something that seems essential to the benefit of your life. The third is *thanksgiving* (EUCCHARISTIN) which means having a grateful language towards God. This speaks of the attitude I should have when I pray unto God. I humbly come before the Lord, not demanding but asking, not ordering but rather beseeching him. At the same time having an approach filled with thankfulness, gratitude and deep appreciation. Thank God for who he is and the great things he has done. Sing in your heart and resonate with gratefulness. The fourth is *requests* (AITEMA) which simply means your petitions or the things asked for. All these things that you are bringing ought to be made known unto God. He is your provider, your sustainer, your benefactor. Paul is telling the Philippians to turn to God for all of your needs, speak to him, rejoice in him, and thank him for all things. And certainly keep on being all of this even if God says NO!

(7) and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

What happens if I do take all of my concerns to God in prayer with a thankful attitude? What happens when I do leave all of my cares and troubles at the feet of the cross (Mat. 11:28-30) and follow my Saviour? My answer can only be – the best thing in your life will happen! The peace of God will make its home in your heart.

Peace means: quietness or rest. It gives the idea of the soul that prospers because of God. It seems that the peace of God envelops his children from the inside. You see, real peace is not from the outside simply because my outside situation can crumble down in a few days. Authentic peace always blossoms from the inside where no one can steal it from you. This overwhelming peace “*surpasses all comprehension*”. This peace that establishes itself in the believer exceeds all that we can understand. It is there and stays there. It is mightier than fear, it conquers all adversities, and it does not cringe even before the threat of death! This peace from God has one main objective and that is “*to guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus*”. The peace of God is not given so that everything will turn out just as you want. It’s not there to be at your service. Actually it’s there to help you continue to glorify the Father! It will guard you hearts and minds. The peace of God will protect you, and keep your heart and mind safe and sound in Jesus. You will be able to persevere because the peace of God will build you up and strengthen you.

8) Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

I believe that in this verse Paul is teaching the Philippians how to keep the peace of God alive in one’s heart. What are we filling our hearts with? What nourishes our hearts? What are the delights of our hearts? The answers to these three questions will have natural consequences towards the presence of God’s peace in us. The peace of God is a gift from him (John 14:27). It is also a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). This gift and fruit can be neglected and even buried by the things or thoughts of this world. We are warned not to “quench the Spirit” (1 Thes. 5:18). By keeping these things in our minds, and naturally living them, the peace of God will be with me. Because I will have God’s favour upon me.

First, keeping the truth is essential if we are going to have a good relationship with the Lord. In the following verse we see the Psalmist desiring God’s truth to be with him

Ps 25:5

**Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.
(RSV)**

Notice that it is “*your truth*” that is desired because it is God’s truth. Wanting to be taught the ways of the Lord is a sign of spiritual health.

Second, honourable thoughts should feed our mind. We are constantly bombarded with so many ideas and philosophies that go directly against the character of God that we need to guard our hearts with things that are spiritually honourable. Things that are honourable are things that God values. A quick look at the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17) will give you a brief overview of what God deems very important.

Third, whatever is right means: equitable and just. It gives the idea of keeping thoughts of fairness and wanting to do what is right in our hearts. We are not to try to get away with frauds, scams and deceiving others. The Lord God warns us concerning this!

Prov. 11:1

**A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is his delight.
(RSV)**

Fourth, whatever is pure should flood our minds. There are so many images of impure things that are everywhere out there. Our world craves upon what goes against purity. It seems that the darker things are the more they are accepted! Just think about what we hear and what we see on television and you'll understand what I mean. The standards of God are nowhere to be seen but lust and the desires of the flesh abound!

Ps 19:8

**the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the
LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
(RSV)**

Fifth, whatever is lovely. The word in Greek means something that is acceptable. It seems that there are always scandals on our right and on our left. Our society is pushing the frontiers of what is decent and wholesome. It has gone so far down the road that it has to go over the edge to make the headlines. Things have to be weird, eerie and creepy. Whatever happened to the lovely things, the things that God has set as standards in society's life? Our minds should be filled with these lovely thoughts and our hearts should search for them.

Psalm 84:1

**How lovely is thy dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!
(RSV)**

If you wonder if something is lovely or not in God's sight just ask if he would have it in his dwelling place!

Sixth, whatever is of good repute. This speaks of something or someone that is well spoken of. Our minds are to be filled with subjects, events, or people that are reputable. If this would be the criteria for our television shows the greater part would simply shut down. It seems that the less reputable you are the more you get attention from the media. Scandals and shameful situations make the headlines day in and day out. The more sinful the bigger the praises and the attention given to it! Not so with having the peace of God in you. Keep away from these thoughts.

The seventh are things of excellence and worthy of praise. These are things of valour and praise before the Lord. Again and again Paul is referring the Philippians to the mind of God. What pleases him and what brings praises to him is what you should be storing up in your minds.

But how can I have all these wonderful spiritual thoughts in my mind? Where do I get them? Do they just “pop up” when I need them? Actually they don’t. What I have learned in my Christian life is quite the opposite. The things of the flesh “pop up” and are stored somewhere in the back of my mind. If I want to be filled with the good things the apostle Paul says that I should “ *dwell on these things* ”. In Greek it means: to take an inventory of or to think on something. I guess Paul wants the Philippians to think and re-think upon the character and person of God. I need to take time (quiet time) between the Lord and me with the Scripture open. Read each book from beginning to end and take notes, placing certain things in prayer. Practicing what I know to be asked of me.

(9) The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

In chapter three and verse seven-teen Paul says to follow his example. Once more he will speak of himself and the model he has set. Learning, receiving, hearing and seeing that’s how Paul taught others. In other words he was a living example for the brethren. He is not ashamed to say “look at the way that I have lived and do as I did”. I wonder if I could say the same, can you?

Paul ends with a certainty: “*and the peace of God will be with you*”. This dearly beloved is how you will possess peace within you.

Philippians 4:10-14
19 - 'Your concern for me'

(10)But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.

(11)Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

(12)I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

(13)I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

(14)Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.

(NASB)

This is the last “rejoice” that is found in this epistle. Some have called this letter of Paul to the Philippians “the epistle of joy”. It could be but this all depends on what you set your eyes upon, what you are looking for when you read. Nevertheless Paul rejoices once more. Out of the nine times that the word “rejoice” is mentioned, on six occasions it deals with rejoicing because of Jesus and two because of what is done for the Lord and one because of seeing a brother in the Lord (Epaphroditus). One way or another it all has to do with either the Lord Jesus himself or something directly connected with him. We see that the true sense of Christian joy is found in the person of God – the Son. What he has done for us and what we can do for him.

The Philippians are to rejoice “*greatly*” (MEGALOS), which means: much, greatly. It comes from the Greek word MEGAS which means “really big” in English. So after reading the epistle and nearing to the end of it Paul tells the Christians to greatly rejoice in the Lord. As in all the other times there is a reason for rejoicing in the Lord.

(10) ...that now at last you have revived your concern for me;

This is certainly another astonishing statement! Here we have still another reason to rejoice and that is in giving monies to support a person and his ministry. As you know Paul was in prison and was unable to provide for his own needs. The prison system in Rome was not what is found in North America today. Those who could afford it (such as Roman citizens) were encouraged to be in “house arrest” where they could live until the day of the trial. As long as they did not try to flee they were able to have a small amount of freedom inside their home. Those who were poor, were kept in prison and the conditions of their incarceration were not as today (three meals a day, nice bed, recreation, etc...).

Paul was under “house arrest” and he needed some income to pay for his expenses. Knowing this, the Philippians gathered monies to help Paul with his up keep.

I have noticed that in our Christian churches people are often divided concerning giving for the support of missionaries or other ministries. As a pastor I know far well that most have a difficult time in rejoicing when asked to open their hearts and to give for a special offering. Some have not yet learned the joy of giving. I can still remember when I was a missionary how I was filled with joy and gratefulness when we received a “love offering” from an individual or a church. It really made a big difference in our small family budget. It may be that some gave reluctantly when the offering plate passed before them and it’s very unfortunate. There is a verse made especially for those who give and it came out of Paul’s writings.

2 Cor. 9:7

**Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion,
for God loves a cheerful giver.**

(RSV)

The Philippians seemed to be cheerful givers because this had not been the first time that they had helped Paul. In verse ten we see that giving comes out of concern. This word concern (PHRONEO) means: to interest oneself in or to set affections on. When you think of it – it’s true! When do we give? It’s when our affections are set upon someone or some cause. If you take that away then there is no reason to give. Since the Philippians loved and cared about Paul it was natural that they also wanted to participate in his ministry by making certain that he had all he needed. In other words “I don’t give because I don’t care” or “I give because I care”.

(10) ...indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.

Sometimes the opportunity to give just doesn’t come up or comes up only at certain times. It seems that at the church of Philippi the invitation to gather monies for Paul had not come up for a certain period of time. But when it did, people stepped up to the plate and gave with open hearts. May we also learn the joy (on our part) and necessity (on the other’s part) to give for the Lord’s work. I must warn you not to give to anyone that just comes up and says – give, give, give. Be certain that the organization or the person is worthy of the cause of Christ. Never take from what you would give to your local church and give it to others. What you give for other ministries should not come out from what you normally give but should be over and above it. Take time before the Lord and ask him to manifest his will concerning your giving.

(11)Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

(12)I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

In verses eleven and twelve we are brought before an openhearted Paul. He will speak about a very delicate subject and that is – contentment. What a difficult word it is to even pronounce in our modern Christian world. I live in North America and contentment is certainly not something that we have been taught. It is not our way of living. We live in a throwaway society. We acquire things for the pure pleasure of accumulating stuff. How many televisions do we have in our home? How many dresses do we really need? How many trucks, and cars and motorcycles does a family actually require? As I was writing this I got up and counted how many shirts and pants I have in my wardrobe – just to see. Well I have 28 shirts and 18 pairs of pants and I can wear only one of each at a time! What ever happened to contentment?

Paul did live in another time period but he still had to exercise contentment and don't forget that the Roman Empire could offer everything one could ever desire. Paul says that "*he did not speak from want*". Meaning that he believed that he already was satisfied with what he had and believe me that was very little. He truly practiced what he later wrote to Timothy:

1Tim. 6:6

**There is great gain in godliness with contentment;
(RSV)**

If there is great gain in godliness with contentment what are your thoughts concerning what many preachers are telling God's flocks today? Many are taught that "God wants you to be rich" or "Being wealthy is a sign of God's hand upon you" or "God doesn't want you to be poor". Being rich and having more and more possessions is certainly not a sign of contentment quite the contrary. Do you remember when John the Baptist was baptizing and soldiers came and asked him what they ought to do? Listen to his answer:

Luke 3:14

**Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."
(RSV)**

Be content with what you have – that was his answer! You see even in those days people wrestled with contentment. When you really think of it, when I lack contentment I am telling God that I don't accept the situation or the possessions that I have. Having this attitude can be very insulting to the Lord. Now I am not speaking about not having any desire for betterment but when betterment absorbs a big chunk of my thoughts and energy, then there's something wrong. When money becomes what I'm looking for or working for in life then I'm completely wrong!

Heb. 13:5

**Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never fail you nor forsake you."
(RSV)**

Paul had learned to be content, he knew that God was taking care of him and that the Lord could supply to his every need. Don't forget that there's a big difference between a NEED and a WANT. God provides for the needs, it's your flesh that desires the wants – the over and above of life. Paul continues on with being content:

(12)I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

In the first phrase of verse twelve I can understand that there is nothing wrong with being prosper as there is nothing wrong with being humble. Many believers had great wealth but what I notice in all of them is that they did not seek wealth. They sought after the Lord of lords and made him their desire. Listen to what Jesus said:

Mat. 6:33

**But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.
(RSV)**

No one will dispute that Paul sought first and foremost the kingdom of God and God provided as he wished. No one can also dispute that Abraham also sought after God and God also provided according to his will. In Paul's case he never was rich and with Abraham he was very rich! Now God is sovereign over all things and everyone. Seeking after Mammon (wealth) is turning your back on God.

Luke 16:13

No servant can serve two masters; for 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 God and mammon."

(RSV)

Paul had this wonderful spiritual capacity and that was to be content in all types of circumstances. He gives six examples of what contentment means to him.

- Getting along with humble means
- Knowing how to live in prosperity
- Learning the secret of being filled
- Learning the secret of going hungry
- Having in abundance
- Suffering in need

I see people break down because their car needs to go to the garage or their computer is not as powerful as their friend's. Some don't go to church on a given Sunday because they "don't have anything to wear"! Others are hurt because a sibling received more inheritance than they did. What in the world is happening to God's people? Have we not learned what Job did?

Job 2:10

But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

(RSV)

How many times do we sin because we have not learned to accept ALL that comes from the hand of God? In the following verse Paul will reveal his secret of being able to be content in all situations.

(13)I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

I love the way Paul stands on the person of God. He is so real to him that he sees himself as being able to do all things! Many believers of the God of Israel have placed their full confidence in him and this has made the difference in their lives:

Moses knew he could count on God:

Ex. 15:2

**The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.
(RSV)**

David stood firmly on God:

2 Sam. 22:2

**He said, "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.
(RSV)**

Ps. 27:1

**The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
(RSV)**

In the darkest hours of the history of Israel Jeremiah believed:

Lam. 3:24

**"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."
(RSV)**

The prophet Habakkuk wrote:

Hab. 3:19

**GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like hinds' feet, he makes me tread upon my high places.
(RSV)**

Finally the writer of Hebrews could write this for all true believers:

Job 13:6

**Hence we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me?"
(RSV)**

Paul was not the first one to be able to rely completely on the Lord God, the Bible is full of people like Paul. Men and women who courageously believed and because of this changed the outcome of history. This mystery has been known for centuries and it is still available for all who have received salvation in Christ. The ones I have named are in no way any better than we are for “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23) and we are all children of God’s wrath (Eph. 2:3). Yes you can do all things IF you stand on Christ, believe on Christ, and hope on Christ. God will honour your faith as he did with an untold number of believers. Paul could do all things, even being content while in jail because Christ strengthened him.

(14) Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.

This in itself remarkable. Paul just finished saying that “he can do all things through him who strengthens me” and he is speaking of Christ of course. He is telling the Philippians that Christ does take care of him but at the same time he tells them that it’s a good thing that they helped him out! How can the two work together? Is it Christ that helps him or is it the Philippians that brought help? Did Christ provide for his needs or is it the Philippians? I believe that Christ helps him by the working of the Holy Spirit within the hearts of the brothers and sisters in Philippi. We all know that it is the Holy Spirit that works in the lives of the believers. Three of the fruit of the Holy Spirit found in Gal. 5:22,23 are: love, kindness and goodness. By the work of these three fruits of the Spirit in their lives they opened up their hearts and gave unto Paul.

What I learn here is that even though I know that God will provide I cannot simply turn away when there is a real need. James reminds us of this danger in James 2:15-17. So let us be concerned for others and do as we are led by the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 4:15-23

20 - 'The grace of the Lord be with you'

(15)You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

(16)for even in Thessalonica you sent *a gift* more than once for my needs. (17)Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

(18)But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

(19)And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

(20)Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

(21)Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you

(22)All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

(23)The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

You might think that it was easy for the apostle Paul to be able to have the monies necessary for his missionary trips. Because of his reputation and all the testimonies that one hears about Paul, his ministries with churches and his establishing new ones everywhere he went. He should have been a Christian "superstar"! Money should be no problem. Unfortunately that's not what I read in the opening verses.

(15)You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone.

When Paul writes "*you yourselves also know*" it gives me the idea that the financial situation of Paul was not a hidden thing. He was very open about letting people know about his financial state. This should be a lesson for a great many Christian "superstars" out there. Their ministries reap in millions upon millions and you can never find out where it all goes. Many have been "flagged" and investigated. In front of cameras they explain that everything is scrutinized and that they soon will make public their income – but they never do! Some live like kings or queens, nothing but the best, after all it's for the Lord's work! Shame on them and one day they will stand before the Lord and will have to give an account for their lives and all their lies! When I look at the lives of the apostles or Disciples of Christ none of them lived as some televangelists or pastors of our day. As for Paul he was transparent concerning the monies people gave towards his ministry – he is a model for all who say they "work for the Lord".

(15) ...no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone.

It was difficult for Paul for it seems that at that time there was no other church but that of Philippi that helped him out. No other church cared enough to place him on their “missionary list”. It’s so true that we know that Paul had to do secular work while doing ministry and we see this in Acts 18:1-3.

Acts 18:3

and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them, and they worked, for by trade they were tentmakers.

(RSV)

Paul also reminded the Thessalonians that they had to work for their pittance as he himself also worked for his needs.

2 Thessalonians 3:7-10

(7)For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you,

(8)we did not eat any one's bread without paying, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you.

(9)It was not because we have not that right, but to give you in our conduct an example to imitate.

(10)For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: If any one will not work, let him not eat.

(RSV)

I wonder why it was so difficult for Paul to get help for his ministry. I can only guess that just like today for a great many still see money as taboo. This verse teaches me how important it is to do what we can for those who are true heralds of God’s Word. Yes, in prayer but also yes with our finances. I can only imagine the time Paul lost having to work for his bread instead of evangelizing!

(16)for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

(17)Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

What we see here is a church that was truly interested in Paul's work for the Lord. He writes that they already had given more than once when he was in Thessalonica. They were a generous church, they knew what to do with their monies. Philippi was a Roman colony and these colonies emulated Rome the best they could including the life-style that was offered there. No one can say that the Philippians were able to give because there was nothing else they could do with their monies! There were a whole lot of things they could have spent their income on but they chose to do what was spiritual. Remember what Jesus had said in his Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 6:19-21

(19)"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal,

(20)but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.

(21)For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

(RSV)

The Philippians were looking to lay up treasures in heaven rather than to have treasures here on earth. When we read these lines from Paul we can easily recognize where their hearts were – in the right place. Helping others to carry out their God given ministries is a wonderful and very necessary thing to do. We even see this in the ministry of Christ where some faithful women cared for his needs.

Luke 8:1-3

(1)Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him,

(2)and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,

(3)and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

(RSV)

Between you and me Jesus did not need these women to provide for him and his disciples. He had fed thousands by multiplying bread and fish. As God – the Son, he could turn stone into bread if he had wanted to, just like he turned water into wine at Cana. But Christ permitted these women to manifest their love for him by letting them participate with him in his ministry. I believe that we miss out on God's blessings by being selfish and wanting to keep all for ourselves. May we all become as the Philippians generous with our possessions and doing what we can to do our part in ministering towards those who work in the harvest fields.

(17)Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

Paul did not seek after his own good, we have seen this over and over in this letter to the Philippians. He was even happy to be in prison if it encouraged the brethren to walk boldly in the Lord (1:14; 2:17). So money was not a thing that he sought after – he knew his God would provide for all his needs. Why then was he so happy that the Philippians had given him another love offering? Paul says that this *“for the profit which increases to your account”*. It was for the believer’s account that he was so pleased. He knew that what they had done would bring an eternal reward on their behalf! It is something that we must remind ourselves of constantly. Each and every thing that I do for the glory of God has an eternal bearing – everything.

1 Corinthians 15:58

**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.
(RSV)**

This is the end of Paul’s letter and we can see that he is grateful towards those in Philippi. He tells them that he is thankful that they not only thought about him but actually did something for him.

(18)But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

Just look at what a love offering can do in someone’s life Paul now has an abundance of monies. Their gift was more than sufficient. I’m certain that Paul would have gladly accepted whatever was given to him. We see clearly why Epaphroditus had been sent. He was the messenger from Philippi with the special gift. We can also see that Epaphroditus was a very honest person. If the sum of money was substantial there might have been a temptation to keep it for himself and never be seen again. How many Christians have fallen with this type of temptation! How many have been caught with their “hand in the bag”! Do you remember the story of Achan in Joshua chapter seven? After the Israelites won a battle against the city of Ai, Achan took the gold that was supposed to be “accursed” and kept it for himself. When it was found out, Achan and his entire family were put to death. Don’t keep money that is not yours and don’t steal from the Lord – for this is even worse.

Have you noticed a very intriguing point that Paul brings up? He says that the monies he has received from them is “*a fragrant aroma and an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God*”. When we say “NO” to ourselves and “YES” to giving for the Lord’s work what we are actually doing is a sacrifice unto God! This sacrifice is described in three ways by Paul.

First, it is sweet (EUODIA) which means: good fragrance. This means that the sacrifice (or offering) smells good to God. This reminds me of the prayers of the saints which are mentioned in the book of Revelation, they were also a good aroma.

Rev. 5:8

And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

(RSV)

I believe that our sacrifices, as with the prayers mentioned above, do have a good aroma before the Lord. This should encourage us to please the Lord with our love offerings. To be generous and liberal even if it is sacrificial on our part. Second, it is acceptable (DEKTOS) which means to be approved. This tells me that the Lord God says that our love offerings are a good thing. He declares that it is approved. Remember wanting to be approved by a parent, a teacher, an employer or a group of friends? Remember when they said “this is great” or “good job”, remember how you felt? Imagine the Lord himself saying “I approve of you” – I can’t imagine a better feeling than that! Jesus talked about such a wonderful day when this will happen.

Matthew 25:23

His master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.”

(RSV)

Third, it is well pleasing (EUARESTOS) meaning: fully agreeable. Giving the idea that the Father is well pleased with what you have done. One can wonder and think that he is not able to participate like these Philippians did with a love offering to support different ministries. Our budget is tight and we just can’t help out this time. We need to be wise with our finances – don’t we? Yes we do, but on the other hand, too many Christians are afraid to “step up” and give sacrificially. So what should we do? The apostle reminds the Philippians that God is there and will provide for their needs.

(19)And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Paul is reassuring the Philippians that God will take care of them. God will “*supply all your needs*”. NOT all your wants, all your desires, all that your flesh is demanding rather ALL your needs. As we all know there is a big difference between what we need and what we desire. God is able to do this for the following reason “*according to his riches*”. Do you think that the Lord is not able to come to your aid when you openly have a heart for the advancement of his kingdom? Do you think that he will turn his face away from you and leave you stranded when you manifest that much faith? Paul reassures the Philippians that the Lord is there right by your side. Have you ever considered the riches of the Lord? When we realize that the entire universe belongs to him then we only begin to understand that the Lord is surely capable of supplying all of our needs! So go ahead and be generous with the Lord’s work and watch him take care of you! Now his riches and glory pass through his beloved son Jesus Christ. That’s how God the Father works. He will provide for our needs through his son simply because we are his. So stop trying to get your “needs” met elsewhere and place your hope in the Creator and Sustainer of all things. If you glory in Christ – the Father will glory in you.

(20) Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

(21) Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you

(22) All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household.

(23) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

We have come to the end of Paul’s letter to the Philippians. When we write a letter we also end with a short paragraph such as: Say hi to Dad for me and see you soon, your son Ray. In his ending comments Paul first of all thinks of God, as we all should. God should always be the first in our mind.

(20) Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

This reminds me of what Paul wrote to the Corinthians when he encouraged them to live for the Lord.

1 Corinthians 10:31

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

(RSV)

Notice that Paul calls God “*our Father*”. What an amazing privilege to be able to say that God is our Father. Because he is our Father all the glory should be given to him. We should continuously be thankful and offer praises throughout the day. So let us be grateful unto the Lord and manifest it with our voices.

- (21) Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you**
(22) All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

Now Paul turns to his brothers and sisters in Christ. Not only his best friends or the ones he knows the most. His greetings are for “*every saint*” in Philippi. Since all are loved by Jesus, everyone is important for Paul. This should remind us that we also should greet everyone who bears the name of Christ. He reminds the Philippians that they are loved by the Christians in Rome. It is comforting to know that people everywhere around the world actually hold you in their hearts simply because you belong to Jesus Christ. I have ministered, preached and taught in many different churches, conventions and Christian camps. Every time I do this there is a spiritual bond that instantly exists – it is the brotherhood of believers.

- (23) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.**

This is Paul's final blessing for his beloved Philippians. This is his best wishes for them. That the grace of the Lord be with them. Paul speaks of God's grace in every single letter that he wrote. How we also need the grace of God. How we need to feed ourselves with grace as the children of Israel fed upon manna every single day. How we also need to learn to live in the grace of God and also be gracious unto others.

I hope that this book has been an instrument in encouraging you to live for the glory of God.